

# Engaging Volunteers in Riparian Planting Projects



Kristen Balschunat, Conservation Specialist

# Winooski NRCDC

*Winooski NRCDC promotes the wise **use**, sustainable **development**, and **conservation** of our District's natural resources. We connect residents and communities with the necessary education and technical assistance to implement on-the-ground projects for water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat.*



[winooskinrcd.org](http://winooskinrcd.org)

## Vermont Association of Conservation Districts



 [vacd.org](http://vacd.org)

# Why Work with Volunteers?

## BENEFITS

- Build visibility for your organization's work
- Educate the public about the importance of riparian zones
- Build community between participants
- The long game: Add to your newsletter subscribers, recruit new board members, etc.
- Count volunteer hours towards grant "match" funds

## COSTS

- Staff time for recruitment & training
- Volunteers may not be as efficient or detail-oriented as a professional crew
- Volunteers may "ghost" your event - always plan to recruit 20% more than you need



# By the Numbers

**10**

Average # of trees one person can  
plant per hour in "good"  
conditions

**\$28.54**

Value of a Volunteer Hour (for  
grant writing) \*

[\\*https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021/](https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021/)

# Tree Planting



# Prep Work

## 2-3 months before event:

- ❑ Visit the site and dig a few holes, noticing soil type & ease of digging. If the soil is rich in clay, work will be *significantly slower*.
- ❑ Determine how many volunteers you need to complete the planting in your target time range. If planting conditions are challenging, lower average # of trees planted to 7 per hour.
- ❑ Set a date for the planting - discuss weekday / weekend pros & cons
- ❑ Recruit volunteers - strategies vary based on who you would like to recruit. *Tell them what to expect.* (sample text on next slide)
  - ❑ Individuals: Newsletters, Front Porch Forum, Social Media - provide option for RSVP (Google Forms is a great tool for this)
  - ❑ School Groups: Direct outreach to principal or teacher
  - ❑ Corporate Groups: Direct outreach to company
  - ❑ Conservation Commissions & Community Groups: Direct outreach



# Sample Volunteer Recruitment Text

## Volunteers Needed: Tree Planting Project Friday & Sat

When: May 21, 2021 to May 22, 2021

On Friday, May 21st and Saturday, May 22nd, 2021 The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District will be planting 1,200 trees along Indian Brook in Colchester, VT and we need your help. A dam was recently removed from the site, so our tree planting efforts will help to restore the riparian (streamside) ecosystem for wildlife and water quality.

Take a morning shift, an afternoon shift, or stay for the whole day. Volunteer tasks include digging holes, planting trees (saplings) and carrying materials (5-20lbs.) up to ¼ mile on uneven terrain. Participants are required to wear masks and sturdy shoes and encouraged to bring their own water, a lunch and garden gloves. Please dress for inclement weather.

Winooski NRCD will provide all necessary tools and work gloves for those who don't bring their own. Morning and afternoon shifts will begin with a mandatory safety talk.. Children are welcome to attend but must be closely supervised by an adult at all times.

Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/LKtcXm7MBQ3RWcBT7>

We will send a follow-up email to all that register with health and safety information regarding latest Covid-19 guidelines, and further location details and parking logistics. We're so excited for you to join us!

#putatreeonit. Learn more about the Winooski NRCD at our website: <https://winooskinrcd.org/>

# Sample Registration Form

Thanks for your interest in volunteering to help improve water quality in Martin's Brook in Middlesex! On Thursday, October 19th 2021 we will be planting trees at Shady Rill Recreation Area to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Shady Rill Park is located at 25 Shady Rill Rd, Middlesex VT 05602.

Volunteer tasks will include: Digging holes, planting trees (saplings) and carrying materials (5-20lbs) up to 1/8 mile.

Take a morning shift, an afternoon shift, or stay for the whole day. Participants are required to bring a mask and follow state guidelines around covid-19 safety. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring your own water, a lunch and garden gloves. Bring a sturdy shovel if you have one!

Winooski NRCD will provide all necessary tools, work gloves for those who don't have their own. Morning and afternoon shifts will begin with a mandatory training and safety talk, so please make every effort to arrive on time. After signing up for a shift you will receive an email with more information about parking and site access.

Children are welcome to attend, but must be closely supervised by an adult at all times.

There is no cell reception at Shady Rill so event organizers will not be able available for directions or questions the day of the event. Please email [remy@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:remy@winooskinrcd.org) with any questions leading up to the event.

