

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Volunteer Handbook



Welcome volunteers

Dear Volunteer,

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Volunteer Handbook is designed to provide volunteers with a guide to the FWC volunteer program. Individual volunteer programs/projects have varied procedures and policies. Refer to your volunteer coordinator/supervisor for specific information on your responsibilities.

The FWC would like to thank you in advance for volunteering to support fish and wildlife management and conservation programs. We appreciate you for donating your time, efforts, skills and assistance to help the agency achieve its mission:

Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.



Bill Parken

Cover photos: Top left and bottom photos by Bill Parken



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About the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

FWC history

The FWC came into existence on July 1, 1999 – the result of a constitutional amendment approved in the 1998 General Election as part of the package proposed by the Constitution Revision Commission.

In the implementation of the Constitutional Amendment, the Florida Legislature combined all of the staff and Commissioners of the former Marine Fisheries Commission, elements of the Divisions of Marine Resources and Law Enforcement of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and all of the employees and Commissioners of the former Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

Five years later, after consulting stakeholders, employees and other interested parties, the FWC adopted a new internal structure to address complex conservation issues of the new century. The new structure focuses on programs, such as habitat management, that affect numerous species. It focuses on moving the decision-making process closer to the public and did not require any additional funding or additional positions.

FWC vision

Powered by science-based leadership, the FWC and its partners will create a sustainable and healthy future for Florida's fish, wildlife, water and habitat resources.

FWC envisions a future where the people who live in or visit Florida care for and contribute to the stability of the state's fish and wildlife resources and the quality of its environment. FWC will be the recognized leader in the science and management of Florida's fish and wildlife.

Residents and visitors will fully support and fund efforts to maintain the resources that provide recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and boating.

FWC mission

Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.

This statement captures the concept that humans are an integral part of the equation and that balancing competing public interests, concerns and uses of natural resources is at the heart of the FWC's mission.

FWC goal

To provide healthy resources for safe, satisfied customers.

This is the end result that the FWC hopes to accomplish through its mission.

FWC fast facts

Locations

- Headquarters in Tallahassee
- Five regional offices: Panama City, Lake City, Ocala, Lakeland and West Palm Beach
- Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in St. Petersburg
- 73 field offices

Florida has...

- 53,927 square miles of land
- 5,983 square miles of water
- More than 34 million acres of public and private land
- Including 5.8 million acres of wildlife management areas (one of the largest public-hunting systems in the country)
- 2,276 miles of tidal shoreline (8,426 “detailed” miles)
- About 1,700 named rivers, streams and creeks flowing 10,550 miles
- Approximately 12,000 miles of fishable rivers, streams and canals and an overall total of 51,858 miles of flowing water, including minor tributaries, creeks and ditches (20,000 of which consistently have water)
- About 7,700 lakes greater than 10 acres, covering 3 million total acres

The FWC protects and manages...

- More than 575 species of wildlife
- More than 200 native species of freshwater fish
- More than 500 native species of saltwater fish

...balancing these species’ needs with the needs of more than 18 million residents and the millions of visitors who share the land and water with Florida’s wildlife

FWC Commissioners

The FWC’s seven Commissioners are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Florida Senate to five-year terms. Their constitutional duty is to exercise the “... regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to wild animal life and fresh water aquatic life and shall also exercise regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to marine life, except that all license fees and penalties for violating regulations shall be as provided by law.” The current FWC Commissioners are:

Kathy Barco, Jacksonville, Chairwoman
Kenneth W. Wright, Winter Park, Vice Chairman
Rodney Barreto, Miami, Chairman
Richard A. Corbett, Tampa, Vice Chairman
Ronald M. Bergeron, Fort Lauderdale
Dwight Stephenson, Delray Beach
Mr. Brian S. Yablonski, Tallahassee

FWC divisions, offices, institute and regions

FWC offices

- Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
- Freshwater Fisheries Management
- Habitat and Species Conservation
- Hunting and Game Management
- Law Enforcement
- Marine Fisheries Management

Office of Executive Director: Nick Wiley is the FWC Executive Director; Greg Holder is the FWC Assistant Executive Director

Within the Office of Executive Director are the following offices:

- Community Relations
- Finance and Budget
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Inspector General
- Legal
- Legislative Affairs
- Planning and Policy Coordination
- Recreation Services

Regions of the FWC

In addition, the FWC is divided into five administrative regions as follows:

