



STEWARDSHIP DURING COVID-19

Risk & Safety Management Module

VOLUNTEERS FOR OUTDOOR COLORADO
STEPPING UP

STEWARDSHIP

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About Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado is the oldest and largest outdoor stewardship organization in the state. We work to connect people to Colorado's outdoors in ways that inspire them to be caretakers of the state's natural resources. This is especially important because the demands on our outdoor resources are extensive and Colorado's stewardship needs are reaching a near-crisis level. VOC is playing a leading role in addressing these challenges in three ways. First, we're fostering statewide collaboration on issues and solutions. We're also expanding stewardship efforts by helping others build and grow successful volunteer programs. Finally, we're continuing to engage 5,000 volunteers each year in on-the-ground, hands-on stewardship work.

Introduction

The rapid and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic public health crisis that began in early 2020, and the necessary adaptations required to keep the public safe, impacted many organizations that engage volunteers through group-based outdoor stewardship activities. At the time of this writing (Feb 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our public and private lives even as COVID-19 vaccinations increase and transmission rates subside.

This guide is intended to offer your group, agency, or nonprofit organization generalized yet relevant information for this period of continued COVID-19 activity, with guidelines and examples on how to effectively and safely engage with volunteers in the outdoors. This guide offers direct applications and tools to benefit field staff, project managers, volunteers who plan volunteer work, and land managers who rely on or work directly with volunteer stewards.

While this guide is COVID-19 specific in nature, it may also be applicable to situations when broad protection of the public health is paramount, particularly in group-based settings where minimizing viral transmission is necessitated.

Please Note:

- This guide contains information to help your organization develop strategies to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission on outdoor stewardship projects. Some of the content is covered in greater depth in other guides, as noted throughout this one. Other guides in this online Toolkit also contain additional information helpful to you in other facets of volunteer projects.

- All of the Stepping Up Stewardship guides are intended to be complementary and not mutually exclusive. You may need to evaluate all the various resources to determine which offer the most appropriate fit for your specific program or project.

Recommended Steps

This guide is organized into five steps deemed important when undertaking project planning and delivery to maximize stewardship efforts while minimizing COVID-19 transmission.

These steps are not intended to be linear in their implementation. It may be useful, however, to think of them as important planning components that may be revisited and/or implemented at various times based on their relevance to your specific work and needs.

Step 1:

Covers how to choose pandemic-appropriate projects.

Step 2:

Covers how to develop your organization's protocols to meet public health guidelines.

Step 3:

Covers setting volunteer and partner expectations through effective communications.

Step 4:

Covers potential pitfalls and challenges in protocol management, and how to avoid them.

Step 5:

Covers how to manage for on-project medical situations and respond to post-project positive COVID-19 cases.



This Guide is accompanied by additional free resources, called Supplemental Materials, that you can use in your efforts to develop COVID-19 safety practices. They are mentioned throughout the guide and listed at the end, but provided separately.

Step 1: Choosing Pandemic-Appropriate Projects

Before any volunteers are involved in stewarding public lands, it is a paramount principle that the participating land manager be consulted and involved in your planning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, good communication with the land manager is even more important so everyone involved is informed of, and can adhere to, any specific public health guidelines and/or restrictions that the land manager may have related to volunteers or groups.

Once these guidelines have been clarified, you and the land manager can then consider appropriate volunteer projects that comply with the specific agency's current restrictions and/or guidelines.

- ▶ **Becoming familiar with, and staying informed of, public health guidelines** through your respective state, county and/or municipal public health department and the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is also paramount as you consider what types of outdoor stewardship projects may be feasible during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ **Keep in mind that you may be involving volunteers who arrive from other communities** or areas which may have different case numbers, positivity rates, and other factors that could affect the local area where your project is based.
- ▶ **CDC public health experts continue to recommend the following generalized guidelines designed to minimize viral transmission:**
 - ▶ **Stay 6 feet or more apart** from others who are not part of your household.
 - ▶ **Wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask** (multi-layer cloth, KN95 or other similar type, OR double mask using surgical mask covered by cloth mask) over your mouth and nose.
 - ▶ **Properly wash and/or sanitize hands often.**

