



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

PART 150 FW 1-3	SUBJECT Volunteer Services Program Policy, Procedures, and Responsibilities for Volunteers Volunteer Eligibility Agreements Volunteer Program Operations	RELEASE NUMBER 435
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT Division of Visitor Services and Communications		DATE December 15, 2003

EXPLANATION OF MATERIAL TRANSMITTED:

These chapters contain policies, procedures, and responsibilities for administration of the Volunteer Program.

150 FW 3 supersedes Director's Order 121 and Exhibits 1, 2, and 3, March 20, 2000.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

Remove:

150 FW 1, 04/06/92, FWM 020
150 FW 2, 04/06/92, FWM 020
150 FW 3, 04/06/92, FWM 020

Insert:

150 FW 1, 12/15/03, FWM 435
150 FW 2, 12/15/03, FWM 435
150 FW 3, 12/15/03, FWM 435

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Chapter 3 Volunteer Program Operations

3.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter contains information on training, travel, uniforms, housing, awards, and other administrative matters pertaining to volunteers.

3.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter applies to personnel working with individuals, groups, and students who dedicate time and talent to assist the Service.

3.3 What resources are available to Service employees establishing and operating volunteer programs? The *“Guidebook for Working with Volunteers”* includes many useful suggestions. You may obtain copies from the Headquarters Office, National Wildlife Refuge System or the Regional Volunteer Coordinator. Other outstanding volunteer program management resources are available from the American Volunteer Association, the Points of Light Foundation, local volunteer action centers, the National Conservation Training Center, and many other sources.

3.4 What orientation and training can volunteers attend? We will provide volunteers with an orientation to the mission and goals of the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), information on the function of the Service office where they are working, and any training required for the performance of their assigned responsibilities. Volunteers may attend other training as appropriate. You may use appropriated funds to pay for training and related travel for volunteers.

3.5 Who provides training? Orientation and general information is the responsibility of the Unit Volunteer Coordinator. The volunteer's direct supervisor will provide specific job-related training.

3.6 Do volunteers wear uniforms?

A. Volunteers may not wear official Service uniforms or dress in a manner that attempts to duplicate the appearance of the Service uniform (041 FW 4).

B. Volunteers may wear volunteer uniform components. This will help the visiting public easily recognize volunteers. Where volunteers wear uniform components, the project leader will issue consistent components that match the blue color of the volunteer cap or patch as closely as possible. Volunteers must be appropriately dressed and reflect well on the Service. Purchase official volunteer uniform components, patches, etc., through the Service uniform supplier.

3.7 When is it appropriate to provide volunteers housing?

A. When the volunteer's contribution makes provision of housing cost-effective for the Service.

B. When housing is available.

C. When volunteers are not displacing Government employees.

3.8 Can the Service rent housing for volunteers? We may rent housing at a reasonable cost and provide it to volunteers. Rented housing is appropriate in special cases, such as for Student Conservation Association (SCA) participants, student interns, or for nonlocal volunteers with special skills that are not locally available. Providing access to utility connections is also an acceptable form of providing housing for volunteers.

3.9 Can volunteers operate motorized vehicles and equipment? Volunteers who are 18 years old or older and possess a valid State driver's license may operate Government sedans and light-duty vehicles. Operation of specialized equipment or heavy-duty vehicles requires compliance with policies and guidelines provided in Parts 243 and 321.

3.10 What payments to volunteers for travel and other expenses are appropriate? The unit manager (or designated volunteer supervisor) will make the decision whether or not to reimburse incidental expenses, such as travel, meals, subsistence, etc. Volunteers may be reimbursed for incidental expenses regardless of the volunteer's place of residence. Negotiate and determine the reimbursement for each prospective volunteer or volunteer group on an individual basis. The Volunteer Services Agreement must specify the kind and amount of reimbursement. Document any changes in reimbursement as an amendment to the agreement. You may reimburse Service volunteers for transportation, meals, and miscellaneous expenses clearly and directly related to Service work assignments. Provide reimbursement for volunteers in the same manner as for employees.

3.11 How are volunteer expenses reimbursed? You may reimburse volunteers for miscellaneous incidental expenses, such as transportation and meals. Such reimbursements may equal, but should not exceed, the established per diem rate for the primary duty station for meals and incidental expenses. Attach documentation to the Volunteer Services Agreement specifying how you determined rates. Volunteers should submit requests for reimbursement for miscellaneous incidental expenses by submitting a Reimbursement for Incidental Expenses (SF 1164) on no more than a weekly and no less than a monthly basis. Complete FWS Form 3-2239 (FWS Vendor Updating Document) so that volunteers can be reimbursed for expenses. Volunteers receiving incidental

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expense reimbursements and recognition awards are considered recipients of Federal payments. Encourage volunteers to use Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), the same primary payment mechanism used by Service employees. If the volunteer declines use of the EFT system, he/she is granted a blanket waiver and must provide his/her name and social security number to execute the waiver. No volunteer will be denied or delayed payment.

