

Mahaska County Conservation Board Volunteer Handbook

Adopted December 5, 2019
Revised February 28, 2023
Amendments Adopted March 2, 2023



INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been prepared to introduce you to our operations and procedures with the Mahaska County Conservation Board and to help you feel more comfortable and confident volunteering. This handbook will answer many questions you may have about MCCB - its purpose, history, policies and procedures.

Please note that this handbook highlights Mahaska County Conservation Board policies, general guidelines and practices. This handbook cannot be constructed as a legal contract, simply a form of guidance for your personal education. In addition, circumstances may require MCCB to change the policies and practices described in the handbook from time to time. Consequently, the MCCB reserves the right to change, supplement or rescind any provisions of the handbook as it deems appropriate, without prior notice. Please take time to become familiar with this handbook.

Volunteers are a vital and integral part of our operation. The Mahaska County Conservation Board and staff appreciates all volunteer efforts and would like to thank you for donating your valuable time.

The Mahaska County Conservation Board and Staff
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Mission Statement

The mission of the Mahaska County Conservation Board is to create an awareness of our natural environment, encourage a state of harmony between people and their natural communities, develop and implement public conservation policy, maintain the public’s investment in our natural resources, and strive diligently within the budget restraints to provide adequate services for the environmental education and enjoyment of the citizens of Mahaska County.

History and Purpose of the Mahaska County Conservation Board

Mahaska County was settled in 1843. The county was organized in 1844 and named after Chief Mahaska of the Ioway Indian tribe that was indigenous to the area. Mahaska County consists of 576 square miles or 366,080 acres, 96% of which is farmed. Currently the Mahaska County Conservation Board manages 21 separate areas encompassing 1,722 acres.

The Mahaska County Conservation Board was established in January 1975. The purpose of the Conservation Board is to provide quality parks, recreation, conservation, and environmental education opportunities for the public.

The five members of the Conservation Board are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for five staggered year terms. They serve without pay, but receive their actual expenses incurred while carrying out their duties. The board meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm, and public participation is welcomed.

The Mahaska County Conservation Board seeks to ensure that future generations have ample opportunity to enjoy parks, natural resources and the scenic beauty that Mahaska County has to offer. The MCCB encourages your support in this goal.

Mahaska County Conservation Board Staff

Chris Clingan	Director
Laura DeCook	Naturalist
Dorothy Wedgewood	Administrative Assistant
Tommy VanRenterghem	Park Ranger
Jason Ryan	Park Ranger

The conservation board hires seasonal conservation technicians.

Mahaska County Conservation Board Members (as of January 1, 2023)

Willie Van Weelden, Oskaloosa	Chairperson
Steve Dixon, Oskaloosa	Vice Chairperson
Curt Jager, Eddyville	Secretary
Linda Fox, Rose Hill	Member
Jennifer Peterson, Oskaloosa	Member (beginning February 2023)

Responsibilities of the Volunteer

As a volunteer, you represent the management of Mahaska County Conservation. To the visitor, you are part of Mahaska County Conservation. Please be friendly, informative and courteous to visitors. You will be provided a description of your volunteer duties, and you will receive training in volunteering for Mahaska County Conservation.

As a volunteer, you will:

- Be sincere in your responsibilities and have the willingness to make our guests satisfied;
- Represent the MCCB policies and philosophies to the best of your ability;
- Accept the guidance and decisions of your supervisors;
- Stay within the duties described in your position description; and
- Maintain the appropriate standards for your appearance.

Each of these will be discussed further in this handbook and during your volunteer training.

The paid conservation staff will have responsibilities towards you.

We will:

- Recognize you for your donation of time;
- Provide training for specific information, projects and activities;
- Be courteous and helpful;
- Give you a clear description of your responsibilities;
- Listen to your input.

