



FRIENDS of the
BLUE RIDGE
PARKWAY

VOLUNTEER MANUAL

2020



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Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer on the Blue Ridge Parkway!

FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway is a volunteer and member organization that partners with the National Park Service. Our goal is to increase the capacity of park staff so that they are able to interact with more visitors and maintain the park. Our volunteers are vital in keeping the park looking great and providing interactive experiences for visitors. We are glad you decided to lend a helping hand in our effort to preserve, protect and enhance the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The information in this Volunteer Handbook will be a valuable resource to you as you learn about FRIENDS. It will introduce you to our mission, and help make you aware of your volunteer responsibilities. You will learn how NPS staff and volunteers work together to maintain and improve the quality of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

We hope that you have a very rewarding experience serving as a FRIENDS volunteer. We encourage you to reach out to our office with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with us!



MISSION STATEMENT

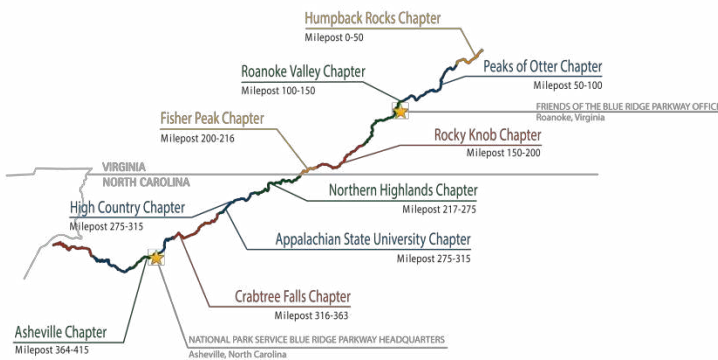
The mission of FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway is to help preserve, promote and enhance the outstanding natural beauty, ecological vitality and cultural distinctiveness of the Blue Ridge Parkway and its corridor, including surrounding scenic landscape, thereby preserving this national treasure for future generations.

Who are the FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway

FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) volunteer and membership organization. We partner with the National Park Service and other parkway partners to support the park and its programs. FRIENDS is often referred to as the “hands on stewards” of the parkway. Our volunteers work tirelessly alongside park staff to ensure the park is maintained and interpretative programs are supported for the over 16 million visitors that visit the park annually. We work to connect local communities to the park and its visitors by creating local FRIENDS chapters who represent specific areas along the park. We currently have 9 chapters along the 469 miles of the parkway. These chapters work

with local district rangers to develop a workplan every year to meet the needs of that area. Each chapter is unique in their task and interests. Working with a chapter is the best way to stay informed of volunteer opportunities. There are also Overlook, Trail and Cemetery Adopters who care for individual areas along the parkway to ensure a positive visitor experience.

Our members are individuals or companies who want to support our efforts along the parkway. They pay an annual fee to be a part of the organization.



Volunteers do not need to be members of FRIENDS but it is the best way to stay informed of all the activities along the parkway.

Our volunteers and members are important in our work to preserve, protect and enhance the Blue Ridge Parkway.



BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

At FRIENDS, we work to help preserve “America’s favorite drive”. You can be assured that however you choose to volunteer at FRIENDS, you are making a difference.

Volunteers have many opportunities that range from manual labor to helping visitors stay safe in the park. Volunteers can be a part of a chapter or just an individual who wants to make a difference.

To Volunteer:

- Visit our website: www.friendsbrp.org or call the office at 540-772-2992
- Fill out an application interest form on the website
- We will be in touch to connect you with a chapter chair in your area
- Once you are ready to volunteer, make sure you have filled out a Volunteer Service Agreement (VSA)
- The VSA form will be sent to the FRIENDS office where it will be entered into their online volunteer system. This document should be reviewed yearly to make sure all the information is up to date
- You will receive log in and password for our volunteer data base via email or mail so you can access the system, so please make sure you write legibly on the VSA form.
- The volunteer system can be used to enter volunteer hours

Reporting Hours:

Please report your volunteer hours to our office at volunteer@friendsbrp.org or through the Website www.friendsbrp.org .

