



# Illinois Master Naturalist Policy Handbook



# Illinois Master Naturalist

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[go.illinois.edu/MNHandbook](https://go.illinois.edu/MNHandbook)

This document supersedes all previous University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist policy documents. This document will be reviewed and updated periodically as needed.

## How to Use This Document

This document is intended for University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist volunteers. The policies and guidelines outline the requirements for participating in the Illinois Master Naturalist Program. Please consult with your local program coordinator with any questions regarding the policies, management, and coordination of the Illinois Master Naturalist Program.

## Definitions

Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Local Chapter/Local Chapter: A Master Naturalist Program located at the unit or county level. Chapters are led by Unit-level Extension staff.

Local Coordinator: The local University of Illinois Extension staff member who coordinates the local chapter. These staff hold any staff position, including education program coordinator, educator, county director, or office support. Although many local chapters operate with a team of Extension staff, each chapter has an identified “local coordinator” that serves as the point of contact.

MN: Illinois Extension Master Naturalist.

State Specialist: The Illinois Extension State Master Naturalist Program Specialist. This individual is responsible for state risk management, curriculum development, and providing local guidance to local chapters and coordinators.



## Introduction to the Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program

University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program is an educational volunteer training program coordinated by University of Illinois Extension. The program is designed to give participants an opportunity to experience nature, develop knowledge of and respect for the environment, and practice natural resource stewardship. The program is designed to increase the availability of university-based natural resources information to local non-profit, non-commercial community groups, and private individuals through trained volunteers known as Master Naturalists.

### Master Naturalist Mission and Vision

The mission of University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program is to provide science-based educational opportunities that connect people with nature and help them become engaged environmental stewards. The vision of the program is to give individuals the opportunity to experience nature, develop knowledge of and respect for the environment, practice natural resource stewardship, and contribute to the natural resources outreach efforts of University of Illinois Extension.

### Master Naturalist Program Objectives:

1. Offer Master Naturalist educational programs and materials that provide classroom and field-based training on the environmental and cultural resources of Illinois.
2. Cultivate volunteers to serve as educators and community ambassadors for environmental initiatives; as stewards in the management of natural resources in Illinois; and as stakeholders who will carry the Master Naturalist program forward.
3. Facilitate cooperation and collaboration among partnering groups and agencies.

To become a Master Naturalist, an individual must apply online through the local Extension office offering the program. After the local coordinator reviews the application, the

applicant may be invited for an interview. Not all applicants are accepted into the program. There may be more applicants than space allows for an in-person classroom, or more applicants than the local office can accommodate. There may also be a waiting period before the local office is ready to accept new applications. If an individual is not accepted into the current training group, their name may be kept on file, and they may be encouraged to reapply.

### What is a Master Naturalist?

Master Naturalists must be adults, 18 years of age or older, and be members of the local community who are interested in connecting with people and nature and in becoming engaged environmental stewards.

### Master Naturalist Participation Status

#### **MASTER NATURALIST TRAINEE**

A program participant from the time they are accepted into the program through completion of the Master Naturalist training.

#### **MASTER NATURALIST INTERN**

A program participant from the time they graduate from the Master Naturalist training, with a minimum of 40 hours of Master Naturalist training through the completion of 60 hours of volunteer service. It is recommended that the internship be completed within 12 months of completing classroom training. However, interns may take until December 31 of the year following their training to complete their internship upon agreement of the local Extension unit Master Naturalist coordinator. Anyone who fails to complete the volunteer service requirement does not become a certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist.

#### **CERTIFIED (ACTIVE) MASTER NATURALIST**

A Master Naturalist Intern who has completed their initial 60-hour volunteer service requirement or a returning previously certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist.

Maintaining certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist status requires a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education annually and is valid for one year.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

A former certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist who is temporarily unable to fulfill active Master Naturalist requirements for health, family, or other personal reasons. Participants may take a leave of absence for one or two years at a time, upon approval from their local coordinator. Returning to active status after more than two years as an inactive Master Naturalist may require additional training and additional background screening. Master Naturalist Interns are not eligible to take a leave of absence, but they can work with the local coordinator to extend their internship. Internship extensions are granted at the discretion of the local coordinator but should not exceed two years (in addition to the original internship length).

