

USDA Forest Service, *Lee & North River Ranger Districts*  
and *Potomac Appalachian Trail Club*

Sponsored Group Volunteer Agreement                      22-VS-11080804-333

**Attachment A –**

This volunteer agreement between the **Potomac Appalachian Trail Club** (PATC) and the **USDA Forest Service** (FS) encompasses the North Zone of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. The North Zone is comprised of two ranger districts: The Lee Ranger District on the northern end of the zone and the North River Ranger District on the southern end. Together these districts care for 580,488 acres of National Forest lands in 12 counties of Virginia and West Virginia. This includes 672 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails, of which approximately one-third have been adopted by PATC.

***Requirements:***

**WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS:**

1. All FS volunteers have the right to: be treated with respect; a workplace free of harassment; and a workplace free of hostile conditions. The FS expects all its representatives, including volunteers, to adhere to civic-minded principles in their personal conduct and to exhibit a high degree of personal integrity. People serving as Forest Service volunteers may not fight, use derogatory language, or participate in discrimination, sexual harassment, or violent or threatening behavior, or cause an unfavorable reaction from the public
2. The FS and PATC will work to ensure all volunteers are aware of their rights and responsibilities and will inform volunteers of the agency's anti-harassment policy and the information found on: [www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/anti-harassment-policy](http://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/anti-harassment-policy). Volunteers will be informed of the Forest Service's Harassment Reporting Center and will be given the number, (844) 815- 8943, in case they encounter a need to report an incident.
3. All US Forest Service volunteer programs must be free from discrimination, on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and/or expression), sexual orientation, religion, disability, political beliefs, military service, and marital or family status.

**PREWORK COORDINATION:**

The FS and PATC will meet (at a minimum) annually to coordinate tasks related to this agreement. A plan of work/projects will be developed as needed and approved by both parties at the annual meeting and will include identification of priorities, work to be performed, and support needs. During annual meetings, the FS and PATC will make a special point of discussing the natural and cultural resource management sensitivity of the areas where volunteer work will take place. Every effort will be made to protect natural, cultural, and Wilderness resources and to comply with applicable policies and regulations

associated with resource protection in the implementation of this agreement.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENTS:

1. In accordance with the authorities contained within the Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972, volunteers who are officially signed up under a completed Volunteer Service Agreement are entitled to the same protections and considerations that regular government employees receive in the case of work-related injuries or tort issues, provided that they are working within their Description of Volunteer Services.
2. PATC agrees to maintain a list of all current volunteers to be provided to the FS upon request.
3. PATC District Managers, Work trip Leads, and Trail Maintainers and will recruit, train, register, and coordinate volunteers on behalf of PATC and FS. Contact information for District Managers will be provided as an attachment to this document. Trail Maintainers and District Managers will submit Tailgate Safety and the signed 301B forms to the FS Lee or North River RDs identifying work trip participants. The 301B serves as the trip roster.
4. PATC will provide the FS a current list of District Managers and Trail Shelter Managers yearly.
5. Individual PATC volunteers will maintain their own Tailgate Safety and 301B forms.
6. Tailgate Safety/301B forms should be submitted after each work trip, be retained for at least one year after the work trip and will serve as proof of a volunteer's participation and PPE use in the event of a worker's compensation or tort claim. If there is an accident or injury, this documentation must be email to [stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov) (Lee) or [Steven.r.beri@usda.gov](mailto:Steven.r.beri@usda.gov) (North River) within 24 hrs of the injury
7. Minors must be signed up using OF-301a with parental or guardian consent in advance of volunteer activities. Activities involving minors must include either parental/guardian supervision or reliable partner organizations that have liability insurance and proven records as youth leaders.
8. PATC/FS YEAR END REPORTING:  
The FS tracks accomplishments by fiscal years beginning October 1st and ending September 30th annually. PATC will track club member accomplishments, in order to assist the FS with this reporting effort. Two specific categories of club accomplishments will be reported to the FS annually (at a minimum).

