

VOLUNTEER SERVICES



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



We truly miss our volunteers and look forward to when we will see you again!

"At the end of the day it's not about what you have or even what you've accomplished... it's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better. It's about what you've given back." – Denzel Washington

SUMMARY

Volunteerism was significantly impacted in 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteer Services collaborated with Leadership to create a Volunteer Re-Engagement Plan in response to the pandemic based on the recommendations and guidelines provided by the CDC, the Governor's Office, and local departments of Public Health. The plan aligned with the state advisory levels 1 through 4 limiting engagement to essential needs under the tightest restrictions and gradually loosening restrictions with each reduced level of advisory.

In a typical year, volunteer groups would have joined us in our annual day-of-service events including Adopt-A-Park and Make a Difference Day, and supported our annual agency events like the Wagner Subaru Outdoor Experience and Bike to Work Day among others. Additionally, our long-term volunteers would have continued to come out to support a variety of ongoing, year-round volunteer opportunities. This year, however, volunteer service was confined to the months of January-March for most volunteers. Only a few essential and/or autonomous volunteer opportunities were authorized throughout the pandemic including MetroParks Volunteer Patrol, Pond Patrol, and Conservation Caretakers, as well as animal care opportunities at the Carriage Hill Riding Center and Germantown MetroPark. Additional volunteer opportunities were identified and made available to volunteers beginning late Fall to support high-priority operational needs.

In addition to limited volunteer service, volunteer recruitment was also paused with one group of new volunteers onboarded virtually between March-December. Thus, new volunteer engagement declined in 2020 as well.

The bright spot in 2020 was the continued service of many dedicated volunteers; those who came out in support of essential and autonomous volunteer opportunities and operational needs. Volunteers continued to come out to care for our horses at the Carriage Hill Riding Center day after day, continued to monitor our trails and ponds for maintenance and safety issues ensuring a positive visitor experience, continued to care for our Wildlife Ambassadors and when the call was made to come back in support of operational needs including opening the 2nd Street Market as an outdoor market, many volunteers did come back. We are so thankful for these dedicated volunteers!

As we bring this year to a close, we do so with a greater appreciation of what volunteer service means to our agency. With roughly one-quarter of a year's typical service, staff in the field have noted the difference volunteer support makes in all we do. We look ahead as a department and an agency to a stronger and safer 2021 and in great hopes of a full return to safe volunteer service.



JENNY J HYMAN

Human Resources Manager, Volunteer Services

VOLUNTEER DATA 2020

LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS:

826 LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS IN 2020

246 CONTRIBUTED VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2020

9,099.20 VOLUNTEER HOURS SERVED IN 2020

246 LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 9,099.20 VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS IN 2020.

EPISODIC AND SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERS:

ADVENTURE CENTRAL: 114 VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 337.20 VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS

EPISODIC WORKDAYS: 15 VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 45 VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS

129 ACTIVE EPISODIC AND/OR SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 382.20 VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS IN 2020.

TOTAL VOLUNTEER IMPACT:

955 TOTAL VOLUNTEERS IN 2020

375 CONTRIBUTED VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS IN 2020

9,481.40 VOLUNTEER HOURS SERVED IN 2020

375 VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 9,481.40 VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS IN 2020 FOR A BENEFIT TO THE AGENCY OF \$233,242.44*.

* BENEFIT CALCULATED BASED ON 2019 VALUE OF VOLUNTEER TIME.



Volunteer Service Hours Comparison 2019-2020

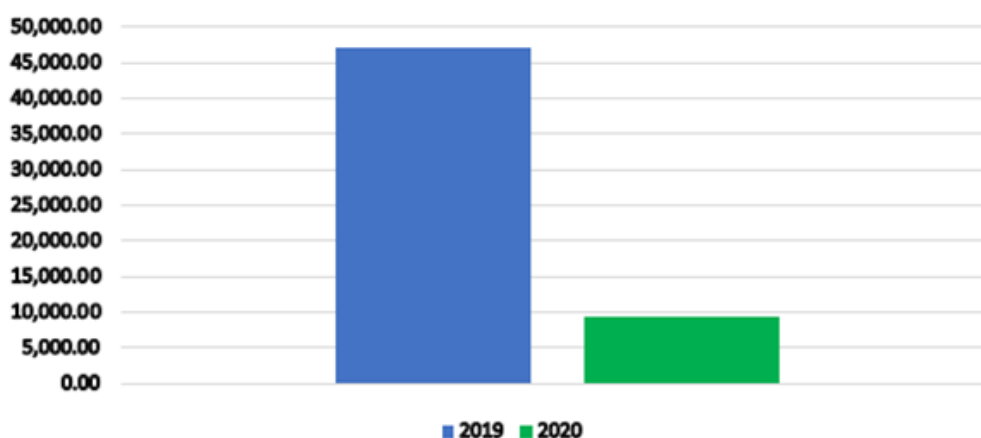


FIGURE 1.

