

# Teaching Volunteer

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**Project Leader:** Andy Brown, Senior Naturalist. [brownaj@co.cal.md.us](mailto:brownaj@co.cal.md.us)  
(410) 535-5327

Calvert County nature parks are recognized as a valuable learning resource for students across Maryland. Each year, approximately 10,000 students, teachers, and chaperones come to our parks for unique hands-on exposure and scientific study of the coastal bay region eco-systems.

Volunteers are a critical asset to the quality and success of the learning experience. Teaching volunteers are seen as an integral part of the teaching team and will work alongside the naturalist in charge to help manage and run the group's program, including stations and activities led by volunteer.

## DETAILS

During the fall and spring we host at least two school groups per weekday at Flag Ponds Park and Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center. School groups typically fall into one of three categories (described below). Teaching volunteers may choose the programs and parks that most interest them. We ask that teaching volunteers **commit in advance** to dates or programs in order to ensure proper staffing and leadership for each field trip. Scheduling is done in advance at the beginning of each teaching season, though further scheduling may be done on a monthly or weekly basis. Exact time may vary by program, but volunteers are typically needed from **9:30am-1:30pm** the day of a field trip.

Most field trips follow a set program and repertoire based on the type of school group; volunteers will be trained for the programs they select (including time to shadow naturalists and experienced volunteers during field trips), and will only assume group responsibility once training is complete and the new volunteer feels prepared to assume the independent leadership role. This decision will be made with the concurrence of the naturalist(s) with whom the volunteer has worked.

### **Types of school groups**

- **CHESPAX Programs**  
Representing the Chesapeake Bay and the Patuxent River, *CHESPAX* is the environmental education program for the Calvert County Public School System. It is a unique program in which the Board of Education staff works closely with local, state and regional partner agencies to provide hands-on environmental education curriculum for the students of Calvert County. Calvert County Natural Resources provides the field trip portion of the curriculum for every public school 1<sup>st</sup> grade class (Animal Habitats, fall and spring), 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class (Terrapins, spring), and 5<sup>th</sup> grade class (Oyster Reefs, fall). These field trips follow a set and rehearsed program so that each class receives a similar enriching experience.
- **Other in-county groups (non-CHESPAX)** May include day cares, home-school groups, private schools, middle or high school classes, or other public school grades who want some more time in the parks between *CHESPAX* visits. These programs are more specialized to the teacher or group's needs, though volunteers will typically lead standard activities like dip-netting in the pond/swamp, fossil searches, or swamp walks.
- **Out of county groups** Many schools from surrounding counties come to us to allow their students time to connect with nature. These are typically larger groups and activities usually include dip-

netting in the pond/swamp, seining in the bay, learning about the importance of wetlands, and searching for fossils on the beach.

## **VOLUNTEER DUTIES**

*Based on the type of field trip, the Teaching Volunteer may be expected to:*

- Independently lead groups of approximately 10-20 people (students and chaperons) for 20-30 minute intervals
- Lead activities/stations: give clear, complete instructions; supervise the group and provide assistance where needed; guide students to record and interpret data
- Take groups on short hikes over varying terrain and point out animals, plants, or habitats related to the curriculum
- Use various types of scientific equipment; understand their function and resulting data
- Spend long periods of time standing, walking, and moving over various terrains and inclines (may include dirt, gravel, grass, sand, boardwalks, and hills or steps)
- Keep track of time for each station and rotate groups accordingly
- Assist naturalists with set up, clean up, and transport of equipment. *May include sorting, re-stocking, cleaning, hosing off, lifting, and carrying various items and weights.*
- Instruct teachers and chaperones how to use equipment, run stations, or organize students as needed
- Answer questions about plants, animals, and ecosystems
- Be flexible to unexpected factors or changes to a program; be ready to fill-in or help out where needed
  
- Represent Calvert County Natural Resources with a welcoming and positive attitude
- Be knowledgeable about the program and parks. *Fully complete training before assuming a leadership role and take advantage of refresher trainings.*
- Encourage students and chaperones to return to the parks for further exploration.
- Follow the designated curriculum and training, unless told otherwise by a naturalist
- Be on time and prepared for all programs. *Volunteers are typically needed from 9:30am-1:30pm*
- Keep in contact with project leader (Andy Brown) or program naturalist to be prepared for changes or alterations
- **Commit** to the dates you signed up for. **If you need to cancel or change a date, contact Andy Brown as soon as possible.**

## **REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS**

*The ideal Teaching Volunteer will:*

- Enjoy working with and teaching children. *Field trips are typically elementary school groups, though we do occasionally have pre-K and high school groups.*
- Be able to engage and lead groups of approximately 10-20 people
- Come appropriately dressed and prepared for the weather. *The beginning and ends of each season may bring high heat, wind, rain, or cold, accordingly. Volunteers may also be exposed to ticks, mosquitoes, poison ivy, and unexpected wild life.*
- Be familiar with the park(s) where volunteering
- Be excited about exploring and spending time in nature, and be able to share this excitement with others
- Have general knowledge and interest of the local natural world and ecosystems. *Volunteers will be trained with program-specific information, but prior knowledge or gumption for extra research is always helpful.*