



SELWAY BITTERROOT
FRANK CHURCH
FOUNDATION

Information and FAQ's for SBFC Volunteer Projects

What kind of work can I expect on a volunteer project with SBFC?

When you sign up to volunteer with the SBFC, you are actually a Forest Service volunteer. As such you will sign the Job Hazard Analysis and be covered under the Forest Service workers compensation program if you are injured. As a Forest Service volunteer, you're also expected to put in an 8-hour workday while on a project. Most of our trail maintenance projects consist of clearing downed trees from the trail and involve the use of traditional tools such as cross-cut saws, axes, Pulaskis, hand saws, shovels, and loppers. Your SBFC crew leader will show you how to properly use the tools to accomplish the work up to USFS standards. Volunteers are also expected to help with camp chores such as cooking and cleanup.

What does a typical day look like on a volunteer project?

7:00am	hot coffee/tea
7:30am	breakfast, pack a lunch and filter water for the day
8:00am	morning stretch circle and safety talk
8:30am	hit the trail; hike to the worksite and begin work
10:00am	mid-morning 15-minute break
12:00pm	lunch in a shady spot
12:30-2:30pm	work
2:30pm	afternoon 15-minute break
2:45-4:30pm	continue to work
4:30pm	arrive back at camp for snacks, swimming, relaxing, fishing ☺
6:00pm	dinner and cleanup
6:45-on	campfire, relaxing

What kind of supervision will we have on a volunteer project?

An SBFC staff member will lead and train you for the duration of your project. A USFS personnel may assist with leading the project as well, depending on availability. Our crew leaders are USFS crosscut- certified and are highly experienced in trail maintenance. They have received in-depth training in safety protocols for camping in bear country, Leave No Trace ethics, and are knowledgeable about the area that you'll be working in.

HEADQUARTERS

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What kind of safety protocols does SBFC have for volunteer projects?

Safety is our highest priority on our trips. Before any work is done, volunteers will receive instructions on how to properly use tools and ergonomics to prevent injury while performing trail work. Further, each morning begins with a daily safety briefing, which includes proper use of Personal Protective Equipment, backcountry safety, and tool use.

Prior to each project, the local USFS dispatch center receives an administrative tracking form from SBFC, which indicates the exact location of the base camp, the work site, and a helicopter evacuation zone. SBFC crew leaders will check in via radio with the Forest Service every day, twice a day, and are in regular communication about any hazards such as weather or fire. Crew leaders carry satellite emergency transceivers to check in or summon help in the case of a radio malfunction.

What about bears?

All SBFC crews practice bear awareness safety including proper food storage, camp set-up, and travel in bear country. Food is stored in bear-resistant containers and coolers at the campsite. Your SBFC crew leader will ask you to store any personal toiletries in these containers to avoid encouraging visitors to your tent. Participants can bring their own can of bear spray if they wish. *Volunteers (except for packers) may not carry firearms on SBFC volunteer projects per the Forest Service volunteer agreement, regardless of whether they are licensed to carry a concealed weapon.*

What level of fitness should I have to safely participate in a volunteer project?

We rate our projects as easy, moderate, or strenuous for both the hike into the base camp and the work difficulty. For example, for a moderate-rated trip we recommend that you can walk or hike 2 miles/hour with a 25-pound pack (per the USFS [Work Capacity Test](#)). We expect that you will sign up for a trip that realistically fits your abilities. Remember, you'll be working with a team in a remote wilderness setting, where simple overuse injuries and blisters can become a big deal.

Do I need backpacking or backcountry experience?

No, you only need to be in good shape and bring the motivation to work. We use a rating system to gauge the hiking and work difficulty for all the projects - for the most difficult projects, you should have some experience carrying a backpack and hiking long distances over rugged terrain. Often we have volunteer packers that use horses and mules to carry the heavy loads (kitchen gear, tools) to the campsite, so you will be responsible for carrying your personal items. If you are worried about it, just be sure to choose a trip well-suited for your abilities. If you're brand new to backpacking or the backcountry, SBFC trips are a great

way to gain experience and confidence! If you have any questions about a project or the work, just ask us at volunteer@selwaybitterroot.org.

Do I need trail maintenance experience to participate?

Nope! Our crew leaders will teach you everything you need to know. He/she/they will show you how to safely use the tools to perform the job. Just come ready to work, willing to learn, and motivated to make the project a success! Check out the work difficulty rating for each trip and find one suited for your physical abilities.

What gear does SBFC provide? What should I bring?

SBFC provides all personal protective equipment (PPE), including a hard hat, safety glasses, and leather work gloves. You are welcome to bring your own pair of work gloves.

We supply all trail tools and equipment. Volunteers may bring a small folding saw to the project if desired, but any other tools should stay at home.

For multi-day projects, we provide all group gear including a stove with fuel, cookware, group water filter, camp tarp, and toilet paper.

Visit our website for a personal multi-day [packing list](#).

How do I get to the project site?

