



Virginia Master Naturalist Program Volunteer Handbook and Policy Guidelines

Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Policy Handbook
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Virginia Master Naturalist Program

Volunteer Handbook and Policy Guidelines

Introduction

Welcome to the Virginia Master Naturalist program! Whether you are an experienced naturalist or someone just beginning to learn about the natural world around you, you are joining this program to learn more about Virginia's natural resources and to contribute to natural resource conservation in your community.

The Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) program is a formal, state-sponsored program. VMN volunteers are recognized as volunteers of the Commonwealth of Virginia and of Virginia Cooperative Extension, the lead sponsoring agency for the VMN program. As such, VMN volunteers are expected and required to follow the policies and guidelines of the VMN program. The purpose of this Volunteer Policy Handbook is to describe the mission and structure of the program, outline those policies and guidelines for you, and answer questions you may have about your role as a VMN volunteer.

About the Virginia Master Naturalist Program

Mission

The VMN Mission: *The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

Some key aspects of that mission include:

- A focus on natural resources: This focus distinguishes our program from some other programs, such as Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners, which is focused on home horticulture.
- A focus on volunteerism: The primary purpose of the VMN program is not to provide adult education through the Basic Training course, but rather to train, develop, and support volunteers who will participate in natural resource conservation.
- A focus on local communities: Although the program is statewide, it is a chapter-based program that encourages volunteers to focus their learning and service in their own community.

History

The Virginia Master Naturalist program was launched in 2005 after a team of individuals from several different state agencies researched programs in other states, planned a framework for Virginia's program, and hired a program coordinator. Many aspects of the VMN program were modeled after the successful Texas Master Naturalist program. We began establishing

chapters and recruiting volunteers, and by the end of 2006, our first ten chapters were in place. We continued to add chapters over time, and now our VMN program has chapters covering most of the state.

VMN Program Structure

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is not a stand-alone organization but rather a program within Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension. The program exists as a collection of local chapters that adhere to a set of objectives, procedures, and minimum requirements established at the state level. Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers are trained and certified at the local level through their respective chapters. Each local chapter has at least one Advisor from one of the program's sponsoring state agencies to facilitate volunteer opportunities that directly support the sponsoring agencies and to ensure that chapters maintain a working relationship with the statewide program and adhere to its principles and guidelines.

At the State Level

Sponsoring Agencies and Committees

At the state level, the Virginia Master Naturalist program is sponsored jointly by:

Our founding sponsors:

- *Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)*
- *Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)*
- *Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*
- *Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)*
- *Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH)*

And by two additional sponsors:

- *Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)*
- *Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Center for Coastal Resources Management (VIMS-CCRM)*

Program sponsors provide some level of financial support that is unrestricted and not tied to specific local programs or deliverables, and they provide in-kind contributions of one or more Chapter Advisors, Committee Members, and instructors for training courses.

The **State Steering Committee** is comprised of appointed representatives of the State Program sponsors and appointed Certified Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers. Together with the State Program Director, the State Steering Committee sets the minimum standards and curriculum requirements of the statewide VMN program. The State Steering Committee and State Program Director also review and approve new chapter development and initial training curricula. In addition, the Steering Committee reviews and approves new VMN program policies. They advise the Program Director in the operation of the VMN program and assist with planning and supporting conferences, events, and trainings.

The **Executive Committee**, which is comprised of representatives from the State Program's Sponsoring Agencies, makes final decisions regarding program policy, budget, and personnel. This Committee appoints one State Sponsoring Agency representative to sit on a

special committee for the purpose of interviewing or hiring the Program Director, and assists the Program Director with identifying State Sponsoring Agency priorities for the program.

VMN State Program Office

The **Program Director** develops the annual work plan and budget, serves as the programmatic liaison between the sponsoring agencies, and supports day-to-day operations of the VMN program. The **Project Assistant** takes the lead role in the logistics and planning for conferences and meetings, collects and compiles annual reports, manages program purchasing and accounts, and generally supports the program, its chapters, and its volunteers. The **Volunteer Coordinator** acts as liaison to volunteers by advising them on program policies, best practices, and other inquiries; assists volunteers with the VMN-VMS recordkeeping software; publicizes volunteer service and continuing education opportunities; updates and maintains program documents; and assists with conference/workshop logistics.

Financial Support

Funding for the VMN State Program Office comes primarily from its sponsoring agencies. Virginia Cooperative Extension provides funding for the Program Director faculty position. Funds from the other sponsoring agencies support the staff positions, supplies, and materials such as volunteer recognition items, travel expenses for program personnel, and contractual services such as online communication tools.

Donations are also an important source of funding for the program. Donations, which have come mainly from VMN volunteers, support many program activities, such as mini-grants to chapters, volunteer awards, and events. Donations also help cover any base program budget needs that are not covered by sponsoring agency support.

Grants for specific projects also help fund the VMN program. Grants may be from agencies, non-profits, or corporations, and they are generally tied to specific deliverables over a one or two year time frame.

At the Local Chapter Level

Local Coordinating Committee/ Chapter Board of Directors

When chapters are in their early stages (i.e., through the chapter's first Basic Training course), the chapter is run by the **Local Coordinating Committee**, comprised of local partner representatives and volunteers. As a chapter matures, trained Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers assume a larger role in the administration of the chapter's VMN program. Once the chapter has attained a trained cadre of volunteers, these volunteers are expected to maintain and coordinate the efforts of the chapter through the establishment of a **Chapter Board of Directors (BOD)**, minimally consisting of President, Vice President/President-elect, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair, Basic Training Chair, and Volunteer Projects Chair. The Chapter Board, with guidance from the VMN State Program Office and the VMN program template documents, will create and maintain its own Bylaws and Operating Handbook. Upon establishment of a chapter's first elected Board of Directors, the work of the Local Coordinating Committee is completed. (For more details on starting a new chapter, please see the *VMN Chapter Chartering Guidelines*, under "Resources", Appendix I.)

Local Partners

It is important for Virginia Master Naturalist chapters to capitalize on local resources and expertise through partnerships. **Local partners** may include schools, nature centers, non-profits, local offices of natural resources agencies, and any other organizations that might be stakeholders in a natural resource volunteer program. These partners may assist with chapter development, provide resources such as a meeting place or course instructors, and provide volunteer service project opportunities. All local partners must adhere to the VCE/VMN nondiscrimination policy (see “Civil Rights Compliance” section.)

Volunteers

VMN chapter membership is made up of enrolled, trained VMN volunteers who are actively participating in and recording their time on approved chapter projects, administration, and continuing education activities.

Financial Support

VMN chapters are funded primarily through training fees associated with their Basic Training course. These fees are expected to be in line with the costs of running the course. Some chapters also have required annual dues. The dues help support other expenses of the chapter, such as website hosting, mailing costs, recruitment materials, and project supplies.

Becoming A VMN Volunteer

VMN volunteers are dedicated, well-informed people who are excited about the natural world. They have a willingness to volunteer their time towards the conservation of the natural resources around them, through educational, stewardship, and citizen science activities. Candidates for the VMN program are required to complete a formal Basic Training course (BTC), which is normally given by the chapter to which they are applying for membership. This can be very competitive due to the limited class sizes, and can fill up quickly. Because of this, chapters are able to decide, based on local needs and criteria, which BTC applicants are best suited to be potential VMN volunteers upon graduation, as long as they adhere to the VMN/VCE nondiscrimination policy.

Age Eligibility

The VMN program is targeted towards adult volunteers, though many of those adults may work with youth as part of their volunteer service. However, there are likely to be some highly motivated youth and parent-child teams who would fit into this program perfectly. Youth who are 14 to 17 years old may participate, provided that they (1) have parental consent; (2) apply and enroll in the program using the application and enrollment procedures established by the chapter; and (3) be accompanied at trainings, field trips, and volunteer service events by a parent or other designated adult guardian who is directly responsible for them. If the parent or guardian is going to be an active participant in the VMN training and program, then that person must also be enrolled in the VMN program using the same procedures as the other applicants. Like all Basic Training course candidates, the chapter must first approve both the youth and their parent/guardian as VMN trainees before starting classes. Should the parent/guardian not be able

to accompany the underage VMN trainee at any event, the chapter's hosts may exclude that trainee from attending that particular class or field trip.

As an extra precaution, the youth also should be enrolled in the 4-H program of VCE. Please contact the VMN State Program Director and the local 4-H agent for additional details. The 4-H agent will enroll the youth in the delivery mode of "4-H Individual Study" (also known as "4-H Lone Star") and will help the youth choose an appropriate project book.

Volunteer Screening Procedures

The volunteer screening process, including the application, interview, and reference checks, are considered a confidential process. The information provided in the volunteer screening process should be kept confidential within the committee tasked with screening the applications. Any notes collected as a part of the screening process should be kept with the trainee/volunteer's file in a locked cabinet designated by the Chapter Advisor. The Chapter Advisor must be informed about volunteer recruitment and screening activities within the chapter and have the opportunity to provide guidance during the process.

The current volunteer screening process for the VMN program has three mandatory steps which are required for compliance with VCE volunteer policies. Only after all three steps are completed may a prospective volunteer be enrolled in the VMN program's Basic Training course.

1. Volunteer Enrollment and Application form:

Prospective VMN volunteers must complete the most up-to-date *VMN Volunteer Enrollment and Application Form*. A template for this form is available on the VMN website (See "Resources", Appendix I.) Chapters must use all of the language in the required sections and questions of this template in their chapter's application forms. However, chapters may also choose to include additional questions to help them in identifying potential volunteers who will be the best fit for the program. Examples of these additional questions may include ones about volunteering experience, interest in different types of volunteer projects, and availability for volunteering.

If an applicant indicates a criminal history on the form, the VMN chapter should alert the VMN State Program Office before deciding whether to accept or reject that application. At that point, the VMN State Program Office will work with VCE to choose a course of action. Extra care should be taken to maintain confidentiality in this regard.

2. References:

One of the required parts of the Enrollment form is a list of three references. VMN chapters must check these references as part of the application review before accepting a volunteer into the VMN program. Acceptable means of checking the references include an in-person conversation, a phone conversation, or a written form sent via email or hard copy. "Resources", Appendix I shows where on the VMN website to find a list of suggested questions for reference checks and a sample form that may be used.