A volunteer who adopts a Leave of Absence status:

- Remains a Master Naturalist volunteer or a member of the Illinois Extension Master Naturalist volunteer program
- May report volunteer service or continuing education hours
- May attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences at the local coordinator's discretion
- Is required to stay current on all background checks and sign the annual Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct and Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement forms
- May not serve in a local county leadership capacity
- May not apply or serve on the Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Advisory Board

- Time (years) spent in Leave of Absence status will not count toward years of service awards

### **TEMPORARILY INACTIVE STATUS**

Active Master Naturalist volunteers who do not fulfill or record the minimum requirements (30 volunteer service hours and 10 continuing education hours) by December 31 of the previous year will automatically receive an inactive status.

To return to active status, the volunteer must fulfill and report a minimum of 30 volunteer service hours and 10 continuing education hours within the following calendar year. Failure to do so will result in permanent inactive status and loss of their Master Naturalist certification. Time (years) spent in inactive status does not count toward years of service award eligibility.

Volunteers with temporary inactive status:

- Are eligible for all volunteer activities in the local county program and those offered by the state program
- Are encouraged to attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences
- Are required to stay current on all background checks and sign the annual Illinois Extension Code of Conduct and Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement forms
- May not serve in a local county leadership capacity
- May not apply or serve on the Illinois Master Naturalist State Advisory Board

### **PERMANENT INACTIVE STATUS**

Permanent inactive status defines an individual who has voluntarily or involuntarily left the Illinois Master Naturalist volunteer program. They no longer volunteer for the program and may not present themselves as an Illinois Master Naturalist.

### **PERMANENTLY INACTIVE VOLUNTEER STATUS:**

- Lose their status as Illinois Master Naturalist volunteers and their membership in the program

- Do not have access to the Illinois Master Naturalist Program and Extension resources, staff, websites, etc.
- Are not eligible to participate in any volunteer activities offered by the local, county, or state programs
- Are not required to complete a background check or sign the annual Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct or Illinois Master Naturalist Agreement forms
- Does not report volunteer service or continuing education hours
- Are not eligible to serve in a local county leadership capacity
- Are not eligible to serve on the Illinois Master Naturalist State Advisory Board
- Do not attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences
- Do not attend local social gatherings, including awards banquets and holiday parties

Individuals on permanent inactive status may be reinstated as active volunteers in the Illinois Master Naturalist volunteer program if approved by the local program coordinator. To rejoin the program, the volunteer must complete and submit a volunteer application and contact the local program coordinator, who will confirm that the returning volunteer has completed a background check and is in good standing. Reinstatement to active status after more than two years of inactivity will require completion of additional training and a new background screening.

### **ALUMNUS**

A former University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist who successfully completed the 40-hour classroom training and the 60-hour internship, but does not maintain the required annual active volunteer service and/or continuing education requirements. When a volunteer ceases to actively participate, their designation as a University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist becomes void.

Instead, they will become an Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Alumnus. Certification as an Illinois Master Naturalist is limited to individuals participating in a University of Illinois Extension-sponsored or endorsed Master Naturalist program for the coming year. Volunteers who do not maintain participation in the program will not be re-certified and must not present themselves as Illinois Master Naturalists, as doing so would violate their original commitment.

Returning to active status after more than two years as an Illinois Master Naturalist Alumnus will require completion of additional training, which is determined by the local coordinator with consultation of the state coordinator if needed. Additional training can include participating in Master Naturalist classes or continuing education webinars/seminars. Volunteers auditing a Master Naturalist class may attend free of charge but are responsible for any fees associated with online webinars or seminars.

