

## Welcome Volunteers



**Welcome to San Juan Mountains Association!** Your interest in the care and protection of our public lands is shared by all SJMA staff and partners. Your willingness to contribute your time, energy, enthusiasm and talents for the benefit of public lands is appreciated.

We are glad that you have chosen to volunteer for the San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA), the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Exciting opportunities await you as a partner in the stewardship of America's public lands. You are joining an elite team of people who annually help our

agencies perform their missions. You will find many rewards and opportunities to learn new skills, meet interesting and highly motivated people who are experts in their fields, and challenge your ability to do meaningful and rewarding work. We are confident you will benefit from your volunteer experience. We will benefit from your unique background and skills.

The volunteer program is an essential component of each agency's mission. The several hundred thousand hours volunteers donate each year make it possible for all agencies involved to complete conservation, land management, and protection work that otherwise might not get done.

The primary objective of this handbook is to give our volunteers an understanding of their role and how it fits into the agency's missions. Please contact your project supervisor or the volunteer coordinator if you have any questions or comments on your work.



## ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION



**The San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA)** is a non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation created in 1988 to provide education and interpretation of public and other lands in SW Colorado for area residents and visitors. SJMA has a participating agreement with the San Juan National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management Tres Rios Field Office to develop and provide educational programs, publications and volunteer projects as well as provide interpretive services. SJMA also partners with community organizations, the business community and other non-profit groups through its educational and interpretive services.

SJMA developed a strategic vision in 2000 and expanded its mission to further clarify its many services. Conceptually the mission remains the same today; however it was recently shortened to read:

***SJMA promotes responsible care of natural and cultural resources through education and hands-on involvement that inspires respect and reverence for our lands.***

In early 2011 SJMA identified and articulated its values and key priorities through the year 2016 and made a commitment to build an organization widely recognized for conservation education and sustainability programs by (1) providing a broad range of rich and enjoyable programs; (2) inspiring people to work together to respect and enjoy the land; and (3) treating staff and supporters with respect and decency while nurturing their growth.

SJMA identified the following key priorities through 2016:

- **Educating** our volunteers, our partners and the public, with a renewed focus on youth.
- **Connecting** people, including the public, land managers and our volunteers to each other and to our natural and cultural resources.
- **Inspiring respect** for our ideals among our partners, the public and our volunteers.
- **Strengthening** our image and visibility in the community, our membership, volunteer groups, and the partnerships that contribute to meeting our mission.
- **Diversifying** funding sources by identifying and pursuing new opportunities.
- **Supporting** our volunteers, staff and partners by providing opportunities for growth and creativity.

Since its inception in 1988, SJMA has grown to an organization comprised of two Divisions: (1) Visitor Information Services & (2) Programs. SJMA operates on a budget of approximately \$700,000. We have 13 bookstore outlets across the San Juan & Rio Grande National Forests. Our staff and volunteers have been recognized nationally, state-wide, and locally for their hard work and excellence and we are honored to play a part in vital resource protection and management through stewardship and education.

# Volunteer Basics

## Volunteer Defined

The United States Department of Labor defines “volunteer” as an individual who donates services, usually on a part-time basis, *for public service, religious or humanitarian objectives without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation.*

## What is an SJMA Volunteer?

SJMA welcomes and appreciates both long-term and short-term volunteers. We ask volunteers to share our passion for public lands and have a common interest in the mission and work of SJMA.

An SJMA “Program” Volunteer is a person or group willing to help with ongoing activities. A Program Volunteer makes an advanced level of commitment and gives stronger assurances to meet a minimum number of hours promoting responsible care of natural and cultural resources on public lands in SW Colorado. An SJMA Program Volunteer is required to sign the SJMA Waiver and to participate in at least one SJMA orientation and required trainings. A program volunteer is expected to reflect his/her commitment to our mission by **becoming a member of SJMA.**

An SJMA “Project” Volunteer is a person or group opting to work for a limited time and for a specific project. A Project Volunteer is required to sign an SJMA Waiver and to participate in a one time event or particular project.