3. Interviews:

To ensure the best possible experience for everyone in the VMN program, it is important to make sure that prospective volunteers understand the expectations of the VMN program and to determine whether volunteers' expectations adequately match those of the program. Acceptable methods for accomplishing this goal include an interview with the prospective volunteer in-person or over the phone, or a group information session in which the expectations of the VMN program are communicated and participants are given the opportunity to ask questions. Suggested questions for phone or in-person interviews (including what is unlawful to ask) as well as suggested major points to make in a group information session can be found on the VMN website (see "Resources", Appendix I.) Interview questions must not be unlawful or discriminatory on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law.

Training Requirements

The *minimum* basic training requirements include 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences, with a minimum of 10 hours spent in the field. If a chapter decides to have a course that exceeds these minimum hour requirements, the required hours for each session must be communicated to potential recruits through marketing materials and the Basic Training course syllabus.

In order to graduate from the Basic Training course, VMN trainees are required to pass a two-part assessment and make up any missed classes. Both of these have specific requirements that are determined by the local chapter.

Because of its geographical diversity, the natural resources of Virginia vary widely. Therefore, each local chapter will customize their training program to focus on their local ecosystems and volunteer needs.

Over the course of the 40-hour training, each volunteer should achieve a core set of learning objectives, listed below.

Virginia Master Naturalists will know:

- All aspects of their role as a Virginia Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the VMN program, and the guidelines for participation
- What a naturalist is and does and the significance of naturalists and natural history
- The biogeography of Virginia, including the physiographic regions and the geological and ecological aspects that make them distinct
- Basic concepts of ecology
- Basic concepts of geology
- Basic resource management principles
- Some native flora and fauna in the region
- The general process of science
- The roles of Virginia state agencies in the management and conservation of natural resources

Virginia Master Naturalists will be able to:

- Use a key to identify organisms
- Use a field guide
- Share knowledge with others (verbally and/or in writing)
- Make and record observations in nature
- Recognize when they do not know the answer to a question, but be able to seek out answers from people, books, or other reliable resources

Trainee Assessments

Each chapter will do a two-part assessment of its trainees as part of the basic 40 hours of training. This assessment includes an open-book written assessment, and a practical component that may include skills such as using a dichotomous key or giving a presentation. If you would like to use an assessment method not listed below, please have it approved by the VMN State Program Office. Additional details are provided in the *Virginia Master Naturalist Program Guidelines for Basic Training* (see “Resources”, Appendix I).

Part 1: Written Assessment

The written assessment may be one assessment at the end of the Basic Training course, or a series of assessments. Assessments can include open-book quizzes or writing assignments (e.g., guided journaling, reflection on training received each week). To receive the VMN certification, participants must pass each of these parts of the assessment. What constitutes as a “pass” can be determined by your local chapter’s Basic Training Committee. If using a traditional assessment approach, we recommend a score of 70% or higher. Suggested assessment questions have also been included in the *Guidelines for Basic Training*. (See “Resources”, Appendix I).

Part 2: Practical Assessment

Similar to the written assessment, the practical assessment may be one assessment at the end of the course or a series of smaller assessments. Assessments might include development of a class project, doing a class presentation, leading an interpretive hike for classmates, or using a dichotomous key. The type of assessment used here can differ across chapters, depending on their trainees’ unique skills and interests. Providing options is a great way to ensure the trainee has flexibility in meeting this requirement.

Absenteeism: Basic Training Course

Because we want to ensure all trainees have received training in all curriculum topics, any missed classes must be made up within 12 months of the completion of the training. Each chapter will set a local standard for the maximum number of classes that can be missed during a given training cycle without the volunteer needing to retake the Basic Training course. This standard is to ensure the trainee’s commitment to the program. Chapters are encouraged to set this standard at no more than one or two missed classes. If a participant must miss more classes than the local standard allows then the respective chapter may consider an exception to their rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. However these situations should be the exception, not the rule.

A volunteer is not considered a graduate and remains in Trainee status until the missed classes are made up. This trainee cannot become a Virginia Master Naturalist member nor a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist until graduating, but may continue to earn and report volunteer service and continuing education hours towards certification.

Appropriate Replacements for Missed Classes

Appropriate replacement classes must first be approved by the chapter's Basic Training Committee. A missed class could include one or more of the following:

- Attend the same subject class in a different training cycle or with a neighboring chapter within the same physiographic region, given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring chapter.
- Allow a continuing education class to count as make-up. If a continuing education class is used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as continuing education hours.
- Watch or listen to a recording of the missed class provided by the chapter.
- Self-study of curriculum materials, including readings, videos, and webinars, provided by the State Program Office on that training topic.

Serving as a Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN)

Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN) are individuals who, after receiving specialized training, provides education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their community for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

❖ Virginia Master Naturalist Trainee

Volunteer participant of an official Basic Training course from the first day of class, continuing until the Trainee has completed the chapter's basic training requirements. The Volunteer Management System (VMN-VMS) used for program recordkeeping refers to this category as "Trainee."

❖ Virginia Master Naturalist Member

A Virginia Master Naturalist who is currently enrolled, has successfully completed the chapter's basic training requirements and passed the final examination, but has yet to complete volunteer service requirements for certification for the current calendar year. The VMN-VMS used for program recordkeeping refers to this category as "Virginia Master Naturalist Member."

❖ Certified Virginia Master Naturalist

A Virginia Master Naturalist who is currently enrolled, has successfully completed the chapter's basic training requirements and passed the final examination, and has successfully completed all certification or re-certification requirements for the current calendar year, including continuing education and volunteer service. The VMN-VMS used for program recordkeeping refers to this category as "Certified Virginia Master Naturalist."

Certification Requirements

A Certified Master Naturalist is a graduate of a Basic Training course who has accomplished the following goals during a calendar year. **(The exception is for the new VMN volunteers who have just completed their Basic Training course – see “Trainee” section below for more information.)**

- A *minimum* of 40 hours of chapter-approved volunteer service.
- A *minimum* of 8 direct contact hours of chapter-approved continuing education.

Members will need to work toward renewing their certification every calendar year. There will, of course, be wonderfully enthusiastic volunteers who will exceed these minimum hours for certification in a given year. While they will not be able to bank them for use in a following year, these hours will be added to their ‘lifetime’ service and continuing education hours accumulation, for which milestones and other recognitions are awarded. (See “Recognizing VMN Volunteers” section.)

Even if a volunteer hasn’t been able to achieve these certification goals in a given year, they are still considered to be a VMN member. (Some chapters may also require paid dues each year to stay ‘active’. Please check with your chapter.) They can be proud of their accomplishments! The volunteer will continue to enjoy both the many benefits and the camaraderie of being a VMN member. And those hours that they have recorded will accumulate and be added to their ‘lifetime’ hours for each member, where various milestones are celebrated.

The certification document, Certified Master Naturalist title, (and pin if awarded) are valid for the rest of the year in which the goal is achieved and for the following year. A volunteer is considered “Certified” as soon as these goals are accomplished.

Certification Timeline for VMN Trainees

Newly graduated volunteers have a maximum of 12 months from the last day of their Basic Training course to complete the above requirements and receive their first Certification. (See Appendix II for certification timetables and questions.)

Class participants may begin earning and recording volunteer service hours once they begin their Virginia Master Naturalist training.

Volunteer Service Requirements

Volunteer service hours are those direct contact hours spent on Virginia Master Naturalist projects that have been approved by their local chapter. Time spent on chapter leadership positions, such as serving as a Board or Committee member, are also eligible for service hours credit. Service may involve a series of short, unrelated volunteer experiences, a long-term commitment to a single project or resource, or anything in-between. A VMN volunteer may earn hours working independently or as part of a team, perhaps on a class project. VMN volunteer hours can come in the form of outreach, such as educational or interpretive programming, assistance to statewide sponsor or local partner programs and/or research, or simply manual labor that benefits the local natural resources.

Service hours are counted for projects that have first been approved by the volunteer's chapter. Travel time can be counted as part of the project hours, as can project organizational time.

Virginia Master Naturalist trainees will vary in their abilities. Some will want volunteer opportunities to be presented to them, while others will see a need and want to design their own project. Virginia Master Naturalist trainees should be encouraged to design volunteer projects that are interesting to them and that capitalize on their individual talents. Volunteer service must be dedicated to the beneficial management of the natural resources and natural areas within their communities, and the service must be for public benefit, not personal gain. When designing new projects, volunteers are encouraged to partner with other local organizations and/or state sponsoring agencies, particularly for projects that involve a high amount of risk, such as projects with youth.

Volunteer Contribution Areas

VMN volunteers should record chapter-approved service hours in the following areas:

- **Education and Outreach Activities**

This area indicates activities or programs in which the VMN educates the public and/or fellow VMNs. This can include interpretive programs at parks; presentations and tabling/booths at fairs, markets, and other public events; and educational presentations to identified audiences, such as garden clubs, school groups, or homeowner associations. This area also includes training of other non-VMN volunteers or identified groups of volunteers to assist VMNs in delivering a program. Educational efforts include the time spent planning, organizing logistics of, implementing, and evaluating the program. If a volunteer serves as an instructor for a VMN Basic Training course or a continuing education opportunity, those service hours would count as Education and Outreach and not Administration hours.

It is important that those VMN members who are leading these kinds of activities gather and report civil rights compliance “Contact” information. This information documents the diversity of the members of the public with whom you shared educational information. See more details on this under Contacts in the “Civil Rights Compliance” section.

- **Citizen Science Activities**

This area indicates service involving data collection, monitoring, biological inventories, and other research-oriented activities. Examples include bird censuses, Wildlife Mapping, and butterfly counts. The activities may be part of statewide projects or projects specific to a local partner.

- **Stewardship Activities**

This area indicates hands-on volunteer activities intended to improve habitat and other natural resources, or, in some cases, to improve the ability of the public to access these resources. These activities may include invasive plant removal, habitat restoration, and

trail building/maintenance. As with other service projects, these activities must be for public benefit, not personal gain, and must first be approved by the chapter.

- **Chapter Administrative Time**

These hours include efforts spent on chapter organization, VMN volunteer development, training and other management roles. These may include: leading general membership meetings, planning and supervising VMN training classes (not teaching, which would instead be reported as Education service hours); working on a chapter newsletter; communication efforts; and any other activities that maintain and support the effectiveness of the chapter and the statewide program.

