



## SCA'S GUIDE TO CITIZEN STEWARDSHIP A Call to Conservation Service

As SCA enters its second 50 years, we've been thinking hard about our mission, our goals, and our impact. We have 50,000 alumni across the country, and each of those volunteers has contributed many hours to conservation service. But our nation's parks, public lands and communities are in need as more and more public funding to parks is cut.

Can we all do more? We've got the ability to help. One SCA alumni can get 10 friends to volunteer for 8 hours in their local community. That's 80 hours. If 3,000 alumni organize projects, all of a sudden, that number jumps to 24,000 hours. That can go a long way in protecting and restoring our natural resources.

To aid in this effort, SCA has created an all-volunteer Alumni Council [[www.thesca.org/alumni/be-leader/alumni-council](http://www.thesca.org/alumni/be-leader/alumni-council)] to facilitate the engagement of alumni in their local communities. The Council has taken on the responsibility of updating this citizenship plan yearly because they understand how difficult it can be to plan a service event, even with the best of intentions!

We hope that you will join us and help widen the circle of people who are actively working to protect, preserve, and improve our environment and communities. SCA's Guide to Citizen Stewardship is a general 4-step map on how to hold a conservation service event. At the end of the document is a great checklist you may use in your planning efforts.

Good luck!



Giving your time is easy, but successful events require careful planning. Your investment will pay off even more with the support of friends, family, and co-workers—so just do it! Organizing a volunteer conservation project can seem like a daunting task, but it's just a matter of a few simple steps.

## Step 1: Pick a Project

This is the fun part. Let your imagination run wild as you think of all the possibilities for getting your hands dirty. Are you really jazzed by the idea of doing aquatic restoration? Wildlife surveys? Trail maintenance? Or maybe there's a park in your neighborhood that you walk in regularly that's in need of some love?

Projects that involve basic solutions to complete are often the most successful—removing invasive plants, for example, or hauling crushed stone to plate a trail surface can engage many people to accomplish a lot with a minimum of training and supervision. Whatever way you want to give back, chances are you can find it.

You have two choices. You can either work with a park or forest or other public agency to create your own service project with them and have them pick up the liability or piggyback on the project of another organization that you know does really good work and that you think you could help. Garden Clubs. Volunteer Coordinators in National Forests or National Parks. Trail organizations (here's a link to hundreds of trail organizations across the country: [americanhiking.org/PTAllianceOrg.aspx](http://americanhiking.org/PTAllianceOrg.aspx) ). Earth Day (every April; [earthday.net](http://earthday.net)), National Trails Day (every June; [nationaltrailsday.org](http://nationaltrailsday.org)) or National Public Lands Day (every September; [publiclandsday.org](http://publiclandsday.org)) are all good opportunities for service projects.

### Questions to answer with your partner group

- How many volunteers can the project accommodate?
- Are tools and equipment available for use?
- What about safety? Will volunteers need gloves or hardhats?
- Is this project appropriate for the skills and abilities of the volunteers?
- Will someone from the group be available for the day to supervise the work and clear up any questions?
- Will the partner's liability insurance cover the volunteers should anything go wrong?

NOTE: Projects that require the use of power tools, chainsaws, mechanized equipment and/or advanced trail work techniques (e.g. rock work requiring pulleys and winches), should not be undertaken.

## Step 2: Figure out the Details

You should meet with your partner group (i.e. the land manager or other nonprofit group) to discuss the work to be done. What do they want you and your group of volunteers to accomplish? What are reasonable expectations for the numbers of people

who will be involved? Will the land manager be providing the liability coverage for the event?

[Note: if the land manager will not be providing the liability coverage, SCA strongly recommends that you find a partner who will. This will protect you and the other participants.]

Establish plans to reach the event's goals. Steps to put in motion include:

- Register your event with SCA [[http://members.thesca.org/personal\\_events](http://members.thesca.org/personal_events)]
- Recruiting and preparing work leaders able to guide volunteers, keep them motivated, and follow the event's emergency response plan in case something goes awry.
- Distributing info about the project, the schedule of events, and details of the day including where to gather, clothing to wear, and whether to bring food and water.
- Figuring out what tools and materials will be needed, how you'll get them, and what will happen to them after the event.
- Developing an emergency response plan. At a minimum, the group leaders should have first-aid kits.
- Planning for restroom facilities, sources of drinking water, and enough food all of which will increase the comfort of volunteers and reduce the likelihood they might suffer injury and illness.
- Identifying a place for people to gather and putting together a carpooling plan.
- Planning ways to thank volunteers and land managers for their work.

