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Volunteers in the  
National Forests

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# Welcome to the Forest Service

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service



Welcome to the Forest Service. I really mean that. Your contribution will be significant. With your friends and neighbors, you make the volunteer program successful. Your work will have a lasting effect on the National Forests.

Since 1972, over 100,000 of you have volunteered to help us with our work, and we've received both tangible and intangible benefits. The District Ranger you'll be working for will give you the chance to do the things you do well. While this is a work experience, we want it to be a fun experience as well.

Ask the Ranger and his staff about those things you see them doing. We want you to learn more about us. These are your National Forests.

Again, welcome to the Forest Service. Enjoy your time with us.



*F. Dale Robertson*  
F. DALE ROBERTSON  
Chief  
USDA Forest Service

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# Introduction

When the first settlers arrived on American soil, forests covered nearly all the land from the eastern seaboard to the Great Plains. The forests seemed endless, and the needs for a new nation were great. Trees were cut to build homes, stores, and ships and for countless other purposes. Because farmland was essential for existence, forests were burned to make room for crops.

Although a law was passed in 1807 to protect timber stands, it was virtually ignored. In 1891, Congress gave the President the power to establish forest reserves from the public domain to protect the remaining timber and to ensure a regular flow of water in the streams. The forest reserves were under the administration of the Department of the Interior. However, there was no provision for the management of these reserves.

In 1905, the management of the reserves was transferred to the Department of Agriculture under the concept that trees are a crop. The new agency was called the Forest Service, and Gifford Pinchot was named its first chief. In a letter dated February 1, 1905, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson laid out the guiding principles of the Forest Service to the new chief. An excerpt of the letter follows:

In the administration of the forest reserves, it must be clearly borne in mind that all land is to be devoted to the most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies. . . . You will see to it that the water, wood, and forage of the reserves are conserved and wisely used under businesslike regulations enforced with promptness, effectiveness, and common sense. . . . Where conflicting interests must



***Gifford Pinchot***

*First Chief of the Forest Service*

be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run. . . .

Gifford Pinchot, first Chief of the Forest Service, wrote in his autobiography:

The chief driving force which made the Service the best organization in the Government was not the desire to earn good money, but the urge to do good work in a good cause. . . . Of greatest consequence was this: every member of the Service realized that it was engaged in a great and necessary undertaking in which the whole future of their country was at stake. . . . The Forest Service was no organization of master and servant . . . it was not a regiment but a community.

# National Forest System

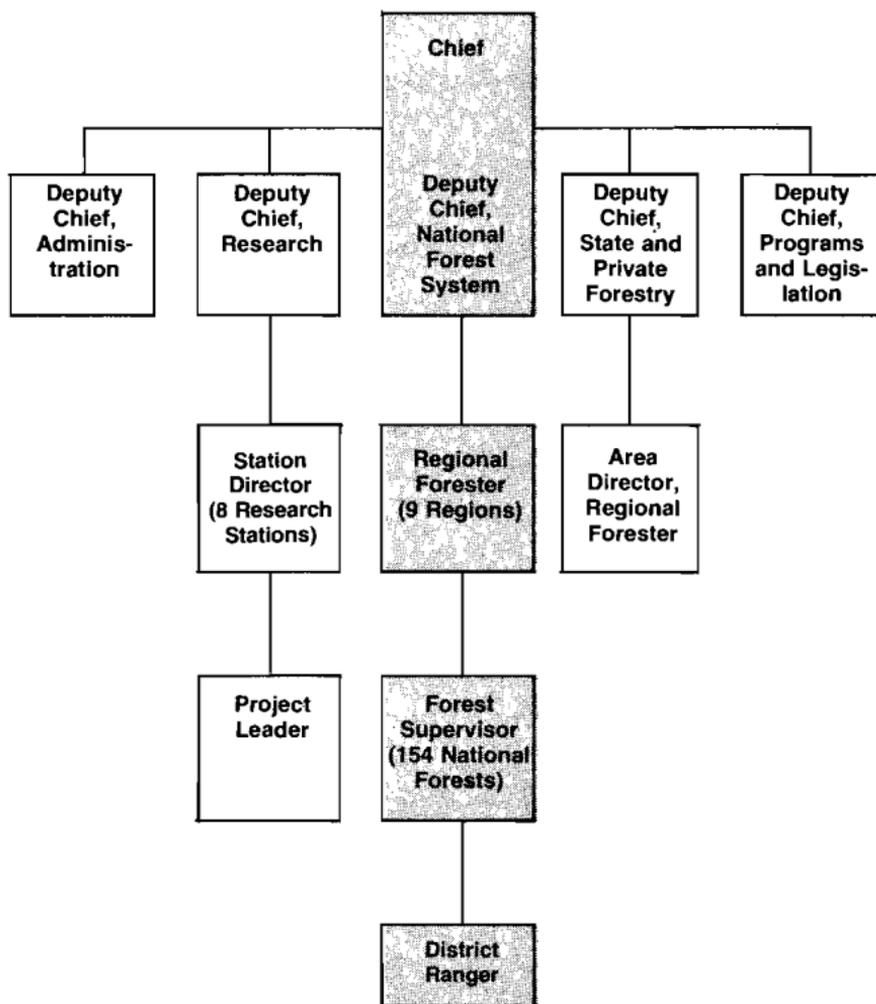
The National Forest System—including 154 National Forests, 17 National Grasslands, and 16 Land Utilization Projects—is managed by the Forest Service and includes 192 million acres of land located in 44 States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The natural resources contained in these lands represent some of the Nation's greatest assets and have major economic, environmental, and social significance for millions of Americans.



