

Dungeness Nature Alliance

Volunteer Handbook

4/15/2025

This handbook provides information about the policies, procedures, and approach to Dungeness Nature Alliance volunteer programs. Volunteers and staff are expected to be familiar with its content.

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I. WELCOME & FOUNDATION

Thank you for choosing to donate your time to Dungeness Nature Alliance (DNA) or S’Klallam (sčéyaʔčaʔ cə cǎqʷ xənǵs). We are so glad that volunteering is in your DNA! Our volunteer program is housed in the Dungeness River Nature Center (River Center) and financially supported by the River Center and the Jamestown S’Klallam National Wildlife Refuge Program (Refuge Program). Because the program is housed within the River Center, our volunteer handbook is largely governed by River Center policy and procedure. The Refuge Program is responsible for stewarding Dungeness and Protection Island National Wildlife Refuges, so we also highlight applicable policy for these federal lands.

The River Center was founded by volunteers and continues to rely on them to complete its mission. We know there are many meaningful ways to give back in our region, and we are truly grateful you’ve chosen to be part of our community.

Missions

Dungeness River Nature Center: “To inspire understanding, respect, and stewardship of our natural and cultural resources.”

The Dungeness and Protection Island Management Program: “To conserve and restore ecosystems for future generations, while respecting the deep connection the S’Klallam peoples and all communities have with these lands and waters.”

Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion Statement

The Dungeness River Nature Center and Jamestown S’Klallam National Wildlife Refuge Program will provide a safe and welcoming experience for all our visitors, members and staff. We will accurately and respectfully reflect diversity in everything we do.

II. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Applicability of Policy

For the purpose of this handbook, a volunteer is anyone who signs up and successfully registers on VicNet (screened and approved), undergoes required training, and performs tasks without compensation on behalf of the Dungeness River Nature Center or the Dungeness and Protection Island Refuge Management Program. Volunteers operate under the direction of River Center staff and when delegated by the Volunteer Coordinator, under the direction of Refuge Management Program staff.

Violations of Dungeness Nature Alliance policies as articulated in this document may result in release from the volunteer program. These policies are designed to provide clear guidance and direction for the relationship between staff and volunteers. The Dungeness Nature Alliance reserves the right to update or change these policies as needed.

If you ever have questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Rights

Volunteers are entitled to:

- A safe, fun, and collegial volunteer experience
- Appropriate orientation, training, and supervision
- Meaningful job assignments
- Clear guidance, direction, and feedback
- Effective use of their time
- Opportunities to provide input into the volunteer program
- Recognition for their contributions

Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers shall:

- Participate fully in training
- Support the missions of River Center and Refuge Program
- Represent the River Center and Refuge Program in a positive and professional manner
- Adhere to Dungeness Nature Alliance volunteer policies
- Be reliable
- Work cooperatively with other volunteers and staff
- Record and track their hours using VicNet

Volunteer Program Communications

Most updates about the Volunteer Program, such as opportunities, schedule changes, and training are shared through e-mail and the online platform called VicNet. Active volunteers can log in to VicNet to check their schedule, sign up for openings, update their contact info, and track their hours.

Volunteer Opportunities

Dungeness Nature Alliance offers a variety of volunteer opportunities. Details about each volunteer assignment can be found in the appendix.

III. Getting Started

Application

Prospective volunteers are required to complete an application form for consideration in the Volunteer Program. Prior to being assigned to a position, all volunteers will be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator to ascertain their suitability for and interest in the position. Interviews may be by phone or in person. The interview provides the opportunity to learn more about the prospective volunteer and gives the prospective volunteer the opportunity to learn more about the organization and the available volunteer positions.

Once accepted into the Volunteer Program, volunteers will be required to attend General Orientation and our Volunteer Basic Skills Workshop.

In addition, volunteers who wish to volunteer for shifts on Federal property managed by the Refuge Program must complete a Volunteer Service Agreement (Federal Form OF301a).

