Volunteer Orientation Handbook

South Slough Reserve



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Welcome to the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

Mission: To improve the understanding and stewardship of Pacific Northwest estuaries and coastal watersheds.

Thank you for choosing to donate your time, talents and skills to the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve). The valuable work of volunteers allows the reserve to broaden its reach in the community and the region. As a Reserve volunteer, you are part of a growing team of staff and volunteers working together to accomplish our mission. You become the best stewards of the South Slough and other estuaries by contributing to and sharing your knowledge about our education, research, and stewardship goals.

This handbook is designed to introduce to you the South Slough Reserve and the volunteer program. We depend on the dedication, time and energy of one of our most valuable resources, our volunteers. Once again, thank you and welcome!

Sincerely,

South Slough Reserve Staff

About the Reserve

The Reserve is part of a nationwide system of 30+ reserves that are bioregional representatives of the different types of estuarine ecosystems. The estuaries in this system are protected through management for long-term research, environmental monitoring, education, and stewardship. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) was established originally as the National Estuarine Sanctuary Program within the amendments of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 that provided a legal basis for the protection of estuaries. The NERRS is a partnership program between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the coastal states. NOAA provides partial funding and guidance while the state partners are responsible for immediate administration of the reserves. The state partner is typically a state agency or university; Oregon's Department of State Lands oversees the Reserve. The Reserve is funded through the State of Oregon and NOAA.

*Where rivers meet the ocean; the term **estuary** is derived from the Latin aestus — tide, surge*

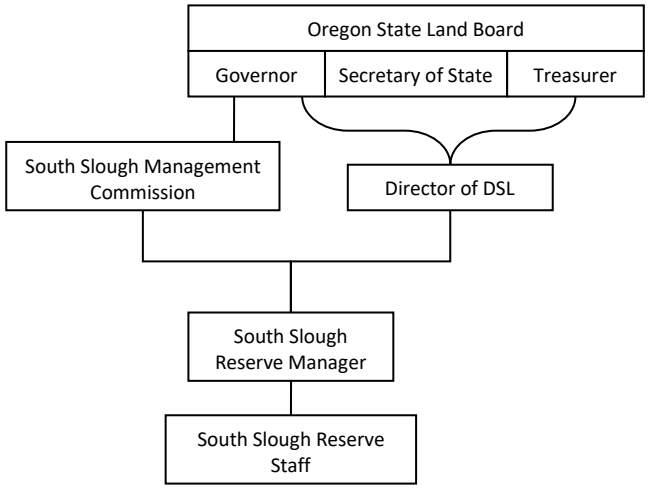


The Department of State Lands is the state partner for the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve on the southern Oregon coast. The Reserve manages nearly 7,000 acres of natural habitat which includes open water channels, tidal and freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, and forested lands.

South Slough Reserve is a cornerstone of recreation, education, science, and coastal training, providing rich opportunities for the local community and visitors alike to learn about and explore estuaries. Reserve lands and waters are used by visiting researchers, teachers and students, and other members of the public who come to the Reserve to hike or paddle, view wildlife, and participate in community classes. The Reserve Visitor Center offers interpretive exhibits as well as meeting spaces for the public.

Organization

The immediate governing body of the Reserve is the South Slough Management Commission which establishes operating policies and administrative rules. The members of the commission are appointed by the Governor. The Reserve's parent agency, the Department of State Lands



(DSL), provides administrative support and the Director of DSL serves as a permanent chair of the South Slough Management Commission. The DSL is a state agency that is under the jurisdiction of the State Land Board, composed of the Governor of Oregon, the Oregon Secretary of State, and the Oregon State Treasurer.

The **administrative services** of the Reserve provide the framework for fiscal and human resource management as well as support the operation of reserve activities through policy and procedural processes. Additional operational support is provided by our **facilities maintenance** team.

Three programs are common to all the reserves in the system: research, education, and stewardship. At this reserve, the **research** program is focused on developing a greater understanding of the functions and processes of the estuary as well as investigating the linkages between the estuary, nearshore marine environment and watersheds. The **education** program operates with the idea that community members become equipped to better manage and protect estuarine habitats when they are aware of the value and the function of these ecosystems. The goal of the **stewardship** program is to encourage more informed management of estuaries in Pacific Northwest coastal watersheds.

Reserve staff and volunteers work between three buildings. The administration and education staff work from the visitor center, four miles south of Charleston on Seven Devils Road. The maintenance staff are based at the maintenance facility located a mile south of the visitor center. The stewardship and research staff work from the Estuarine and Coastal Science Lab (ECOS) housed within the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology in Charleston.

