

BUFFALO BAYOU PARTNERSHIP

2023 Volunteer Information Packet



Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Buffalo Bayou Partnership is the non-profit organization leading the planning, design, activation, and stewardship of inspiring spaces along the 10-mile stretch of Buffalo Bayou from Shepherd Drive through downtown and eastward to the Port of Houston Turning Basin.

Whether it's reimagining a former barge terminal into a cultural and recreational hub, reinforcing the bayou's banks with native plants and trees, or constructing the first pedestrian bridge between the historic Fifth Ward and Greater East End — building relationships and mapping change with our communities are essential to our mission.

By drawing people together along and across our bayou — and inviting their ideas and aspirations into the process — we celebrate and perpetuate the vitality and resiliency of our city and its historic waterway.

Buffalo Bayou Park

Buffalo Bayou Park is an internationally-recognized public greenspace. Stretching two-and-a-half miles from Shepherd Drive to Sabine Street between Allen Parkway and Memorial Drive, BBP built, maintains and operates the 160-acre park. Each year, volunteers contribute thousands of hours to help in preserving the green space's health, safety, and appearance. These efforts lead to a healthier environment and a more aesthetically pleasing amenity while fostering bayou stewardship.

Our volunteers are essential in keeping vibrant natural area in top shape for our citizens and guests from around the world. They help us protect our gardens and native grass, and wildflower areas from invasive plants which rob moisture and nutrients from beneficial plants there and preventing vines from choking out trees. We spread mulch around trees and vegetation to help them retain moisture, prevents weeds, and provide protection from freezes and extreme heat. They also help keep our trails well-illuminated and free from debris and silt, and our green spaces safe and clean.



Volunteering Policies

- All volunteers must read and sign a waiver form preferably no later than **48 hours prior** to volunteering with Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Waivers received after that may not receive timely updates, may need to show email receipt at check-in, and could delay our project start time. <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/BufferaloBayouPartnership/volunteerwaiver.html>.
- Buffalo Bayou Partnership has the right to use photographs or video of volunteers in marketing or public relations material, most of which are in group settings.
- Unchaperoned volunteers must be at least 18 years of age to volunteer with Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Youth volunteers ages 9-17 years are welcome with a chaperone 21 years of age or older. There must be one adult per ten youth present.
- Group leaders are responsible for making certain that all participants in their group follow instructions and abide by Buffalo Bayou Partnership's volunteer policies. Groups must agree to arrive in a timely manner.
- Closed-toe shoes or boots are required. Long pants and long sleeves are generally recommended and required for some projects. Attire should be comfortable, weather appropriate and able to get dirty. Optional items include hat, bandana, sunglasses, knee pads, back brace and gardening or work gloves. Disposable gloves will be available.
- Volunteers must supply their own water, snacks, insect repellent, sunscreen, or medicine.
- If you have a contagious disease or transmittable medical condition or have not cleared it by the time of your shift, or have had significant recent exposure, for the safety of our other volunteers, park guests, and staff, we ask that you reschedule to volunteer another time.
- Most volunteer group projects are scheduled for 8:30-11:30am, Wednesday through Friday. Some Saturday mornings may be able to be reserved for groups with 10+ volunteers. Afternoon shifts are discouraged as they preclude other groups volunteering that morning and the next day.
- Students, scouts, and others needing community service hours (non-court ordered), may be able to join groups that are already scheduled. Email volunteer@buffalobayou.org for available dates.

