



VOLUNTEER HOST MANUAL

Virginia State Parks
A Division of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Revised February 2022

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INTRODUCTION

This manual was created to provide general information about policies, procedures, and responsibilities pertaining to volunteer hosts, including camp hosts, retail hosts and maintenance hosts at Virginia State Parks.

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is the state's lead natural resource conservation agency. DCR protects what Virginians care about - natural habitat, parks, clean water, dams, open space and access to the outdoors.

DCR enables and encourages people to enjoy and benefit from Virginia's natural and cultural resources.

The agency values diversity of nature, culture and communities to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for recreational access and a healthy environment for all Virginians to enjoy.

DCR's mission is accomplished through funding, expertise, education, acquisition and improved access. The agency manages, protects and provides access to dozens of state parks throughout the Commonwealth.

Virginia State Parks

Virginia State Parks (VSP), a division of DCR, exists to conserve the natural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources of the Commonwealth and provide recreational and educational opportunities consistent with the good stewardship of these lands, water and facilities that leaves them unimpaired for future generations. About eight million visitors a year enjoy the breathtaking beauty of Virginia's award-winning state parks.

Virginia State Parks Volunteer Program

Volunteers are indispensable to Virginia State Parks. Volunteers are recruited and accepted from the public without regard to race, religion, age, gender, color, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or disability.

HOST PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Director of Community Engagement & Volunteerism

The Director of Community Engagement and Volunteerism manages volunteer programs for Virginia State Parks, establishes policies and procedures, develops manuals, forms and benefits plans, promotes volunteer opportunities, and provides training and support for park staff.



Camp Host Program Manager

The Camp Host Program Manager is overseen by the Director of Community Engagement & Volunteerism, and is responsible for the following:

- Recruitment of hosts
- Handling host applications and paperwork
- Screening and interviewing potential hosts
- Assigning hosts to sites
- Keeping master host schedule
- Providing host uniforms and handbooks upon request
- Serving as the point of contact for site supervisors
- Maintaining correspondence with host volunteers
- Providing public relations for host program
- Securing benefits for hosts upon completion of assignment
- Conducting ongoing evaluation of host program
- Collecting host and site evaluations
- Providing weekly and annual reports to the Office of Community Engagement and Volunteerism

HOST PROGRAM STRUCTURE CONTINUED...

Park Site Supervisor

The Site Supervisor at each park works closely with the Camp Host Program Manager regarding the performance of hosts on site, including orientation, general training, assignment of specific duties, time sheets, evaluation, and recommendation for future placement.



Other Park Staff

The Site Supervisor may assign a park staff person to supervise the daily performance of hosts. Supervisors are selected according to their normal area of work and expertise and what the volunteer will be doing. Site Supervisors are responsible for specific job training, supervision of work, and evaluation of work performed by hosts. Staff should have daily contact with hosts. Supervisors shall report any violations of park or volunteer policies or procedures to the park's Volunteer Coordinator.

Contact Information

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HOST PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Record Keeping

Host Position Descriptions

Hosts are provided with a written description of their duties. Be sure to read the document carefully so that you are clear about the park's expectations. Ask questions if you are unsure about these, or if you'd like to contribute in additional ways during your stay.

Application & Background Check

Hosts are required to complete an application and background check, found at www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/camp-host-application. Paper versions are available upon request.

Host Volunteer Agreement

Once a Host is registered for a position, the online system (YODA) will automatically send a confirmation email with the start date, site contact information, and the Host Volunteer Agreement. The Site Supervisor will review the Host Volunteer Agreement with you at the start of service.

Recording Volunteer Hours

Hosts must keep track of their volunteer hours during their assignment. At the end of the month, the Host should log their hours in the database by visiting <https://vasp.fun/hostlogin>. At some parks the Site Supervisor may log them for the Host.