Program volunteers must attend an SJMA orientation and training for their respective program. Volunteers who are only involved in one day projects are not required to attend orientations or trainings.

*“That land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.”* Aldo Leopold wrote those words many years ago. For SJMA, his words carry weight today. Our volunteers work every day to inspire love and respect for our public lands so that future generations can enjoy what we experience today.

*This Handbook is geared toward all Program Volunteers.*

## Expectations:

### Volunteers can expect SJMA to:

- Value and appreciate their time, talent and expertise.
- Treat all volunteers with respect and decency while nurturing their growth.
- Provide a broad range of rich and enjoyable programs.
- Inspire every individual to work together to respect and enjoy the land.
- Protect their privacy and not release their contact information without their permission.
- Maintain a positive work environment.
- Communicate adequately through several different mediums.
- Provide trainings and materials necessary for participating in programs.
- Provide educational opportunities throughout the year.

### We expect Volunteers to:

- Keep safety as your top priority.
- Consider volunteer work a professional commitment.

- Represent SJMA and our agency partners in an appropriate and responsible manner at all times.
- Be non-confrontational while performing SJMA duties.
- Act as a member of the SJMA volunteer “team” when working with other volunteers and SJMA staff.
- Be prompt and reliable in reporting for duty and follow through on all commitments.
- Dress in an appropriate manner for your position and wear nametags and uniforms when required.
- Follow your activity description.
- Participate in continuing education to enhance your skills.
- Provide own transportation and gear unless otherwise stated.
- Practice Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! Ethics.

**SJMA Volunteer Policies include:**

- Safety is a top priority. No activity shall begin unless it can be performed with the safety of the volunteer as the main consideration. Volunteers are encouraged to travel in pairs.
- Completing required paper work such as required reports and time sheets.
- Signing an SJMA waiver of release of liability.
- Attend orientation and training sessions as scheduled.
- Report injuries immediately to your program director.
- Notify your program director if you are unable to complete your volunteer commitment.
- Communicate with your program director to resolve any problems or concerns. If you are unable to resolve a problem with your program director you may: seek assistance with the Volunteer Program Director or the Executive Director.
- Provide your program director with adequate notice, in writing, before leaving any position.
- Report any activity related injuries immediately to your program director or the Volunteer Program Director.
- Call your program director before going out into the field to perform assigned duties.
- Comply with Federal Sexual Discrimination and Harassment laws.
- Volunteers are not allowed to carry weapons while on duty.

**Protecting Privacy of the SJMA Volunteers**

SJMA has adopted a policy of not giving out volunteer information to other sources without your permission. This consists mainly of e-mail addresses but also includes your address and phone numbers. SJMA is fortunate to be able to contact our volunteers through e-mail and we assure our volunteers that when you provide us with your contact information it is for our use only. When sending out via e-mail we use the bcc function.

**Harassment/Sexual Harassment**

SJMA is committed to maintaining a positive working environment. We strive to provide volunteers with an environment that encourages efficient, productive, and creative work. Therefore in compliance with applicable law, SJMA will not tolerate any verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct that harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another’s work performance or which creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile environment.

“Harassment” is defined as offensive verbal, non-verbal or visual conduct based on race, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, age, disability, or any other individual status or

condition. “Sexual harassment” is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Any volunteer harassing another will be disciplined, up to and including termination. If you believe you have been subjected to harassment, or if you observe harassment of other, you should report the incident immediately to the Volunteer Program Director or the Executive Director. Complaints will receive prompt attention and appropriate action will be taken.

### **Resolving Issues**

If a situation develops at SJMA that is not resolved to your satisfaction, discuss it with your program director. If you are having difficulty with another volunteer, SJMA staff member, or with policies or decisions, take your concerns to your program director. If your immediate supervisor is the source of the problem – or if he or she does not resolve the situation satisfactorily – submit your concerns in writing to the Volunteer Program Director or the Executive Director and make an appointment to discuss the issue. All complaints and questions will receive thoughtful consideration and will be discussed with the individual who raises them.