As you consider project work during COVID-19, it is important to carefully assess the tasks your crews will be doing to be able to safely adhere to recommended public health guidelines. Sometimes this can limit certain types of project work. For example:

- ▶ **Will any task require more than one person at a time to perform it?** If so, how many people and for how long will volunteers need to be in proximity of each other to complete a specific task? (Typically, the longer the duration and the more people, the higher the risk of transmission.)
- ▶ **Is the work designed such that individuals can maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance,** especially if they are from unrelated households?

You will need to clearly define these kinds of project selection parameters based on your volunteer pool and the risk tolerance your organization or group is willing to take.

VOC Mini Spotlight

In early summer 2020, VOC and other Colorado stewardship partners sought guidance from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) regarding size and participation recommendations for outdoor volunteer stewardship projects.

Because there were no specific guidelines for organizations such as ours, CDPHE categorized outdoor volunteer work efforts akin to organized sports (i.e. a softball league). Using those guidelines, we have continued to assess public health agency updates related to changes in outdoor sports requirements pertaining to maximum numbers of participants.

In Colorado, each county also issues its own guidelines related to public group sizes and therefore our second check is to verify those requirements with the county where the project will be taking place. There are readily available sites for quick information such as <https://covid19.colorado.gov/data/covid-19-dial-dashboard>.

Each state will differ, so we recommend establishing a list of sources on public health data and guidelines to check throughout the process from project selection through planning, and up to the day before your project.

Step 1: Continued

There are ways in which projects may still be completed even while adhering to specific public health guidance. A wide variety of tasks including new trail construction, planting, basic trail maintenance and much more can be achieved by volunteers wearing masks and staying 6 feet apart.

For example, in 2020 VOC permitted volunteers from the same household or are in the same COVID-pod to perform projects tasks together without physical distancing. More information about these options is available in [Step 4](#).



As more people get vaccinated there may be new guidelines from the CDC and other public health agencies regarding how to account for vaccinated volunteers.

During VOC's 2020 project season, we learned that with some accommodation we could accomplish a lot of project tasks while still physically distancing volunteers. We found we could achieve this most effectively on the following types of projects:

- ▶ **New trail construction**
- ▶ **Light trail maintenance** where tasks could be achieved independently such as clearing drains and corridor clearing, including with crosscut saws
- ▶ **Invasive/noxious weed mitigation**
- ▶ **Community/citizen science and monitoring**
- ▶ **Forest management**, including chainsaw work
- ▶ **Community gardening**
- ▶ **Building structures** where materials can be carried by one volunteer and tasks can be accomplished while always maintaining 6 feet of separation.
 - ▶ **VOC volunteers were able to maintain 6 feet of distance while constructing some rock erosion control structures.** In the pictured example, required rocks were light enough that they could be carried by individual volunteers and the structure was built in such a way that one Crew Leader could direct the placement of individual rocks by each person on their team to complete the structure. In the pictured example, rock was staged by a youth corps prior to the volunteer day.
 - ▶ **VOC found that installation of timber steps is a good example of a task where workflow management can be adjusted to allow for 6 feet of distance.** In the example pictured, one volunteer dug the trench, one placed the timber, and the group took turns driving rebar to secure the timber.



We were reluctant to engage volunteers in work that did not allow for the six (6) feet of distancing requirements which limited our efforts in the following:

Step 1: Continued

- ▶ Any task that required moving or maneuvering materials so large that teams of non-household volunteers were required to work in close proximity to achieve results, such as:
 - ▶ **Moving large logs or boulders** during trail construction or maintenance
 - ▶ **Constructing heavy rock structures** such as staircases or retaining walls

Before you bring volunteers to a project site, completing a site visit is highly recommended.