General Policies

Our volunteers will work under the same policies and procedures as employees. This section discusses important policies you need to know while you are working. These policies are:

- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance
- Harassment
- Sexual Harassment
- Drug and Alcohol Use in the Workplace
- Smoke Free Air Act
- Safety
- Fire Extinguishers
- First Aid
- Accident Prevention
- Lifting Objects
- Reporting an Emergency
- Accident/Illness
- Schedules and Schedule Changes
- Timekeeping
- Break Periods
- Weather Conditions
- Dress Code & Personal Appearance
- Computer Usage
- Personal Property
- Animal Policy

Equal Employment Opportunity (*Mahaska County Employee Handbook pg. 6*)

Mahaska County is dedicated to equal employment and advancement opportunities. It is the County's policy to hire and promote qualified individuals on the basis of their qualifications, interest and aptitude, without unlawful regard to age, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability, pregnancy, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by Federal, State, or local law. This policy applies to all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment, including, but not limited to recruiting, hiring, training, transfers, promotions, benefits and discharge.

ADA Compliance (*Mahaska County Employee Handbook pg. 6*)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals on the basis of disability. It is the policy of Mahaska County to comply with the ADA. Mahaska County will not discriminate against any qualified employee or job applicant with respect to any terms, privileges, or conditions of employment because of that person's physical or mental disability. In compliance with the ADA, the County will consider reasonable accommodations that do not pose undue hardship to the County to enable qualified applicants or employees with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a position. The County encourages applicants or employees to make suggestions regarding reasonable accommodations to their supervisors, department heads, or the County ADA Coordinator.

Harassment (*Mahaska County Employee Handbook pg.6*)

It is the policy of Mahaska County that no employee be harassed by another employee, customer or supervisor on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or any other protected characteristic as established by law.

Illegal harassment, whether verbal or physical, will not be tolerated. All members of management have the explicit responsibility and duty to take corrective action to prevent any illegal harassment of our employees.

If any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to illegal harassment, that employee should bring the matter directly to the immediate attention of a Department Head, the County Attorney or a member of the MCCB. All complaints will be investigated, and appropriate disciplinary action taken up to and including termination. There will be no retaliation against anyone who submits a good faith harassment complaint or participates in an investigation relating to such a complaint.

Sexual Harassment (*Mahaska County Employee Handbook pg.7*)

It is the policy of Mahaska County that no employee be harassed by another employee, customer or supervisor on the basis of sex.

The policy prohibits any demand for sexual favors that is accompanied by a promise of favorable job treatment or threat concerning the employee's employment. Also prohibited is subtle pressures for sexual favors, including implying that an applicant's or employee's cooperation of a sexual nature, or refusal thereof, will have any effect on the person's employment, job assignment, wages, promotion or any other condition of employment. In addition, any behavior of a sexual nature not welcomed by the employee or found to be personally offensive is expressly forbidden. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Repeated sexual flirtations, advances or propositions;
- b. Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature, sexually related comments and joking, graphic or degrading comments about the employee's appearance or the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures;
- c. Any uninvited physical contact or touching, such as patting, pinching or other contact;
- d. Conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment whether verbal or physical, will not be tolerated. All members of management have the explicit responsibility and duty to take corrective action to prevent any sexual harassment of our employees.

As with other forms of harassment, any employee who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment should bring the matter directly to the immediate attention of a Department Head, the County Attorney or a member of the MCCB. All complaints or reports of sexual harassment will be investigated and appropriate disciplinary action taken, up

to and including termination. There will be no retaliation against anyone who submits a good faith sexual harassment complaint or participates in an investigation relating to such a complaint.

Drug and Alcohol Use in the Workplace *(Mahaska County Employee Handbook pg. 25)*

The County requires all employees to report to work on time and in the appropriate mental and physical condition for work. Employees using alcohol or drugs without medical authorization in the workplace or in the course of their employment are subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Smoke Free Air Act *(Mahaska County Employee Handbook pg. 12)*

The County prohibits smoking on the grounds of any public building and in all County owned vehicles.

Safety

The MCCB makes every effort to continually ensure the safety and health of our employees, volunteers and guests. This is your job and the job of every member of the MCCB staff. Worker and guest safety is a concern we must address constantly, which means being alert to hazards that can cause injury to workers or guests as well as property damage to our facilities. Your safety and health are of vital concern to us and the prevention of accidents is given the highest priority. If you ever see anything that appears unsafe, please notify your supervisor immediately. A volunteer acting within the scope of their duties is covered by the MCCB's general liability policy, which provides protection against lawsuits for bodily injury recompense for the MCCB. All volunteers may be required to attend safety training.

