

# 2020 Master Naturalist Policies

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**ILLINOIS**

Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

In addition to the policies outlined in Chapter 1 of the Illinois Master Naturalist Handbook, the following are the Cook County Master Naturalist (MN) Policies for 2020.

1. To remain a certified MN in good standing (i.e. active), volunteers must complete the annual agreement, any additional University required forms training & background checks, a minimum of 30 activity hours (volunteer & planning), and 10 continuing education hours per calendar year.
2. Volunteer Activity is defined as service in the community within Cook County in activities involving natural resource stewardship, environmental education and outreach program delivery, citizen science efforts, and administrative service to perpetuate the Illinois Master Naturalist Program.
3. Planning Hours are defined as the time taken to prepare for volunteer activity. This includes: program preparation & development, traveling to and from programs, picking up and dropping off supplies for programming, and other activities approved by Extension Staff.
4. All activities entered in the database must report the number of engagements in the comment section in order to be approved by the MN Coordinator. Engagements are defined as an interaction with a member of the public. If no engagements occurred during that activity, enter zero. If no record was kept, make an approximation. See "Recording Engagements Process Document" for guide.
5. Volunteer and continuing education hours including number of engagements should be entered into the database monthly. See "Guide to Reporting Activities in VCMS" for clarity on how to report activities.
6. If a volunteer activity is not already in the database, it must be pre-approved and added to the database prior to volunteering. If this Volunteer Activity is with a new organization, you must contact the Master Naturalist Program Coordinator to ensure appropriate paperwork has been filed through the new organization.
7. All volunteer activities must have precise locations (i.e. a street address). To add a volunteer activity, please email the following information to the Master Naturalist Program Coordinator: activity name, date(s), street address including city and zip. If a precise address for the site cannot be found, please email the name and approximate locations (e.g. Dan Ryan Woods at 87th and Western, Chicago, IL) to the Master Naturalist Coordinator, and we will determine an address.
8. Activities taking place outside of Cook County are counted towards Volunteer hours. However, a minimum of 30 of the volunteer hours must take place in Cook County in order to recertify.
9. Continuing Education (CE) is defined as instances in which a Master Naturalist is the recipient of information. This includes: Master Naturalist training sessions, partner-sponsored workshops, and approved short courses, and other instances approved by Extension Staff. Contact the Master Naturalist Program Coordinator prior to attending a CE to determine if it is approved. To request the addition of continuing education activities to the database, please place a request through VCMS.
10. Only Active Master Naturalists, interns and trainees will be allowed access to the closed Facebook page "Master Naturalists in Cook County- University of Illinois Extension".
11. Per University of Illinois Extension's agreement with the Forest Preserve of Cook County, the 60 hours of volunteer service required to complete the Master Naturalist internship must be for Forest Preserve of Cook County Programming.

# Guide to Reporting Activities in VCMS (MN Database)

## Cook County Master Naturalists

Activity	Definition	Examples	What to Report it as
Citizen Science	Data collection by the public to contribute to scientific research through a verified project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frog Call Monitoring</li> <li>Odonate Monitoring</li> <li>Riverwatch</li> <li>iNaturalist</li> </ul>	Volunteer Activity
Natural Resource Stewardship	Taking direct care of natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration</li> <li>Seed collection</li> </ul>	
Environmental Education & Outreach Program Delivery	Delivery of programming to the public on environmental science topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided hikes</li> <li>Speakers bureaus</li> <li>Mighty Acorns</li> <li>Rapid Color Guide Development</li> </ul>	
TrailWatch	FPCC approved program walking and monitoring the trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail Watch at FPCC Locations</li> </ul>	
Administrative Service	Activities to help run or manage the MN Program and other approved FPCC programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizing the MN office</li> <li>Writing article and newsletters for MN programming</li> <li>Organizing libraries for FPCC and Extension</li> </ul>	
Program Preparation	Activities related to ensuring you are prepared to deliver a program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading over the program</li> <li>Picking up/dropping off supplies</li> <li>Gathering Supplies</li> </ul>	Planning Activity
Program Development	Creating programming for Master Naturalist and Extension delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation@Home Program Development</li> <li>Creating Master Naturalist speakers' bureaus</li> <li>Creating Guided Hikes</li> </ul>	
Traveling	Time traveling to and from programming where you volunteer as a MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving</li> <li>Public transportation</li> <li>biking</li> <li>etc.</li> </ul>	
Continuing Education	Times when you are receiving information	<p>Attending*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Webinars</li> <li>Lectures</li> <li>Workshops</li> <li>guided hikes</li> <li>covering naturalist topics.</li> </ul> <p>*When covering naturalist relevant topics</p>	Continuing Education

## Recording Engagements Process Document

### Cook County Master Naturalist

Type of Engagement	Definition	Example	Recording	Submitting
<b>Tabling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically, at a table or booth.</li> <li>Passive informal interaction</li> <li>Audience engages for short period of time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPCC Special events</li> <li>Friday's in the Field</li> <li>Watershed Demonstration</li> </ul>	<p>Use the "Master Naturalist Program Participant Tally Sheet"</p> <p>Tally the adults and youth.</p>	<p>Take a picture or scan the document and email it to the MN program coordinator. Or can be mailed to any extension office.</p> <p>Report numbers in the "comments" section of the Database.**</p>
<b>Active Engagements</b>	Any other time Master Naturalists come in contact with the public to engage with, teach about, or discuss naturalist topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided hikes</li> <li>Speakers bureaus</li> <li>Restoration activities</li> <li>Citizen science efforts</li> <li>All other things</li> </ul>	Take a direct count during any volunteer activity and write it down for your own records	Report numbers in the "comments" section of the Database.**

\*\*Starting January 1, 2020 all activities entered in the database must report the number of engagements in the comment section in order to be approved by the MN Coordinator. If no engagements occurred during that activity, enter 0.