



PENNSYLVANIA
Master Naturalist

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PROGRAM POLICY MANUAL

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

A National Initiative

The Master Naturalist program is a national initiative that is designed to train master volunteers to conduct conservation education and outreach, citizen science, and service in their community. The program promotes awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the natural environment by developing a local corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to the conservation of natural resources in their communities. The Master Naturalist program emphasizes a local approach to conservation by forging vital partnerships among community members and local organizations through service activities. This year-round experience consists of three components: **intensive natural science training, continuing education, and service hours.**

The first Master Naturalist Program in the United States started in 1995 in the city of Fort Collins, Colorado. In response to urban sprawl, the citizens of Fort Collins approved a city sales tax to preserve natural areas. Part of the money from the tax was used to create a volunteer task force to help educate citizens and visitors about the wild plants, animals, and processes that are conserved with the open space initiative.

The first state-wide Master Naturalist Program began soon after in Texas in 1998. Texas now has the largest program in the country and is often used as a model for other state's programs, including Pennsylvania's. As the name implies, Master Naturalist programs were modeled after the popular Master Gardener programs that began in 1973 through Washington State University's Extension Program. The combination of rigorous training and service for certification has proved successful not only for Master Gardener programs, but for Master Naturalist programs as well. Currently, there are 26 state-wide Master Naturalist programs and 4 in development.

Along with Texas, Florida and Michigan have prominent Master Naturalist programs (program names vary) and have evaluated their programs. All three states have shown an approximate 15 percent increase in knowledge scores about ecology and other program content^{1,2}. Demographics from these three programs are similar, attracting more women than men, and people over 50 with higher than average incomes and education levels. Since many state Master Naturalist programs are co-sponsored by their respective state's fish and wildlife agency, these participants represent a new group of supporters for these agencies, different from the traditional sportsperson.

¹Main, M. B. (2004). Conservation Education Mobilizing Grass-Roots Conservation Education: the Florida Master Naturalist Program. *Conservation Biology*, 18(1), 11-16.

² Van Den Berg, H. (2006). Impact of Michigan Conservation Stewards Program on Participant's Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills Regarding Ecology and Resource Management. Paper presented at the National Master Naturalist Conference, Flagstaff, AZ.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist History

After three years of extensive research of other state master naturalist initiatives and meetings with Pennsylvania conservation organizations, Pennsylvania Master Naturalist was formed in 2007. During its startup, the PA Institute for Conservation Education (PICE) served as the administrating partner and fiscal agent of the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program. A feasibility study conducted under PICE's leadership in 2008 demonstrated a need for this program in Pennsylvania communities. Greater Philadelphia was selected as the best location to pilot this new partnership initiative. A Regional Advisory Council was formed to guide curriculum development and program planning began in earnest. The program was piloted in 2010 and 2011, with PICE serving as the fiscal and administrating agent for Pennsylvania Master Naturalist. Each year evaluations and assessments were conducted, with guidance from advisors and partners, and the program was revised and tweaked to improve instructional, logistical and program effectiveness. In 2012 Pennsylvania Master Naturalist moved forward with the preferred program model that involves Coordinating Partnerships, where Coordinating Partners plan, coordinate and host local 50-hour volunteer training courses under the guidance and administration of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist. This model significantly improves Master Naturalist impacts, in terms of engaging and training more volunteers, across a broader geographic range, and providing volunteers to a larger network of conservation and community organizations. In 2012, Pennsylvania Master Naturalist separated from PICE to begin operations on their own as a Pennsylvania nonprofit organization. In 2014, Pennsylvania Master Naturalist was approved as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization by IRS.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist Program Details

MISSION

To develop a corps of knowledgeable, skilled volunteers dedicated to protecting Pennsylvania's natural heritage.

