



Volunteer Steward Handbook

Connecting to
and supporting Aurora's
open spaces



**PARKS,
RECREATION
& OPEN SPACE**



CONTACT LIST

Open Space & Natural Resources Volunteer Coordinator

Fendi Despres
Natural Resource Specialist

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NATURE CENTERS



Plains Conservation Center

21901 E. Hampden Ave.

303.326.8380



Morrison Nature Center

16002 E. Smith Rd.

303.326.8445



Senac Creek Nature Center

5800 S. Powhatan Rd.

303.326.8429

OSNR VOLUNTEER REPORTING

Ranger Office

To provide a detailed report about any safety concerns or violations to park regulations across ALL open spaces.

303.326.8430

Access Aurora

To report any dumping or maintenance related issues.

303.739.7000

Wildlife Hotline

To report wildlife safety concerns and questions.

303.326.8435

Aurora Animal Care Division

For domestic animal issues

Dispatch: **303.326.8288**

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Aurora Police Department

Emergency: **911**

Phone Reports/Non-Emergency:
303.627.3100

Aurora Fire Rescue

Emergency: **911**

Fire Dispatch: **303.627.313**

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DISCOVER AURORA'S *True Nature*

Open Space and Natural Resource Volunteer Program

Mission and Vision

Our mission is to preserve open spaces that connect people with nature, today and in the future, through effective stewardship practices.

We envision a community connected with nature where wildlife thrives, and everyone can be an effective steward.

OSNR Branches & Divisions of Work

Maintenance and Operations

Weed control, snow removal, habitat restoration, vegetation management, and trail maintenance.

Park Rangers

Public safety, education and regulation enforcement of trails, open space, and reservoirs.

Naturalists

Education, outreach, nature center management, exhibits, Volunteer Steward coordination, natural resource monitoring and management.

Values

- Integrity
- Respect
- Professionalism
- Customer Service

Open Space in the City of Aurora

- 8,000 acres of open space
- 103 miles of trails
- 2 Reservoirs
- 3 Nature Centers



WELCOME TO THE TEAM

PURPOSE OF THE OSNR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

1. To support the OSNR division mission of being stewards of natural resources that are essential to Aurora's quality of life.
2. To strengthen volunteers' connection to nature and community through meaningful work and learning opportunities.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN OSNR STEWARD?

OSNR volunteers are committed to providing essential support to the volunteer program mission of preserving open spaces that connect people with nature, today and in the future, through effective stewardship practices.

There are a variety of opportunities that volunteers can do to fulfill this mission, including:

- Staff the desk at nature centers
- Participate in habitat restoration projects
- Maintain native plant gardens
- Monitor wildlife
- Perform trail stewardship duties
- Assist or lead public or school programs
- Provide support at special events
- Special projects on an as needed basis (building insect boxes or taking wildlife photos for educational materials as examples)

WHO CAN BECOME A OSNR VOLUNTEER?

Anyone ages 16 & older can apply to become an OSNR volunteer. People ages 15 & under can volunteer with a parent or guardian. Visit AuroraGov.org/OSNRvolunteers to apply.



WHAT TO EXPECT

OSNR VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

- Fill out an application and make a profile on AuroraGov.org/OSNRvolunteers
- Sign volunteer agreement and liability waiver (done when you fill out an application)
- Pass a background check every two years (paid for by the city)
- Be committed to the mission
- Represent the city of Aurora in a positive manner
- Wear required uniform when volunteering
- Not volunteer under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Successfully complete required training
- Actively participate (read and respond to newsletters, notify if you can't fulfill a commitment, etc.)
- Log all of your volunteer hours.

OSNR VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

- Sense of purpose and giving back to nature
- Nature immersion and time outdoors
- Social and networking opportunities
- Interact with people with similar interests
- Assisting people to connect with nature through understanding and appreciation
- Lifelong learning and career development with exclusive continuing education classes, tours, and programs.
- Opportunities to work with and learn from talented and experienced OSNR staff
- Letters of reference and job training
- Newsletter spotlights
- Volunteer appreciation events
- Free Aurora and Quincy reservoir passes with 20 hours of service; award given at beginning of year for previous years' service

BE PREPARED

Before performing any outdoor tasks, volunteers must be equipped with the following:

UNIFORMS

OSNR volunteers are provided a t-shirt and name badge. Volunteers are required to wear a volunteer shirt or badge when performing volunteer tasks. We ask volunteers to wear uniforms only when on duty and other clothing should be professional and appropriate for the nature of the volunteer assignment e.g. close-toed shoes and sun protection when working outside.

