



Volunteer Handbook

2021

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PROTECTING LAND.

**CONNECTING
PEOPLE TO LAND.**

**INSPIRING A
LAND LEGACY.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit WWW.PPLT.ORG

Email INFO@PPLT.ORG

Call 512.308.1911

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 737 | Bastrop, Texas 78602

Physical Address:

1018 Main St. | Bastrop, Texas 78602

 PINESANDPRAIRIES

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 PINESANDPRAIRIESLANDTRUST

WHAT WE DO

PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION

Pines and Prairies Land Trust works with landowners to conserve their land legacies. Conservation easements are the main tool for private land conservation and are custom agreements with the landowner to protect the resources they value for future generations.

STEWARDSHIP & PUBLIC ACCESS

We own and manage three nature preserves totaling over 1,000 acres. These preserves provide rich natural values through native plants and wildlife, beautiful views, water quality protection and public access. The 65-acre Colorado River Refuge is open to the public 365 days a year with three miles of trails. Yegua Knobbs Preserve and Billig Ranch are accessible with prior permission and on preserve days because of active habitat restoration. These beautiful properties are maintained with the help of dedicated volunteers and work days are held at each preserve regularly.

EDUCATION

PPLT is an all inclusive organization dedicated to educating people of all ages and abilities on the wonders of the natural world around us. We offer:

- Free nature classes - at the Colorado River Refuge during the Spring and Fall.
- Events and Seminars - to share our expert knowledge of land conservation with our neighbors and provide resources to those interested in land management.

OUR PRESERVES

YEGUA KNOBBS PRESERVE

- 302 ACRES
- MCDADE, TEXAS
- Unique geology & habitats

BILLIG RANCH

- 677 ACRES
- PAIGE, TEXAS
- Prairie restoration demonstration site

COLORADO RIVER REFUGE

- 65 ACRES
- BASTROP, TEXAS
- Free, open to the public during daytime hours & all access trail

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

- 1500 ACRES
- Private custom agreements between landowner and PPLT to preserve their land in perpetuity



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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

NATURE GUIDES

If you are well versed in the natural world and enjoy hiking, birding or other outdoor activities please share your gifts and knowledge with others! We are seeking naturalists and guides to lead programs and hikes for the public.

TRAIL BLAZER

Help maintain the trails and native habitat at the 65-acre, Colorado River Refuge. Trail Blazers work independently or in teams to keep trails clear and accessible.

TRAIL TECH TEAM

Join a group of hard working volunteers to complete technical and special projects that arise at Pines and Prairies' three preserves. Volunteers with diverse skills and knowledge are needed!

SPECIAL EVENTS AND OUTREACH

Share information on land management, conservation and PPLT's work at events including conferences, fairs, festivals and meetings. We will share all needed information and materials-we just need your enthusiasm and voice!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PPLT is seeking leaders to serve on our Board of Directors. Utilize your personal and professional skills to help protect our natural resources, breathtaking views and recreational spaces.



Volunteer Program Overview

We are so happy you are joining Pines and Prairies Land Trust in our mission to preserve and steward special lands in Texas! This handbook will provide some information on volunteer program and answer questions that may come up. Please review each page carefully and then sign and return this page stating at you are comfortable with and agree to following the expectations and conditions we set out.

I have read and understand the contents of the Pines and Prairies Land Trust volunteer handbook. I agree to the expectations and requests set forth including project approval, proper trail maintenance, requests for reimbursement, and safety. I also agree that any and all information shared with me or that I may obtain about landowners, donors, employees and fellow volunteers of Pines and Prairies Land Trust is confidential and shall not be divulged by me. It is my understanding that volunteer status may be revoked if these policies are violated. I also acknowledge that my role is as a volunteer, and as such, I will receive no financial reimbursement for services rendered.

