

## FWS Friends Webinar

### Friends Versus Volunteers—Answers to Your Top Questions Revealed

### Questions and Answers

**Presenters:**

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- 1) You've volunteered to work a 4-hour shift at the Refuge Visitor Center welcoming and orienting visitors. The Friends nature store sales transactions happen in the same space as visitor orientation, and these two volunteer functions cannot be reasonably separated. What would you need to do before you could work as a volunteer for both visitor orientation and nature store sales transactions? Type your answer in the space below and press the Send Answer button.

**Answer:** You need to have completed and signed both a USFWS Volunteer Services Agreement (VSA) and a Friends Volunteer Services Agreement. Remember, the USFWS VSA only lasts one year so be sure yours is current. Any volunteer activities that you'll be doing need to be listed in your USFWS VSA. If it's not listed, you shouldn't do it. If you want to be able to do it, discuss it with your FWS volunteer coordinator to get it added.

- 2) Okay. So you have both a signed USFWS Volunteer Services Agreement to work at the Refuge's visitor information desk and a Friends Volunteer Services Agreement to work in the Friends nature store as comingled duties. Let's look at this scenario again. You're a Friends group member working a 4-hour shift at the Friends nature store. You've also been asked to help at the visitor information desk to answer questions and orient visitors when it's not busy in the store. How do you track your volunteer hours? Select **ALL** that apply.
  - A. I can count all 4 hours as official USFWS volunteer hours.
  - B. I can estimate the time I spent at the visitor information desk and count only those hours as official USFWS volunteer hours.
  - C. I can estimate the time I spent working in the Friends nature store and count those hours as Friends volunteer hours.
  - D. I can't count any of the hours as official USFWS volunteer hours.

**Answer:** The correct answer is B and C. You can estimate the time spent at the visitor information desk and count those hours as official USFWS volunteer hours, and you can estimate the time spent working in the Friends nature store and count those hours as Friends volunteer hours.

- 3) The Friends group is giving a tour of the Refuge to new Friends members using Service vehicles. Since it's a tour of the Refuge, they're counting the hours as volunteer service hours. Are the Friends group members doing anything wrong in this scenario? If so, type your answer in the space below and press the Send Answer button.

**Answer:** Actually, they are doing two things incorrectly. They can't use Service vehicles for a members-only tour, and they can't count the hours for a members-only Friends group tour as volunteer service hours.

**Discussion:** The Refuge Manager or Service liaison could give the Friends board of directors a tour of the refuge in a government vehicle for orientation and educational purposes and the board members could count those as official USFWS volunteer hours.

- 4) The Friends group is co-hosting an Owl Prowl with the USFWS on the Refuge. To advertise the event, the Friends group made a flyer and has included on the flyer a suggested donation of \$5 to go to the Refuge. Is this okay, since it is a "suggested" donation and not a required set amount? Yes or No.

**Answer:** No. First, Friends cannot ask for donations for a USFWS co-hosted event held on Service property. "Suggested" implies a fee and is therefore considered a solicitation for a donation. Second, the USFWS nor Friends are permitted to charge recreation fees on refuges per FLREA, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

However, if someone offered a donation without prompting, anyone could direct the donor to the Friends' donation box in the visitor center or have a Friends member (who is not also acting as a USFWS volunteer) on hand to accept unsolicited donations.

- 5) An official USFWS event is being held at the Refuge and a Friends member has volunteered to lead one of the Refuge tours. It's a really hot day so he's wearing his Friends group logo ball cap with his official USFWS volunteer shirt. Is this okay?
- A. Yes, because he's wearing an official USFWS volunteer shirt, and the hat is considered an accessory.
- B. No, wearing Friends insignia items while conducting official USFWS volunteer duties is not permitted.

**Answer:** No. USFWS volunteers cannot represent themselves as Friends members while performing official USFWS business.

- 6) A local festival is being held in which the Service and the Friends group are sharing an outreach booth together. Select **ALL** the activities that are okay for the Friends volunteers to do while in the shared booth at the festival.
- A. Talk about the Friends group and their activities.
  - B. Hand out literature about the Friends group.
  - C. Solicit donations to the Friends group.
  - D. Sell Friends merchandise.
  - E. Accept unsolicited donations to the Friends group.
  - F. Recruit for new Friends members.

**Answer:**

- A. Talk about the Friends group and their activities.
- B. Hand out literature about the Friends group.
- E. Accept unsolicited donations to the Friends Group.

**Discussion:** If the Friends want to solicit for donations and new members, they should have their own separate booth from the USFWS and its employees.

- 7) You are on the Friends' Board of Directors and sometimes serve as a USFWS volunteer. Select **ALL** the activities you are allowed to do as a USFWS volunteer and count toward **official USFWS volunteer hours**?
- A. Participating and voting at Friends board meetings
  - B. Recruiting new Friends members
  - C. Leading a Refuge-hosted wildlife tour
  - D. Traveling to and attending training sponsored by the USFWS
  - E. Working at the Friends nature store
  - F. Staffing the Refuge's visitor information desk
  - G. Soliciting for donations

**Answer:**

- C. Leading a Refuge-hosted wildlife tour
- D. Traveling to and attending training sponsored by the USFWS
- F. Staffing the Refuge's visitor information desk

- 8) The Friends organization is holding a Friends-sponsored annual membership meeting in the Refuge auditorium. The meeting consists of a business meeting and a speaker. An accident occurs with one of the participants. Who's liable—the Friends group or the USFWS?
- A. Friends Group
  - B. The USFWS
  - C. Both
  - D. Neither
  - E. It depends

**Answer:** E. It depends on the purpose of the meeting and the details of the accident. For example, if there was a tear in the carpet and a guest at the meeting tripped and fell as a result, the Service could be held liable as it was facility-related. However, if a guest spilled hot coffee on a child during the meeting and the child received third-degree burns, the Friends group could be held liable as it was the Friends group coffee and function. Standard non-profit best business practices includes evaluating every activity the organization conducts and assessing their liability risk.

- 9) The Friends group has planned a meeting at the fish hatchery to discuss proposed legislation that would reduce funding and support for the Service's volunteer program. Friends members, Service volunteers, and National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) staff plan to be in attendance. **What caution flags do you see here?**

**Answer:** Lobbying activities, including discussing action the Friends may take on any piece of legislation, are prohibited on Service property. Service volunteers may attend such a meeting but not as official Service volunteers, and would, therefore, not be able to claim these hours as official duty hours. Service employees should not attend these types of meetings, even off Service property.