

## RRCT VOLUNTEER TRAIL STEWARDS GUIDE

**RRCT Trail Stewards** play an important role in maintaining our properties (land on which the RRCT holds a Conservation Easement) and preserves (land on which the RRCT owns fee-simple) to ensure that visitors have a safe, rewarding, and enjoyable visit. Volunteer trail stewards can play a key role in advancing RRCT's mission of protecting and enhancing its properties and preserves and carrying out the vision of the property's or preserve's Management Plan, if there is one. As the eyes and ears for RRCT, trail stewards will be expected to monitor preserve uses, spot potential problems and assist the Stewardship Director with basic trail maintenance.

RRCT's goal is to enlist one or more stewards for each of its properties and preserves. RRCT will actively recruit, train, and retain stewards who will follow the organization's stewardship key principles and standard practices. Stewards will be responsible for three basic roles: monitoring, maintenance, and liaison activities (optional).

**Benefits.** Stewarding is a volunteer activity that offers many benefits:

- Working outdoors in well-managed, beautiful surroundings.
- Interacting with people enjoying the trails.
- Learning about the history and ecology of the property or preserve.
- Develop an appreciation of an RRCT property or preserve and witness it change throughout the seasons.
- Trail stewards receive an RRCT ball cap and orange beanie to wear out on the trails!

**Monitoring.** Through their regular visits, trail stewards are RRCT's eyes and ears at their property or preserve. The monitoring role includes:

- Periodic checks on kiosks, bridges, benches, signage, trails, trail marking, and other property or preserve improvements.
- Monitor trails for signs of excessive wear, erosion, litter, and unofficial use.
- Monitor parking interface/issues and general notes on user type/quantity.
- Monitor for the presence or spread of invasive plants and partake in removal if desired.
- Check trail conditions following major weather events.

Submit a brief [Preserve Visit](#) report after each visit to keep track of volunteer hours and document observations and trail conditions.

Submit a [Maintenance Needs](#) form to report the location and details of trail issues.



**Maintenance.** Trail Stewards should engage in light maintenance activities in keeping with the vision of the Management Plan for the property or preserve. Stewards might perform any of the following activities:

- Litter cleanup within view of the trail.
- Light trail clearing and maintenance; primarily removal of fallen branches and small trees that can be moved by hand. Problems and projects such as blowdowns, installation of water bars, trail relocation, heavy pruning, and trail and bridge repair should be referred to the Stewardship Director for assignment to Trail Crew.
- Light pruning of branches within and above the trail corridor.
- Removal of invasive plants within view of the trail.
- Install or replace signage and boundary markers.

**Liaison Activities.** Trail Stewards are encouraged to be a liaison between the community and RRCT. This role is optional, and the scope will vary depending on the time and interest of the steward. Stewards may:

- Update RRCT staff on community events that may impact the property or preserve.
- Act as an ambassador for RRCT when meeting trail users on the property or preserve.
- Meet with abutting landowners when deemed appropriate.
- Attend Stewardship Committee meetings that involve the property or preserve.
- Train and mentor new trail stewards to RRCT.

**Requirements.** Trail Stewards will be selected by the Stewardship Director, based on the following requirements:

- Ability and interest in working outdoors, year-round under typical Maine weather conditions.
- Ability to work independently with little or no supervision.
- Experience in trail maintenance and the use of basic maintenance tools, or the desire to learn those skills.
- Ability to communicate with the public who may be encountered in the properties or preserves.
- Commitment to personal health and safety (i.e., tick and insect repellent, cell phone, proper footwear and clothing, knowledgeable use of tools, etc.).
- Commitment to the mission of the Royal River Conservation Trust.
- Willingness to commit to a 1-year term.
- Proficient with email and web communications.

**Time Commitment.** Will vary, depending upon the size of the property or preserve, the season of the year, visitor use levels, and availability of the trail steward. Trail stewards should commit to monitoring their preserve at least once a month. Stewards should keep track of the hours spent and submit them to the Stewardship Director via the [Preserve Visit](#) form.