As directed by Congress, renewable forest resources—water, timber, forage, wildlife, and recreation—are managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Multiple use means that resource management is coordinated so that land areas produce a combination of values that best serve Americans. Sustained yield means that resources are managed to provide services and products at a supply level as high as can be sustained without harming the land's ability to produce. Under such management, the National Forests represent the Nation's largest tangible accomplishment in forest conservation.

Water from the forests irrigates millions of agricultural acres and is used for domestic and industrial purposes in hundreds of cities. Timber from the forests is made into products sold worldwide. National Forests and Grasslands provide habitat for millions of big and small game and produce forage for cattle and sheep. Forest recreation provides scenic drives, wilderness travel, picnicking, camping, hiking, skiing, swimming, boating, and, subject to State conservation laws, some of the Nation's finest hunting and fishing. The National Forests are truly America's playgrounds.

# Organization of the Forest Service



# Volunteers in the National Forests

Over the years, hundreds of citizens interested in the conservation of natural resources and the management of the National Forest System have wanted to donate their time and services to assist the Forest Service. However, only a small percentage of those offers actually resulted in services rendered because of two barriers.

First, an individual who wanted to donate time and services to the Forest Service was not covered under the Federal Employees Compensation Act or the Federal Tort Claims Act. Second, many people, especially senior citizens and students, needed some assistance to defray the incidental costs of travel or meals involved in performing donated services. Before the Volunteers in the National Forests Act (P.L. 92-300) was passed in 1972, the Forest Service did not have the authority to accept voluntary services or to reimburse an individual for these personal expenses. The Volunteers in the National Forests Act provided that authority and recognized the many Americans who wanted to give their time and skills to public service.

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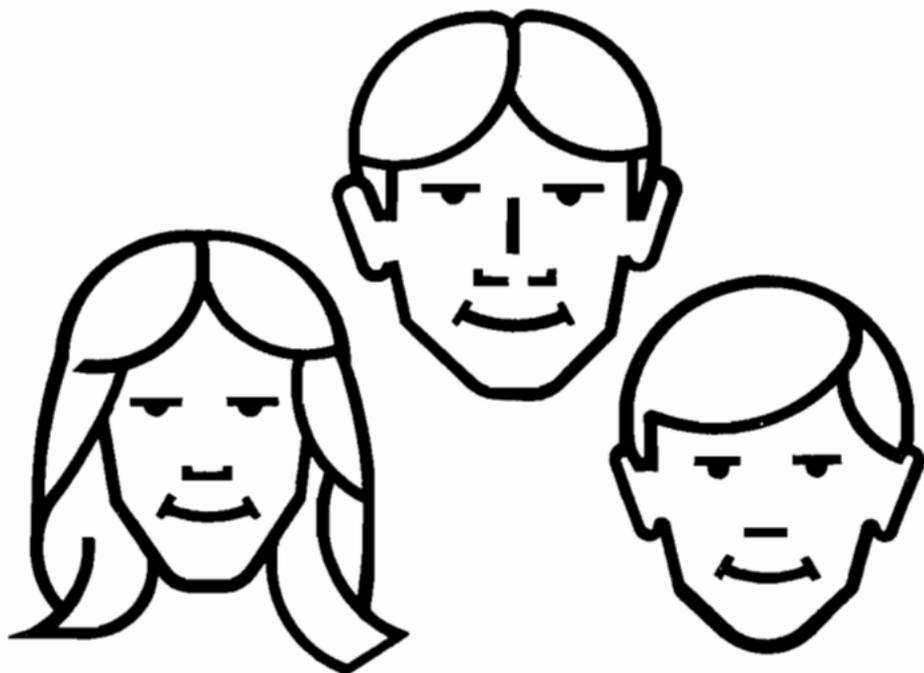
Specifically, the Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture “to recruit, train, and accept, without regard to the civil service classification laws, rules, or regulations, the services of individuals without compensation as volunteers for or in aid of interpretive functions, visitor services, conservation measures and development, or other activities in and related to areas administered by the Secretary through the Forest Service.” The act authorized the Secretary to provide for incidental expenses, such as transportation, uniforms, lodging, and subsistence, for volunteers.