Learn more about the Winooski NRCD at our website: [winooskinrcd.org](http://winooskinrcd.org)

1. Name
2. Email
3. Phone #
4. What town do you live in?
5. What shifts are you planning to attend? (provide 3-4 hours time blocks - may select multiple)
6. # of adults in your household who will be attending
7. Will you bring your own work gloves?
8. Will you bring your own shovel?
9. Can we add you to our email list? We send out quarterly newsletters that highlight our conservation work and share opportunities to get involved.

# Prep Work

## 3-4 days before event:

- Email volunteers to remind them of project location, time & what to bring
- Ask them to email you (or find a substitute) if they can no longer attend - helps you evaluate if you need to do any last-minute recruitment to pull off a successful event

## 1 day before event:

- Pack planting supplies: Buckets, shovels, flagging tape, trees
- Pack supplies to share with volunteers if needed
  - Gloves for volunteers to borrow
  - Shared sunscreen
  - Shared bug spray
  - Med kit
  - Extra water



# Prep Work

## Day of event:

Arrive 1 hour before volunteers to stage supplies

- ❑ Place signs to direct volunteers from parking area to planting site if not obvious
- ❑ Create "greeting station" with waivers, med kit, etc. for late arrivals
- ❑ Flag planting area if necessary
- ❑ Fill soaker buckets with water & distribute first batch of trees
- ❑ Pre-dig a hole for planting technique demonstration
- ❑ If flagging trees before planting, flag a few to demonstrate technique



# Training: 10 mins or less

- Brief intro to your organization
- Why do we plant trees? (see next slide) Why is this project important?
- Share hazard warnings (2 slides forward) re: ticks, poison ivy & wild parsnip
- How to plant a tree well - demonstrate!
  - Make sure the hole is wide enough so roots aren't crowded
  - Break up clods of dirt before depositing them back in hole
  - Root to soil contact is key for survival!
  - Tug test to make sure it is well seated in the ground.
  - As a project manager, it can be tempting to emphasize moving quickly, but taking time to plant a tree *well* pays off in the long term. You might suggest a goal like "By the time your shift ends you might be able to plant 20 trees!" but emphasize quality over quantity. Goal setting is especially effective with school groups to keep everyone on track.
- Note how far apart to space trees (1 shovel's length is what we recommend)
- Describe tasks that need to be done & let people self-assign



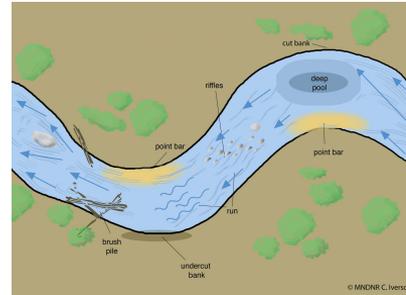
# Training: Why Do We Plant Trees?



Provide Wood Turtle  
& Warbler Habitat



Can help prevent  
streambank erosion  
over the long-term

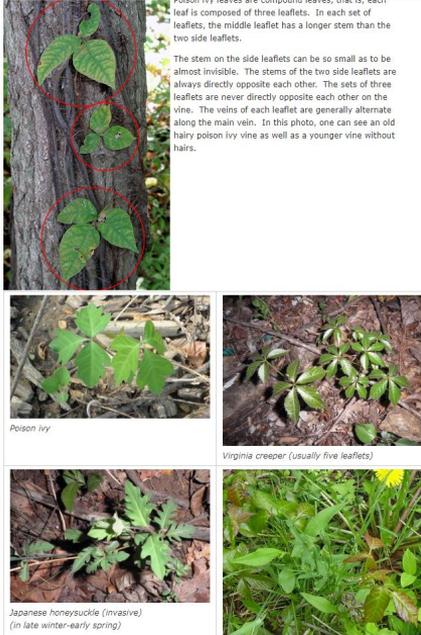


Allows the stream  
space to move and  
flow over time &  
access its floodplain.



Provide shade, which  
cools the temperature  
of the water in the  
stream and increases  
the amount of oxygen  
the water can hold.

