



South Carolina Master Naturalist Program Definition and Requirements for Volunteer Projects for Master Naturalist Graduates

PART 1: Purpose and Requirements of Volunteering

Purpose: The purpose of the volunteer service requirement of the SC Master Naturalist Program is to provide a service to the community/region or state with regard to natural resources; to help the volunteer gain knowledge and experience; and to support the work of the State Office, partner agencies and Host Sites through their volunteerism.

Volunteer service requirements: In addition to the in-person training, the *requirements* for certification as a South Carolina Master Naturalist include *30 hours per year* of approved volunteer work. Eight of these 30 hours are required to be Advanced Training.

Requirements for projects: Projects must involve educating the public, enhancing the natural resources of our state, or other approved functions (see examples below). In general, volunteer projects must fall into one of the *four main areas*: Citizen Science projects, Ecological Services projects, Education and Interpretation, or Coordination for the Master Naturalist program.

Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

Tracking volunteer hours: Master Naturalist volunteer service hours are very important to the SC Master Naturalist program and its many affiliated organizations. The hours that you report, the educational service you provide to the visitors to our parks, and the environmental service projects in which you participate demonstrate your value and the value of the SC Master Naturalist Program to the state of South Carolina.

Hours are recorded through the *Master Naturalist Online Volunteer Hour Reporting System*. This is the only method used to track your volunteer hours at the state level. A Volunteer Hour Tracking Form is available online at <http://www.clemson.edu/masternaturalist/volunteering.html> as a method for you to keep up with your hours until you can enter them into the computer database.

PART 2: Volunteer Projects

What constitutes a good volunteer project?

The hallmarks of a good volunteer project include but are not limited to good organization of the volunteer opportunity; appropriate tools to conduct the activity; opportunity for the volunteer to engage himself/herself in the natural resource related activity (i.e., a learning experience); good communication (including respect and appreciation) between the volunteer and the person or organization requesting the service; opportunity for reflection or connecting with others; strong purpose for the activity; and a reasonably safe environment. The project should fall within the four categories of activities discussed above and listed below.

What doesn't count toward volunteer service hours?

An activity that primarily benefits the volunteer or activities with a political agenda will not count toward volunteer hours. Examples of this include but are not limited to: work conducted on your own property of which you are the primary beneficiary (potentially excepting demonstration projects); projects on public or private lands that benefit an individual or business; organizing a letter writing campaign to support a political agenda or viewpoint and advocacy work toward the same.

For questionable volunteer service opportunities, please work with local chapters or Host Sites. See the website for contact information on these. *The State Office reserves the right to refuse a project for volunteer hours if it falls significantly outside the four categories of service or abuses the definition of a good volunteer project.*

Only members scheduled to give a presentation may include preparation time as part of volunteer service hours. Travel time greater than 30 minutes and up to one hour for each project can be counted.

How do I find volunteer activities?

Finding volunteer activities is everyone's responsibility, though in general, chapters and Host Sites will work together to find opportunities. In fact, one of the primary missions of chapters is to find and publicize volunteer activities that could be available to their members. Information on chapters can be found online.

What are volunteer incentives?

As you graduate through the Master Naturalist program, you will be given an incentive nametag. These special nametags, made from a renewable wood (*Alnus rubra*), are intended to help you serve with pride. As you accumulate hours, you will be rewarded with state-occurring gemstones for each year of volunteerism. For individual years, one amethyst (SC state gemstone) will be placed in your nametag in one of the five small holes in the nametag. Awarding of amethysts is handled by the Association and/or Host Site. The hole closest to the logo is intended as an incentive for you to become a Statewide Master Naturalist. This training prepares you to train others and helps to make you competent in two biographical regions other than the one in which you initially took training. Earn this designation and you will receive an emerald from the State office.



Examples of Some Possible Volunteer Projects

Education/Interpretation:

- Speaking to school classes and other groups
- Information/educational booths at meetings or events
- Environmental workshops for children
- Leading nature walks
- Children/youth outdoor classroom naturalist activities
- Development of audiovisual materials
- Creating brochures, fact sheets, etc.
- Web site development

Citizen Science:

- Field surveys for various biota
- Wetland sampling, classification, and mapping
- Plant collections (adding to and maintaining)
- Bird census (point count surveys)
- Monitoring populations of rare biota, water quality, etc.
- Ecological inventory of public lands
- Assisting raptor facilities with transportation of injured birds

Ecological Service:

- Wetland restoration
- Trail building and maintenance
- Erosion control
- Building boardwalks, observation platforms, kiosks
- Construction and placing of nest boxes
- Organizing stream cleanups
- Advising/assisting with habitat improvement
- Exotic invasive removal or monitoring

Program Service:

- Coordination for SCMN program (could be either at state, host site or chapter level):
- Fund raising
- Maintaining volunteer data
- Editing/writing for newsletter
- Clerical work (mail outs etc.)
- Telephone coordination
- Photography
- Coordinating/assisting a local MN class
- Website maintenance or development