The Reserve participates in NERRS **system-wide initiatives** including the Coastal Training Program and the System Wide Monitoring Program. These initiatives provide a coordinated approach for addressing issues of concern at a national level in a way that best meets the program needs and goals of individual reserves.

Coastal Training & Engagement Program

The goal of the Training & Engagement Program (TEP) is to promote better informed decision-making to improve coastal management at local and regional levels by ensuring access to and understanding of the best available scientific information. The program has three objectives:

- To increase the use of science-based knowledge and skill by local and regional coastal decision-makers.
- To provide opportunities for discussion and collaboration among coastal decision-makers.
- To support coastal-decision makers and assist their efforts to understand the role of human activities in coastal areas.

Coastal decision-makers *are individuals who, through their work, are responsible for making decisions that affect coastal resources.*

System Wide Monitoring Program

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) started in 1995 to track and predict short-term and long-term change in estuaries to understand how human activities and natural events can change ecosystems. It provides valuable long-term data on water quality and weather at frequent time intervals.

At this Reserve, the SWMP includes monitoring water quality, nutrient levels, local weather, and communities of emergent tidal wetland and submerged aquatic vegetation such as eelgrass beds. This information is used to help coastal professionals and community members make informed decisions about local and regional issues.

Volunteer Program

The volunteers program at South Slough Reserve is designed to provide a way for the community to connect with the Reserve by supporting and assisting Reserve staff to fulfill the operational, scientific and educational goals. The volunteer program goal is to enhance and expand the work of the Reserve and increase the effectiveness in achieving the Reserve's mission. Whether it is one hour a week, one day a week, one day on a special project - your efforts make a positive difference.

There are opportunities for volunteering within the three program areas and facilities maintenance. The **education program** offers volunteer positions that include providing visitor services, assisting with delivery of school field trips and public programs, tabling at public outreach events, and assisting with canoeing and kayak trips. Opportunities also include helping to promote Reserve activities through photography and social media. Volunteers with the **research program** may assist with research and monitoring projects in a variety of ways, such as recording data in the field, helping to carry equipment, mapping eelgrass beds, and assisting with biomonitoring. The **stewardship program** is assisted by volunteers who collect and disperse seeds, monitor and help control invasive species, monitor restored marsh and forest habitats, and assist with planting native vegetation. The **facilities maintenance** team benefits from volunteer assistance with building projects, trail maintenance, and landscaping projects.

Volunteers with the Reserve receive many benefits such as new or reinforced skills, knowledge, deepened appreciation for natural environments, exercise, creativity, and personal satisfaction.

Celebration of your contribution may also be shown by activities like an informal get-together after a project is completed, a summer barbeque, or a formal banquet complete with awards for your time. There are opportunities to participate in training to build on knowledge you have developed in your volunteer position. Whatever the form, you can be assured that recognition of your generosity and talents is sincere.

You will also get a first-hand look at everything the Reserve does. An understanding of the benefits that estuaries provide, and associated management options, is critical to informed decision making, especially as more people become involved in managing estuarine and coastal areas.

Volunteer Program Goals:

- Encourage community members to get involved and educated about coastal environments by offering fulfilling, positive experiences through volunteer projects.
- Form partnerships with other government agencies and non-profit organizations to promote volunteerism and aid in recruitment and recognition efforts.
- Identify volunteer opportunities that will assist paid staff in accomplishing work goals.

Volunteer Commitment

As a volunteer with the Reserve, you are free to set your work schedule in coordination with the public involvement coordinator and project supervisor, and you must be prepared to fulfill your volunteer commitment by agreeing to specific responsibilities.

You have the right

- to be treated as a team member and not free help
- to have a suitable and worthwhile assignment
- to know as much as possible about the organization policy, people, and programs and to be kept informed
- to be listened to by salaried staff
- to participate in activities
- to receive quality training
- to receive sound guidance and direction
- to have regular evaluation of your work
- to proper working conditions
- to have your concerns be heard



You have the responsibility

- to accept only assignments that are realistic for you to complete
- to respect confidences
- to respect and carry out professional attitudes and methods

- to follow all Reserve and DSL rules, policies, and procedures
- to state your limitations to the project supervisor or to the public involvement coordinator
- to be punctual and notify your project supervisor and the public involvement coordinator of absences as much in advance as possible
- to present any problems, concerns, and/or challenges to the public involvement coordinator in a timely manner
- to report damage to any equipment to project supervisor
- to support South Slough Reserve policies and mission

Performance Standards

Communication
As a volunteer, it is crucial that the lines of communication stay open and clear. Remember the saying "there's no such thing as a dumb question"? Believe it! If you are unsure about what's expected of you or how to use certain equipment, please ask for direction.