If you are part of a chapter, please check with your chapter chair about the chapter procedures for reporting hours.

These hours are used by the Blue Ridge Parkway to receive funds for interpretative and volunteer programs. It is important that we report accurate hours to capture all the volunteer work along the parkway.

VOLUNTEER INCENTIVES

FRIENDS’ volunteers can earn free FRIENDS merchandise based on the total number of hours they volunteer each year. See the chart below.

50 total hours/ Year	Note Cards set
100 total hours/Year	Parkway Print
200 total hours/Year	Friends Umbrella
250 or more total hours/Per Year	National Park Service Park Pass



Volunteer Positions Available

****Listed below is are examples of Volunteer positions, Chapters may also have other activities you can participate in.**

For more information about each position, please see the full position description at the end of this manual

Overlook, Trail and Cemetery Adopter
The Buffer Brigade/ Crew leader
Resource Management
Interpretative
Maintenance and repair
Facility grounds keeping and landscaping
Chapter & Community relations
Visitor Center Support
Donation Box Collector
Social Media Representation

Program and Staff Responsibilities

As a FRIENDS volunteer, you will be connected to a local chapter and have access to a Volunteer Coordinator at our Headquarters in Roanoke, VA. Volunteers can join the local chapter or work independently depending on the volunteer task. Being a part of a chapter is the best way to stay connected to volunteer opportunities and social events.

It is the responsibility of FRIENDS volunteer coordinator or chapter chair to:

- Recruit, interview, and place volunteers & interns in positions which are appropriate for the individual
- Ensure new volunteers & interns receive a general orientation to the FRIENDS
- Maintain records for all active volunteers and interns, including hours, location, and description of tasks
- Issue each volunteer a work vest or appropriate attire for the task at hand
- Administer recognition program
- Provide ongoing support and assistance in staff/volunteer relationships.
- Administer and provide information regarding benefits and opportunities available for active volunteers & interns.
- Receive and fill requests from NPS staff for volunteer/intern assistance on specific projects.
- Provide written job descriptions for volunteer tasks



Safety

Safety is a topic taken seriously by the National Park Service and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Safety is not one person's responsibility, but the responsibility of everyone working on the Parkway. We expect each individual to take safety seriously, talk to coworkers about what they see, and report or stop unsafe activities. Safety is a "we" topic where we work together to make each person safe.

Service Standards

You are the face of FRIENDS to park visitors, National Park Staff and your community. FRIENDS relies on these relationships to be successful in our mission. We want our volunteers to represent our organization to the best of their ability. Since we serve a National Park that is open to the public, we require that our volunteers are professional, courteous and polite to everyone they encounter.

Policies and Procedures

FRIENDS volunteers work closely with NPS staff and other volunteers. It is important to follow procedures and policies to ensure the safety of everyone. We want to make your volunteer experience as pleasant as possible so please be aware of the following :

- **All Parkway volunteers MUST have a [VSA](#)** (Volunteer Service Agreement) completed and signed prior to volunteering on the Parkway. The VSA includes a photo release for Parkway related activities. This form can be found on our website www.Friendsbrp.org. For group activities involving adults 18 and older, you can use the [VSA Group Form](#) (OF301b).
- **If you are unable to fulfill a volunteer obligation** please let the chapter contact or FRIENDS office know so that they can find a replacement. You are expected to be on time and ready to fulfill your volunteer obligation.
- **A FRIENDS volunteer or NPS Staff must be on site during projects or events on Parkway land.** This is especially important when you are working on a project with a partner group.
- **If a volunteer is injured while volunteering in the Park**, the first action is to call 911 and perform lifesaving first aid as needed. As soon as possible, the incident needs to be reported to the NPS supervisor or Project contact. **Any injury to persons or property** during any activity of a Chapter must be reported immediately to the FRIENDS Office.
- **Please dress appropriately for your volunteer task**, safety is a priority when working on



parkway land.

