

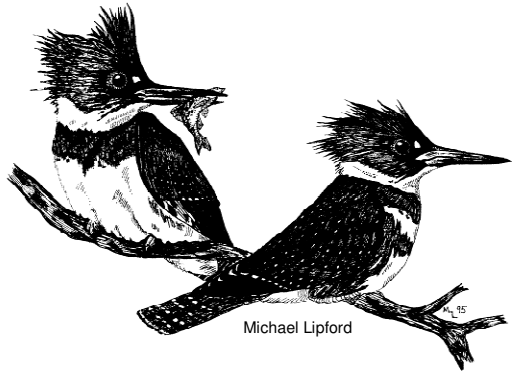
Milldam Creek Boardwalk Committee Handbook

North Landing River Preserve

The Nature
Conservancy



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



Michael Lipford

Volunteer Visitation Committee Members

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North Landing River Preserve © Bobby Clontz/ TNC

THANK YOU for deciding to help maintain and monitor the Milldam Creek Boardwalk. Volunteers make it possible for the Conservancy to continue protecting nature and preserving life.

VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Volunteer Visitation Committee Member

POSITION LOCATION: Milldam Creek Boardwalk, Virginia Beach

SUPERVISOR: Volunteer Coordinator

SUMMARY: With many preserves to manage around the commonwealth, it is not always possible to monitor them as often as the Conservancy would like. Regular monitoring and maintenance keeps us informed about their condition, while promoting the Conservancy's mission and supporting the ecological goals for which each preserve was established. Committee Members visit the preserve on a rotating schedule, greet visitors, walk the boardwalk, make observations and perform boardwalk maintenance as needed while working as part of a team.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

Committee members will visit the Preserve on a regular, rotating calendar schedule, approximately 4-6 visits per year, to assess the condition and needs of the Preserve. When making a visit, members should thoroughly inspect the property by walking the boardwalk while carrying a tool to observe for the following:

- Instances of trespassing and land abuse (trash dumping, unauthorized boardwalk use, etc.).
- Condition of the parking areas, gates, kiosks, signs, boardwalk and boundaries (vandalism, tree blow downs, erosion damage, etc.)

Volunteer Visitation Committee Members should also perform basic boardwalk maintenance by removing debris, fallen branches, overgrown vegetation and trash as needed. Members will report problems and issues to the supervisor.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS:

- Demonstrated interest in the management of nature preserves and commitment to the mission of The Nature Conservancy.
- Basic physical fitness to hike moderately challenging outdoor terrain and physical ability to operate hand tools such as loppers and hand saws safely.
- Good human interaction and interpersonal communication skills to work and communicate with a diverse group of people, including volunteers, local residents, trespassers if necessary and Conservancy staff.
- Self transportation to and from site.
- Willingness to participate in training sessions and attend committee gatherings (potlucks, etc.)

RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Complete and report preserve inspection form after preserve visits (provided by The Nature Conservancy).
- Suggest ideas for improvement projects to accommodate future preserve needs.
- As needed, greet and inform visitors of rules and volunteer preserve opportunities.
- When possible, help establish and maintain good relations with preserve neighbors and foster local attitude of stewardship, possibly recruiting volunteers to assist with future work.

COMMITMENT:

Flexible, depends on personal interest in maintaining preserve; ideally, 4-6 days per year or more. Ultimate goal is to have the preserve visited every week by committee members.

BENEFITS:

Being a Volunteer Visitation Committee Member for The Nature Conservancy gives you the opportunity to help protect critical habitat for plants and animals that is quickly disappearing. Members will gain valuable experience in the field and have the opportunity to increase leadership skills.



Volunteers at Milldam Creek Boardwalk © Bobby Clontz/TNC

PRESERVE INFORMATION

GUIDE TO THE PRESERVE

North Landing River Preserve is a 7,533 acre preserve located on the west bank of the North Landing River in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. The preserve is one of the largest expanses of undisturbed freshwater marsh habitat along the entire eastern seaboard. This unusual wetland system provides a habitat for southern species of plants that are rare in Virginia, including sawgrass, an integral part of the Florida Everglades.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Nature Conservancy preserves are private properties. They are managed to protect fragile resources--native species and plant communities. The point of allowing the public to visit the property is to educate and inspire. During defined hours, the public are permitted to park at the entrance and enter the preserve on foot using designated trails.

The one-fifth-mile boardwalk runs through the woods to the marsh. An interpretive brochure is available. The rest of the preserve is accessible only by boat.

Specific hours, rules and policies are as follows;

- The preserve's boardwalk will be open to the public daily, dawn until dusk, year round.
- Prohibited activities include: camping, fishing or trapping, horseback riding, biking, illegal hunting, motorized travel, pets and the collection of plants, animals, artifacts or other items found on the preserve.

A NOTE ON THE BOARDWALK

In the past there has been a history of multiple instances of vandalism to the boardwalk. Because the distance Conservancy staff must travel to North Landing River Preserve, we cannot always monitor regularly, thus we have not always been aware of when vandalism occurred and the resulting damage in a timely manner. Due to these occurrences the boardwalk had to be closed. The goal of the committee is to 1. minimize vandalism occurrences and, 2. identify small instances of vandalism and make repairs. Catching smaller instances of vandalism in a timely manner will prevent us from closing the boardwalk again. Common types of vandalism include:

1. Damaged and/or missing planks in the boardwalk
2. Broken safety rails
3. Campfires on the boardwalk

WHAT TO LOOK FOR/ ACTION TO TAKE

Note the condition of the preserve's natural features, signs, structures, boardwalk, as well as anything unusual. Please fill out the Monitoring Inspection Report Form, example found on page 8, and turn in to supervisor.

Parking Areas/ Signs/ Kiosks/ Structures/ Gates (locks)

Most Conservancy parking areas are small in size and simply just a pull-off from the road. Check parking areas for litter or dumped garbage or overgrown vegetation. Check the condition of gates or fences that may need replacing and check for damage to kiosks and signs.

ACTION: Pick up any litter or dumped garbage (if substantial amount, may need to schedule a workday). Mow, weed-whack or trim with hand tools any overgrown vegetation adhering to all safety precautions. Contact supervisor with any structure issues.

Trails

Survey the condition of all trails. Look for blow downs, obstructions and erosion problems. Inspect for encroaching vegetation. Make sure the trail markers are present or in need of replacement.

ACTION: Remove any overgrown vegetation with hand tools such as loppers, clippers or swing blades. Maintain a path that is 4' wide by 7' tall to allow easy passage. Walk trails and move any blow downs and obstructions such as branches and fallen trees out of the trail while adhering to all safety precautions. Do not move large trees or those that need chainsaw work. Contact the Conservancy staff if chainsaw work is needed. Replace trail markers as needed. Contact supervisor with any boardwalk or bridge damage that you cannot repair.

Signs of: Vandalism, Dumping, Fire, Unauthorized vehicle activity (ATV's), Trespassing, Illegal Hunting *hunting permitted on adjacent properties, Camping, Biking, Horseback Riding, Damaged Vegetation, etc.

Be aware of instances of the above preserve violations. Look for signs such as tire/track marks, campfires, etc.

ACTION: Although committee members have the authority to inform visitors of rule violations, this is not required. Committee members should only act if they feel comfortable. If you witness illegal activity, please do not confront the person, but record the activity and immediately call The Nature Conservancy's office or the Virginia Beach Police Department when appropriate.
**see additional resources section for important phone numbers*

Pets

The Nature Conservancy has a nationwide policy prohibiting pets on preserves. Dogs can chase wildlife, disturb ground nesting birds and trample vegetation. Dogs are very commonly seen with hikers at the preserve.

ACTION: Committee members should not ask visitors to leave if they have a dog, but should mention that they are not allowed. However, only speak with visitors if you feel comfortable doing so.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Reimbursements– The Nature Conservancy has certain vendor accounts where supplies can be purchased. However, purchases should be approved in advance by the Conservancy staff in Charlottesville. Many field supplies are kept by this office and efforts should be made to use these whenever possible.

Visitor Liability– The Nature Conservancy assumes no responsibility for accidents to visitors while at North Landing River Preserve. All visitors to the preserve assume responsibility for their own safety.

Preserve Publications– All publications should be approved by Conservancy staff at the Charlottesville office. All inquires from newspapers, magazines, television stations, etc. should be forwarded to Conservancy staff as well.

PROPER PREPARATION

Be sure to dress properly for monitoring. Generally, it is a good idea to wear long pants and hiking or work boots. You should also bring work gloves and water/snacks. Depending on conditions, a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent are helpful as well. *wear blaze orange during hunting season.

Hand tools such as, loppers, clippers, hammers/nails, and hand saws, will also be helpful to remove overgrowth, downed branches and fix sections of boardwalk as needed.



North Landing River © Harold E. Malde

MONITORING INSPECTION REPORT FORM

SITE: _____ DATE: _____
MONITOR'S NAME: _____ APPROX. TIME SPENT IN FIELD: _____ (hrs)

**If the preserve is in good condition
with no significant problems check this box.**

INCLUDE ANY PHOTOS YOU HAVE TAKEN

Was the *parking area* in good condition along with all *signs, kiosks, structures* and *gates* (including *locks*)? Was the vegetation trimmed around these areas?

Comments/Action Taken/ What did you do about it?:

Were the trails in good condition?

Any blow downs, obstructions, erosion problems?

Action Taken/ What did you do about it?

What are the conditions of the boardwalks or bridges (if any)?
(Loose boards/nails; rotting wood; replacement necessary)

Action Taken/ What did you do about it?

Were there any signs of (check any that are appropriate):

Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/>	Unauthorized vehicle activity <input type="checkbox"/>	Safety Hazards <input type="checkbox"/>
Dumping <input type="checkbox"/>	Biking/Horseback Riding <input type="checkbox"/>	Illegal Hunting <input type="checkbox"/>
Litter <input type="checkbox"/>	Camping <input type="checkbox"/>	Fire <input type="checkbox"/>
		Damaged Vegetation <input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain/ What did you do about it?:

Did you notice any changes in surrounding land use or status?

Describe any interactions you had with preserve neighbors or visitors.

Describe any significant wildlife or plant species you may have encountered during your visit. We'd like to hear about anything unusual you observed!

General Comments. Did you notice any other problems or have suggestions for preserve improvement?

ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

MISSION

To preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.



FACTS AND FIGURES since 1951

We've protected more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide — and we operate more than 100 marine conservation projects globally.

We have more than 1 million members.

We address threats to conservation involving climate change, fire, fresh water, forests, invasive species, and marine ecosystems.

We have grown to be one of the nation's top 15 charitable institutions, as measured by private funds raised.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How did The Nature Conservancy get started?

The Conservancy emerged from a professional association of ecologists seeking to turn their knowledge of nature into positive action for conservation. The Conservancy was incorporated in 1951 in the District of Columbia for scientific and educational purposes.

Where does the Conservancy work?

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization that works in all 50 United States and more than 30 countries.

How does the Conservancy identify lands and waters for protection?

The Conservancy takes a systematic, science-based approach to identifying sites for protection. Called Conservation by Design, this approach helps us identify the highest-priority places—landscapes and seascapes that, if conserved, promise to ensure biodiversity over the long term.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN VIRGINIA

Established in 1960 and headquartered in Charlottesville, The Nature Conservancy of Virginia has helped protect more than 235,000 acres of wildlife habitat across the commonwealth.

North Landing River Preserve and the Milldam Creek Boardwalk is located in the Conservancy's Southern Rivers Landscape. In southeast Virginia, six major rivers and vast expanses of wetlands and rare forests are home to centuries-old cypress swamps, rare longleaf pine, and a rich mix of freshwater mussels and fish. Through creative partnerships, land acquisition, ecological management, and other conservation strategies, the Conservancy's Southern Rivers Program works to protect the area's lands and waters.

Despite its proximity to a major metropolitan area, this region supports an exceptional array of over 100 rare plants, animals, and natural communities.

The Southern Rivers Program now concentrates on five significant river systems: the North Landing, Northwest, Meherrin, Nottoway, and Blackwater rivers. The Northwest River provides drinking water to 60% of the City of Chesapeake. Near the headwaters of the Meherrin, Nottoway, and Blackwater Rivers, Piney Grove Preserve harbors the northernmost population of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. All five mostly freshwater rivers are important wildlife corridors and collectively support a third of the state's non-tidal wetlands.



North Landing River © Mary Porter

SAFETY

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

** see additional resources section for important phone numbers*

ASSESS THE SITUATION

In the event of any accident that requires the immediate attention of medical personnel, call 911. Be advised that cell phone coverage varies. If you need to call emergency services note the following:

- Know the directions to the trailhead closest to where you are.
- Take notes about the situation: names, what happened, in what way the victim appears to be hurt, etc.
- Use from a first aid kit only what you are trained to use.

If the injury does not warrant immediate medical attention, the person(s) injured should be transported to the nearest hospital.

After you have assessed the situation and dealt with the emergency, please call the Conservancy's volunteer coordinator .

POTENTIAL HAZARDS

- Exposure to rain, wind, cold
- Exposure to sun, dehydration
- Terrain including wetland/aquatic habitats
- Dangerous flora and fauna (e.g., poison ivy, snakes, bees)
- Traffic and poor visibility entering the boardwalk area



***PLEASE NOTE:** Wear blaze orange during hunting season.

TOOL SAFETY

- Carry tools with sharp edge pointed towards the ground when walking. Maintain a safe distance from others when hiking and carrying tools.
- Make sure area is clear of people before swinging a tool. Notify others if walking behind them when they are using a tool.
- Keep unused tools away from work area. Lay tools sharp end down. Keep tools closed or sheathed when not in use.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Nature Conservancy in Virginia
490 Westfield Road
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901
(434) 296-6106
(434) 979-0370 fax

Jennifer Rich, volunteer coordinator
(434) 951-0572 (office)
(740) 590-3307 (cell)
jrich@tnc.org

Bobby Clontz, land steward
(757) 353-7376 (cell)
bclontz@tnc.org

Virginia Beach Police Department
2665 Leroy Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
(757) 385-4444