During COVID-19, you will want to further assess the site with specific attention on physical spacing of volunteers during all the portions of your event, not just the project work itself. Additional considerations may include assessing areas for:

- ▶ **Volunteer parking**
- ▶ **Staging for project sign-in and orientation**
- ▶ **Tool distribution**
- ▶ **Camping**
- ▶ **Camp kitchen layout**, if you are serving food



More information about site visits in non-COVID-19 times is found in our [Project Selection Guide](#).

VOC Mini Spotlight

VOC also identified projects in the early months of COVID-19 that could be undertaken exclusively by experienced volunteers who had worked with VOC before. Our knowledge of their technical skills and capacity enabled us to place them on projects where they could independently work on more challenging project elements.

This minimized the need for instruction, assessment and/or correction of project tasks by less skilled volunteers, which in turn promoted physical distancing compliance even while completing more technical tasks. It was also a useful recruitment strategy for seasoned volunteers who were eager to get involved during the pandemic but also concerned about viral transmission.

Step 2: Developing Protocols to Meet Public Health Guidelines

Consider every part of your project and develop a set of protocols that will outline:

- ▶ **What needs to be put in place and by when**, including:
 - ▶ **What new supplies may be needed**
 - How many and where these items can be sourced
 - The cost for the supplies
 - When they need to be on hand designed to attract volunteer interest.
- ▶ **Who needs to be made aware of and/or trained in the protocols**
 - ▶ How and when will the training take place?
 - ▶ Who will be responsible for implementing the protocols?

Informing volunteers about the new protocols is also important as you recruit and engage them. You will want to inform volunteers before they arrive about any specific COVID-19 related requirements such as:

- ▶ **What to bring with them** from home such as masks, personal hand sanitizer, gloves, their own prepared food for the project day, and refillable water bottle.

Step 2: Continued

- ▶ **What to do upon arrival**, including directions for on-project health screening, physically distanced activities such as on-site registration, issuing of tools and project orientation.
- ▶ **What to expect on a project** such as required physical distancing, on-project sanitation requirements, wearing of masks, and the availability and use of bathroom facilities.

Additional detailed plans should be in place for staff or volunteer project leads to manage for such things as:

- ▶ **Project set-up** to ensure optimal physical distancing, including use of signage to reinforce rules.
- ▶ **Clearly defined instructions for personal sanitation practices**, including bathroom use and hand washing stations, food preparation and designated eating areas, and other project related efforts where communal contact may be concerning.
- ▶ **Planning for how to handle infractions**
- ▶ **Risk management specific to injury and accidents** (See Step 5)

VOC Mini Spotlight

As a condition of volunteer participation this year, VOC developed an additional disclosure and volunteer and guardian commitment document called "Responsible Together: VOC in COVID-19". This document acknowledges that VOC is unable to guarantee safety or a COVID-19 free environment along with the inherent risks of contracting COVID-19 or any other communicable or contagious disease while participating in a VOC program or activity. We implemented this new waiver considering the uncertain nature of COVID-19 and the altered conditions of participation, including VOC's right to refuse volunteer participation based on demonstrated or reported sickness, and the potential for project or program termination (due, for example to changes in federal, state or county directives.) The Responsible Together: VOC in COVID-19 is additional to our typical project waiver and we will require both to be signed electronically as part of our registration process until we are no longer operating in a pandemic.

To ensure that the participating volunteer understands the risk management protocols and policies, including changes and consent to participation during COVID-19, we require both waivers to be signed a few days prior to the project and returned electronically, thereby ensuring compliance and aiding in enforcement of protocols on the project. Volunteers who have not signed and returned the waiver are not permitted to participate on the project. Highlights of the Responsible Together waiver include:

- The volunteer and their child (if applicable) must be willing to accept and assume COVID-19 and other risks.
- Descriptions of specific changes in the way VOC's programs are run as determined by adherence to public health safety, including things such as operating in smaller groups and with more distance between volunteers, not promoting or helping to plan carpooling with non-household members, and discontinuing shuttling on projects.
- Volunteer consent and agreement to follow project protocols such as health screenings, mask wearing, hand sanitizing, and notifying VOC's project manager if they become sick or are notified of exposure after a project.
- Commitment to adhere to sound protocols not only during their time on a VOC project, but also before they arrive on the project and after they depart, so we may protect all our communities through our actions.

