

It's about the people...



The volunteer opportunities offered are many and varied.

Fishing rodeos

The Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center annually hosts 4 fishing rodeos. Volunteers work alongside families to introduce kids to the art of reeling in a big one! Cutting bait, clearing around ponds, rigging tackle and showing kids how to paint a fish t-shirt are part of what volunteers do.

Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center

In partnership with the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and the SEWEE Association since 2009, the Sewee Visitor Center has received over 11,000 volunteer hours staffing the visitor information desk and delivered over 10,500 volunteer hours of environmental education programs. EE programs include the earth stewards program that involves over 4,000 students a year in field trips, lab experiments and classroom demonstrations focusing on the natural habitats of the Francis Marion National Forest and Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteers also perform grounds maintenance on the Sewee Visitor Center grounds.

Forest-wide clean-ups partnering with Palmetto Pride

For the past four years, the forest has sponsored six forest-wide clean up events, four in partnership with Palmetto Pride, involving almost 1,000 volunteers who removed 150 tons of trash from the forest while contributing nearly 5,000 hours of volunteer labor valued at around \$100,000.

Trail maintenance and reconstruction work

Since 2009, volunteers have worked on several low-country trails including the Swamp Fox Passage of the Palmetto Trail and the Jericho Horse Trail (includes trail bridge and boardwalk replacement). They have constructed and repaired 20 trail bridges on four different trails, totaling 1927 linear feet. This includes replacement of 800 linear feet of wooden boardwalk at the Sewee Visitor Center with recycled plastic “wood,” and building a 300 foot boardwalk at Buck Hall Recreation Area on the Intercoastal Waterway to connect the Awendaw Passage of the Palmetto Trail to the



campground. In addition, the Forest hosted six week-long American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation projects and seven week-long Spring Break projects that included installing geoblock to harden sections of Jericho Horse Trail and building footbridges on the Swamp Fox Passage of the Palmetto trail to name a few.

Hosts services and operations and maintenance.

The campground host program provides hosts year-round at Buck Hall Recreation Area on the Intercoastal Waterway. In FY 2012 the program was expanded to include an overnight host at the Wambaw Cycle Trail trailhead/camping area providing hosts/visitor contact for the heavily used fall and winter seasons.

Wambaw Cycle Trail maintenance and reconstruction work.

The new Wambaw Cycle Trail beginners' loop was built by CORRA (Coastal Off-Road Riders Association) volunteers donating 240 hours this spring. Over the past 4 years volunteers have groomed, cleared and blazed the trail. They have installed signs, gates, and fencing contributing 2200 volunteer hours valued at approximately \$44,500. These volunteer hours have in turn been used to help match over \$300,000 in Recreational Trails Fund grant dollars that included trail hardening, fencing off sensitive areas, and more.



Rifle range maintenance and clean-up

Four years ago the two ranges were shot up and piled with litter. The recreation staff started sponsoring volunteer clean up days. Another group of dedicated users helped rebuild both ranges' shooting shelters with benches and information kiosks. Today these heavily used rifle ranges remain clean and maintained thanks to the efforts of volunteer events.



Connecting kids and the outdoors

Many of the volunteer activities involve getting kids and young adults into the woods and fostering a sense of giving back. Since 2009 the Forest has sponsored 16 volunteer projects led by the Boy Scouts of America. A Cub Scout troop showed up 80 strong to one such event converting two large

parking islands into pollinator gardens at the Sewee Visitor Center.

The volunteer program continues to grow and thrive in the excellent committed hands of the Francis Marion Ranger District Recreation Staff. This August, using a portion of the recently awarded More Kids in the Woods (MKIW) grant funds, Earth Stewards from a local grade school will assist in installing the 10 interpretive panels for the recently developed Animals Olympics Trail at the Sewee Visitor Center. The exercise stations and equipment will also be installed by volunteers this September for National Public Lands Day.

Francis Marion and Sumter National Forest's Forest Supervisor Paul Bradley said "I am extremely proud of the Francis Marion Ranger District Recreation Staff, they have committed to making volunteer opportunities not just an added thing to do but an essential part of their program. It is easy to see from the work accomplished and tremendous turnout that they are the glue to the process, but more importantly the volunteers return and bring friends. The District has found the right mix of fun, rewarding projects and personal touch that makes a real difference in the forest."