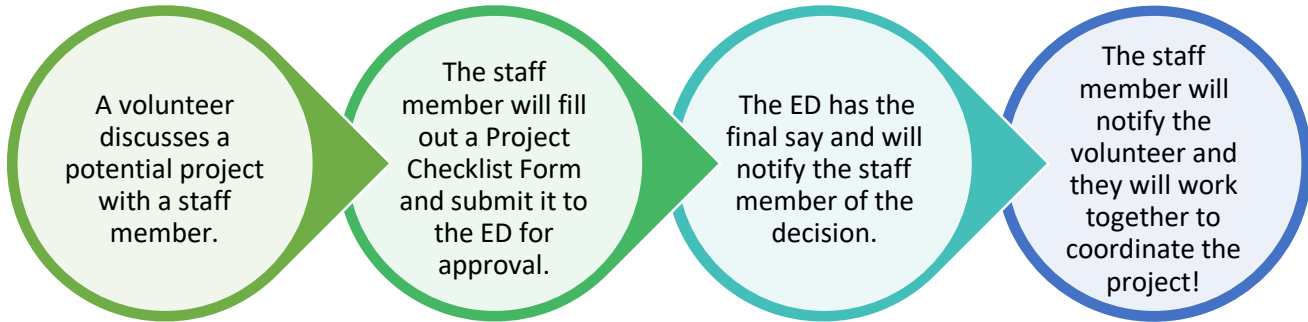
Name

Date

Signature

Special Projects

If you see a need or have a project you would like to do outside the regular scope of your volunteer position, we want to hear about it! There is a simple process for approval that flows from a volunteer, through a staff member, and to the executive director for approval. Please speak to the PPLT staff member closest to the project to begin the process.



Volunteer Reimbursement

Occasionally volunteers will have the opportunity to purchase or donate supplies for regular and special projects. All volunteers must receive approval by staff if they would like to be reimbursed for a project BEFORE purchasing the supplies. PPLT cannot reimburse volunteers for supplies or equipment if approval was not given beforehand. There is the possibility that PPLT already has the needed supplies or that we can acquire the supplies through a donation or at a discount.

Age Eligibility

All volunteers under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian sign their liability waiver and volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied on site by a parent or guardian.

Feedback

Volunteer grievances are of great concern to Pines and Prairies Land Trust, regardless of whether the problems are large or small. PPLT considers a grievance to be any event, condition, rule, or practice which the volunteer believes violates his or her civil rights, treats him or her unfairly, or causes him or her any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness on the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a manager or volunteer.

If a volunteer experiences a grievance with another volunteer at a PPLT event, let the volunteer coordinator on site know. Also address your volunteer coordinator if you feel any volunteering condition, policy, practice, or action by PPLT is unjust. If for some reason your volunteer coordinator fails to offer you the opportunity to discuss the matter, or if the discussion does not lead to a satisfactory conclusion, then you should contact the executive director. The executive director can be reached at (512) 308-1911 or melanie@pplt.org. At this meeting, you should feel free to openly discuss your complaint and substantiate your reasons for feeling the way you do.

Guidelines for Trail Maintenance

Trimming

- Three feet wide is the standard for an accessible trail. The trail tread should be three feet wide and vegetation should be trimmed and mowed four feet wide and eight feet tall, when possible.
- In areas with dense vegetation widening the trail with a shovel may be necessary to remove the vegetation.
- Look for birds' nests March-September before clipping a branch or removing a small tree. Do not cut a branch or tree with an active nest. When in doubt- leave it.
- When mowing check for ground nesting birds and rabbit nests.
- Move trimmed limbs and vegetation away from the trail into the underbrush.
- If cutting an oak, apply a latex based spray paint over the wound to prevent the spread of Oak Wilt. If you do not have any paint, do not cut the tree. DO NOT cut oak trees February-July which is Oak Wilt season.

Trail Grade

- A steep trail moves water more quickly, try to grade trails 10% or less to prevent erosion.

Ethics

- Do not intentionally harm any animals, including snakes, unless you are at risk of harm. There are three critically imperiled or threatened snake species in our area of conservation.

Larger Problems

If you see any larger concerns, please let a Pines and Prairies staff member know so they can assess the issue and determine the right course of action. This would include: excessive erosion, a large tree down, or vandalism.

