

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

GSWA's Conservation Management Area,
Tiger Lily Lane,
Harding Twnp. N.J.



Overview

As part of its environmental stewardship goals, the Great Swamp Watershed Association owns and manages 50 plus acres of beautiful forested land in Harding Township, NJ, collectively managed as the Conservation Management Area (CMA), and located within the 36,000-acre Great Swamp watershed.

This property is part of a developing open space greenway surrounding is located upstream of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Morris County, NJ. The 50 plus acres of



riparian forest contains critical wetlands, vernal pools, forested areas, and Silver Brook (a feeder stream to the Passaic River), and is home to several state and federally designated threatened species, including wood turtle and barred owl. Eleven vernal pools support viable populations of breeding amphibians, including wood frog and several salamander species. The CMA is permanently preserved from development and permits groundwater recharge, helping to protect local water supplies.

GSWA believes that it is not enough to merely own land, but sound ecological management must also be practiced. The CMA is used to educate about best management practices; to offer recreation in the form of hiking trails; and to offer a diverse, and gradually improving habitat for wildlife. By making habitat improvements to the land, for example increasing vegetation cover on the forest floor, we keep rainwater on the surface for longer, slowing runoff and sedimentation into the Silver Brook, a feeder stream of the Passaic River. In essence, good land management affects and improves water quality, so creating good water management of Passaic River headwaters, drinking water to over 1 million New Jersey residents!

In order to manage these lands, we rely on volunteers to help conduct the management plan for the area.



Since 1996, thousands of volunteer hours have been expended in creating trails and boardwalks through the area, removing non-native, invasive species and replanting native ones, and in various other tasks such as erecting nesting boxes, and creating native plant areas to enable the area to become more valuable for wildlife.

Our goal is to restore the property to increase its biological diversity, making it a better place for animals to live, and consequently a better place for individuals to come and observe wildlife.

Much of the volunteer labor comes in the form of corporate work groups, who through their local philanthropic efforts, or in association with team building events, volunteer their.

In 2008 more than a dozen corporate work groups volunteered 1100 hours to help us to:

- Maintain 7,000 feet of fence to continue to exclude deer from 23 acres of the property.
- Remove invasive plants such as Multiflora rose and Japanese barberry from 4 acres of the site allowing valuable native species to thrive.
- Replant 350 native shrubs along stream banks and within the fenced acreage.
- Construct 400' of boardwalk to carry visitors over the wettest sections of the trails.



Workdays give employees a chance to give back to the community where they work. Additionally, corporate workdays facilitate team building as volunteers work together to accomplish the various tasks assigned.

Outlined below are the necessary steps to having your employees become a part of the restoration efforts at GSWA's Conservation Management Area site.

Volunteer Information:

Volunteer workdays typically take place during the March to November. Typical workdays are 6 hours, with a break for lunch. Water and snacks, restroom facilities and all tools and equipment are provided, along with leadership and any training or instruction for the group to accomplish the task assigned. Weekend dates can also be arranged, which allows family members to attend. The site is a beautiful forested wetland and, while working, volunteers will see wildflowers and birds galore, adding to the experience of the day.

Group Size

Workdays typically have between 8-25 volunteers, working alongside three or four GSWA staff and volunteers who are familiar with the project and offer leadership and supervision throughout the day. Larger groups can, with advance notice, often be accommodated.

Funding

Corporations often supply funds to offset the costs of materials for projects to be completed on the workday, and to cover the costs of hosting a group, including lunch and restroom rental fees.

Project Details and Description

A typical day will start with coffee and donuts while the group assembles. A quick introduction to Great Swamp Watershed Association and a review of the





project to be tackled that day will focus the group, followed by a review of any safety considerations, detailed explanation of the task to be accomplished, and division of the group into work teams.

Snack and bathroom breaks occur as necessary. Lunch occurs around 12:00 pm, with activities continuing until around 3 pm, when the days accomplishments are reviewed.

Benefits to Your Group or Corporation

Our newsletter, which is received by almost 2000 households, highlights corporate volunteer days. Many groups so enjoy the experience of volunteering to help the environment they become regulars, and set up a follow-up workday! With corporation's permission, press releases are sent to local newspapers highlighting the workday

How to Initiate a project

Groups interested in scheduling a workday should contact Hazel England, Director of Outreach and Education at (973) 538-3500 ext 20 or email her at hazele@greatswamp.org. Ideally one month lead time is requested, but projects can be arranged on shorter notice.



How to dress

Volunteers should dress to work in the outdoors. Long pants and shirts with long sleeves protect volunteers from insects, poison ivy and plant scratches. A hat and sunscreen are essential, as well as old shoes or boots that can get wet, as some areas of the property can be a little muddy. Many corporations supply company T-shirts, which make a great keepsake as well as a good photo opportunity.



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