Note: Due to liability concerns, VOC is unable to share our specific COVID-19 waiver.

Step 3: Setting Expectations Through Effective Communications

CCOVID-19 quickly changed how volunteers can work safely in the outdoors. While the volunteer experience is still an important consideration, clearly defining expectations for participation must take precedence to protect public health and operate successfully during the pandemic.

Since many public health protocols were new to most people and organizations (and continue to evolve), communicating project specifics well in advance offers clarity about expectations and strengthens volunteer buy-in, hopefully resulting in greater on-project compliance and ultimately enhanced safety.

- ▶ **Determine your non-negotiables.** For most of us, it is often difficult and uncomfortable to be the one to enforce rules that are being violated and/or not followed, particularly in volunteer organizations where people are generously giving their time and talents. But, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the new procedures put in place are essential to protect the public health of all those participating.

- ▶ **Start with clearly communicating the protocols and procedures that your group or organization will not negotiate on during COVID-19** – in other words, clearly stating the "deal breakers" that will result in non-participation both before the project begins and then during the project if the protocols are not followed. Examples of some non-negotiables may include:

- *Specifying mask types and how and when they must be worn on your project.*

What types of masks are acceptable, and which are not for participation on a project? Can a mask be anything that covers the nose and mouth such as a bandana or buff or does it need to be more tightly fit and constructed of multiple layers? Will you provide alternative masks if volunteers do not have the kind your organization requires? When will you require masking on a project and when can volunteers remove their masks? What kinds of reminders will you use if you see volunteers not wearing their masks when they should? How many "strikes" will you allow before barring a volunteer from participating in the rest of the project?

- *Defining physically distanced work standards on every project.* Will there be exceptions to these standards? If so, what are they? If not, what breaches will not be tolerated and

VOC Mini Spotlight

Just as the pandemic has evolved over the past year, so have VOC's requirements for volunteer participation. One example is our new policy on masks. Last season, VOC required all staff to wear KN95 masks on projects. Beginning in 2021, we will expand this to include other project participants like land management partners, and VOC volunteer leaders (trained crew leaders, crew chefs and tool managers) while working on a project site and within six feet of others which tends to happen more often for people in these leadership roles. Cloth, surgical, or other masks will be required for project volunteers and KN95s will be recommended. VOC will share information about proper mask-wearing in pre-project communications. These changes are a direct result of new CDC guidelines for mask. We are hopeful that by providing KN95 masks to our project team members and land management partners (if they are not already using these) along with offering the rationale for our decision that we will have full compliance. We are prepared, however, to also limit or prevent project participation by any volunteer who we have asked to wear a mask and to whom we have supplied it, but who choose not to comply.

In 2021, all VOC project volunteers will again orally complete the health screening questionnaire with a VOC staff member, responding to the series of health screen questions we have developed based on CDC guidelines. If any of the questions are answered in a way that suggests the respondent could be at risk of having COVID-19 or transmitting the virus to others, they will be asked to return home. This may include affirmative responses to questions such as exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 48 hours, having been in physical contact with anyone known to have laboratory confirmed COVID-19, or currently waiting on result of a COVID-19 test.

Step 3: Continued

result in a volunteer being barred from participating in the rest of the project?

- *Determining level of variance in admissible health screen answers.* Determine the responses that are grounds for non-participation, including for example, the range of acceptable temperature variance you will allow if you use temperature checks as part of your screening.
- *Supplying volunteer gear.* For a variety of health safety reasons, you may require volunteers to bring their own supplies and equipment that you may have previously supplied for them on pre-COVID-19 projects. For example, you may ask volunteers to now supply their own gloves, water, and food. Will you offer any of these items if the volunteer does not bring them? Will you send the person home if they could put themselves or others in danger by not having the necessary supplies?