**Volunteer Service Hours** – PATC will assist the FS with the annual reporting of volunteer program accomplishments by providing the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests with the total number of individuals and volunteer hours contributed via this Sponsored Volunteer Agreement.

**End of Year Reporting** - Accomplishments may be reported as a list of miles of trail sections maintained. The annual accomplishments will be reported to the Forest Service annually by early October.

Major safety issues with trails/roads, and maintenance needs which fall outside the scope of this agreement, shall be reported to the Forest Service in a timely manner.

VOLUNTEER SAFETY:

1. PATC will make the following information available to its volunteers: (1) FS Project and Emergency Response Plan and any project specific Job Hazard Analyses documents; (2) Tailgate Safety and 301B forms; and (3) procedures and forms associated with volunteer injury response requirements.
2. PATC will inform volunteers of health and physical condition requirements of the service project for which they are being recruited and will provide volunteers with an opportunity to disclose any medical conditions that may affect their ability to serve.
3. All volunteers and partners working together under this agreement are empowered to identify and immediately rectify safety concerns. If at any time a volunteer is found to be serving beyond his/her safe capacity or is creating a danger to him/herself or others, an alternative activity will be identified, and the volunteer will be redirected. In cases where an alternate activity cannot be found, or the endangering behavior is so egregious as to not warrant accommodation, the volunteer will be released from service.
4. Travel time from the volunteer's home to the project site parking area (commuting time), is not covered by this agreement. The project site parking area is defined as the trail rendezvous point for volunteers where vehicle travel ends. Hiking from the parking area to the specific project site where work will take place is covered by this agreement. Volunteers who are picking up and delivering supplies and materials to the project site are covered by this agreement.
5. The FS and PATC recognizes that trail users may occasionally perform the beneficial services such as trash collection or other tasks included in the attached descriptions of services while recreating on the trail. These users will only be considered volunteers if the **primary intent** of the trail use is/was volunteer service.
6. PATC will develop their own check-in & check-out procedures in consultation with the FS. PATC volunteers must check-in and out with someone, but that someone does not have to be a Forest Service employee. The check-in & check-out procedures will provide a safety net and response protocol should volunteers encounter a situation that prevents them from returning at the expected time. PATC will make district personnel aware of their procedures so that both organizations can work together to keep volunteers safe.
7. Communication: Cell Phones- Volunteers are encouraged to use their personal cell phones for communication but to be aware that many areas do not have adequate

cell coverage for communication during volunteer activities. Reimbursement is not available for minutes used during volunteer activities.

8. Personal Equipment: Volunteers may use their own weed eaters, hand tools and supplies at their own financial risk. Privately owned tools and supplies must be regularly maintained, meet safety standards (FSH 6709.11 Health and Safety Code Handbook), and meet the requirements of the applicable JHAs. FS may supply basic safety supplies and tools when budgetary restraints allow.
9. Chainsaw Use:
  - a. Any volunteer engaged in chainsaw activities must be trained, evaluated and certified in accordance with the Forest Service Manual 2358 and Forest Service Handbook 6709.11 section 22. 48b. Once certified all safety equipment, refresher/recertification trainings and first aid requirements must be adhered to prior to operating a chain saw on national forest lands. Volunteers will use proper carrying, starting, stopping and cutting methods at all times.
  - b. The Lee District uses this student guidebook for chainsaw certification: [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2\\_045478.pdf](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2_045478.pdf) and our FAQ document.
  - c. The FS can pull a chainsaw certification card for improper chainsaw use.
  - d. Volunteers will refer to and adhere to all job hazard analysis (JHAs) received during chainsaw or refresher training.
  - e. Certifications are valid only with current CPR/First Aid training. FS manual direction on chainsaw use: [www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/saw-policy-2350-7-21-16.docx](http://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/saw-policy-2350-7-21-16.docx)
10. COVID-19 Mitigation and Prevention: Volunteers must comply with guidelines provided by CDC, FS and PATC regarding sanitation, use of masks and physical distancing. <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>; <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-covid-19-workplace-safety-plan.pdf>
11. PATC is responsible for sharing the FS emergency action and medical plan.
  - a. **Major Volunteer injuries should be addressed immediately.** Once the situation has resolved, document the incident. within 24-48 hours, depending on injury severity.
    - i. For Lee Ranger District: notify Stephanie Chapman, FS Volunteer Coordinator and PATC liaison at (540) 331-1381 or [stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov).
    - ii. For North River RD: notify Steve Beri, FS volunteer Coordinator 540-432-0187 or [Steven.r.beri@usda.gov](mailto:Steven.r.beri@usda.gov).
  - b. Volunteers should work with the FS liaison to complete a CA-1 Federal Notice of Traumatic Injury Form (<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/owcp/regs/compliance/ca-1.pdf>)

