

Cook County Master Naturalist Policies

Date revised: December 15, 2023



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.

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. Follow the GivePulse Impact Reporting Flow Chart to determine how to report your hours. See the below policies to provide further clarification on definitions.
3. 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. Each entry for a Book can be submitted for a maximum of 3 hours. Provide the requested details on your continuing education.
4. 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.
5. All activities entered in the database must report the number of contacts recorded to be approved by the MN Coordinator. Contacts 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. Send all table tally sheets to the Program Coordinator. If someone else is reporting contacts for the same event as you, please note it in the comments.
6. Volunteer and continuing education hours including number of contacts should be entered into the database monthly. See the GivePulse Flow Chart for clarity on how to report activities.
7. If an organization is not already in the database, it must be pre-approved and added to the database prior to volunteering. You must contact the Master Naturalist Program Coordinator to ensure appropriate paperwork has been filed through the new organization.
8. All volunteer activities must have precise locations (i.e. a street address). 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.
9. 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.
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.