- ▶ **Communicate your protocols and expectations.** When communicating, as with most other project planning tasks, it is a good practice to start with your land manager partner.
 - ▶ **Share your organization and/or group's non-negotiables** and ask the land manager to share their own guidelines, if applicable. Then work together to define all project tasks in adherence with governmental restrictions and both groups' guidelines.
 - ▶ **Once you are on the same page with the land manager, it is time to work with other project partners and any volunteers who will be critical to making your project a success.** Share with them the plan that has been decided and agreed upon with the land manager. Take feedback and suggestions for changes but stick to your non-negotiables. Work to align everyone. This could be accomplished via a meeting or a document that must be reviewed by a certain date.
 - ▶ **Once everyone involved in planning the project understands the protocols and expectations, it is time to make sure all volunteers who will be on the project also learn what the rules are, and how they need to prepare.** The earlier you can begin getting general information out, the more effective you will be in helping prospective volunteers choose to participate.
 - *Newsletters or email blasts may serve as quick and effective communication platforms to share general safety updates with your stakeholders well ahead of any in-person gatherings or projects. If you will be requiring, for example, strict masking upon project arrival, begin communicating this information a few months ahead of time in your regular communications. It may be useful to expand on these guidelines through smaller snippets of information such as:*

VOC Mini Spotlight

VOC developed a Health Screening process for each volunteer to complete on the project day during check-in. Pre-project communication with volunteers included the health screen questions so participants would understand what they would be asked on the day of the project. This helped us ensure that volunteers were aware of health considerations for participation and enabled us to screen health status in real time.

We designed the check-in process to minimize proximity between our staff and the volunteer, including curtailing sharing of pens, paper and other supplies. We used orange safety cones spaced 6-8 feet apart to indicate where arriving volunteers could line up for project sign-in. Volunteers were then checked off on a prepared spreadsheet of project registrants, including their spoken responses to the Health Screening questions which were directed by the VOC staff member, with each response recorded on the spreadsheet. Each project roster, with volunteer contact information and screening responses, was then securely filed after the project in the event of any reported transmission that may require contact tracing. We did not have to send anyone home in 2020 based on their individual responses to the Health Screening questions.

VOC's Health Screening Questionnaire is included in the Supplemental Materials.

Step 3: Continued

- Why masks are an important safety precaution;
- What a proper mask fit is and how to test whether your mask fits properly;
- What types of masks offer the best protection;
- How you will monitor, remind, and deal with non-mask compliance; and/or;
- Whether you will have extras on hand or send people home if they don't bring a mask.



It may also be useful to include a brief overview of protocols in your project promotions and/or create a webpage dedicated to explaining your health and safety protocols that you can direct new volunteers to.

While email blasts and electronic newsletters are good first communications, you will also need a plan for how and when you communicate all your protocols with your project participants leading up to and on the day of the project before any on-the-ground work begins.

VOC learned some valuable lessons in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic about sharing public health protocols with people who are agreeing to come out to volunteer in a group setting. Here are some of our takeaways:

- ▶ **Make an appeal for people to STAY HOME** if they are experiencing any signs of sickness, especially common COVID-19 symptoms such as a sore throat, fever, aches, cough, or loss of smell/taste.
- ▶ **Choose 3-4 main compliance rules** you want your project participants to know and follow. Keeping things simple will make compliance that much easier for everyone.
 - ▶ **At VOC, we focused on** what we called "The 3 Ws" - 1. Wear a mask 2. Wash your hands 3. Watch your distance. - If people did nothing more than followed these three guidelines, we felt these actions could protect them and others throughout the project day.
- ▶ **Use multiple media to reinforce your 3-4 main compliance actions.** Send messages through emails, [make a video](#) to demonstrate what you are asking volunteers to do, create signage, give people a printed card to serve as a reminder (see Supplemental Materials for VOC's version). Once on the project site, repeat your compliance actions orally as you gather before the project and use visual markings such as cones, flags, and rope, to help people easily follow your protocols.

VOC Mini Spotlight

Every year, before our project season begins, VOC hosts an event, called Team Night, to introduce any revised protocols to our trained volunteer leaders (crew leaders, tool managers, and crew chefs).

