

2024 Spring and Summer

Outdoor Recreation School Volunteer Newsletter



Happy Spring? Winter? Summer? Who knows!!!!

Wow! There are not enough words to express the weather and programming weirdness we have experienced over the “winter” months! It has sure been one chaotic yo-yo whiplash circus of a ride! Thank you to all of you who helped us with our traditional winter activities and all the other creative ways we engaged folks outdoors over the season. We appreciate all the patience, flexibility, creativity and grace you gave us as we rode this winter ride! When all was said and done, we still were able to be outside, introduce new folks to our parks, appreciate nature, teach new skills and so much more. Glad many of you were able to be a part of that. We now turn our sights to paddling, biking and other warm weather fun. Fingers crossed weather is more cooperative with us and we don’t get an influx of locusts or some other sort of wacky thing happening! Knock on wood, knock on ALL the wood! Hope to see you in the parks soon!

Heather 😊

Volunteer Liaison for the Outdoor Recreation School

Cross-Country Ski Season Recap

By Grant Armor

What a season of eking out skiing this has been. From late cold, to almost no natural snow, to late December rains, generally warm temperatures, and even added pressure from Loppet skiers coming to TRPD while they prepared for the world cup - it was a weird season. And yet, we had a great year of ski lessons, making do with what we have and showing up with the enthusiasm and gratitude for just being able to get on snow at all this year. A massive thank you to the group of you who showed up for our programs this winter, welcomed new skiers and folks wanting to refine their technique alike. We really couldn't serve the range of participants we do on both public programs and in our school groups without your gracious support.

National Pie Day Hike

Thursday, March 14, 5-6:30PM at Richardson Nature Center

ORS staff and volunteers will meet up with staff and volunteers from Richardson Nature Center for a casual gathering. We will chat, drink warm beverages, eat pie and take a short hike. Hope you can join the fun! RSVP to Heather.Gordon@threeiversparks.org



Reflections from an ORS Volunteer – Dawn Peterson

When I started volunteering over seven years ago my goal was simply to give back to the community. A bonus has been forming friendships along the way -and not just with other volunteers! I have been lucky enough through Women's Trails Club to get to know several wonderful women whom I continue to hike with to this day. When Trails Club scheduling no longer worked for some people, we exchanged numbers and now try to plan weekly or semi-monthly hikes in various parks. It has been a great way to keep in touch while also participating in a shared interest.

Through this new group of friends, I was also introduced to the Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) a program that the DNR puts on several times a year. These weekends are held at various locations throughout the state of Minnesota and hosted by the DNR. Participants are offered a choice of opportunities to learn about new outdoors activities from knowledgeable experts. Several of us were able to attend last fall and took introductory classes as varied as fly fishing, foraging, shooting, archery and even how to make wood duck houses. If interested, you can find more information and sign up for their newsletter to be informed of new weekends at:
<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/education/bow/index.html>



Thank you, Dawn, for sharing your story! Would love to have this become a regular feature of our newsletter, all ORS volunteers are welcome to share a reflection or story about their volunteer experiences. Please send an email to Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org you would like to be featured!

Kayak Spa Day

Friday, April 28th, 9am-5pm at French Maintenance Yard

Be one of the first to lay eyes on over a dozen new kayaks and help them and the older ones get ready for the season with our annual spa day! There will be lots of boats moving, washing, and treating with sunscreen to get them happy and ready for a summer of paddling. Contact Grant Armour at Grant.Armour@threeriversparks.org if you wish to help out. Likely will not take all the way until 5pm.

Paddle Programs Volunteer Training

Saturday, May 11 at 930am (end time is TBD, sometime in the mid-afternoon) at Hyland Lake Park Reserve

We are looking for volunteers to help with our canoe, kayak and stand-up paddleboard programs for families, adults, kids, summer camps, school groups and more. Our volunteers are critical to the success of these programs – helping us welcome participants, correcting upside-down paddles, managing groups on the water, counseling canoe partners that are struggling and so much more.

Paddle programs volunteer training is required every two years. If you attended training in 2023, you are set for this upcoming season. If you are new to paddle program volunteering OR you attended in 2022 or prior, you must attend training this year. Please send an email to Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org if you plan to attend. If you are not able to attend due to a prior engagement, please be in touch and we will see what we can work out.

Starting with the 2024 paddling season, we are increasing our minimum number of programs requirement for volunteers. We are asking that all of paddle programs volunteers commit to a minimum of five paddling program dates throughout the 2024 season. This is commitments only, not actual programs, as we realize that our programs cancel due to a variety of factors throughout the season.

