



Sudbury Valley Trustees

Volunteer Handbook 2023

Welcome to SVT!

Thank you for volunteering! To achieve its mission, SVT relies on the efforts of volunteers in our offices, at our events, and on our properties and trails. The SVT staff values your contributions as a volunteer, and we appreciate your gift of time and energy.

About SVT

SVT is a nonprofit land trust that conserves natural areas and farmland for wildlife and people in 36 communities around the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers.

SVT is committed to being an equitable and inclusive organization that works in partnership with the full diversity of people in the region to ensure everyone feels welcome to enjoy local natural areas and participate in the efforts to care for these lands.

We accomplish our work through a professional staff, a community-based Board of Directors, and nearly 200 volunteers.

We also collaborate with numerous partner organizations, such as other nonprofits, local conservation commissions, and state agencies, to conserve essential lands. Our work is supported by more than 2,500 members.

In 2013, SVT was accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

You can learn more on our website: www.svtweb.org/about-svt

Contact Us

Sudbury Valley Trustees
18 Wolbach Road
Sudbury, MA 01776

Phone: 978-443-5588
Email: svt@svtweb.org
Web: www.svtweb.org

You can find a complete staff directory with phone numbers and e-mail addresses on our website at www.svtweb.org/contact-svt



How We Work

SVT works in three major way to fulfill our mission: land protection, stewardship, and outreach.

Land Protection

SVT's Land Protection staff collaborates with private landowners, other land trusts, town governments, and state and federal agencies to conserve open space. We place a priority on protecting large, contiguous parcels that support a diversity of wildlife.

Our land protection efforts are guided by a geographic analysis of natural services, biodiversity values, community values, and farmland potential. This region-wide analysis is posted on our website (www.svtweb.org/storymap).

We protect land in three ways:

- *By acquiring a property through purchase or donation.*
- *By holding a conservation restriction (CR) on a parcel of land.* A CR is a voluntary legal agreement in which a landowner limits specified activities (such as development buildings) on a property while retaining ownership of the land. The limitations are designed to prevent harm to the conservation or agricultural values of the property. CRs are recorded with the county Registry of Deeds and stay with the land forever. When SVT holds a CR, we are responsible for monitoring the land to make sure no prohibited activities have occurred.
- *By helping land trusts and local governments conserve land.* Our support often consists of fundraising, providing expert advice on land transactions, and encouraging local residents to vote in favor of a municipal conservation effort.

You can read about current land protection projects at www.svtweb.org/land-protection

Stewardship

SVT's Stewardship staff manages the properties we own and monitors the conservation restrictions (CRs) we hold.

The Stewardship staff develops a management plan for each property we own that includes an inventory of natural resources, our ecological goals for the land, and a strategy for property maintenance. The plan may cover tasks such as invasive species control, vegetation and habitat restoration, trail building and maintenance, and boundary monitoring to ensure no one is encroaching on the land.

All of these tasks benefit greatly from volunteer help.

You can read about current stewardship projects at www.svtweb.org/stewardship

Outreach

SVT's Development & Community Engagement staff manages our public outreach and member relations. The staff plans educational programs and outings, hosts member events, produces newsletters, and manages our website.

Both SVT staff members and volunteers lead programs and outings. We seek volunteers who have an expertise in nature-themed topics to assist in this programming. Volunteers also represent SVT at farmers' markets, cultural fairs, and other community events.

You can see our current programs and outings at www.svtweb.org/calendar

Volunteering at SVT: General Information

SVT's success depends upon the hard work of our dedicated volunteers. We value your time and appreciate your efforts to support our conservation work.

Please note: The **Volunteer page of our website** includes the most up-to-date information about our volunteer opportunities. It also provides the forms and other documents needed by volunteers, many of which are described on the following pages. www.svtweb.org/volunteer

Getting Started: Application & Other Forms

All potential volunteers should fill out a **Volunteer Application** that asks about your skills and your volunteer interests. It is available on the Volunteer page of our website.

An SVT staff member will respond to your application and discuss our volunteer opportunities with you. Potential volunteers are interviewed for specific positions to determine if there is a good match.