FIELD WORK REQUIREMENTS



- **CLOSED-TOE SHOES**

Preferably sturdy work boots.



- **EYE PROTECTION**

Sunglasses. Safety glasses will be provided if job requires.



- **GLOVES**

Gloves are provided to volunteers when needed but volunteers are welcome to bring their own.



- **OSNR GEAR**

Wear your Volunteer T-shirt or badge provided when on-boarded.



- **SUN PROTECTION**

Sunscreen, hat, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.



- **REFILLABLE WATER BOTTLE**

To help reduce the use of plastic, please bring your own reusable water bottle. Ask a staff person if you require a water bottle and one will be provided for you.

REPRESENTING THE CITY OF AURORA

OSNR volunteers are advocates for Aurora's open spaces and communicate professionally with the public.

- Provide exceptional customer service to Aurora's site visitors by communicating in a manner that is informative, courteous, professional, and responsive.
- Represent the city of Aurora in a positive manner through, but not limited to, proper appearance, positive attitude, and demonstrated respect to the open space and trail users. Refrain from expressing opinion or bias when representing the city.
- Follow rules and regulations for Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Will not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on-duty.
- Record visitor comments and concerns and forward these to an appropriate staff member if necessary.

NON-EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

In most other situations such as trail hazards, non-compliance with park rules and regulations, transients, and wildlife issues follow one of these other non-emergency pathways of reporting:

• Ranger Line

Call 303.326.8430 to provide a detailed report about any safety concerns or violations to park regulations across ALL open spaces.

• Access Aurora

Call 303.739.7000 to report any dumping or maintenance-related issues. You can also file a report online at AuroraGov.org/City_Hall/Contact_Us or download the free Access Aurora App onto a smartphone device using your app store.

• Wildlife Hotline

Call 303.326.8435 to report wildlife safety concerns and questions.



EMERGENCY/INJURY POLICY

RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

As an OSNR volunteer you may be the first person to arrive at the scene of an emergency. We want you to be prepared with safe, professional, and efficient tools for an appropriate response.

- Adhere to the Volunteer Steward Requirements
- Remain within the scope of your training
- Be prepared to mobilize the correct resources

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION POLICY

For any of the following emergency situations call 911 immediately:

- A medical emergency or injury that requires the immediate response of an emergency medical provider.
- Fire or smoke within Open Space boundaries.
- Any criminal activity that is beyond the scope of the park rules and regulations such as assault, theft, etc.
- Aggressive or threatening behavior by an Open Space visitor that presents a clear and immediate threat to you and/or another visitor.
- Vehicle accidents.
- Missing persons.

EFFECTIVE REPORTING

When calling 911 or a Park Ranger be prepared to provide the following essential information:

- Your name; be sure to identify yourself as a Volunteer Steward
- Your contact information
(in case they need to call you back for more information)
- Your location
- The nature of the emergency you are reporting

Please be prepared to provide accurate and detailed information; your report can be the key to a safe, efficient, and professional response.

If an emergency requiring significant first aid or a response by the Aurora Fire and or Police Departments occurs, we ask that you call and report the incident to Aurora Park Rangers **after** first reporting to emergency personnel

VOLUNTEER STEWARD INJURY POLICY

Whether or not to seek medical attention is your decision. As a volunteer you are not covered by the City's insurance or by workman's compensation. In the event of an accident or injury:

1. Notify the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible or within 24 hours of the injury or accident.
2. Complete a report detailing the incident.



OSNR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To register for opportunities go to
AuroraGov.org/Volunteer and click on
"City of Aurora Programs Volunteer Portal"

VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

TRAIL STEWARDSHIP

City of Aurora Open Space and Natural Resources (OSNR) Trail Stewards are the extra eyes and ears for the OSNR division and perform stewardship practices while on Aurora trails. They report maintenance needs and illegal activities using designated pathways. Trail Stewards also conduct wildlife monitoring, pick up trash and remove invasive plant species while volunteering on Aurora trails. If approached while wearing a volunteer uniform, Trail Stewards can share their knowledge of the area by providing information to users about wayfinding, wildlife, and open space rules and regulations.

DUTIES

- Observe and report safety issues, violations of open space regulations, maintenance issues through designated channels.
- Provide a positive presence on the trails and open spaces.
- Provide information and answer questions from trail users if approached.
- Provide spot maintenance of trails by picking up trash.
- Remove invasive plant species along trails (optional).
- Report wildlife observations using iNaturalist (optional).