without delay. Any witnesses to the injury will fill out the "Witness Statement" section. Everyone must sign and date the CA-1 Form.

- c. If the volunteers have questions, they can contact their PATC/FS liaison or call the Workers' Compensation Section at 877-372-7248, press "2" for Human Capital Management, then "5" for the Workers' Compensation section.
- d. Even if medical treatment is not required, or the injury does not appear to be service related, a CA-1 form should be filled out to protect the volunteers and the FS if problems arise later.

#### SCOPE OF WORK:

PATC volunteers may participate in the following projects as well as miscellaneous projects or tasks such as planting trees, bridge repair or construction or other projects approved in advance by the FS.

#### **TRAIL MAINTENANCE (non-motorized and Wilderness)**

Trails adopted in the North Zone of GWJNF are divided into five PATC maintenance districts: Tuscarora South, Great North Mountain, Massanutten North, Massanutten South, and North River.

Most of the trails on the North Zone are managed for multiple non-motorized uses – horses, bicycles, trail runners, and hikers. Most are classified as USFS Trail Class 3 – “Fully Developed”. Trail maintenance occurs on and within the “prism” of the existing trail. Trail relocation or new trail construction requires advance authorization from the FS. Volunteers will only conduct trail maintenance activities on Forest Service system trails.

Tools used for these projects may include typical hand and power tools. Hand tools include loppers, pick mattocks, Pulaskis, McLeods, Rogue hoes, rock bars, hand weeders, digging bars, shovels, rakes, scrub brushes, and paint brushes. Power tools are used in non-Wilderness locations and include gas and electric weeders, pole saws, hedge trimmers, and chain saws. Chainsaws and crosscut saws will be used only by volunteers with a valid FS certification for either a chainsaw or cross cut saw. Maintainers not yet certified may help with crosscut work under the direct supervision of a certified individual and must wear all required PPE.

Volunteers will alert the FS liaison, Stephanie Chapman, 540-331-1381, [stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov) (Lee) or Steve Beri, 540-432-0187, [Steven.r.beri@usda.gov](mailto:Steven.r.beri@usda.gov) (North River) of any problems they find on the ground.

Trail maintenance activities include, but may not be limited to:

#### *Brushing, clearing or limbing*

- Clearing Height: 8-10 feet above the trail tread.
- Clearing Width: 6 feet minimum - 3' on either side of the center of trail tread.
- Clip/cut limbs flush with main branch or trunk. Clip/cut brush or saplings flush and close to the ground.
- Scatter (don't pile) all cut material outside of the trail prism.

- Consider brushing more heavily on the uphill side of the trail – it is a natural tendency to brush too much on the downhill side, and not enough on the uphill side.
- Use only tools for which you have been trained in proper and safe operation. For use of a chainsaw or crosscut saw, you must be formally certified by an accepted authority.

*Removing blowdowns, deadfall or logging out*

- “Blowdowns” are trees that fall across or partially across the trail.
- Cut blowdowns as wide as the clearing limits (3’ either side of trail tread).
- Remove “chunks” from the trail prism.
- Consider cutting once and pulling the top section away from the trail.
- Consider leaving some blowdowns (“step overs”, less than 15” above trail tread) on non-bicycle trails to reduce unauthorized use.
- Use only hand tools, unless you are trained and certified to use a chain saw.
- Use of chainsaws/crosscut saw with a valid FS Chainsaw/Crosscut saw Certification. A volunteer must be trained, evaluated and certified in accordance with the Forest Service Manual 2358 and Forest Service Handbook 6709.11 section 22. 48b. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to maintain a current saw certification.

