



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

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TRAIL CONFERENCE VOLUNTEER TRAIL LEADER ONBOARDING RESOURCE GUIDE

Welcome to your new volunteer position! This guide highlights all the resources available to you, most of which can be found on your [Online Dashboard](#).

Priority/Frequently Used Resources

- [Online Dashboard](#): Every volunteer has access to an online dashboard via the Trail Conference website. The online dashboard hosts all the listed documents below. If you need help logging on, follow the instructions in this packet or contact volunteer@nynjtc.org.
- [Online Reporting Form](#): All trail volunteers submit their volunteer hours using this form. Hours are separated by region, Supervisor, and Trail Chair. This form is located on the Dashboard under 'Resources for Online Reporting', along with the [Online Reporting Instructions](#).
- [Volunteer Service Agreement Forms](#): If you're volunteering on NPS/ATC, NY DEC or NY OPRHP lands you must fill out the associated park volunteer service agreement (VSA). Check our grid to see if your park or region requires a VSA. If you're still not sure, email volunteer@nynjtc.org.

General Resources

- [Avenza User Guide](#): Avenza is a digital map app that is very useful when volunteering. It can track your location to mark exact spots where you've spotted trail issues with photos and GPS points.
 - *Note: All NJ State Park maps, and some other local maps, are **downloadable for free**.*
- [Parking Pass](#): A parking pass can be provided to put on your car dashboard when working, identifying the vehicle as belonging to a volunteer. Know the rules of where you are parking! This pass does not allow you to supersede park rules unless you've been explicitly told so.
 - *Note: Some parks waive their entrance fee if you tell them you're there to do volunteer work.*
- [Trail Volunteer Structure Chart](#): If you're a trail volunteer that means you're part of a Regional Trails Council (RTC). Each RTC is a group of volunteers operating within a specific geographic region to coordinate the management of trails in the area. There are five RTCs: New Jersey, East Hudson, West Hudson, Catskills, and Long Path.
- [Trail Management Guide](#): If you want to dive deep and go beyond what's in this packet, this is the complete guide to all practices, protocols and policies for Trail Conference volunteers and Staff.
- [Invasive Species Management Techniques for Trail Maintainers](#)- Management techniques for various types of invasive species (Note: We've highlighted specific species, but these techniques can be used generally). This includes managing herbaceous plants, small woody shrubs, large thorny woody shrubs, vines, and removal methods.
- [Quick Invasives ID Guide](#)- Quick guide with photos of common invasive plants that you encounter on the trail, and best practices for how and when to remove or clip them. This includes plants that are 'aggressive resprouters' which cutting is not recommended.
- [Learn About Invasive Species- Standard Guide](#)- Learn about the 14 most common invasive species. This is also the part 1 training video for Invasive Strike Force Surveyors.
- [Learn About Invasive Species- Intermediate Guide](#)- Learn about 11 less common invasive species. This is the part 2 training video for Invasive Strike Force Surveyors.
- [Tools and Safety Protocols](#)- Recommended tools and safety protocols such as boot brushes, protective eye gear, leather gloves or larger tools like a weed wrench or pick mattock.



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Volunteer Trail Leader Resources

- [First Year Plan](#): The First Year Plan included in your welcome letter is a guide to everything you should accomplish in your first year, including trainings you should take.
- [Contact List](#): This lists key staff contacts and provides room for you to fill in applicable volunteer and park contacts for your region and role.
- [Managing Your Team](#): Learn best practices for managing your volunteer team. Remember, the Trail Conference has always been volunteer-powered – your leadership is the latest in a 100-year tradition!
- [Reimbursement and Tax-Exempt Purchases](#): Volunteer leaders (including Committee Chairs, Crew Chiefs/Leaders, Trail Chairs, Trail Supervisors and Corridor Managers) and sawyers are eligible to be reimbursed for certain expenses incurred while performing Trail Conference business. Occasionally Trail Maintainers or Crew Members may be eligible for reimbursement for items related to special projects. In all such cases the Supervisor or Crew Chief should approve these items prior to purchase. Expenses that are eligible for reimbursement include mileage (volunteer rate is \$0.14/mile), pre-approved tools and construction materials, and budgeted supplies for volunteer meetings, workshops and recognition.
 - *Note: We **legally cannot reimburse tax** as a nonprofit organization. Please use the enclosed tax-exempt form when making Trail Conference purchases.*
 - Follow the provided guide and forms to be reimbursed.
- [Supervisor-Maintainer-Summary \(SMS\)](#): This report lists all trail segments and assigned Trail Maintainers in a particular Supervisor region. To obtain your region's updated copy or submit data updates (i.e. new/relocated trails, maintainer assignment changes, etc.) email volunteer@nynjtc.org.
- [Trail Help Available](#):
 - [Help with Trail Work](#): If you need help with a construction project, blowdown removal, or other project beyond basic trail maintenance, work with your Trail Chair and/or Program Coordinator to connect with the appropriate Trail Crew or chain sawyer.
- Detailed information on sawyer support: <https://www.nynjtc.org/content/find-sawyer>
- [Help with Recruiting People for your Workday](#): If you are a leader running a workday and need more people, contact volunteer@nynjtc.org for recruitment help. We can 1) post the event on the webpage and promote it via email and social media, and 2) email our [Roving Trail Team](#) list once we receive your completed [Roving Trail Team Information Form](#)
 - [Tools and Signage](#): If you are running an ad hoc work day, we have a limited supply of tools and protective equipment for short-term loan. Regular crews are supplied their own supply of tools and protective equipment. If you are a Trail Crew Leader, work with your Program Coordinator during the annual planning period to budget for needed materials. Additionally, for any work day, we can provide signage to be posted along the trail for alerting the public that you're out on the trail. These signs encourage folks to be aware, safe, and leash their dogs when approaching a work group.
 - [Trail Project Approval Processes](#): Follow this guidance for your region when a new trail or park is being adopted, or a trail construction project beyond normal maintenance is planned.
- [Trail Walker](#): You will receive copies of our quarterly Trail Walker print newsletter that shares updates about trails, volunteers, Conservation Corps, and other goings-on in our community. As a volunteer leader on the front line of new and exciting initiatives, our communications team would love to receive photos and articles from you. [Content deadlines can be found here](#).
- [Business Cards](#): Volunteer leaders are provided business cards. To obtain yours, work with volunteer@nynjtc.org.
- [Complimentary Maps](#): A complimentary map of your region can be very helpful in managing your team of people and corresponding trails. Below is the policy on complimentary maps:
 - Volunteer Leaders Entitled to Free Maps:
 - Chairs – Can receive print and/or digital maps of all the regions they oversee when they first start their position and each time a new edition of the map(s) is released.