Northwest Region

3911 Highway 2321
Panama City, FL 32409-1658
850-265-3676

North Central

3377 E. U.S. Highway 90
Lake City, FL 32055-8795
386-758-0525

Northeast Region

1239 SW 10th Street
Ocala, FL 34471
352-732-1225

Southwest Region

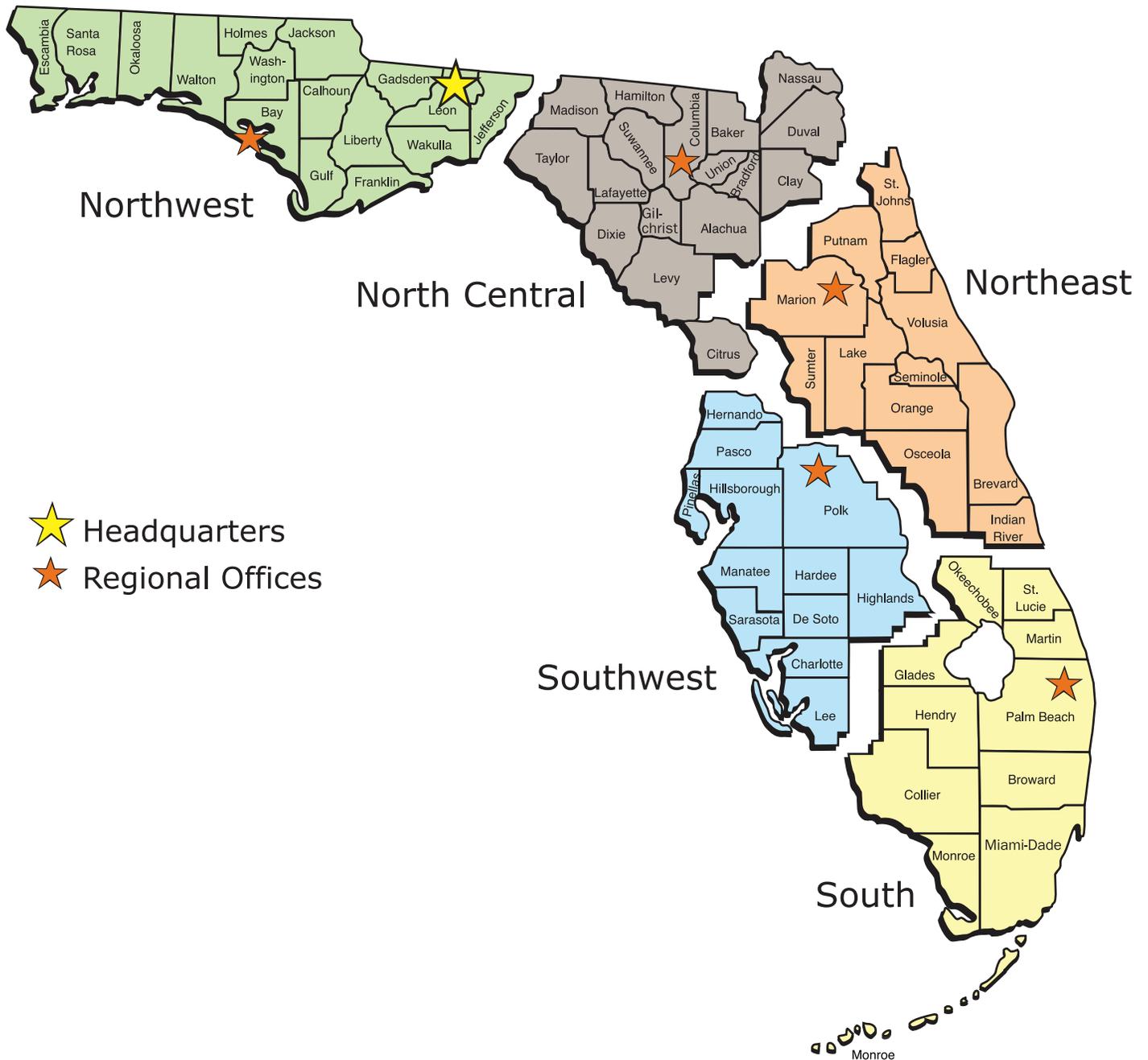
3900 Drane Field Road
Lakeland, FL 33811-1207
863-648-3200

South Region

8535 Northlake Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL 33412
561-625-5122

Regional map

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



FWC Volunteer Program

With increasing pressures on Florida's fish, wildlife and habitats, the FWC cannot accomplish its mission without the assistance of volunteers. The FWC benefits from the skills, experiences and dedication of volunteers, and, in turn, strives to offer its volunteers a fulfilling, meaningful and satisfying volunteer experience.

