

Volunteers in the Parks Program



dcr
Massachusetts



What We'll Talk About Today



Where the Volunteers in Parks program fits into the agency



Park Serve Day



How the program currently works



Difficulties



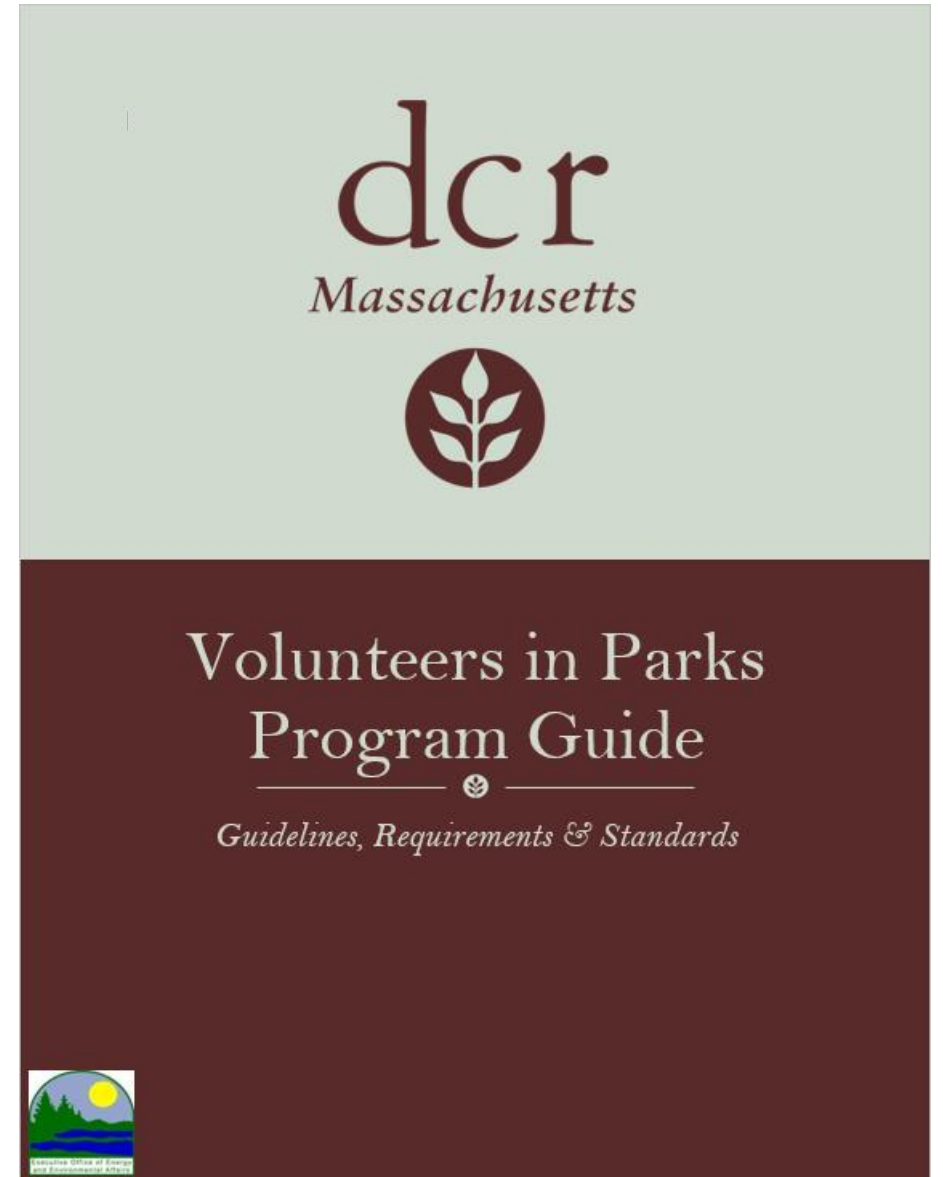
Opportunities



Where the program is heading

Volunteers in the Parks

- Program sits in the Visitor Experience and Programming unit.
- Overseen by Manager of Stewardship Programs and Strategic Initiatives who reports to Director of Visitor Experience and Programs.
- Coordinates the Volunteers in the Parks Program which was established in 2014 with the publishing of the “Volunteers in Parks Program Guide.”
- Oversees annual Park Serve Day event.



Park Serve Day

- Annual Day of Stewardship that coincides with Earth Week
- 40 participating parks and 60 separate events held.
- 2000 volunteers
- 4000 hours worked
- 14,000 lbs of trash collected





Park Serve Day

Friends groups play a huge role in the success of Park Serve Day!



Current Volunteer Program

Volunteering at DCR Parks is popular amongst corporate groups, non-profits, and individuals looking to give back to the spaces that they enjoy. There are several different ways that someone can volunteer in a park:

- Contacting DCR park staff or Mass.Parks@mass.gov
- Filling out the Volunteer Interest Form on the DCR website
- Working with a friends group or other affiliated group



Importance of the Program

- The volunteer program builds stewards with companies and individuals. They often return to volunteer again and gain a sense of appreciation for the land, the staff, and the agency's mission.
- Helps staff with simple tasks like trash pickup, planting, etc.



Difficulties of the Program

- Staff capacity
- Funding
- Consistency of Volunteers
- Knowledge of the Program by staff and volunteers



Addressing the Need: Staff Feedback

- Conducted a survey of park staff that works with volunteers.
- 26 responses
- 4 parks that responded do not offer volunteer activities and told why.
- 20 parks gave feedback on difficulties they face and changes they would make.

Takeaways

- Volunteering happens year-round
- Staff want ways to thank and recognize volunteers
- Need a better way to show opportunities to individuals
- Outreach to local groups is needed

Opportunities for the Program

Training for Volunteers and Staff

- Turnover has caused a lack of knowledge of the program amongst staff
- Training would help volunteers be better prepared to work

Volunteer Software

- Utilizing a volunteer management software (VMS) will allow the agency to post opportunities and track volunteer hours.
- Most organizations with similar missions to DCR use this.

Planned Opportunities

- Working with staff to identify volunteer opportunities in the winter
- Gives potential volunteers ready made events they can plan for.
- Takes pressure off of staff to have quick turnaround to volunteer requests.



DCR Employee Innovation Awards

- Opportunity for DCR staff to apply for funds for projects.
- Applied to purchase supplies, a VMS program, and to plan a volunteer recognition event.
- Received the award and began planning.



Changes to Program



- Worked with six parks to plan events from May to October.
- Updated the website with information about the events and other ways to volunteer

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Date	Event	Registration
May 10, 2025	Carson Beach Clean-Up	Register for the Carson Beach Cleanup
June 7, 2025	Celebrate National Trails Day at Blackstone Heritage Worcester Visitor Center	Register for Trails Day at the Worcester Visitor Center

Other Ways to Volunteer

Other Opportunities

[Groups and Individual Projects](#)

Does group want to volunteer, or do you have an idea for an individual project? Learn how to request a volunteer opportunity.

[Volunteering with the Universal Access Program](#)

Learn how you can volunteer and get involved with the DCR's Universal Access Program

Changes to Program

- Created new branding for the program, now called DCR Volunteer Corps
- Working to create an advisory board of DCR staff that will meet monthly to discuss the program.



Changes to Program

- Better method of collecting data internally and externally.
- Volunteer opportunities more aligned with staff and agency goals.
- Incorporation of other departments at DCR to utilize volunteers.
- Ready made opportunities for volunteers similar to Park Serve Day
- Staff and volunteer trainings.
- Volunteer Recognition.



Thank you!

Hope to see you out in the parks

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Mass.gov/dcr/volunteersinparks

