



Volunteer Handbook



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Who We Are

In 1974, a small band of community activists formed Bronx River Restoration and began the arduous process of cleaning up and restoring the river. Their effort gained strength and numbers in 1997, when Partnerships for Parks convened the Bronx River Working Group and brought together more than 60 community organizations, public agencies, and businesses committed to reclaiming the river and improving access to it throughout the Bronx. In 2001, the Bronx River Working Group created the Bronx River Alliance as a permanent 501(c)(3) organization to continue this work for the long term.

Today, the Bronx River Alliance serves as a coordinated voice for the river and works in harmonious partnership to protect, improve, and restore the Bronx River corridor so that it can be a healthy ecological, recreational, educational, and economic resource for the communities through which the river flows.

The Alliance works in close partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and over 100 partner organizations to achieve these goals.

Program Descriptions & Volunteer Roles

The Bronx River Alliance offers our volunteers, community organizations, schools, corporate groups, and park leaders a variety of opportunities to be part of our mission. Each of our program areas—Ecological Restoration, Education, Greenway, Outreach and Recreation—depend on support from volunteers to plant trees, remove trash, support paddlers, and engage community members in protecting the Bronx River and surrounding parklands.



Thank you for volunteering with the Bronx River Alliance! You are an important member of our team and we are committed to making the most of your volunteer contribution. We hope this handbook offers you valuable knowledge that is useful throughout your volunteering experience.



bronx river alliance

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www.bronxriver.org

To volunteer or learn more about the work done by the Bronx River Alliance, please contact us at 646-532-7704 or volunteer@bronxriver.org.

Covid 19 Safety Practices & Tips

Always remember that safety comes first. Following these simple tips can help you maintain a safe volunteering experience:

- Please perform a Self-Health Check at home. If you don't feel well, please stay home.
- When you arrive on site, you will receive a temperature scan. If it is above 100.4°F you will not be able to participate.
- Arrive on time so that you can familiarize yourself with your event supervisor, site conditions, and meet other volunteers.
- Dedicate your full attention to activity, instructions, and training.
- Speak to the event supervisor immediately if you become sick, injured, or for any other issue.
- Wear appropriate attire, which will be communicated in advance.
- Wear gloves if working with tools, river water, or clean-ups.
- Follow current CDC guidelines, including wearing a face cover at all times; maintaining at least 6 feet of social distance; washing hands with soap or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer after eating, drinking, or adjusting your mask
- Ask questions if you need clarification on how to do something. Better safe than sorry!

Ecological Restoration

Program Managed by Ecology Coordinator and Conservation Manager

Stewarding our natural areas takes dedication from community members and the general public. The Ecological Restoration and Management Program offers individuals, groups, and schools an opportunity to protect, improve, and restore the Bronx River corridor through hands-on engagement.

Volunteer opportunities include: Restoration & Gardening, Green Infrastructure Maintenance, Water Quality Monitoring, Project WASTE, Park Clean-ups, Species Monitoring



Education

Program Managed by Education Coordinator

Our Education Program offers schools, community-based organizations, and youth groups hands-on learning experiences using the Bronx River and surrounding parklands as outdoor classrooms. Students gain STEM experiences in real-world contexts and engage in stewardship of our environment. Volunteer hours will be certified by Bronx River Alliance staff upon request. Students interested in becoming EELS (Environmental Enrichment & Leadership for Students) interns can apply to learn from our staff and partners about the environment and our personal impacts as well as participate in directed or independent research projects.

Volunteer opportunities include: Restoration & Gardening, Green Infrastructure Maintenance, Species Monitoring, Project WASTE, Microplastics, Park Clean-ups, Water Quality Monitoring



Code of Conduct

Volunteers serve as representatives of the Bronx River Alliance. The Alliance does not tolerate:

- Actions that threaten the safety of or intimidate an employee, client, or fellow volunteer in public at any time including breaks
- Inappropriate language
- Discriminatory behavior
- Any so described behaviors while wearing an Alliance marked article of clothing such as a shirt or hat

Confidentiality

Volunteers, particularly those assisting in the office and public events will collect sensitive participant information from waiver and release forms. Volunteers are required to turn in all information to the Alliance and refrain from retaining, copying, or using information received. Violation of this rule will result in dismissal and police prosecution.

Conflict Resolution

If any problems arise during service hours, the volunteer is asked to seek their event supervisor for solutions. If a satisfactory agreement is not reached, the volunteer is encouraged to bring this issue to appropriate Bronx River Alliance staff.