As authorized by law, the objective of the Volunteers Program is to allow the Forest Service to legally accept volunteers’ services as either individuals or groups to further the mission of the Forest Service in managing the National Forests.

# Information for Volunteers

A volunteer is a person enrolled by the Forest Service under the Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972. A volunteer receives no salary or wages from the Forest Service and gives his or her time and talents to further the mission of the Forest Service.

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.



A volunteer enrolls by signing a negotiated agreement with a Forest Service officer, either agreement form FS-1800-7 for individual volunteers or FS-1800-8 for sponsored or group voluntary services. A volunteer may not begin work or travel on his or her assignment until the agreement is signed. The agreement is the official instrument for authorization of any payment for incidental expenses.

### **Volunteer Qualifications**

The Forest Service officer negotiating and approving volunteer agreements will determine the necessary qualifications for each volunteer assignment. A volunteer's assigned duties should be noted briefly in the agreement. A volunteer may assist in any Forest Service program or activity but shall not be permitted to perform law enforcement activities or serve as a collection officer. A volunteer's health and physical condition must be good enough to permit volunteered activities without undue hazard to anyone. A medical examination may be required at Forest Service expense. A volunteer under the age of 18 must have the written consent of his or her parent or guardian to enroll.

### **Tour of Duty**

A volunteer's tour of duty is negotiated between the volunteer and a Forest Service officer. The tour of duty (hours per day and per week) will depend on the volunteer's availability and Forest Service priorities.

## **Timekeeping**

It is very important to keep a record of the number of hours worked and the quantity of work accomplished. This responsibility may be assigned to the leader of a group of volunteers or to each individual volunteer.

For group projects, it is mandatory that the members who are participating in the project be listed on a sheet with the name of the project and that this list is given to the District Ranger or other Forest Service official to use for work-related injuries or tort claims. This list should be attached to the volunteer's agreement form.

## **Pay Information**

A volunteer receives no salary from the Forest Service for work performed; however, incidental expenses for items such as transportation, lodging, subsistence, and uniforms, if applicable, may be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Remember, the volunteer's agreement is the only authorizing instrument for payment of all incidental expenses agreed to be paid by the Forest Service. For more information, check with the authorizing official negotiating the agreement.

### **Supervision and Work Performance**

The volunteer's responsibility is to perform the work as described and agreed to in the volunteer's agreement.

The Forest Service's responsibility is to provide adequate supervision and to recommend termination of a volunteer if his or her service is unsatisfactory.

### **Safety**

The Forest Service is concerned about the safety of volunteers. Safety is part of each work day; no job is so urgent or important that it cannot be done safely. Safety equipment such as seat belts, hard hats, goggles, and so forth, are available and must be used. Groom head and facial hair so it does not interfere with health or safety equipment. You will be taught to use hand and power tools, as well as to drive vehicles in adverse terrain, if these are a requirement of your job. See the publication "A Guide to Working Safely," book number two in the volunteer series.



## **Use of Tools, Equipment, and Vehicles**

All volunteers at some time during their service are issued tools, equipment, vehicles, or other Government property needed to perform their jobs. You may not drive a Government vehicle without a valid State driver's license and a Government operator's identification card.