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- Supervisors and Corridor Managers – Can receive the print and/or digital map that includes the park/area they oversee when they first start their position and each time a new edition of the map set is released.
- Crew Leaders – Each year may receive the print and/or digital map(s) for the region they are working in that season.
- How Volunteer Leaders Will Receive Their Maps:
 - Leaders may choose to receive the print and/or digital version of a map.
 - *Note: Avenza limits each individual to THREE complimentary individual maps. If you are a Chair that oversees a region covered by more than three maps (not map set) you will **only be able to receive three digital** and the rest will be print.*
 - All new leaders will be provided a print map set when taking on their new role. They will also be provided a print map set when there is a new edition released.
 - Print maps can be picked up at headquarters or coordinated with a staff member for pick up at another location. Maps will not be mailed unless there are special circumstances preventing pick up via the other methods.
 - Digital map requests will be solicited and distributed at set times throughout the year (not on demand). Staff will collect the requests between each release date and then distribute the codes all at once. When you receive a code, you will have seven days to download your map, after which you will have to wait for the next release date.

Policies and Guidelines

- [Injury, Incidents and Insurance](#): Injuries and incidents that occur when actively volunteering are covered by insurance, either through the Trail Conference or a partnering land manager. Be familiar with the reporting process and forms before going into the field.
- [Code of Conduct](#): By becoming a volunteer you are agreeing to our Code of Conduct. To keep a positive and safe atmosphere, we expect all volunteers and staff to follow this code. If you experience or witness a breach of this code please email volunteer@nynjtc.org.
- [Outdoor Activity Safety Guidelines](#): There is inherent risk when working with tools. Keep yourself and others safe by following these guidelines and any instructions particular to your role.
- [Youth](#): If you are under 18, or are a guardian bringing a youth with you, the [Guardian Consent Form](#) must be filed with volunteer@nynjtc.org. If you are an adult who plans to lead youth other than your own, you must [submit to a background check](#) prior to doing so.

Training and Skills Building

- [Ongoing In-Person and Digital Events](#): We offer an ongoing selection of trainings, workshops, and webinars so that you can continuously build your skills and knowledge. Regularly visit <https://www.nynjtc.org/events> to see what's available at any given time.
- [Online Learning Library](#): Our learning library provides pre-recorded trainings and webinars you can watch at any time. These include: volunteer skills such as Trail Layout and Design and Invasive Species Surveying; general skills such as wilderness navigation and planting with native plants; and Trail Talks such as Making the Maps and Lenape Trail History.
- [Trail Blazing and Maintaining Resources](#): Whether you're an official Trail Maintainer, leading a team of Maintainers, or just curious about how trails are maintained, this page has all resources you'll need to effectively care for the trails – foremost among them, our Trail Maintenance Manual.
 - *Note: If you're a Trail Maintainer, Supervisor, or Chair, you're eligible for **trail maintenance hang tags** you can easily clip to your pack.*



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- [Trail Design & Construction Resources](#): Are you interested in joining or leading a Trail Crew? Just curious about how trails get built? Check out this resource page.
- [Other Programs](#): Learn about our other programs such as [Ecological Stewardship](#), the [Conservation Corps](#), our growing [Trail Steward team](#), and our many committees (i.e. events, policy and publications.) Email volunteer@nynjtc.org for more details!