Signing In and Out
Please sign in and out for each volunteer shift using the online link. This is used for verification of eligibility to receive limited volunteer injury coverage should the need arise. Additionally, this enables us to keep track of how many hours volunteers donate to the South Slough Reserve, helping to provide volunteer recognition, estimate the value added to the Reserve by volunteers, summarize end of year reporting, and calculate in-kind match for grant-funded projects. Interns receiving stipends directly from Department of State Lands/South Slough Reserve will complete a separate timesheet on a weekly basis.

Conduct
As a volunteer, you represent the Reserve, and therefore, you are expected to act in a courteous, professional manner while you are volunteering

Dress Code
As representatives of the Reserve, all staff, including volunteers, are expected to present a professional image to visitors and the public and dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties.

If you can't make your shift
Dependable attendance and punctuality are important to the smooth operation of the visitor center and completion of research, education, or stewardship projects. Please

contact your project supervisor and the public involvement coordinator as soon as possible so that other arrangements can be made if you are unable to make your shift or will be arriving late.

Telephone
As cell service connectivity varies by carrier, you may use Reserve land line phones for brief, personal, local calls if needed.

Policies

Definition of Volunteer
A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs tasks with the direction of and on behalf of the Reserve. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by the Reserve volunteer program prior to performing any volunteer tasks. Volunteers are not employees of the Reserve or the Oregon Department of State Lands.

Training
All volunteers must attend the following:



- **Volunteer orientation** provides information about the Reserve mission, history, background, and goals, as well as expectations of volunteers and all relevant policies and procedures.
- **Project-specific training** will be conducted by the project supervisor specific to the placement. This training will provide details about the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the volunteer assignment. It may be in an on-the-job format.
- Required agency trainings…

The Reserve also provides learning opportunities for volunteers, such as:
- **Continuing education** opportunities to allow volunteers to build on and improve their skill levels.
- **In-service meetings** are typically one hour in length and are designed for volunteers to understand the work of Reserve staff, receive on-going safety training, and to gain tools that will be useful in their volunteer tasks.

Non-advocacy
As a public educational organization, the Reserve is dedicated to presenting information in a way that is free of judgment and bias. The Reserve understands that its staff, volunteers, and training program participants have their own personal opinions. While the Reserve does not expect anyone to give up those personal opinions, they must be withheld when you are interacting with our visitors and anytime you are representing the Reserve. This includes refraining from wearing

campaign items or promotion of political positions while on duty or representing the Reserve.

Record Management
The public involvement coordinator maintains records of each Reserve volunteer. These records include all forms completed by volunteers, dates of service, positions held, hours contributed, duties and responsibilities, performance evaluation, training record, and recognitions received. The application and reference checks are confidential. All background check information is also confidential and is housed with the DSL offices in Salem.

Injury Coverage
Although worker's compensation is not provided, the Reserve has a volunteer injury coverage plan through the State of Oregon to cover injuries of authorized volunteers. It is limited to only injuries due to an accident while performing volunteer duties.

Accidents
If you, a visitor, or another staff member is injured, call 911 if it is an emergency, then notify the manager, either Patricia Fox or Rebecca Muse (See directory on p.16) as soon as possible. If you are injured, please notify the public involvement coordinator who will help you complete an accident report form. Promptly reporting any accident which may occur during your volunteer duties is extremely important both to help us prevent future accidents and to protect your interests.

Taxes
Please note that under federal tax laws, the value of your time spent as a volunteer is *not* deductible. However, out-of-pocket expenses, such as mileage, purchases, and other volunteer-related costs, may be deductible as charitable expenses. Please consult your tax advisor for details on current requirements and regulations.

Supervision and Guidance
Your initial contact and ongoing resource person during your volunteer assignment is the public involvement coordinator. The volunteer will be immediately supervised and provided project specific training and guidance by the project supervisor specific to the volunteer assignment.

Background Check
Applicants offered a volunteer position are required to get a background check that includes fingerprinting. Records of a crime will not automatically preclude appointment as a volunteer. The circumstances involved in the conviction will be considered, however adverse background data may be grounds for immediate disqualification.