Outdoor Recreation School and Prairie Seeds Academy

By Allie Dart



For the past three years, ORS has been working with Caryn Chalstrom's Outdoor Recreation class at Prairie Seeds Academy (PSA), providing six recreation experiences each semester for the class of 30-35 high school students. PSA is a public charter school in Brooklyn Park whose students come primarily from the Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, Latino, Liberian, and African American communities. Many students have recently immigrated to Minnesota, most speak more than one language, and nearly 75% qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Students choose the Outdoor Recreation class to try new things, get outdoors, learn skills, and have fun, and they are fortunate to have a teacher who is passionate about outdoor recreation and works hard to create a wide variety of opportunities, including those with ORS.

Each semester, Caryn's class participates in two field trips to Three Rivers parks and four school-based programs with ORS. In 2023 they visited Fish Lake for canoeing, fishing, and navigation skills; Silverwood for ice fishing, snowshoeing, and kicksledding, and Elm Creek for cross-country skiing. ORS staff bring activities to their school to reduce barriers and allow the students more opportunities to try recreation activities. School-based programs have included archery, geocaching, disc golf, and fire building, some of which students get to practice over multiple sessions to build skills. Students not only get to try new activities and visit new parks through these programs – they also learn how to dress for all kinds of Minnesota weather; get to build relationships with ORS staff and learn about careers in parks and recreation; and get connected with opportunities like Recreation Pass Plus, the Pathways Internship program, and more ways to participate in recreation activities. Some of the students who tried canoeing for the first time at Fish Lake even took a trip to the Boundary Waters with Friends of the Boundary Waters, a partner of both ORS and PSA. Try it, learn it, love it, live it in action with new Minnesotans! Such a privilege to be a part of their journey.

ORS Volunteers have been an essential part of programs with Prairie Seeds students including supporting archery lessons at their school, cross-country skiing at Elm Creek, and canoeing at Fish Lake. Thank you so much for assisting us with this awesome partnership!

Turtle Fest: Let's Shellebrate!

Saturday, June 1, 2024, 11AM-3PM at French Regional Park

ORS staff are joining staff from Natural Resources, Maintenance, Facilities, and other Education sites to put on an event featuring the turtle species at French Park. ORS will be leading canoe tours of the areas where we often see turtles. If you are a paddle programs volunteer (or will be after training) and would like to help out please RSVP to Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org



ORS at the Special Park District Forum

Tuesday, June 11 at Carver Park Reserve and Thursday, June 13 at Bryant Lake Regional Park

The Special Park District Forum is an annual gathering of park, recreation and natural resources representatives from special park districts through the US and Canada. Three Rivers Park District is hosting this year's forum in June. It is an opportunity for the district to highlight our parks, trails, facilities and initiatives. ORS staff are leading a few sessions for the forum and we would love to have some of our volunteers join us. Tuesday, June 11 in the morning Sam Tabaka will be showcasing our adapted mountain biking equipment and programs. Thursday, June 13 in the afternoon, Heather Gordon and Nick Sacco will be showcasing our fishing and log rolling activities. If you are interested in helping with one or more of these sessions, please contact Heather Gordon at Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org for more information.

NEW - Mountain Bike Camp Volunteer



We have a new volunteer role starting this year! Our mountain bike camps are a 3-day camp of 6-hour days (except Murphy-Hanrehan which is 4 x 3-hour mornings) where we build the foundational skills of mountain biking through a combination of drills and trail riding. We teach wheels-on-the-ground riding. Volunteers should already be mountain bikers who are comfortable riding blue rated trails, be able to provide your own mountain bike and helmet in good condition, and be CPR/first aid certified. The summer schedule will have Mountain Bike Camp sessions for volunteers to sign up for. In the meantime, if you have any questions about these programs, please contact Heather Gordon at Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org

Outdoor Recreation School Staff and Contact Information

Main ORS Phone Line: 763-694-7717

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Coordinator
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This silly photo was taken at a recent ZOOM meeting our team had; we were excited about something! Ask us next time you see us. Sorry that Sam is missing from the picture.!

Midsummer Festival

Saturday, July 20 from 10AM-4PM at Cedar Lake Farm in New Prague



This is a really fun event with outdoor recreation and other summer festival fun including tractors, food trucks, bouncy houses and more! ORS volunteers are needed to assist with drop-in paddling, archery and fishing. Volunteer opportunities for this fun day will be on the summer schedule that comes out in May, but if you want to mark your calendar now and would like to confirm your interest in helping please send an email to Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org



Spring and Summer Volunteering Positions with ORS

A spring program schedule is now available for volunteers to sign up. If you have not received this schedule, please send an email to Heather.Gordon@threeriversparks.org for a copy. The summer programs list will be available in May. Here are descriptions for the spring and summer volunteer opportunities.

