

VOLUNTEERS IN THE NATIONAL FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS ACT

[Public Law 92–300; Approved May 18, 1972]

[As Amended Through P.L. 118–234, Enacted January 4, 2025]

【Currency: This publication is a compilation of the text of Public Law 92–300. It was last amended by the public law listed in the As Amended Through note above and below at the bottom of each page of the pdf version and reflects current law through the date of the enactment of the public law listed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/comps/>】

【Note: While this publication does not represent an official version of any Federal statute, substantial efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of its contents. The official version of Federal law is found in the United States Statutes at Large and in the United States Code. The legal effect to be given to the Statutes at Large and the United States Code is established by statute (1 U.S.C. 112, 204).】

AN ACT To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a volunteers in the national forests program, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. [16 U.S.C. 558a note] SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Volunteers in the National Forests and Public Lands Act”.

SEC. 2. [16 U.S.C. 558a] PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to leverage volunteer engagement to supplement projects that are carried out by the Secretaries to fulfill the missions of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management and are accomplished with appropriated funds.

SEC. 3. [16 U.S.C. 558b] DEFINITION OF SECRETARIES.

In this Act, the term “Secretaries” means each of—

- (1) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service; and
- (2) the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the Bureau of Land Management.

SEC. 4. [16 U.S.C. 558c] AUTHORIZATION.

The Secretaries are authorized to recruit, train, and accept without regard to the civil service and classification laws, rules, or regulations the services of individuals without compensation as volunteers for or in aid of recreation access, trail construction or maintenance, facility construction or maintenance, educational uses (including outdoor classroom construction or maintenance), interpretive functions, visitor services, conservation measures and development, or other activities in and related to areas administered by the Secretaries. In carrying out this section, the Secretaries

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shall consider referrals of prospective volunteers made by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

SEC. 5. [16 U.S.C. 558d] INCIDENTAL EXPENSES.

The Secretaries are authorized to provide for incidental expenses, such as transportation, uniforms, lodging, training, equipment, and subsistence.

SEC. 6. [16 U.S.C. 558e] CONSIDERATION AS FEDERAL EMPLOYEE.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a volunteer shall not be deemed a Federal employee and shall not be subject to the provisions of law relating to Federal employment, including those relating to hours of work, rates of compensation, leave, unemployment compensation, and Federal employee benefits.

(b) For the purpose of the tort claim provisions of title 28, United States Code, a volunteer under this Act shall be considered a Federal employee.

(c) For the purposes of subchapter I of chapter 81 of title 5, United States Code, relating to compensation to Federal employees for work injuries, volunteers under this Act shall be deemed civil employees of the United States within the meaning of the term "employee" as defined in section 8101 of title 5, United States Code, and the provisions of that subchapter shall apply.

(d) For the purposes of claims relating to damage to, or loss of, personal property of a volunteer incident to volunteer service, a volunteer under this Act shall be considered a Federal employee, and the provisions of section 3721 of title 31, United States Code, shall apply.

(e) For the purposes of subsections (b), (c), and (d), the term "volunteer" includes a person providing volunteer services to either of the Secretaries who—

(1) is recruited, trained, and supported by a cooperator under a mutual benefit agreement or cooperative agreement with either of the Secretaries; and

(2) performs such volunteer services under the supervision of the cooperator as directed by either of the Secretaries in the mutual benefit agreement or cooperative agreement in the mutual benefit agreement, including direction that specifies—

(A) the volunteer services, including the geographic boundaries of the work to be performed by the volunteers, and the supervision to be provided by the cooperator;

(B) the applicable project safety standards and protocols to be adhered to by the volunteers and enforced by the cooperator;

(C) the on-site visits to be made by either of the Secretaries, if feasible and only if necessary to verify that volunteers are performing the volunteer services and the cooperator is providing the supervision agreed upon;

(D) the equipment the volunteers are authorized to use;

(E) the training the volunteers are required to complete;

(F) the actions the volunteers are authorized to take; and

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(G) any other terms and conditions that are determined to be necessary by the applicable Secretary.

SEC. 7. [16 U.S.C. 558f] PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.

The Secretaries shall promote volunteer opportunities in areas administered by the Secretaries.

SEC. 8. [16 U.S.C. 558g] LIABILITY INSURANCE.

The Secretaries shall not require a cooperator or volunteer (as those terms are used in section 6) to have liability insurance to provide the volunteer services authorized under this Act.