GOALS

1. Build a knowledgeable corps of citizen volunteers to enhance conservation education, outreach, and service efforts throughout Pennsylvania.
2. Elevate public awareness of Pennsylvania's natural history, ecology, natural resources, and natural areas conservation and management.
3. Steward and conserve natural resources of Pennsylvania communities.
4. Cultivate effective, productive and interdisciplinary partnerships among natural resource agencies, organizations, community groups and citizens.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Develop comprehensive and standardized field-based training curricula to address the distinct geology, climate, hydrology, soils, flora, fauna and land uses within each Pennsylvania ecoregion, as well as service and outreach skills development.
2. Train a local corps of "master volunteers and service providers" to offer outreach and service dedicated to the understanding and management of natural areas within their communities.
3. Provide opportunities for continuing education, through specialized courses in areas such as field natural and cultural history, urban ecology, citizen science monitoring, interpretation and the arts.
4. Create a network of local conservation groups, agencies and projects to connect Pennsylvania Master Naturalists with service and outreach opportunities that address education, conservation, stewardship, and sustainability of the natural resources of local communities.

BENEFITS TO PARTNERS and MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Access trained and dedicated volunteers and citizen scientists.
- Reach out to new constituencies and receive increased public support.
- Build capacity to more effectively accomplish mission, strategic goals and objectives.
- Address the most pressing conservation or natural areas priorities in the region.
- Elevate the visibility and impact of the organization and its mission.
- Build and broaden effective, productive and interdisciplinary partnerships with citizens, conservation agencies, organizations, and community groups.
- Generate new and/or share existing resources (e.g. funding, marketing, volunteers, projects, programs, information, research, equipment, staff training) through regional and statewide partnerships.

BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

- Join a statewide network of trained volunteers in education, interpretation, and stewardship.
- Gain a deeper appreciation for, connection with, and understanding of the natural world.
- Continue learning through ongoing advanced training.
- Socialize with like-minded people.
- Support local organizations and give back to the community through service projects.
- Make positive changes in local ecosystems and watersheds.
- Learn from and work with professionals.
- Access opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- Receive rewards and recognition.
- Become better acquainted with regional conservation organizations and their work.

BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY

- Increased availability of natural science and conservation education opportunities.
- Enhanced wildlife watching, and outdoor and recreational opportunities.
- Cleaner and restored natural landscapes and water resources.
- Increased community action and involvement in natural resources conservation.
- Revitalizing communities through sustainable resource use and development.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist Structure

Administration

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Partnerships at the local and regional level are encouraged and include other public agencies, as well as private organizations whose interests are within the boundaries of the program. This initiative is guided by regional **Advisory Councils** made up of statewide and regional representatives of our Program Partners. An Advisory Council may include natural resource professionals, leaders of local natural resources organizations, agencies, educators, naturalists, college/university staff and other interested groups.

Partners and Structure

The Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is a cooperative program, involving natural resource and conservation agencies, organizations and institutions at state and regional levels. There are five categories of partners: Sponsoring Partners, Coordinating Partners, Program Partners, and Member Organizations. The involvement of any given organization, agency or institution may include more than one category of partnership, in such a case they are listed at the partnership

level that best reflects their level of involvement in the program or however the group prefers to be listed.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is responsible for program administration statewide and among regions across the state and for providing curriculum training and materials for the local Coordinating Partners. Pennsylvania Master Naturalist provides a staff member (Program Coordinator) to oversee volunteer recruitment, retention and certification and work with Coordinating Partners on delivering the volunteer training course regionally.

Program Partners are organizations, agencies and institutions that are involved in the program in one or more of the following ways: provide in-kind program support (staff time, materials, facilities, etc.), utilize PA Master Naturalist volunteers to help them fulfill their mission, and provide advanced training opportunities for Master Naturalists.

Coordinating Partners are Program Partners who coordinate and host a local 50-hour Master Naturalist volunteer training course. Coordinating Partners must commit a staff member or volunteer to coordinate the logistics and implementation of the local volunteer training course ("Training Coordinator").

Sponsoring Partners are organizations, agencies, and institutions who provide financial support for the program.

