

Why Volunteer?

Our trails need your help

Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Do what you can, with what you have, wherever you are.” While federal and state governments manage a large amount of land, their limited budgets have left many of our nation’s trails in disrepair. These federal and state agencies rely on the help of volunteers. Volunteers maintain and build new trails, construct trail signage and shelters, monitor rare wildlife and plants, and lead guided hikes.

Volunteerism

To truly enjoy and be fulfilled by volunteering, first identify what cause you wish to help. No matter what is most important to you, you’ll find many personal benefits to volunteering. The Volunteer HELP!Line Center of America states that volunteering benefits both the receiver and the giver. Many people who volunteer say that they get back much more than they give. Some of the benefits they mention are meeting new friends, learning new skills, improved self esteem, making a difference, and improving the quality of life.¹

The Trails Need You!

Some hikers take it for granted that the trails they travel are well-defined and clear of brush. But each year volunteer trail crews spend thousands of hours making sure hikers have a great experience on the trail. Trail workers build new trails, redirect old trails, clear brush and fallen branches, build bridges, and so much more.

- *Make new Friends* - Outdoor recreation writer Karen Berger says that “the days I’ve spent helping out on trails are among my favorite trail memories.”² Indeed, volunteering on the trail gives you an opportunity to be around people with similar interests to yours.
- *Feel Good* - Americans, 58% of adults and 67% of teenagers volunteer, and many say feeling good about themselves is an important reason for wanting to volunteer.³
- *Make a Difference* - Without the help of volunteers, many trails would have to be closed to the public. By volunteering on a trail, you are providing a place for people to find peace and solitude.

Finding Volunteer Opportunities

- *Call Your Local Hiking Club* - If you wish to help out in your region, volunteer for a trail organization near you. Find an organization to help

at <http://www.americanhiking.org/alliance/members.html>.

- *Volunteer Vacations* - Travel the U.S. and perform trail maintenance from Admiralty Island, Alaska to Osceola National Forest in Florida - for only \$80 per week! Frommer's Budget Travel says AHS' Volunteer Vacations "simply cannot be beat."⁴ Go to <http://www.americanhiking.org/events/vv/index.html> for more information.
- *National Trails Day* - Every first Saturday of June, thousands of trail enthusiasts come together to celebrate trails at events around the country. Go to <http://www.americanhiking.org/events/ntd/index.html> to find more information - and an event near you!
- *Winter Trails* - Each January, hikers gather in snowy locations around the U.S. to experience and learn about trail opportunities in the winter. Find an event near you at www.wintertrails.org.

Volunteer Today!

One of American Hiking's most dedicated volunteers has said: "I have no right to set foot on any trail that someone else worked and sweated over unless I am willing to work and sweat over a trail myself." Become involved now by visiting the AHS website at www.AmericanHiking.org.

¹ Volunteer HELP!Line Center, *Why Should I Volunteer?*, <http://www.helplinecenter.org/volunteer01.html>, 2001.

² Berger, Karen. "Giving Back to the Trails." GORP, <http://www.gorp.com/gorp/activity/hiking/volunteer.htm>

³ "Adult Survey Highlights." Prudential Financial, 1995. <http://www.prudential.com/community/spirit/cmszz1002.html>

⁴ "The Cheapest Volunteer Vacation Ever!" Oct. 17, 2000. <http://www.frommers.com/newsletters/10-17-00/article1.html>

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