Evaluations

Hosts are asked to evaluate their experience at the end of each assignment by completing a Site Evaluation. Hosts are also encouraged to inform staff of any suggestions that will benefit future hosts and/or guests. In turn, supervisors also evaluate Host performance.

Uniforms

Each Host will be provided three t-shirts, a hat, and a nametag. Safety vests are available at each park. New shirts and hats will be issued every other year, or as needed due to wear and tear. Hosts are expected to wear their uniform while on duty.

RECRUITMENT

Hosts are recruited through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation website and by word of mouth. Hosts are encouraged to spread the word to friends, family, and park guests who might be interested in serving as hosts.

Reasonable Accommodations and Accessibility

Virginia State Parks is committed to providing fair and equal opportunities to people with disabilities. It is the policy of Virginia State Parks to reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, accommodations will be provided to qualified individuals with disabilities when such accommodations are directly related to performing the essential functions of a position, competing for a position, or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment. This policy applies to all applicants, employees, and employees seeking promotional opportunities.

Screening and Interviewing

After a Host submits an application, they should reach out and make arrangements to schedule a telephone interview with the Camp Host Program Manager. The telephone interview with the applicant covers work hours, duties, insurance, and volunteer benefits. The Camp Host Program Manager answers questions about the position, and provides a copy of the appropriate position description and basic information about Virginia State Parks.

Background Check

All applicants are required to give permission for a criminal history background check to be conducted. Any applicant who does not agree to this requirement will not be considered for a position. All fees related to the background check are covered by Virginia State Parks; the applicant pays nothing.

RECRUITMENT CONTINUED...

Placement

After the Host has been registered for a position, they are sent an official confirmation email with their assignment location and dates, as well as the park's contact information.

Returning Hosts

Although Hosts are placed on a first come, first served basis, returning Hosts receive first preference on placements.

Each August, Site Supervisors provide the Camp Host Program Manager with a list of Hosts who have expressed interest in returning to serve the following year, along with their preferred service month(s). If the Host has not yet served by that time, they should contact the park to discuss the subsequent season's request. Remaining openings for the following season get posted in mid-September and are available to all approved hosts on a first come, first served basis.

Contact the Camp Host Program Manager for assistance registering for your preferred time and location.

Tenure

Hosts are restricted to serving two calendar months at any one park in a year. Hosts may serve additional months in other parks during the same calendar year. However, service at each additional park will also be limited to a maximum of two months.

Arrival

Hosts will be contacted by the Site Supervisor approximately two weeks prior to the Host's assigned service month to coordinate arrival. Hosts may contact the Site Supervisor more than two weeks in advance if needed or desired.

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

Upon arrival at their assigned park, Hosts receive orientation and training on how to safely and successfully fulfill their duties.

Orientation

To be effective, Hosts must be familiar with their park's services and facilities. If possible, the Site Supervisor will take the Host on a tour of the park, and will note any special information that affects campers or visitors. Hosts should read all materials provided, tour the park again on their own, and ask questions to be well informed about the site.

The Host will be introduced to park staff and other volunteers. Hosts will be given a list of park employees and any necessary staff contact information.

Hosts should also be familiar with the surrounding area and region, as well as the state, as much as possible. Hosts are encouraged to explore the local community, particularly tourist attractions, grocery stores, laundry facilities, and shopping locations. Hosts should consider visiting the local Chamber of Commerce or Tourism Center.

Orientation Packet

Upon arrival, Hosts will be provided the following in hard copy or digital form:

- Park map
- List of park staff and work phone numbers
- Park brochures and fee guide
- Camping and cabin rental information

Job Training

Hosts are trained by supervisors or designees regarding the specifics of their job duties. Experienced hosts probably have done similar tasks at other locations, but still need clear expectations for the particular park.

Training may include, but is not limited to:

ORIENTATION & TRAINING CONTINUED...

Job Training Continued...