### **Use of the Master Naturalist Title**

The title “University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist” is to be used only and exclusively in connection with University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program, in which certified and active Master Naturalists use this title to conduct educational programming and provide natural resource assistance to University of Illinois Extension and its local and state partners.

Master Naturalists should identify themselves as such only when performing unpaid public service within University of Illinois Extension-sponsored programming. The title is valid only when the volunteer is participating in University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program.

The title may only be utilized on work applications by active Master Naturalists. However, individuals who have completed the training may list the Master Naturalist training course under “Coursework” or a similar title.

## Conflicts of Interest

A Master Naturalist should not display credentials or present themselves as a University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist at a workplace or business unless the activity is an authorized University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist program event.

It is improper to imply that University of Illinois Extension endorses any product or place of business. The title “Master Naturalist” may not be used in any commercial advertisement and should only be used when performing unpaid volunteer work in the program. If products must be discussed in an educational program, the volunteer must provide at least three equal options.

When Master Naturalists give public presentations on natural resource topics, it is permissible for them to accept unsolicited gifts or be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred related to conducting the presentation. However, it is inappropriate to seek personal compensation for speaking engagements conducted as a Master Naturalist. Speaker fees or honoraria are only permissible if they are submitted to the local Extension Unit Office.

## Master Naturalist Identification

Name badges are used to indicate a volunteer’s Master Naturalist level. Temporary name badges are intended for Master Naturalist Trainees and Master Naturalist Interns. Active Master Naturalists should wear official University of Illinois Extension name badges to identify themselves as representatives of University of Illinois Extension while conducting programs as Master Naturalists, unless anonymity is needed for the volunteer’s safety.

## Master Naturalist Apparel

Official University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist apparel may be ordered from an approved Illinois Extension vendor, with guidance from the local coordinator. Master

Naturalist apparel must be compliant with University of Illinois Extension logo guidelines.

## Application, Screening, and Training

### Application Procedures

To become a Master Naturalist, applicants must follow the application procedures of their local Master Naturalist chapter. Once a class is determined, a volunteer application must be submitted online through the Illinois Extension Volunteer Gateway System.

### Screening of Applicants

Screening methods, including detailed applications, background checks, live interviews (in-person, virtual, or by phone), references, and other sources, will be used to determine whether candidates are suitable for the program.

All Master Naturalist trainees accepted into the program must complete the Illinois Extension volunteer screening process.

### How to Become an Illinois Extension Volunteer

- Application submission and review
- References should be obtained from three individuals who know the applicant, including one family member, one work-related contact, and one personal character reference.
- Interview with Illinois Extension staff
- Criminal history check and registered sex offender check through Sterling Volunteers
- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services – Child Abuse and Neglect System (CANTS) check
- Illinois Extension Child Protection Training
- Volunteer Orientation/Training

### Regular Background Checks

Master Naturalist trainees who wish to become certified and volunteer, and who have been accepted into the program, are required to

complete a full background screening as part of the volunteer selection process. This screening includes completing the volunteer application; participating in an interview; providing references; completing a DCFS CANTS check; undergoing a national background check through the Sterling Volunteers system; and a name check against the National Sex Offender Registry at (<http://www.nsopw.gov/en-US>). The University will treat all information collected as confidential.

The volunteer DCFS CANTS check, Volunteer Application (initial or updated), National Sex Offender Registry Check, and national background check through the Sterling Volunteers system must be renewed at least once every three years of volunteer service.

### Required Forms\*

#### Once:

- Extension Risk Waiver, signature required
- Child Protection Training Certificate

#### Annually:

- Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Master Naturalist Program Volunteer Agreement
- Talent Release Form, signature required

#### As Needed:

- Emergency Medical Form

\*Individual programs may require additional steps or forms.

Applicants should be provided with explanations of available volunteer opportunities, particularly those that they will commit to for the internship. If the opportunities are not suitable for the candidate due to scheduling conflicts, lack of interest in the program areas offered, or for other reasons, candidates are encouraged to reapply to the program in the future.

