

CINC VolunteerSpot FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Do I have to use VolunteerSpot in order to sign up for CINC trips or events?

No, it is not mandatory that you use VolunteerSpot for scheduling—you are welcome to contact the CINC staff person who handles that calendar instead. Please note that you will have a faster response time by using the online system and may therefore have a better chance of getting the shift(s) you prefer.

Do I have to register at VolunteerSpot in order to sign up on the calendars?

No, you only need to initially sign in with your name, an email address, and a phone number. Please note that we request you use your real first name so that it is clear who is scheduled. We suggest using only your first name and last initial; if those are identical to another volunteer, perhaps you can use your last name alone, or your first name and the first two letters of your last name (such as “Fritzsche” or “Clare Fr”).

How can I see an overview of what is available?

When you are first able to sign up for a calendar, we will email you an attachment that lists everything available. Please note that it will not show which shifts are no longer available—you will have to go to the online VolunteerSpot calendar or contact CINC staff to check for availability.

When may I sign up for a trip when a calendar first becomes available?

Initial sign-ups take place on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 a.m. At that time, you may sign up for one day of whale watching, one island trip, and one outreach event. Any early sign-ups or any extra sign-ups will be deleted without contacting you.

When may I sign up for additional trips or events?

You may sign up for additional trips at 7:00 a.m. on the 3rd Friday of the month. Any early sign-ups will be deleted without contacting you.

What if I noticed that someone signed up for something before 7:00 a.m., or that they have a trip that I really want?

Our scheduling process runs on the honor system. If you feel that a colleague has forgotten the process described above, please contact the other volunteer directly and work out together who will take the trip. (Staff have found over the years that sometimes folks forget the process and it is a simply a slip up, nothing more, when volunteers sign up early. As always, we appreciate the eagerness to be involved!)

Why do I have to allow for 2 business days when signing up for an Island Packers trip?

Because you can only get on the boat as a CINC naturalist if CINC staff have booked you, and since staff won't know right away when you sign up online, we need to make sure we have enough time to monitor the calendar daily and then make a reservation for you.

What happens if I need to find a substitute?

It is your responsibility to find a substitute for any shift you schedule. Simply go to the online calendar and delete your name from that shift (or speak with CINC staff to do so). Send a message to your colleagues that the shift is available. Whoever is the first to sign up on the online calendar has the trip; you are welcome to contact CINC staff to sign you up online, but if another volunteer has already signed up online by the time the staff person accesses the VolunteerSpot calendar, you will not be able to sign up for that shift.

What happens if I need to find a substitute for an Island Packers' trip?

It is your responsibility to find a substitute and to notify Island Packers as to who that substitute is. If you are unable to find a substitute, you must notify Island Packers (and CINC staff).

What if I am a substitute for an Island Packers' trip that is already booked and I signed up on VolunteerSpot but can't reach the original naturalist (or CINC staff) in time?

Since only the original naturalist or CINC staff can change the name on the reservation, you will not be able to go out on the trip.

What happens if a trip or event cancels and I don't end up volunteering for it?

Please let the CINC staff person who manages that calendar know.

I can't find the link to the online calendars—what do I do?

Please go to the park's website for the CINC at <http://www.nps.gov/chis/supportyourpark/volunteer-schedules.htm> and click on the icon for the calendar you wish to access. It is recommended that you bookmark the link (or save it as a "favorite") in your internet browser; you can do this when you receive an email announcing that you can sign up for a particular calendar. The link for that particular calendar (whale watch, outreach, island trips, etc.) will remain the same and will not change from month to month as it is updated.

What happens if two or more volunteers try to schedule the same shift at the same time?

VolunteerSpot will be able to determine which user requested the shift first and schedule that person for that spot. The others will be able to see (usually within about a minute or less) that they didn't get it and can try for their next choice. If there are two spots or more available for a shift, VolunteerSpot will automatically fill as many available spots as there are requests.

What happens if the calendar is being edited and I want to sign up for something?

The only time you will not be able to sign up for a shift is if that particular day on that particular calendar is being edited. That would rarely happen and usually only impact you for a minute or two.

Is there any way to not receive emails from VolunteerSpot, such as when I sign up for something?

*No, there is currently no way to avoid receiving emails. If you prefer to be less impacted by them, you might do one or two things. Either create a free email address that you only use for VolunteerSpot and then only check mail when and if you want. Or, you could put a filter on your current email account that would automatically direct all VolunteerSpot emails to a particular folder. **PLEASE NOTE:** there at least a couple of good reasons to check your emails from VolunteerSpot: 1) if there is a change to a shift you signed up for, you will automatically receive an email describing the change. 2) you will receive an automatic reminder in advance of any shift you signed up for.*

Is there any way to not see the advertisements associated with VolunteerSpot?

No, but VolunteerSpot does carefully screen those who advertise with them and sometimes provide special deals for those who use the website. The advertisements make it possible to use the website for free. However, the National Park Service and National Marine Sanctuaries do not necessarily endorse those advertisements.