Disputes

Disputes may arise whenever people work together. Conflicts can result from differences of understanding whether between project supervisors and volunteers or among volunteers. We prefer those disputes be resolved informally in the immediate work area. However, some conflicts cannot be resolved easily or without assistance. A few options that may help to handle a dispute are:

- Try to work things out directly with the person involved. It may be helpful to have an outside, neutral person participate while you do this.
- Contact the public involvement coordinator who will work with you and the other person(s) to reach a resolution.
- Contact the project supervisor and let that person know what the problem is.

Performance Concerns

The Reserve greatly appreciates the services of its volunteers. Their service allows us to undertake additional projects for the benefit of estuarine resources which it could not otherwise pursue. Participation in the Reserve's volunteer program is a privilege.

If a volunteer's perfomance is repeatedly below the standards required by Reserve, lead staff or management may issue a verbal warning outlining the problem. The first time an incident occurs, the volunteer will be alerted of the problem and the changes the volunteer is required to make. During that time, an evaluation will be done to determine if continued volunteering will benefit the volunteer and the Reserve. The volunteer may be provided goals that must be accomplished to resolve the situation or dismissal depending on the severity of the performance issue. Staff or management will meet with the volunteer to provide feedback. If the problem is not corrected following this process, a dismissal notice will be given.

Volunteers may be dismissed for failure to comply with policies and procedures of the Reserve. Depending on the severity of conduct involved, the Reserve maintains the right to immediately dismiss or otherwise take appropriate action in response to any undesirable behavior of a volunteer. Volunteers may discuss reasons for dismissal with the project supervisor/Reserve management.

No dismissal, disciplinary or any other action will be taken against any volunteer on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, gender identity, marital status, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, or any other legally-protected status.

Harassment

All employees and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in professional manner to maintain a pleasant work environment and particpate in annual "Preventing Workplace Discrimination and Harassment" training. It is the policy of the State of Oregon to provide a work environment free from behavior, action, or

language which may be percieved by others as hostile, intimidating, or abusive. Harassment includes but is not limited sexual, racial, religious, based on a person's age, disability, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation. Contact your project supervisor and the public involvement coordinator if you experience harassment. No retaliation will occur because of your report.

Drugs and Alcohol
The Reserve is a drug-free workplace. You are expected to report to your volunteer position in a physical and mental state that allows you to perform in a safe, productive, and acceptable manner. Volunteers will not be allowed on Reserve property while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Use, possession, or distribution on Reserve property is forbidden and grounds for immediate dismissal.

Milestones in the Formative History of South Slough Reserve

Compiled 15 April 2003 by Mike Graybill, Manager 1974-2014

Summer 1971: The Coos County, Oregon planning department creates a Citizen Committee for the Barview – Charleston area. The committee is formed to develop a land use plan for that area. It was originally met to develop a plan which would qualify the area for federal assistance to construct sewer lines in the area.

December 1971: The Citizen Committee for the Barview – Charleston area holds first hearings to discuss establishing a protection zone around the shoreline of South Slough. The plan includes a one-fourth mile protected "buffer strip" around South Slough from Valino Island southward.

Spring and Summer 1972: The citizens committee for the Barview – Charleston area proposal for South Slough zoning is passed on to the Coos County Planning department. The proposal has been adopted as part of a report by the Coos Bay Estuary Planning Committee.

August 1972: A subcommittee of the Oregon Coastal Conservation and Development Commission (OCCD) tours the South Slough area. The full OCCD commission adopts Coos County planning department's proposed moratorium on development south of Valino Island.

October 1972: Congress passes the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). The CZMA directs NOAA to establish a program which, among other things, will assist states in the acquisition, monitoring, research, development and operation of national estuarine sanctuaries (later called research reserves) for the purpose of creating natural field laboratories to gather data and make studies of, and educate people about the natural and human processes occurring within estuaries.

1973: Oregon Coastal Conservation and Development Commission (OCCDC) votes to support a moratorium for South Slough. Federal coastal zone monies for sanctuary protection were suggested.

June 1974: NOAA issues Federal Register notice inviting states to nominate sites for designation as a "National Estuarine Sanctuary". Oregon state senator Jack Ripper and the Governor's office play a key role in setting out the duties of a high-level steering committee to look at management alternatives for creating a National Estuarine Sanctuary in the South Slough. The Oregon Legislative Emergency Board grants approval for OCCDC to respond to NOAA's federal register notice and apply for grant funding.