As we roll-out 2021, we are using information we gained last project season through a virtual debrief conducted with staff and VOC volunteer project leaders. They shared their ideas and suggestions based on their direct experience in leading volunteers and managing projects with the COVID-19 protocols we had originally put in place in early 2020.

We learned how several protocols were difficult to enforce and possibly unnecessary in preventing virus transmission. One example included challenges in enforcing tool sanitizing protocols that we had initially designed to minimize viral transmission on tool surfaces when those tools were being shared between volunteers on the project. As more was learned about how the COVID-19 virus is transmitted, and surface contamination was determined to be less of a factor, it was recommended that in 2021 we focus instead on asking volunteers to more frequently sanitize and wash their hands throughout the project day instead of repeated tool surface sanitation after each use of the specific tool.

VOC will continue to provide multiple and convenient hand sanitizing stations throughout the project sites and emphasize this protocol in communication prior to and during the project. Tools will also be fully sanitized at the conclusion of each project before being stored. Volunteers may continue to wipe tools with provided sanitizing wipes if they choose to do so but we will no longer detail this as a necessary procedure in our protocol overview with volunteers.

Step 3: Continued

- ▶ **Clearly communicate accountability.** Let people know what happens if they break protocols. Set expectations early on and be prepared to follow through. Practice ahead of time with your colleagues so that you know exactly how to be direct, assertive, but friendly when you give people reminders and then be prepared to ask them to leave your event if they still fail to follow your rules.
- ▶ **Keep reiterating the importance of everyone's safety** as to why you are asking for everyone's participation and cooperation.

Step 4: Avoiding Potential Pitfalls and Challenges

It is inevitable that there will be challenges in ensuring public health and safety on volunteer projects especially in COVID-19 times when people are experiencing the pandemic differently. Despite thorough communication before the project and at the project site, challenges are going to surface.

This next section showcases several examples of challenges VOC faced in implementing some of the general public safety protocols we determined were critical, with a few ideas on how we addressed them.

- ▶ **Protocol non-compliance.** Even though you set clear expectations ahead of time through written and oral communications you will still have non-compliance – people will forget to stay 6 feet or more apart from each other, incorrectly wear their masks especially in the heat, or neglect to wear their masks when in proximity with others. No one wants to become the "Project Police", but it is important to discuss how you will address these issues and who makes the final decision when compliance is not followed. Options may include beginning with gentle but firm reminders and culminating in sending the volunteer home.



At VOC, we have a final option we have termed, The Nuclear Option! When someone on the project refuses to follow our protocols and refuses to leave upon several gentle but firm reminders, we can resort to The Nuclear Option which effectively halts the project in its entirety, and everyone is sent home. We have yet to employ The Nuclear Option, but its threat can serve as a sufficient deterrent!

- ▶ **An unexpected task on the project requires close proximity between a few people.** Even with good planning, you will have an unexpected issue – for example, a large boulder that must be moved – that cannot be accomplished with social distancing. Breaking protocol, even once, makes it more difficult to reinforce later and sets a poor precedent for others. Two safer options may include:
 - ▶ **Ask people who are from the same household or COVID-pod** to accomplish the task together.
 - ▶ **Do without.** Advise the land manager that this portion of the work cannot be completed; ensure that no other safety issues exist due to the task not being done.
- ▶ **Emergency or injury on your project.** You always need to be prepared for emergency situations and injuries/accidents. But COVID-19 makes medical injuries even more challenging and requiring greater attention to appropriate COVID-19 guidelines. See information in [Step 5](#) for more guidance.

Step 5: Managing On-Project Medical Situations & Post-Project COVID-19 Cases

A risk management plan is a requirement for any outdoor volunteer stewardship project. COVID-19 complicates typical risk management plans by requiring additional protocols, including options for personal protective equipment (PPE) when there is a medical emergency on a project site.

This next section showcases several examples of challenges VOC faced in implementing some of the general public safety protocols we determined were critical, with a few ideas on how we addressed them.



