

Volunteer Orientation & Field Safety Guide

Welcome to the Fremont-Winema National Forest Volunteer Packet.

This packet contains essential information and resources to help you prepare for volunteer activities within the Fremont-Winema National Forest.

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1. Volunteer Role & Expectations

Opportunities for volunteers in the Fremont-Winema are diverse. As a volunteer, you may assist in any Forest Service program or activity, except for law enforcement duties or service as a union steward. Your talents, skills and work preference are matched with the Agency's mission to create a mutually beneficial partnership.

Volunteers may work part-time or full-time, participate in a one-time project, or serve over several months, seasons, or year-round. The level of commitment is your choice.

Examples of volunteer opportunities include serving as a camp host, front desk assistant, recreation maintenance helper, or natural resource survey assistant.

For more information on Fremont-Winema National Forest volunteer opportunities, email lena.rux@usda.gov.

2. General Safety Guidelines

Being prepared is the best way to prevent mishaps. Know the area, weather, and terrain, understand your physical limits, and use common sense to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

- **Travel with a companion or group.** Don't go into the wilderness alone. In remote areas, travel with at least four people so one can stay with an injured person while two go for help. If the area is unfamiliar, go with someone who knows it or get local advice before starting out.
- **Share your itinerary.** Give a responsible person your travel details—route, expected return time, vehicle description, and gear list—before you leave.
- **Respect closures.** If an area is marked as closed, do not enter, even if it appears safe. Closures are in place to protect visitors, wildlife, and sensitive environments.
- **Know emergency locations.** Before your trip, identify the nearest telephone or ranger station so you can get help quickly in an emergency.
- **Don't overestimate physical ability.** Set a pace that works for everyone, especially the least experienced member. If you have health concerns, talk to your provider first. Make sure you have the skills you need—such as reading a compass, setting up shelter, or basic first aid—and practice before your trip.
- **Watch your footing.** Stay on established trails or dry, solid rock. Don't rely on trees or bushes for stability near cliffs.
- **Dress for conditions.** Wear shoes and clothing suited to the trail, season, and weather.
- **Check your equipment.** Inspect gear before leaving, not at the trailhead. Carry emergency signaling devices.
- **Be weather aware.** In this area, weather can change very quickly. Learn storm warning signs, and avoid exposed ridges, lone trees, streams, and rocks during lightning. Seek lower, forested shelter. Even in the summer, exposure to wind and rain can result in hypothermia.
- **Know basic first aid.** Carry a kit and learn how to recognize and treat heat-related illnesses, hypothermia, and dehydration.
- **Make camp before dark.** Setting up in daylight helps you avoid hazards. If you must leave camp after dark, stay in familiar areas, take a friend, and bring a flashlight.

- **Move carefully.** Take your time on slippery, uneven ground. Watch for low branches and hidden hazards.
- **Avoid alcohol near hazards.** Drinking reduces balance, judgement, and agility—especially near cliffs.
- **Treat your water.** Even clear water can carry harmful parasites and micro-organisms. Bring your own or purify it before drinking.

3. Hiking Safety

Hiking is one of the best ways to experience the many wonders of our nation's forests. Visit your forest's ranger district office, our All Maps page, or check the [National Forest Store](#) for a trail map to help you plan your route based on your ability, available time and interest.

Follow these safety tips to ensure a safe journey:

- Know the basics of responsible hiking. See our Responsible Recreation page for more.
- Stay on marked trails to protect sensitive habitats and avoid getting lost.
- Hike with others. Let the slowest person in your group set the pace, especially if children are with you.
- Leave your itinerary with a friend or family member and check in when you return.
- Have an emergency plan. Ensure everyone knows what to do if they become lost or injured. Give children whistles and teach them to "stop and blow" if separated.
- Pace yourself and take regular breaks conserve energy.
- Drink plenty of water, even on cool, wet days. Never drink your entire supply between refills.
- Wear appropriate clothing, including sturdy boots that are broken in and comfortable.
- Consider using a hiking pole or walking stick to help maintain your balance in unlevel or hazardous areas.
- Be aware of your surroundings, and pre-plan your approach before hiking through more hazardous areas. Wet surfaces can be a hazard and even more so if it's on a slope.

