

Pacific Crest Trail Association

Volunteer Trail Crew

Frequently Asked Questions



Do I need trail building and maintenance experience to participate in a project?

There is no trail building and maintenance experience necessary! You will receive a training session by the trail crew leaders before you begin working on a project or task. Training will include proper techniques for the specific task at hand and appropriate tool use. However, due to the physical demands of performing trail maintenance, you will need to be in good physical condition.

What is the cost to join a project?

None! This program is offered to you free of charge!

What does the PCTA provide on the volunteer trail crew projects?

For all projects, the PCTA provides tools, work gloves, and protective safety gear, including a hard hat. For overnight or extended projects, the PCTA provides food, drinking water and kitchen supplies.

What will I need to bring?

For all projects, you will need a daypack and water bottles. For extended projects, you will need to provide your own camping and backpacking gear. This will include a tent, sleeping bag, eating utensils, and personal items. You will also need to arrange for your own transportation to and from the designated meeting place.

What are the age requirements?

It is preferred that volunteers are 16 years of age or older, but young adults ages 14 - 15 are allowed if accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Can I bring my dog(s)?

Due to safety reasons and concern for the animal's safety, dogs are not allowed on a project worksite.

What is a typical day like on a trail crew?

You will begin by meeting the rest of the crew at a trailhead, campground, or other designated spot. Depending on the project, you may need to backpack in to the campsite, set up base camp, or after a safety talk you may begin working on the trail. On extended projects, work days will typically begin by sharing a breakfast with fellow crew members. Afterward, instructions and training sessions are given. Work days may be 6 – 10 hours long, depending on the project but they will always include lunch time and breaks. After the day's work is done, it's back to the camp to relax, have dinner, and, if needed, help with campsite chores. Many of the projects will have recreational opportunities, such as swimming and fishing, that volunteer's can take advantage of during their time off.

How do I get to the project?

After you register for a project you will receive directions to the meeting place. You are responsible for your own transportation to and from the meeting place.

Must I commit to stay for the entire project?

No, you are welcome to join the team starting on the first day of the project or if the project falls over a weekend, you can join the team on Friday evening and work through the weekend. First priority is given to volunteers who are interested in joining the crew for the full week.

(Continued on other side)

Is working on a trail hard work?

Trail work can be hard. It often requires volunteers to hike in beautiful forests while brushing the trail, work in the shade of mountain peaks while restoring eroded tread, and enjoy the mist of waterfalls while constructing bridges. To ensure responsibilities are shared, volunteers are asked to team up and work together in a coordinated fashion. Many times teamwork is the only way to complete a task at hand. Each project description lists the tasks and fitness level required. If you are concerned about the level of fitness needed for the project please ask and we can help direct you to an appropriate project.

How do I sign up for a volunteer project?

Once you have decided that you want to participate in a PCTA project, you will be asked to fill out a volunteer application. You can find this form at www.pcta.org or contact Merrit Hoeh at 916-285-1838 or by email at mhoeh@pcta.org.

What if I'm signed up but need to cancel?

Many of the projects will have waiting lists. It is very important you let the PCTA know at least three weeks before the project that you need to cancel. When there is a cancellation the PCTA is then able to sign up volunteers who are on the waiting list.

What is the alcohol policy while at the campsite?

PCTA's number one priority on trail crews is safety of the volunteers. While serving as a volunteer with a Northwest Service Academy (NWSA) AmeriCorps or the Student Conservation Association (SCA) trail crew, volunteers are discouraged from bringing alcohol. It is important to know that the NWSA and SCA programs are alcohol-free and we expect volunteers to respect the policies of NWSA/SCA members and leaders. However, if the volunteer decides to consume alcohol, they are expected to do so in moderation and away from the main camp out of respect for AmeriCorps/SCA's alcohol-free policy.

When I volunteer with the Northwest Service Academy AmeriCorps crews they will occasionally take some time off during the project for development hours. What does that mean?

AmeriCorps crews are required by the parent organization to designate a portion of their time while serving in their positions to "development hours." This means they may need to remove themselves from the trail project either individually or as a group to conduct meetings, activities, or other projects. While you may not be able to participate in the "development time" of these groups, you will receive guidance on alternate activities (such as fishing spots, great photography locations, or swimming access).

How do I find out more about volunteering with the PCTA?

You can view the up-to-date volunteer project schedule at www.pcta.org. If you have additional questions or want to learn more about volunteering with the PCTA, you can contact Merrit Hoeh at 916-285-1838 or at mhoeh@pcta.org.