[Adapted Program Volunteer \(non-paddle sports\)](#)

Volunteers will assist program staff with adapted equipment and variety of outdoor activities at these fun and rewarding programs. Activities include cross-country skiing, fishing, geocaching, archery, biking, and mountain biking.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: A desire to assist participants with a variety of cognitive and physical disabilities. Training is required every two years for cross-country skiing, biking, mountain biking, and archery. Fishing and geocaching don't require training; volunteers will be given a brief orientation on their role when they arrive for the program. Ages 15+
ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate

[Adapted Paddle Program Volunteer](#)

Volunteers will assist program staff with adapted paddling equipment. There will also be time paddling on the water with staff and participants.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: A desire to assist participants with a variety of cognitive and physical disabilities. Volunteers must be current paddle volunteers and attend an adapted paddle program training every two years. All potential new adapted paddle program volunteers will meet with one of our staff to review the role and make sure it is a good fit. Ages 18+

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate to vigorous depending on the program and/or needs of individual participants.

[Archery Volunteer](#)

Help us introduce the sport of archery to youth, adults, and families. Assist with range set up, range monitoring, and coaching individuals on shooting techniques.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: No advanced training needed; volunteers will be given a brief orientation on their role when they arrive for the program. Be able to learn archery range rules and the role of range watcher.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy to moderate; some lifting of equipment is involved for those up for a moderate level of activity.

[Canoeing Volunteer](#)

Help us introduce youth, adults, and families to canoeing. Assist with program set-up, fitting PFDs, loading/launching and landing/unloading canoes, and group management on the water.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: Must attend Paddle Program Volunteer Training every two years and have previous experience canoeing. Ages 18+

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate, moving canoes is optional

[Fishing Volunteer](#)

Get involved with teaching youth how to fish.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: No advanced training needed. A basic knowledge of fishing equipment, fishing knots, and/or native fish species is helpful. Baiting hooks with wax worms or corn and/or removing fish from hooks is appreciated but not required. Volunteers will be given a brief orientation on their role when they arrive for the program.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy

[Fly Fishing Volunteer](#)

Get involved with teaching youth and adults how to fly fish.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: No advanced training needed. A basic knowledge of fly fishing equipment, fishing knots, and/or native fish species is helpful. Helping to tie on flies with the clinch knot and/or removing fish from hooks is appreciated but not required. Volunteers will be given a brief orientation on their role when they arrive for the program.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy



[Kayaking Volunteer](#)

Help us introduce youth, adults, and families to kayaking. Assist with program set-up, fitting PFDs, loading/launching and landing/unloading kayaks, and group management on the water.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: Must attend Paddle Program Volunteer Training every two years and have previous experience kayaking. Ages 18+

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate, moving kayaks is optional



[Mountain Bike Trails Volunteer](#)

Volunteers will be in a sweep, rover, or point role, helping keep the group together and riding safely while also chatting with participants and sharing knowledge about the parks. Possibly assist with first aid.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: Must be first aid certified. Must be comfortable riding your mountain bike up to 15 miles. Must be comfortable on blue trails. Must provide own bike and helmet.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate to significant (5-15 miles at moderate pace on blue trails, possibly black trails), depending on group fitness levels and program goals.

[Nordic Walking/Hiking Volunteer](#)

Volunteers will be in a sweep or rover role, helping keep the group together while also chatting with participants and sharing knowledge about the parks. When using Nordic walking poles, volunteers will help with setting these up for participants.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: No experience or advanced training needed, just a desire to socialize and help participants enjoy the beauty of the parks.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy to moderate, depending on group fitness levels and program goals.

[Regional Trails Bike Volunteer](#)

Volunteers will be in a sweep, rover, or point role, helping keep the group together and riding safely while also chatting with participants and sharing knowledge about the parks. Possibly assist with first aid.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: Must be first aid certified. Must be comfortable riding your bike up to 20 miles. Must provide own bike and helmet.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate (5-20 miles at easy to moderate pace), depending on group fitness levels and program goals.

[Stand Up Paddleboarding Volunteer](#)

Help us introduce youth, adults, and families to stand up paddleboarding. Assist with program set-up, fitting PFDs, launching/landing SUPs, and group management on the water. Volunteers paddle in a kayak sometimes, depending on equipment availability.

REQUIREMENTS and TRAINING: Must attend Paddle Program Volunteer Training every two years and have previous experience stand up paddleboarding. Ages 18+

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate, moving boards is optional