### Protection of Minors Training

All Master Naturalist volunteers are required to complete University of Illinois Extension Child Protection Training online to become and remain active volunteers.

The training includes University of Illinois policies regarding the protection of minors and the volunteer's responsibility to report incidents of abuse and/or neglect of minors to a University of Illinois Extension employee within the unit in which they are volunteering (e.g., County Director). University of Illinois Extension employee and volunteer will then contact University of Illinois Police Department and DCFS together.

### Core Course Training

#### COURSE TOPICS

University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Core Course training consists of a minimum of 40 hours of instruction based on the Illinois Master Naturalist Manual. Exact topics presented may vary due to local needs, however, all programs will include sessions on the following topics:

#### Foundational Chapters (required)

- Chapter 1: Introduction to the Illinois Master Naturalist Program
- Chapter 2: Understanding the Natural World
- Chapter 13: Geology
- Chapter 14: Soils of Illinois
- Chapter 15: Environmental Ethics and Philosophy
- Chapter 19: Natural Divisions - The Biogeography of Illinois

#### Ecosystem Chapters (minimum of 2)

- Chapter 3: Understanding Prairies in the Prairie State
- Chapter 4: Forests of Illinois
- Chapter 5: Wetlands
- Chapter 6: Agricultural Lands and Wildlife

- Chapter 7: Urban Areas and Wildlife
- Chapter 18: Flowing Water - Illinois' Streams and Rivers

“Ologies” Chapters (minimum of 2)

- Chapter 8: Ornithology
- Chapter 9: Mammalogy
- Chapter 10: Herpetology
- Chapter 11: Botany
- Chapter 12: Entomology

Supplemental Chapters (as appropriate)

- Chapter 16: Archaeology - People and the Early Illinois Landscape
- Chapter 17: Weather and Climate
- Chapter 20: Art of Interpretation and Teaching
- Chapter 21: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access

Topics not covered in the Illinois Master Naturalist Manual may also be part of the core course training, provided approval of the topic is obtained from the State Master Naturalist Coordinator.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Master Naturalist Trainees are expected to attend all training sessions. In the event a training session must be missed, it is the responsibility of the trainee to plan for making up the missed session. The local coordinator will determine the appropriate make-up activities/assignments. Trainees who miss more than 20% of the training are not eligible for certification.

## **COURSE FEES**

Master Naturalist course fees are set by the local units offering the training and are based on the suggested state pricing guidelines. The course fee should also cover additional training costs, including meeting room rental, educator expenses, and photocopying. The fee

should include the cost of the Master Naturalist curriculum.

If a course applicant indicates that they do not wish to complete the volunteer internship portion of the course, or if a non-volunteer training option is deemed appropriate during the interview process, the local unit may offer this alternative at its discretion. Additional fees can be added if this option is available.

## **Volunteering in the Illinois Master Naturalist Program**

### **Screening for Active Volunteers**

Each year, all active Master Naturalists must sign a copy of the Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement and the Illinois Extension Code of Conduct and have their name checked against the National Sex Offender Registry online. A volunteer background check, a DCFS CANTS check, and a criminal history check with Sterling Volunteers must be renewed at least once every three years of volunteer service.

A volunteer charged with a criminal offense but not yet convicted may be suspended as determined through consultation between the local staff, the regional director, and state program leadership. The volunteer will be notified (with a receipt requested) that their Master Naturalist status is suspended pending resolution of the matter. Once the matter is resolved, the individual may request reinstatement to active status. The county director, in consultation with program administration and Master Naturalist Program leadership, will determine whether reinstatement is appropriate based on the circumstances.

### **Annual Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement and Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct Documents**

All University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalists must sign the Annual Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement and the Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct as part of

their commitment to the program. A digitally signed copy of these agreements will be kept on file in the Illinois Extension Volunteer Gateway.

### **Eligible Volunteer Activities**

Volunteer service with sponsoring and partnering groups or agencies that further the mission of the Illinois Master Naturalist Program is considered eligible.

