

Indiana Dunes National Park Volunteer Service Description



River Scouts

Position Overview

The Northwest Indiana region has some of the most beautiful and diverse parklands / natural areas anywhere. The Indiana Dunes National Park is one of the world's largest urban national park systems encompassing 15,000 acres of Indiana coastal landscape visited by two million people each year. These parklands add immeasurably to the quality of life in the region. River Scouts will work closely with partners of the National Park, such as the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association, on stewardship activities that will help keep the East Branch of the Little Calumet River water trail open and accessible for paddling.

Minimum Commitment

Work is typically done late April-September. River Scouts survey the river independently (or with other paddlers) when it fits their schedule.

Goal / Outcome of Job:

River Scouts will work to enhance and protect the water trail system in several ways. River Scouts monitor hazards in and along the water trail such as fallen trees, log jams, issues with access sites, manmade garbage, and debris. River Scouts map and report these hazards back to their supervisors. River Scouts may also remove small debris and trash from the water trail.

Description of Duties

- Coordinate with River Restoration Crew leadership to conduct an accessibility assessment of the river once every two weeks or after any significant wind or rainstorms.
- Document water trail hazards such as downed trees, issues with launch areas, new garbage, and debris in or along the river.
- Document damaged or missing trail signs.
- Take photos of trail hazards and damage to help maintenance staff.
- Police the trail for litter.
- Remove sticks and other small debris from the trail.
- Optional: Perform basic water trail restoration/maintenance with the River Restoration Crew using capstan pullers and hand saws (training required). If a member of the crew is trained according to NPS standards, they may operate a chainsaw.
- Optional: Participate in trail stewardship workdays.

Knowledge/ Skills Desired

- Knowledge of simple handheld GPS devices and/or have a willingness to learn.
- Ability to paddle a canoe or kayak with competence.
- Ability to help move and relocate large woody debris.
- The ability to work with a diverse community of volunteers and park staff.
- Knowledge and understanding of the National Park Service mission and goals.
- Possess ability to use photos, GPS information and verbal / written communication to describe the location and details of trail conditions and invasive species.
- Understand and respect all park regulations and policies.
- Desire and ability to work outdoors.
- Ability to work in inclement weather.
- Ability to work in diverse terrain and footing.
- Ability to handle some strenuous physical activity.

Difficulty

Average to Strenuous.

Working Conditions:

Work is mainly performed outdoors in and on the East Branch of the Little Calumet River under normal non-flood conditions. The banks can be muddy, there are underwater hazards such as submerged logs, and debris, as well as occasional water quality issues. There is frequent exposure to poison ivy, sun, wind, rain, uneven terrain, mud, biting insects, and ticks. Ground footing can vary from loose sand to slippery clay, to mud. Other hazards include the log jams themselves, hazard trees, broken bottles, boards with nails submerged in the water, and safety issues associated with log jam clearing

Training / Preparation Required:

- Mandatory safety training will be provided. River Scouts will be issued personal protective equipment as needed.
- If a River Scout observes a violation which they feel requires a law enforcement response, they should never approach person(s) engaged in the illegal behavior.
- When the River Scout is at a safe location, call 1-800-PARK-TIP to report the situation.
- Informational contact with visitors may be made at the discretion of the crew member based on their level of comfort.

Uniform

River Scouts will be provided with a National Park Service volunteer t-shirt and ball cap. These items are to be worn while on duty.