Member Organizations are organizations who utilize the services of the Master Naturalist program (volunteer support and/or audience for their education and outreach programs) and in turn, support the program with an annual membership fee. Organizational members receive special opportunities and resources to connect them with our network of volunteers and/or directly market their educational outreach programs to our volunteer network.

For a current list of partnering organizations, please refer to <https://pamasternaturalist.org>.

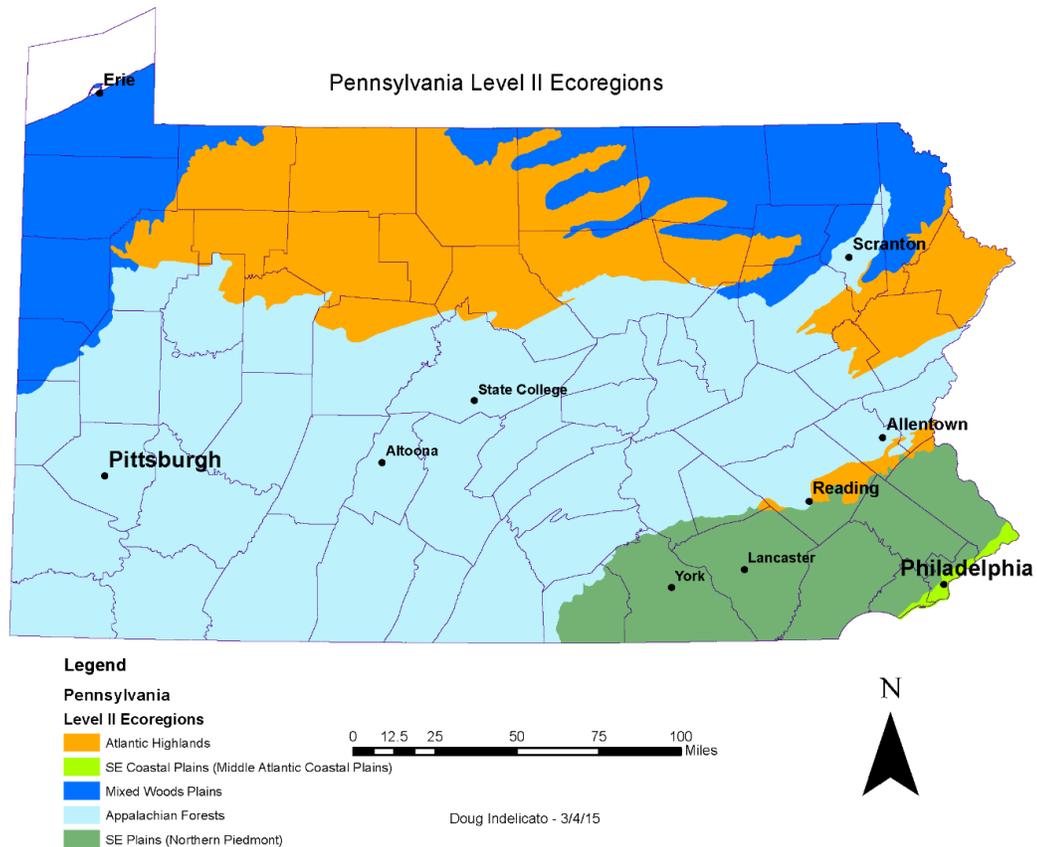
PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST OVERVIEW – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Program Introduction

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist promotes awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the natural environment by developing a local corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to the conservation of natural resources in their neighborhoods. The program emphasizes a local approach to conservation by forging vital partnerships among community members and local organizations through service activities. This year-round experience consists of three components: intensive natural science training, continuing education, and service hours.

Because of the great diversity of landscapes and population densities within Pennsylvania, the natural resources (and their uses) in each area of the state are also highly variable. Therefore, Pennsylvania Master Naturalist will be customized to focus on distinct ecoregions and local ecosystems. An Advisory Council and network of Program Partners will be formed in each ecological and geographic region of Pennsylvania to provide local resources, expertise and insight into regional curriculum development and program implementation.