Before you begin volunteering at SVT, we will ask you to fill out and sign two forms, both of which can be downloaded from the Volunteer page of our website.

- **Release Form.** You (or your parent/ guardian if under age 18) must sign this form to acknowledge the risks associated with the work you will be doing. **The release form must be signed annually**, typically at the beginning of our Fiscal Year (July 1). This ensures your emergency contact information and medical conditions are up-to-date in our database.
- **Confidentiality Agreement.** You must agree that you will not divulge certain types of information you learn during your volunteer assignment.

We ask all volunteers to attend an **SVT Volunteer Orientation Session** to learn about our work and our volunteer program. We hold Orientation Sessions twice each year, once in April and once in September. If you begin volunteering after the session has passed, please plan to attend the next scheduled session.

Code of Conduct

Like staff, volunteers represent SVT and need to present themselves in a professional and approachable manner. When out on our properties or performing tasks, please treat all people with respect and kindness. Your supervisor will be available to help you if you are ever in a situation that requires sensitive attention. This respect is also expected when interacting with other volunteers and SVT staff.

Changing Your Assignment

If you would like to change assignments or explore a new volunteer opportunity, consult the appropriate department staff and your current supervisor.

Providing Feedback

Do you have feedback on a project, a disagreement with a supervisor, or suggested improvements to our volunteer program? Please fill out our **Volunteer Feedback form**. This form can be anonymous. You will find a copy in the volunteer space in our office or on our website at www.svtweb.org/volunteer (scroll down to the Volunteer Forms). You may also contact your supervisor's supervisor or the SVT Executive Director and be assured of confidentiality.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Each volunteer role has a job description that outlines the qualifications, skills, and time commitment required for the position. Many of these job descriptions are posted to the Volunteer page of our website. They are also available from your volunteer supervisor.

Volunteering at SVT: Stewardship Positions

Stewardship volunteers assist the SVT staff in various ways. Some volunteers make long-term commitments, while others make only an occasional or short-term commitment.

Long-Term Opportunities

Volunteers who are prepared to make a long-term, regular commitment receive training on how to perform a specific job. Once trained, these volunteers work independently to complete their assignments. Here are some of our regular, long-term volunteer opportunities:

- **Preserve Stewards** are assigned to a specific SVT property at which they perform regular monitoring and maintenance activities. Stewards submit reports about their work to the staff via a log on the SVT website. This position requires a long-term commitment.
- **Preserve Monitors** regularly visit a specific SVT property to monitor its condition. Monitors submit reports to the staff via a log on the SVT's website. This position requires a long-term commitment.
- **Weed Warriors** are trained to identify and remove several species of non-native invasive plants and then work independently or in small groups to remove these plants from SVT properties.
- **Nest Box Monitors** regularly check bird boxes that are located on specified SVT properties. They enter their findings on the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology website, and the information becomes part of a nationwide database.

We list our available long-term opportunities on the SVT website. Each listing includes the job description, the skills needed, and the expected time commitment. www.svtweb.org/volunteer.

Short-Term & Occasional Opportunities

Volunteers who want to make a short-term or occasional commitment can help out on an SVT "work day." For a work day (generally two to four hours) we put together a team of volunteers to clean up a property, clear or maintain a trail, or pull invasive plants.

Group work days are posted on the SVT Program Calendar: www.svtweb.org/calendar

Youth Opportunities

To engage a younger audience in land conservation, SVT works with youths who volunteer either individually or as part of a group. Past youth projects have included invasive plant control, the development of an interpretive trail map, and the installation of a bridge on a trail. Youths who are interested in volunteering should contact us at svt@svtweb.org.

Stewardship Staff

SVT Stewardship Volunteers will be assigned a supervisor from the Stewardship staff. Your supervisor will communicate regularly with you to ensure clarity of expectations. The supervisor is responsible for providing the resources and training you need to perform your job.

- **Director of Stewardship** – responsible for program administration and overall programming. Plans and implements habitat management projects.
- **Assistant Director of Stewardship** – responsible for trails, access, and infrastructure. Manages SVT GIS and mapping. Manages our team of volunteer Preserve Stewards and Preserve Monitors.
- **Conservation Restriction Manager** – responsible for monitoring and managing CRs and maintaining relationships with CR landowners. Implements some habitat management projects. Coordinates the SuAsCo CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area). Supervises Baseline and CR Monitoring volunteers.
- **Land Steward** – responsible for implementing regular trail maintenance and the implementation of numerous invasive species control projects on SVT lands. Leads SVT's Weed Warrior program.