- **FRIENDS volunteers who work one on one with children** leading hikes, hosting interpretative programs, and interacting with children are required to have a background check. Please contact the FRIENDS office to begin the process.
- **If a visitor would like to contribute money** to the FRIENDS organization or the park, please direct them to our website or closest donation box.
- **Confidentiality as an office volunteer** is important for all members, volunteers and employees of FRIENDS! Confidential information includes all financial and organizational information, communications and documents of FRIENDS and the Chapters not otherwise in the public domain.

Smoking, Alcohol, and Drug Use Policy

- Smoking is prohibited inside the FRIENDS and Parkway offices and at all inside event locations. Please find discrete outdoor designated smoking areas to smoke and extinguish and dispose of butts in a trash receptacle.
- Alcohol shall not be consumed or possessed while volunteering unless it is at the exception of a specific event. Volunteers who violate this policy are subject to immediate dismissal.
- Any volunteer who brings, possesses, is under the influence of, uses, transfers, sells, or attempts to sell on/at a FRIENDS or Parkway property or while at a FRIENDS event, at any time, any form of narcotic, drug, or hallucinogen, except the use of prescribed drugs under the direction of a physician, is subject to immediate dismissal.

Sexual Harassment Policy

- It is a FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway policy that all employees and volunteers have a right to work in an environment free from any type of discrimination, including freedom from sexual harassment.
- Our policy statement on this subject is as follows: FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway prohibits sexual harassment of employees or volunteers in any form. Such conduct may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Volunteers subjected to acts of sexual harassment should inform their chapter contact or FRIENDS office. Complaints will be reviewed impartially and resolved promptly.



It should be remembered that volunteer commitment is by the mutual consent of the volunteer and FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Either the volunteer or FRIENDS can terminate the relationship at will. When the relationship between the FRIENDS and a volunteer ends, all FRIENDS property must be returned to the chapter representative or FRIENDS office.

No member, volunteer or employee should make or encourage disparaging comments that may be considered derogatory or detrimental about FRIENDS, the National Park Service, any Chapter, employee, member or volunteer or any other person. Please bring any concerns your chapter representative or the FRIENDS office.

Remember, we are a team and our focus should be on fulfilling our mission!



Important NPS Information

Resource Artifacts

While visitors are allowed to gather up to one gallon of berries and fruits per person per day for personal consumption, gathering, tampering, or removal of artifacts from the park grounds is strictly prohibited. This may include animal remains, potential historic objects, plants, seeds, rocks etc. If an item or object is worthy of attention, please notify the park resource manager.

Firearms

A change in federal law effective February 22, 2010 allows people who can legally possess firearms under federal, state/commonwealth (North Carolina or Virginia), and local laws to possess those firearms on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Volunteers are required to abide by the same regulations in regard to firearms on the Blue Ridge Parkway. While on duty as a volunteer, volunteers are not allowed to open or conceal carry a firearm inside a federal building (43 CFR 20.511).

Volunteer Response to Incidents

Volunteers can be confronted with a wide range of incidents ranging from visitors locked out of their vehicle to serious emergency incidents (medical, requests for search and rescue, law enforcement, etc.). The principle tasks of the volunteer are to answer questions, offer useful advice, to educate visitors about the park and to assist and support the rangers in carrying out their many responsibilities. Volunteers can be a valuable resource when it comes to taking initial reports of incidents and can assist rangers by gathering and passing along key information about incidents.

Please note that volunteers should contact 911 and district rangers to handle any medical emergency beyond minor medicals (band-aid cases, etc.). Volunteers can assist rangers to the **level of their medical certification**. **Also, law enforcement actions must not be taken by volunteers. Volunteers can advise visitors of violations but should not place themselves in jeopardy by trying to prevent people from violating laws or regulations. Call a ranger if a violation persists.**

If a volunteer receives a report of an emergency incident, they should first try to keep communication with the reporting party. A ranger will want to ask questions of the reporting person once they arrive on scene. At the very least, get contact information (name, phone number or place they can be reached immediately). Then the volunteer should get a minimal amount of information, key facts, about the incident that they can pass on immediately to a ranger or Park Dispatch. Volunteers should contact a ranger or Park Dispatch immediately with minimal key facts about the incident. Once a ranger is on scene, volunteers should assist the ranger according to his/her instructions.

