

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



**CITY OF
MINNETONKA**
NATURAL RESOURCES

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NATURAL RESOURCES VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



WELCOME!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the City of Minnetonka's Natural Resources division! We're so glad you have joined us to protect our community's natural areas.

About the City of Minnetonka

Minnetonka is a fully developed suburban community of more than 53,000 residents located eight miles west of Minneapolis. The city's natural surroundings—including trees, wetlands, prairies and diverse bodies of water—set it apart from similar-sized suburbs and give the community a distinct character. View the City's vision, mission, guiding principles and strategic priorities [here](#).

Natural Resources (NR) is a division of Public Works, and is responsible for:

- ◆ Promoting city policies to protect the natural environment
- ◆ Forestry programs
- ◆ Water and wetlands protection
- ◆ Restoration programs
- ◆ Development guidance and inspection
- ◆ Education, outreach and engagement

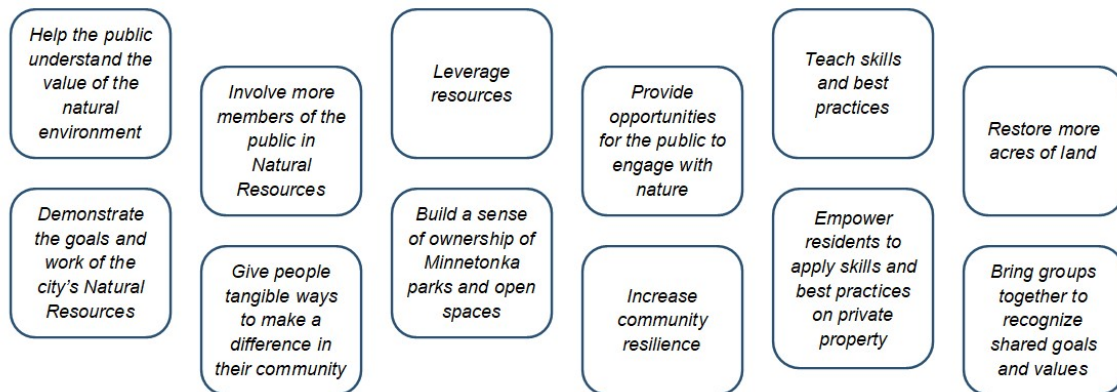
The city of Minnetonka encompasses 28 square miles, with more than 2,100 acres of parkland and open space. There is broad community understanding that having healthy and high quality natural resources is essential to supporting a healthy and thriving community. To that end, NR has three primary goals and objectives:

- A. Improve the quality of habitat in Minnetonka parks and open spaces, creating more resilient and sustainable ecological systems while providing multiple benefits to the community.
- B. Manage and improve the community forest system on both public and private lands, including natural woodlands and the altered ecosystem of the traditional managed landscape.
- C. Engage the public to support ecological restoration and management on public property. Promote and empower voluntary application of best practices on private property.

See the charts below for an overview of the city's organizational structure, and refer to the [Natural Resources Master Plan](#) for more information about the Natural Resources division's direction and priorities.

Why are volunteers so important in Natural Resources?

On average, volunteers provide 1,600 hours of service per year to the Natural Resources division. That has a significant impact, increasing NR's capacity to fulfill its goals and priorities—which, in turn, enhances the beauty, function, diversity and resilience of our natural areas. A robust volunteer program benefits the City, volunteers and the community alike. Along with other NR programs—including outreach, workshops, trainings, technical assistance and incentives—volunteerism helps spread awareness and best practices for habitat restoration and management to private property owners and other residents.



NR volunteer roles

Refer to the attached list to learn about volunteer roles in Natural Resources. Some of these (as marked) are still being developed; staff will share updates in case you would like to try a new or additional form of volunteering.

