



# Parks & Trails Volunteer Handbook

Volunteers like YOU make this program possible!  
Thank you for joining our efforts to make communities across  
the CVRD a better place for us all to work, live and play.







## WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Parks & Trails Program. Your involvement in the CVRD Parks & Trails Volunteer Program will add great value to the region while benefiting the ecosystems and the communities of the Cowichan Valley. This handbook provides you with important information about the program. We look forward to working with you to make your volunteer experience with CVRD parks and trails a rewarding one!

## OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

As an important part of the fabric of CVRD parks and trails, volunteers support and contribute to the vision, mission and values of the CVRD through participating and contributing to program activities.

**VISION:** Cowichan Communities will be the most livable and healthy in Canada.

**MISSION:** We serve the public interest through leadership, cooperation, and a focus on community priorities and strengths.

**VALUES:** Respect, engagement, quality of service, collaboration, accountability, supportive work environment, integrity.

**PROGRAM MISSION:** To provide increased stewardship and community engagement in CVRD parks and trails through volunteer involvement recognizing that parks and trails are key contributors to the quality of life and cultural fabric of the CVRD.

## WHAT WE DO

CVRD Parks & Trails volunteers work with the CVRD Parks & Trails Division on projects related to improving the health of ecosystems through invasive plant removal and native planting, improving trail networks, and clean ups and restoration of natural areas.



## VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a CVRD Parks & Trails volunteer you can expect to be treated with respect and appreciation. The CVRD provides support and appropriate resources to facilitate meaningful volunteer involvement. You have the right and the responsibility to decline to take on any work you feel is unsafe or for which you feel there is inadequate supervision, training or direction.

During participation in the program we endeavor to:

- Ensure that you are provided with a safe working environment
- Treat you fairly, with respect and value and recognize you for your contribution to the work of the CVRD
- Provide management of volunteers and volunteer activities in a manner that is consistent with CVRD policies, standards and bylaws
- Provide valuable opportunities for you to become an active supporter of parks and trails initiatives

As a volunteer you are expected to support and abide by the vision, mission and values of the CVRD and the Parks & Trails Volunteer Program. By signing up and participating, volunteers must read and agree to follow the CVRD Parks & Trails Volunteer Agreement. All policies and practices of the program are there to ensure a safe working environment for both volunteers and the CVRD.

## BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Although no money changes hands in a volunteer relationship there is great value to donating your time and energy. Volunteers with this program will gain knowledge, skills and experience associated with parks and trails. Volunteering also provides for social connection, and networking opportunities as well as community building. It is a great way to support individual and community mental and physical wellness. There is also a sense of satisfaction that comes from spending time on meaningful work that contributes to the value of parks and trails in the local community.



## VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

A CVRD Parks & Trails volunteer is anyone who offers time, energy and skills of their free will and without compensation for the benefit of parks and trails managed by the CVRD. Volunteers who are between the ages of 16 and 18 must have parental or legal guardian consent to participate in the program. Volunteers aged 15 and younger must be accompanied by their parent or legal guardian while volunteering.

Those interested in volunteering should enjoy spending time outdoors in nature undertaking physical tasks and be positive, enthusiastic and interested in protecting and rehabilitating natural spaces and or improving trails.

### *Goals:*

- Work cooperatively with your supervisor and fellow volunteers to complete assigned tasks at volunteer events in a safe and effective manner.
- Have fun, learn about and engage with CVRD parks and trails in new and rewarding ways, and contribute to a positive experience for all program participants.
- Improve CVRD parks and trails through actions that promote healthy ecosystems and high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities for the community.

### *Responsibilities:*

- Actively participate in assigned activities.
- Comply with all applicable CVRD policies and procedures.
- Carry out all work as a volunteer under the direction and supervision of the CVRD Parks & Trails Division.



### ***Limitations:***

- As a volunteer of the CVRD it is important to recognize that you are not considered an employee, and therefore are not entitled to compensation or benefits traditionally associated with an employment position or role. As a volunteer of the CVRD you have no authority to officially represent the CVRD.