Volunteer Guidelines

Release & Waiver of Liability

All volunteers are required to sign the Alliance's Release and Waiver of Liability Form before participating in a program or event. For volunteers who participate more than once per calendar year in the same activity/program, only one waiver is required; however, volunteers are required to fill out another waiver for different programs or on-water activities.

Training

All volunteers have the benefit of receiving specific on-site training from experienced Bronx River Alliance staff

Attendance & Punctuality

Volunteers are an integral component of the organization's public service and ecological management goals. Punctuality is important for programs and events to run smoothly.

Volunteers who will be absent should notify the event supervisor at least 24 hours in advance prior to the event. In case of absence or emergency please contact us at volunteer@bronxriver.org.

Greenway

Program Managed by Greenway Manager

The Bronx River Greenway is a 25-mile-long multi-use path that extends along the full length of the river from Westchester County into the Bronx. The Greenway Program offers community residents the opportunity to advocate and organize programming along the Greenway with the goal of promoting positive usage to new open space along the Bronx River.

Volunteer opportunities include: Bicycle Repair Workshop Lead (experience required), Bicycle Safety Marshal, Special Event Support



Outreach

Program Managed by Outreach Manager

The Outreach Program works to build community support for and involvement in the Bronx River and its parks by engaging interested individuals and groups in educational and cultural programming. Volunteers also support annual events like The Amazing Bronx River Flotilla and An Upstream Soirée.

Volunteer opportunities include: Office Volunteer, Special Event Support, Cultural Programming Partnerships, Friends of Groups

At the Bronx River Foodway at Concrete Plant Park—an edible food forest in the food desert of the South Bronx—volunteers help maintain the trees, herbs, and veggies as well as the pollinator meadow and other installations.

*Foodway managed by Foodway Coordinator
Volunteer opportunities include: Restoration & Gardening, Park Clean-ups*



Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities

All Bronx River volunteers have the right to receive:

- Support in finding the ideal position
- Adequate training and preparation necessary for satisfactory performance of your duties as assigned
- Advice, directions, and technical support when needed
- Recognition for your contributions
- Direction and feedback from a staff supervisor
- Permission to resign at any time; however, please inform Alliance staff prior to taking this action.

All Bronx River volunteers are responsible for:

- Having a valid waiver and liability form on file.
- Maintaining attendance and punctuality.
- Following a strict code of conduct.
- Upholding confidentiality agreements set forth by the Alliance.

Together We Help Keep the Bronx River Clean & Healthy

Each year, volunteers contribute 2500 volunteer hours:

- Planting ~4000 native trees, shrubs, and plants
- Removing over 650,000 sq ft—or 11 football fields!—of invasive species
- Removing 1000 bags of trash weighing 12.5 tons
- Collecting 180 water quality samples monitoring the health of the Bronx River
- Helping us host 1000s of participants at community events
- Extending our reach to help steward the Bronx River and surrounding parks for the benefit of all New Yorkers



Recreation

Program Managed by Recreation Coordinator

The Recreation Program offers a full calendar of public canoe tours along the lower eight miles of the Bronx River, and introduces the community to the river through canoeing and kayaking. Volunteers with paddling experience serve as on-water safety for Community Fridays and for annual events like The Amazing Bronx River Flotilla. Special event support is needed on land for registration, gear distribution/collection, and equipment check in/out during the season (May-October).

Volunteer opportunities include: On-water Safety (experience required), Special Event Support, Cultural Programming Partner



Why Volunteer?

Become a “Friend” of the Bronx River

Contact us at volunteer@bronxriver.org

Groups interested in stewarding a park or rain garden can apply to become a “Friends of” group, gaining valuable support and training from the Bronx River Alliance and NYC Parks. Strengthening local independent groups along the Bronx River and linking them together creates a dynamic forum for idea exchange, promotes best practices among groups, and provides a valuable service to the local community. Through your collective efforts, we can promote stewardship and engagement so that people will be more likely to join in efforts to protect, improve, and restore the Bronx River for generations to come.



Becoming a volunteer with the Bronx River Alliance makes you a leading advocate for the Bronx River and the public spaces through which it flows.

Volunteers are dedicated, reliable individuals that show their commitment to the Bronx River Alliance’s mission through their time and effort. Volunteers participate regularly in our programming, support the Alliance behind-the-scenes during special events, and help steward our local environment. Becoming a volunteer means joining a long legacy of community activists committed to protecting, improving, and restoring the Bronx River.

Benefits of Volunteering

- Create new relationships and foster community
- Explore career and personal interests
- Develop marketable job skills and education for resumes
- Earn great recommendations for future employment or college applications
- Have fun
- Make a difference!