Orientation and training

Every volunteer will do:

- ◆ **Initial onboarding**, including an interest survey, photo release, and liability release (also called the “Affirmation and Release Statement”)
- ◆ **Orientation** to the city, the NR division, the specific volunteer role chosen and more
- ◆ **Training**, both initial and ongoing, depending on the volunteer role
- ◆ **Annual update** of the liability release

Supervision and staff contacts

You will be assigned a staff liaison, depending on your volunteer role. That person is your primary contact for questions about your work as a volunteer, or with concerns and ideas about the program.

Signing up for events and reporting hours

This aspect of volunteering depends on your role. Your staff liaison will provide guidance.

NATURAL RESOURCES VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



VOLUNTEER ROLES

HABITAT STEWARD

Purpose: Provide continuity for habitat restoration efforts in Minnetonka parks. Extend staff capacity for restoration and support goals outlined in the [Natural Resources Master Plan](#) (NRMP).

Role:

- Apply Minnetonka's restoration methods and practices on public property
- Perform duties independently or in collaboration with staff and/or other stewards or volunteers
- When NR staff are not on site, serve as a contact point with members of the public
- Work with staff liaison to develop and implement annual project plan.
- Track and regularly report hours and activities to Engagement Coordinator.

Commitment:

- Complete in-depth training in Minnetonka's restoration methods and practices, as well as safety protocols, leadership, administration, etc., with ongoing training for each year of service
- Participate in 12 hours or more of volunteer service for Natural Resources per year.

LEAD HABITAT STEWARD

Purpose: Provide leadership and continuity for groups working on habitat restoration in Minnetonka parks. Extend staff capacity for restoration and support goals outlined in the [Natural Resources Master Plan](#) (NRMP).

Role:

- All duties listed above for Habitat Steward
- Use, model and teach Minnetonka's restoration methods and practices while leading other volunteers
- When NR staff are not on site, provide training, safety oversight and other supervision of volunteers
- Track and regularly report hours and activities to Engagement Coordinator.

Commitment:

- Complete in-depth training in Minnetonka's restoration methods and practices, as well as safety protocols, leadership, administration, etc., with ongoing training for each year of service
- Participate in 20 hours or more of volunteer service for Natural Resources per year.

HABITAT VOLUNTEER

Purpose: Support habitat restoration or other Natural Resources work on public property

Role:

- Periodically or regularly participate in habitat restoration events on city property
- Follow the supervision of NR staff or a habitat steward.
- Track and regularly report hours and activities to Engagement Coordinator.

Commitment:

- Receive orientation and basic training on Minnetonka's restoration methods and practices, safety protocols, etc., with ongoing training for each year of service
- Participate in 6 hours or more of volunteer service for Natural Resources per year.

WILDLIFE STEWARD

Purpose: Take actions that benefit pollinators and wildlife on city property. Extend staff capacity and support goals outlined in the NRMP.

Role:

- Work with staff liaison to develop and implement annual project plan and/or goals.
- Track and regularly report hours and activities to Engagement Coordinator.
- When NR staff are not on site, serve as a contact point with members of the public.

Commitment:

- Complete in-depth training in Minnetonka's wildlife monitoring practices (or show proof of equivalent outside training), as well as safety protocols, leadership, administration, etc., with ongoing training for each year of service
- Participate in 12 hours or more of volunteer service for Natural Resources per year.

TREE STEWARD

Purpose: Assist with tree planting, care and maintenance in city parks.

Role:

- Work with staff liaison to schedule activities and locations.
- Track and regularly report hours and activities to Engagement Coordinator.
- When NR staff are not on site, serve as a contact point with members of the public.

Commitment:

- Complete training provided by the City of Minnetonka's Natural Resources (NR) staff, with ongoing training for each year of service.
- Participate in 12 hours or more of volunteer service for Natural Resources per year.

EVENT VOLUNTEER

Purpose: Extend the capacity of staff and regular volunteers to complete restoration or other Natural Resources projects, while learning and applying skills and connecting with other community members

Role: Participate once or periodically in restoration or other volunteer events led by NR staff or stewards. Event volunteers receive training on-site for their duties and report to NR staff or the habitat steward on site.