Chapter administrative time does not include time spent on management activities associated with chapter-approved projects. Those hours would instead be reported as Volunteer Service hours for the project to which they are related.

Local chapters may limit the number of Administrative volunteer hours credited to the individual's annual volunteer requirement, but keep in mind that serving in a leadership role is a significant time commitment that will likely result in more than 40 hours of volunteer time in a year. If a chapter does decide to have a limitation, they should indicate these limitations in their Bylaws. Like all other hours, these are added to the member's accumulative 'lifetime' hours.

More on Counting Volunteer Service Hours

Time spent in the preparation and management of an approved project can be counted as Volunteer Service hours. Where training is a requirement for the volunteer to be able to assist with an approved project, the member can report those specific training hours as either Volunteer Service or Continuing Education hours. For instance, if a Butterfly Identification class is required for those helping with a survey, that class can be counted as volunteer service hours for that approved project, provided that the volunteer did indeed help with the survey. In addition, VMN volunteers may count time spent on travel to conduct chapter-approved volunteer service towards the certification requirements and milestone achievements. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to choose service opportunities close to their communities, rather than choosing projects that have very high travel time compared to the actual service time. Volunteers should log travel time as part of the project on which they were working.

Process for Chapter Approval of Service Projects

If volunteers want to contribute their time to a natural resource cause that has not yet been approved and added to their chapter's list of projects, they can request the approval of this project prior to the accumulation of VMN hours for it. The volunteers will need to fill out and submit a *Project Proposal form* to their chapter's Project Committee or BOD for consideration. This form can be found on the VMN website (see "Resources", Appendix I.) Be sure to first check your chapter's existing projects as the proposed project activities may fit into one of these. For example, if you want to help pull invasive species at a particular county park, your chapter may already have a project that includes a variety of stewardship activities, including pulling invasive plants, in all of the county parks. Alternatively, there may be an existing project that could be broadened to include new activities, rather than adding an entirely new project.

Although your chapter will still need to officially approve it, it is recommended that any new projects that are under the auspices of one of our VMN Sponsoring Agencies be approved, provided that the projects meet the VMN program guidelines for volunteer service.

Other Volunteer Service Guidelines

Master Naturalist Volunteer Projects with Private Organizations and Landowners

Not all projects must be done on public lands or with public organizations. Projects with private not-for-profit organizations that have natural resource or environmental education missions are acceptable. Examples include 4-H Centers, land conservancies, and nature centers.

Stewardship projects on other private lands (such as individual landowners' properties) are generally not appropriate for VMN service. In some situations, they may be approved. Some of the things to consider for approval include: state sponsor involvement, public accessibility, a clear public benefit that outweighs any financial gain to the landowner, free or affordable entrance to the public, opportunities to tie stewardship to education, and benefit to natural resources in the broader locality. Chapters should evaluate proposed projects to ensure they are not simply performing free landscape work on private lands.

If VMN chapters are offering educational programs for individuals or private organizations such as private schools, they must ensure that these programs are also available to other individuals and organizations in the community to avoid discrimination of any kind, in accordance with the Civil Rights policies of VT/VCE (see “Civil Rights Compliance” section.)

Wearing “Multiple Hats”

Much of the time, Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers are volunteering with state agencies and other organizations. As a result, they may wear multiple “hats” for the same project. For example, a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteering for Virginia State Parks is both a DCR volunteer and a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer. Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers should follow any volunteer guidelines of the organization for which they are volunteering. These may include a separate application, additional training, and additional reporting of volunteer hours. It is fine if both the organization and the Virginia Master Naturalist program or chapter recognize and count those volunteer hours. The one exception is VCE-run volunteer programs (such as Master Gardeners) in which there is a required level of service. Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers who are also volunteers in one of these programs should choose which “hat” to wear for any reported volunteer hours.

Administrative Time for Other Organizations

Virginia Master Naturalists frequently hold leadership roles in other natural resource organizations. Volunteer service for these organizations may count towards certification if it is on an approved project that benefits natural resources. However, administrative time that is not project-oriented (e.g., board meetings, member recruitment, fundraising) is generally not appropriate for certification hours when it is with an outside organization. For example, if a volunteer is a member of the Board of their local chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, that volunteer may count volunteer hours putting on a public education program pertaining to Virginia flora. However, the volunteer may not count the time spent on general Board activities or planning fundraisers for the other organization.

Volunteer Projects that Cross State Borders

Volunteer service must be performed in Virginia in order to count towards VMN certification hours. There may be opportunities for regional projects that cross state borders; however, chapters may evaluate those on a case-by-case basis.

Continuing Education (CE) Requirements

Continuing education is time spent on personal education that provides Virginia Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their volunteer efforts on specific topics that interest them. Continuing education on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development of natural resource skills and knowledge, and it provides the experienced Master Naturalist with tools to work more effectively on new or advanced volunteer efforts.

While the Virginia Master Naturalist State Program Office regularly provides continuing education opportunities through events and webinars, it is generally the responsibility of each chapter to ensure the availability of sufficient continuing education opportunities to enable their members to attain their 8-hour minimum CE requirement. In addition, the local chapter should be a clearinghouse for notifying members of approved continuing education opportunities that exist outside their chapter boundaries.

Continuing education hours are counted as one hour for each hour of training received. VMN credit for travel time to and from the CE activity is not accepted.

Continuing education courses may be made available by VMN program sponsors, local chapter partners, local universities or nature centers, or directly by the local chapter, to name a few. Master Naturalists should receive approval from their chapter *prior* to attending any continuing education event. Chapters may choose to pre-approve continuing education offerings from some of their sponsors and partners.

Suggested Criteria for the Approval of Continuing Education Hours

The Chapter Board of Directors and/or the Chapter Continuing Education Committee should use the following required criteria when reviewing continuing education opportunities for possible approval.

Does the continuing education opportunity:

- 1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?**
- 2. Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?**
- 3. Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?**
- 4. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter?**
- 5. Provide information on natural resources and resource management or naturalist skills applicable to Virginia?**

VMN State Program Continuing Education Offerings

The State Program Office is devoted to providing regular continuing educational opportunities for its members through conferences, workshops, webinars, and other events that they can apply toward their required CE hours.

VMN Webinars: These regular informational webinars provide the members with an opportunity to interact, from the convenience of their computer, with a ‘live’ educational presentation about a natural resource topic or help with a VMN administrative subject. These are presented by well-informed instructors or experts in those areas, and allow for a more intimate and convenient way for members to learn, where they can ask questions. These webinars are recorded and then saved to the VMN website for the listening convenience of the member should they not be able to participate at the time of the webinar. There are many previously recorded webinars to choose from that the member may use as credit toward their CE hours requirement. (See VMN website; “Resources”, Appendix I.)

Other Continuing Education Guidelines

Media and Online Programming

Watching educational television shows and movies, and reading books cannot be credited toward VMN continuing education hours. We strongly encourage in-person trainings.

We also realize that there are excellent online CE opportunities not offered through the VMN program. Volunteers need to get approval from their local chapter for these online continuing education options, as it is up to that chapter’s guidelines as to what they want to accept in this form.

Reporting VMN Activities (& Why It’s of Great Importance)

Recording and reporting volunteer efforts is a **very important part** of being a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer. A surprising number of volunteers are very active, but never report any hours. Both the VMN program and the sponsoring agencies benefit greatly from this small but very critical effort by the VMN member. It can assist the agencies and local partners in getting much needed Federal/State monies, grants, or other funding to support their natural resource programs. It also substantiates the continuation of funding to support the VMN program itself.

Accurate reports of volunteer efforts can:

- Help the state sponsoring agencies and local partners evaluate their investment in the program. For example, in 2015, the average volunteer hour in Virginia was determined to be worth over \$26/hr.
- Provide in-kind match for external grants
- Allow volunteers and chapters to receive statewide awards
- Ensure our program’s compliance with civil rights requirements
- Provide documentation of what activities were done when and by whom for risk management purposes

VMN Reporting Systems

VMN volunteers should report their hours and education program *Contacts* (see below) to the online **Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System (VMN-VMS)** or to their chapter Recordkeeper at least monthly. In addition, Master Naturalists may want to track their mileage on all projects for the volunteer's tax purposes – the VMN-VMS provides a field for this optional information. (See the *Getting Started with the VMN-VMS for Volunteers* document in Appendix III or talk to your chapter's Recordkeeper for assistance with this user-friendly system.)

Chapter Board of Directors must submit an **annual report** to the VMN State Program Office using the standard report template provided on the VMN website. This report is to be submitted in January of the following year. (Contact the VMN State Program Office for help.)

Reporting Contacts When You Share Educational Information: Your Civil Rights Responsibility

It is important that VMNs remember to gather and report *Contacts*. A *Contact* occurs anytime research-based educational information is shared with the public. (See Reporting Contacts in the “Civil Rights Compliance” section.) This creates a record of the demographic make-up of the number of people served by VMNs.

Inactive Virginia Master Naturalist Status

An “**Inactive**” VMN member is one who has requested to withdraw from the program or who has been dismissed from the program (See “Standards of Conduct and Volunteer Dismissal” section.) A chapter's Board of Directors, at their own discretion, can determine if a member becomes inactive if dues are not paid for the upcoming calendar year.

If a volunteer becomes inactive, the member should be classified as “Inactive” in the VMN-VMS. Please **do not** remove volunteer from the roster of the VMN-VMS system, as we want to maintain a record of all past program participants.

Reactivation of an Inactive Member

If an inactive member wants to become active again, that volunteer should contact their chapter's Board of Directors to make that request. The chapter may request that current dues be paid before the member is reactivated. If a significant length of time has passed, the chapter's BOD is encouraged to provide a re-orientation for the volunteer to provide updates on program policies and procedures, available projects, and pertinent contact information.

If a former member has inactive status because of dismissal from the program, no chapter can reinstate that individual as an active member.

Use of the VMN Title

After completion of the requirements to become a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer, the official title shall be Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN). Use of this title is a privilege, and this title is to be used only by individuals trained as a VMN and while volunteering under the auspices of the program. This relationship should be clearly stated in nametags, signs, etc.

The VMN title is to be used only when doing unpaid volunteer work associated with and approved by the VMN program and the local chapter.

The Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers provide accurate, unbiased natural resources information. The Virginia Master Naturalist title **may not** be identified with any particular political viewpoint or be used by groups or individuals as they participate in political advocacy.