Background Checks

To ensure the safety of everyone participating in the Dungeness Nature Alliance and to protect the organizations, volunteers and staff undergo designated background checks. The cost of these checks is covered by the organization.

Volunteer Placement

Volunteers have different motivations for volunteering, as well as a range of skills. Dungeness Nature Alliance places considerable importance on appropriate placements and developing suitable opportunities to achieve maximum benefit for both the volunteer and the organization. No placement shall be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met.

Training

All volunteers shall be provided with training on a variety of matters including but not limited to: River Center and Refuge Programs Visions and Strategic Goals, River Center and Refuge Program History, Local Ecology and Wildlife, and Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal History and Culture.

Volunteers will also receive specific on-the-job training to ensure they have the information and skills needed to safely perform their tasks and understand the program they are supporting. Designated staff will manage volunteers and be available for consultation and assistance.

Volunteer Incident Report Form

We know that questions, confusion, and the occasional issue are all part of working with people and the public. That's why we offer a clear, simple tool for communicating when something goes wrong, feels unclear, or needs to be documented.

The **Volunteer Incident Report Form** is available online and is automatically submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator. Paper copies are also available at the front desk of the River Center and at Refuge Headquarters. You can use this form to document **any concern**, whether it seems serious or minor. This includes:

- Accidents or injuries
- Serious disagreements
- Confusion about policies or procedures
- Inappropriate behavior, including harassment
- Interactions with neighboring property owners, visitors, event guests, or staff
- Anything else that you feel should be noted or followed up on

Submitting a report ensures the issue is seen, addressed appropriately, and—when needed—documented for accountability or future improvement. Reports will be reviewed, and staff will follow up with any volunteers involved if additional information or action is required.

If you'd prefer to direct your report to someone other than the Volunteer Coordinator, please use the paper version and indicate your request.

IV. Working Together: Expectations, Support, and Policy

Volunteer-Staff Relationship

Dungeness Nature Alliance Volunteers are essential to the success of the Dungeness River Nature Center and the Dungeness and Protection Island Refuge Management Program.

They are the DNA of these organizations. By supporting staff, volunteers help bring our mission and programs to life while also serving as important ambassadors in the larger community.

We welcome and encourage volunteers to get involved in a variety of ways across our programs and activities, with opportunities that vary between the River Center and the Refuge Program. Designated staff will provide orientation, training, supervision, and feedback to ensure volunteers feel supported and successful in their roles.

Volunteers may act as supervisors for other volunteers, but only if they are directly supervised or trained and approved as supervisors by a staff member.

Equal Opportunity Guidelines

Dungeness Nature Alliance is committed to providing equal opportunities for all volunteers. We recruit, welcome, train, and support volunteers based on their skills and ability to perform a task—never on factors like race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or ability. Personal competence and a good fit for the role are the only qualifications that matter.

At the same time, we actively seek to create an environment that values diversity, welcomes different perspectives, and reflects the broader community we serve. We believe our work is stronger when it includes voices from all backgrounds and lived experiences.

We also recognize that prior experience, familiarity with the organization, or personal relationships can sometimes create unintended advantages or influence expectations. We are committed to ensuring that all volunteers—whether new or longstanding—are given fair and transparent access to opportunities, support, and feedback. Our goal is to create a program where everyone feels respected, valued, and set up for success.

Volunteer Conduct

The lasting impression volunteers make on those they serve and work with directly reflects on all staff and volunteers of the organizations and programs that they support. All communications and actions should enhance the positive reputation of Dungeness River Nature Center, Protection Island Refuge Management Program, and partner organizations including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, and National Audubon Society.

Often, volunteers are the first contact a new visitor may have with Dungeness River Nature Center, the Dungeness and Protection Island Refuge Management Programs, or the National Wildlife Refuge System. Volunteers are critical as ambassadors to the community and serve as one of the first public faces of the organizations. To be effective ambassadors, volunteers must remember that we welcome everyone from all walks of life to engage with us. Every visitor, volunteer, shopper, class participant, parent, student, and worker should feel comfortable at any of our properties or in our programs.