For general risk management planning, please see the [Policies and Procedures Guide](#).

With COVID-19, you will want to **add** a plan of action in case someone exhibits signs of illness on your project and requires immediate first aid or potential removal from the project location. Generally, the following considerations may be helpful in developing a COVID-19 ready emergency medical plan:

- ▶ **Volunteers should review all COVID-19 protocols** you have put in place prior to attending and sign off that they have read them and agree to abide by them.
- ▶ **Health guidance is included prominently** in the pre-project communications.
- ▶ **Volunteers may also be required to review and sign a COVID-19 specific waiver** outlining what to expect and how to help mitigate viral transmission risk at any field program event.
- ▶ **Project leads need to have a plan in place** if someone begins to exhibit signs of any illness on project, including:
 - ▶ **If this is an injury or accident**, follow [American Red Cross Guidance for First Aid during COVID-19](#).
 - ▶ **Attend to the person with full PPE** if needed (mask, goggles or face shield, disposable gloves, extra clothing/disposable gown).
 - ▶ **Assess if the individual can transport themselves** off the project or if they have a household member who can take them.
 - ▶ **Know the availability of nearby emergency response** and how to contact them if the person cannot transport themselves and does not have a household member with them.
 - ▶ **Know the location of the nearest medical facility.**
 - ▶ **Only household members or project lead in full PPE should transport sick volunteers** if first response cannot be mobilized.
 - ▶ **Train all project staff and/or volunteer leads on the above protocol.**
 - ▶ **Continue to follow COVID-19 protocols after the project** if there is an COVID-19 outbreak.



Step 5: Continued

Following a project, if a volunteer or project lead informs your organization that they have tested positive for COVID-19, here are some suggested action guidelines:

- ▶ **Gather information.**
 - ▶ **The particular facts of the exposure** to the virus if known.
 - ▶ **The date of onset of symptoms.**
 - ▶ **When they were last in contact with your community** (such as volunteer project, site visit, work at your office).
 - ▶ **Which project or what areas of the workplace they were in** for the 14 days before symptoms appeared.
 - ▶ **Thank them for coming forward** with this information that will help reduce further spread in your community.

- ▶ **Take action.**
 - ▶ **Notify everyone who was on the project or may have come in contact with the infected person** of a potential exposure in **WRITING**.
 - *Care must be taken to remain confidential in sharing information, particularly avoiding any identification of the infected person. Inform the participants that they may have been exposed but do not share other information about the COVID-19 test results.*
 - ▶ **Instruct the infected person** to call their health care provider for further guidance.
 - ▶ **If this is an employee who has tested positive**, you will have additional information to gather, and other considerations based on your organization's procedures.
 - *Participants who may have been exposed on the project with your staff member should be informed of the potential exposure.*
 - *Be sure to work with your local public health department to make sure you are following applicable laws and guidelines.*



Conclusion

This guide provided practices and ideas to help your organization navigate the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic while planning and conducting outdoor volunteer stewardship projects in a manner that protects public health.

It is important to note that establishing COVID-19 protocols is not a "one-and-done" task. The virus, along with scientific recommendations to reduce its transmission, continue to evolve and your organization will likely need to revisit your protocols and processes as new information becomes available.

A list of Supplemental Materials is provided below.

- ▶ **Volunteer Cheat Sheet**
A pocket-size "cheat sheet" distributed on projects to remind volunteers of VOC's safety protocols.
- ▶ **Volunteer Packing List**
A sample packing list for volunteers that includes items specific to COVID-19.
- ▶ **Health Screening Questionnaire**
VOC's health screening questionnaire used during project check-in and shared with volunteers beforehand in pre-project communications.
- ▶ **48-Hour Checklist for Project Managers**
A checklist for project managers to use in the two days preceding a volunteer project to ensure all COVID-19 precautions have been taken and communicated to the necessary parties.

Check out the guides for
Risk & Safety Management

Policies & Procedures

Volunteer Outdoor Stewardship During COVID-19