Additional volunteer service is eligible if pre-approved by the local coordinator and/or the Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Advisory Committee. University of Illinois Extension non-discrimination forms must be signed every three years by non-state or federal entities that have not previously collaborated with Illinois Extension. All volunteers are required to discuss and confirm all planned activities with their local coordinator prior to leading a program.

Volunteer work is typically done in the local community or in regional natural areas but need not be limited to local efforts and these areas. Projects may include natural resource stewardship at local parks and preserves, community scientist efforts, environmental education and outreach, administrative service, and leadership activities that support the Master Naturalist program. Travel time to and from volunteer service activities can be counted toward volunteer service hours.

For liability reasons, Master Naturalists are not permitted to conduct home visits as part of their volunteer duties.

### **Natural Resource Stewardship**

Natural resource stewardship includes, but is not limited to, hands-on management, planting, invasive species control, wildlife and vegetation monitoring, and trail work related to the management of the state's natural resources. Some activities may require additional training and certification. Stewardship opportunities in local and state

parks, natural areas, and preserves can be carried out in coordination with partnering groups and agencies.

In addition to attending existing and scheduled volunteer workdays, Master Naturalists may contact partner groups about opportunities for independent service projects. Master Naturalists are especially encouraged to coordinate with partnering groups and agencies to take on ongoing stewardship roles at sites and preserves in need of continuous care. All independent service projects and other opportunities must be pre-approved by the local coordinator in consultation with the Unit Director and State Coordinator.

Master Naturalists must comply with the Illinois Pesticide Act requirements when applying herbicides, including obtaining a license to apply herbicides on public lands and following all pesticide and herbicide labels. For more information, visit the [Pesticide Safety Education Program \(PSEP\) licensing webpage](#).

Volunteers must provide proof of completing a safety class BEFORE operating a chainsaw in the Master Naturalist Program and reporting volunteer hours.

### **Community Science Efforts**

Community science programs cover a wide range of natural resource interests. These programs typically involve observing natural resources, recording data, and sharing information, which are used formally and informally by teachers and researchers. While most of these projects require training to participate, not all do. Training in data collection methods counts as a continuing education activity, while the actual data collection qualifies as a volunteer activity.

These projects are usually managed by larger organizations, with those through University of Illinois researchers and programs highly encouraged. Non-state or federal organizations must have a non-discrimination form on file to

qualify for Master Naturalist volunteer work. Independent projects through platforms like iNaturalist, Zooniverse, or similar sites are subject to approval by the local coordinator and may have limits on the number of hours that can be credited.

### **Educational Efforts**

Educational efforts are activities or programs that Master Naturalists use to educate the public. This includes developing and delivering presentations to relevant audiences or at project demonstration sites, facilitating a resource table at an event or site, providing natural resource training to other volunteers, and developing environmental interpretive materials, programs, and signage. Work related to constructing or developing educational sites, such as a native plant pollinator garden, qualifies as an educational effort.

Educational efforts include time spent planning, implementing, and reporting on educational efforts. As a rule-of-thumb in determining which activities are appropriate educational programming, use the questions: “Is the program educational in nature?” and “Does this activity support and contribute to the goals and mission of the Illinois Master Naturalist Program?”

### **Administrative Efforts**

Administrative volunteer efforts that count toward volunteer hours include working on the Master Naturalist newsletter, serving on a local or the State Master Naturalist Advisory Committee, providing content for Master Naturalist publications and web media, planning conferences or workshops, and any other activities that help maintain and support the Master Naturalist program.

Additional “winter work” activities that count as administrative efforts include cataloging biofacts, books, or natural items, as well as conducting quantitative or qualitative site assessments.

### **Continuing Education**

Approved continuing education includes events such as the Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Conference, local and state Master Naturalist webinars/seminars, and University of Illinois Extension-sponsored webinars and short courses. Non-Extension courses, seminars, and webinars hosted by University of Illinois Extension or other universities or government entities may also be eligible, subject to approval by the local coordinator.