Volunteers should direct questions they cannot answer to a staff member. Volunteers should feel comfortable saying, “I don’t know, but let’s find out.” The Volunteer Coordinator or any other staff member will be happy to help.

Absenteeism

Volunteers should make their best effort to be present and on time for each scheduled event or activity. If unable to attend, they are expected to remove themselves from the schedule at least 48 hours in advance.

If a cancellation is made at least 48 hours before the shift, volunteers should remove themselves from the schedule via VicNet. After this window, VicNet will no longer be available for changes, and volunteers must notify the Volunteer Coordinator by text or phone at (360-477-8249). Please do not email, as last-minute schedule changes require immediate attention.

Volunteers who commit to an off-site project are expected to complete it in a timely manner. If they are unable to do so, they should inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

Uniform and Appearance Guidelines

Uniforms are part of an ongoing conversation as the volunteer program continues to grow and evolve. For now, here are the current expectations:

- **Nametags:** Volunteers will be issued a nametag when they get started. Nametags should be worn only while actively volunteering, and we kindly ask that volunteers return them if they decide to step away from the program so they can be reused.
- **Appearance:** Volunteers are expected to arrive in clean clothes, practice good hygiene, and dress appropriately for the task and environment. While there’s no strict dress code, clothing should reflect the welcoming, professional, and

community-centered spirit of our program. If you're unsure what's appropriate for a specific role or setting, feel free to check in with the Volunteer Coordinator.

- **Fieldwork:** For outdoor work—especially stewardship projects or trapping efforts—plan on getting dirty! Weather-appropriate layers and closed-toed shoes are required.
- **Volunteering at the Refuge:** If you've previously served at the Dungeness or Protection Island National Wildlife Refuges and have a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) branded uniform, you are welcome to continue wearing it during volunteer shifts. A limited number of USFWS uniforms are also available for new volunteers.

Media Conduct

Volunteers are requested not to represent themselves as spokespersons for Dungeness River Nature Center or the Dungeness and Protection Island Refuge Management Program without prior approval from the Executive Director or Refuge Manager, when applicable. Despite this, volunteers will be seen as ambassadors of the organizations and it's important that all public communications align with the River Center and the National Wildlife Refuge System's mission, values, and messaging.

If a volunteer is approached by the media, members of the community, or others seeking official statements on behalf of Dungeness River Nature Center or the Dungeness and Refuge Management Program, they should politely refer them to a designated staff member for an appropriate response. Volunteers are encouraged to share their positive experiences and knowledge about the River Center or the Dungeness and Protection Island Refuge Management Program with friends and on social media but should refrain from making statements that could be interpreted as official organizational positions unless authorized.

Respecting Political Boundaries

While working in a volunteer assignment, volunteers are asked to refrain from political and ideological discussions.

As a matter of policy and in compliance with applicable IRS guidance, as a nonprofit organization, the River Center does not endorse political candidates and does not take positions on legislation at the local, state, or national level. Volunteers are requested to refer any requests for comments on politics or political candidates to a staff member.

Additionally, volunteers serving at the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge are considered volunteers for the federal government under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As such, they are required to follow federal policies and guidelines, including restrictions on engaging in political activities while volunteering. If you have any questions about what this means in practice, please speak with a staff member.

V. Safety and Risk Management

At the Dungeness Nature Alliance, your safety—and the safety of those around you—is a top priority. We're committed to maintaining safe working conditions, but each volunteer also plays a key role in protecting their own well-being and speaking up when something isn't right.

Emergency Procedures

Each volunteer site has its own emergency procedures, which are included in the appendix of this handbook. Please take time to review the protocol specific to your location.

However, one critical protocol is shared across all sites:

In any emergency, call 911 first. Then, alert a staff member as soon as the situation allows.

Your quick response can help protect lives and ensure that help is on the way as soon as possible.

