



Produced by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay with support from the Chesapeake Bay Program  
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# Volunteerism and Watershed Stewardship

## Recruiting Volunteers to Restore the Chesapeake Bay

### Chesapeake 2000 Stewardship Goal

Promote individual stewardship and assist individuals, community-based organizations, businesses, local governments and schools to undertake initiatives to achieve the goals of this agreement.

### Six Steps to an Effective Volunteer Program

- Define need
- Design valuable volunteer opportunities
- Recruit and screen carefully, matching skills with need
- Train, orient, motivate, explain project goals and commitment
- Recognize, show appreciation and value of volunteer support
- Follow-up effectively to evaluate success, improve communication and future programs.

## INTRODUCTION

A concerned and mobilized citizenry is essential to the success of the ongoing Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. Obtaining public involvement in environmental policy matters has become mainstream (albeit still challenging). The imperative to make individuals better stewards around their home and workplaces is commonly accepted. Environmental education programs strive to instill in youth an ecological awareness and a conservation ethic. These are positive efforts with much promise in strengthening laws, changing attitudes and behaviors, and ultimately improving the condition of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Quite complementary to these efforts is the more recent proliferation of community-based watershed organizations and an increasing interest in environmental volunteerism, especially in water quality monitoring and habitat restoration activities. Watershed groups are positioned at the local scale mirroring the focus of many new restoration and regulatory initiatives. The *Chesapeake 2000* agreement emphasizes education, outreach and community engagement as part of its stewardship goals.

Watershed organizations are at the front line of the implementation offensive, but there is a tremendous need for more foot soldiers (aka volunteers). Their ranks are growing but additional recruits are needed. Some of the places to find volunteers may seem obvious, but you may be surprised. Here are some tips on where to search:

### •• Schools

Teachers welcome innovative hands-on opportunities for their students, and students often prefer applied learning. Many secondary schools require public service hours of their students. School clubs may also be a source. Maybe even the PTO. The campus of a school may also provide an opportunity for a meaningful restoration or monitoring activity.

### •• Colleges and Universities

Professors like new opportunities for their students and their curricula. And it's not just natural science students and instructors that are suitable recruitment targets. Watershed stewardship is interdisciplinary so don't forget sociology, political science, computer science, law, and other realms. Think of all the diverse campus groups that might be interested in helping environmental efforts. From sororities to science clubs, the volunteers are everywhere.

### •• Service Clubs

There are many service organizations – Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Sertoma, and numerous others. While their missions may not be directly environmental, they often support certain environmental initiatives. Rotary International's *Project Planet Earth* is one example. Service club members may welcome the opportunity to get their hands dirty with outdoor projects or use their professional skills to administratively assist a watershed organization.

## Tips to Keeping Volunteers

Once you have volunteers, you 'll want to keep them.

Satisfied volunteers can be the best advocates for your organization. Positive word of mouth will enhance your recruitment efforts.

Take good care of volunteers working on restoration projects. Provide food, beverages, water, and restrooms.

Make sure they know you value their participation. Praise them on the job, send them thank-you letters, give them souvenirs, etc.

## Resources

For more valuable information on the recruitment, care and retention of volunteers, browse the following websites:

▲ *Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement*  
[www.easi.org](http://www.easi.org)

▲ *GreenVolunteers*  
[www.greenvolunteers.org](http://www.greenvolunteers.org)

▲ *Restore Corps*  
[www.restorecorp.org](http://www.restorecorp.org)

▲ *River Network*  
[www.rivernet.org](http://www.rivernet.org)

### •• **Seniors**

The Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (EASI) has successfully mobilized and trained thousands of senior citizens to be stream monitors and stream monitoring is just one of many tasks that they can perform. Many seniors are very active and have time to commit. Most counties have offices devoted to services to senior citizens – you might want to start your search there.

### •• **Community Associations**

These groups are often focused on crime prevention and neighborhood improvement, but it can be easy to make the case that certain environmental efforts can meet these and other civic goals. Plus, homeowners are a crucial audience to educate about good stewardship.

### •• **Adjudicated Youth**

Many programs have been established which provide alternatives to incarceration for delinquent teens. Service projects are often a preferred activity of these programs.

### •• **Youth Programs**

This category represents the payload for young volunteers. Whether it's Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, Boys Club or Girls Clubs, Big Brothers or Big Sisters, there are kids who want to help.

### •• **Sporting Groups**

The interest of fishing and hunting clubs in environmental activities is almost a guarantee, but other recreation groups can also be tapped for volunteers. Canoe clubs, hiking clubs, and even team sports leagues are worth seeking out.

### •• **Employee Associations**

Many mid-size to large companies have employee associations who host recreational activities and participate in service projects. The partnership of just one key company can mean the activation of many volunteers.

### •• **Religious Institutions**

Churches, synagogues, and mosques have members who share a deep concern for the well-being of our planet. Their faiths instruct them to care for creation and volunteerism in environmental projects is one way to put their faith into action.

### •• **Environmental Organizations**

Local chapters of the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and other well-known environmental organizations may welcome the chance to partner with watershed associations. This is a way for their members to understand and support habitat and pollution issues in a new context. The Friends group at a nearby park or sanctuary should also not be overlooked.

### •• **The Person Next Door**

Volunteers are potentially everywhere. Speak to people about your project or volunteer need with passion and commitment (it's contagious!). You may be pleasantly surprised with who comes out of the woodwork. Imagine how many people have never volunteered because they haven't been invited.

### •• **Miscellaneous**

Volunteers can be found where you least expect it. Did you know there is a Parrothead Club? Parrotheads are fans of the musician, Jimmy Buffet. There are chapters all over the place and they enjoy community service. Maybe there is one near you.