

2008 Volunteer Adventures

The Backgrounder

What should I expect?

Trail work is hard, physical labor. Trail construction involves working with hand tools, and getting dirty is guaranteed. The crews usually work eight to ten hour days, rain or shine, hot or cold, regardless of black flies, mosquitoes, and other insects. During the course of the trip, the weather can vary wildly.

All volunteers must be willing to live and work cooperatively and in close proximity with fellow volunteers of both sexes, all ages and nationalities. All volunteers are expected to participate equally in routine tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and tool care, both at base camp and the project site.

What is provided?

Once you reach base camp, food, transportation to and from work projects, tools, and safety equipment (as available) are provided. Volunteers need to bring work clothing, water bottles, utensils, sturdy boots, and their own basic camping gear.

Who can register?

Persons 18 or older, of all backgrounds, are welcome. Good health, enthusiasm, and adaptability are essential. Willingness to follow instructions and safety rules and to share equally in routine camp tasks is vital. Experience helps but is not necessary.

How do I sign up for a project and what happens once I do?

We recommend signing up on our on-line application form. You will receive a confirmation email when your application is received at our office. We recommend registering and submitting your deposit (make your check payable to North Country Trail Association) as soon as possible, so staff can plan appropriately. Your deposit will be held in trust and returned at the end of the project.

If a project is already filled to capacity, we'll notify you that you are on a waiting list and you'll be contacted if space becomes available due to cancellations.

Once you have registered, you will receive a project information email approximately ten days prior to the project. This email will give you an update on the project, as well as all the logistical information you'll need, such as: how to get to the project, what time to be there, what to bring, where to park, where to camp, where to stay if you don't want to camp, etc. etc.

What should I do if I signed up for a project and can't make it?

Call the NCTA office at 616-897-5987 as soon as possible! Your absence on a project makes a difference! If the expected number of volunteers fail to show up, chances are the project will not get completed. And our food purchaser will be furious with you! If we know in advance that you're not coming and we have a waiting list for that project, we can contact another willing volunteer to go in your place or we can recruit more volunteers.

Please act responsibly. If you sign up, show up...or call NCTA as soon as possible to let us know that you can't make it.

Do I need any experience?

NO! You'll be working on a volunteer crew with an experienced NCTA staff person or Affiliate trail crew who will work with you and show you all you need to know. Volunteers will receive training in safety, tools and technical skills.

Does NCTA arrange carpools for projects?

To arrange a carpool to a project with someone who lives near you, send an e-mail to NCTA headquarters. You must send your information a minimum of 7 days before the project and mention the project name for which you wish to arrange a carpool.

Can I bring my kids along?

Yes! We recommend a minimum age of 10 for child volunteers. This guideline is based on the nature of the work on this year's particular projects and safety considerations. On all projects, youth under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Can I bring my pets?

Sorry, no pets are allowed on projects. This allows you to give your full attention to the work at hand and all the fun to be had. We recommend you bring your pet with you on a return visit to the site...they will be proud of what their owners accomplished and will forgive you for leaving them at home for a week.

What will the weather be like?

Good question! The weather will be sunny and beautiful every day! (But, just in case, come prepared for rain, cold, wind, etc. We can only predict that the weather is unpredictable!) Projects are generally not canceled because of rain or light show showers—weather must be severe before we'll cancel a project.

I can't come for the entire project's length, are there other ways for me to help on a project?

Yes! Contact NCTA even if you can only come for a day or two. Your help is still needed and appreciated. We can work with you to accommodate your schedule!

I'm not really into physical work, are there other ways I can contribute?

Yes! There are always opportunities for everyone. You might consider helping out as the camp cook, painting blazes, arranging car pools, etc. Instead of working on the trail, you can spend the day preparing, serving, and cleaning up the meals for the masses.

I have another question, who do I ask?

You probably have a ton of project-specific questions...or maybe we've left something important to you off this Backgrounder. If so, feel free to contact Clare at the NCTA office with any other questions about specific projects.

She can be reached at 616-897-5987 or clarecain@northcountrytrail.org.