4. The 10 Essentials

Bringing these 10 essentials can make all the difference if you become lost, injured, or delayed.

1. **Navigation**

Carry a map and compass or a GPS device. Cell service and GPS signals can be unreliable in many parts of the forest.

2. **Light Source**

Bring a headlamp or flashlight, plus extra batteries, so you can travel safely after dark.

3. **Sun Protection**

Sunglasses, a hat, and sunscreen help prevent sunburn and eye damage.

4. **First Aid**

Pack bandages, medications, and any other supplies you might need, especially for overnight trips.

5. **Repair Kit**

Include basic tools, like a knife and supplies to make quick gear repairs.

6. **Firestarter or Stove**

Matches, a lighter, or a small stove can be essential for warmth and cooking.

7. **Shelter**

A tarp, bivy sack, tent, or emergency shelter provides protection from the elements.

8. **Extra Food**

Bring more than the minimum you expect to need, in case your trip runs long.

9. **Extra Water or Filter**

Carry several liters of water or a way to purify water from natural sources.

10. **Extra Clothes**

Pack an additional layer for nighttime, a rain jacket, and dry socks to stay warm and comfortable.

5. If You Get Lost

Pay close attention to your surroundings and landmarks during your trip, and note how they relate to your map.

- **Stay calm.** Panic is your greatest enemy. Take a moment to breathe and think about how you arrived at your present location.
- **Use your tools.** Trust your map and compass to help you reorient. Avoid walking aimlessly.
- **Stay on the trail.** If you are on a trail, don't leave it.
- **Know when to stay put.** Remain in place if it is getting dark, you are injured, or you are too tired to continue.

- **As a last resort, follow water downhill.** A drainage or stream can be difficult terrain but may lead to a trail or road.

6. Plants and Wildlife

The Fremont-Winema National Forest's diverse climates support a wide range of species.

- **Plants:** About 925 species of vascular plants grow here, forming the foundation of the ecosystem and supporting animals, insects, fish, and people. Management efforts focus on maintaining healthy populations of all native species.
- **Wildlife:** Over 300 species of fish and wildlife inhabit the forest. Game animals include mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, and pronghorn antelope. Waterways hold trout and, in some areas, largemouth bass. Visitors may see waterfowl like Canada geese, swans, and mallards, along with predators such as black bears, mountain lions, and bobcats. Threatened and endangered species include the bald eagle, peregrine falcon (rare migrant), bull trout, and several sucker fish species found downstream.

7. Safety and Outdoor Ethics

Leave No Trace is a system of outdoor ethics designed to help protect natural spaces and ensure everyone can enjoy them. Following its seven principles minimizes your impact and preserves the forest for future visitors. Learn more [LNT.org](https://www.lnt.org).

Leave No Trace Principles

- **Plan ahead and prepare.** Know your destination and route. Carry a map (available online for free or for purchase at Forest Service offices). Bring enough food, water, and appropriate clothing for the conditions. Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return
- **Travel and camp on durable surfaces.** Avoid fragile environments like springs, streams, subalpine meadows, and wildflower fields. Camp on durable surfaces like rock, bare soil, or pine needle beds.
- **Dispose of waste properly.** Pack out all trash. Bury human waste at least six inches deep and at least 200 feet away from water sources. Note: Campgrounds may not have trash services—plan accordingly.
- **Leave what you find.** Protect archeological sites and natural features. Do not collect artifacts, deface rock formations, or harvest plants without proper permits. These resources hold cultural and ecological value that should remain intact.
- **Minimize campfire impacts.** Check current fire regulations before building a campfire. Use existing fire rings where available, keep fires small, and fully extinguish them before leaving.