*Installing drainage dips (also called waterbars, drain dips, waterbreaks, Coweeta dips or grade dips)*

- WATER is the primary natural enemy of trails. Water running down a trail causes erosion and poor trail conditions. Water must be removed from the trail as quickly as possible.
- Drainage dips are required instead of log or rock water bars on multiple user trails.
- Effective drainage dips extend beyond both sides of the trail tread, and carry water off of, and away from, the trail.
- They should be angled at least 45 degrees perpendicular to the tread. The broader the dip, the better.
- Clean out existing drainage dips regularly, paying extra attention to the outflow area where soil can deposit. Outflow areas must extend well beyond the trail tread. Deposit extra soil (but not leaves and twigs) in the downhill mound of the dip for extra hardening.
- Reinforce the ends of drainage dips to discourage users from going-around them. Pile rocks, etc. at the ends of drainage dips.
- Consider building new drainage dips in areas with active erosion. (New dips are classified as maintenance). In general, dips should be installed every 6-10’ of elevation change on the trail.

*Installing and maintaining trail signs (Supplies/materials provided by FS or PATC)*

- Damaged or missing signs should be reported to the FS liaison.
- Cleaning graffiti from trail signs as needed
- Replacing signposts as needed
- Installing new trail signs provided by FS or PATC (Tuscarora Tr signs)

*Trail blazing (Supplies/materials provided by FS)*

- The blazing standard for the Lee Ranger District uses two blaze shapes.
  - The primary blaze is called a dotted-i. This is a 2x2 inch square painted above a 2x6 inch vertical rectangle.
    - The dotted-i blaze is not doubled up to indicate a turn, and arrows [→, ←] are not used either.

- The “i” blaze is used for all trails except the Tuscarora Trail and designated motorized trails (“V” blazed).
- The sections of the Tuscarora Trail that travel through the Lee Ranger District are blazed with a blue vertical 2x6 inch vertical rectangle, without a dot. A sharp turn in the trail is signaled by painting two vertical rectangles, one above the other, with the top rectangle offset in the direction of the turn.
- The blazing standard for the North River Ranger District is the dotted-i.
  - The blazing standard is usually a yellow dotted-i. This is a 2x2 inch square painted above a 2x6 inch vertical rectangle.
    - The dotted-i blaze is not doubled up to indicate a turn, and arrows [→, ← ] are not used either.
  - The Wild Oak Trail is blazed with a white dotted-i.
  - Plastic diamond trail blazers are still in use on some North River Ranger District trails. When blazing one of these trails this style of blazing is to be removed and replaced with the yellow dotted-i method.
  - Trails and trail sections within Ramseys Draft Wilderness are not blazed.

North River Ranger District’s Ramseys Draft Wilderness.

*The following Wilderness trail provisions will be followed:*

- Only hand tools will be used. Motorized equipment such as weed eaters, drills, or chainsaws are not permitted.
- Use of crosscuts saws is permitted in lieu of chainsaws. Any volunteer engaged in crosscut saw activities must be trained, evaluated and certified in accordance with the Forest Service Manual 2358 and Forest Service Handbook 6709.11 section 22. 48b. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to maintain a current certification.
- Wheeled vehicles such as mountain bikes, e-bikes or carts/wheelbarrows are not permitted on the trail and cannot be used to carry tools or other materials.
- Trail crews and hiking group size must not exceed 10 people.
- Trails and trail sections within Ramseys Draft Wilderness are not blazed.

#### **TRAIL SHELTER AND PRIVY MAINTENANCE**

PATC maintains three trail shelters and associated privies on the Lee Ranger District: Little Crease, Gerhard and Boone Shelters.

Tools used for these projects may include sanders, drills, and carpentry equipment, painting supplies, and miscellaneous hand tools. Chainsaws and crosscut saws will be used only by volunteers with a valid FS certification for the tool in question.

