

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OHIO CERTIFIED VOLUNTEER NATURALIST
VOLUNTEER APPLICANT
INVOLVEMENT PACKET

FOR USE WITH ALL
POTENTIAL OHIO CERTIFIED VOLUNTEER NATURALISTS

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED:

- ◆ Welcome letter
- ◆ OCVN Program Policy Statement
- ◆ OCVN Volunteer Position Description
- ◆ OCVN Volunteer Application
- ◆ OCVN Standards of Behavior
Reference Copy for Volunteer
Copy to Sign and Return

Dear Potential Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist,

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program (OCVN). Volunteers are an integral part of OSU Extension, and the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program volunteer educators make a significant contribution to natural resource programming throughout Ohio. Let me share some important information about our volunteer selection process.

Effective November 1, 2002 Ohio State University Extension implemented a new volunteer selection policy and procedures. All individuals who are interested in volunteering with Ohio State University Extension and working with a member of a vulnerable population (minors, elderly over age 65, or individuals with disabilities) must adhere to new selection procedures.

While the actual order of implementation may vary from chapter to chapter, all potential volunteers will: (1) receive a position description; (2) complete an application and return it to the State office; (3) have references collected by program professionals; (4) complete an interview; (5) submit to a criminal history fingerprint record check; and (6) agree to and sign the Volunteer Standards of Behavior form. The standards of behavior form you will receive are specific to the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program.

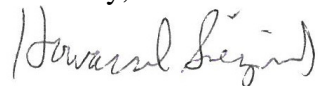
In addition, in order to complete the full Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program Volunteer Involvement packet each potential OCVN volunteer will receive a copy of the (7) Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program Policy Statement.

Please know that this information may be updated periodically and will be kept in a secured file cabinet. This information will be kept on file for a minimum of three years following the receipt of your application or the termination of your involvement as an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (whichever is longest). The release of information will follow The Ohio State University and Ohio State University Extension operating procedures and will be in accordance with Ohio law.

Serving others in your community can bring immense satisfaction as you help them grow, learn, develop, and succeed. Additionally, volunteering provides you an opportunity to gain new skills, help others, and meet new friends. We hope that you recognize the tremendous benefits of volunteering and will join us in helping assure that everyone involved has a positive, educational experience.

We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to the potential opportunity to work with you as we "Share our Naturalist Knowledge with Others"!

Cordially,



Howard J. Siegrist, Extension Educator
The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program

Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Program

Policy Statement

Sponsorship

At the state level, The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program is sponsored jointly by **Ohio State University Extension** (OSUE) and the **Ohio Department of Natural Resources** (ODNR). Partnerships at the local level are encouraged and could include other public agencies, as well as private organizations whose interests are within the boundaries of the program. The OCVN program is administered by Ohio State University Extension in cooperation with a state steering committee. The committee is made up of individuals from the following organizations:

- The Ohio State University Extension
- The Ohio State University School of Environment and Natural Resources
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources
- Ohio Sea Grant
- Five Rivers Metro Parks (Dayton)
- Ohio Master Gardeners
- Audubon Ohio
- Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative (OBCI)
- Hancock Parks District
- City of Dublin Parks

Program Mission

The mission of the OCVN program is to promote awareness and citizen stewardship of Ohio's natural resources through science-based education and community service.

Objectives

- To improve public understanding of natural resources and their management.
- To enhance existing natural resource education and outreach activities.
- To develop a volunteer naturalist network that is self-sufficient.

Program

The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program exists as a collection of local programs that adhere to a set of objectives, procedures, and minimum requirements set at the state level. The program, at the state level, is ***governed by a State Steering Committee made up of statewide and local sponsor representatives***. The state committee sets the minimum standards and curriculum requirements for the program. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists are trained and certified at the local level through their respective chapters. When feasible, each local chapter should have at least local coordinating committee participation by local OSUE and/or ODNR personnel – these individuals form the administrative connection to the statewide program for their respective agencies. It is important for Certified Volunteer Naturalist chapters to capitalize on local

resources and expertise through partnerships. Representatives of these local partners may serve on a planning committee.