Fire Extinguishers

Hand-held fire extinguishers are located throughout the facilities. Familiarize yourself with their locations in relation to your workstation. When a fire extinguisher is used, or removed from its location, notify your supervisor so it can be replaced or refilled. Under no circumstances are fire extinguishers to be abused, removed from their holders or used for any purpose other than fires.

AED

Located on the upper level of the Environmental Learning Center next to the elevator.

First Aid

If you are injured, report it immediately to your supervisor. We will attempt to have qualified personnel staffed on site to render First Aid and CPR.

Accident Prevention

Occasionally guests do not realize they are endangering themselves and others by violating simple safety rules. Always remain alert to guests bypassing systems and taking unnecessary risks, such as children running or climbing on displays. Should you discover a hazardous condition in your area or anywhere else, take action if possible, to alleviate the condition and immediately report it to your supervisor.

Lifting Objects

Upon occasion you may be lifting objects. To protect yourself from injury, follow these simple rules:

1. Bend your knees, keep your back straight and lift with your legs. Never attempt to pick up an object with your back by bending your back and keeping your legs straight.
2. Never twist your back.
3. Never pick up an object that is beyond your physical abilities. Ask for help.
4. Lift in one single, smooth motion. Avoid quick, jerky motions.

Reporting an Emergency

Serious accidents, illness, fires (extinguished or not) or the need for security assistance is considered an emergency and must be reported immediately. When reporting an emergency, remember to:

1. Remain calm and call your supervisor immediately.
2. Do not discuss the incident with anyone other than your supervisor.
3. Give a full report, if requested by your supervisor or designated representative.

Accidents/Illness

Your first responsibility in a medical situation is to the injured or ill person. In the event of a guest injury or illness that requires additional treatment, follow this procedure:

1. Make sure the scene is safe to prevent any further injuries to the guest or injuries to you, the volunteer.
2. Attend to the injured.
 - If the person can walk, escort him/her to get First Aid. First Aid kits are located in MCCB facilities and vehicles.
 - If the person should not be moved, call your supervisor to report the incident. Stay with the person until help arrives.
 - If you are ever uncertain of what to do – call for help!
 - If you or a fellow worker becomes ill or injured, follow the steps above.
3. Fill out an accident report:
 - Please see your supervisor for minor injuries requiring an antiseptic or bandage. You will have access to a First Aid kit in your area. Become familiar with its location.
 - Volunteers involved in an accident resulting in an injury to them, a guest, or another employee may be required to take a drug test to ensure that drugs or alcohol were not a factor in the accident.

Schedules/Schedule Changes

Schedules will be set by MCCB staff, based volunteer availability. If the schedule must be changed the volunteer will contact MCCB staff as soon as possible.

Time Keeping

Please sign in and out on the clipboard each time you volunteer; when you arrive and when you leave. Do not sign in and out for lunch breaks but include it in a day. Write legibly and record your responsibilities. Time spent for training, orientation or other required meetings is considered time volunteered and should be indicated on the sign in sheet. Please sign in only when you come to MCCB to serve as a volunteer, not when you are visiting.

Volunteer hours are considered a gift-in-kind donation, a contribution the MCCB reports when applying for grants.

Break Periods

Rest periods are intended to provide you with an opportunity to rest and relax. They should be enjoyed away from work areas.

Volunteers should take breaks as needed. You are not required to clock out for breaks. The opportunity to take is available as workload permits. Check with your supervisor before leaving your workstation and be sure to check back in with your supervisor upon return.

Weather Conditions

If weather conditions dictate a change in schedule or cancellation of event the MCCB staff will notify volunteers as soon as reasonable.

Dress Code & Personal Appearance

Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for task being performed.

Computer Usage

Volunteers are not allowed on MCCB computers or internet.

Personal Property

The MCCB does not assume any responsibility for the loss, theft or damage to personal belongings. To minimize your risk, we advise you not to carry unnecessary amounts of cash or other valuables. If you must bring personal items to work, you are expected to exercise reasonable care to safeguard them. Such items should never be left attended or in plain view.

Animal Policy

Other than MCCB collections, the only animals allowed into the Environmental Learning Center are Service Dogs.

All animal donations to MCCB must go through the **MCCB Director**.