### ***Skills and Abilities:***

You will learn many skills and develop abilities while volunteering with this program. The following list encompasses some of the skills and abilities that will be used in this program. We will inform you of specific considerations for opportunities as they are scheduled and advertised.

- At least moderate physical fitness (required for most volunteer activities).
- Ability to use hand tools.
- Ability to work outdoors in varied weather.

### ***Qualities:***

- Positive attitude
- Team-player
- Enthusiastic
- Interested in parks, ecosystems, trails and green spaces.

### ***Useful Experience:***

It is not a requirement to have prior experience, however, some types of experience that would be useful are:

- Ecological restoration, gardening or landscaping (native and invasive plant identification, weed control techniques, proper planting technique, use of a variety of hand tools).
- Trail building or maintenance (theory and practice of sustainable trail building, experience with trail building or maintenance using hand tools).
- Hiking, working outdoors in a variety of conditions.





## REGISTERING FOR THE PROGRAM

To get involved and start volunteering you must sign up for the program by filling out and submitting a CVRD Parks & Trails Volunteer Agreement and Application Form. These forms are available at [www.cvrld.ca/parks-and-recreation-culture/volunteering-in-cvrld-parks/](http://www.cvrld.ca/parks-and-recreation-culture/volunteering-in-cvrld-parks/) - click 'Volunteer Today'.

Alternatively, you can request a pdf or paper copy of the forms to fill out. Request these by contacting the Parks Volunteer Coordinator at [Parks.Volunteers@cvrd.bc.ca](mailto:Parks.Volunteers@cvrd.bc.ca) or **250.746.2660**

## ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Once you are registered with the volunteer program you will receive an orientation email which will include important information about the CVRD and the Parks & Trails Division including relevant policies that apply to your involvement as a volunteer.

At each volunteer event you will receive a site and activity orientation so everyone feels safe, comfortable and knowledgeable while completing the task at hand. There will be an introduction of all volunteers and supervisors at the start of each volunteer activity or event.

Volunteers will be provided with task-specific training for each volunteer activity. This will include explanations of how and why tasks will be completed as well as demonstrations for things like proper tool use and proper planting technique.

## SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

Volunteers will be supervised by CVRD Parks & Trails staff during volunteer events. Feedback will be provided to volunteers on an ongoing basis, as needed. Volunteers are also encouraged to provide feedback regarding the program to CVRD staff.



## **WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS**

Working conditions for the volunteer program will be varied. Volunteer events will take place almost exclusively in the outdoors on a CVRD park or trail. Difficulty of access will vary, as will weather conditions. We always aim to provide you as much information about an upcoming volunteer event as possible so that you can decide whether or not it is an appropriate opportunity for you to take part in. Our first priority is keeping you safe while volunteering. Be aware that an event may be postponed or canceled if unsafe conditions arise.

## **TIME COMMITMENT**

Most volunteer opportunities will take place as 2 to 4 hour work parties, although this may vary depending on the project. You can participate in as many or as few volunteer opportunities as you like depending on your interests and availability.

## **DISMISSAL AND RESIGNATION**

The CVRD may end an individual's participation in the program if they do not remain in compliance with applicable CVRD policies, standards, and bylaws as per the Parks & Trails Volunteer Agreement. Efforts will be made to address issues with a volunteer should any arise. Dismissal of a volunteer will only be considered as a last resort if issues cannot be resolved.

As a volunteer you can cease participation in the program at any time you wish. We appreciate you letting us know if you will no longer be participating in this program so that we can thank you for your contributions, keep our records up to date, and receive any constructive feedback you may have about your experience in the program.



## VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Volunteer events will be advertised on the CVRD website, social media as well as other local media. Once you sign up for volunteer events you may also receive emails about your upcoming scheduled volunteer activities.

### How to Register for an Event:

Once you are registered with the program you will be able to sign up for volunteer events directly through your online volunteer profile. Alternatively, you can phone or email the Parks Volunteer Coordinator to register for an event.