Volunteer Projects

The park director or zone supervisors will assign each group to areas wherever their services are most needed during their volunteer event. Our work area encompasses the 4 1/2 miles of bayou from Shepherd Dr. to Austin St. The following are some types of work volunteers may be completing:

- **Protecting plants** – Our work in the planting beds includes removing weeds and invasive plants which compete for nutrients and moisture the native plants need. They can overtake the beds. We also mulch there to help prevent weed growth, hold in moisture, and protect the root systems against extreme heat and cold. We will also mulch in some of our tree groves.
- **Conservation** – The park has many native plant areas which include wooded groves, native prairies, grasslands, meadows, and wildflower areas. To help the plants in these areas thrive and support beneficial insects and wildlife, we remove invasive plants or seed heads in those areas. During different seasons we will also collect native seeds or sow them back in to needed spaces.
- **Park Maintenance** – Some of our projects will also be to help keep the park safe for our guests and to provide general maintenance. These include tasks such as cleaning the trail lights to keep them bright, removing silt build-up to maintain the natural flow of rainwater as it moves into the bayou, removing broken branches, and helping add crushed granite to walkways.



- **Trash and debris removal** – The park is very fortunate to have many of our visitors pick up trash as they walk the trails. Most of the trash that comes into the park is from litter or unsecured trash on properties that is washed into the streets, down the storm sewers, and then into the bayou. A lot of that ends up on the banks. We can reach some of that. Most of what we pick up is further from the paths. We also help remove debris that floats into the park after a significant rain event.

Group Opportunities

We take groups of usually up to 25 people on Wednesday through Friday of most weeks from 8:30 – 11:30 am. Some Saturdays are available but are the days with the highest number of park guests, large scale park events and city festivals or runs. A minimum of 10 volunteers are preferred on weekdays but is a requirement on Saturdays.

Groups larger than 25 can sometimes be accommodated if they are coming by bus or carpool to limit the number of parking spaces needed.

A group checklist is available at the end of this packet.



Individual Opportunities

- **Community-Wide Volunteer Day** – We complete a variety of tasks needed to maintain Buffalo Bayou Park. Events are generally held on the 3rd Saturday of each month for individuals and up to two small groups of five (groups need prior approval). Check our website for upcoming events.
- **Small Household Groups or Individuals** – To provide safe opportunities during COVID-19. These projects are designed to have limited contact with park staff. They are now open to individuals and small groups on designated days. The sign-up form indicates days available in the next few weeks.
- **Independent Projects** – Volunteers are allowed to do trash clean-ups or other special projects on their own at times best for them. Special projects need prior approval and coordination with BBP staff and a signed waiver.
- **Special Events** –
 - **Buffalo Bayou Partnership Regatta** – Help with registration and check-in, direct vehicular and boat traffic, and set up/tear down finish line festivities.
 - **KBR Kids Day** – Help with check-in, set up and tear down, help direct families to event location, distribute BBP materials, and lead children's activities.
 - **Office Work** – On occasion, BBP will need assistance with a large mailing, filing, and other administrative work.



Contact Information

Buffalo Bayou Partnership
volunteer@buffalobayou.org
Office: 713-752-0314 ext. 206





Frequently Asked Questions

What will we be doing during our volunteer shift?

Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP) will strive to determine exact focus areas one to two days prior to your volunteer event. However, as conditions change due to regular use or weather-and/or water-related reasons, your help may be needed in a different area. Most volunteers assist with pulling weeds, spreading mulch, clearing trails of silt and tree limbs, and cleaning up trash and debris. We ask you to remain flexible and open minded should volunteer responsibilities change prior to your arrival.

What tools/equipment does BBP provide?

BBP provides all necessary equipment and materials for the project area (e.g., rakes, shovels). If you have them, you may bring your own gardening or work gloves. Group we will need to provide a fairly accurate volunteer count a week prior to the event in case we need to rent any additional tools.

What do I/we need to bring?

Please bring a reusable water bottle (single-use plastics are the major source of trash in the bayou) and any snacks, sunscreen, medicine, or bug spray that may be needed. A Safety Tips sheet is at the end of this packet.



What should I/we wear?

Clothing will vary depending on the time of year or project. BBP recommends volunteers wear loose fitting clothes that are comfortable and will protect the body from possible snags and briars you may encounter if working in overgrown areas. Closed-toe shoes or boots are required. Hats, bandanas and sunglasses are also recommended. The project email will include information on weather and any site conditions. Work in muddy areas may impact your footwear choice. We do require masks be brought with you, but we are usually well socially distanced. Masks may be handy during pollen season or when working around dust or mulch in windy conditions.

