



Pitch In for Parks and Trails

PARK STEWARD POLICIES

Program Goals

The goal of the Park Stewardship program is intended to provide opportunities for citizens and groups to help maintain Mount Vernon parks and trails. By delegating some duties to very capable volunteers, the City can make better use of Park staff for jobs that require more expertise or use of equipment. The program offers volunteers a sense of ownership in “their” trail, park, or natural site, and is a way of involving the community in enhancing and maintaining parks and trails.

Adopter Criteria

Any individual or group may sign on for maintenance of a trail section or park with a commitment of at least six (6) months. Agreements are renewable each year in January. Youth groups are welcome to adopt parks and trails during the school year, with work coordinated with a teacher or other adult leader.

The adult or teacher must apply as the Park Steward for the group and be present for projects. Potential Park Stewards must complete and return the application, which will then be reviewed by a staff person and followed by an interview and site visit. Park Stewards are also required to complete a background check and sign a Park Steward Agreement with the City.

Duties

Volunteers are assigned appropriate park or trail maintenance jobs suitable for their skills and interests. Duties can be as simple as routine litter pick-up along a stretch of trail, or as complex as planning for a restoration project. Volunteers are generally not allowed to use power tools, such as weed whackers, lawn mowers, chain saws, etc.

Agreement

Park Stewards will be issued a Park Steward Agreement, signed by both the volunteer and the Mount Vernon Parks and Enrichment Services Volunteer Coordinator. The agreement lists the following: site location, all permitted duties, allowable equipment or techniques, and any limitations on work. The agreement also includes a liability waiver assuming responsibility for your safety and releasing the City from claims.

Maintenance Standards

Standards for maintenance of the designated work area will be detailed in the Agreement. If agreed upon standards are not being met, a staff member will discuss the site with the Park Steward. If assistance is needed, it may be given in the form of supplementary volunteer work parties, staff support, or advice. If the Park Steward wishes exclusive responsibility for the site but fails to maintain it to the agreed upon standards, the City will terminate the agreement.

Training

Individuals and groups taking on work they are unfamiliar with are trained in safe and proper ways to accomplish their job. A Parks and Enrichment staff member will work with the Park Steward until both parties are comfortable with the work.

Tools

For routine maintenance, volunteer stewards are asked to provide their own tools. For special projects or large groups, staff may loan tools and gloves on a case-by-case basis.

Support

Support will be provided in the form of advice and guidance, trash bags, and bag pick-up. As needed, staff will provide site preparation work (if heavy equipment is required), mulch and gravel deliveries, nursery plants or purchased trees and shrubs. Park Stewards are asked to inform the Volunteer Coordinator when trash bags need to be picked up.

Recognition

Park Stewards are generous people and deserve more recognition than they get. Park Stewards, Community-Led Work Parties, Park-led Work Parties, and School Stewardship will be recognized on the Parks and Enrichment Services website and other ways as appropriate.