Finding volunteers to help out with your service day is as easy as opening your eyes to the people who surround you. Volunteer work is fun and rewarding, and there's nothing like the camaraderie of a shared purpose. What a great opportunity to be with the people you enjoy! Invite your friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors. Or there may be other volunteer organizations that would like to pitch in as well. There are certainly other SCA alumni in the area and they may want to get involved. You can find out about alumni near you from the SCA Alumni Staff.

Once you have an idea of numbers, work with your partner group to figure out what tools you'll need and how to get them. Check out some of these good resources:

- Many cities have tool-lending libraries.
- Check with local hardware stores to see about donations.
- Partner organizations, like trail clubs, usually have a cache of trail tools.

Think about lunch and snacks for all your volunteers. You can ask folks to bring a bag lunch with them, or you can try to solicit donations from area businesses.

Is there an SCA Regional Office in your Area?

Check the SCA website, [www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org), to find SCA offices in:

- Charlestown, NH
- Arlington, VA
- Oakland, CA
- Seattle, WA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Boise, ID
- Houston, TX
- Dallas, TX
- Stamford, CT

A few helpful tips about food. Check with local bagel shops and bakeries. Many businesses will be happy to make donations to a good cause, so don't be afraid to call around and ask for specific items, like water, sandwiches, or even lunches. If you do get donations, be sure to let SCA know so we can thank and acknowledge the donor(s).

Work with your partner group to map out a rough schedule of the day. It doesn't need to be too detailed, just a kind of general outline. Make sure there's time for introductions, a briefing about the work project, safety talk, lunch and snacks, and a wrap-up at the end of the day.

Arrange a meeting place and time and make sure everyone knows what to expect. Should they bring a lunch or snacks? Water? What time will things start and end? What should people wear or bring (long pants, boots, hats, sun screen)? Can they bring kids, dogs, families, friends?

Recommended clothing and equipment:

- Leather (or Kevlar) boots. These should cover the ankle. Smooth soles are discouraged in settings with slippery conditions. Boots may not be appropriate for re-vegetation projects, but if grub hoes are used boots with all-leather uppers and lug soles are required.
- Hard hats when working with swinging tools, performing overhead work, or while working in close proximity to any swinging tools or other workers.
- Long pants that cover the top of the boots.
- T-shirt or a sleeved work shirt that covers the shoulders.
- Gloves are smart protective covering.
- Safety glasses are recommended for all work activities and should be mandatory whenever using high impact tools (sledges, mauls, picks, etc.) that make flying particles a danger. Protective eyewear should also be worn when metal is being struck on metal, or metal on rock.

#### How SCA can help

- Spreading the word to alumni in your area
- Giving advice with more advanced projects
- Help writing press releases or getting in touch with local media
- Coming up with ideas for games, activities, or ceremonies

### **Step 3: Make the Day Successful**

You've got a list of everyone you're expecting. All of your volunteers are starting to arrive. You are ready with tools, food, water, and the work project is all lined out. You may want name tags, and you definitely want participants to register as they arrive.

All service project participants, including you, should be covered by your partner's insurance.

Set aside some time to get everyone ready for the day. Make sure everyone has a chance to introduce themselves, maybe a round robin. And give a brief introduction about the work project. What will you be doing? Why? What effect will this project have in the long term? How did you come up with the idea? What tools will they be using and what safety issues are associated with those tools? You may want to put the day into an even bigger context, and let all of your volunteers know that this is one of many events going on across the country, led by SCA alumni!

Participants will remember three main things from your project. Was the work fun and rewarding? Was the food good? And was the project safe? You will have the fun and the food planned out in advance, so to make sure you're covered on safety, it's a good idea to walk through the Take 5 for [Safety Guidelines](#) steps.

1. Stop
2. Think
3. Identify
4. Plan
5. Manage

After everyone is feeling comfortable with the work project and what they'll be doing, go ahead and roll up your sleeves and get to work! Have fun! That can mean playing ridiculous games that makes everyone feel like a kid again, or talking to people throughout the day.

Use the [Post-Event Reporting Form](#) to document what is being accomplished both with photographs and with written descriptions. Quantify the work by recording the number of feet of trail work completed, areas of invasive weeds addressed, etc.

Leave some time at the end of the day to wrap up a little bit, maybe even a full blown closing ceremony. Recognizing the people who helped you out is an important part of the process. Thank everyone for coming, especially any partner groups that helped you in planning. Tell the whole group how much was accomplished, and remind them about why that is significant and important. Ask people what they liked best about the day, and if they are interested in helping out more. Wish them well, and thank them once again.

## **Step 4: Wrap Up**

Well, all the hard work is done. You've done some really great work and gotten a good group together to enjoy it with. There are just a few more pieces...

After a few days, check in with your partner group. Find out how they feel about the work that you accomplished, what worked well, and what didn't. That feedback can help you in planning future projects.

Email all the volunteers with thanks and a few good photos.