This committee may include natural resources personnel, the leaders of local natural resources groups, and other interested individuals. When chapters are in their early stages (i.e., during the planning of their first training sessions) the local planning committee should be led by OSUE or ODNR personnel. As a chapter matures, trained Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist volunteers should assume a larger role in the administration of the program. Once the chapter has attained a trained group of volunteers these volunteers should take on larger roles in the coordination of the chapter by developing and maintaining a Chapter Executive Committee and committee chairs. At this time, the original local chapter steering committee begins serving in an advisory capacity to the Chapter and its Board. (Appendix I lists guidelines for these advisors). Because Ohio has such a diversity of landscapes and population densities, the natural resources (and their uses) in each area of the state are also highly variable. Therefore, each local chapter should consider customizing their training program to focus on their local ecosystems. When planning the training schedule, the local coordinating committee should try to use expertise from local universities, nature centers, and research centers, as well as local land managers. The local coordinators should plan and facilitate the training sessions so that class and field sessions adequately cover the following suggested categories of topics:

The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN) program is a volunteer educational program designed to meet the natural resource education needs of the citizens of Ohio. Its purpose is to train volunteers and use their expertise to teach people more about Ohio's natural resources and their importance to our quality of life. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists provide service to their local natural resource organizations so that their activities and programs can be more effectively and efficiently delivered to the general public.

OCVN trainees receive formal training from their local partnership covering a wide range of pertinent natural resource topics. To become an OCVN, the trainee must be accepted into the program, complete the training component, pass the required exam, and volunteer for the specified number of hours.

The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of ways, depending on the needs determined by the local chapter. After the completion of the initial required volunteer time, volunteers are encouraged to continue to assist with natural resource program delivery as Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists.

The state OCVN steering committee develops policies and guidelines for the operation of the program. It also provides some training and recognition materials and other resources for chapters participating in the program. On the local level, the program is coordinated by an OCVN coordinator or committee.

Training

The formal training program is the responsibility of the OCVN coordinator or committee managing the program. Instructors may include OSU faculty, ODNR professionals, Extension Specialists, Extension Associates, experienced Volunteer Naturalists, and other experts with a demonstrated knowledge in the subject matter being taught, as well as an ability to communicate that knowledge to a lay audience.

The training program is intended to provide a balanced, integrated, practical course in natural resource science. The following are the core topics: (Other topics based on local needs may also be part of the curriculum.)

- Introduction to the OCVN Program
- Ecological Concepts
- Environmental Education and Interpretation
- Exploring Ohio's Watersheds
- Aquatic Life
- Stewardship
- Geology
- Soils
- Plants
- Forests
- Insects and other macroinvertebrates
- Reptiles & Amphibians
- Birds
- Mammals

The principle resource for the training will be the OCVN Training Manual and other materials approved by the state steering committee that include the core topics appropriate to Ohio. Core training is held during a 2-3 month period, with continuing education or in-service training provided during the year in accordance with local needs and resources. Regional continuing education opportunities should be offered at least once every two years. A national conference is held annually to assist in fulfilling continuing education requirements.

Attendance

Each OCVN program trainee is expected to attend every class session. The trainee is responsible for initiating provisions to make up any missed sessions. A limit on the number of allowable absences may be specified by the local coordinator.

Class attendance

In anticipating the need to set standards for maintaining class attendance, the State Advisory Committee has set the following policy: Each chapter may set a local standard for the maximum number of classes that may be missed during a given training cycle. Chapters are encouraged to keep this standard to a minimum. However, regardless of the number of classes that can be missed, a participant must make up the class(es) by attending the appropriate class(es) within 12 months. Appropriate means the chapter can allow an advanced training class to count as make-up or the chapter may require that it be the same subject class presented during the next training

cycle. If an advanced training class is used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as advanced training. In this case the class must account for only one type of training -- initial training OR advanced training. A participant may also attend the same subject class of a neighboring chapter within the same ecoregion given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring chapter. If a participant must miss more classes than the local standard allows then the respective chapter may consider an exception to their rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. However this should be the exception not the rule. Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards certification.

Examinations and Quizzes

All trainees must pass a final exam with a cumulative average of **70 percent** or better. This exam will test the trainees' knowledge of broad natural resource principles. Local level coordinators may incorporate quizzes into the training program as they see fit.

Volunteer Commitment and Certification

The OCVN state steering committee has established the following minimum requirement for certification and recertification. However, the local chapters may opt to increase these minimum requirements.

Certification:

- **40** hours of combined classroom and field instruction.
- **40** hours of approved volunteer service projects.

In general, the first year begins once the volunteer has completed the initial training. A chapter may allow participants to begin earning volunteer service hours once they begin the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists training.