# Training: Hazard Warnings



IMMUNIZATIONS & INFECTIOUS DISEASE

QUICK LINKS | ALERTS | GET HELP NOW | COVID-19 IN VERMONT | SEARCH

Over the past month, we have been holding vaccine clinics for eligible Vermonters and members of their households who are among the groups at higher risk for COVID-19 in our language learners such as English Language Learners. [Book Now](#)

HOME / IMMUNIZATIONS & INFECTIOUS DISEASE / TICKBORNE DISEASES /

## BE TICK SMART

The best way to prevent tickborne diseases is to prevent tick bites. In Vermont, tickborne illnesses are most often transmitted between early spring and late fall since ticks are most active during warm months.

Take action to decrease your risk of infection. Wear a repellent containing up to 30% DEET, check your body daily for ticks, and limit your exposure to ticks and tick habitats.

Be Tick Smart flyers in Arabic | Burmese | Chinese | English | French | Kirundi | Nepali | Somali | Spanish

### PROTECT

- Avoid areas where ticks live.
- Use EPA-registered tick repellents.
- Cover up to keep ticks off your body.

### CHECK

- Don't let ticks hitchhike inside.
- Check your whole body for ticks.

TICKBORNE DISEASES

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/tickborne-diseases/prev-ent-tick-bites-tickborne-diseases>

## WILD PARSNIP

*Pastinaca sativa*



### Caution: Do not touch this plant!

#### What is wild parsnip?

Wild parsnip is an invasive plant from Europe and Asia that has become naturalized in North America. It is well suited for colonizing disturbed areas but can also be found in open fields and lawns. Wild parsnip sap can cause painful, localized burning and blistering of the skin.



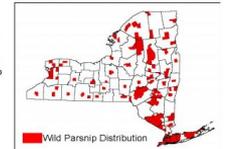
#### Identification

Wild parsnip can grow up to 5' tall and has hollow, grooved stems that are hairless. Leaves resemble large celery leaves. They are yellow-green, coarsely toothed and compound, with 3-5 leaflets. Small, yellow flowers are clustered together in a flat-topped array approximately 3-8" across. Flowering usually occurs during the second year of growth, starting in May or June and lasting for 1-2 months. Seeds are flat, brown, and slightly winged to facilitate wind dispersal in the fall.



#### Where is it located?

Wild parsnip can be found growing in a broad range of habitats, especially along roadsides, in fields and in pastures. It is common in the United States and Canada and is widespread in New York. The map on the right reflects only what has been positively identified and reported; it significantly under represents the presence of wild parsnip in the state. DEC encourages the public to report sightings of this invasive plant to iMapInvasives (see below).



[https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands\\_forests\\_pdf/wildparsnipfact.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/wildparsnipfact.pdf)

<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/identifying-poison-ivy>

# Building Investment

- Project managers should “float” around the site. Start up conversations with participants, deliver tools or resupply trees as needed. It is more important to invest in building community connections and make sure the day is running smoothly than planting (unless you are SUPER short on hands)
- Offer t-shirts or stickers as thank - you
- Provide opportunity to join newsletter
- Encourage folks to share their experience with friends & neighbors
- Invite people to come back and visit their trees (if on public land)
- If you have a stewardship program see if you can recruit a volunteer to steward the site for the next year



# Stay In Touch with Future Opportunities

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Individuals						
Area of Interest	County	Town	Name	Title	Email	Notes
	Chittenden	Colchester		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting
	Addison	Cornwall		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Burlington		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Williston		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Burlington		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Burlington		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Colchester		Resident		2020 Colchester Tree Planting Interested in larger events with 7th Generation
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
Field Work	Chittenden	Burlington		UVM Student		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Burlington		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
Tree Planting	Chittenden	Shelburne		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting
Stream Team	Chittenden	Williston		Resident		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting, 2019 Stream Clea UP
Stream Team	Chittenden	South Burlington		EcoAmericorps		2020 Shelburne Tree Planting, Shared tree sale FPF
Trees for Streams	Chittenden	Colchester		Resident		Interested in planting trees anywhere in the District
Urban Streams	Chittenden	Essex Junction		Resident		Middle School Teacher at Shelburne Community School - we taught a guest lesson on urban water quality there in 2019

# Volunteer Tree Stewardship



# Benefits

- People can sign up any time of year
- Volunteers can create their own schedule
- Able to keep more "eyes" on the trees you've planted
- Training can take place remotely