And lastly, we here at SCA would love to hear about your project. Just fill out the [Post Event Survey](#) (it's short!), and send along the best pictures from the day. We'll keep track of what everyone in the SCA family is accomplishing, so help us share your story!

Thank you for your continued dedication to public lands and conservation service. We're proud to have people like you in the SCA family. Take some time to enjoy your accomplishment, and then start thinking about your next project.

And remember, [SCA's Guide to Citizen Stewardship](#) is intended to help you think through your project and get you started on the right path, and is not intended to have all the answers.

[Credit: Some materials in this Guide were pulled from *Lightly on the Land*. The Guide was compiled by SCA staff and alumni.]

Feeling stuck? Contact one of SCA's Alumni Specialists!

Mary Margaret Sloan – Alumni Director in Charlestown, NH  
603-543-1700 ext. 184  
mmsloan@thesca.org

Daniel Parr – Regional Alumni Representative in Arlington, VA  
703-524-2441  
dparr@thesca.org

Katie Myszka – Regional Alumni Representative in Oakland, CA  
510-832-1966  
kmyszka@thesca.org

Kristin Mitchell – Regional Alumni Representative in Seattle, WA  
206-324-4649  
kmitchell@thesca.org

# MASTER CHECKLIST

Determine the TYPE of event you would like to organize:

- a. social/networking
- b. 1-day service project
- c. non-SCA event with alumni
- d. extended service project or trip

Create a written plan for the event that includes information on this checklist. This will be helpful for your personal planning. Also include:

- a. goals and expected outcomes for the event
- b. budget for the event, if necessary

Partner with a park/agency or another nonprofit organization

- a. consider volunteer trail coordinators or employees associated with a park or forest
- b. nonprofit trail or gardening clubs make great partners

For service events, choose a specific project and determine the work to be completed during the specific timeline.

Set a date and times.

- a. If SCA has an office in your region, coordinate with them – they can be very helpful!
- b. make sure there is a rain/weather backup plan!!

Let SCA know. Start with Alumni Director ([alumni@thesca.org](mailto:alumni@thesca.org)) and the appropriate regional office.

Set up your event on the Host s Service Project pages of SCA's web site.

[http://www.thesca.org/service\\_projects/](http://www.thesca.org/service_projects/) Use this site to invite alumni, friends, family and anyone else you think may be interested and manage the event.

- a. Contact alumni, your friends and family a few weeks in advance and send a reminder e-mail the week of the event!
- b. Take advantage of online resources. SCA has established pages on [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) and [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). Events can be posted there.
- c. Placing posters on University campuses or contacting local papers to place a free advertisement may also be helpful.
- d. Feel free to contact members of the SCA Alumni Council for more ideas!

Gather tools and equipment. This is something the park or organization you are volunteering with may be able to provide. Local SCA offices can also provide help.

Consider food, water, decoration and other needs, perhaps even giveaways.

- a. If getting donations, start early.
- b. For larger groups, it may be easier to ask everyone to bring a bag lunch.
- c. Local restaurants, cafés or bagel shops may be willing to donate leftovers.
- d. Again, talk to the park about connections or arrangements they may already have in place.

Put together a first aid kit! Make sure to have Program Participant Agreement and medical response waiver forms and the Take-5 for Safety checklist.

Gather appropriate SCA promotional materials. It may also be possible to contact someone at SCA for free schwag to give to alumni.

Consider contacting a speaker or person of interest about attending the event.

Consider media releases.

Create an event agenda with schedule

- a. Be prepared to speak. Provide an introduction to the day.
- b. Leave time for socializing.
- c. Allow time for welcoming or closing comments by the partner you are working with.

Bring a camera! Or enlist the services of a photographer. Send photos and a written recap to SCA so we can publish your event!

Follow-up. This may be the most important part of your event.

- a. Send thank-you cards or e-mails to alumni, park employees, partners, guests or anyone else who helped with the execution of the event.
- b. Fill out the SCA Post-Event Reporting Form.
- c. Send Program Participant Agreements and Medical Release forms to SCA Alumni Director.

# SCA Post-Event Reporting Form

(Please complete within one week of event)

Name of the Event:

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Date:

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Location:

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How many people (total) attended?

How many were alumni?

How many were SCA staff?

How many were volunteers?

If so, who were they and what did they do?

What happened?

If the event was a service project, how many service hours?

Were there any donations?

Any in-kind donations and from whom?

Was there any media? If so, what publications?

Include any good quotes

Include any lessons learned

Attachments:

- Attach Event Planning Form
- Include the best THREE photos
- Attach list of attendees

**Please fill out this form and send it to:**

Alumni Director

SCA, 689 River Road, PO Box 550

Charlestown, NH 03603

[alumni@theSCA.org](mailto:alumni@theSCA.org), 603-543-1828 (fax)