



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position Description

Title: Midewin General Heritage Program Volunteer

Purpose: Assist Midewin's Archaeologist and Heritage Program Manager in a variety of tasks related to the Midewin Heritage Program. Heritage volunteers are essential to accomplishing the mission and responsibilities of the Midewin archaeologist in exercising responsible stewardship of irreplaceable heritage resources on the Prairie.

Duties and Responsibilities: Activities are not on a set schedule. In working with the Volunteer Coordinator and the Midewin Heritage Program Manager we will learn your areas of interest, skills, availability, and physical capabilities. Activities may range from such things as artifact curation in the office here, on a schedule determined by you and the Heritage Program Manager; transcribing previously recorded oral histories from your home, digging shovel test holes on the Prairie, or recovering large artifacts from Arsenal buildings slated for demolition. Occasionally there are scheduled activities such as assisting with Heritage tours, removing invasive species from historic sites, conducting research at repositories off-site in Will County, or recording pre-1940 farmstead sites. Safety training and training on the conduct of the activity will be provided before the work begins.

Department and Location: Under the direction of the Midewin Archaeologist and Heritage Program Manager within the Midewin Public Services Team, volunteers may work on various field locations on the Prairie, in the Supervisor's Office building, or at off-site research locations (for example the I&M Canal Museum and archives in Lockport, Will County Recorder's Office in Joliet, or various other local libraries and museums).

Qualifications: Volunteers are responsible for their own transportation to and from activities. An interest in the activity and a willingness to learn are required. No previous experience is required for most heritage projects although those with related experience are very welcome and that experience will be utilized. Volunteers should be age 16 or older. Volunteers will be offered a wide-range of activities matching their skills, abilities, and interests. Some activities are physically strenuous and require safety equipment and appropriate seasonal clothing for outdoors work such as digging or moving heavy pieces of equipment and artifacts. Other activities may be conducted at home on a computer. Some, but not all activities, may be done by people with physical challenges or limitations.

Time Commitment: Almost all Heritage work is on an ad hoc basis to best support short term and long term goals with shifting or new priorities. You will be notified by the Heritage Program Manager or Volunteer Coordinator at least a week in advance when an opportunity that meets your interests is to take place. Occasionally Heritage volunteer opportunities are in conjunction with larger scale events with set time schedules, such as National Public Lands Day or scheduled tours and other programs. Individual time commitment may range from an hour or two on a weekend, to full time digging for a week or two; or even at your convenience such as when the Heritage volunteers are doing web based archival research from home or visiting local libraries or resource facilities.

Training: Each opportunity to participate will begin with a safety discussion followed an informal overview of the activity and each individual's responsibility within the activity. As appropriate, training for the specific activity will then be conducted. Examples of this are training in the use of a GPS unit, training in how to record archaeological sites, a demonstration of how and where to access archival records from your home computer and the format for recording the information. Additionally, should you volunteer to do such things as driving for a tour there may be required defensive drivers' training. Volunteers interested in protecting Heritage sites from invasive plants are encouraged to get their herbicide license through the IL Department of Agriculture, which includes training and testing on proper use and application of herbicides. Additional responsibilities could become applicable or available to this position in the future that might require additional training and/or certification. These additional responsibilities will be determined by the program managers and approved for selected volunteers.

Working Conditions/Physical Effort: *Heritage program volunteers are covered by the Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) while performing duties described by this position description during the season(s) listed or scheduled shifts.* Volunteers must read, sign and consent to the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes safety requirements and recommended best practices. Volunteers may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions & allergens
- Walking on uneven ground for short distances
- Standing for up to 2 hours or more at a time
- Light to moderate lifting

Benefits: Heritage volunteers learn and uncover exciting land use, cultural history, and prehistory of this area. These discoveries can influence best management practices and protect sensitive heritage sites. Heritage volunteers can be interpreters, researchers, detectives, and more. Heritage volunteers also support restoration goals by protecting sites from invasives and habitat loss. Volunteers can stay updated on the future plans of Midewin and be a part of the mission along the way. Midewin's volunteer staff receives ongoing recognition from their supervisor and other staff. Volunteers that contribute three or more individual volunteer visits in the fiscal year will receive an invitation to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or U.S. Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteers.