What is a PNTA volunteer work party?

Our volunteer trail work parties are trail maintenance and construction projects on the Pacific Northwest Trail system. Volunteer trail stewards, from beginners to experts, generously donate their time by working with PNTA crew leaders to keep trails open and safe.

Trail Work Parties offer something for nearly anyone who is interested in trail stewardship. Many are ideal for beginning volunteers who are looking to help out for a few days or only a few hours. Many projects are in frontcountry work sites and provide opportunities to camp out on the trail or in frontcountry campgrounds nearby. You can learn more about each of our trail work parties by visiting our events calendar.

Backcountry Trips provide opportunities for backcountry camping on the trail for one or more nights. Volunteers will need backpacking skills and equipment, and be able to hike long distances to help us service hard-to-reach parts of the trail in more remote backcountry areas.

Drop-in Work Parties give experienced volunteers an opportunity to work alongside PNTA Performance Trail Crews on intermediate or difficult projects. These work parties are usually time-flexible for volunteers, who can arrange to join our crews for the day, or for a multi-day adventure.

Do I need experience to volunteer?

For most trail work parties, no experience is necessary. PNTA will provide all of the tools, training, and personal protective equipment needed. Please review each project description to learn if the work matches your skill level or interest.

Experienced and certified trail workers are always appreciated. Please indicate your level of experience when you sign up or renew your PNTA volunteer enrollment. If you like, we can contact you about opportunities that especially need your abilities.

Are volunteer trail work events open to people of all ages?

All of our volunteer trail work parties are open to folks 18 and older. Many work parties are open to young adults ages 16–17 with guardian consent. We also host some events that are suitable for younger kids when they are accompanied by their parent or guardian. You can learn more about age-appropriate volunteer opportunities on our events calendar.
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My club or group of friends would like to do volunteer trail work on the PNT. How can we get involved together?

Search our events calendar at pnt.org/volunteer for work parties that meet your groups’ interest. If you find a match, direct everyone to sign up: enroll as volunteers, RSVP to the party, and mention your group in the comments/questions field so we know you’re all together.

We can also create a custom work party to meet your groups’ specific interests and needs. Reach out to us at volunteer@pnt.org to begin that conversation, or call your PNTA Regional Coordinator at (360) 854-9415.

What will we do?

Common trail maintenance tasks include:

- **Brush Out**: Prune back overgrown vegetation to open the trail corridor
- **Tread Work**: Maintain the surface of the trail and its drainage features
- **Log Out**: Cut and remove trees that have fallen across the trail
- **Construction**: Maintain or build rock walls, trailhead kiosks, steps, and other structures
- **Conservation**: Revegetate damaged areas, pull invasive weeds and remove litter

What does it cost to volunteer?

It is free to volunteer but as a nonprofit organization, donations are always appreciated. Individual contributions are important because they help support programs to maintain and protect the 1200 mile Pacific Northwest Trail corridor.

How do I get to the project site?

Each volunteer is responsible for getting to the trailhead or rendezvous point described on the event listing on the website. In some cases, it may be necessary to share special instructions about parking, directions, and road conditions, which the PNTA will provide when we confirm your event registration.

How difficult are the projects?

Volunteer opportunities with PNTA vary between “easy” and “difficult” based on the physical demands of the project, its location, or the experience required. Please review each project description to learn if the work matches your interests and contact us with any questions you may have.
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EASY
These projects can accommodate a wide range of abilities and experience levels and are most suitable for first-time volunteers. Typically, these involve light trail maintenance, such as brushing, limbing, and minor tread repair, or restoring an area by packing out trash. Worksites require minimal hiking distances (1–3 miles) with moderate grade trails (<15%).

INTERMEDIATE
These projects may require longer hiking distances (3–6 miles), steeper grade trails (~15–20%), or moderate elevation gain (+/- 1,500 ft.). These projects may involve more physically strenuous work, such as trail construction, rock work, or structures.

DIFFICULT
These projects may require hiking distances (> 6 miles), steeper or more rugged trails (>20%), or backpacking to remote work sites, and are suitable to individuals with experience backpacking or working on trail crews or doing physically demanding work.

How do I apply to join a volunteer work party?

1. Register — Visit our events calendar or Volunteer Guide to search for events. After you have found a project on your favorite part of the trail, register for the amount of time you would like to help out.

2. Get Confirmation — After you have registered for an event, we'll contact you with more information. If you're a new volunteer at PNTA, we'll ask you to complete our Volunteer Enrollment Form to complete your registration.

3. Meet us at the Trail! — After we have confirmed your registration, a PNTA representative will be in contact with you and be available to answer questions and provide regular updates about the event.

What if I can't stay for the entire scheduled event?

In most cases, any help is appreciated. Be sure to contact the project leader or Regional Coordinator listed on the event description on our website. If your availability changes and you are unable to join the work party for the entire project. For some events, such as those with limited positions or parking, you may be asked to give up your position on the crew for another volunteer who can participate for the entire project.
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Do I need to bring my own food?

Unless specified otherwise, plan on bringing lunch, snacks, and water for day projects. The PNTA may provide food for overnight projects, in which case crew leaders and volunteers will share cooking and cleaning chores. Some projects may include volunteer camp hosts who pamper trail crews by preparing meals and handling camp chores.

What do I need to wear? What should I bring?

Please wear:

- Comfortable leather boots that support and cover your ankles; the more water-resistant the better (No sneakers!)
- Long pants (No shorts or cropped pants!)
- Long-sleeve shirts are required (T-shirts and tank tops may only be worn as base layers.)

The PNTA provides personal protective equipment (PPE): hard hat, safety glasses, gloves, and earplugs if needed. If you wear eyeglasses, please bring your own safety goggles or prescription safety glasses. If you have strong preferences about work glove material, consider bringing your own pair. For everyone’s safety, wearing required clothing and PPE is non-negotiable.

Bring a daypack, including:

- One gallon of water
- Lunch and snacks
- Rain gear: top and bottom
- Warm layers if we expect cold or wet weather
- Change of clothes (optional—left in your car for the ride home)

Visit pnt.org/volunteer for comprehensive checklists of recommended daypack and multi-day personal gear.
Can I bring my own tools? Can I bring my chainsaw?

The PNTA provides all tools and the training you'll need to use them. Volunteers may bring small folding saws if they wish. They should not bring any tools with emotional value (like an heirloom ax or antique crosscut saw).

Volunteers should not bring chainsaws without first checking with a PNTA coordinator. Land management agencies require specific certification for sawyers; our trained staff will handle log-out and tree felling with chainsaws if required.

Can I bring my dog?

PNTA does not allow dogs on most project worksites for safety reasons and out of concern for the pet, wildlife, and other volunteers.

What is the alcohol or marijuana policy for work parties in Washington?

For safety reasons, PNTA does not permit the use of alcohol or recreational marijuana during project work hours. Occasionally, a sponsor may donate alcoholic beverages to work parties. If a volunteer chooses to bring and consume alcohol, they should do so in moderation and outside of project work hours.

Volunteers should be aware that while recreational marijuana is legal to consume in the state of Washington, it is unlawful to possess on federal lands, such as National Forests and National Parks.

Where can I learn about other trail-based organizations that work on the PNT?

Visit pnt.org to learn more about partner organizations and the volunteer opportunities they offer in Montana, Idaho, and Washington.