



# Hoosier National Forest Highlights



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## Volunteers, a Precious Resource on the Hoosier National Forest



By Teena Ligman, Bedford Office Volunteer Coordinator

As Forest Service budgets decline volunteers become more important to help manage the nation's natural resources. Forest Service employees have often said they have the best jobs in the world, working in the great outdoors, serving the American people, and caring for natural resources. So it is no surprise, that people consider the Forest Service for a place to spend their free time doing volunteer work.

The Forest Service celebrated 40 years of the Volunteer Act in 2012. Over the last forty years, 2.5 million volunteers have contributed 100 million service hours valued at \$1.2 billion.

Volunteers are able to do almost anything in the Forest Service including working in campgrounds or offices, planting trees, and building nest boxes or picnic tables. "When an individual or a group wants to volunteer, we have them fill out an application to provide information on their interests, skills, background, and availability," explains Lisa Faulkenberg, Volunteer Coordinator for the Tell City Ranger District. Potential volunteers are interviewed to match up the available jobs with their skills and interests.

Current volunteer jobs on the Hoosier include a campground maintenance position at Hardin Ridge Recreation Area. This position offers free camping in return for mowing campground roadsides, clearing weeds around gates, and other maintenance jobs at the site. The actual work is anticipated to take 3 days each week and the position is needed from mid-May through Labor Day weekend. Some reimbursement for expenses may be available for this position.

Other positions include stewards to clean-up along roads, or camping sites along roads. Stewards are also needed for trails and fishing ponds on the Forest. “We have one family who are stewards of two fishing ponds in Lawrence County,” said Ligman, Volunteer Coordinator for the Bedford office. “They’ve done an incredible job, they go fishing and pick up the trash others have left behind. They also replace signs when needed. They have really taken ownership in a piece of their national forest and made it a better place.”

Tree planting, wildlife surveys, inspecting special uses and boundary lines are other examples of jobs available for the right volunteer. The qualifications and nature of the work varies, but Forest staff is willing to match jobs with interest and schedules.

“There is always data entry or office work for the right person,” said Faulkenberg. She added that for computer work and some field work a simple background check is required. “The Forest Service covers the cost of the background check as well as any training or equipment that you might need. We want our volunteers to be safe,” she explained, “so for each job, there is training and in some cases requirements for wearing safety equipment.”

To view available volunteer opportunities on the Hoosier National Forest visit the Forest website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/hoosier/>, click on Volunteer Opportunities in the upper right corner of the page. The jobs span almost every resource area so there should be something for everyone.

Ligman coordinates volunteers for the north end of the Forest, Faulkenberg for the south end, and both agree, there are many great jobs on the list. The idea is to make it a positive experience for volunteers. Volunteers will always be an indispensable part of the Forest Service team.

Contact Teena Ligman for information on volunteering on the Hoosier National Forest for the area between Bloomington and Paoli at 812-276-4757 or [tligman@fs.fed.us](mailto:tligman@fs.fed.us); and for the area south of Paoli contact Lisa Faulkenberg at 812-547-7051 or [lfaulkenberg@fs.fed.us](mailto:lfaulkenberg@fs.fed.us).



Eagle McFarlan and her family are stewards of two fishing ponds on the Hoosier National Forest. Eagle is shown here with the trash she collected this spring.



Carroll Ritter pulls garlic mustard near Pioneer Mothers Memorial Forest last spring.