### **Political Activity**

Volunteer may not wear campaign items or promote political positions when on duty. It is highly recommended that you also refrain from “talking politics” or commenting in a negative way, about SJMA and our agency partners while on duty.

### **Keeping Track of Hours & Mileage**

**Your volunteer hours are a valuable contribution** and will become a permanent record for SJMA. This is a very important part of volunteering for SJMA as we must report quarterly and annually to our partners about our programs. More importantly we use these hours for fundraising for our programs and demonstrating our involvement in the community. In addition we track your mileage to and from your volunteer activity. The agency fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30. At the end of the federal fiscal year, SJMA sends volunteers a copy of their volunteer hours and their recorded mileage. Mileage may be used on your income tax return. (see page 8 and check with your accountant).

SJMA has made it easy for volunteers to report and record hours and mileage. Simply log onto our website, [www.sjma.org](http://www.sjma.org) to find the appropriate volunteer reporting form. Your program director will train you as to what goes on the individual reports.

If you do not have internet access, special arrangements will be made for you to turn in reports, hours and mileage.

### **Scheduling**

Each program director will be responsible for scheduling the volunteers.

### **Communications - E-news, Volunteer Opportunities Booklet and Newsletters**

SJMA strives to communicate adequately with our volunteers through several mediums.

E-news is published as necessary to announce opportunities with SJMA and the community related to our mission. You must provide your e-mail address to receive this or log onto our web site to view. E-mail addresses are kept confidential

In the spring newsletter, SJMA publishes a variety of volunteer opportunities, enhancement trainings, program trainings, projects and additional contacts for the upcoming season. If you are an active SJMA volunteer or member you will receive this publication.

Newsletters are published bi-annually.

SJMA lists important information on our website, [www.sjma.org](http://www.sjma.org).

Important announcements and dates are published in Public Service Announcements.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

SJMA has an annual volunteer recognition BBQ in August to honor all of our SJMA volunteers. A gift of appreciation is presented at this event.



SJMA “Outstanding Volunteer” Award Program:

This is based on cumulative hours of the volunteers, beginning in October 2000. Plaques for achieving 250, 500, 750, 1000 hours hang in the Public Lands Center, outside the SJMA offices and bear the names of volunteers who have achieved the hourly goals.

Individual program directors often provide additional acknowledgements and recognitions within their respective programs.

### **Resignations**

Annually volunteers will be asked to update their commitment to volunteer in a particular program. Program directors will have you sign a Letter of Commitment and provide you with an updated Activity Description. This means you are still interested in remaining in a particular program and that we should keep you on the roster.

If you decide to leave your volunteer position, we ask that you please do the following:

- Contact your program director about your change in volunteer status in writing.
- Return your handbook, uniforms, and name badge (if you have one).
- If you wish, schedule an exit interview.

### **Terminations**

Volunteers who do not adhere to SJMA policies and procedures and who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignments are subject to dismissal. Depending on the situation, a volunteer may be given an opportunity to improve their performance. If performance has not improved within a reasonable amount of time, the volunteer may be terminated, in writing, by SJMA.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing volunteer activities
- Theft of property or misuse of agency funds equipment or materials
- Illegal, violent or unsafe acts
- Unwillingness or inability to support and further the mission of SJMA and/or the objectives of the program.

## **Inactive Volunteer Status**

Volunteers may either be in an Active or Inactive status.

### Inactive status:

- No hours submitted for over 24 months
- Mail returned or undeliverable
- No activity for 3 years or the volunteer has resigned in writing
- Request received from volunteer to change to inactive status

A volunteer in Inactive Status will not receive mailings, nor be contacted by SJMA for volunteer opportunities. If you no longer receive volunteer information by mail and wish to continue being an SJMA volunteer, simply contact the Volunteer Program Director to change your status to Active.