Pennsylvania is an ecologically diverse state that can be divided into distinct ecological regions or *ecoregions*. The Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program has divided the state into four (4) curriculum modules based on five (5) ecoregions (defined by [EPA level II ecoregions](#)): Appalachian Forests, Mixed Woods Plains, Atlantic Highlands, Southeastern Plains and Southeastern Coastal Plains. Southeastern Plains and Southeastern Coastal Plains have been combined into one curriculum module.



Pennsylvania Master Naturalists receive formal training during the initial training session coordinated by the local Coordinating Partners and covering a wide range of pertinent natural resource topics, including:

- All aspects of the role of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the program, and the guidelines for participation.
- What a naturalist is and does and the significance of naturalists and natural history.
- The biogeography of PA, including the physiographic regions and the geological and ecological aspects that make them distinct.
- Basic concepts of ecology; local ecological communities
- Basic concepts of geology & local geology
- Basic concepts of wildlife biology
- Some native flora and fauna in the region.
- Knowledge of the characteristics defining the ecological communities in their ecoregion (upland, aquatic and wetland communities)
- The art of nature interpretation.
- The roles of Pennsylvania state agencies in the management and conservation of natural resources.
- Other topics as related to the local needs of the region.

To become a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, a trainee must be accepted into the program, complete the training components (core training and advanced training) and volunteer for the specified number of hours. The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of ways, depending on the needs determined by Pennsylvania Master Naturalist and the Advisory Council. By providing volunteer service, Pennsylvania Master Naturalists enable local natural resource organizations to more effectively and efficiently deliver their programs to the general public.

Participant Selection & Enrollment

Volunteer selection for Pennsylvania Master Naturalists is managed by the Program Coordinator and the Coordinating Partner, if they desire. Enrollment in Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is selective. Selection is based on the content of the application, an applicant interview and personal references to determine how well the applicant meets the criteria listed below.

Qualifications:

1. Must be 18 years old or older.
2. Have a background or strong interest in natural history.
3. Be enthusiastic about natural resource education, conservation and stewardship.
4. Possess or be able to learn communication skills.
5. Enjoy public speaking or working with the public.
6. Have a willingness to learn and a desire to share knowledge with others.
7. Have a desire to contribute volunteer service toward the conservation of natural resources and natural areas within your community.
8. Previous volunteer or community service experience preferred

Screening and Selection

Each applicant must:

- Complete an application. This information will help determine suitability of the applicant.
- Participate in an interview
- Review and sign a volunteer agreement
- Review and sign or decline a photo release form for Pennsylvania Master Naturalist
- Submit to a background check (if required) and have 2 references verified
- Have a volunteer service record on file with the Program Coordinator.

Screening is necessary to ensure selection of persons suited to the program. An informal interview must be conducted with each applicant either in person or by phone using a recommended list of questions. The interview is conducted by the Program Coordinator, Training Coordinator (optional) or approved volunteers. Volunteers may be used in conducting interviews and checking references. To maintain confidentiality, those persons checking references and conducting interviews may be required to sign a confidentiality statement.

Background Checks

- Criminal History and Sex Offender clearances will be conducted on every individual selected for enrollment. These will be conducted by the Program Coordinator who will indicate in the class roster that the individual is “clear” for service.
- If references or other screening procedures indicate that further clarification of a person’s qualifications is required, fingerprinting may be necessary and at the discretion of the Program Coordinator.
- Reference checks provide another person’s perception of how well the applicant can work with others. They may also provide additional information about the applicant that could be useful in matching the skills of the volunteer with the service required.
- A reference check may be conducted by phone or by mail using a recommended list of questions. A minimum of 2 references is required.

Confidentiality

All personal information, verbal or written, collected from applicants is to be treated as confidential information. All written applications, interview responses and evaluation information must be kept in a locked file. Only those responsible for supervision of volunteers and reference checking of applicants should have access to confidential information. Volunteer records are kept in separate files in a secured place and are accessible only by trained staff. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to make sure that the contact information on their application and service record are kept current and accurate.

