

CHAPTER 10 - THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

10-1. Purpose. This chapter establishes guidance on accepting the services of volunteers.

10-2. Background.

a. PL 98-63 authorizes the Chief of Engineers to accept the services of volunteers and to provide for their incidental expenses to carry out any activity of the Army Corps of Engineers except policy making or law/regulatory enforcement. The Corps objective is to utilize voluntary services having some value to the Corps in a manner mutually beneficial to the volunteer and the public interest. MSC offices have the responsibility for the coordination of volunteer programs within their MSC, including monitoring and evaluating volunteer programs within their districts, providing assistance to district counterparts, and acting as a liaison between the districts and HQUSACE. Administration of each district's volunteer program is the responsibility of a designated Coordinator.

b. Volunteers may carry out many activities for the Corps of Engineers. Voluntary service may include work that would not otherwise be accomplished because of funding or personnel limitations. Volunteers may produce products for the Corps at off-site locations.

10-3. Guidance.

a. A successful volunteer program requires a step-by-step approach to assess Corps needs, develop a plan to accomplish those needs, and evaluate program success. The program should also tailor Corps needs to the volunteer talents available in the local area. The major steps in this procedure are:

(1) Assess overall needs. Define the tasks that need to be done at the individual project or office.

(2) Evaluate costs and benefits. This program is not "free." It will require staff time and administrative support. Regulate the size of the program to match individual organizational capability.

(3) Refine task descriptions. The supervisor will develop simple descriptions for the tasks that need to be accomplished. Existing information will be used to the greatest extent possible. The level of work described will be used to establish a value of the service performed. This replacement cost classification determination, as well as the number of hours volunteered, will give the accepting official the means to determine the value of each volunteer's work effort.

(4) Recruit and select. Advertise the volunteer program through public service announcements, news releases, personal contact and brochures. Screen all applicants and identify the talents that are available. Match the volunteer applicants with the tasks identified and finish the acceptance process.

(5) Provide orientation (training). Provide initial orientation and follow-up training commensurate with the type of job, length of proposed service and the requirements for safety.

(6) Provide supervision. Identify supervisory channels for the volunteer and clearly describe the work to be accomplished. Follow up on the job as you would with a paid staff member.

(7) Keep records. The supervisor will monitor the hours worked by each volunteer.

(8) Develop a volunteer plan. A volunteer plan is a synopsis of the information resulting from paragraphs 10-3a(1) through (7) above. Such a plan should be included as an appendix to the project "Operational Management Plan." A Corps Volunteer Coordinator's Handbook (EP 1130-2-429), has been developed to assist coordinators in the formation of the volunteer plan and the overall operation of the volunteer program.

b. Most individuals can qualify to become volunteers for the Corps. It doesn't matter if the person is receiving pay, academic credit, or other types of compensation from sources other than the Corps; if the Corps is not paying for the work that is done, the person can be considered a volunteer. Individuals convicted of crimes and participating in court-approved probation, work release, or alternate sentencing programs may serve as volunteers at the discretion of the accepting official; however, no person referred from a court-approved program, who has been convicted of any violent crime, crime against person, or crime involving the use of a weapon shall be utilized in the Corps of Engineers volunteer program in any manner.

c. Volunteers must be qualified to perform the work assigned. Additionally, they must be physically able to do the work. The accepting official may request the volunteer to complete a Standard Form 256, Self-identification of Handicap, or obtain a medical examination if there is a question regarding the volunteer's ability to perform assigned work. In special circumstances, the cost of medical examinations may be considered incidental expenses of the volunteer. These circumstances should reflect the need for medical examination and the value of the voluntary services that the Corps would receive.

d. Volunteers will not be used to displace any personnel of the Corps of Engineers. They may, however, perform duties which once were, or are presently, performed by Corps personnel or contractors. Volunteers should not be required to perform any type of work that he or she does not feel comfortable doing or does not willingly agree to do. Volunteers who are assigned to operate machinery or equipment (such as chain saws, power shop tools, or specialized equipment) must first have demonstrated their proficiency in the operation of that equipment and their understanding of safety requirements to the satisfaction of the supervisor and the accepting official.