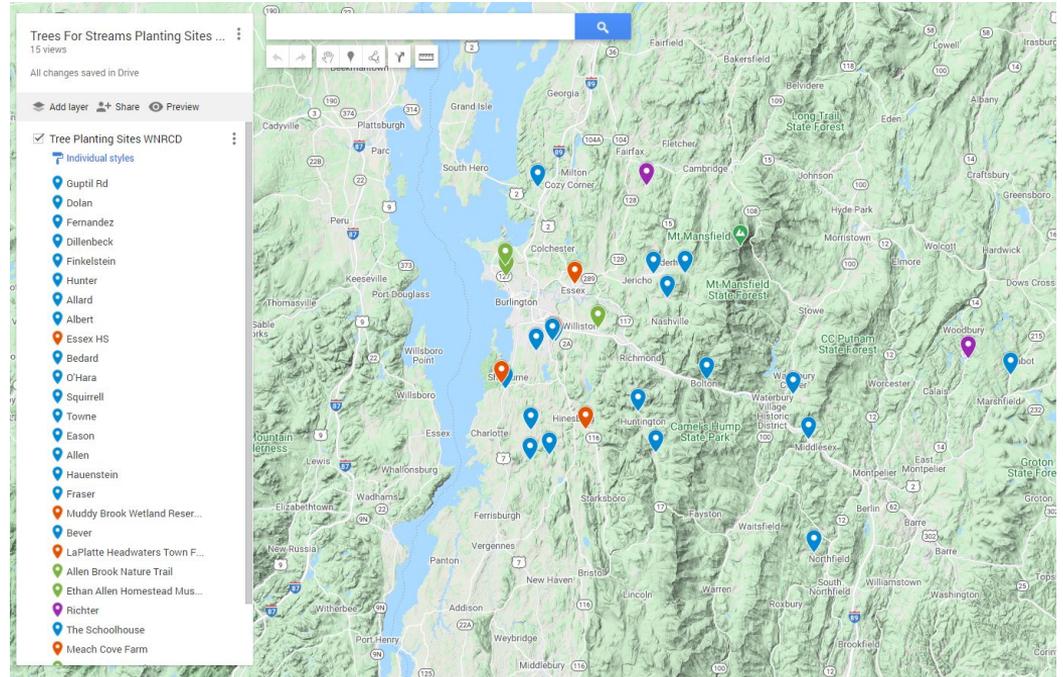
# Limitations

- Volunteers may not be tree ID experts - will give you ballpark data, but may not be accurate enough for certain reporting requirements
- We've limited this program to plantings on public land



# Stewardship Planning

- Map of Available Sites
- Waivers
- Training Materials
- Follow-Up & Communication



# Division of Labor for Groups

Remove  
bindweed

Weeding  
around base  
(1 sq. foot)

Site Cleanup  
(trash sweep)

Survival  
Inventory



Allen Brook, Williston - Volunteers from Williston Master Naturalists, Conservation Commission & Sustainable Williston, 2019

# Training



## Trees for Streams Stewardship Checklist

Site Name: Williston Central School

### What to Bring

- Work/garden gloves
- Long pants and long sleeved shirts
- Sturdy work boots
- Plastic garbage bags
- Planting plan maps
- Plenty of water to drink

### 1. Homework

- Before you go, study the site [map](#)
- Study the tree species in the planting plan
- Know how to identify poison parsnip and poison ivy. These harmful plants are present at some of our sites. If you encounter them, please proceed with caution. Know how to be "tick smart" and check for ticks when you get home.

### 2. Get to Know the Trees at Your Site

This site was originally planted in spring 2018 in partnership with the Town of Williston. Some species were planted with protective tubes to prevent damage from beavers and field mice. Others were planted without tubes. Learn how to identify these trees using clues from their bark, leaves and branching pattern.

Black willow	90	Tubes
Boxelder	90	Tubes
Silver maple	90	Tubes
Shrub willow	100	NO tubes
Speckled alder	100	NO tubes
Silky dogwood	90	NO tubes
<b>Total</b>	<b>560</b>	

### 3. Tree Inventory

If working as a team it can be helpful to assign two people to complete a tree inventory while others work on site maintenance. People completing the inventory should count every tree that they notice that seems to have been planted by WNRCD. You'll probably miss a few here and there, so it's OK if your total #s don't align perfectly with the planting plan. The most important thing is to identify trends, so do your best!

We recommend using tally marks to count as you go. Tally the # of trees that are alive and seem healthy in one column. Tally the # of trees that are damaged or dead in another column. Write any notes about damage in the third column. This could include chewing at the base of the tree (probably from field mice), chewing on the top of the tree (may be deer), beaver damage, excessive vines or other causes of damage.