## **Tax Deductions**

San Juan Mountains Association is a 501-c3 organization.

The following list offers examples of the types of expenditures that volunteers may possibly deduct on their tax returns:

- Bus and cab transportation costs
- Cost and expenses of upkeep of special uniforms
- Telephone bills
- Supplies purchased to perform volunteer duties
- Auto mileage
- Dues, fees, or assessments made to a qualified organization
- Non-cash contributions of property (e.g. clothing, books, household items, equipment, etc.)
- Cash contributions

**Please contact the Internal Revenue Service and/or your accountant for more information.**



## **Getting Started**

### **SJMA Program Volunteers**

- Fill out volunteer profile
- Complete an interview with program director
- Attend SJMA Volunteer Orientation
- Choose a program
- Complete the specific program training

## Volunteer Profile

All new volunteers are required to complete a Volunteer Profile prior to service. All personal information that you provide will be deemed strictly confidential. If you are 18 or younger, acceptance into an SJMA program is at the discretion of the program director. Parental permission will be required.

- Volunteers can expect to be interviewed by your specific program director if you have chosen a program.
- Volunteers **may** be subject to a background check.
- Volunteers working with youth **may** be required to have additional training.
- Some of our programs may require you to sign a “Code of Ethics”. Check with your program director.

## SJMA Volunteer Orientation

All new to SJMA volunteers, who plan on participating in one of SJMA’s programs, will receive an SJMA Orientation. At this orientation you will receive a Volunteer Handbook. Orientations may be online, classroom or at the discretion of the program director. Topics covered are:

- Introduction to SJMA
- Membership
- Agency Partnerships
- FS/BLM general regulations
- Introduction to Wilderness and San Juan Public Lands
- Volunteer Profiles and Agreements, Liability Waivers
- Reporting Time
- Reporting Injuries
- Volunteer Safety

## Volunteering for an SJMA Project or Event

SJMA sponsors many one day projects or events. An example would be a one day trail project or a fundraising event. Volunteers will usually be asked to pre-register for the event or project and will be required to sign an SJMA Waiver of Release of Liability. Turning in volunteer time will be the responsibility of the project or event coordinator.



## Public Contact

### Meeting Visitors in the backcountry

SJMA public contact programs operate under a philosophy called the “good host or good-will ambassador”, which means we try to treat each visitor or contact as an invited or welcome guest. Remember, as a volunteer you are a representative of SJMA, the USDA Forest Service and the



BLM. All your interactions with the public must be educational and non-confrontational. You are a goodwill ambassador. Take pride in doing a good job of serving the public.

## **Do's and Don'ts**

### **Do**

Keep in mind our #1 role is to provide information and education about trail etiquette, Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly Ethics and public land stewardship.

### **Three key factors when making a contact:**

#### 1. Your approach.

Be friendly and conversational. Start with some small talk.

Examples:

- Hi, I am a volunteer.
- How is your hike or ride going today?
- Are you enjoying your visit?
- Where are you from?
- Where are you headed?

Then you may lead into an important message.

Examples:

- May I share some information with you?
- Are you aware of the cryptobiotic soils and how they help stop erosion?
- It is important to keep your dog close to you and pick up their waste.
- Are you aware that cutting switchbacks causes erosion?
- Have you ever heard of Leave No Trace or Tread Lightly?
- Would you like more information?

#### 2. Your attitude.

Be positive, friendly and interested in the visitor you contact. Focus on finding out what the visitor may have to offer to you as well as what you may offer them.

Example:

- Have you been here before?
- Do you live in the area?
- How far are you traveling today?

#### 3. The impression you leave with the contact.

Leave a feeling of having left the visitor with informative and important information that will make theirs and others experience on public lands more enjoyable.

Example:

You have provided them with some stewardship information that they can pass along to friends and family; an LNT or Tread Lightly card, or “Some good reasons to keep your dog on a leash”, card. The visitor is happy that someone is out and about providing helpful information.

