

Volunteers are individuals or groups who give their time, talent and abilities to a cause they believe in, without pay.

- Earth Team Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age or older.
- Volunteers do not have to be citizens of the United States; however, they should be citizens of allied countries. International volunteers must be approved through the NRCS International Programs Division prior to starting work.
- Anyone meeting the requirements stated in the General Manual, (GM 360, Part 428, Subpart C), can be an Earth Team Volunteer.

NRCS or other government employees may be Earth Team Volunteers. For example:

Melissa, an NRCS-Iowa Purchasing Agent, volunteers to assist with an RC&D weekend project. Her time for working on this project can be counted as volunteer hours. She would not be able to count any time during her regular tour of duty, but any evening or weekend activities could be included.

Norm is a district conservationist in Missouri. He attends regular evening meetings to discuss conservation issues and works on weekends. Norm can not count time spent on these activities as volunteer time, because they are part of his regular duties.

Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) and conservation district officials may serve as Earth Team Volunteers.

Reggie is an RC&D Board Member in Colorado. Reggie attends regular board meetings and performs various duties related to this position. He would not be able to credit this time as volunteer work. The functions relating specifically to his role as a board member would have to be performed whether or not he was an Earth Team Volunteer. However, if the RC&D hosted a community-wide park clean-up day and Reggie worked all day cleaning up trash, his time could be counted as volunteer time, since he would not be performing duties he was elected to perform.

Julie is a conservation district supervisor in Arizona. Julie performs her regular duties for this position; however, she also decided to assist the local field office by serving as the volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator position is not part of her supervisor duties; therefore, it could be counted as volunteer time.

Helping People Help the Land

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.



Relatives of NRCS employees are eligible to serve as volunteers. Good judgment and discretion should be used when placing these individuals in order to avoid the perception of conflict of interest. Some good examples of relatives serving as Earth Team Volunteers are:

Jim is the Virginia State Conservationist. His wife comes into the office one day a week to assist the public affairs specialist. The state conservationist's wife could be signed up as an Earth Team Volunteer.

Kathleen is an area conservationist in Montana. Kathleen brings her 14-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter into the office occasionally to assist with photocopying and mailings. Kathleen's two children could be signed up as Earth Team Volunteers.

The local district office was moving and several staff members as well as their family members worked on a weekend to complete the move. The family members could be signed up as an Earth Team group and their hours could be counted.

Any of the above individuals may be considered Earth Team Volunteers. However, their activities must always be clearly voluntary, and beyond what they were hired, elected or appointed to do.

Our primary purpose for signing up any volunteer is to assist the conservation partnership in the accomplishment of their mission.

We need to protect the integrity of the Earth Team by not signing up individuals or groups who:

Are performing duties that they were elected, hired or appointed to perform.

Are looking for workman's compensation and tort liability coverage only and not furthering the conservation movement or the NRCS mission (i.e., an "Adopt a Highway Group" is already established but unable to receive this type of coverage through local government).

Are looking for assistance to pay for travel or meals (i.e. a district supervisor needs financial assistance to attend national meetings).

Volunteers are an important tool that can be utilized to accomplish any job that an NRCS employee would be authorized to do.

Contact Information:

1-888-LANDCARE (888-526-3227), send a Fax to (515)289-4561 or E-Mail:
landcare@usda.gov