Time spent in training, educational conferences, or other settings that qualify as continuing education should not be counted as volunteer hours. When the Master Naturalist is receiving information or training (rather than presenting it), this counts as continuing education, subject to approval by the local coordinator.

### **Local and Regional Meetings/Programs**

Many local Master Naturalist groups organize periodic informational meetings and educational programs for active Master Naturalists and Interns, which count toward continuing education credits.

### **Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Conference**

The Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Conference is held annually, either in-person or virtually, depending on available resources. Program content for the conference is coordinated by the State Master Naturalist Coordinator and the local hosting unit. Attending classes and workshops at the Master Naturalist State Conference can count toward fulfilling the continuing education requirement.

### **Reporting Volunteer Activities**

Master Naturalists must report their volunteer and continuing education hours using GivePulse at [go.illinois.edu/Givepulse](https://go.illinois.edu/Givepulse). Volunteers are responsible for reporting their own hours. Exceptions can be made at the local level for staff to enter hours on behalf of

volunteers who have limited or no access to the internet or a computer.

Volunteer hours and continuing education hours must be reported separately. If assigned by the local coordinator, volunteers must also record the number of people impacted by the activity as the demographic reporter.

Travel time to and from a volunteer activity can be reported as volunteer hours, as determined by the local coordinator. Travel time to attend a continuing education event does not count towards the required continuing education hours and should not be reported. The information from the reporting system is used to recertify Master Naturalists for the following year. Master Naturalists who do not submit their annual report summaries, the Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct, and the Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreements will be removed as active Master Naturalists.

### **Master Naturalist Transfers**

Master Naturalists who complete their classroom training and internship in Illinois and receive a positive recommendation from their local Master Naturalist coordinator prior to moving to another part of the state are eligible to become volunteers in the locale of their new residency. However, they may be required to complete additional coursework, as required of all local Master Naturalists in the new locality, and will be subject to the guidelines of the new locale.

Master Naturalists who have not completed their internship prior to moving will be required to complete their internship with their new unit before becoming certified Master Naturalists. Master Naturalists moving from out of state or returning after an absence (for example, someone who trained in Illinois, moved away and is returning) may be required to complete the full Master Naturalist training before volunteering in Illinois, depending on their demonstrated knowledge and skills in this geographic area. Master Naturalists who are transfers or who have been inactive for

two years or more are required to undergo retraining. A Master Naturalist volunteer may be required to complete a new background screening if they have been inactive or paused their volunteering.

Master Naturalists from other states are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Local coordinators will consult the state coordinator to determine training requirements and eligibility for admission into the Illinois Master Naturalist Program.

### **Volunteer Performance and Renewal of Active Status Process**

Volunteer performance will be continuously assessed to ensure the goals, objectives and mission of the Illinois Master Naturalist Program are met and best serve the needs of the program and University of Illinois. The review process may include both oral and written feedback on volunteer performance and can be used to determine if the volunteer is invited to return for the following year.

### **Grounds for Dismissal of a Master Naturalist Volunteer**

A University of Illinois Extension volunteer can be relieved of their title and privileges at any time at the discretion of the local Extension staff coordinating the Extension program. Grounds for dismissal may include a volunteer who demonstrates actions that conflict with the mission, purpose, and objectives of University of Illinois Extension. Examples of such actions include, but are not limited to, failure to comply with University of Illinois volunteer policies or the Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct, misuse of the Illinois Extension program title, and disrespecting the authority of Illinois Extension staff. At the time of dismissal, the volunteer will be required to turn in their name badge and any other Illinois Extension property to the local Extension staff coordinating the program.

## Procedure for Dismissal

All dismissal decisions will be made by the unit, regional, and Workforce Development offices. All dismissals must be pre-approved by University Legal Counsel. A dismissal letter will be created with the guidance of the Volunteer Relations Associate and Extension Workforce Development. Extension staff will keep a copy of the letter in the volunteer's file. This file will be kept indefinitely.