Some examples of advocacy that are inappropriate include:

- Writing a letter as a chapter stating a political viewpoint on an issue to an organization
- When announcing your position in a public forum, you state that you are representing the Virginia Master Naturalist program or one of its state sponsoring agencies
- Using chapter listservs to promote your individual position on a political issue or to promote events or organizations with a political agenda

It is allowable to write letters to government officials as a **private individual** or make statements at public meetings as **private individuals**. You may state that you are a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer but may not state that you are representing the stance of the organization as a whole or those of its sponsoring agencies.

Any Commercial Activity: Implying a VMN endorsement while participating in any commercial activity, within any commercial marketing, or in association with other commercial products or businesses is improper and a violation of VMN policies. VMNs may only identify themselves as such while volunteering in conjunction with official/approved VMN programs or activities, NOT for business or personal gain.

Within Resumes or Job Applications: VMN training and experience may be given as qualifications when seeking employment. However, once employed, those credentials may not be displayed by the VMN member or the employer.

Recognizing VMN Volunteers

The VMN State Program Office provides the following recognition items to VMN volunteers as they move through the program. A chapter may also establish its own local awards. An example of such an award might include "the most hours served" or "Chapter Master Naturalist of the Year".

Please update your personal profile in the VMN-VMS or with your chapter's Recordkeeper so that the VMN State Program Office and local chapter can make sure you receive your well-deserved awards and/or certification pins.

Nametags

Upon completion of their Basic Training course, VMN members are eligible to receive their VMN nametag. Nametags for Virginia Master Naturalists are available through a central

vendor, and each chapter is responsible for ordering and paying for these nametags for their members. Contact the VMN State Program Office for the ordering information.

Certificates

Upon completion of their initial certification, VMN members receive the official Certified Virginia Master Naturalist title and certificate. The VMN State Program Office distributes certificates twice a year, based on requests submitted by chapters.

Recertification Pins

Certified VMN volunteers are eligible for recertification every calendar year by completing 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education (also called your annual “40+8”) between January 1–December 31 of that year. Certified VMN volunteers who meet these requirements will receive a recertification pin unique for that year. Volunteers certified for the first time are not generally eligible for a recertification pin for the upcoming year because their initial certification is still in effect. However, upon completion of their initial certification by the required deadline (40+8 after completing the Basic Training course; see Appendix II for examples of deadlines), ambitious new volunteers may only earn the recertification pin for the upcoming year by completing an additional 40+8 of certification hours in the same calendar year as their initial certification.

Accumulated Lifetime Hours and Milestones

VMN volunteers who do not achieve “Certified” status are still encouraged to submit hours. As VMN volunteers record their volunteer service hours, they are adding to their ‘lifetime totals’. As these volunteer hours accumulate, the Virginia Master Naturalist program recognizes certain milestone achievements.

These milestones are cumulative and honor those volunteers who have given 250, 500, 1000, 2500, 5000, 7500, and 10000 hours of service, receiving pins that notate each milestone achievement. A volunteer may reach these milestones within one year or over the course of several years. When volunteers achieve the 250-hour milestone, they are given VMN base pins and ‘250 hours’ rocker panels that attach to the base pin. As each new milestone hour rocker panel is awarded, it replaces the previous milestone rocker panel. Should the volunteer not wish to keep the now redundant milestone rocker panel, please return it to the VMN State Program Office so that it can be reused.

Volunteers contributing 10000 hours will receive special recognition from the VMN State Program Office. However, chapters are encouraged to applaud members as well when a volunteer reaches milestones between these levels for their amazing dedication to the conservation of natural resources and the VMN program.

VMN Program Awards

The VMN program provides the following annual awards. Awardees will be recognized at the VMN Statewide Conference and in the VMN statewide newsletter:

- Most volunteer hours in a calendar year

- Most volunteer lifetime hours per active chapter member
- Advisor of the Year (nominated)
- Volunteer of the Year (nominated)
- Project of the Year (nominated)

Honorary Membership, Certificate of Appreciation, and other Non-member Awards

A chapter's BOD may want to give special recognition to a valued long-time instructor or supporter of their chapter with an Honorary Membership. However, Honorary Members are not true VMNs and should not call themselves as such. Unless they are enrolled, trained VMN graduates, they are not afforded the same rights and privileges (such as liability insurance and volunteer recognition items) as an official member. It is suggested that a chapter instead honor the person with a Certificate of Appreciation (COA) or a dedicated chapter special service award, for example. A template for an official COA is located on the VMN website. (See "Resources", Appendix I.)

VMN Logo Use Policies

A chapter may, and is encouraged to, provide shirts and other logo items for their volunteers. Approved digital VMN logo templates for chapters to add their name to and send to a printer can be obtained by contacting the VMN State Program Office.

Other Volunteer Policies

Member Transfers and Locations

Transfers from Within Virginia

When a member moves to a different part of the state or wishes to become active in an alternate chapter, a transfer can be implemented, with conditions. (See *Member Transfers from Within Virginia*, Appendix IV for procedures.)

Transfers from Another State

The VMN program welcomes volunteers from other states who have been a part of a natural resources volunteer training program, and highly values their interest and enthusiasm. However, the Virginia State Program does not recognize state-to-state transfers. These individuals will be required to take the VMN Basic Training course as a new VMN trainee and go through the same enrollment and screening process that all new applicants go through. The receiving chapter is encouraged to give priority entrance of this transferee into their next Basic Training course, should they find the transferee's application and references acceptable.

Basic training and continuing education/volunteer service hours earned under a different state's master naturalist-type program do not transfer.

Membership in Multiple Chapters

Being a Virginia Master Naturalist is a significant commitment, and actively participating in training, volunteer projects, chapter activities, and chapter administration takes a lot of time. For that reason, Virginia Master Naturalists are strongly encouraged to choose just one chapter for their membership. It is recognized, however, that some volunteers have the time and energy to fully commit to two chapters and have worthwhile reasons for membership in two chapters (such as two residences, or a long history of participation with a nearby chapter). Volunteers may be members of two chapters if they have the approval of the Board of Directors and Chapter Advisors of both chapters. Volunteers in this situation need to fully commit to both chapters, and they are expected to keep separate records with each chapter for certification, recertification, and milestone requirements. Chapters will not pool hours for any volunteer across multiple chapters for receiving his/her certification, recertification, or milestone awards. Members of two or more chapters also may not apply hours from the same approved project or CE activity to their records in both chapters – they will need to choose one.

VMN Members Who Live in Neighboring States

Individuals who live in states neighboring Virginia are welcome to participate in the Virginia Master Naturalist program. Their volunteer service, however, must be done in Virginia in order to count towards the VMN program.

Fees and Monetary Contributions

Speaker and Activity/Event Fees

- VMN volunteers asked to speak as a Master Naturalist by an outside party or other VMN chapter may not charge or receive speaker fees for their talks, slide presentations, demonstrations, etc.
- A chapter that is inviting a paid speaker or incurring other such costs for a VMN event may charge a fee or accept donations for a program to cover those necessary costs.

Donations to Chapters

Donations, both monetary and in-kind, to an individual chapter can occur and are welcome. These gifts should be given on behalf of the chapter or the VMN State Program for the furtherance of the VMN mission. The **important thing to remember** is that the VMN program, being a part of Virginia Tech, is not a non-profit organization. Thus, a donation, unless it goes through the VT Foundation (the 501(c)3 arm of VT) or is to one of our excepted 501(c)3 chapters, is **not** tax-deductible and should not be inferred to the donor as such. (See the *VMN Financial Manual* or the VMN State Program Office for guidance.) NOTE: If your chapter is considering a 501(c)3 status, please talk to the VMN Program Director to learn about the critical limitations of this status.

Pesticide Use and Recommendations

The registration and use of pesticides are governed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Activities involving the use of pesticides or advising the public on the use of pesticides

carry high liability for the VMN program and its sponsoring agencies and partners. Please see *Pesticide Use and Recommendations* in Appendix V for important details on this topic.

Wildlife Permits

VMN volunteers must be in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations when collecting or displaying live or dead birds and other wildlife or their related artifacts, even for educational purposes. Wildlife artifacts include such items as feathers, nests, skins, bones, and turtle shells. See *Wildlife Permits*, Appendix VI for more permit information.

Copyrighted Material Use

VMN volunteers may create educational or marketing materials such as presentations, brochures, flyers, displays, blog posts, and webpages. With the wealth of resources available from the internet, it is tempting to take images and other resources for use in those educational materials. Volunteers who are authoring educational materials should be aware of a few basic points of copyright laws. Please see *Copyrighted Material Use Guidelines* in Appendix VII.

Standards of Conduct and Volunteer Dismissal

Standards of Conduct for VMN Volunteers

Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers shall at all times:

- Act in accordance with the VMN Volunteer Policy Handbook and the applicable policies of the chapter, sponsoring agencies, and partners with which they serve.
- Present a positive public image that speaks well of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and its sponsoring agencies.
- Be respectful and courteous of others in all communications and interactions.
- Maintain and report accurate records relating to their training and service.
- Accept supervision and support from VMN sponsoring agency employees while involved in the program.
- Comply with the nondiscrimination policies of the VMN program and its sponsoring agencies, and make all reasonable efforts to reach underrepresented audiences with VMN programs.
- Actively participate as a positive team member with other individuals in the VMN program.

Local chapters should be instrumental in making members aware of these Standards of Conduct as well as their own chapter bylaws, policies and procedures. Chapters shall be vigilant and responsible for ensuring members and affiliates are following expectations.

Dismissal of VMN Volunteers

VMN volunteers serve at the sole discretion of the Virginia Master Naturalist program, Virginia Cooperative Extension and other sponsoring agencies. VMN, VCE, and other sponsoring agencies may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the organization or to make changes in the nature of their volunteer assignment.

When a volunteer is not representing the VMN program well, is not following program policies, or is not behaving in accordance with the Standards of Conduct, then the Chapter Advisor must be made aware of the situation. The Advisor should hold an in-person meeting with the volunteer to discuss the behavior and possible solutions. If no acceptable solution is found, or if the problematic behavior continues, the Chapter Advisor may, in coordination with the VMN State Program Office, approve and carry out a dismissal of the volunteer. All parties should receive written notification that the individual's role as a VMN volunteer has been terminated. From that point forward, the individual shall be listed as "inactive" in the Volunteer Management System (VMN-VMS) and may not volunteer as a VMN nor represent the VMN program in that or any other chapter.