Informing Applicants

The applicant will be informed by phone or email as to the decision of acceptance or non-acceptance. Payment for the volunteer training is required upon acceptance into the program.

Benefits of Becoming a Volunteer

- Opportunity to attend basic and advanced training programs on environmental issues
- Learn new skills
- Meet and work with other people with similar interests
- Gain personal satisfaction from volunteering
- Declare allowable, non-reimbursed, out-of-pocket expenses for income tax purposes

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- Follow the guidelines and procedures set forth in the *Standards of Behavior*
- Be considerate, respect others' competencies and work as a member of a team with all professional and volunteer staff
- Accept assignments within the Volunteer's comfort level and that are compatible with personal interests and skills.
- Keep an accurate record of advanced training and service and submit this log on a regular basis to the Program Coordinator.
- Volunteers must complete their volunteer log forms on a regular basis. Detailed information is needed. This includes hours and descriptions of each service activity.
- Help new Volunteers feel accepted.

Standards of Behavior for Volunteers

This Standards of Behavior document is a contractual agreement accepted by volunteers who commit to the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program. The Standards of Behavior shall guide the volunteers' behavior during their involvement with Pennsylvania Master Naturalist. Just as it is a privilege for Pennsylvania Master Naturalist partners to work with individuals who volunteer their time, energy and talent to Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, a volunteer's involvement in the program is a privilege and a responsibility, not a right.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist provides unbiased, research-based educational programs accessible to all Pennsylvania residents and community service in support of natural resource conservation and stewardship. The primary purpose of the Standards of Behavior is to ensure the safety and well-being of all Pennsylvania Master Naturalist participants (i.e., target audiences, professionals and volunteers.). Pennsylvania Master Naturalist volunteers are expected to function within the guidelines of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist and all of its partners.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist volunteers shall, **at all times:**

- Promote and support PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST goals, philosophies, mission, and activities in order to develop an effective local, state, and national program.
- Conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner, with fairness, honesty, and integrity.
- Accept supervision and support from professional staff while involved in the program.
- Respect, adhere to, and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established by PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST and any additional guidelines established by their host organization.
- Perform duties in a responsible and timely manner as outlined in the job description.
- Uphold the commitment made to the program by completing the initial training, required volunteer hours and advanced training hours.
- Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training, and research; regularly notify the Program

- Coordinator of these records.
- Comply with all civil rights laws and policies, including, but not limited to, PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST and their host organization's policies and anti-discrimination laws.
- Report immediately to the Program Coordinator any misconduct by any PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST volunteer or participant that threatens the emotional or physical well-being of a participant.
- Handle animals and operate machinery, vehicles, and other equipment in a responsible manner and in accordance with the host organization's guidelines.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist volunteers **shall not**, at any time:

- Abuse PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST authority, status or involvement for personal or commercial gain.
- Advocate, lobby or promote political issues while representing PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST.
- Engage in abusive behaviors that physically or verbally threaten or harm any participant of PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST activities, including youth and any other vulnerable populations.
- Accept driving responsibilities as part of their Master Naturalist service or training activities.
- Commit or have been convicted of a felonious act.
- Use alcohol or any controlled substances while performing service as a PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST volunteer. (Reporting for service while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from the volunteer program.)

Training and Program Requirements of Volunteers

The formal training program is the responsibility of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, the Coordinating Partners and the Advisory Council. With guidance from the Advisory Council, Pennsylvania Master Naturalist develops the curriculum, policies and guidelines for the operation of the program, and will provide Coordinating Partners with training and the necessary resources to conduct the volunteer core training. Instructors who teach the training may include college faculty, natural resource professionals, Extension Specialists or Associates, experienced naturalists, and other experts with a demonstrated knowledge in the subject matter being taught, as well as an ability to communicate that knowledge to a lay audience. The volunteer training program is intended to provide a balanced, integrated, practical course in field ecology and the natural sciences.

Attendance

Each Pennsylvania Master Naturalist trainee is expected to attend every class and field session for the volunteer training.