3.12 When are volunteer expenses deductible?

Volunteers may deduct nonreimbursed expenses (local travel, meals, travel expenses, lodging, supplies, and a mileage rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for the operation of a personal vehicle for volunteer work) as a deductible contribution on Federal income tax returns. The volunteer should retain a copy of the Volunteer Services Agreement and use it to support this claim. [IRS Publication 526, "Charitable Contributions,"](#) provides information on this subject.

3.13 What are appropriate methods of recognizing volunteer contributions to the Service?

We strongly encourage providing recognition and awards to volunteers. Nonmonetary items should stay within the limit of \$100. This does not mean that you cannot give the volunteer who contributes an unusual number of hours and whose work substantially benefits the Service something beyond the \$100 value. Using sound professional judgment and providing proper justification and documentation should allow for the flexibility needed to ensure an effective and successful volunteer program. Certificates of Appreciation and other volunteer recognition items may be available from the Regional Volunteer Coordinator, or you may produce them locally.

3.14 Can I use appropriated funds to purchase awards and recognition items?

You may use appropriated funds to pay for award and recognition items such as, but not limited to, T-shirts, pins, mugs, wildlife art or books, lunch/dinner, or other items for the volunteer(s).

3.15 Can I give a monetary award to a volunteer?

The National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 allows us to give volunteers nominal monetary awards in recognition of their contributions to the Government.

A. When should volunteers receive monetary awards?

Monetary awards are an appropriate way to recognize volunteers who demonstrate exemplary performance of duties.

B. Can monetary awards affect a volunteer's tax status?

Monetary awards may affect the volunteer's status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Monetary awards may also jeopardize a person's status as a

volunteer under regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Volunteers who receive monetary awards should refer any questions regarding monetary awards and tax status to their tax advisers.

C. How can I give a volunteer an award? Use Volunteer Monetary Award Certification (FWS Form 3-2177) for all volunteer monetary awards. This must include a justification summarizing the specific accomplishment(s) you are recognizing.

D. What amount can I give as a monetary award? We limit monetary awards to volunteers to two awards per calendar year and normally to \$100 per award. This does not mean that you cannot give a volunteer who contributes an unusual number of hours and substantially benefits the mission of the Service a monetary award above \$100. You cannot reward the same contribution more than once.

E. How do I process the paperwork? Complete FWS Form 3-2177 and attach a copy of the Volunteer Services Agreement (FWS Form 3-2148). The National Business Center will not process the award unless you attach the agreement. If the volunteer chooses to receive payment electronically, complete FWS Form 3-2239. If the volunteer chooses not to receive payment electronically, complete FWS Form 3-2239 providing the volunteer's name and social security number to execute the blanket waiver. Forward all forms to the National Business Center for processing. This is important to ensure payment of the award and generation of the Form 1099, mailed to the volunteer at the end of the calendar year for income tax purposes. Failure to follow approved procedures may result in fines and penalties to the volunteer and the Service.

F. Are all volunteers eligible for monetary awards?

Our employees who serve as volunteers are not eligible to receive monetary awards. Family members of our employees that volunteer may receive monetary awards. However, the unit manager's supervisor must approve monetary awards to relatives of Service employees.

G. Who approves volunteer monetary awards?

The unit manager giving the award will approve the award with the exception of employee family members or when the award amount exceeds \$100. When you give an award to a family member of an employee, you must elevate the approval to the unit manager's supervisor. We require second level approval when giving a monetary award to a family member of ANY Service employee OR when the amount of the award exceeds \$100.

H. How should I present the award?

You must present all monetary awards publicly (in the presence of employees or others) to avoid any appearance of impropriety or conflict of interest. For example: a staff meeting where

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there are more than two people in attendance, volunteer award dinner, or any other public meeting where recognition of the award is appropriate and/or meaningful to the volunteer. Public presentation of the award serves to recognize the volunteer in front of others and acts to reinforce the sincerity of our desire to share the volunteer's achievement with others.

I. What must volunteers do who have received cash awards? The Service will issue award recipients a Form 1099 at the end of the calendar year, which the recipients must report on their individual income taxes as miscellaneous income. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to properly report the funds received to the IRS.

3.16 What annual reports are required?

A. Unit Volunteer Coordinators. All Service field units/stations must submit a Volunteer Services Report (FWS Form 3-2271) to the Regional Volunteer Coordinator by October 31 of each year. Refuge staff will submit volunteer data using the Refuge Comprehensive Accomplishment Reporting (RCAR) system by dates established by the Headquarters Office, National Wildlife Refuge System. Stations other than refuge field stations must also submit FWS Form 3-2271 by October 31 of each year.

B. Regional Volunteer Coordinators. Submit a summary of the data prepared by field and Regional Offices to the Service Volunteer Coordinator by November 15 of each year. Submit photographs and highlights electronically or in any other format.

C. Service Volunteer Coordinator: Submit an annual report on the national status of the volunteer program to the Director by January 31 of each year. This report will provide information including the number and age distribution of Service volunteers nationwide, the number of hours contributed, the kinds of activities conducted by volunteers, and the resulting benefits to the Service. We will forward a copy of the annual report, including a breakdown of volunteer data by Region, to each Region, CNO, and the Service Directorate.