Some examples of key facts that a volunteer should attempt to obtain from a reporting party, depending on the type of incident, include:

- (1) Search and rescue (SAR) – description of missing party/parties including age, sex, where last seen, and destination
- (2) Motor vehicle accident (MVA) – location, number of vehicles, extent of car damage, extent of personal injury, obstruction of roadway



(3) Medical – location, nature of injury, if any action taken so far, if ambulance is needed, description of injured party. Volunteers can only assist rangers to the level of their medical certification.

(4) Law enforcement violation (LE) – location, nature of violation, number and description of people, vehicle description including make, color, state, plate number if possible.

(5) Fire – location, origin, type of fuel, wind direction and speed

(6) Traffic violation – location, direction of travel, speed, number of passengers, vehicle description including make, color, state, plate number if possible

(7) Vehicle lockout – location, type of lock, insurance carrier, description of vehicle including year, make, model, color, state, plate number

Volunteers should talk with their supervisors for further clarification of responsibilities in regards to emergency incidents.

Insurance Benefits/Injuries:

You receive the same benefits and protection as National Park Service employees under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (5 USC 8101 (1)9B) and 16 USC 18i(c)) and the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 USC, 2671 and 16 USC 18i (b)) and claims for damage to or loss of personal property incident to service (31 USC 3721 and 16 USC 18i (d)) and are considered to be Federal Employees for those purposes only. Because of the coverage that you do receive, it is imperative that you are properly signed up (VSA) and operating under written position descriptions, containing specific information on the type of work you are assigned to do. This is necessary in case questions arise as to whether you were acting within your assigned responsibilities.



Volunteer Positions

Current volunteer positions include:

Volunteers must provide their own transportation where applicable.

• **Overlook, Trail and Cemetery Volunteer**

This position serves to remove vegetation, litter, and debris, as well as perform other tasks as needed, at trails, overlooks, and/or cemeteries. The greater volunteer program will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but volunteers will contact local NPS staff regarding items beyond their abilities. Volunteers will check on overlooks, trails and cemeteries throughout the year to ensure they are clean and well maintained.

Major Duties:

- Assess and clear prescribed areas of excessive vegetation, debris, and litter utilizing a variety of hand and power tools. (Use of power tools on NPS property requires proper certification by NPS employees. Follow park regulations regarding when certifications are necessary and proper usage practices.)
- Address issues pertaining to aesthetics, drainage, and other matters relevant to the site with relevant approval of park staff.
- Perform sign inventories.
- Utilize safety procedures and follow established safety rules and regulations.
- Use and assure proper fit of required safety equipment and clothing (e.g., safety gloves, safety glasses, dust masks, ear plugs, etc.).
- Identify areas of need and create plans of action to deal with needs.
- Follow all guidelines and requirements specified by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

• **Buffer Brigade**

This position serves to remove vegetation and debris within pre-established buffer zones along vistas at Parkway overlooks. Volunteers completing this task will effectively extend capacity of Parkway employees, while also contributing to an improved Parkway experience overall.

Work will be conducted as a team utilizing tools furnished by the Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway to remove or reduce natural material within a predetermined and specified buffer at Parkway overlooks. The program will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but crew members will coordinate with local NPS staff on work location and progress. Work will be restricted to a 3 member crew minimum at locations that range in extremity of hazards, including weather conditions.

• **Buffer Brigade – Crew Leader**

This position will lead a team in removing vegetation and debris within pre-established buffer zones along vistas at Parkway overlooks, as well as serve as the liaison between staff of the National Park Service Maintenance & Engineering division and Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.