Commitment: None required. Participants will be Habitat Volunteers if they wish to volunteer more regularly.

RISK AWARENESS

Protect yourself by watching for the risks listed here (and others), and notify staff or your habitat steward of concerns at your site.

TRIPS, SLIPS AND FALLS

- Stumps
- Fallen branches
- Tree snags
- Animal holes
- Culverts and ditches
- Slopes & eroded areas

OTHER RISKS

- Barbed wire
- Debris or trash
- Pet or animal waste
- Improper tool use

PLANTS & ANIMALS

- Poison ivy
- Stinging nettle
- Thistle
- Eye-level branches
- Buckthorn, prickly ash and other plants with thorns or barbs
- Stinging insects (wasps, bees etc.)
- Mosquitoes
- Ticks
- Chiggers

**Find more information at
MinnetonkaMN.gov/NRevents**

RISK PREVENTION

- Every time you volunteer, ask where the first aid kit is located.
- Dress properly for the work you're doing, as well as the current weather and site conditions.
 - Pro tips:*
 - ◇ Wear sturdy, close-toed shoes, long pants and long-sleeved shirt, a hat, etc.
 - ◇ Use safety glasses, gloves and other protective gear.
 - ◇ Apply sunscreen and reapply if outdoors for more than two hours.
 - ◇ Bring (and use!) insect repellent.
 - ◇ Check your clothes, skin and hair for ticks after each volunteer event.
 - ◇ During chigger season (late June through October), tuck your pants into your socks while working outdoors, and take a thorough shower afterward.
- Learn how to properly use hand tools and other equipment. Wipe tools clean after every use to avoid corrosion and other damage that might make tools unsafe.
- The use of power tools must be approved by the Natural Resources Manager. Chainsaws may not be used by any volunteers. If your site requires removal of large buckthorn or trees of any size, contact your staff liaison.
- Practice prevention—notice potential risks and take action to avoid them. Remind others do the same!

PUBLIC INTERACTIONS

Whether you volunteer with a group or independently, you are likely to interact with the public. Please follow these guidelines to promote positive and safe public interactions:

- Always wear a safety vest so visitors know you're volunteering for the City.
- Model safe, responsible behavior throughout your volunteer shifts.
- Volunteering provides an opportunity to educate others—but you are not expected to enforce rules or ordinances. Provide reminders if you feel comfortable (such as when it seems the visitor may just be unaware of a rule). Contact staff or call 911 if you see anything that is concerning.
- If you are approached by a park visitor:
 - ◇ Greet them in a friendly manner.
 - ◇ Provide your first name and volunteer position, and ask how you can help.
 - ◇ It's important to provide accurate information to the public. Feel free to address simple questions if you are certain of the answers. Otherwise, refer the visitor to a staff member or make note of their name, contact information and question and pass it along to your habitat steward or staff liaison.
 - ◇ Remain friendly and calm, even if a visitor is upset. Explain that you are a volunteer and have limited knowledge of city ordinances and policies. Do not argue with visitors. Thank them for expressing their concerns, and ensure them you will relay the information so staff can follow up.
 - ◇ If you feel unsafe at any point in a conversation with a visitor, politely step away. Contact your steward or staff, or call 911 if you feel the situation has become dangerous to you or others.

IN AN EMERGENCY

Treat minor emergencies on site.

- ◆ Use a first aid kit to treat or stabilize the injury.
- ◆ If the injury requires further treatment, go to urgent care or visit your preferred physician.
- ◆ Report the incident to your steward or staff liaison as soon as possible. They will help you complete the required liability claims form.

Keep tabs on potentially severe weather.

- ◆ Consult a weather app and listen to local weather (such as WCCO 830 AM radio or KSTP 1500) or for updates.
- ◆ Know the location of your nearest shelter. If none is available, find a low-lying depression and lay down until the weather passes.