Tracking Hours

If you are maintaining a trail on your own time, please submit your hours to PPLT so we can recognize and thank you for your hard work. Please use the form found on our website, under the heading "Volunteer" to submit your hours.

Trail Maintenance Aids

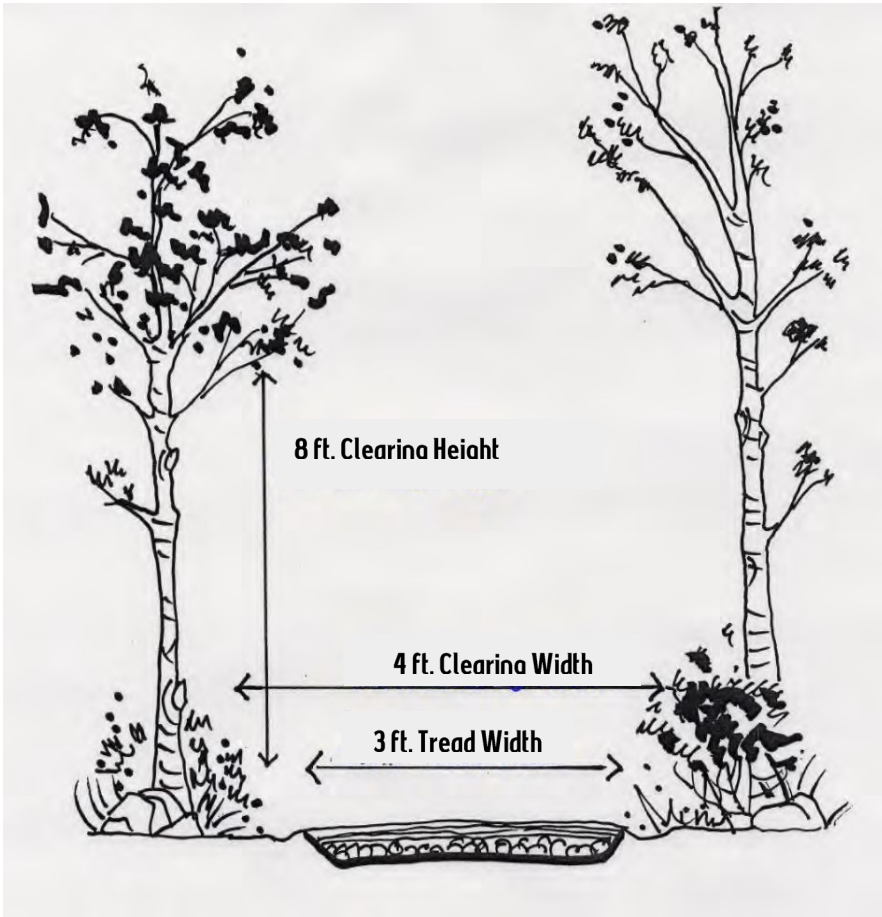
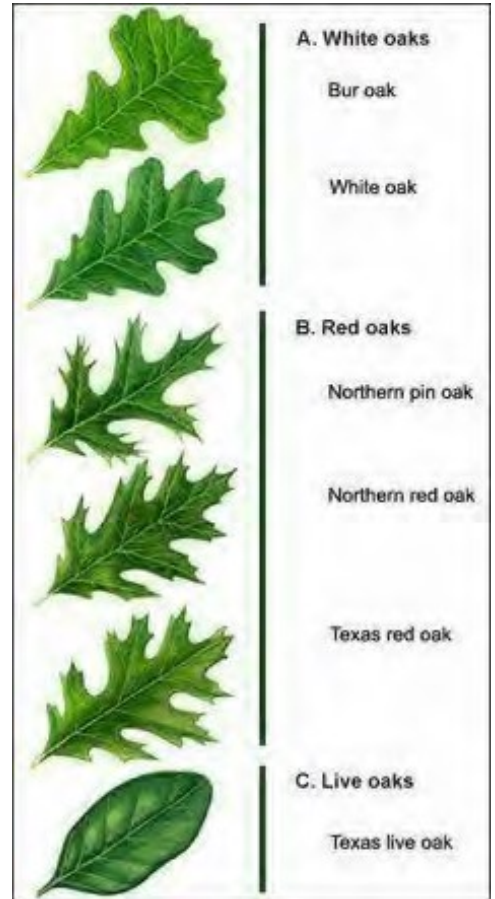


