



U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region

Partner/Cooperator and Volunteer Work in the Pacific Northwest Region COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions-May 20, 2020

Who determines what partner or volunteer projects will be authorized to take place and on what timeline?

- Forest Service offices, facilities, and developed recreation sites across the Pacific Northwest are being managed to be in compliance USDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance as well as state-issued executive orders.
- The Pacific Northwest Region has adopted a framework that focuses our efforts on ensuring emergency response preparedness and public health and safety. Work in support of these efforts will be considered priority and will continue to be identified at the local level.
- Local line officers will continue to have the decision authority to determine what projects can take place, when they can take place, and under what conditions they must take place in order to ensure safety.

What safety requirements exist for partners, volunteer organizations, and volunteers?

Partners (Under a Challenge Cost Share, Participating Agreement, etc.)

- Must adhere to any safety standards and risk mitigation techniques required by the local line officer where work is to be conducted.
- It is recommended and may be required that partners have their own COVID-19 risk mitigation/safety plan and that it be approved by the local line officer where work is to be conducted.
- The attached Risk Assessment Worksheet is a template that includes COVID-19 examples of the type of risks and risk mitigation that agency staff and line officers are considering. While the RAW is specific to volunteers, there is a tab dedicated to questions and considerations staff may take into account before permitting work with partners to commence.

Volunteer Organizations (Under a Group Volunteer Agreement OF-301a and OF-301b)

- Must adhere to any safety standards and risk mitigation techniques required by the local line officer where work is to be conducted.
- Must adhere to any risk management or safety standards as outlined in volunteer agreement and Job Hazard Analysis.
- It may be required that volunteer organizations have their own COVID-19 risk mitigation/safety plan and/or that they adhere to the local unit's Risk Assessment. This is at the discretion of the local line officer.
- The attached COVID-19 Volunteer Risk Assessment Worksheet is an example template that includes examples of the type of risks and risk mitigation that agency staff and line officers are considering.





Individual Volunteers (Under a Volunteer Agreement OF-301a)

- Must adhere to all safety and mitigation requirements outlined in the COVID-19 Volunteer Risk Assessment for the unit where work is taking place. (See attached for example template.)
- Must adhere to any safety standards and risk mitigation techniques required by the local line officer where work is to be conducted.
- Per agency policy, must not purchase own personal protective equipment (PPE) as it is not reimbursable. If pre-owned PPE is brought to the work site, it must first be inspected by agency personnel to ensure all safety requirements are met. Volunteers should contact their agency supervisor to obtain PPE before beginning any work.
- Must adhere to any risk management or safety standards as outlined in volunteer agreement and Job Hazard Analysis.

Can the Forest Service provide Personal Protective Equipment?

- The Forest Service is required to provide appropriate PPE for employees, individual volunteers, and sometimes volunteer organizations, depending on what has been outlined in the agreement.
- Federal purchases of PPE are being limited due to ongoing strains on the supply chain and the need to ensure PPE for essential, particularly medical/first responder, workers. Because of this, each forest and district will have a limited supply of PPE that they must prioritize for employees.
- Volunteers will not be asked to work without PPE, however, if PPE becomes unavailable, projects may be delayed until it again becomes available.

Can work be done virtually to promote physical distancing?

- Any work by partners, volunteer organizations, or volunteers that can be done virtually can be done virtually if approved by the local line officer and program manager responsible for project oversight.
- Generally, modifications to partnership or volunteer agreements will not be needed but this should be assessed by the agency program manager and agreements staff.

What flexibility is available for partnership agreements in terms of timelines, programs of work and matching requirements?

- On April 8, 2020, USFS Business Operations shared guidance related to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memo M-20-17, Administrative Relief for Recipients and Applicants of Federal Financial Assistance Directly Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) due to Loss of Operations. This guidance addresses reporting deadlines, budget revisions, extensions to performance periods, and more.
- Questions related to this should be submitted to the Forest Service program manager with whom you are working and the agreements specialist listed on the partnership agreement.

Will additional funding become available that might allow the agency to work more with partners, volunteer organizations, or volunteers to help with a phased re-opening in light of COVID-19?

- Some funding to help the Region and forests purchase personal protective equipment has been made available by the Washington Office. This funding is earmarked specifically for PPE and is intended to ensure agency employees conducting essential work can do so safely.
- At this time, there does not appear to be funding available specific to COVID-19 that would allow the agency to work more with partners, volunteer organizations, or volunteers.





What is the agency's fleet guidance to maintain physical distance and does it apply to volunteers and partners?

- Guidance: A person who shows any signs of being sick (fever, coughing, body aches etc.), should stay at home and not work or ride in vehicles with others. If individuals are sharing a vehicle, a minimum of 6 feet is the recommended separation between individuals and this separation pertains to riding in vehicles too. The size of the vehicle will dictate how many passengers should ride together.
- This guidance does apply to all individual volunteers. It may apply to volunteer organizations, depending on what is outlined in the volunteer agreement and local line officer discretion.
- This guidance is recommended for partners but is at the discretion of the local line officer where work will take place.

What is the agency's quarters/lodging guidance to maintain physical distance?

- Local line officer's maintain the discretion to implement restrictions and requirements specific to federal quarters.