Risk Management for VMN Activities

Overview

VMN volunteers are engaged in an extremely wide variety of activities to benefit their local communities, such as leading youth environmental education programs, monitoring water quality in local streams, and providing landowners with advice on invasive plants. Most of these activities include some element of risk. Problems that could arise include physical injuries, ranging from minor cuts and bruises, to more severe incidents. Damage to property, whether it is a homeowner's prized shrub or a vehicle are also possible. Emotional injuries such as claims of rape, abuse, and molestation are another possible risk. Further complicating matters is the fact that some VMN volunteers work with vulnerable populations such as youth and nursing home residents.

One of the benefits to volunteering through the VMN program is that our sponsoring agencies provide training and support to protect you as the volunteer, as well as the public, the VMN program, and their own organization. Because Virginia Cooperative Extension is the lead sponsoring agency for the VMN, we follow VCE volunteer policies with adaptations made as needed to address the multi-agency nature of the program.

Insurance Coverage

Personal Health/Injury Insurance

As noted on the required Volunteer Application and Enrollment form, if a volunteer is injured while performing volunteer duties, medical claims are his or her responsibility (personal insurance or cash payment). The Workers' Compensation Plan provided for employees of the Commonwealth of Virginia does not apply to volunteers.

If the injured volunteer feels that the injury is Virginia Tech's responsibility or the result of negligence, the volunteer has the option to file a tort claim with Virginia's

Division of Risk Management (DRM). Filing a claim with the DRM does not guarantee acceptance or reimbursement.

Automobile Insurance

Accidents involving personal vehicles (even when used for business) are the responsibility of the owner. All accidents must be reported to the insurer of the vehicle. Virginia Tech does have coverage for excess over personal coverage, only if personal auto liability limits were exhausted and Virginia Tech was determined to be liable because the individual was conducting approved VMN volunteer activities.

General Liability Insurance

Enrolled Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers are covered by general liability insurance that covers employees and volunteers while participating in chapter-approved projects and activities only.

The state's insurance program coverage of general liability for the Commonwealth of Virginia and Employees of the Commonwealth provides defense, which is handled by the Office of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The program provides \$2,000,000 per occurrence liability coverage as set forth in Section 2.2-1837 of the *CODE OF VIRGINIA*, which provides that a self-insurance program may "provide protection against liability imposed by law for damages resulting from any claim made against any department, agency, institution, board, commission, officer, agent, or employee thereof for acts or omissions of any nature while acting in an authorized governmental or proprietary capacity and in the course and scope of employment or authorization." This plan provides for coverage of anyone representing Virginia Tech, whether full time, part time, paid, or volunteer. All coverage for professional liability concerns are covered under this policy as well. Violations of the law or willful acts outside of the volunteer's scope of duties are not covered. In addition, insurance coverage does not apply to a failure to follow or implement the risk management procedures provided by the VMN program or the project documentation.

Two important criteria must be in place for the liability insurance to apply:

1. Program Enrollment

VMN volunteers must be officially enrolled in the program with their signed Enrollment form on file with their current chapter in order to be covered by the liability insurance. Individuals who have the status of "inactive" may no longer volunteer as VMNs and are not covered by the liability insurance.

2. Project Approval

All service projects and activities must be approved by the VMN chapter before the activity takes place, following procedures in the chapter's Operating Handbook. Before participating in a service project, volunteers should receive an orientation to the project. A volunteer should understand the project's purpose, the project's protocols, hazards and risks associated with the project, and safety procedures. The Project Proposal Form should contain all of this information and essentially serve as a job description for that project. Volunteers must be aware

of their responsibilities as they relate to liability when planning programs. (See *Risk Management: Planning for the Best and the Worst* in Appendix VIII.)

Other Aspects of Risk Management

In An Emergency

In the event of a fatality or an emergency that involves serious injuries or life-threatening incidents, Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers should follow the procedures on the VCE *Emergency Procedure Card* (Appendix IX), including completing an *Incident Report Form* (Appendix X). Volunteers should carry the Emergency Card at all times. This card will vary slightly among chapters, so as to reflect the procedures and contact information required for that chapter.

Risk Management Training

All Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers must receive training in risk management that includes guidelines for youth interactions as well as other risk management policies. A slide set, script, and handouts are posted on the Virginia Master Naturalist website (see “Resources”, Appendix I). Chapters must include risk management training as part of the Basic Training course.

Tracking Your Activities

If you do not log and report your hours, it is as if you did not complete them at all. Documentation of your volunteer hours is the evidence of when you were acting as a VMN volunteer in your activities. At least once a month, enter your hours on the VMS and attribute them to the correct approved project in your chapter.

Contracts

Volunteers are not authorized to sign contracts on behalf of their chapter, the VMN program, or the VMN program’s sponsors and partners. (There are exceptions for those chapters which have 501(c)3 status.) These include contracts such as room rental agreements and other contracts that might result in a volunteer being personally liable. Talk to your Chapter Advisor and the VMN State Program Office prior to the event/program if a contract will be involved. They will advise you on the proper procedure for contracts and can assist with having contracts signed, which will require specific language. Most contracts will need to be signed by the Director of VCE at Virginia Tech, so ensure that enough time is provided to have your contract reviewed and signed.

Social Media

The policy of the VMN sponsoring agencies regarding personal blogs and other forms of social media is as follows:

If VMN volunteers have personal blogs, Facebook pages, and other social media, they are encouraged to include a “disclaimer” that information shared on these sites are their opinion and not necessarily those of the VMN program or its sponsoring agencies. An example would be: “Information represents my personal opinions, but not necessarily those of the Virginia Master Naturalist program or its sponsoring agencies.”

Civil Rights Compliance

As Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is the lead sponsoring agency for the Virginia Master Naturalist program, we share both the values and the responsibilities of VCE related to diversity and civil rights compliance. Thus, the VCE policies apply to the VMN program as they do to other Extension programs. In addition, all local partners should adhere to the VCE/VMN nondiscrimination policy (see “Equal Opportunity” section.)

VMN chapters and volunteers will comply with VMN program policy in recruitment, screening, and training of VMN volunteers and in implementing educational programming. This policy mirrors that of Virginia Cooperative Extension and applies to paid staff and VMN volunteers. All VMN volunteers must also have Civil Rights training (see VMN website and “Resources”, Appendix I for more information.)

The following sections are specific civil rights compliance guidelines that apply to all VMN volunteers.

Reporting Contacts

An important part of your civil rights responsibilities as a volunteer is collecting *Contacts*. A *Contact* occurs anytime research-based educational information is shared with the public. It is not counted as a *Contact* if you are simply communicating business information, such as the time or location of a meeting. *Contacts* can occur face-to-face, over the phone, by email, through newsletters and publications. A *Contact* record includes the race, gender, and age group of a program participant that you work with. Some people wonder why we must collect this information.

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is committed to diversity and to ensuring equal opportunity for those wishing to benefit from our program and services. In order to monitor the effectiveness of our civil rights and affirmative action efforts, we collect or invite participants in our program to voluntarily disclose their gender, age, race, and ethnicity.

Neither the information gathered or provided, nor the decision not to voluntarily provide it, will be used to determine eligibility for the VMN program and activities or the benefits available through participation.

The cumulative demographic information is used solely for the purpose of determining compliance with Federal Civil Rights laws. By collecting this information, you will assist us in assuring that the VMN program and activities are administered in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Because *Contact* collection and reporting are so central to our civil rights compliance expectations, it is critical that all VMN volunteers understand and take this responsibility seriously.

There are resources available to help you understand how to correctly collect *Contacts*, including instructions and forms. (See “Resources”, Appendix I, and the VMN website.) You will need to understand what qualifies as a direct *Contact* and an indirect *Contact*, you’ll want to know the difference between business-related and educational *Contacts*, who is required to report *Contacts* and how often, and the specific guidelines and policies that pertain to *Contacts*.

You may use either of two methods to collect *Contacts*: **Self-Reporting** or **Observer-Collected**.

Self-Reporting Contacts

This method is for use by volunteers to aid in collecting Contact demographic information during educational programs. The VMN volunteer will have each participant fill out a demographics form, then summarize that data on the VMN-VMS.

Observer-Collected Contacts

This method is to document demographic information of program participants when circumstances do not allow for self-reporting by participants. The staff member or volunteer collects the demographic data using their own direct observation of the participants. This method is much more practical when you are giving out educational information at a booth or having other brief interactions. Importantly, it is also more confidential in these circumstances.

The *Contacts* you collect must be reported on the VMN-VMS on a regular basis, ideally every month when you report your hours for your project. (You will fill in the collected *Contacts* information in that same project section.) If more than one VMN volunteer addresses an audience during an educational program or individual participants such as at an educational tabling event, EACH volunteer reports the entire audience as face-to-face *Contacts*. If you have questions about *Contacts* collection and reporting, please talk with your VMN Chapter BOD or Advisor.

Equal Opportunity (EO)

All VMN activities comply with the VCE Equal Opportunity policies and are conducted in a manner that assures equal opportunity for all, based solely on individual merit and fitness of applicants and employees, related to specific jobs and without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The following statement should be included on all documents without research-based educational subject matter content, which are distributed to the public (including on public websites.) Examples of this are flyers or brochures for an event:

"Virginia Master Naturalist programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer."

If there is research-based educational subject matter content shared within the document, this additional statement should follow the non-discrimination statement above:

“Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Interim Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.”

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can be defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is also constituted when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination involving unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which interferes with the education or work of others. Sexual harassment violates Virginia Tech policy as well as state and federal laws and can result in disciplinary action for staff and volunteer offenders as severe as dismissal. In addition to university sanction, persons who engage in sexual harassment may be subject to civil or criminal action.

Program Compliance

Virginia Master Naturalist and Virginia Cooperative Extension programs are planned and conducted in response to issues affecting the social, economic, and cultural well-being of the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Programs are conducted in accordance with the respective resources and staff competencies of the two institutions. The VCE, and thus the VMN program, are committed to the intent of Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other related acts.

All VMN program staff and volunteers have the responsibility to strive for balanced membership in its program and activities. Balanced membership is defined as the condition existing when the number of participants of the non-majority race or gender reaches 80 percent of the number of the non-majority participants that the group would have if its racial or gender composition were exactly proportional to that of the community. This is to be used as a guide to assist the VMN program in measuring progress toward achieving a fully integrated program.

