

Bellingham Parks Volunteer Program PARK STEWARD PROGRAM POLICIES

Goals

The Park Steward program is intended to provide opportunities for citizens and groups to help maintain Bellingham trails, parks, and natural areas. By delegating some duties to capable volunteers, the City can make better use of Park staff for jobs that require more expertise or use of equipment. The program offers volunteers a sense of ownership in “their” trail, park, or natural site, and is an outgrowth of the Greenway Volunteer Program’s goal of involving the community in enhancing and maintaining trail corridors.

Adopter Criteria

Any individual or group may sign on for maintenance of a trail section, park, or natural area with a commitment of at least 6 months. Agreements are renewable each year in January. Youth groups are welcome to adopt parks and trails during the school year, with work coordinated with the teacher or other adult leader.

Duties

Volunteers are assigned appropriate park or trail maintenance jobs suitable for their skills and interests. Duties can be as simple as routine litter pickup on a stretch of trail, or as complex as planning for restoration of a trailside natural area or construction of a trail. Volunteers are generally not allowed to use power tools, such as weed whackers.

Contract

Adopters will be issued permission to work in a Park Steward Contract, signed by both the adopter and the Bellingham Park Operations Manager. The agreement lists the site, all permitted duties, allowable equipment or techniques, and any limitations on work. The contract includes a liability waiver assuming responsibility for their safety and releasing the City from claims.

Maintenance Standards

Standards for the maintenance of the adopted work area will be detailed in the Contract. If agreed-upon standards are not being met, the Parks Volunteer Coordinator will discuss the site with the adopter. If assistance is needed, it may be given in the form of supplementary volunteer work parties, staff support or advice. If the adopter wishes exclusive responsibility for the site but fails after discussion to maintain it to the agreed-upon standards, the coordinator will terminate the agreement in writing and remove from the site any signage recognizing the adopter.

Training

Individuals and groups taking on work they are unfamiliar with are trained in safe and proper ways to accomplish their job. The Parks Volunteer Coordinator works with the adopter until both parties are comfortable with the work.

Tools

For routine maintenance, volunteer adopters are asked to provide their own tools. For special projects or large groups, the Volunteer Coordinator may loan program tools and gloves on a case-by-base basis.

Support

Support will be provided in the form of advice and guidance, trash bags and bag pickup, site preparation work (if heavy equipment is required), mulch and gravel deliveries, nursery plants or purchased trees and shrubs. Whenever possible, adopters are asked to transport trash bags with weeds or garbage to the Park Operations weed bin. If assistance is needed, the Coordinator will arrange pickup. The Coordinator will order and pickup plants for groups wishing to donate trees to the program.

Recognition

Park Stewards are generous people and deserve more recognition than they get. The Parks Volunteer Program is developing more ways to fully appreciate our adopters. Dedicated adopters may be recognized on the trail with small program signs listing their name(s).