30 June 1974: The OCCDC receives NOAA grant-in-aid award 04-4-158-12001 ($823,965 Federal funds, $823,965 General Funds) to evaluate the possibility of establishing an estuarine sanctuary in Oregon. The proposal was submitted on behalf of the state by OCCDC under the direction of Jim Ross. The grant conditions require the state to prepare an environmental impact statement and hold public hearings to discuss the proposal. A consultant is hired to coordinate the meetings of the Sanctuary steering committee which meets numerous times throughout the summer and fall.

November 1974: An analysis of management alternatives is issued by the Sanctuary steering committee. The supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement, states: "The Director of the Department of State Lands will handle the administrative services for the sanctuary staff and provide management direction as defined by the Task Force and Land Board." The Land Board was identified as the Agency to acquire property on behalf of the state.

Fall 1974: The Nature Conservancy asks Governor Tom McCall to enter the acquisition phase of the South Slough Sanctuary Program.

Spring 1975: The South Slough project is presented to the 1975 Legislature. The project was presented as follows:

1. Total projected cost $1,647,930.
2. Federal funding available on 50 - 50 federal, non-federal match.
3. There would be significant private contributions from landowners.
4. The Nature Conservancy would lead the coordination and negotiation of property purchases and private property donations on behalf of the State.
5. The state would be involved in a single payment and closing to The Nature Conservancy upon completion of the acquisition phase.

May 1975: Governor Bob Straub approves a request submitted some months earlier by The Nature Conservancy to enter the acquisition phase of the South Slough Sanctuary program.

June 1975: NOAA approves first amendment to the grant-in aid award which authorizes the state to institute a three-tiered management program resulting in a

revision to the Sanctuary boundaries, extends the grant period, and adds $325,000 to federal share of budget and $1,832,200 to the non-federal cost share total of the original award.

July 1975: The Oregon Legislative Emergency Board authorizes expenditure of federal funds in the amount of $1,148,965 for acquisition activities. Expenditure authorization is placed in the Division of State Lands' budget. The Legislature approves the project on the concept that non-federal funds would be 50 percent state funds and 50 percent private donations.

Fall 1975: The Nature Conservancy begins property acquisition. A key parcel is an approximately 2,000-acre tract owned by Georgia Pacific Corporation. Georgia Pacific proposes to donate 50% of the value of the land. The Nature Conservancy purchases the property based on a total value of $1,700,000. The proposed gift value of the sale amounts to $854,000, suitable for use as non-federal match. The Nature Conservancy also acquires Valino Island and secures a conservation easement on the property of Mr. Dieter Kunz.

October 1975: After securing the initial properties, evidence mounts that there will be insufficient funding to complete the purchase of all the property as initially proposed.

November 1975: The Nature Conservancy informs the Department of State Lands that they do not intend to purchase any more properties. The Nature Conservancy requests reimbursement from the state for the properties they had acquired or optioned.

December 1975: Representatives of The Nature Conservancy, NOAA's Office of Coastal Zone Management, the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, and the Department of State Lands meet and agree that the Department of State Lands would act on behalf of the state for subsequent property acquisition. The Department is named to lead the acquisitions because it held the legislatively adopted expenditure limitation for this task. Department of State Lands and The Nature Conservancy appraisers revise the estimated acquisition cost of the Sanctuary upward to $3.8 million from the original $1.6 million estimate developed earlier that year.

January 1976: The Department of State Lands appears before the Oregon Legislative Emergency Board to seek additional expenditure authorization and authorization to amend the original grant-in-aid award from NOAA, thereby enabling the agency to seek additional funds for acquisition.

May 1976: The Department of Land Conservation and Development with help from the Department of State Lands submits a grant amendment request to NOAA which will:

1. Increase federal dollars by $600,000.
2. Change the federal-non-federal match ratio back to 50 - 50.

3. Provide for multiple closings to complete acquisition.
4. Advance final closing date through 1979.

September 1976: In a single transaction the Department of State Lands acquires title to all parcels and easements purchased by the Nature Conservancy for the South Slough Sanctuary, an area amounting to approximately 50 percent of the total area identified for acquisition. From this point forward the Department assumes primary role to negotiate purchase of all subsequent property acquired in addition to the Sanctuary.

April 1978: The Department of State Lands has purchased 72.6 percent of the area originally proposed for the estuarine sanctuary. The agency has expended $2,153,947 on purchase funds. Of this amount, the Department of State Lands documents $483,176 in private donations to match state and federal funds.

April 1986: Congress reauthorizes the Coastal Zone Management Act changing the name of the program designated under section 315 from “National Estuarine Sanctuary” to “National Estuarine Research Reserve.”

Staff Directory

Visit https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/ss/Pages/staff.aspx for the latest South Slough Reserve staff directory.