Expectations for Stewardship Volunteers

Identification: Because you may encounter members of the public when working on our trails and properties, we will provide you with a name badge that identifies you as a representative of SVT. Please wear this whenever you are working on our properties.

You are encouraged to wear SVT hats and/or T-shirts as additional identification. If supplies permit, we will provide such clothing to long-term volunteers.

Use of SVT Equipment: If you will be working independently as a Property or Preserve Steward, please take note of these resources that are available on the Volunteer page of our website:

- SVT's Power Tool Use Policy
- Information about Borrowing Tools
- Basic Trail Maintenance

If you have questions about any procedures, please contact the Stewardship staff at any time.

Logging Your Time: SVT tracks the number of hours that volunteers work with us. This information helps us recognize our volunteers' contributions, and it is also useful for grant applications and reports.

Your supervisor will work out the best way for you to report your hours. Most Stewardship volunteers (Preserve Stewards, Preserve Monitors, and Weed Warriors) log into the online Steward Log to document their work. Others send an e-mail to their supervisor or fill out a time sheet at the office.

Volunteering at SVT: Outreach & Office Positions

The Development & Community Engagement Staff has an assortment of opportunities for volunteers. Examples include:

- **Program Leaders** make natural history or wildlife presentations or lead hiking or paddling outings. These programs generally require only a few hours of a volunteer's time. If you have a program to suggest, please contact us at svt@svtweb.org.
- **Community Event Volunteers** represent SVT at farmers' markets, cultural fairs, and other community events and engage event attendees in conversation about our work. These opportunities are intermittent and generally require only a few hours of a volunteer's time.
- **Office Volunteers** help out with mailings, data entry, and other administrative tasks. Most office volunteers work a regular schedule of 2 to 4 hours per week.

Outreach & Office opportunities (except for Program Leaders) are listed on the Volunteer page of the SVT website. Each listing includes the job description, the skills needed, and the expected time commitment. www.svtweb.org/volunteer.

Outreach & Office Volunteer Supervisors

SVT Outreach & Office Volunteers will be assigned a supervisor from the Development & Community Engagement Staff. The supervisor will depend on your specific volunteer role.

Expectations for Outreach & Office Volunteers

Identification at Outreach Events: Because Outreach Volunteers will encounter members of the public, we may provide you with a name badge that identifies you as a representative of SVT. You are also encouraged to wear an SVT hat or T-shirt as additional identification. If supplies permit, we will provide such clothing to long-term volunteers.

Office Volunteers: When you arrive at the SVT office, please report to your supervisor for your assignment. Please remember that you are working under a confidentiality agreement and must not divulge any information you learn from working on membership or fundraising mailings.

Our office attire is "business casual."

You are welcome to use the kitchen to prepare tea or coffee or to heat your lunch; your supervisor will explain how to use the equipment and show you where the supplies are kept. Please wash any dishes or utensils that you use.

Logging Your Time: SVT tracks the number of hours that volunteers work with us. This information helps us recognize our volunteers' contributions, and it is also useful for grant applications and reports.

Your supervisor will work out the best way for you to report your hours. Outreach Volunteers may be asked to send an email with the number of hours worked each month. Office Volunteers may be asked to fill out the Time Log in the Volunteer space.

Questions?

