



qathet
REGIONAL DISTRICT

PARKS, PROPERTIES & TRAILS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FRAMEWORK



PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

Volunteer involvement is fundamental to a healthy democratic society as it promotes inclusivity, builds capacity, and fosters relationships in the community. Volunteer programs help contribute to strong, connected and vibrant communities. By providing a Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program for community groups, the qathet Regional District (qRD) is increasing citizen engagement and in the stewardship of important protected areas that benefit the entire region.

Through this program, volunteer organizations and businesses will be supported to work on projects that improve ecosystem health in our parks, and enhance recreation and active transportation opportunities in the community.

The qRD Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program provides opportunities for people to become active supporters and promoters of parks and trails initiatives that complement the work of the qRD. This program supports the vision, mission and values of the qRD.

PARKS, PROPERTIES & TRAILS VOLUNTEER POLICY

Key Considerations

- Community groups and businesses may bring volunteer service proposals to the Manager of Operational Services at any time. Please allow at least 14 days for response.
- Volunteers working with these groups must be 19 years of age or older or have written consent from a legal guardian. If volunteers are 15 years of age or younger, they must be accompanied by a legal guardian while volunteering.
- Groups and businesses must enter into a volunteer agreement with the qRD.
- Volunteer activities will be approved by the Manager of Operational Services after consultation with unionized outdoor workers.
- As a condition of becoming a Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer, applicants must agree to abide by qRD policies relating to standards of conduct, confidentiality and health and safety.
- Volunteer activity outcomes will be consistent with relevant qRD plans and operational standards.



PROGRAM OUTLINE

Program Mission Statement

To provide increased stewardship and community engagement in qRD Parks, Properties & Trails through volunteer involvement, recognizing that parks and trails are key contributors to the quality of life and cultural fabric of the qRD.

Objectives of the Program

The objectives of the qRD Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program are to ensure:

- 1) A safe working environment is provided for volunteers.
- 2) Volunteers are treated fairly, with respect and are valued and recognized for their contribution to the work of the qRD.
- 3) The management of volunteers and volunteer activities is consistent with qRD policies, standards and bylaws such as (but not limited to) work safety, purchasing and privacy.
- 4) Opportunities are provided for organizations to become active supporters and promoters of parks and trails initiatives that complement the work of the qRD.

Goals of the Program

The goals of the qRD Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program are to:

- 1) increase public engagement with the enhancement of qRD parks and trails through valuable, positive, hands-on action;
- 2) raise public awareness about qRD parks and trails and their value;
- 3) increase the stewardship of qRD parks and trails through volunteer activities;
- 4) implement volunteer activities based on the interests of community organizations and impact on qRD funding and staffing;
- 5) maintain program delivery equity between all electoral areas and the regional parks;
- 6) set realistic expectations for the program given the existing capacity of Operational Services; and
- 7) maintain a consistent standard for quality of work done by volunteers.



Types of Activities

- **Ecological restoration and habitat enhancement** to protect and improve ecosystem services and contribute to biodiversity:
 - o Examples include: native plantings for biodiversity or riparian function.
- **Invasive Plant Removal**
 - o Examples include: Scotch broom or English ivy pulls or yellow flag iris smothering.
- **Trail maintenance**
 - o Examples include: picking up litter, filling holes with gravel, removing branches and small windfalls.
- **Garbage clean-ups** to protect the environment and create positive experiences for all park users:
 - o Examples include: beach clean-ups, park and trail patrols.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management procedures will be followed to assess and manage potential risks to volunteers, the organisation and the public. Organisations are required to supervise their volunteers during events. Feedback will be provided to volunteers during volunteer events or by email or in person for more involved feedback.

Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteers – Risk Assessment

Identifying Hazards	Assessing Risk Level (the probability and impact of a potential incident)	Managing Risks - Protocols
Use of hand tools (no power tools will be used)	Low	• Groups are responsible to ensure volunteers use hand tools properly. • Appropriate personal protective gear will be used. • Each person will work at a safe distance from other people to avoid accidents involving others. • Tools will be stored safely when not in use so as not to create a tripping or fall hazard.



Identifying Hazards	Assessing Risk Level (the probability and impact of a potential incident)	Managing Risks - Protocols
Environmental hazards	Low	• Environmental hazards will be assessed at each work site on each work day to identify potential hazards such as weather, stream flow, danger trees and proximity to steep slopes. • Work will be completed a safe distance away from hazards such as danger trees, streams and steep slopes. • If hazardous conditions arise such as high wind or snow and ice, volunteer work will be rescheduled.
Wildlife conflicts	Low	• Volunteers will be made aware of appropriate practices to minimize the risk of human/wildlife conflict and appropriate actions to take in the event of potentially hazardous wildlife sightings or attacks. • Volunteers should carry bear spray to use as a last resort to avoid a dangerous wildlife attack.
Toxic plants	Low	• Volunteers will be made aware of toxic plants in and around the work site. • Appropriate personal protective gear will be used if working with toxic plants. • Proper practices will be used for safe handling, transportation and disposal of toxic plants.
Working in uneven terrain	Low	• Volunteers will be informed about specific considerations for each work site prior to an event so people can decide whether it will be an appropriate situation for them or not. • Extra care will be taken to work safely on uneven terrain.



Identifying Hazards	Assessing Risk Level (the probability and impact of a potential incident)	Managing Risks - Protocols
Injury	Low	• First Aid trained volunteers and a well stocked First Aid kit will be on site at each volunteer event to attend to any minor injuries. • If a more serious injury occurs that requires further medical attention during a volunteer activity the volunteering organisation will ensure the volunteer is able to get them self to medical attention or has transportation to do so. • Lead Volunteer will always have a cell phone on hand to call for medical help if needed.
Medical health emergency	Low	• Volunteers will be screened for pertinent medical health information (allergies, conditions, medications) during the volunteer application process so that staff are aware of potential issues that could arise. • A First Aid trained volunteer and a well stocked First Aid kit will be on site at each volunteer event. • In case of a medical emergency during a volunteer event the lead volunteer or designate will call 911 and administer First Aid unless someone more qualified is available (e.g. a medical doctor). • Lead volunteer will always have a cell phone on hand to call for medical help if needed.

***This Risk Assessment will be reviewed and updated periodically*



VOLUNTEER RETENTION

Recognition

It is important for organisations to know the positive impact their contributions have on the qRD's mission and on the community. The value and impact of volunteer contributions will be acknowledged by the qRD and communicated to the community. The contributions of volunteer groups will be acknowledged through formal and informal methods.

Volunteers will be thanked for their contribution at each volunteer event by the volunteer leaders.

Further recognition opportunities will be identified and developed as the program develops.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

qRD will track, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program by putting an evaluation framework in place to assess the impact of volunteers and gauge organization satisfaction.

Program effectiveness will be tracked through the collection of data on the number of volunteer person hours spent, the impact of the activity (such as the amount of invasive plants removed, number of native species planted, or photo point monitoring of volunteer project sites).