Volunteer Data from 2019 compared with 2020.

"The bright spot in 2020 was the continued service of our most dedicated volunteers. Those who came out in support of essential and autonomous volunteer opportunities and operational needs".

HIGHLIGHTS IN VOLUNTEER SERVICE

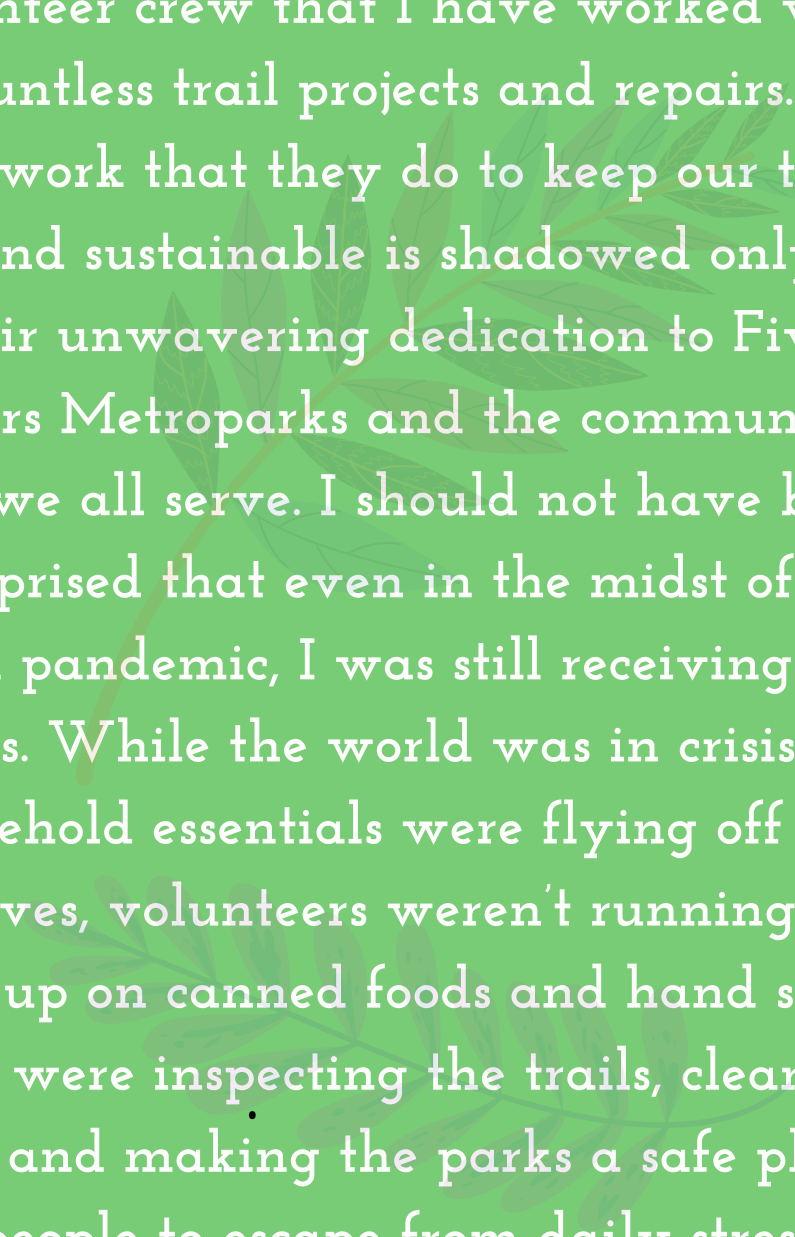
While most volunteer opportunities were unavailable in 2020 due to the pandemic, some essential tasks needed operational support. Volunteers cared for our Wildlife Ambassadors at Germantown MetroPark, our horses at the Carriage Hill Riding Center, and our feathered visitors, the Eastern Bluebirds, throughout our park nest boxes. MetroParks Volunteer Patrol team, Conservation Caretakers, and Pond Patrol continued to patrol our parks, ponds, and trails to ensure a safe and positive visitor experience. Volunteers also came out to support access to fresh produce at our 2nd Street Market throughout the market season. All of these dedicated volunteers were highlighted in social media posts and spotlights in our monthly volunteer newsletter.