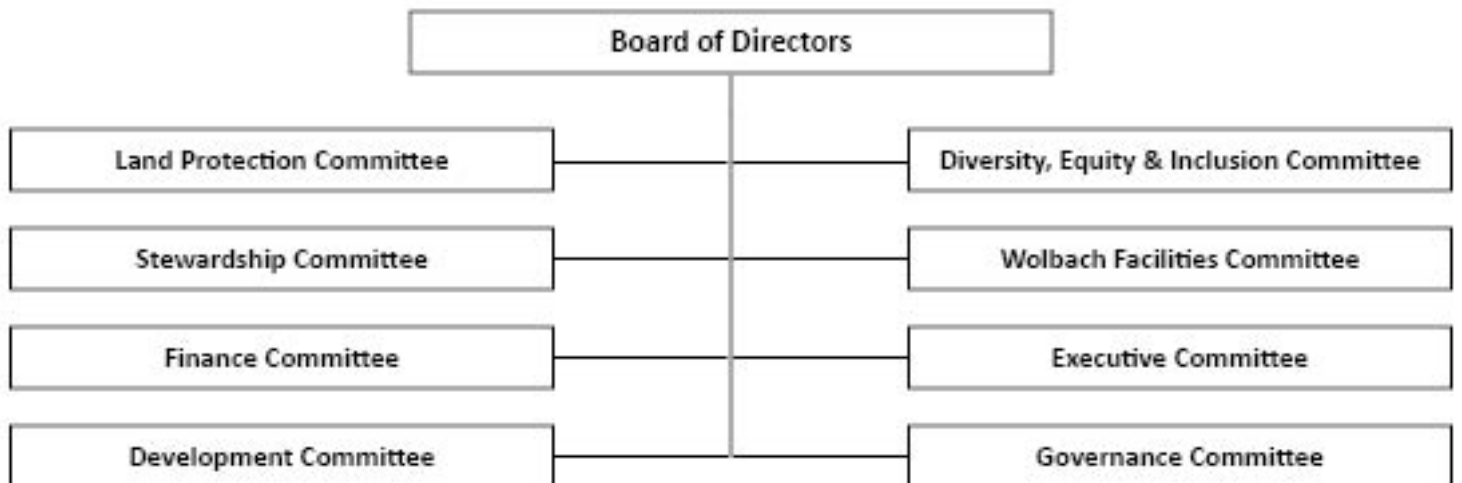
Please contact us by phone at [978-443-5588](tel:978-443-5588) or by email at svt@svtweb.org.

Appendix I. Organizational Structure

SVT Staff Organizational Chart



SVT Board & Committee Organizational Chart



Appendix II. Confidentiality Agreement

Sudbury Valley Trustees CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Agreement

I acknowledge that in the course of my volunteer activities I may have access to documents, data, or other information, some or all of which may be confidential whether or not labeled or identified as "confidential." This includes any work completed within SVT's offices on a company computer or within a database that holds personal contact information for members, volunteers, or donors, all of which is confidential.

Any information regarding the amounts of gifts and bequests of money, land, or Conservation Restrictions, and any negotiations regarding the transfer of land or Conservation Restrictions, is confidential and should not be shared outside of SVT's offices or with anyone other than SVT staff.

In addition, the known location of a rare or endangered species is confidential information.

Therefore, except as required by my activities, I shall not either during or after my association with the Sudbury Valley Trustees directly or indirectly use, disseminate, or otherwise disclose any confidential information acquired in the course of my activities.

Name (print or type): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix III. Release Form

Sudbury Valley Trustees RELEASE FORM*

I hereby agree that I am going to participate in the volunteer program offered by Sudbury Valley Trustees and in consideration of being allowed to participate, agree that I alone will bear the risk of any personal injury or loss of personal belongings which occurs during or on account of my participation in the above outing, both for myself and for any minor children accompanying me.

I intend by this release and waiver to release Sudbury Valley Trustees as well as its officers and directors, both personally and in their representative capacities, from any claim for injury, damage, or loss, from any cause whatsoever, and I understand and acknowledge the significance and consequence of such specific intention to release all claims. I hereby assume full responsibility for any injuries, damages, or losses that I, or any minor children accompanying me, may sustain.

In case of an emergency, I understand every effort will be made to contact the person listed below. In the event they cannot be reached, I hereby give my permission to the physician selected by the adult leader in charge to administer emergency treatment, including hospitalization, anesthesia, surgery, or injections of medication.

By signing this, I authorize SVT to take my photo to use for publicity reasons. I agree that I am freely and voluntarily executing this release and waiver and that I have fully and completely read its contents.

Name (print or type): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

ALLERGIES/ OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS:

*If under 18, please speak with SVT staff about a Youth Release form