Species Name	# alive	# damaged or dead	Notes on tree damage observed
Black willow			
Boxelder			
Silver maple			
Shrub willow			
Speckled alder			
Silky dogwood			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

### 4. Site Maintenance

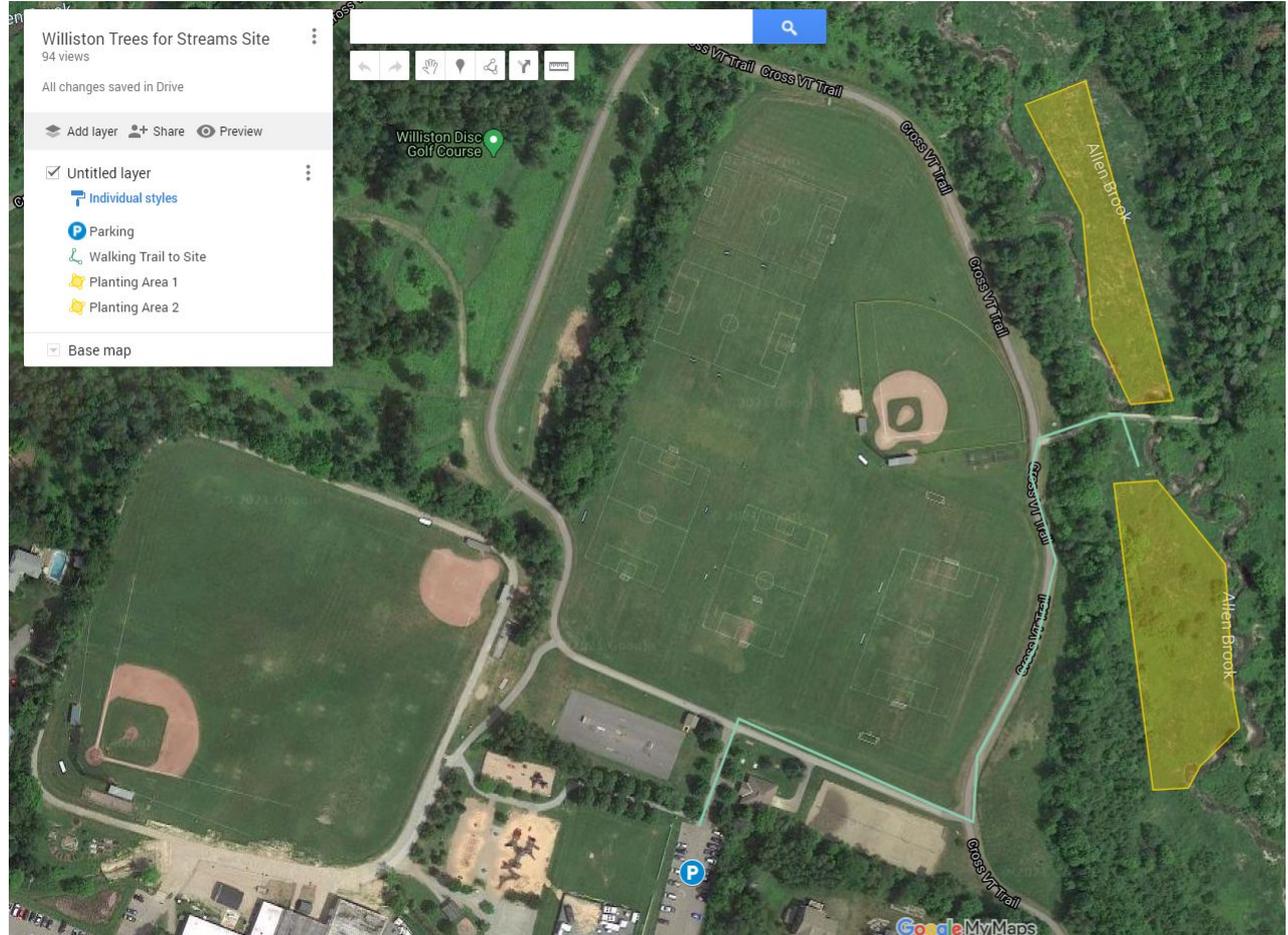
- Pull weeds in a 1 foot circle around the base of the tree. Additionally, remove any vines climbing up tree stems.
- Remove any trash that you notice on site.
- Remove tree tubes *only if tree diameter is as thick as a baseball bat, or if plastic tube is starting to peel away from the tree.* Tree tubes can be disposed of in the trash.