As an FWC volunteer, you can make a positive impact by assisting with activities such as facilities/grounds maintenance, wildlife research, biological sampling and monitoring, habitat restoration, laboratory work and education and outreach programs or events.

A volunteer for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission becomes part of the FWC team; volunteers are an invaluable resource to FWC!

In 2009-2010, volunteers contributed more than 108,000 hours to FWC at a value of approximately \$2.25 million.

Volunteer benefits

As a volunteer for FWC, you can:

- Have a positive impact on Florida's fish and wildlife species, habitats and ecosystems
- Interact with FWC staff to acquire new skills and gain new experiences
- Learn about Florida's fish, wildlife and ecosystems and use this knowledge to educate others
- Teach youth hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing ethics and skills
- Assist with important scientific research, including sampling and species monitoring
- Be a part of the FWC community

As a volunteer, you will be provided with ongoing training and education to enable you to efficiently and effectively do your job. You may be assigned a volunteer T-shirt, hat and nametag, as well as other materials or equipment needed to do your assigned job.



Volunteer rights

As an FWC volunteer, you have the right to:

- Receive workers' compensation benefits as provided under Chapter 440, Florida Statutes
- Have your time used efficiently and effectively
- Be assigned jobs/tasks that are meaningful and worthwhile and that fulfill your goals/aspirations as a volunteer
- Receive orientation, training and supervision appropriate for your job/task
- Receive clear guidance and support from your supervisor
- Receive feedback on volunteer job performance
- Be kept informed of trainings and activities relevant to your volunteer job/task
- Provide input to your supervisor and to the FWC volunteer program
- Be recognized for your contributions





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Volunteer responsibilities

As a volunteer for FWC, you are responsible for upholding the following volunteer agreement standards:

- Maintain loyalty to the FWC mission and policies when you are in communication with the public and employees, except where constructive criticism through proper FWC channels is encouraged
- Maintain a courteous but firm, supportive attitude when discussing or explaining FWC policies to the public
- Reflect the image of a qualified and effective volunteer working within a well-defined system to fulfill volunteer duties and responsibilities for the FWC
- Refrain from using language unbecoming of a representative of the FWC and refrain from negative criticism or unfounded statements about fellow volunteers or the FWC
- Conduct yourself in such a manner that your behavior does not reflect an antagonistic attitude toward management, supervisors, employees, fellow volunteers or the public
- Refrain from using your position to secure special privileges, benefits or exemptions for yourself or others
- Refrain from soliciting or accepting anything of value (gifts, loans, rewards, favors, etc.) that may influence you in carrying out your responsibilities as a volunteer
- Only participate in tasks for which you have been approved
- Report job-related injuries immediately to supervisory staff
- Report all volunteer hours worked and any other information required by your supervisor, and, if appropriate, notify your supervisor of intent to discontinue your volunteer services
- Have a background screening conducted if working with or around youth
- Request clarification of any rules and policies that you do not understand

Volunteer requirements

Volunteer application and agreement

If you are volunteering for a one-day event or workday and will not be volunteering on a regular or continual basis, you should sign up on the Occasional Service Volunteer (OSV) Sign-up Roster (Appendix 1).

If you are volunteering for FWC on a regular or continual basis for one or more projects or tasks, you will be signed up as a regular service volunteer (RSV). Regular service volunteers are required to complete the RSV Application (Appendix 2) and read and sign the RSV Agreement (Appendix 3). Both you and your supervisor should sign these forms and the completed forms should be submitted to your supervisor.

Volunteer time and activity records

The FWC requires all volunteers to report activities and service hours. The tracking of volunteer time allows the agency to compile annual volunteer program reports to highlight the value of volunteer work and to justify the need for continued funding support of the volunteer program. Reporting your hours is also important so that you can be recognized for your time and efforts as a volunteer.



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Once you are registered as an FWC volunteer and you begin volunteering, you should keep track of your hours and activities on the FWC Volunteer Activity Record (Appendix 4). You should sign and submit this form to your supervisor on a monthly basis or as requested by your supervisor. All volunteer work you do for FWC will be assigned an activity code by your supervisor. These codes are explained in Appendix 5.

You may be required to participate in a volunteer orientation, and you may also be required to participate in various trainings or certifications to ensure you are sufficiently qualified and prepared for various job duties.

If you will be working with or around youth as part of your volunteer work duties, please note that background screenings are required.