## Incident/Accident Reporting

Whenever an incident or accident causes harm or injury to a youth, volunteer, or staff member, an Incident/Accident Investigation Form must be completed and shared with the county director, associate director for the region, program specialist, and associate director of workforce development.

## Bus Coverage

Extension units and Master Naturalists must adhere to university policies for bus charters with approved insurance. University guidelines for making charter bus arrangements can be found in Section 6, 6.1.3 'Select Bus Charters with Approved Insurance' of the Business and Finance policies and procedures website, [busfin.uillinois.edu/bfpp](http://busfin.uillinois.edu/bfpp).

## Agreements and Contracts

State statutes prohibit volunteers of University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program from signing agreements that contain hold harmless or similar clauses. If the lessor will not waive the hold harmless or similar clauses, the event must be moved to a different location.

## Program Compliance

See University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook at [go.illinois.edu/OnlineVolunteerHandbook](http://go.illinois.edu/OnlineVolunteerHandbook).

- Equal Opportunity Statement
- Affirmative Action
- Americans with Disabilities Act

## Information Management

Maintaining accurate and up-to-date records is vital for a successful volunteer program. This includes proper record retention and adequately maintaining filing systems. It is important to remember that University of Illinois has established policies and guidelines for these areas. Please review the Campus Administration Manual (CAM) at [cam.illinois.edu](http://cam.illinois.edu).

## Volunteer Record Retention and Filing System Policies

### **VOLUNTEER MAILING LISTS AND DIRECTORIES**

Email lists, mailing lists, and volunteer directories shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or government agency. Volunteers may share their personal contact information with fellow volunteers at any time. Illinois Extension will not share or organize volunteer contact information in a volunteer directory without the written consent of each volunteer to be included.

Email lists, mailing lists, and volunteer directories are not considered federal records and are not subject to the provisions of the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

### **GIVEPULSE AND GATEWAY PRIVACY POLICY**

Volunteer data in GivePulse and the Volunteer Gateway is for the sole use of Illinois Extension personnel and shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or federal government agency. Volunteer data is compiled for official use only and is confidential. Volunteer data is not considered a federal record and is not subject to the provisions of the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

### **WEB PRIVACY POLICY INFORMATION**

Illinois Extension volunteer programs adhere to all web privacy policies outlined by University of Illinois Privacy Statement at [go.illinois.edu/PrivacyStatement](http://go.illinois.edu/PrivacyStatement).

## Setting and Amending Illinois Master Naturalist Policies

The State Specialist has final authority over setting and amending statewide Master Naturalist policies. Official notification of state Master Naturalist policy changes will be officially communicated by the State Specialist through the local coordinators. Additionally, all unit directors will be notified of any policy changes directly via email or a direct mailing.

Recommendations for policy changes are submitted through the Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Advisory Committee.

Local chapters may adopt additional policies and procedures to support their operations and address community-specific needs. However, all local policies must consistently align with the statewide Master Naturalist program policies. Local policies may be more restrictive than statewide policies, but they cannot override, weaken, or conflict with statewide requirements. In the event of any discrepancy, the statewide policy will take precedence.

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion And Access

### University of Illinois Non-discrimination Statement

It is the policy of the University of Illinois not to engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, disability, national origin, citizenship status, ancestry, age, order of protection status, genetic information, marital

status, sexual orientation including gender identity, arrest record status, unfavorable discharge from the military, or status as a protected veteran and will comply with all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action laws, orders and regulations.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX notice of nondiscrimination is located at University of Illinois System Statement on Sex Discrimination.

Reasonable accommodations for those with special needs must be made to ensure equal access to programs. Instances of discrimination or harassment are grounds for dismissal and decertification from the Master Naturalist program.

The University of Illinois is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive environment and recognizes individuals with disabilities as a valued component of diversity and of our campus community. It is the policy of the University of Illinois to provide reasonable accommodations, as required by law, for qualified individuals with disabilities who are current employees of the University or applicants for employment at the University of Illinois and visitors and guests to the University.



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

[extension.illinois.edu](https://extension.illinois.edu)