Mahaska County Conservation Board VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

First Name: _____ Middle Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____ City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Employer (if applicable): _____

Date of Birth _____

If Participant is a Minor (UNDER AGE 18):

Parent/Legal Guardian Printed Name (if under 18) _____

Parent/Legal Guarding Signature: _____ Date: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Relation (e.g., mother, friend) _____

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER WITH US?

- _____ Arts/Crafts
- _____ Carpentry
- _____ Construction (General)
- _____ Environmental Education – assist with programs
- _____ Forestry
- _____ Gardening and landscaping
- _____ General office skills
- _____ Graphic Design
- _____ Hospitality – program greeter
- _____ Hospitality – ELC greeter, monitor displays during open hours
- _____ Invasive plant removal
- _____ Light Housekeeping at ELC
- _____ Litter removal/clean up
- _____ Outdoor recreation i.e., fishing, archery, shooting sports
- _____ Photography – programs, events, parks
- _____ Prairies
- _____ Special events i.e., Halloween Bash, Summerfest, Youth Outdoor Field Day
- _____ Trails
- _____ Videography -programs, events, parks
- _____ Wetlands

_____ Other ideas:



Mahaska County Conservation Board Volunteer Agreement



As a volunteer I understand:

- _____ That I will not receive any compensation for my volunteer work and that volunteers are NOT considered Mahaska County Conservation Board (MCCB) employees for any purpose.
- _____ That volunteer service is not creditable for leave accrual or any other employee benefits.
- _____ That my volunteer position may require a background investigation for me to perform my duties. Volunteers supervising facilities or minor children will undergo annual background checks.
- _____ That all publications, films, slides, videos, artistic or similar endeavors, resulting from my volunteer services will become the property of MCCB, and as such, will be in the public domain and not subject to copyright laws.
- _____ That tobacco use is prohibited on the grounds of any MCCB public building, vehicles, and machinery.
- _____ That I will need to attend a volunteer training once every three years to maintain volunteer status.

Code of Conduct

As a volunteer I will:

- _____ Follow the policies, guidelines and procedures defined by staff and the appropriate volunteer leader.
- _____ Conduct myself in a professional manner at all times, and work cooperatively with other volunteers and MCCB staff.
- _____ Be courteous and respectful in dealing with staff, other volunteers and the public.
- _____ Work within my assigned agency-authorized tasks.
- _____ Abstain from, and not, tolerate physical or verbal abuse.
- _____ Wear appropriate clothing and required Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) as pertaining to assigned task at all times.
- _____ Under no circumstances, attend or participate in a volunteer task, activity or event under the influence of alcohol and/or controlled substances.
- _____ Under no circumstances, wear MCCB volunteer clothing, hats or other gear while consuming alcohol and/or illegal controlled substances.
- _____ Report all injuries/emergencies to the appropriate staff and/or authorities after first making sure the scene is safe and then taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of the injured party (whether self or others).
- _____ Operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in a responsible manner.
- _____ I understand that failure to comply with the terms of this agreement will result in termination of volunteer activity at all Mahaska County Conservation Board volunteer programs.
- _____ I also understand that either the county or I may cancel this agreement at any time by notifying the other party.
- _____ I understand that all tools, materials and supplies provided by MCCB are and remain the property of MCCB. I also agree to return these to MCCB within three business days of the end of my volunteer service, unless otherwise approved by MCCB staff.

Furthermore:

- _____ I am aware that all statements I have made and/or information that I have submitted are subject to investigation and verification including a criminal background check.
- _____ I authorize the persons, schools, law enforcement agencies and other organizations or employers I have stated and/or submitted information thereof to provide information requested by the Mahaska County Conservation Board with regard to volunteering with the MCCB. I agree to provide, upon the request of MCCB, written releases and waivers of confidentiality should any such employers or others require such a release.
- _____ I understand that withholding of information or misrepresentation of any statements I have made and/or information I have submitted could result in disqualification, or termination of volunteer service.
- _____ I understand any offer of Mahaska County Conservation Board volunteer positions is conditional upon satisfactory background checks which include criminal, sex offender and if applicable, driving record; or any other that are deemed necessary by MCCB.

I have read and understand the above agreement and agree to adhere to these principals.

Participant's Printed Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____