In anticipating the need to set standards for maintaining class attendance, the following policy has been established: A participant must make up missed coursework by attending the appropriate class or classes within 12 months. The definition of "appropriate classes" will be determined by the Program Coordinator, Training Coordinator and Advisory Council. If an advanced training class were to be used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as advanced training. In this case the class must account for only one type of training -- initial training OR advanced training. A participant may also attend the same subject class of a neighboring training within the *same ecoregion* given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring training class.

Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards becoming a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist.

Acquiring and Maintaining Status

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist has established the following minimum requirements for receiving Pennsylvania Master Naturalist certification. However, the Program Coordinator or Training Coordinator may opt to increase these minimum requirements.

YEAR ONE

- **minimum of 50** hours of core volunteer training (combined classroom and field instruction)
- **30** hours of approved volunteer service
- **8** hours of advanced training/continuing education

YEAR TWO AND ANNUALLY

- **20** hours of approved volunteer service
- **12** hours of advanced training/continuing education
- Participants may begin earning volunteer service hours once they complete the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist core volunteer training course.
- Upon completing the core volunteer training portion of the program, each Trainee will receive a letter certifying completion. Upon fulfillment of the 30 hours of volunteer service and advanced training, the trainee will then receive a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist certificate of completion and Pennsylvania Master Naturalist name badge.
- Only unpaid public volunteer service in Pennsylvania Master Naturalist approved activities will count toward the requirement. The required volunteer hours must be completed within one year (or another time period designated by the Program Coordinator) of completing the training course.

Once an individual has completed the necessary requirements and receives his/her status as a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, he or she is not automatically a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist for life. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists must be complete advanced training and additional service hours each year to remain on the “active” list and maintain the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist title. Pennsylvania Master Naturalist status is achieved by fulfilling the following minimum requirements:

- 1) Serve a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service after the first year and annually.
- 2) Complete a minimum of 12 hours of advanced training or continuing education annually through any of the following options:
 - i) Participation in any PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST or partnering organizations natural history programs.
 - ii) Participation in any program approved by the Program Coordinator for advanced training to maintain status.

Advanced Training

The purpose of advanced training is to provide Pennsylvania Master Naturalist volunteers an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also,

advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Pennsylvania Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts.

Advanced training courses may be made available directly through PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST or any number of short courses provided by universities, local parks, nature centers, or other partners. The Program Coordinator must pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. Advanced training hours are counted as one hour for each hour of advanced training; however, travel time is not included for advanced training hours.

In addition, Pennsylvania Master Naturalists will be notified of approved advanced training opportunities that are offered locally and statewide by Member Organizations.

The following criteria are followed when reviewing and approving advanced training opportunities:

How does the advanced training opportunity:

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide Pennsylvania Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Provide Pennsylvania Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?
4. Build on the initial core curriculum?
5. Provide natural resource information applicable to Pennsylvania and the particular ecoregion?

Levels of PA Master Naturalist Certification

Master Naturalist Trainee: a program participant from the time he/she is accepted into the program through completion of first year core training, advanced training and service requirements. This is normally completed within 12 months of the end of classroom training. However, trainees may take 2 years to complete their requirements upon agreement of the PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST Program Coordinator. Anyone who fails to complete the volunteer service requirement does not become a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist.

Certified (Active) Master Naturalist: a Master Naturalist trainee who has completed the year-one advanced training and service requirements. To maintain certified status requires a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service and 12 hours of advanced training annually and is valid for one year. These hours of commitment are recorded by the Master Naturalist and reported to the Program Coordinator. Certified Master Naturalists are encouraged to mentor Master Naturalist trainees, helping to guide newcomers through a successful volunteer experience. Such mentoring qualifies as volunteer service.

Terminated: a Master Naturalist who no longer wishes to be part of the program or who is asked to leave the program by Pennsylvania Master Naturalist.

Mentor: a volunteer who has maintained their certification status for a period of 2 years and is in good standing with Pennsylvania Master Naturalist. This individual will act as a resource for knowledge and skill in assisting other volunteers.