### **Other Do's**

- Let the visitor know that you are a volunteer of SJMA
- Remove your sunglasses when speaking with a visitor. Eye contact is important.
- Stand shoulder to shoulder when sharing information. You will be less threatening.

- Lead up to a situation, avoid being abrupt.
- Keep your contact on a positive note.
- Be a good listener.
- Ask the visitors if you can share some important information with them about being a good steward on public lands.
- Focus on the “Authority of the Resource” not the authority of the agency or the regulations. Remember, we have no policing or law enforcement capability. Ours is to provide information in a friendly non-confrontational manner.
- Answer all questions if possible.
- Avoid dangerous situations or confrontational visitors. Just say have a nice day and walk away if you feel threatened. Document the situation and give it to your program leader or the law enforcement officer.

### **Don't....**

- Get into the visitors face or space.
- Display an overbearing attitude.
- Be critical or sharp.
- Be self righteous.
- Assume a threatening or aggressive posture (crossing your arms or pointing a finger).
- Lose your cool.
- Respond to abusive language in anger.
- Be an elitist.
- Talk politics or be negative about the agencies.

### **Customer Service at the Bookstore and Visitor Information Services**

Here are some tips when you are interacting with visitors:

- Be truthful, tactful and positive on information about the agency.
- Use lots of eye contact and interact with positive body language and a relaxed demeanor.
- Welcome visitors briefly after they enter the building. Use the 10 ft. rule – if a visitor is within 10 ft. of you, be sure to say hello.
- Smile and be enthusiastic and energetic, develop a service style that is uniquely you.
- Use the visitor’s name whenever possible.
- Actively listen to the visitor, and repeat key pieces of the conversation to verify your understanding. Have eye contact.
- If you don’t know the answer to a visitor’s question, say you don’t know but you will find someone who does know.
- Asking open ended questions, which contribute to a more constructive conversation and serve visitor needs more efficiently.
- Phrase things in a positive way.
- Always project a professional appearance in the way you dress and in you manner and demeanor.
- Treat every visitor as if he or she is your 1# priority.
- Remember you are the SJMA experience – Do something unexpected for the customer. We are an organization that takes down challenges in communications; going above and beyond.

- Ask visitors, “Is there anything else I can do for you?”
- Involve customers in solutions and ideas to improve service; focus on solutions, not excuses.

### **Courtesy**

What is courtesy? Pleasantness, politeness, thoughtfulness, tact, good cheer, charm and company manners. But being courteous is not always easy. However you achieve a real victory when you deal with disagreeable situations in a positive, pleasant and courteous way.

Here are some helpful hints that may help you with a courteous demeanor:

- The Golden Rule Rules! Treat others the way you’d like to be treated. See a person, not just a customer.
- Hear Hear. Listen twice as much as we speak. Listening holds the key to satisfying customers.
- Allow the visitor to keep their dignity. Never make the visitor feel stupid or unimportant.
- Be diplomatic. Always respect the visitor’s point of view.
- Never argue with a visitor. To help solve problems, listen, acknowledge, sympathize, and take initiative. End on a positive, optimistic note.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, take the extra step and find someone who does. It’s okay to say I don’t know if you are doing something to find out the answer.
- Don’t take it personally. Remember that if the visitor is upset about something it has nothing to do with you personally, but the situation.
- Use Empathy. Place yourself in the “visitor’s shoes”. It is a great way to help you deliver the best service you can.  
The customer may not always be right, but the customer is always the customer. In a sense, you work for your customers.
- Never let a visitor leave feeling like nothing has been done for them. Going to another person or filling out a comment form may solve the problem because at least the visitor voices their opinion. Sometimes a person just wants to be heard.
- Remember to ask, if there is anything else I can do.

## **Volunteer Safety**

As an SJMA volunteer your safety is our most important concern. **SJMA requires that volunteers, involved in SJMA programs, inform their program director when they are going out into the field.** This is for the safety of the volunteer and to protect the volunteer’s rights if they are injured while volunteering. It is SJMA policy that no activity will be started unless it can be completed in a safe, effective manner.