- FOCUS training for customer service
- Cleaning procedures
- Identification of dangerous plants and animals
- Emergency management training
- Hazardous materials training (if applicable)
- Handling of blood-borne pathogens (if applicable)
- Cash handling procedures (if applicable)
- Use of park radio (if applicable)
- Use of office equipment (if applicable)
- Operation of visitor center (if applicable)
- Use of mowers, weed eaters, & other equipment (if applicable)
- CPR/First Aid (if applicable, available, desired, and time permits)

Hosts should alert park staff of any health conditions they have that may affect their ability to perform certain duties. Hosts are expect to perform the agreed-upon duties, but should keep physical limitations in mind as they work.

Hosts should know where First Aid kits and AEDs are located. However, Hosts should not administer First Aid or CPR, or use the AED, unless they are currently certified to do so.

Hosts who work with any hazardous agent (like gas-powered equipment or cleaning agents) must complete a Worker's Right-to-Know Statement and related training, including information on how to handle hazardous chemicals, Safety Data Sheets, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and emergency procedures.

Please note, as volunteers, Hosts are not eligible for Workers' Compensation. Injuries that occur on-site must be handled by the volunteer's own insurance provider.

SUPERVISION & EVALUATION

Supervision

One staff person at each park is designated as the Site Supervisor for the Host Program. This person is responsible for the following:

- Responding to host questions, comments, & concerns
- Offering suggestions for host performance improvement (if needed)
- Ensuring host records hours
- Completing host evaluation form online
- Encouraging host to complete Site Evaluation form online
- Ensuring host handbook & other materials are returned upon completion of each Host's service term
- Coordinating volunteer recognition at the park level

The Site Supervisor keeps a copy (paper or digital) of the following information and records for each Host:

- Signed Host volunteer agreement (do not send to the Camp Host Program Manager)
- Host time sheets, if desired (most should just enter hours into YODA)
- Mid-month evaluation, if used

Hosts will have a specific supervisor when on duty. The supervisor can answer questions about specific assignments and any problems that arise while Hosts are working.

Scheduling

Work schedules vary from site to site, but all Camp Hosts are expected to work every weekend and holiday. Other hosts' schedules (like Retail and Park Hosts) may vary depending on the type of work they are performing.

Hosts have two weekdays off each week. Hosts generally work six hours per day, five days a week.

SUPERVISION & EVALUATION CONTINUED...

Termination

The Host Volunteer Agreement states that both the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Host themselves may terminate the agreement at any point in time for any reason. However, Hosts and supervisors are encouraged to discuss problems and find solutions so that termination is used only as a last resort.

Evaluation

Hosts should complete the Camp Host Site Evaluation at the end of their service. Supervisors will complete a Camp Host Evaluation at the end of the Host's service as well. The results of these evaluations are used to improve the Camp Host program.

RECOGNITION

Benefits

Virginia State Parks deeply appreciates the dedication and hard work of Hosts who volunteer their time. To show our thanks, Hosts receive the following benefits:

- Camping fees waived during service
- Free or reduced usage fees (including boating and other equipment rentals - check to make sure your site participates in this benefit)
- 40,000 Virginia State Parks customer loyalty points upon completion of a 30-day assignment (a maximum of 80,000 points may be earned in one season upon completion of two 30-day assignments)

RECOGNITION CONTINUED...

Benefits Continued...

Benefits earned are for the use of the Host or Host Couple only. They may be used in any increment, and in most time frames (subject to availability), except for major holidays. Points may be used toward any type of stay in, or entry pass for, Virginia State Parks.

Unused loyalty points expire five years after the date they are earned. To learn more about the loyalty points program and redemption values, visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/customer-loyalty.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More Information

Visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/camp-host> for more information, including a full list of Host benefits, responsibilities, and participating parks.

Contact

If you have questions that neither this booklet nor your Site Supervisor are able to answer, you may email vspcamphost@dcr.virginia.gov or call (804) 887-8930 to contact the Camp Host Program Manager.

Thank you for your service!



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