Each volunteer is responsible for getting to the trailhead or meeting site as specified in the project description. For some locations, we may recommend driving a high-clearance or 4WD vehicle. Having a spare tire is always a good idea on Forest Service roads!

SBFC can assist with carpool or caravan arrangements as requested.

What if I can't stay for the entire project?

Our projects occur in remote locations with limited cell service. Rough road conditions, creek crossings, and inclement weather are all risk management considerations. Accordingly, we prefer that volunteers registering for multi-day projects commit to and stay for the entire event. If you would like to discuss this, please contact volunteer@selwaybitterroot.org.

Can I bring my furry friend along?

Unfortunately, we do not allow dogs on volunteer projects.

What about showering during the project?

Basecamp will generally always be near a water source if possible. However, it is not guaranteed that this water source will be large enough or clean enough for cleansing purposes. SBFC practices Leave No Trace and therefore discourages the use of soap or toiletries in any water source. Even biodegradable soap affects water chemistry and aquatic life. Our water bodies in MT & ID are just too cold to break down soap suds.

Feel free to bring a solar shower and/or a collapsible rubber bucket to clean up. Just be sure to hang and use these at least 200 feet from water sources. Unscented, moist toiles or microfiber towels/washcloths are also handy for wiping down at the end of the day.

What about a toilet?

If you are stationed in the backcountry for the duration of your project, your SBFC crew leader will dig a proper backcountry latrine that the group will use. While at the worksite, you will have plenty of digging tools to dig a cathole if nature calls during the workday.

Will I have time off to explore and enjoy the backcountry?

Volunteers have free time at the end of each workday to hike, fish, relax or enjoy the backcountry however they'd like. Many of our longer projects include a day off in which volunteers can enjoy the backcountry for the entire day.

What about food?

We've got you covered. The SBFC project leader for your trip will take care of all the meals. Three weeks before the trip, the crew leader will contact you with details and their personal contact information. This is an excellent opportunity to follow up further with the project leader on any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or anything else that is important to you in regards to food and menu planning. However, if there are some food items that you just can't live without, you may certainly bring them!

What are SBFC's updated COVID-19 policies?

SBFC has been diligent over the past three years in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We're still concerned about this disease and are working closely with our Forest Service partners to mitigate its spread during the field season. We understand that the situation continues to develop. Our decisions follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and to keep the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, and communities a priority. The CDC offers a [Community Level tool](#) useful for monitoring the latest data.

Pre-project: All volunteers and SBFC staff should continuously monitor their health and the onset of any COVID-19 symptoms. Please stay home if you are not feeling well. Note that your volunteer deposit is refundable if you need to cancel due to COVID-related concerns.

SBFC will bring hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and a thermometer to each volunteer project.

Why do I have to pay a deposit to volunteer on a trail project?

Upon registering as an SBFC volunteer, you are required to pay a card deposit in order to secure your spot. For multi-day projects, this amount is \$60. For single-day events, it is \$15.

Volunteer deposits are *fully refundable*. Expect to receive your refunded deposit in October. So why the fee? Each volunteer project requires a significant amount of planning and coordination to implement. Projects with “no-show” volunteers can’t get the work done as requested by our Forest Service partners. By placing a deposit, you signify that you understand the details of the project(s) that you are signing up for and that you are committed to participating.

Upon completion of the project, we will send a feedback form via e-mail in which you may request a full refund, partial refund, or donation towards a membership. If we do not hear from you within 14 days of receiving the feedback form, we will transfer your deposit to a complimentary one-year membership with SBFC. All donations are tax-deductible.

If you are registering for multiple projects, you are only required to submit one \$60 deposit. Please contact us at volunteer@selwaybitterroot.org to request a waiver if you want to join us but are unable to provide the deposit.

Cancellation Policy:

If you must cancel your registration, you must notify us before 14 days to receive a refund. If we do not hear from you in this time or you do not show up, we will accept your deposit as a donation to SBFC. Refunds may be issued in the event of unforeseen complications or medical emergencies.

Occasionally, SBFC may have to cancel a project because of fire or other safety reasons. We always contact volunteers as soon as possible, typically within two weeks before the project's start date. In this case, we will refund your deposit. Of course, if we can move the project to another location, we will do that and let you know. We suggest that volunteers purchase trip insurance when making airline reservations or other travel arrangements.

Backcountry First Aid:

Each SBFC crew leader has current certification as a Wilderness First Responder. The crew leader carries a well-stocked first aid kit for the group and a Forest Service radio and/or a Garmin inReach device to communicate with the right people, in case an emergency should arise. If you are prone to blisters, we recommend you pack a personal stash of tape and band-aids. If you use ibuprofen or acetaminophen regularly, bring a personal stash.

Emergency Communication: As mentioned above, each crew leader carries a Forest Service radio. The leaders will 'check in' with the ranger station each day. If a volunteer in the field needs to be contacted, please call SBFC staff. We can be reached at any hour in the event of a true emergency. Phone numbers below:

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO:

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