Upon completing the training portion of the program, each trainee will receive an OCVN name badge and a "completion of training" certificate. Upon fulfillment of the 40 hours of volunteer service, the trainee will then receive an OCVN certificate and an OCVN logo pin. *A Nametag template has been set up. These are available through Ryder Engravers at 1-740-927-7193. Nametags will run approximately \$3.25/ea. The OCVN logo pins can be purchased from J.P. Lieser \$2.00/ea lieser8@ag.osu.edu*

Only unpaid public service in OCVN-sponsored activities will count toward the requirement. Other volunteer activities may be counted after receiving prior approval from the local coordinator. The required volunteer hours must be completed within one year (or another time period designated by the local coordinator) of completing the training course.

Volunteer Selection

Volunteer selection for the program is managed by a local coordinator or committee.

Each OCVN applicant must:

- Complete an application
- Review and sign the OCVN Policy Statement form
- Review and sign an OSU Extension Standards of Behavior form
- Attend a face-to-face interview
- Pass a fingerprint background check and have two references verified.
- Have a service record on file at the local office

Information in the service record file is treated confidentially. Volunteers' records are kept in separate files in a secured place and are accessible only by trained staff. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to make sure that the information on his or her application (e.g., address, contact information, etc.) and service record are kept current and accurate. This is necessary for liability reasons and for the protection of the volunteer as well as program clientele.

Use of the Title

The title "Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist" is to be used only and exclusively in conjunction with the OCVN program. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service work under the auspices of the OCVN program. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists are advised not to advertise their place of business during program-sponsored activities and are not to be listed as OCVNs on the advertisements of businesses that they own or where they are employed. Because the OCVN program is a source of unbiased, research-based information, the following are considered inappropriate: appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University endorsement of any product or place of business.

Recertification

Once an individual has completed the necessary requirements and is certified as an OCVN, he or she is not automatically an OCVN for life. Volunteer Naturalists must be recertified each year to remain on the "active" list and maintain the OCVN title. Volunteer Naturalist Recertification is achieved by fulfilling the following minimum requirements:

1. Donate a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service each year.
2. Complete a minimum of 8 hours of continuing education through any of the following options:
 - Participation in the Association for Natural Resource Outreach and Service (ANROSP) Conference.
 - Participation in an OCVN-sponsored continuing education session.
 - Participation in any other program approved by the local coordinator for recertification.

Advanced Training

The purpose of advanced training is to provide Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also, advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Volunteer Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts. Although the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program may occasionally provide statewide or regional advanced training opportunities, it is generally the responsibility of the chapter to insure that there are sufficient advanced training opportunities offered so that members can meet their 8-hour minimum requirement. In addition, the local chapter should be a clearinghouse for notifying members of approved advanced training opportunities that exist outside the chapter boundaries. Advanced training courses may be made available directly through OSUE, ODNR or any number of short-courses provided by universities, local parks or nature centers. One way for a chapter's trainees to meet their advanced training requirements is by actually sponsoring the advanced training sessions.

Each chapter's Local Coordinating Committee must pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. Advanced training hours are also counted one hour for each hour of advanced training; however travel time is not included for advanced training hours. Pre-approval must be obtained for an advanced training session that is outside the chapter boundaries.

Chapter Coordinators and/or the Chapter Advanced Training Committee should use the following criteria or ask the following questions about the training program when reviewing and approving Advanced Training Opportunities:

Does the Advanced Training opportunity:

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide Volunteer Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
4. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
5. Take advantage of local partnerships?
6. Provide Volunteer Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?
7. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter?
8. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Ohio?

Advanced Training opportunities must meet the following criteria: 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the authorization process.

Each Certified Volunteer Naturalist chapter may set its own recertification standards above and beyond these minimum requirements.

Inactive Status

An inactive Certified Volunteer Naturalist is one who is unable to commit to the annual recertification requirements at present but would like the opportunity to remain in the program and recertify in the future. The following policies apply:

- 1) To request “inactive status,” the Certified Volunteer Naturalist must be in good standing and must have completed the original commitment of training, passed the exam, and completed the required hours of volunteer service.
- 2) The Certified Volunteer Naturalist must complete an Inactive Status Request Form.
- 3) The inactive Certified Volunteer Naturalist must attend 8 hours of acceptable continuing education for each year of inactive status (see item #2 in the Recertification section).
- 4) An inactive Certified Volunteer Naturalist may recertify within 3 years as long as the defined criteria are met. Individuals on inactive status for more than three years must also retake and pass the final exam or retake the course, in addition to meeting the defined requirements.

Out-of-State Transfers and Transfers from Similar In-State Programs

A Certified Volunteer Naturalist who was certified in another state may be admitted into the OCVN program by:

1. Showing that he or she is a Volunteer Naturalist in good standing in another state.
2. Completing the Volunteer Involvement packet for his or her file.
3. Attending a face-to-face interview and passing a fingerprint background check.
4. Acquiring a current OCVN program training manual.
5. Acquiring an OCVN program name badge.
6. Scoring a minimum of 70 percent on a final exam administered by the local coordinator
7. Meeting all of the recertification requirements listed herein.