Assessing Your Own Safety

Volunteers are responsible for regularly checking in with themselves to ensure they can safely participate in their volunteer activities. If your health, mobility, or energy level changes—whether temporarily or long-term—it's okay to adjust. Please consult with your healthcare provider if you're unsure, and let the Volunteer Coordinator know if something no longer feels safe or manageable.

While we'll do our best to provide accommodations when possible, some roles do have physical requirements that can't be adjusted. We're always happy to help you find a task that's a better fit if your needs change.

Working Safely in the Moment

Volunteers must follow all safety instructions and use equipment properly. When necessary, personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided and must be worn.

If you notice something unsafe—whether it’s related to equipment, conditions, or behavior—**please speak up right away**. Bring it to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator or any available staff member. Immediate communication helps prevent accidents and reinforces our shared culture of safety.

Alcohol & Drugs

When participating in Dungeness Nature Alliance activities, volunteers are prohibited from purchasing, transferring, using or possessing recreational drugs, alcohol, or any other substances in any way that is illegal or that may impair the ability of the volunteer to perform his or her duties properly and safely.

Harassment Policy

Volunteering should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for all.

Harassment is not only inappropriate but also creates a negative and uncomfortable environment. It includes any unwelcome conduct—verbal, non-verbal, or physical—that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive atmosphere. Examples include:

- Offensive jokes, slurs, or derogatory remarks
- Unwanted touching or physical contact
- Displaying or sharing inappropriate images or materials
- Bullying, intimidation, or threats
- Unwelcome comments about a person’s race, gender, religion, age, ability, or other personal characteristics
- Failure to respect personal boundaries, including giving others adequate physical space

We are committed to maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment. If you experience or witness harassment, please report it using the Volunteer Incident Report Form

Concerns will be addressed promptly to ensure a safe and positive atmosphere for all volunteers and staff. Volunteers who engage in harassment or other inappropriate conduct may be required to complete additional training or may no longer be offered volunteer work.

Reporting Incidents and Concerns

In addition to addressing safety concerns in the moment, **any injury, incident, or unsafe situation must be documented using the Volunteer Incident Report Form the same day it occurs**—even if it feels minor. This helps staff follow up appropriately, track patterns, and improve our systems to prevent future issues.

If you're unsure whether something needs to be reported, err on the side of documenting it. When in doubt—fill it out.

VI. Feedback, Concerns, and Accountability

Feedback and Evaluation

The staff members overseeing a volunteer activity will provide informal feedback as the work progresses. Evaluations will express appreciation for the volunteer's efforts, review their performance, suggest adjustments to work style when needed, and check in with the volunteer about their interest in continuing in that role. Staff will also welcome any suggestions from the volunteer regarding the position or the volunteer program.

Grievance Procedures

Volunteers and staff are expected to act professionally and in line with their position descriptions. If a volunteer has a grievance concerning their work environment, they should promptly report it to the Volunteer Coordinator. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue quickly and effectively, in accordance with the personnel policies of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe. Staff members will complete a Volunteer Incident Report Form as needed.

If a volunteer has concerns about a partner organization's practices or procedures, they should refrain from making public statements while volunteering and instead bring their concerns to the Volunteer Coordinator, the River Nature Center's Executive Director, or the

Refuge Manager. While our long-time partners may have different functions, priorities, and business practices, we remain united in supporting our shared mission.

Corrective Action

If a volunteer is not performing their assignment satisfactorily or is responsible for misconduct, they may be reassigned to a different task, required to complete additional training, or no longer offered volunteer work.

VII. AGREEMENT

Volunteers with Dungeness Nature Alliance must agree in writing to follow these standards of conduct and safety. Please read and attest to the following:

I will faithfully comply with Dungeness Nature Alliance policies and the above written standards of conduct. If not, I will face a possible reassignment to a different volunteer position or, if not agreed to, an end to my volunteer relationship with the Dungeness Nature Alliance Volunteer Program.

I understand and agree with the above volunteer commitment statement. ___Yes ___No

Signature of Volunteer _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

END