e. Voluntary service may be accepted by any official designated by Commanders or their representatives.

f. Voluntary service may be accepted from individuals or from members of organized groups. Volunteers will be recruited and service accepted without regard to race, creed, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, or handicap.

g. Whenever possible, volunteers will be provided a work environment which is equivalent to that provided for Corps personnel performing similar duties. Volunteers will not normally be used in work assignments in which Corps personnel would receive hazardous duty pay. The same safety training and briefings provided to Corps personnel in a given circumstance will also be provided to volunteers. This should include the review of an "Activity Hazard Analysis." Injuries to volunteers will be reported in the same manner as those involving Corps personnel. The reporting procedures will be the same except that item 17 of ENG Form 3394,

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Accident Investigation Report, will be checked "other-volunteer." The activity will also report all hours of volunteer work (reported as USACE personnel work-hours) for accident statistical analysis purposes.

- h. Volunteers will not be used for policy making or law or regulatory enforcement.
- i. Voluntary service is to be carried out in conformance with Federal, State and local laws and standards regarding the employment of minors.
- j. The agreement for volunteer services may be terminated at any time by the accepting official or the volunteer.
- k. A large event which is sponsored and coordinated by multiple organizations and attracts large numbers of participants may be considered a volunteer activity when the overall event is coordinated by the Corps and the requirements of this guidance are met.

10-4. Protection and Benefits.

- a. Volunteers receive the same benefits and protection as federal employees under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (5 USC, Chapter 81) and the Tort Claims Act (28 USC, 2671-2680) and are considered to be federal employees for only those purposes. Since volunteers are considered the same as paid personnel for the purpose of this Act, they are offered the protection of the Act for personal liability as long as the volunteer is within the scope of his/her responsibilities.
- b. Federal Employees Compensation Act. Volunteers are entitled to first aid and medical treatment for on-the-job injuries, as well as hospital care when necessary. When travel for receiving medical care is necessary, transportation may be furnished or travel expenses reimbursed.
- c. If death results from an on-the-job injury, burial and funeral expenses may be paid. Burial and funeral payment, however, as well as other possible compensations are regulated by the Office of Worker Compensation Programs. Volunteers do not receive compensation for lost wages. (Note: This paragraph does not apply to any prisoner work program. Such programs would be covered by a separate formal agreement and other regulations and statutes.)
- d. Federal Tort Claims Act. This Act provides a means whereby damages may be awarded as a result of claims against the Corps for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the Corps. Such damages could be awarded if a private person would be liable to the claimant in accordance with the law of the place where the act or omission occurred.
- e. Incidental Expenses. PL 98-63 grants the Corps authority to provide for the incidental expenses of volunteers. Reimbursement of incidental expenses is not to be understood as salary. Many volunteers do not want or need reimbursement for their out-of-pocket expenses; others could not volunteer without some financial assistance. Reimbursement should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Accepting officials and volunteers should enter into volunteer agreements with the understanding that reimbursement is not mandatory. Volunteers may be reimbursed for actual out-of-pocket expenses they incur in performing voluntary service when approved in advance.

f. Long distance travel expenses may be reimbursed in cases where it can be shown that the services of the volunteer will be of exceptional value to the Corps, and then only with the approval of the commander.

g. The rate at which volunteers may be reimbursed for incidental expenses will not exceed the amount authorized by the Joint Travel Regulation for Government employees under similar circumstances.

h. Volunteers may be housed in Government provided quarters. They will not normally be charged for such occupancy. Volunteers may also be provided campsites at Civil Works projects where their voluntary service occurs and not be required to pay a user fee.