Inactive Status: An Inactive Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is one who is unable to commit to the annual program requirements at present but would like the opportunity to remain in the program and be involved in the future. The following policies apply:

1. To request “Inactive Status,” the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist must be in good standing and must have completed the original commitment of initial core training and the required hours of volunteer service and advanced training.
2. The Pennsylvania Master Naturalist must complete an Inactive Status Request Form.
3. If the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is able to renew his/her “Active” status **within a 2-year period** and commit to making up missed program requirements. He/she must attend 12 hours of acceptable advanced training for each year of “Inactive Status” in addition to the required 12 hours of advanced training for the current year. He/she must also commit to 20 hours of service work for each year on Inactive Status, as well as 20 hours for the current year.
4. An Inactive Pennsylvania Master Naturalist may rejoin the program within 3 years as long as the defined criteria under section 3 above are met. Individuals on “Inactive Status” for more than three years must retake the initial core training course, in addition to meeting the defined first year requirements of volunteer service (minimum of 30 hours) and advanced training (minimum of 8 hours).

Recognition and Benefits

Those individuals who complete their training and required service hours will receive:

- A certificate of completion as Certified
- A recognition name badge
- Recognition in a statewide volunteer database
- Nomination for awards as merited
- Seasonal Volunteer E-newsletter

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist Chapters

Pennsylvania Master Naturalists, trainees and alumni may form local and regional alumni chapters to network, share resources, information and opportunities among Master Naturalists in the region and among regions. Please contact your regional Program Coordinator if interested in forming an alumni chapter.

Use of Title

The title “Pennsylvania Master Naturalist” is to be used exclusively in conjunction with the program of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public volunteer service work for Pennsylvania Master Naturalist. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists are advised not to advertise their place of business during program-sponsored activities and are not to be listed as Pennsylvania Master Naturalist on the advertisements of businesses that they own or where they are employed. Because Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is a source of unbiased, research-based information, the following are considered inappropriate: appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or implying Pennsylvania Master Naturalist’s endorsement of any product or place of business.

Transfers from Out-of-State Master Naturalist Programs

Persons interested in transferring from an out of state Master Naturalist Program must speak with the Program Coordinator of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist about details of the transfer of training hours. In general, a person who was certified in another state's Master Naturalist program will be required to take 50 hours of core training in his/her Pennsylvania ecoregion location unless he/she received training in the same ecoregion of a neighboring state and maintain status by completing 30 hours of volunteer service in year one, and 20 hours of volunteer service and 12 hours of advanced training in year two and annually. He/she will not have to complete advanced training in the first year.

In-State Ecoregion Transfers

Pennsylvania Master Naturalists transferring from one ecoregion to another must be in good standing and have their file transferred to the Program Coordinator and the Training Coordinator (Coordinating Partner) in the new ecoregion. Transfers will need to complete specified coursework at a core training in the new ecoregion.

Participation in Multiple Ecoregions or States Other than PA

It is not recommended that Pennsylvania Master Naturalists carry on activities in multiple ecoregions. If a volunteer lives on the boundary between two ecoregions and is interested in volunteering in both, please contact the Program Coordinator. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists must complete their service projects and service hours within Pennsylvania.

Driving and Liability

Pennsylvania Master Naturalist does not provide or arrange for transportation to activities, programs and/or events and volunteers/trainees are expected to use their own transportation or make their own arrangements to meet or arrive at program or activity sites.

Master Naturalist trainees and volunteers are not permitted to accept driving responsibilities in any way related to their Master Naturalist service and training activities. Our liability insurance does not cover driving by volunteers and so we must require that Master Naturalists only engage in service and training activities that do not require you to drive as part of the volunteer activities.

Dismissal of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist

Failure to adhere to the "Standards of Behavior" established for Pennsylvania Master Naturalist can result in dismissal as a volunteer. When the Program Coordinator finds it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, the volunteer must be informed in writing of the termination of his or her volunteer status. This notice of dismissal will become a part of the volunteer's confidential file.