Most of SJMA volunteer activities take place in the outdoors. Volunteers must keep in mind the following potential risks when outdoors:

### **Weather**

SW Colorado weather is unpredictable and requires some extra preparation by the volunteers.

Volunteers should:

- Dress appropriately for the activity they are about to embark on.
- Be aware of changing conditions and bring extra clothing and rain gear

- Carry a day pack with water and emergency supplies such as a first aid kit, fire starting materials, cell phone and food.
- Avoid going out into the field if it is storming or lightening is present.

### **Terrain**

The landscape you are about to enter varies from high mountain elevations to rocky desert vistas. Volunteers should consider:

- Appropriate sturdy shoes, such as hiking boots.
- Know your ability and avoid dangerous situations such as stream crossings or climbing.

### **Using Stock**

Many SJMA volunteers use stock in their activities and should be prepared by:

- Only use well trained & well conditioned stock for volunteer activities.
- Check your stock's gear such as cinches, bridles, and saddle pads before going out into the field. Make sure they are in good condition.
- If riding a horse, it is highly recommended you wear a helmet when volunteering.

### **Volunteering in pairs**

SJMA highly recommends our volunteers travel in pairs for their own safety.

### **Reminders**

Before going out into the field to volunteer:

- Tell someone where you are going and what time you will be back.
- Have a partner.
- Call your program director and let them know you will be out volunteering.
- Carry essential equipment.
- Be observant on the trail.
- Stay calm if you get lost, stop, sit down, and think.
- Learn to read and understand topological maps of the area you are in.
- Never act in a "law enforcement" capacity.
- Carry important contact information with you.

### **In an Emergency:**

Write down the necessary information such as:

- Condition and location of victim.
- Description of the landscape and indicate on a map.
- Weather

Notify the appropriate authorities. If you choose to assist in an emergency your decision is considered personal and at that point you are no longer representing SJMA or the agency. We urge you to consider the ethical, personal, legal and safety ramifications of your choice.

Your own safety must come first, especially in emergency situations. Do not put your life or safety in jeopardy. Remember if you are injured while on duty, you will be unable to help others. Please exercise good, cautious judgment at all times.

## **Colorado Good Samaritan Act**

13-21-108. Persons rendering emergency assistance exempt from liability.

(1) Any person licensed as a physician and surgeon under the laws of the State of Colorado, or any other person, who in good faith renders emergency care or assistance without compensation at the place of an emergency or accident shall not be liable for any civil damages for acts or omissions in good faith.

(2) Any person while acting as a volunteer member of a rescue unit defined in Section 25-3.5-103 (11), CRS 1973, notwithstanding the fact that an organization may recover actual costs incurred in the rendering of emergency care or assistance to a person, who in good faith renders emergency care or assistance without compensation at the place of an emergency or accident shall not be liable for any civil damages for acts of omissions in good faith.

## **Emergency Numbers – IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911**

**Please be advised that these emergency numbers are subject to change. We strongly encourage volunteers to update all contact numbers by logging onto our website at [www.sjma.org](http://www.sjma.org) and click on “Volunteer Handbook.”**

### **Hospitals:**

SW Memorial Hospital: 1311 N. Mildred, Cortez 970-565-6666  
Mercy Regional Medical Center: 1010 Three Springs Blvd., Durango 970-247-4311

### **BLM Rangers:**

Sean Waggoner 970-882-5625  
Tyler Fouss 970-882-6849

### **Forest Service Law Enforcement:**

Dolores: Emelene White 970-882-6846  
Columbine/Pagosa: Shawn Cave 970-884-1417  
San Juan Public Lands Center:  
Brenda Schultz 970-799-1236

### **Sheriff Offices**

LaPlata County 970-385-2900  
Montezuma County 970-565-8452  
Archuleta County 970-264-2131  
Dolores County 970-677-2257

Revised: 1/2015