All Reasonable Efforts (ARE) consist of a combination of actions designed to communicate to all persons that memberships are open, that non-members are welcomed and encouraged to become members, and that VCE (and the Virginia Master Naturalist program) subscribes to a balanced membership philosophy. Chapters are requested to report All Reasonable Efforts as part of their Annual Report and to maintain documentation of these efforts.

Documentation is defined as written records that reflect adequately the All Reasonable Efforts made by VMN chapters and volunteers to balance membership. Handwritten notes indicating dates, names, places, and other pertinent facts constitute documentation. Such documentation should be retained for a period of three years from the original date in the same location as your chapter's records.

Not making All Reasonable Efforts can jeopardize the status of your chapter, so be sure to demonstrate and document evidence that of All Reasonable Efforts to integrate and balance membership and program participation.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

This federal anti-discrimination statute was instigated in 1990 and designed to remove barriers that prevent qualified individuals with disabilities from enjoying the same opportunities that are available to persons without disabilities.

The following VMN/VCE guidelines should be followed:

1. Consider the accessibility of meeting rooms that are used to conduct classes and meetings. Choose only ADA compliant rooms if at all possible.
2. No interested parties may be denied services because of a disability unless it is impractical to accommodate their needs or if accommodating them would create an unacceptable health or safety risk, or significantly alter the nature of the program.
3. Every reasonable effort must be made to design and deliver VMN programs that encourage participation of individuals with special needs.

The following ADA Statement must be used in all methods of promotion of Virginia Master Naturalist events and programs, including written, verbal and electronic means for workshops, events, seminars, classes and organizational meetings:

"If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact _____ (name, office) at (phone number/TDD*) during business hours of _____ a.m. and _____ p.m. to discuss accommodations five days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120."

The following ADA Statement must be used in all methods of promotion for accessing Virginia Master Naturalist services, including written, verbal, and electronic means, and on any materials placed conspicuously in public places:

"If you are a person with a disability and desire assistance or accommodation, please notify _____ (name, office) at (phone number/TDD*) during business hours of _____ a.m. and _____ p.m. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120."

Appendix I. Resources

Where to find:

If it lists the VMN website, go to <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org> and look under the Tab that is listed by the topic below. Also, once on the VMN website homepage, you can use the ‘Search box’ at the top to help you find whatever you’re looking for.

Volunteer Screening and Enrollment

Volunteer Enrollment Form template (revised Nov. 2015): VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab

Sample questions for volunteer training interviews: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab

Sample questions for volunteer training reference checks: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab

Screening questions to ask and not to ask: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab

Basic Training and Continuing Education Materials

Curriculum training class modules online: VMN website, under Documents/Training Resources tab

VMN CE webinars – archives to watch, and to sign up for current one: VMN website, under Documents/Training Resources tab

Civil Rights Compliance

Contact Reporting for Volunteers forms and information documents: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Volunteer Management tab

Contact Reporting Fact Sheet: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Volunteer Management tab

Indicia – EEO/ADA (most current) to copy/paste: The *VMN Volunteer Policy Handbook* under the “Equal Opportunity” section

These mandatory nondiscrimination statements should be included in any published and publicly distributed documents, to include (but not limited to) flyers, event listings, and educational reports.

Civil Rights Compliance for VMN Volunteers (powerpoint creation in progress): VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Volunteer Management tab

Risk Management

Project Proposal blank form: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Volunteer Management tab

Risk Management: Planning for the Best and the Worst: see Appendix VIII and VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab

Risk Management slideshow and script, handouts: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab

Contract signing information: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Risk Management tab. Please contact the VMN State Program Office before proceeding.
Emergency Procedure Card templates: Appendix IX and <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/490/490-101/490-101.html>
Incident Report Form: Appendix X
Certificate of Insurance instructions: Contact the VMN State Program Office

Communications and Outreach

SmugMug instructions: Appendix XII; VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Outreach tab - contact VMN State Program Office for login and password
Getting Started with the Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System (VMN-VMS): Instructions for Volunteers – see Appendix III; VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Volunteer Management tab; and helpful videos and instructions from UC-Davis, albeit for the Master Gardener program
http://ucanr.org/sites/vmshelp/about/General_Information/.
Logos to adapt for Chapter: Contact VMN State Program Office
VMN promo video to send to interested parties: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Outreach tab
VMN statewide communications - sign up: VMN website. Click on the “Stay Connected” icon on right side of home page, below the VMN butterfly logo. You will be given choices of what type of things you’d like to receive. This is where you can sign up to be made aware of upcoming webinars as well.

Miscellaneous

VMN Strategic Plan: VMN website, under Documents/Program Doc/Program Reports tab
Copyright Laws: <http://www.lib.vt.edu/copyright/basics.html>;
Wildlife and Wildlife Artifact Collection – For more information on Virginia state guidelines and laws: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/permits/> or contact Shirl Dressler at VDGIF, shirl.dressler@dgif.virginia.gov, 804-367-6913.
Bird and Habitat Salvage Collection for Educational Use – US Fish and Wildlife Service: <https://www.fws.gov/pacific/migratorybirds/permits/salvage.html>

Appendix II. Certification Timelines for Volunteers

I've just completed my Basic Training course. How long do I have to finish my requirements for certification?

Newly graduated Virginia Master Naturalists have one year from the end of your training course to complete your certification requirements. For example, if your Basic Training course ended in May, then you have until May of the following year to complete your initial certification hours. You will then be a 'certified' VMN for the rest of that year AND the following year. Should you find that you need an extension of time to complete those requirements that first year, please talk to your Chapter's Board of Directors.

I've just completed all of the requirements to become a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist. How long does my certification last?

In general, the expiration date of the certification depends upon when the requirements for certification were met, not upon the year of the Basic Training course.

If you complete all the requirements for certification between these dates:	Your certification is valid through this date:
January through December 2017	31 December 2018
January through December 2018	31 December 2019
January through December 2019	31 December 2020

I've just completed all of the requirements to become a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist. How do the rest of the volunteer hours I contribute this year count?

Once you achieve the initial certification, all certification hours are based on the calendar year and cannot be banked. Extra volunteer hours beyond the certification hours worked in any calendar year count towards your lifetime achievement but cannot be banked for future certification years. The same principle applies to continuing education. This system greatly simplifies recordkeeping for everyone. We do recognize milestones of lifetime service achievement, so please do not be discouraged from contributing extra volunteer hours.

Examples:

1. If your Basic Training course ended in December 2016, and you achieved certification in May 2017, you are certified through 2018. Any additional hours you work in 2017 are added to your lifetime achievement, and any hours you work in 2018 count towards certification in 2019.
2. If your Basic Training course ended in May 2016, and you achieved certification in April 2017, you are certified through 2018. Any additional hours you work in 2017 are added to your lifetime achievement, and any hours you work in 2018 count towards 2019 certification.
3. If your Basic Training course ended in May 2016, and you achieved certification in May 2016, you are certified through 2017. Any additional hours you work in 2016 are added to your lifetime achievement, and any hours you work in 2017 count towards 2018 certification.

Appendix III. VMN-VMS Instructions

Getting Started with the Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System (VMN-VMS): Instructions for Volunteers

1. **Log on** the first time using the link you received in an automated email from the system.

This is a one-time-only temporary link, so once in the system, please make sure to create a permanent password!

The very first thing you should do is look for the “Edit Your Profile” link in the upper left hand corner of the page, under “Your Information.” Click the “Edit Your Profile” link and scroll down to the box that says “Change Password.” Enter a password here that you can remember and then be sure to click “Save Information” at the bottom of the page.

Please be aware that the password box will appear to be blank, even after you save it. Your password is still valid! This is to protect your privacy, so make sure to commit it to memory before you leave the site. From that point onward, you should log into the system by going to <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org> and entering your email address and that password. You will not use the initial invitation again. The VMN-VMS will be most useful and effective if you get into the habit of logging on to it often to enter your hours as you complete them and to look for upcoming events.

2. **Update your contact information.** Under “Your Information” on the left-hand side of the screen, click “Edit Your Profile”. There you can fill in your contact information, choose whether to share it with others in your chapter, and change your password. You can also update your interests by checking off the interest topics provided or adding new ones.
3. **View your hours.** Under “Your Information” on the left-hand side of the screen, click “View Your Hours” to see what has already been entered. You can create an Excel spreadsheet to save and print those hours, using any date range you would like.
4. **Enter any additional Volunteer Service or Continuing Education hours.** Under “Your Information”, click “Add New Hours.” Enter a description for your volunteer event, the date of your volunteering, and the number of hours. You must choose from the approved volunteer projects listed in the drop-down box, where you will also find Administrative and Continuing Education categories. So, for example, if your hours were for Continuing Education, choose “Continuing Education” as the project and enter the hours for CE there. There is also a field to enter your driving miles so that you can track these if you report them on your taxes. The “Population Served” section is where you will report your Civil Rights Contacts. This should be completed any time you have had a face-to-face interaction in which you gave out or presented research-based educational information (e.g. a school program, a talk for a community group, an interpretive hike, or a booth at an Earth Day event.) (See Reporting Contacts in the “Civil Rights Compliance” section of the VMN Volunteer Policy Handbook.)

5. **Check the calendar for upcoming events.** If your chapter has enabled the “Calendar” feature, use the calendar to find out about upcoming advanced training, volunteer activities, and chapter meetings. You can even click on the events to sign up to attend or volunteer for them.
6. **Find other chapter members.** Use the “Member Roster” link under “General Information” to find and email other members of your chapter.
7. **Find approved projects for your chapter.** Use the “Projects” link under “General Information” to see the complete list of approved projects, to find details about the projects, and to see upcoming events associated with the projects.
8. **Find chapter documents.** Use the “Newsletters/Documents” link under “General Information” to find chapter documents.

Although it is directed at the California Master Gardener program, you may find useful instructions and videos for the VMN-VMS on the following website:

http://ucanr.org/sites/vmshelp/about/General_Information/.