Volunteer policies

Workers' compensation

As an official FWC volunteer, you are covered in the event of a work-related injury under state liability protection in accordance with Workers' Compensation benefits provided in Chapter 440, Florida Statutes. Disability, life insurance and temporary wage benefits are not included.

If you are injured while volunteering for FWC, follow these steps:

- In case of emergency, call 911 immediately.
- If your injury is not an emergency, report it to your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible.
- To file a workers' compensation claim, your supervisor should immediately report the injury to the state of Florida's workers' compensation insurance company, OptaComp, by calling 877-518-2583.
- Seek treatment immediately after OptaComp has provided a case number and has arranged for immediate medical treatment.

Volunteer attire

Volunteers should wear clothing and attire that is appropriate for the work involved. If you are issued an FWC volunteer T-shirt, hat or other clothing item, you should only wear this attire when working on or for official volunteer activities/jobs sanctioned by the FWC. Also, remember that when wearing clothing containing the FWC logo, you are acting as a representative of the Commission and should act accordingly.

Youth volunteers

The FWC applies state and federal Child Labor Laws to youth volunteers:

- No minor under the age of 16 can volunteer for FWC unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Youth ages 16 and 17 must have parental permission to volunteer for the FWC. Parents grant this permission by signing the RSV Application and RSV Agreement. OSV youth volunteers who participate in a workday through a scout group, school club/project or other supervised youth group are not required to have signed parent permission; these youth volunteers must sign up on the OSV Sign-Up Roster.
- Minors under the age of 18 are not permitted to participate in hazardous activities such as operating power equipment, climbing ladders and working with hazardous chemicals such as herbicides/pesticides, riding in boats, riding on ATVs, etc.

Volunteer background screenings

Any FWC employee or regular service volunteer who will be working with or around youth under the age of 18 will have a background screening conducted. This background screening includes a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) sexual offenders and predators registries search and a statewide criminal correspondence check through the Florida Comprehensive Case Information System (CCIS).

Prior convictions, a CCIS record hit or listing in the FDLE sexual offender and predator registry are grounds to deny an individual acceptance into any volunteer program or as just cause for termination.

Volunteer use of state vehicles and heavy equipment

Regular service volunteers who possess a valid driver's license that is in good standing with the state or country from which it is issued are eligible to operate Commission vehicles. You must submit a copy of your driver's license before you are permitted to operate Commission vehicles.

Occasional Service Volunteers may not operate state vehicles or vessels.

Volunteers should adhere to the following state vehicle guidelines:

- Anyone riding in or operating a state vehicle must wear a seat belt at all times.
- Before operating any vehicle, volunteers should become familiar with the controls and safety features of the vehicle.
- State vehicles may only be used for official state business. Family and friends who are not volunteering may not accompany a volunteer in the vehicle.
- Smoking and pets are not allowed in state vehicles.
- Volunteers are expected to abide by all state laws regarding the use of state vehicles and FWC guidelines.

Regular service volunteers are authorized to operate power and heavy equipment, such as mowers, weed whackers, ATVs, tractors, etc., provided they are trained on the safe operation of such equipment. Youth volunteers under the age of 18 are not permitted to operate any power or heavy equipment.

Volunteer use of Internet and e-mail

Volunteers are permitted to use FWC computers to access the Internet as a tool for the volunteer's job assignment upon approval of the volunteer coordinator/supervisor. Volunteers may be assigned an FWC e-mail account. This e-mail account should be used solely for official state business that is relevant to the volunteer's job assignment.

Appendix 3



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Regular Service Volunteer (RSV) Agreement

As a volunteer for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), I _____
(*print name*), agree to abide by all applicable FWC rules, policies and standards governing volunteers.

Volunteer Agreement standards

I agree to:

1. Maintain loyalty to the FWC mission and policies when I am in communications with the public and employees, except where constructive criticism through proper FWC channels is encouraged.
2. Maintain a courteous but firm, supportive attitude when discussing or explaining FWC policies to the public.
3. Reflect the image of a qualified and effective volunteer working within a well-defined system to fulfill volunteer duties and responsibilities for the FWC.
4. Refrain from using language unbecoming of a representative of the FWC and refrain from negative criticism or unfounded statements about fellow volunteers or the FWC.
5. Conduct myself in such a manner that my behavior does not reflect an antagonistic attitude toward management, supervisors, employees, fellow volunteers or the public.
6. Refrain from using my position to secure special privileges, benefits or exemptions for myself and others.
7. Refrain from soliciting or accepting anything of value (gifts, loans, rewards, favors, etc.) that may influence me in carrying out my responsibilities as a volunteer.
8. Only participate in tasks for which I have been approved.
9. Report job-related injuries immediately to supervisory staff.
10. Report all volunteer hours worked and any other information required by my supervisor, and, if appropriate, notify my supervisor of intent to discontinue my volunteer services.
11. Have a background screening conducted if working with or around youth.
12. Request clarification of any rules and policies that I do not understand.