### What to Expect:

CVRD Parks & Trails Volunteer opportunities focus on:

- **Invasive plant removal** - Achieved manually by cutting, digging and pulling.
- **Clean-ups** – achieved by removing and properly disposing of garbage in parks and on trails.
- **Trail maintenance and restoration** – completed by using hand tools to undertake improvements to existing trails or preparing sites for the building of new trails.
- **Park restoration** – achieved through planting or transplanting of native species, weeding and mulching restoration sites.
- **and more!**

Parks & Trails staff will endeavor to provide as much information as possible ahead of each event so that you can feel prepared and comfortable while volunteering. Please feel free to contact the Parks Volunteer Coordinator should you have any questions about volunteering.

Volunteer events will go ahead rain or shine, but they may be canceled if potentially unsafe conditions arise such as high wind or icy ground. You will be provided as much advance notice as possible for canceled or postponed volunteer activities.





### **What We Provide:**

The CVRD will provide work gloves, tools, materials, personal protective equipment as required for the scheduled activity, along with light refreshments.

### **What to Bring:**

Please come dressed for the weather as volunteer events will take place in various conditions. Sturdy closed-toe footwear is a must! In addition, depending on the weather and type of activity please consider bringing the following items:

- rain gear (waterproof pants and jacket with a hood), a hat, warm layers, sun glasses, sun screen, long pants and sleeves and clothing you don't mind getting dirty.

In addition, if you require or may require medication please bring it with you. Please bring all the drinking water you will need (at least 1 liter) and a snack or lunch depending on your needs and preferences.

### **Pets:**

As much as we love our furry friends we prefer if you leave them at home for volunteer events. Service animals are welcome.

### **Safety:**

We ask all program participants to keep in mind their own safety and that of other participants while volunteering. While volunteering, please take extra caution when walking through uneven, unmaintained terrain to avoid any slips, trips or falls. Special care should also be taken when using or storing hand tools to keep everyone injury free while volunteering. Always be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye out for potential hazards. CVRD staff supervising volunteers are First Aid trained in case of injury.

### **Accessibility and Inclusivity:**

We strive to provide an accessible and inclusive environment for our volunteers that reflects the diversity of our community. Please let us know if there are ways we can accommodate you during this program.



## THANK YOU!

This program would not be possible without the generous contributions of time and energy through volunteers like you! The CVRD thanks you for making this community a better place for us all to live, work and play by becoming involved with the Parks & Trails Volunteer Program.

## FEEDBACK

We welcome feedback from our volunteers. Please tell us about your experience with the program using the contact information below.

## CONTACT

Stay informed about upcoming volunteer opportunities!

Please contact us if you have any questions about the program and how to get involved.

### Parks Volunteers Coordinator:

- **Parks.Volunteers@cvrld.bc.ca**
- **250-746-2660**
- In person or by mail - 175 Ingram St, Duncan BC, V9L 1N8

### Website:

- [www.cvrld.ca/parks-and-recreation-culture/volunteering-in-cvrld-parks/](http://www.cvrld.ca/parks-and-recreation-culture/volunteering-in-cvrld-parks/)
- Click 'Volunteer Today' to complete an online Volunteer Application & Agreement and sign-up for our email list.

### Facebook:

- Follow us at **CVRD Recreation**
- Check out our Parks & Trails Volunteers Facebook group for upcoming opportunities, photos and more!

### Instagram:

- Follow us **@CVRDrec**







## ABOUT CVRD PARKS & TRAILS

The CVRD is well known for its environmental and cultural diversity. Parks and trails are important for the community as they provide for outdoor recreation opportunities and environmental protection. The region is characterized by a variety of landscapes including open farmland, ocean coastline, lakes and significant fish-bearing rivers, lush riparian areas, mountains, forests and meadows. The CVRD manages over 220 parks and trails for the benefit of current and future residents of the Cowichan Valley and visitors to this region.

Photo: Stoney Hill Regional Park