It is your responsibility to return all items assigned to you or to report all losses and damaged property to your supervisor. If, through your negligence, you lose or damage equipment, you may be required to pay for the loss or damage. Report vehicle accidents to your supervisor immediately, even minor scratches or dents.

## **Injuries**

If you are injured on the job, you must report the injury to your supervisor immediately, regardless of how insignificant the injury may be. Immediately fill out Form CA-1, Employee's Notice of Injury, no matter how slight the injury may be. This is to protect you if complications develop later from the injury. Common hazards are snake bites, puncture wounds from sticks, scratches, small cuts, sprains from stepping onto or off of logs or rocks, and so forth. If you are allergic to bee stings or other insect stings, you must inform your supervisor. Disguising or keeping secret a medical problem may endanger your life.

As a volunteer, you are not covered by a hospital plan or Federal life insurance. However, if you are injured on the job, you may be eligible for Office of Worker's Compensation Program (OWCP) benefits.

### **Credit for Work Experience**

You will receive credit for unpaid experience or volunteer work on the same basis as for paid experience on future Forest Service applications if you feel it represents qualifying experience for the position for which you are applying.

### **Resignation From or Expiration of Voluntary Service**

Length of volunteer service must be agreed on by the prospective volunteer and the Forest Service before finalizing an agreement. If, for whatever reason, premature cancellation of an agreement is necessary, this can be done by notifying the other party.

### **Volunteer Responsibility and Conduct**

**Personal Appearance.** Because the Forest Service has a responsibility to gain public acceptance and support for Forest Service programs, the volunteer is expected to maintain a personal appearance that reflects well on the Forest Service.

Prohibited Conduct. Because of the safety hazards to volunteers and others, the following activities are prohibited:

1. Use of firearms in or near a Government camp or living quarters. You are discouraged from bringing firearms when occupying Government-owned or Government-leased quarters. Firearms will be locked in separate cabinets when not in use.
2. Consumption of intoxicating beverages on Government-owned property, transportation of such beverages in Government-owned or Government-leased vehicles, or use of such beverages at any time or place while performing work for the Forest Service.
3. Possession or use of any and all forms of addictive or hallucinatory drugs, unless prescribed by a physician. These drugs include, but are not limited to, marijuana, barbiturates, pep pills, buttons, and so forth.
4. Personal use of Government-owned or Government-leased vehicles, property, tools, equipment, or telephones.
5. Fights or use of abusive language toward the public, other employees, or your supervisor.
6. Failure to follow your supervisor's instructions or directions at all times unless these instructions or directions are clearly illegal or unsafe.

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7. Possession of pets in Government-owned or Government-leased multiple living quarters, without special permission of the District Ranger.
8. Violation of any State game and fish regulations.