The program will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but the crew's leader will, at a minimum, be required to:

- Annually inspect Parkway plans and prescriptions for assigned overlooks and vistas on site with the local NPS Supervisor;
- Bi-annually inspect Friends' trailer and equipment conditions with NPS Supervisor;
- Communicate regularly with assigned crew in order to schedule work days;
- Check in and out with local NPS staff on each work day- providing work location, crew size, and progress updates;
- Provide leadership and support to assigned crew, including briefings at the start and close of each work day covering work plan and safety topics;
- Submit project hours and training completions to Friends' staff;
- Submit equipment repair and/or replacement requests to Friends' staff;
- Meet with members at each year's end to assess training renewals and member satisfaction;
- Regularly report progress in a standardized format to Friends' and NPS staff;
- Serve as the point of contact for crew communications, including emergency situations.

• Resource Management Volunteer

This position serves to support Parkway staff on resource management projects. The volunteer program will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but volunteers will receive instruction and support from NPS staff.

Major Duties:

- Collect remote camera recordings.
- Assist with boundary marking.
- Collect plant or animal specimens.
- Perform other tasks as requested by Park staff to support operations and initiatives, as well as ensure sustained safety of Parkway resources.
- Utilize safety procedures and follow established safety rules and regulations.
- Follow all guidelines and requirements specified by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

• Interpretive Volunteer

This position serves to create a quality experience for visitors through provision of information and assistance in various forms. The volunteer program will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but volunteers will receive instruction and support from NPS staff. This position includes helping with cultural concerts, farm demonstrations, and being a park rover to monitor park assets.

Major Duties:

- Assist with demonstrations and programs.
- Direct Traffic
- Lead Hikes
- Greet and interact with visitors.
- Perform other specialized tasks as requested by staff to enhance the visitor experience and support effective interpretive services on the Parkway.
- Document Information
- Utilize safety procedures and follow established safety rules and regulations.



- Follow all guidelines and requirements specified by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

• Maintenance Repair Volunteer

This position serves to repair items such as signs, mileposts, and fences; clean and paint various surfaces and structures; as well as complete carpentry projects and other tasks to improve aesthetics or enable sustained use. The volunteer program will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but volunteers will receive task instruction and direction by NPS staff.

Major Duties:

- Complete repair and improvement projects under the identification and direction of Parkway staff.
- Utilize safety procedures and follow established safety rules and regulations.
- Use and assure proper fit of required safety equipment and clothing (e.g., safety gloves, safety glasses, dust masks, ear plugs, etc.).
- Follow all guidelines and requirements specified by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

• Facility Grounds Keeping & Landscaping Volunteer

This position works primarily with the removal or addition of vegetation, application of mulch and other materials, as well as other tasks as necessary for the improved aesthetic of Parkway campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor centers, and other areas. The position will be administered and supported by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but volunteers may contact local NPS staff for support.

Major Duties:

- Assess and clear prescribed areas of excessive vegetation, debris, and litter utilizing a variety of hand and power tools. (Use of power tools on NPS property requires proper certification by NPS employees. Follow park regulations regarding when certifications are necessary and proper usage practices.)
- With park approval, plant or maintain pre-approved vegetative species within prescribed areas.
- Apply mulch or other materials for the improvement of prescribed areas.
- Utilize safety procedures and follow established safety rules and regulations.
- Use and assure proper fit of required safety equipment and clothing (e.g., safety gloves, safety glasses, dust masks, ear plugs, etc.).
- Identify areas of need and create plans of action to deal with needs.
- Follow all guidelines and requirements specified by Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

• Chapter relations & Community Outreach

This position serves as a FRIENDS representative at community events.

Major Duties:

To answer questions about FRIENDS and our mission to preserve, protect and enhance the parkway. They would also connect potential volunteers to the local chapter and opportunities along the parkway.



- **Social Media Representative**

This position is serves to promote FRIENDS and our activities on Social Media.

Major Duties:

To use your knowledge of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to promote the FRIENDS organization and our events.

- **Visitor Center Support**

This position helps place FRIENDS and parkway partner materials at visitor centers and kiosks along the park.

Major Duties:

To refill brochure racks in visitor centers, kiosk and trail heads with in certain area.