

Adopted by Newton Conservators Board of Directors March 27, 2024

Background. Newton Conservators depends on volunteers. Our Board members are unpaid volunteers, and we have no paid staff. Many additional people volunteer for the organization, some by doing physical work (such as at our invasive plant sessions or by leading in-person nature walks and programs). Other volunteers provide services online (such as by presenting at on-line webinars or doing administrative or committee work like developing a new trail guide or serving on the Audit Committee). This policy lays out the way Newton Conservators handles its volunteers and the expectations for the volunteers.

Please note that Newton Conservators members or the general public who simply attend a walk or webinar, but are not doing work for the organization, are considered to be participants in our programs, NOT volunteers.

How to become a volunteer. Volunteers become involved through word of mouth or by expressing interest online in an event, activity, or one of the positions posted on our volunteers webpage: <https://newtonconservators.org/volunteer/>

Once an online application is received or a word-of-mouth contact is referred, the Volunteer Coordinator will contact them by email to set up a screening phone call, to confirm interest, age, experience, and as appropriate, place the volunteer with the “supervisor” for that area (e.g., invasives coordinator, walks leader, newsletter editor). If under 18, the person will be given our “Under 18 Protection Policy.” The person will be contacted by the appropriate Board member or supervisor for an informal interview, and if still interested, for an “onboarding” process. The responses of the applicant on the volunteer application form will be discussed as well as future communication expectations. At this point, if the volunteer is under 18 or an adult who will be doing physical activity such as invasives work, a completed Volunteer Release Form will be requested. These will be stored on the G Drive.

When a new person shows up to volunteer for an activity such as an invasives session, they will be welcomed, age verified, asked to sign in and provide their email address, and can sign a paper Release Form at that time, or the leader will contact them afterwards by email to complete it.

Existing volunteers. Board members, repeat walk leaders, invasives team members, etc., will all be asked to complete the Volunteer Release Form annually, normally in late winter. These will be stored on the board G Drive.

Walk leaders from outside the board. These non-board leaders will be asked to complete the Volunteer Release form prior to the session. The form will be stored on the G Drive.

Volunteer release form – linked to our volunteers webpage, <https://newtonconservators.org/volunteer/>.

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It can either be printed for completion or [submitted electronically as a Google form](#).

Based on the age of the volunteer, the form is completed differently. (Volunteers under the age of 18 are further discussed in the separate “Under 18 Protection Policy”)

- **Adult volunteers age 18 and older:** the top part of the form should be completed and signed/dated, and returned to a Board member or emailed to volunteers@newtonconservators.org, or to invasives@newtonconservators.org (for an invasives volunteer).
- **Volunteers who work at multiple sessions per year only need to fill out the form once annually (normally in late winter) and should write the time period covered in the question provided.**
- **Volunteers ages 14-17:** the entire form should be completed and approved/signed/dated by a parent or legal guardian. **The teen may take part in the volunteer activity without the parent/guardian being physically present.**
- **Volunteers under age 14:** the entire form should be completed and approved/signed/dated by a parent or legal guardian. **The parent or legal guardian must be physically present with the child for the volunteer activity.**

Newton Conservators retains these forms electronically.

Special Situations:

- If minors show up for a volunteer activity (such as invasive session or bioblitz) and have not yet completed the Volunteer Release Form, they can complete a paper copy at the session if the parent/guardian is there to complete the parental approval section.
- If the parent/guardian is not there, the minor will be allowed to participate in the event for one time only - they will fill in a sign-in sheet (showing registrants plus blank lines for walk-ins) with parents' email, and the form will be emailed to the parent/guardian to be completed and submitted online, before the minor is allowed to participate in any subsequent Newton Conservators activities.
- The list of those whose form we are waiting for will be kept in the G Drive to be available for checking the next time minors show up with no release form.