Is there a place to store my belongings?

BBP doesn't have a space to store your personal items. Make sure you have a secure space for them prior to working your shift. Valuables left in personal vehicles should be placed out of sight. If space is available on the cart and the project location, we may have a table or small container available.

Can we bring children with us to volunteer?

Yes, however, due to the nature of our work, children must be at least 9 years old to volunteer alongside you. If you're with a group, notify the group leader that you will be bringing children with you prior to your shift. Those under 18 years old will need parental consent. Youth groups will need to provide a chaperone for every 10 minors in their group. Chaperones must be at least 21 years old.

What skills or physical requirements are needed?

We anticipate our volunteers will have a wide range of abilities. Our projects can be divided into tasks and done at your own pace. Take breaks as needed and switch tasks to prevent repetitive motions or to "work a different muscle group". For specific needs such as working on even ground or working with lower weights, just let the volunteer coordinator know. There are always other tasks at or near our site. You can mention that in the notes field of the waiver or email volunteer@buffalobayou.org to let us know ahead of time. We appreciate the effort and ability of every one of our volunteers!

Can I earn Community Service hours?

We welcome anyone needing hours for school, work, or an organization. You can bring your form with you or email to request a letter in the waiver notes or after the conclusion of the event. We are not currently accepting court-ordered community service and will not be able to sign any court documents. BBP's Clean & Green team may have space and can be reached at 281.914.1088.



Frequently Asked Questions

Where do I/we meet?

Detailed instructions are emailed to volunteers who have completed the online waiver at least 48 hours in advance so we have your information before it is sent. Waivers received late will still get the email received no later than 3:00 pm the day prior to the event. For those received after that, the email will be sent after 7:00 am the day of the event, if possible. For monthly Volunteer Day events a sign near the Water Works Visitor Center provides the project location. If you haven't signed up in advance, arrive early to complete the waiver and show the email with your receipt. Meeting locations vary along 4 ½ miles of the bayou from Lost Lake, along Allen Pkwy. near Shepherd Dr., at Water Works, or Allen's Landing at Main St. downtown and are subject to change due to weather or other urgent situations.

Are restrooms available?

While there are two public restrooms located at both ends of Buffalo Bayou Park – Lost Lake Visitor Center (3422 Dunlavy Street) and Wortham Insurance Visitor Center (105 Sabine Street) – they will likely not be close to where you/your group will be working. Please make sure to take care of any needs prior to working your shift. When possible, we may make trips using the golf cart.

What does a volunteer shift look like?

Schedules will vary depending on the number of volunteers, responsibilities assigned, weather conditions, etc.

Below is a sample schedule:

- **8:30 – 8:45 am** – Check-in with Volunteer Supervisor; gather materials and move to work site
- **9:00 – 11:00 am** – Work at designated location
- **11:15 – 11:30 am** – Gather materials, clean up and exit

How do I register and is a waiver needed?

We have group and individual volunteer opportunities.

Each person coming is required to complete our [online waiver](#). Group leaders will send the link to each of their participants. Those in the Small Household Groups & Individuals (SHG&I) program fill out that program's [registration form](#) and the waiver. The waiver link is on the main volunteer page and under each volunteer option.

The waiver is **completed for each person** volunteering, adults, children, chaperones, and anyone who onsite with groups. The form asks for your birthdate and the date you will volunteer. Verify those dates are correct. Those under 18 years old will need parent or guardian consent (field provided on form). There is a place for the volunteer's phone number. Depending on the project, we may be spread out or a volunteer may have needed to go to their car or to the restroom. We need a **number for them on-site** in case we need to contact them or if there is an urgent situation. If the person does not have a phone, they can put the number of another person who will be onsite with them.