Diagram of trail maintenance



Oak Tree identification aid



Ground nests

Safety Checklist for Service Projects

Tools

- Tools are sharp- hold them with the sharp or heavy side down and lay them with the heavy side downhill.
- The person with a tool has the right of way, always get out of their way.
- Each person has a *circle of death* the size of their tool+ handle+ arm extended around them. Verbal consent is required for entering someone's circle, each person is responsible for keeping their circle clear.
- Always review how to use each tool correctly. Ask questions.

Personal

- Switch sides of the body if possible when using a tool to avoid strain.
- Keep a straight back and lift with the legs.
- Close toed shoes are required.

Environment

- Note poisonous plants in the area.
- Note rough terrain.

Hydration & Weather

- Dress for the weather.
- Stay hydrated, bring a water bottle along.



Poison Ivy

Guidelines for Easement Monitoring

Goals

- Develop and maintain a relationship with the landowner.
- Discover changes in land ownership.
- Determine if the easement is effective.
- The monitor checks for conditions of the property specific to the goals of the easement.
- Uncover violations.
- Establish a record in case of court action.

Tips from the Land Trust Alliance

- Review the easement terms before visiting and then with the landowner.
- Use the baseline and past monitoring reports as a guide and to address previously reported issues.
- Check any areas of the land affected by landowner reserved rights or special easement restrictions.
- Walk the property as much as possible, visiting in particular any areas of special concern.
- Check the boundaries of the property; this is where trespass from adjacent landowners most frequently occurs and goes unnoticed.
- Photograph any significant changes caused by natural processes (fire, flood, etc.) and any possible violations of the easement.
- Fill out one master form; any others are considered field notes.

Local Archeological Features and Assets

Much of the land in our five county focus area was inhabited for thousands of years and contains artifacts and signs human passage. Pines and Prairies Land Trust conserves these cultural resources as well as the natural resources of the earth. The best way we can preserve these social assets is by leaving them undisturbed and protected by the earth.

If you come across any artifacts or evidence of historic human inhabitation do not disturb or remove the item. Instead note the GPS location, take a photo and notify a PPLT staff member.

Thank you for your help protecting the historic resources of Texas!



Pottery fragments



An example of a burned rock midden that was used for cooking. These middens are made up of stones and the soil around them may appear darker than usual.

Source: www.texasbeyondhistory.net/bowie/

Liability and Photo Release Waiver

In consideration of being allowed to visit or, provide a service for, a property owned by Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT), I hereby release PPLT, its employees, officers, or agents, from any action, claim or demand for personal injury or property loss arising from or due to any negligent act or omission of PPLT, its employees, officers, or agents. This release shall have no effect with regard to damages caused by PPLT's gross negligence. I expressly assume the risk of injury or harm from my activities as a volunteer. I understand that I am free to refuse participation in or to refuse to continue with any activities if I feel my personal safety is in jeopardy. I agree to notify Pines and Prairies Land Trust staff of any hazardous situation I encounter.

In the event a PPLT driver or a visiting driver provides transportation for himself/herself or if his/her child is visiting, this waiver and release shall extend to and release the visiting driver or PPLT driver from any and all liability. Permission is granted for any emergency medical treatment, operation or anesthesia which might become necessary. I agree to be responsible for the expense of medical treatment or service.

I grant PPLT permission to use and publish photographs or video images of me, including, but not limited to, on the PPLT website, official PPLT social media, and promotional materials.

Name of volunteer

Signature
(Parent or guardian signature if volunteer is under 18)

Name of parent or guardian

Date

Relationship to child