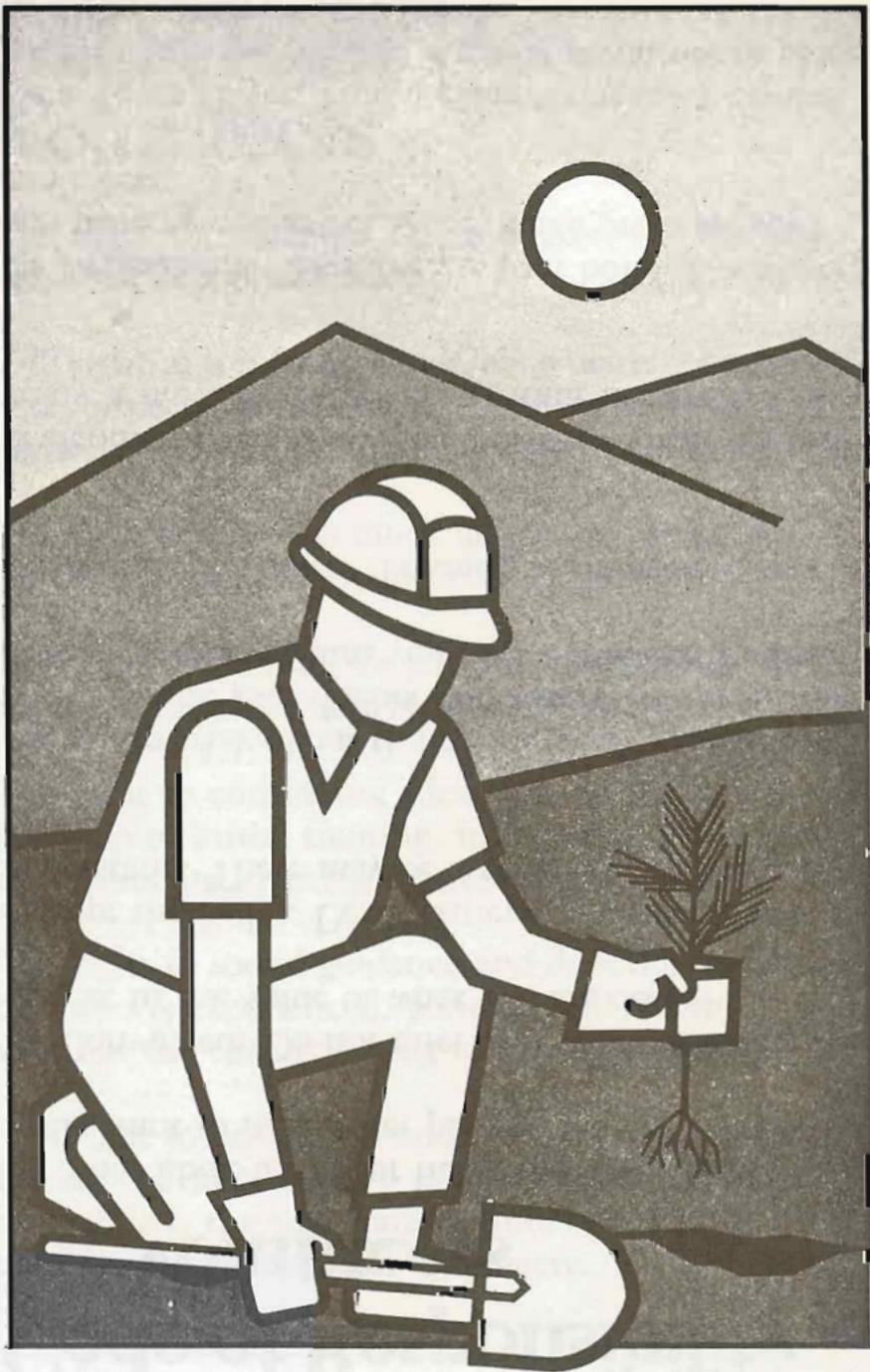
Violation of any of the above prohibitions may constitute grounds for dismissal or other appropriate action.

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*We live in a society that always has depended on volunteers of different kinds—some who can give money, others who give time and a great many who will freely give their special skills, full-time or part-time. If you look closely you will see that almost anything that really matters to us, anything that embodies our deepest commitment to the way human life should be lived and cared for depends on some form—more often, many forms—of volunteerism.*

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Margaret Mead and Rhoda Mettraud—“Aspects of the Present”



# Code of Responsibility for Volunteers

**Be Sure.** Look into your heart and know that you really want to help other people.

**Be Convinced.** Do not offer your services unless you believe in the value of what you are doing.

**Accept the Rules.** Don't criticize what you don't understand. There may be a good reason: find out why.

**Speak Up.** Ask about things you don't understand. Don't coddle your doubts and frustrations until they drive you away or turn you into a problem worker.

**Be Willing To Learn.** Training is essential to any job well done.

**Welcome Supervision.** You will do a better job and enjoy it more if you are doing what is expected of you.

**Be Dependable.** Your word is your bond. Do what you have agreed to do. Don't make promises you can't keep.

**Be a Team Player.** Find a place for yourself on the team. The lone operator is pretty much out of place in today's complex community.

# Bill of Rights for Volunteers

The right to be treated as a coworker, not just free help, not as a prima donna.

The right to a suitable assignment, with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education, and employment background.

The right to know as much about the agency as possible: its policies, its people, its programs.

The right to training for the job, thoughtfully planned and effectively presented training.

The right to continuing education on the job, as a followup to initial training, information about new developments, training for greater responsibility.

The right to sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, patient, well-informed, and who has the time to invest in giving guidance.

The right to promotion and a variety of experiences through advancement to assignments of more responsibility, through transfer from one activity to another, through special assignment.

# Information and Reference

\_\_\_\_\_ National Forest

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Forest Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

In an Emergency, Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Information and Reference

\_\_\_\_\_ Ranger District

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Forest Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

In an Emergency, Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information \_\_\_\_\_

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# Field Notes