We also ask for an emergency contact. That should be someone **who won't be on site** at the same time or with the same phone number. This is sometimes for a person on site we can't reach and true emergency situation. For that we need the contact information for someone on-site.

We'll also need your **email address** to send you the project information and any changes in plans. We ask for your address to very occasionally send you information, but also as a means to see where our volunteers live. It helps us identify areas for which we may not be providing opportunities or missing community connections. None of the information is not released to third parties.





Where do I park?

Parking is limited throughout the park, especially during city and park events, and good weather, particularly on Saturdays. The best parking location to the project site will be determined by the Volunteer Supervisor a day or two prior to the event. Some projects may be a long walk from our parking lots and closer parking may be available. For larger groups, you will often park along or near 105 Sabine Street. Limited parking is available at Water Works (105 Sabine St.) or at Lost Lake (3422 Allen Pkwy.).

Overflow paid parking is usually available at City Lot H (1643 Memorial Dr.) located behind the Marquis Lofts on Sabine. There is also paid City parking along Allen Parkway. Often, we are able to reserve free parking in the city lot along Allen Pkwy. If reserved, a printed permit, provided that morning, must be displayed on your dash. Unless you are notified ahead of time that it has been reserved free-of-charge, be sure to pay at the meter. The city regularly issues tickets in those areas. As available, we may also be able to reserve nearby off-site parking.

There is also limited parking outside the park generally available in the Spott's Park lot, and street parking along Feagan St., Scotland St., and Jackson Hill St. with easy access to the Jackson Hill and Rosemont pedestrian bridges. There is also street parking generally available along Memorial Way, just north of the Water Works area with access by the Sabine St. pedestrian bridge.



Other transportation options?

We have some bicycle parking throughout the park and the Volunteer Coordinator also has cables to set up at or near our work site to which you can chain your bike. There are several other transit options, including stops for different bus routes at each end of the park and near Waugh Dr. and Montrose Blvd. We are close to stops on the light rail lines. **Green/Purple** stops Theater District – west bound: Capitol @ Smith, east bound: Rusk @ Smith (0.7 miles to Water Works). **Red** stops at Market Square and Central Main (1 mile to Water Works). Additional bus and rail information is available at ridemetro.org or the METRO Trip or RideMETRO mobile apps. If you are taking a bus, let the Volunteer Supervisor know, your stop may be closer to the project site than the planned meeting site.



VOLUNTEER SAFETY TIPS

Volunteer Coordinator: 713.965.3629 Water Works Visitor Center: 713.752.0314 x301
Emergency: 9-1-1 Houston Helpline: 3-1-1 HPD Non-Emergency 713.884.3131

We do everything we can to ensure the park is safe for our guests, volunteers, and staff. Tasks are chosen that most people can do, and we have alternate or modified tasks available. Volunteers may use standard gardening and landscaping tools on which they are trained. When working outdoors, there are precautions to always consider; in our park, at home, or on vacation. Here are some helpful tips on staying safe in those environments.

Stay Hydrated

Hydration starts before you arrive on-site. It is advisable to drink 8 ounces of water at the start of the day. You will awake dehydrated after several hours without water. Then drink small amounts of water frequently (instead of all at once) while you are working. In hot conditions, OSHA recommends drinking one liter of water over one hour, about a cup every 15 minutes. A **minimum of one pint (16 ounces)** per hour should be consumed during any labor.

We encourage **reusable drink containers** to help reduce the amount of single-use plastics which account for most of the trash that ends up in our bayou systems. We will have water coolers available for refills.

Coffee, tea, and soft drinks are not hydrating fluids. In fact, they can dehydrate you. It is best to avoid, or at least limit, caffeinated drinks, or heavy meals, prior to physical labor or in hot weather.

Take Frequent Breaks

The number of breaks you take can depend on weather conditions, type of activity, your physical ability and experience doing the assigned task, and the physical environment in which you are working.

