



Volunteer Nature Preserve Steward Job Description

Role of Preserve Stewards:

Volunteer Preserve Stewards serve as representatives of the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) and share responsibility for monitoring and oversight of FLLT nature preserves with Land Trust staff. The Steward should visit their assigned preserve as frequently as possible, and in most cases, no less than once every three (3) months; walk the boundaries at least once a year; re-nail Land Trust boundary signs (and let us know if new ones need to be posted); check vulnerable locations on the property; clean up trash; help keep trails clear (or notify the Land Trust that a crew needs to attend to these tasks); and help perform other tasks that might arise, when possible.

The Steward should report to the Land Trust regularly so that we know the preserve is being watched over, and should notify the Land Trust immediately if he or she finds a problem at the preserve.

Responsibilities:

1. Monitor the preserve throughout the year, and notify the FLLT Director of Stewardship of any problems or issues that need to be addressed, such as poor trail conditions, damage from fallen trees, vandalism, inappropriate use of the property, etc. Also note anything else of importance or particular interest, such as significant plant and animal species, changes in invasive species invasions, etc. Take photos if needed to help document an observation, and mark on a map the location of any photos or observations.

The Land Trust does not expect Preserve Stewards to resolve problems or confront people acting inappropriately, and in most cases, it would be best not to try to deal with such situations yourself. If, however, you encounter people violating preserve rules, and feel safe and comfortable doing so, politely ask them to stop and explain the rules to them. When confronting people, be polite and respectful, but firm. Say that the Land Trust cannot permit certain activities on its properties, give the reason why (e.g. liability, damage to trails or vegetation), and tell them that they are welcome there for walking and nature observation. If people are argumentative, ask them to call the Land Trust office to discuss the problem and provide them with the contact information, or get their name and phone number (and license plate # if possible) so FLLT staff can contact them. Also note that kids often do inappropriate things without thinking of why someone else might object (and are not usually doing something wrong out of malice), so when dealing with youth it is especially important to explain to them why we can't permit a certain activity and that it is not just an arbitrary adult rule.

2. Boundaries of the preserve should be walked at least once a year, which can be done all at once or in sections over the course of a year. If you need help let the FLLT Director of Stewardship know. When conducting boundary walks, check boundary signs and add new nails when old ones begin to pull through (do not pound in nails all the way – leave an inch or so sticking out to accommodate tree growth); attach new orange flagging tape to survey pins as old flagging wears out; and note any problems such as dumping, tree cutting, encroachment of yards, ATV use, clearing of unauthorized trails, etc. If additional boundary signs are needed, or if you are not certain where a boundary is, notify the Director of Stewardship.
3. Complete an annual stewardship report form (provided by FLLT,) which includes an assessment of conditions at the preserve and a summary of management and monitoring tasks.

4. Between annual reports, please keep the office informed of your visits, or at least some of them, so we know they are happening; a brief update by email is sufficient. It is helpful for us to know that you are getting to the preserve—and to different parts of it—with some regularity.
5. Trails: If you are able to maintain marked hiking trails yourself, great! But if not, be sure to let us know if they need work so that we can recruit volunteers to do it.
6. Talk informally with preserve neighbors and keep them informed of activities and issues relating to the preserve, as well as general news about the Finger Lakes Land Trust. As a Land Trust representative, Stewards must behave in a professional and courteous manner toward all preserve visitors and neighbors.
7. To the best of your ability, please keep the Land Trust informed about things such as: additional protection opportunities that may arise for key parcels of land adjacent to or near FLLT preserves; subdivisions or developments proposed for areas adjacent to or near FLLT preserves; proposed widening or other maintenance of roads along our preserve boundaries; local perceptions or opinions about the Land Trust or how we manage a preserve; and other relevant news about what is going on locally in a community.
8. To the extent that you are able, help with projects that may be undertaken by the Land Trust to fulfill the goals of the management plan for the preserve.

Thank you for your dedication and help with this important responsibility – Enjoy the preserve!