Pictured Above: Volunteers Sam and Karleigh Pine at 2nd Street Market; Nick Landis and Ed Stevenson, MetroParks Volunteer Hike Patrol; Leanne Beane, Barn Aide at Carriage Hill Riding Center; Chris Brown, MetroParks Volunteer Bike Patrol; Joe Oswald, MetroParks Volunteer Hike Patrol and Campsite Checker; and Laura Benedict, Wildlife Ambassador.



Staff explored new methods for sharing appreciation with volunteers including special messages and [thank you videos](#). *Pictured Above: Many Staff Leads who submitted thank you videos for volunteers.*



"I can't speak highly enough about the Volunteer crew that I have worked with on countless trail projects and repairs. The hard work that they do to keep our trails safe and sustainable is shadowed only by their unwavering dedication to Five Rivers Metroparks and the community that we all serve. I should not have been surprised that even in the midst of a global pandemic, I was still receiving trail reports. While the world was in crisis and household essentials were flying off the shelves, volunteers weren't running to stock up on canned foods and hand soap, they were inspecting the trails, clearing trees and making the parks a safe place for people to escape from daily stresses. You all have my sincere gratitude and respect."

-Michael Cooper, Trail Specialist

VOLUNTEER SURVEY

To better understand our volunteers and assess our approach to volunteer management, we asked volunteers to complete a short survey. Survey questions were geared toward service during the pandemic and to also help us plan for service after the pandemic.

Background and Demographics

The survey was available for 2 months online with a total of 283 volunteer responses ultimately collected, equaling a 34% response rate when considering the total number of long-term volunteers and a 75% response rate considering the total number of active volunteers in 2020. The majority of respondents identified as white/Caucasian (94%), female (69%), between the ages of 56-75 (59%), and as having served with us between 2-8 years (54%). Respondents also identified as primarily active in Parks and Conservation (38%), Education and Programming (34%), and Horticulture (20%) with the majority active (43%) or very active (23%) before the COVID-19 pandemic.

What We Learned

Of the many insights we gained from this survey, one we were happy to note was that the majority of volunteers responded that they were very satisfied (69%) or satisfied (19%) with the communication they received during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also learned that many volunteer respondents were comfortable (39%) or somewhat comfortable (33%) with a return to service during the pandemic and others were open to supporting operational needs identified by the agency if the need corresponded with their interest, availability, and ability in that order (47%).

Further, we learned that our volunteers value agency communication that demonstrates appreciation, includes relevant information, and occurs in a timely fashion, preferably monthly (46%) or as needed (28%), with the most prized forms of communication being staff emails (92%). Volunteers also highly value verbal thanks (80%), training (75%), written thanks (53%) followed by FRMP Apparel/Gear (50%), and Potlucks/Picnics (45%). Volunteer Services is utilizing all of the information gained to plan for the coming year and years ahead.

11. Volunteer Services has developed a volunteer re-engagement plan. If your regular volunteer position is not immediately available, would you consider volunteering for other identified high need opportunities?

[More Details](#)

Yes	133
No	43
Unsure	107



FIGURE 2.

Volunteer survey responses indicate volunteers interested in supporting operational needs depending on interest, availability and ability in that order.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021...

Volunteer Services has been working diligently to strengthen volunteer service as a human resources strategy for the agency based on best practices in volunteer management. In 2021, we will be rolling out several new updates including a revised agency policy on volunteerism, brand new streamlined volunteer positions, training for staff and volunteers, a correction for success process for volunteers, a new volunteer evaluation tool and process, and to organize it all a brand new, state of the art volunteer management system. This system will better support volunteer orientation and onboarding, training, signing up and checking in for volunteer opportunities, evaluation, communication, and reporting.



NEW! VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Further, Volunteer Services is developing a new strategy for volunteer appreciation that prioritizes what matters most to our volunteers as reflected in our most recent survey:

- 1) Communication
- 2) Training
- 3) Apparel/Gear

Volunteer Services is working with staff leads and the marketing team to send out regular and relevant communications to our agency volunteers including thank you cards, video updates, volunteer spotlights, and more. Volunteer Services is also teaming up with staff leads to convert our typical volunteer trainings and season openers to a virtual format, many of which will contribute to a developing virtual training library for volunteers that will be housed in the new volunteer management system. Finally, in recognition of Volunteer Appreciation Month, we are gearing up for a volunteer appreciation sign campaign in April, rolling out service pins for volunteers recognizing hours of service based on our "Get Out & Explore" campaign, and providing additional new options in volunteer apparel. We are looking forward to a new year full of challenges, changes, and positive growth for volunteerism at Five Rivers MetroParks!



NEW! VOLUNTEER SIGN CAMPAIGN AND SERVICE PINS



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