Updated October 2016

Appendix IV. Member Transfers from Within Virginia

When a member moves to a different part of the state or wishes to become active in an alternate chapter, a transfer can be implemented under the following conditions:

- The transferee brings a letter from the old chapter certifying that the transferee is a currently enrolled member in good standing. If the transferee needs assistance in obtaining this documentation from the old chapter, please contact the State Program Office.
- The letter should provide information on the transferee's status including completed coursework, certification, the number of volunteer service hours and continuing education hours that have been accrued during the current year.
- The new chapter should accept all certifications, volunteer service, and continuing education hours certified in the transfer letter from the old chapter.
- It will be up to the new chapter's Board of Directors to determine if the transferee needs to complete additional training that is specific to the new area, chapter and/or physiographic region during the new chapter's next Basic Training course period.
- The transferee must agree to adhere to all the rules and policies of the new chapter - even if they are more stringent than those of the old chapter.
- The original, signed letter of enrollment should be transferred to the new chapter as well. If the original one cannot be found, the new chapter must have the transferee complete and sign a new one, for purposes of risk management.

Once these steps have been completed, chapters should contact the VMN State Program Office for instruction on how to proceed. The VMN State Program Office can implement a one-time transfer of a volunteer's hours from one chapter to another, so that the record of the volunteer's lifetime hours is maintained.

Appendix V. Pesticide Use and Recommendations

The registration and use of pesticides are governed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Activities involving the use of pesticides or advising the public on the use of pesticides carry high liability for the VMN program and its sponsoring agencies and partners. This section is included in the VMN Volunteer Policy Handbook with the intent of reducing this risk, preventing pesticide misuse or misinformation, and protecting the public and environment from potential harm.

It is possible that some VMN volunteers will be involved in the application of pesticides as part of stewardship-oriented volunteer activities. In these cases, the volunteers must be either certified as commercial pesticide applicators or working under the direct, on-site supervision of a person who has the necessary certification for that type of pesticide application activity.

It is also possible that VMN volunteers will be providing advice and recommendations to the public on natural resource issues that could relate to pesticide use, such as control of invasive species. In these cases, the volunteers may not suggest any specific chemical controls, nor create information (e.g. fact sheets, displays) that includes specific chemical controls. A volunteer may state generally that chemical controls may be recommended for certain species, and that landowners should contact an Extension agent and/or Virginia Department of Forestry forester for specific recommendations to match their species, settings, and needs. Similarly, VMN volunteers may provide factsheets and other materials provided by Agency sponsors that contain pesticide information.

The sponsoring agencies of the VMN program will not cover any liability that results from creating communications on chemical controls unless it is following the *Virginia Tech Pest Management Guide for Home Grounds and Animals* (PMG) (<https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/456-018.html>) or is information from an Extension specialist if something not covered in the PMG. Because the VMN Basic Training course does not teach volunteers how to use the PMG according to the policies of the sponsoring agencies, **VMN volunteers should simply avoid providing chemical control recommendations.**

Appendix VI. Wildlife Permits

VMNs must be in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations when collecting or displaying live or dead birds and other wildlife and their related artifacts, even for educational purposes. Wildlife artifacts include such items as feathers, nests, skins, bones, and turtle shells.

The relevant permits, administered through the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, include:

- Scientific Research and Collecting Permit: Required for sampling activities that remove, even temporarily, any individuals from the natural environment. For example, a Scientific Research and Collecting Permit is required for sampling of aquatic invertebrates during a stream water quality monitoring study and for collecting species and disturbing habitat during a biodiversity inventory event, even if it is just temporarily for identification and documentation.
- Salvage Permit: Required for the taking of species or wildlife parts found dead. For example, if you find a raccoon skull, you would need a Salvage Permit to collect it.
- Exhibitor's Permit: Required for the public exhibit of live animals for educational permits. For example, if you wish to display a live black rat snake at an educational booth at the county fair, that would require an Exhibitor's Permit.
- Wildlife and Wildlife Artifact Collection – For more information on Virginia state guidelines and laws: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/permits/> or contact Shirl Dressler at VDGI, shirl.dressler@dgif.virginia.gov, 804-367-6913.

In addition, a federal permit is required for collection of bird artifacts:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Scientific Collecting Permit: Required before any person may take, transport, or possess migratory birds, their parts, nests, or eggs for scientific research or educational purposes. For example, if you find an old bird nest in your yard and you want to pick it up and take it indoors to show to your friends, that would require a USFWS permit.
- Bird and Habitat Salvage Collection for Educational Use – US Fish and Wildlife Service: <https://www.fws.gov/pacific/migratorybirds/permits/salvage.html>

Permits are not required for the following species and activities:

- Collection and destruction of nuisance species (see species listing at <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/permits/guide/>),
- Taking of aquatic invertebrates, frogs, reptiles, and nongame fish for private use. Private use means for use in the home, not for scientific, research, survey, or educational purposes. Note that there are limits on the number of these species that may be collected for private use, and there are applicable regulations about wildlife transport and release.
- Collection and display of non-threatened and non-endangered terrestrial insects and other arthropods, except for crayfish. Thus, a VMN volunteer may collect a butterfly to use in an educational display.

The VMN State Program Office cannot administer statewide permits to VMN volunteers, nor can it exempt VMNs from the permitting process. When possible, VMN volunteers are encouraged to work with a local partner organization as sub-permittees under their permits. For example, Save Our Streams and several other stream monitoring organizations maintain permits for aquatic invertebrate sampling activities. Otherwise, VMN chapters may choose to apply for permits that list all the chapter members who will be involved in these activities, or individuals may choose to apply for their own permits. Each type of permit includes a fee and requirements for annual reporting on what activities were done and what was collected.

Appendix VII. Copyrighted Material Use Guidelines

VMN volunteers may create educational or marketing materials such as presentations, brochures, flyers, displays, blog posts, and webpages. With the wealth of resources available from the Internet, it is tempting to take images and other resources for use in those educational materials. Volunteers who are authoring educational materials should be aware of a few basic points of copyright laws.

- Authors should obtain permission from the original owner to use any content, including photos, figures, artwork, and text that is not their own. This permission should be in writing, and the author should keep this information on file in case the material is called into question.
- All content published on the Web should be considered copyrighted material and should be treated as such. You should never download photos and artwork from the Web to use on your websites, slide presentations, and/or publications without seeking permission from the content owner.
- There is a group of works that falls outside the scope of copyright law. These include facts; works created by the United State Government; works not fixed in a tangible form of expression; ideas, concepts, principles, or discoveries; and words, phrases, or familiar symbols. For more information, visit <http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/works-not-covered-copyright>.
- Educational use of materials is not necessarily covered by “fair use.” You are encouraged to review the information at <http://www.lib.vt.edu/copyright/exemptions/fair-use.html> to determine whether your use meets the criteria for fair use. When in doubt, get permission from the owner to use the material.
- Creative Commons (CC) licenses give permission for specific public uses. You can legally use the work as long as you follow the conditions set in the work’s CC license. For more information about the Creative Commons licenses, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>.
- It is recommended that you obtain signed media releases when photographing or videotaping minors and people who are not VMN volunteers if you intend to publish the images online or in print. VMN volunteers sign a media release as part of their Enrollment form, unless they opted out. See <http://www.communications.cals.vt.edu/resources/media-release.html> for Virginia Tech guidelines on media releases and sample media release forms.

Appendix VIII. Risk Management: Planning for the Best & the Worst

Nothing can replace the good management practices of planning, documentation and extension of that information to your representatives through good training. In order to adequately prepare for any activity you must prepare for the best and the worst to occur. While there is no inclusive list of items from which to plan your activity, there are some general points from which to start. The following are some items that may assist you in your planning process. More information can be found at <http://www.intra.ext.vt.edu/policies/riskmgt.html>

Items to be Considered When Evaluating Risk

Be aware of the necessity to know:

- Types of activities
- Plan of supervision
- Location, number, and competence of supervisors, and of participants
- Crowd control
- Safety procedures
- First aid procedures and practices
- Plant and equipment maintenance
- **If at any time you fear for your safety, remove yourself from the situation immediately.**

Be alert to dangerous conditions:

- Physical facilities and areas
- Participants: rowdiness, horseplay, general observations, discipline, if children; physical abilities (vision, clumsiness), experience, and ability to handle tools, if adults

Put overall administration into specific written procedures:

- Medical treatment authorization forms, if children
- Schedules
- Registration forms
- Do's and Don'ts for participants
- Emergency procedures (before and after accident)
- Safety rules
- Job descriptions (Includes Volunteers)
- Participant Insurance requirements

Ensure specific supervision criteria:

- Communicate, so that participants understand the responsibilities of their position.
- Be sure all representatives understand and adhere to safety practices and procedures.
- Be alert to changing conditions that can bring about hazardous conditions.
- Ensure existing sponsoring agency policy regarding activity is followed.

Be clear on instruction given to those involved in activity regarding:

- Skills needed for various jobs
- Instruction for safety, courtesies of the game, etc.
- Protective devices.
- Rules and regulations.
- Warnings

Complete all necessary forms:

- Medical form
- General Waivers
- Equine Waivers, if necessary
- Accident insurance, if necessary

Appendix IX. Emergency Procedure Cards

The VMN program is now using only the VCE Emergency Procedure Cards for all its chapters, regardless of whether you have an Advisor from another agency. The State Program Office can acquire hard copies for no charge, but they are not tailored specifically for the VMN program. Please alter them in the following way. Some chapters create and attach a sticker with the information on it:

- In the area where it asks for your Supervisor's name, write in your Chapter Advisor's name and contacts.
- Please ask your Chapter Advisor if there are any additional procedures they would like your chapter to follow and add it to this card.
- Add in your own local police contacts.

Contact the VMN State Office or your local Cooperative Extension office for hard copies in a wallet-sized card format. You may also print this out to hand out to your members. There is a multiple card version on the VCE website (<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/490/490-101/490-101.html>).

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES	
<i>Ensure all steps are followed in accidents resulting in serious injury and/or fatality and incidents that involve law enforcement and/or may result in litigation.</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Priority attention: care for injured; stabilize the situation.• Call 911 or police, ambulance and clergy as appropriate.• A responsible Cooperative Extension representative stays at the scene.• Make NO statements to anyone other than the police, a supervisor/unit coordinator, Virginia Tech Legal Counsel, Risk Mgmt., or University Relations.• Appropriate person must immediately contact the parent, guardian or next of kin to the injured and inform them of the situation.• Contact your supervisor, unit coordinator and Risk Management ASAP.• Contact Virginia Tech Legal Counsel.• Immediately complete the Accident/Incident report and take notes; FACTS ONLY. A copy of the report form can be found in the Risk Mgmt. Guide.• Refer all media to University Relations. DO NOT MAKE ANY COMMENT!• Call Virginia Tech Police for assistance if you cannot reach emergency contacts.	