Contact 911 immediately for other emergencies (significant injury, fire, accident, lost person etc.).

- ◆ Provide your name and specific location, and details of the situation.
- ◆ Stay with the situation until assistance arrives and can take over.
- ◆ Report the incident as soon as possible to your steward or staff liaison.



MINNETONKA
COMMUNITY

MINNETONKA CITY COUNCIL
(Economic Development Authority)

Mayor Brad Wiersum

Council Members at Large: Ward Representation
 Seat A: Deb Calvert Ward 1: Patsy Foster-Bolton
 Seat B: Dr. Kimberly Wilburn Ward 2: Rebecca Schack
 Ward 3: Paula Ramaley
 Ward 4: Kissy Coakley

CITY MANAGER
Mike Funk

City Attorney
Corrine Heine

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS
 Charter Commission
 Planning Commission
 Economic Development Advisory Committee
 Park Board
 Senior Citizen Advisory Board
 Sustainability Commission
 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission

PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE
 Chief Scott Boerboom
 Patrol
 Investigation
 Support Services

FIRE
 Interim Chief Kevin Fox
 Emergency Management
 Inspection
 Prevention
 Response

LEGAL
 Corrine Heine
 Prosecution
 Legal advice to the city

PUBLIC WORKS

PUBLIC WORKS
 Will Manchester
 Streets
 Water & Sewer
 Engineering
 Parks, Buildings &
 Grounds
 Natural Resources
 Recycling

RECREATION

RECREATION SERVICES
 Kelly O'Dea
 Recreation programs
 Ice Arena
 Williston Center
 Gray's Bay Marina
 Senior Services

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

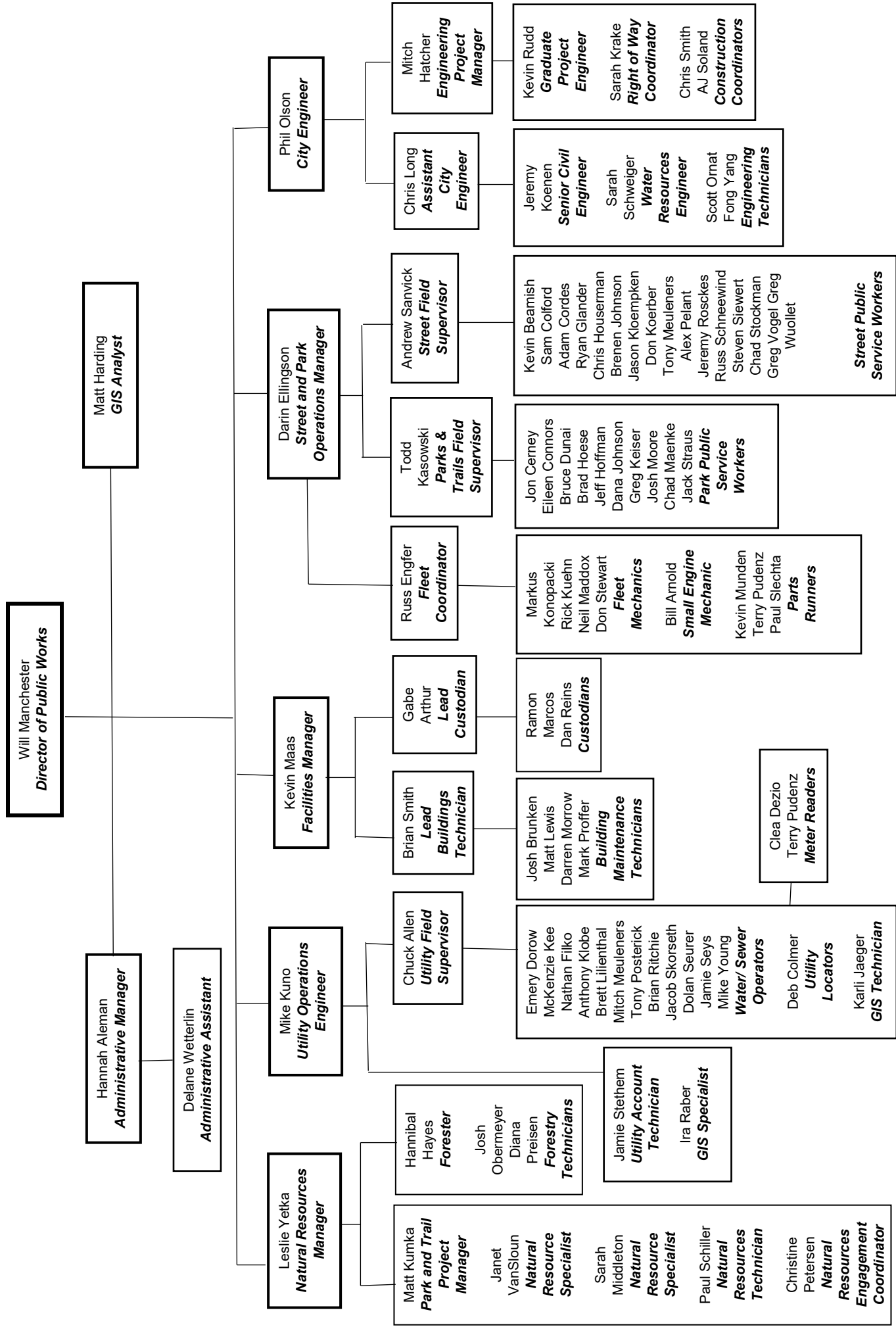
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 Julie Wischnack
 Inspections
 Environmental Health
 Licensing
 Planning & Zoning

ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
 Moranda Dammann
 City Clerk & Elections
 Human Resources
 Payroll
 Information Technology
 Communications
 Risk Management

FINANCE
 Darin Nelson
 Accounting
 Budget
 Utility Billing
 Assessing
 Special Assessments

Public Works Department



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VOLUNTEER PROGRAM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Minnetonka's Natural Resources division encompasses forestry, habitat restoration, water resource protection, and development compliance on public land in Minnetonka, as described in the Natural Resources Master Plan. Our work also includes outreach, education and engagement intended to extend awareness of natural resources issues and best practices into the wider community.

As a volunteer, you play an essential part in meeting those goals. We value the time and energy you bring, and will strive to provide you with an enjoyable, educational and rewarding volunteer experience.

By reading this handbook and becoming a volunteer, you acknowledge these commitments and our shared role in upholding them.

The Natural Resources division commits to:

- Conduct orientation to the City, an overview of the Natural Resources division and its work, and perspective on how volunteers contribute to that work.
- Provide a description of your specific volunteer role, duties and opportunities and direction for the projects you participate in.
- Share expectations and standards of conduct.
- Assign a Natural Resources staff liaison to address your questions and concerns.
- Deliver training related to your volunteer role.
- Work with you each year to develop a project plan, obtain your feedback on the volunteer program, and reflect on your efforts.
- Track and report on your volunteer hours, making that information available if you request it.
- Help you feel part of the team, and celebrate your successes and contributions.
- Foster a safe and respectful work environment.

As a Natural Resources volunteer, you agree to:

- Help the Natural Resources division fulfill its mission, as outlined in the Natural Resources Master Plan and the approved annual project plan for your work site.
- Wear a City-issued safety vest while working as a volunteer.
- Perform only those tasks approved by your staff liaison, using Natural Resources-approved procedures and standards.
- Follow the direction of your staff liaison, other Natural Resources or City staff, or the lead steward for each event.
- Use equipment safely in the course of volunteering, and clean and return all equipment checked out to you.
- Report any injury, safety concern or other incident to your staff liaison as soon as possible
- Provide staff any forms, photos and other documentation of progress on your site's project plan. Upon request, make available photos for use in promotion of the volunteer program.
- Promote a climate of mutual respect between volunteers, staff and the public.

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