10-5. Identification. Individual volunteers who are likely to come into contact with the public must be recognizable as volunteers. To do this, three kinds of identification may be used:

a. A 3" x 1" name tag showing the individual's name and the word "volunteer".

b. The Corps of Engineers volunteer emblem, which will be available as either a patch for garments or decal for hardhats. A baseball cap (color optional) with a patch or other suitable identifying garment. Otherwise, regular personal clothing which is neat and appropriate for the work performed is acceptable. Volunteer emblems will be available through central procurement.

c. A white uniform shirt with the volunteer patch on the left shoulder may be provided to volunteers in special situations when the value of the volunteer being recognized by the public outweighs the cost of the uniform. District commanders will authorize such procurement on a case-by-case basis. The shirt may be similar in design to the authorized Class B Park Ranger gray uniform shirt, however, under no circumstances shall a volunteer wear the authorized Corps patch or any other item of the official Natural Resources Management Class A-B-C Park Manager/Ranger uniform, or the Operations/Maintenance uniform.

10-6. Reports.

a. It is important to maintain accurate records regarding the number of volunteers utilized, and the cost to the Government of this volunteer service. This information will be tracked by project and reported via the Natural Resources Management System annually (RCS: CECW-0-39). Letter reports may be required more frequently by district or division offices.

b. For the purpose of determining the value of volunteer services, the following rates will be used at the comparable base rate (not to include overhead).

Laborer - Minimum wage or WG-3

Skilled Maintenance - WG-9

Student/Clerical - GS-4

Technical Specialist - GS-7 or GS-9

Consultant - GS-11 or GS-13

10-7. Forms.

a. Optional Form 301, Volunteer Application for Natural Resources Agencies. This form should be provided to all people who request information about the volunteer program. It is designed to gather pertinent information on a potential volunteer's background and areas of interest and skills. It can be used to screen applicants, to develop a file of potential volunteers or to refer volunteers to other areas or agencies. Optional Form 301 can be obtained locally from GSA sources.

b. ENG Form 4880-R, Agreement for Individual/Group Voluntary Services. This form is the official document that legally enrolls an individual in the program and provides him or her with federal protection in case of injury or tort claim. It must be completed and signed prior to commencement of work by both the volunteer or organized group representative and the accepting official for all volunteers, even for work projects of only a few hours duration. This form is to be used when dealing with individual volunteers or sponsored groups. A list, containing the name, address and signature of each group member who will be participating must be attached. Also a complete, detailed description of the duties, conditions, and responsibilities should be attached to this form. This is important in case questions arise on whether the volunteer was acting within the scope of his/her assigned responsibilities. The document can be modified at any time by mutual consent, but it must accurately reflect the duties of the volunteers at all times. The acceptance/termination line at the bottom of the form serves two purposes. It provides the accepting official with a means of officially terminating an agreement, if appropriate, and it provides a legal record of when an agreement was terminated in case of a law suit or injury claim. A copy of the agreement along with any revisions or amendments should be given to the volunteer for his/her records. The original should be retained by the accepting official for a three-year period. The inactive file is to protect against possible law suit or injury claim.

c. ENG Form 4881-R, Parental Approval. This form must be completed, signed, and attached to the volunteer agreement of all volunteers under the age of eighteen years. This requirement also applies to volunteers of organized groups. However, if the group leader has already obtained a signed parental release, this can be used in place of ENG Form 4881-R.

d. ENG Form 4882-R, Volunteer Service Record. This form may be used to record information regarding the service of individual volunteers.

e. ENG Form 4883-R, Certificate of Appreciation. This form may be used to recognize the efforts of volunteers. Locally designed certificates may also be used.

f. Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business. Claims for reimbursement of a volunteer's incidental expenses should be submitted on Standard Form 1164, and, when practicable, paid from imprest funds. Claims for travel expenses such as per diem, lodging or air fare should be submitted on DD Form 1351-2, Travel Voucher or Subvoucher.

g. Appendix R contains illustrations of the ENG Forms prescribed by this guidance. Procedures for the use of these forms will be found in the Volunteer Coordinator's Handbook, EP 1130-2-429. Reproducible copies of ENG Forms 4880-R, 4881-R, 4882-R and 4883-R may be obtained through the local forms management officer (FMO).