As a volunteer for the FWC, I understand that I am not considered an employee of the FWC and am not entitled to rights under the Career Service System. I understand that I am covered in the event of a work-related injury under state liability protection in accordance with Workers' Compensation benefits provided in Chapter 440, Florida Statutes. Disability, life insurance and temporary wage benefits are not included.

I understand that, as appropriate and with supervisory approval, I am permitted the use of state equipment, lab/office space, and vehicles and vessels which are needed to effectively complete assigned volunteer duties.

Volunteer signature

Supervisor signature

Date

Date

If volunteer is under 18:

I, _____ (*name of parent or guardian*), understand and agree to the above FWC volunteer rules, policies and standards governing volunteers and do hereby authorize my child to participate in volunteer projects with the FWC.

Signature of parent/guardian (*if volunteer is under 18*)

Date

Check applicable box: RSV CEV

Appendix 5

FWC Volunteer Activity Code List

When you enter volunteer data into VolTrack, you will need to assign an activity code. When you assign a volunteer activity code, you should use the one which best describes the intention of the work completed. For example, if a group of volunteers remove old fencing from an area, you need to determine the overall intention or desired end result of the job: if the intention was to reduce barriers to wildlife migration, it would be coded 'HE' (habitat enhancement and management); if the intention was to maintain property near a FWC roadway or building, it would be coded 'FM' (facility and grounds maintenance).

Some activity codes have an option of [Activity Code] 2. These codes can be used for volunteers who supervise others, take a leadership role or complete a job or task without direct supervision.

Please minimize the use of 'XX,' other, to instances where there is absolutely no code that fits the intention of the volunteer job or task.

Activity Code	Activity	Option	Description
FG	Friends group activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participation in steering committee, board development or planning meetings ■ Friends group marketing and public relations
FM	Facility and grounds maintenance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clean-up or maintenance of an office ■ Restroom and equipment maintenance ■ Landscaping or grounds clean-up ■ Miscellaneous construction ■ Mechanical, plumbing or carpentry work for buildings or facilities
HE	Habitat enhancement and maintenance	HE2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Installation and management of feed plots ■ Native plant species planting and monitoring ■ Litter/debris/trash pickup ■ Fence construction or fence removal to improve or protect conservation habitat ■ Fire management ■ All activities to control, manage, or remove invasive plants and animals to minimize negative impact ■ Trail construction or management for access to recreational activities and to protect wildlife habitat and other sensitive areas by reducing human impacts ■ Marine/aquatic habitat enhancement activities
LE	Law enforcement activities	LE2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Activities conducted by FWC Reserve Officer volunteers that supplement the full-time officers' patrol activities
OM	Office management	OM2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Administrative data management (non-scientific public surveys, program evaluation survey and volunteer data input) ■ General office/secretarial duties (receiving and placing phone calls, making copies, running errands, etc.) ■ Check station staffing

Appendix 5

Activity Code	Activity	Option	Description
PO	Public Outreach	PO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outreach, education or promotion (including speaking to visitors or interest groups) ■ Developing workshops or trainings ■ Composing outreach materials (including graphic design, articles, newsletters, etc.) ■ Working on/preparing for festivals, outreach events, etc. ■ Volunteer recruitment
RR	Rescue and recovery	RR2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Terrestrial, aquatic and marine animal rescue and/or recovery (including necropsy) ■ Nuisance wildlife management
SR	Scientific research, data collection and analysis	SR2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Biological investigations, sampling, surveying and monitoring ■ Scientific data collection, analysis or management – including data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Flora or fauna ■ Human impacts on fish, wildlife or habitats ■ Data to answer research questions related to natural resource management
VT	Volunteer training	LE2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hours accrued by the volunteer for technical training ■ On-the-job training or shadowing may be listed as another activity if it meets goals and/or objectives related to another code
XX	Other	OM2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This code should only be used if no other activity code that fits the overall intention of the volunteer work ■ If you use this code, you must provide a brief description of the work done



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