- **Respect wildlife.** Do not feed wild animals or leave food and trash unattended. Human food can harm wildlife and lead to dangerous encounters. Maintain a safe distance—about 75 feet from deer and elk, and 300 feet from bears, wolves, and cougars.
- **Be considerate of other visitors.** Keep noise to a minimum, especially in campgrounds, picnics areas, and other high-use locations. Observe posted quiet hours and be mindful with generators, music, and large gatherings.

8. Wilderness Regulations & Restrictions

Motorized equipment and mechanical transport are prohibited in designated Wilderness Areas, including motor vehicles, bicycles, hang gliders, carts, portage wheels, and aircraft.

Special Restrictions by Area

- *Gearhart Mountain Wilderness:* No stock or campfires within 200 feet of water sources or Blue Lake's high-water line.
- *Mountain Lakes Wilderness:* Group size limit of 10 people and/or stock in any combination.
- *Mt. Thielsen Wilderness:*
 - Fremont-Winema portion: 6 people and 9 stock limit (except Maidu Lake Trail #1446).
 - Maidu Lake Trail #1446 (Umpqua NF): 20-unit limit, with max 12 people and 8 stock (or reverse).
 - Deschutes NF portion: Limit of 12 total (people and stock).
 - No stock within 200 feet of water sources.
- *Sky Lakes Wilderness:* Use designated horse camps in Seven Lakes and Blue Canyon Basins. Group size limit of 8 people and 12 stock (exceptions on Pacific Crest Trail). Camps and fires prohibited within 100 feet of lakes or 50 feet of streams/springs. No stock within 200 feet of water. Do not tether stock to live trees for over one hour.

9. Fire Safety

To report a wildfire: Call 911.

Check before you go: The South-Central Oregon Fire Management Partnership provides current fire danger levels and restrictions.

Restrictions:

- *Public Use Restrictions* limit certain recreation activities (campfires, smoking, off-road travel, generator use, chainsaw use) during high fire danger.

- *Industrial Fire Protection Levels (IFPLs)* apply to commercial and industrial activities, such as timber harvest or firewood cutting, to minimize wildfire risk.

10. Tailgate Safety Checklist

Assignment Complexity

The difficulty of a task should be determined by the individual or crew, based on skills, knowledge, and awareness of personal limits.

- Anyone may delay or decline work they consider beyond their capabilities or an acceptable level of risk.
- Before starting, assess the job using the criteria below and consider current environmental conditions.
- Decide whether to proceed or not to proceed only after completing this assessment.

Decision to Proceed

- ☐ I / WE feel comfortable with performing the work
- ☐ I / WE do not feel comfortable with performing the work and will explore alternatives.

Hazardous Conditions

- ☐ All known hazards/risks have been identified and discussed.
- ☐ Mitigation measures have been implemented to reduce risk.
- ☐ Environmental conditions and their impact on hazards have been considered.
- ☐ PPE required for the work has been identified.
- ☐ Appropriate PPE is available.
- ☐ PPE fits properly.
- ☐ Volunteers are trained to care for and maintain their PPE.

Participant Engagement

- ☐ All team members are mentally focused on the day's work.
- ☐ No personal distractions are present that could impair safety.
- ☐ All team members have been asked if they have concerns about the work or its risks.

Tools and Equipment

- ☐ All necessary tools are available.
- ☐ Tools are in good working condition.
- ☐ Volunteers are trained in the proper use of all required tools.

Task Deployment

- ☐ **Supervision:** Chain of command is clearly defined.
- ☐ **Planning:** Adequate information and planning time have been provided.
- ☐ **Risk Assessment:** Current assessments are reviewed and signed.
- ☐ **Communication:** Communication devices work in the area, or dead zones are known and SEND devices will be used.
- ☐ **Check-Out/Check-In:** Procedures are in place and followed?
- ☐ **Emergency Plan:** Emergency contacts and medical evacuation plan are available.

11. Acknowledgment & Signature

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Volunteer Orientation & Field Safety Guide. I agree to follow the safety procedures and guidelines described herein.

Volunteer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____