REQUIRED TRAINING

Trail stewards are required to read the handbook or watch the orientation, and attend the trail steward training or watch the recording of the trail steward training. After completion, volunteers must attend an in-person meeting with the volunteer coordinator to go over trail stewardship duties, receive an OSNR volunteer shirt and badge, and trail resources.

DRESS CODE

While performing trail stewardship the following items must be worn. All are provided:

- Volunteer shirt
- Volunteer name badge

BENEFITS

- Log volunteer hours while being in nature and exercising.
- Give back to nature by picking up trash, removing invasive plant species and monitoring wildlife.
- Interact with trail users (optional).

VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

HABITAT RESTORATION

City of Aurora Open Space and Natural Resources (OSNR) volunteers can assist with habitat restoration at various Aurora open spaces. Habitat restoration helps to improve the ecological health of natural areas in Aurora. Healthy ecosystems provide various services that support our daily lives. Those ecosystem services include providing clean air and water, creating habitat for pollinators that pollinate our food crops, and removing carbon from the atmosphere. There are many facets to habitat restoration and volunteers can help with all of them.

DUTIES

- Invasive species removal
- Seed collections
- Native plant plantings and care
- Wildlife monitoring to determine the effectiveness of restoration practices
- Educating others about the importance of healthy ecosystems

REQUIRED TRAINING

Restoration volunteers are required to read the restoration handbook and will receive on-the-spot training when participating in a restoration workday. For example, you register for a restoration workday where invasive plants are being removed, you will get identification training for the target species the day of the workday.

DRESS CODE

While performing habitat restoration the following items must be worn.

All are provided:

- Volunteer shirt
- Volunteer name badge

BENEFITS

- Log volunteer hours while being in nature and exercising.
- Give back to nature by picking up trash, removing invasive plant species, planting native plants and monitoring wildlife to determine impact.
- Interact with other volunteers with similar interests.
- Make a positive impact to the environment and benefit from immersing in nature.

VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

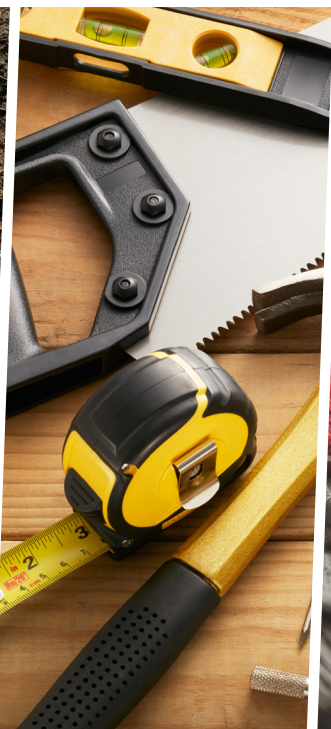
SPECIAL PROJECT VOLUNTEER

Special project volunteers have unique skills or interests that can help us achieve program and resource goals.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIAL PROJECTS MAY BE

- Art projects
- Carpentry
- Sewing
- Research
- Survey
- Data entry
- Gardening
- Writing
- and more!

If you have a skill or interest that you would like to utilize in your volunteer experience, please let us know.



VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

VOLUNTEER NATURALISTS (DOCENTS)

Help educate about Aurora's natural resources and their importance to our daily lives and future. Volunteer naturalists are trained educators that share their knowledge about nature with the community. Volunteer naturalists assist with educational programs, staff nature centers, and help with events throughout the year.

DUTIES

- Assist naturalist staff during educational programs for various groups. This can include program research/preparation, set up and clean up.
- Lead educational programs if desired and after completing the required trainings.
- Staff the desk at any of Aurora's three nature centers. Provide trail, program, and natural resource education to drop-in visitors.

REQUIRED TRAINING

- Volunteer naturalists are required to read the handbook or watch the orientation, and attend the intro to interpretation training or watch the recording of the intro to interpretation training.
- After completion, volunteers are required to shadow two naturalist programs before fully assisting.
- Volunteer naturalists interested in staffing the nature center desks are required to complete two desk staffing shadow shifts to receive training from naturalist staff.

DRESS CODE

While performing volunteer naturalist duties the following items must be worn. All are provided:

- Volunteer shirt
- Volunteer name badge

BENEFITS

- Help people connect with nature and inspire stewardship through education.
- Give back to nature by showing others the importance of natural resources.
- Attend additional continuing education classes that increase knowledge of natural resources for lifelong learning or professional development.

VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

EVENT SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Event support volunteers assist the OSNR division with special events like Nature Art Shows, SCFD Free Days, Agriculture Festival, Halloween Nature Trail, and Santa Wagon Rides.

DUTIES

Duties are assigned to volunteers after they arrive at the event. Volunteers are not required to do all the duties but are assigned one or two of the following:

- Provide information about the event at the check in table.
- Assist event attendees with parking and wayfinding.
- Staff booths that teach participants about nature
e.g. booth on bats at Halloween Nature Trail.
- Help staff with event set up and clean up.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Event support volunteers are required to read the handbook or watch the orientation recording.

DRESS CODE

While performing volunteer projects the following items must be worn.

All are provided:

- Volunteer shirt
- Volunteer name badge

BENEFITS

- Log volunteer hours while providing memorable experiences with nature to event attendees.
- Give back to nature by assisting with educational events that aim to connect as many people to nature as possible in a fun and memorable way.



VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

WILDLIFE MONITORING

City of Aurora Open Space and Natural Resources (OSNR) volunteers can participate in community science through various wildlife monitoring opportunities. Wildlife monitoring gives us a better understanding of the occurrence, distribution and status of plant and animal populations in Aurora. Data collected through wildlife monitoring informs us about the health of Aurora's ecosystems and helps influence future land management decisions.

There are several wildlife monitoring opportunities including, Bald Eagle Watch, bird counts, iNaturalist bioblitzes, macroinvertebrate surveys, butterfly monitoring, and more. There are trainings for each of the monitoring opportunities to ensure volunteers collect appropriate data.

DRESS CODE

While performing wildlife monitoring the following items must be worn. All are provided:

- Volunteer shirt
- Volunteer name badge

BENEFITS

- Connect with nature through observation and data collection.
- Learn how to identify various plant and animal species and become familiar with their characteristics and behaviors.
- Contribute to state and federal monitoring projects that impact present and future conservation efforts.



REPORTING AND HOURS

Volunteer hours are automatically logged if you register for an opportunity through the volunteer portal. Some opportunities like trail stewardship and special projects are not logged automatically so volunteers are required to log their hours.

To log volunteer hours go to **AuroraGov.org/Volunteer** and click on City of Aurora Programs Volunteer Portal. Then click on LOGIN. Once logged in click on report hours. Select an opportunity to report hours for, enter the date, hours and the service you performed then click submit.



Dashboard

Welcome Back, Fendi!

Volunteer since 05/08/2019

0 hours This Month 0 hours This Year 2.00 hours Since forever!

Upcoming Schedule: No upcoming schedule shifts. [View your full schedule](#)

[Report Hours](#)

[Edit Profile](#) [Account Settings](#) [My Attachments](#)

[Bird Counts \(OSNR\) Open Space Natural Resources \(OSNR\) Volunteer Stewards](#)

[Butterfly Monitoring \(OSNR\) Open Space Natural Resources \(OSNR\) Volunteer Stewards](#)

Report & View Hours

[Report Service](#) [Logbook](#)

Select an Opportunity

- Select an Opportunity
- Bird Counts (OSNR) Open Space Natural Resources (OSNR) Volunteer Stewards
- Butterfly Monitoring (OSNR) Open Space Natural Resources (OSNR) Volunteer Stewards
- Farm Animal Care at the Plains Conservation Center (OSNR) Open Space Natural Resources (OSNR) Volunteer Stewards
- Nature Center Park Steward (OSNR) Open Space Natural Resources (OSNR) Volunteer Stewards
- Open Space & Natural Resources (OSNR) Stewards
- Open Space Natural Resources (OSNR) Volunteer Stewards
- OSNR Steward Enrichment & Trainings
- Trail Stewardship (OSNR) Open Space Natural Resources (OSNR) Volunteer Stewards

Report & View Hours

[Report Service](#) [Logbook](#)

Select a Survey

Log Book Entry [change opportunity](#)

Bird Counts (OSNR)

Start Date:

End Date:

How many hours did you serve?

Service Performed:

[Cancel](#) [Submit](#)





**Plains Conservation
Center**

21901 E. Hampden Ave.
303.326.8380



**Morrison Nature
Center**

16002 E. Smith Rd.
303.326.8445



**Senac Creek
Nature Center**

5800 S. Powhatan Rd.
303.326.8429

We are so grateful for our OSNR volunteers and appreciate your dedication and passion for Aurora's beautiful open spaces and natural areas.



**PARKS,
RECREATION
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