Volunteers will alert the FS liaison of any problems they find on the ground.

Trail shelter and privy activities may include, but not limited to, assessment, maintenance, and repair of items to the following.

### Shelter and Privy Checklist

#### FACILITY EXTERIOR

- Evidence of wood rot/insect damage
  - Caulking (condition)
  - Exterior Stain
  - Roof (shingles/metal)
  - Cleanliness of windows/skylights
  - Gutters (clean/condition)
  - Wildlife damage, such as porcupines.
- Trail register (not full)
  - Graffiti
  - Water leaks (check register)
  - Broom or brush present

#### GROUNDS

- Extra fire rings (remove)
- Vegetation (trim)
- Trails to privy, campsites, spring (well-marked)
- Fire pit (clean)
- Condition of picnic table
- Signage (appropriate/condition)
- Potential Hazard trees

#### PRIVY

- General appearance (stain/rot)
- Water leaks
- Evidence of rodents/insects
- Ventilation (screening)
- Doors self-closing and lockable
- Toilet seat/lid in good repair
- Pit capacity below grade

#### SPRING

- Signage
- Water box clean

#### FACILITY INTERIOR

- Signage (up-to-date/good condition)
- General appearance (free of litter/paint condition)

#### TENT SITES

- Level and clear of debris
- Potential Hazard trees
- Trail well-maintained
- Individual sites marked

### **GRAFITTI REMOVAL**

As needed, PATC will remove spray paint/permanent marker from rocks, trees, metal overlooks, bridges and other forest objects using an environmentally safe and Forest Service recommended product such as “elephant snot”. Volunteers will wear all applicable personal protective equipment prior to using graffiti removal solutions. Eye protection is a particular concern and chemical splash goggles are required.

Tools used for these projects may include paint scrapers, scrub brushes, paint brushes. With appropriate training, volunteers may use a pressure washer.

Volunteers will alert the FS liaison, Stephanie Chapman, 540-331-1381, [stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov) (Lee) or Steve Beri, 540-432-0187, [Steven.r.beri@usda.gov](mailto:Steven.r.beri@usda.gov) (North River) of any problems they find on the ground.

### **INVASIVE PLANT/INSECT MITIGATION AND ERADICATION**

Volunteers will follow all PATC and FS mitigation techniques to avoid the spread of invasive plant or insect species from their tools, vehicles or person from place to place. This may include washing tools



and vehicles prior to traveling from one location to another, checking for seeds or insects that may be deposited on tools, vehicles, shoes and clothing, disinfecting and cleaning tools, clothing or vehicles to reduce the spread of noxious invasive species.

Volunteers may also be involved in pulling invasive plant species such as garlic mustard from the trail corridor. These will be disposed of in trash bags to prevent spreading seed heads.

Volunteers will alert the FS liaison, Stephanie Chapman, 540-331-1381, [stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.l.chapman@usda.gov) (Lee) or Steve Beri, 540-432-0187, [Steven.r.beri@usda.gov](mailto:Steven.r.beri@usda.gov) (North River) of any problems they find on the ground.

*The Volunteers in the National Forests (VIF) program is authorized by the Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972. Before passage of the act, the Forest Service did not have the authority to accept voluntary services or to reimburse individuals for associated personal expenses. The Volunteers in the National Forests Act recognized the public's interest in giving time and skills for community service. Volunteers are enrolled by the Forest Service under this act. Volunteers receive no salary or wages from the Forest Service and give their time and talents to further the agency's mission.*

*A volunteer is not considered a Federal employee and is not subject to the provisions of laws relating to Federal employment except for the purpose of tort claims or work related injuries (Federal Employees Compensation Act of 1974).*

**This volunteer agreement will be in effect on the date signed by USFS Lee RD & North River RD Line Officer and will remain in effect for five years from that date. The agreement will be reviewed annually by the USDA Forest Service Lee RD & North River RD and PATC and any subsequent amendments or modifications will be by mutual consent of both affected partners.**