### 5. Wrapping Up

- Please take a few photographs of the site and send them to [kristen@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:kristen@winooskinrcd.org). These photos help us track our progress and can help convince organizations to fund our future tree planting projects!
- Please scan or photograph this reporting sheet and send to [kristen@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:kristen@winooskinrcd.org)
- Thank you for your hard work. Our streams thank you!

# Site Map

- Clearly show where to park
- Outline access to the site (walking trail)
- Define planted area
- Mark any hazards or private property lines
- Creating on Google MyMaps allows volunteers to see the site map on their phone in the field



# Waiver



Volunteer Activity: Tree Steward at Macrae Farm Park

Date: Full Year of 2021

Participant Name:

Street Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:

Email:

In consideration of being allowed to participate in any way in the program, related events and activities, I, the undersigned, acknowledge, appreciate and agree that:

1. I am donating my time and services without any compensation and shall at no time be considered an employee or independent contractor of the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD) for this event. The risk of injury from the activities involved in this program may be significant, including the potential for permanent paralysis and death.
2. I knowingly and freely assume all such risks, both known and unknown, even if arising from the negligence of the releases or others, and assume full responsibility for my participation.
3. I willingly agree to comply with terms and conditions for participation. If I observe any unusual significant hazard during my presence or participation, I will remove myself from participation and bring such to the attention of the nearest official immediately.
4. I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, hereby release indemnify and hold harmless WNRCD and its officers, agents and/or employees, other participants, sponsors, advertisers, partners and, if applicable, owners and lessors of premises used to conduct the event (RELEASEES) from any and all claims, demands, losses and liability arising out of or related to any injury, disability or death I may suffer, or loss or damage to person or property, whether arising from the negligence of the releases or otherwise, to the fullest extent permitted by the law.
5. Any dispute between WNRCD and me will be governed by the substantive laws of Vermont. Any action or proceeding arising hereunder shall be brought in the courts of the State of Vermont.



**PHOTO RELEASE** (please check one box)

I grant WNRCD, its representatives and employees the right to take photographs at this volunteer event of me and any minor participants for which I am the parent or guardian. I authorize WNRCD, its assigns and transferees to use such photographs, with or without names, for any lawful purpose, including for example such purposes as publicity, illustration, advertising and web content and to copyright, use and publish the same in print and/or electronically.

I do not grant WNRCD, its representatives and employees the right to take photographs at this volunteer event of me and any minor participants for which I am the parent or guardian.

I have read this release of liability and assumption of risk agreement, fully understand its terms, understand that I have given up substantial rights by signing it, and sign it freely and voluntarily without any inducement.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature Date

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency Contact Name Emergency Contact Phone

FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF PARTICIPANT OF MINOR AGE (UNDER 18 AT TIME OF REGISTRATION): This is to certify that I, as parent/guardian with legal responsibility for this participants, do consent and agree to their release as provided above of all the Release, and, for myself, my heirs, assigns and next of kin, I release and agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Releases from any and all liability incidents to my minor child's involvement or participation in these programs as provided above, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASES, to the fullest extent permitted by the law.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Names & Ages of all participating minors

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian Signature Date

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency Contact Name Emergency Contact Phone

# Tracking Hours

Questions Responses



## Tree Stewardship Volunteer Log

Please complete this form after every visit to your riparian tree stewardship site.

Your Name \*

Short answer text

Which site did you visit? \*

- Ethan Allen Homestead (Burlington)
- Macrare Farm Park (Colchester)
- Williston Central School
- Essex High School
- LaPlatte Headwaters Town Forest (Hinesburg)

How many hours did you spend at your site? Round up to the nearest half-hour. \*

Short answer text

What tasks did you complete? Check all that apply \*

- Weed around trees
- Remove trash
- Count trees for survival (remember to email your report to [kristen@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:kristen@winooskinrcd.org))
- Collect photos of the site (please email to [kristen@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:kristen@winooskinrcd.org))
- Other...

# Questions

put a  ree on it.  
*winooskinrcd.org*

Kristen Balschunat  
Conservation Specialist  
Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District  
[kristen@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:kristen@winooskinrcd.org)  
(80) 288-8155 x104