Hot weather requires many more frequent breaks. That goes for mid-summer, but also at the start of warmer weather. If you have not acclimated to warmer temperatures yet, they can have a similar effect as working on the hottest days of the year. In **cold weather**, it takes longer to warm up or stretch your muscles. It can help to do some stretching before leaving home and some before starting your task. Breaks also help you when working muscles, you might not normally use as often. Remember to bend at the knees if any heavy lifting is required.

Wear Proper Clothing

Many areas of the park have taller vegetation and may require wearing long sleeves or long pants. Those can also be advisable to avoid UV rays and sunburn. Clothing should be **comfortable** and preferably looser fitting than tight. Lighter materials and colors are suggested during hot weather. In cold weather, dressing in layers is best. We require closed-toe shoes. You may work on a slope or in muddy or slippery conditions and should consider **properly-fitting footwear** best suited for those conditions. Gardening or work **gloves** can help grip tools and prevent blisters. Hats can also protect the head. Sunglasses or protective eyewear are generally recommended.

Environment

You will be working in a natural environment. If you have **allergic reactions** to plants or insects, you should come prepared with any items you need for that. The park has been landscaped to minimize standing water so mosquitos are not a heavy threat. Our opossum staff do a good job of limiting ticks, but you should check yourself after leaving a natural area. We do our best to rid the park of **poisonous plants** and don't assign projects where they have been identified. If you do encounter any, immediately pour water over the affected area and let the coordinator know. We do have oil-removing wipes available.

While unlikely, we could work in areas that have spiders or other common **biting insects**, but closed-toe shoes, long pants, and gloves all help to reduce that exposure. There are snakes, most are harmless. The few types that are venomous are not generally found in our working areas and are more afraid of you, quickly making an exit.

Monitoring Conditions

It is important to monitor the **weather**. We do that before and during any event, including having a real-time lightning app with us. Also **monitor yourself and others** for signs of dehydration, fatigue, heat-stress, and other potential issues. Symptoms can include headaches, dizziness, confusion, or nausea. Work with a buddy or in a group and **pay attention** to your surroundings. Another feature of the park to watch out for are our other guests, particularly on the paths and trails. Please stay to the right and **keep the paths clear** when standing around.

STAY SAFE AND HAVE FUN!



GROUP LEADER CHECKLIST

Volunteer Coordinator: 713.752.0314 x206 (office) 713.965.3629 (mobile text/voice)
Emergency: 9-1-1 Houston Helpline: 3-1-1 HPD Non-Emergency 713.884.3131

1 MONTH PRIOR TO EVENT

- ☐ Set date, time, and approximate number of volunteers with Volunteer Supervisor
- ☐ Recruit volunteers

2 -3 WEEKS PRIOR TO EVENT

- ☐ Distribute online waiver link to all participants

1 WEEK PRIOR TO EVENT

- ☐ Send final number of participants to Volunteer Supervisor
- ☐ Finalize meeting and parking location with Volunteer Supervisor
- ☐ Distribute Volunteer FAQ, waiver form, and parking/meeting location to participants
- ☐ Request list of online waivers received to date
- ☐ Send reminder email to participants, including website link to find and submit the waiver form

48 HOURS PRIOR TO EVENT

- ☐ All waivers are required to have been submitted.

17-48 HOURS PRIOR TO EVENT

- ☐ Volunteer Coordinator will send a detailed email to those who have completed the online waiver.
- ☐ Encourage participants to wear appropriate attire and to bring water. Ensure snacks and gloves are obtained (if necessary)

DURING VOLUNTEER EVENT

- ☐ Volunteers will check in with Volunteer Supervisor
- ☐ Participants who turned in waivers less than 48 hours in advance may need to show email receipt
- ☐ Any participants who have not completed waiver will need to do so before working
- ☐ Ensure all participants are following instructions and staying on task
- ☐ Remind participants to take water/snack breaks as needed
- ☐ Take time at the end of projects to clean up and help collect and load tools, trash and debris
- ☐ Get a group photo
- ☐ **Have a great time!**