In-State Transfers

Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists transferring from one chapter to another also must be in good standing and have their file transferred to the new chapter.

Membership in Multiple Chapters

It is not recommended that Volunteer Naturalists carry membership in multiple chapters. As an alternative, it is recommended that Volunteer Naturalist Chapters within similar ecoregions work together to offer the same benefits a volunteer may be seeking through membership in a chapter other than the organization in which they were trained.

Appendix I. Chapter Management Guidelines

Chapter Management Guidelines (Key Points)

- Maintain the program as an unbiased public service.
- Recognize one’s responsibilities as an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist.
- Recognize the autonomy of the various partners when coordinating or implementing projects and other chapter events.
- Keep accurate records.
- Present a positive public image that speaks well of the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Program.
- Actively participate as a team member with other individuals of the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Program.

- Local Chapters should be instrumental in making members aware of these key elements and their own bylaws, policies and procedures. Chapters shall be vigilant and responsible for ensuring members and affiliates are following policy.

Additional Chapter Management Recommendations:

A Chapter may also establish local awards as seen fit. An example of such an award might include "the most hours served" or “____ Chapter Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist of the Year”.

Additional Information

For any point not yet addressed by the state guidelines, or for any issue that arises that may need development of formalized procedures, please inform the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist State Steering Committee. Issues will be brought forth and reviewed by the Steering Committee. When possible and appropriate, guidelines will be developed and amended to the current statewide Chapter Management Guidelines. It is the responsibility of the local chapter representatives to inform the state advisory committee of such issues.

Appendix II. Chapter Coordinator or Coordinating Committee Guidelines

The Chapter Coordinator's/Committee's roll is as follows:

1. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
2. The Coordinator/Committee should not be the manager of the chapter business or activities. They are to be a chapter supporter and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the chapter and/or its members on appropriate and professional matters.
3. Be familiar with the goals, activities and mission of the organization.
4. Be willing to meet with the officers of the organization to discuss expectations for roles and responsibilities.
5. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the chapter as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the chapter's executive committee that are within the parameters of the statewide Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program.
6. Facilitate opportunities for Volunteer Naturalists to exercise initiative and judgment within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, coordinators/committees should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.
7. Be aware of the chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures.
8. Be aware of the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist State policies and guidelines and other agency or organization guidelines that establish expectations for volunteer requirements,

behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its officers know where these policies and guidelines are published, what rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. You are expected to report violations or potential violations to the appropriate Volunteer Naturalist program and/or agency official.

9. The advisor should be ready to assist the Volunteer Naturalist State Program and Steering Committee as needed as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.

10. The advisor is responsible for notifying the chapter officers and the State Steering Committee regarding chapter concerns. The chapter officers are responsible for notifying the State Steering Committee regarding advisor problems or concerns. The chapter-Coordinators/Committee relationship is not a one-way street, in that the chapters and its leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for coordinator/committee interaction and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

OHIO CERTIFIED VOLUNTEER NATURALIST POSITION DESCRIPTION

General Description

To support The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program, Licking County area, in meeting the needs of our citizens in the area of natural resources education by assisting with educational programs, and providing service to local natural resource organizations.

Example Responsibilities:

- Plan and present environmental education programs for a variety of audiences in classroom or outdoor settings.
- Lead or participate in natural resource projects (e.g., stream monitoring, tree planting, invasive species control).
- Develop promotional and educational materials (e.g., brochures, displays and exhibits, web-sites).
- Interpret information from Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist manual for the general public.
- Represent and promote the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program to the public at community events.
- Keep records of training and volunteer activities.

Time Required

Volunteer hours will vary depending on the needs of participating organizations. A total of 40 hours must be donated by December 31, 2010.

Qualifications

The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program volunteer must show an interest in, enthusiasm for, and knowledge of natural resources. He/she must be able to communicate with the public and deal courteously with visiting public and other Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program participants. He/she must be able to read, write and comprehend the information presented in the training sessions, and be able to communicate that information to the general public. The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program volunteer must pass a final exam in order to volunteer in the program. He/she must provide his/her own transportation to training and volunteer activities.

Location: Chapter office and various locations around the state.

Supervision:

Howard Siegrist represents the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist program, and will provide coordination, supervision and support to the volunteers. He will assign, review and evaluate volunteer activities.