EMERGENCY CONTACTS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
First Contact: Risk Mgmt. Office: 540-231-7439	
Supervisor name: _____	
Office #: _____	Cell #: _____
University Relations: 540-231-5396	VT Legal Counsel: 540-231-6293
State Police: Cell Phone #77	State Police Local: _____
VT Police: 540-231-6411	Local Police: _____
THESE PROCEDURES SHOULD ONLY BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF A FATALITY OR AN EMERGENCY WHICH INVOLVES SERIOUS INJURIES OR LIFE THREATENING INCIDENTS.	

Information on how to handle incidents of a lesser nature, or on what forms to complete may be found in the Risk Management Information Guide for Virginia Cooperative Extension.
The general switchboard number for Virginia Tech is: 540-231-6000.

VT0215/VCE538NP490101

Card is current as of October 2016

Appendix X. Incident Report Form

Date of Injury:		Time:	AM	PM
Name of Volunteer:				
Street:				
City, State, Zip:				
Phone number:	()	-	Ext:	
	Age:	Sex:	The volunteer is requesting reimbursement. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (Volunteer must file with own health care provider first.)	
Chapter Advisor:		Phone Number:	()	- Ext:
Street:				
City, State, Zip:				
Part A: To be completed, signed, and dated by the volunteer.				
<i>If the injured person cannot fill out the description, a witness can write the narrative of what he or she saw only, and should also sign and date the form.</i>				
1. Detailed description of incident (attach additional pages if necessary, sign and date them):				
2. Description of injury (attach additional pages if necessary, sign and date them):				
3. Signature:			Date:	
Part B. To be completed, signed, and dated by a witness to the incident.				
1. Witnesses (name/address/phone number):				
1. Detailed description of incident as witnessed (attach additional pages if necessary, sign and date them):				
Accident reported by:				
Report submitted by:				Date:

This form should be given to the Chapter Advisor, who should file it with the Virginia Division of Risk Management if a claim is requested. A copy should be maintained in the chapter records and a copy should be sent to the Virginia Master Naturalist Program Director, 460 Stagecoach Road, Charlottesville, VA 22902

Appendix XI. Communication Tools for Members of the VMN Program

Communication is one of the most challenging aspects of coordinating this dispersed statewide program. Below are some of the ways that we all can communicate between the State Program Office, and within your own chapter. **Have fun!**

Statewide tools:

VMN Website and Blog

We have a VMN blog on the home page of our statewide website where we post news that might be of interest to VMN volunteers, announcements about chapter awards and accomplishments, etc. You can view it at <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/>. You will also find all kinds of useful information on this website, such as supporting curriculum materials for the Basic Training course and webinar archives that you can watch for Continuing Education hours. (Look under the ‘Documents/Training’ tab.)

Volunteer Service, Continuing Education, and other Opportunities via Constant Contact Emails

The VMN State Program Office sends out volunteer and continuing education opportunities that come our way from our sponsoring agencies and other related causes and interests. If you, as a VMN Trainee or Member, haven’t already signed up for this and wish to, go to the VMN website home page and click on the “Stay Connected” icon below the VMN logo on the right side of the blog posts. From there, you can choose which ‘interest categories’ you’d like to receive, such as Newsletter, General Interest, etc.

VMN Statewide Newsletter

A quarterly statewide e-newsletter is distributed to our VMN program’s members and stakeholders across the state. The newsletter only goes out to subscribers, so if you would like to receive this, be sure to sign up by clicking on the “Stay Connected!” icon on the home page and choose ‘newsletter’.

If you have articles or Member achievements (“Laurels”) that you would like to submit, please send them to the State Program Office at masternaturalist@vt.edu.

Statewide and Chapter tools:

VMN-VMS (Volunteer Management System) <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org>

You know that the VMS is the way we keep track of a volunteer’s hours for our program. It will also have information about the projects that your chapter has approved. In addition, the VMN State Office will use its email capability to send pertinent statewide information to all members.

But did you know that it is also a very useful tool for internal chapter communications? Your chapter’s VMN-VMS may have some of the following capabilities: events calendar; photo sharing; and document and newsletter storage. Log onto the VMN-VMS and look at the menu column on the lefthand side to see what communication features are

there for your chapter. Instructions on using the VMN-VMS for Volunteers is on the VMN website at <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/volunteer-management.html>.

Photo Sharing

If you haven't already, try out our VMN Smugmug Photo Sharing site, <http://virginiamasternaturalist.smugmug.com>. This is a place where we encourage all of our chapter members to share photos of their activities with each other, and it is an important repository of images that we use for brochures, presentations, the Web site, and other publicity purposes. It is free for you all, has unlimited storage (so you can put the files on with their original resolution—no need to size them down), and can be accessed by any chapter member. (Directions and guidelines for the photo sharing site are found on the VMN website under the Program Documents/Outreach tab at this time.) If you visit it, you will see that there is already a section set up for your chapter. You can add as many galleries and images as you like to that section. (If you upload any photos, please be sure to tell us who the photographer was, so that they can be credited for their wonderful photo!)

Social Media (for secondary use)

Your chapter may have some of these set up already. Please check with your chapter's Web or VMN-VMS Administrator. This can be a fun tool to use for unimportant chapter communications, such as photos, critter identifications, etc. (Because of the external membership nature of these sites, not everyone wants to sign up for this resource. Please use these only as secondary communication resources for things that aren't imperative that all members know about - don't exclude your members by using only this for member events, projects, or announcements.)

The VMN State Program has a Facebook and a Twitter page. If you are on social media, we recommend that you "like" our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaMasterNaturalist/>, and/or follow us on Twitter @VA_Naturalists , https://twitter.com/va_naturalists

Additional Chapter tools:

Chapter Websites and Calendar of Events

Most of our chapters have a website presence. This may be one of the most important places for you, as members, to find out more about your chapter. Many are quite intricate, informative, and fun to read, and some may even have places for you to contribute comments or stories. We encourage you all to have a look at your chapter's website. Many are also a great source for local and internal events.

Chapter Listserv Groups and Other Email Sources

Probably most of your chapters have something like this already to send out email to and between all your members. If you haven't yet received emails from your chapter, please check to make sure you have been properly added to the chapter's email list.

Chapter Newsletters

This is one of the most important communication tools for your chapter and is where you, as a member, will find out what is happening in your chapter, outside of a chapter website and emails. Again, great job to all of you for these important tools that keep your volunteers informed and engaged.

Appendix XII. SmugMug Photo Sharing Instructions

Virginia Master Naturalist Online Photo Gallery

We have an online photo sharing site set up with SmugMug.com. We have created guest password access so that any Virginia Master Naturalist can add images to the galleries. Our goal is to provide an easy way for Virginia Master Naturalist chapters to share photos that can be used for the VMN State Program website, annual report, presentations, and other promotional purposes. It is also a great way to promote communication amongst chapters.

A few rules:

1. Please just upload your best photos to the site. We have unlimited storage, but there's no need to share photos that didn't turn out well unless they are the only images captured at a particular event.
2. Do not upload any images of youth under 18 unless there are photo releases on file for all of the youth in the pictures. We know there are some wonderful pictures of programs you are doing with kids, but we do not want to share these images on line or use them for program promotion without parental permission.
3. A photo release is part of our Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Enrollment form. However, any Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer can at any point request that a particular image be deleted from the site. Some people may prefer not to have certain images posted, and that's fine.
4. Only upload images pertaining directly to the Virginia Master Naturalist program. Images of Virginia Master Naturalist training events, volunteer events, and social events are all acceptable. Natural history and scenic images from sites in Virginia are also acceptable if they were taken as part of a Virginia Master Naturalist event.
5. No photos that are offensive, of illegal activities, or otherwise inappropriate are allowed.
6. Keep copies of your photos on your own computer, in case your on-line copies are deleted.

Just Viewing Images (open to the public)

1. Go to <http://virginiamasternaturalist.smugmug.com>.
2. Click on any of the gallery categories that appear, and discover the images inside!

Adding Photos, Comments, Editing, Etc.

Even though you can view the photos without logging in, if you want to upload your own photos, edit them, add comments, or even to download photos for your chapter's use, you will need to log in with a username and password. NOTE: CONTACT THE VMN STATE OFFICE if you don't already have this log-in and password. Since the Volunteer Policy Handbook is a public document, we did not want to include this information here. Once you have that information:

1. Go to <http://virginiamasternaturalist.smugmug.com>
2. Click the "login" button at the top of the page.

Uploading Images

Once you have logged in, there are several ways you can upload images. Here is one of the easiest ways. If you are computer-savvy, you can explore other ways to upload images through the SmugMug Help menu.

Once you are in SmugMug:

1. Click on the “Upload” link near the top left of the page.
2. Select the sub-category to which you want to add your photos. There are separate sub-categories for each chapter and for statewide events. You can choose to create a new photo gallery within your chapter’s sub-category, or use an existing gallery within your chapter’s subcategory.
3. On the uploading page, you can drag-and-drop files into the uploading box, or you can browse and choose your files using the menu. If you are computer-savvy, you can explore other methods.
4. Please label the photos in the caption area. At the very least, **add your name as the photographer** so that we can make sure to give you credit for that wonderful photo! Other helpful details to put in the caption area would be the event and its date, and names of anyone else in the photo, if you are able.

Editing Images

1. Once you have logged in, navigate to the particular gallery you want to view, which is probably within one of the chapter sub-categories.
2. Click on one of the galleries. You will then see thumbnail pictures that you can click on to view or edit. Once you are looking at the images, you can add captions, do some color editing, crop photos, rotate photos, and even add a bookmark for the location that the photo was taken onto Google Earth. You can also add or edit keywords. Keywords will help us sort the images later. Anyone with the password can edit the photos; you do not need to be the photographer (which is why photographers should keep a copy on their own computers).
3. The site is set up so that you cannot delete a photo or gallery if you are logged on using the “helper” identity that we have provided here. To delete something, email masternaturalist@vt.edu and let us know exactly what needs deleting.

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