

# PENNSYLVANIA MASTER NATURALIST™

## 2010 Program Policy Statement

### **Administration and Sponsorship**

At the state level, the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the *Pennsylvania Institute for Conservation Education (PICE)* using funds from private foundations and corporations. Partnerships at the local and regional level are encouraged and include other public agencies, as well as private organizations whose interests are within the boundaries of the program. The program is administered by PICE and guided by regional Advisory Councils made up of statewide, regional and local partner representatives. An Advisory Council may include natural resource professionals, the leaders of local natural resources groups, agencies, educators, naturalists, college/university staff and other interested groups.

### **Program Mission**

The Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program is dedicated to increasing knowledge of and connection with Pennsylvania's natural world among our citizens and visitors.

### **Purpose**

The Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program provides regional conservation organizations with a corps of trained, informed volunteers to contribute to community education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas.

### **Program Goals**

1. Increase public knowledge of Pennsylvania's natural and cultural history, ecology, conservation and management.
2. Build a knowledgeable corps of volunteers to contribute to local conservation efforts and to educate the public about Pennsylvania's natural environment.
3. Cultivate effective, productive and interdisciplinary partnerships among natural resource agencies, organizations, community groups and citizens.

### **Program**

Pennsylvania Master Naturalists receive training at the local level within the ecoregion where they live and work. An Advisory Council will be formed in each ecological and geographic region of Pennsylvania to provide local resources, expertise and insight.

Instructor training to train local "Training Coordinators" will be offered in the future. Once trained, Training Coordinators will be able to conduct Pennsylvania Master Naturalist volunteer training within their communities autonomously. Training Coordinators will be able to meet and work with other coordinators across the state and become part of a statewide effort to increase natural resource volunteering in citizen science, education, interpretation, program support, and stewardship throughout Pennsylvania.

Because of the great diversity of landscapes and population densities within Pennsylvania, the natural resources (and their uses) in each area of the state are also highly variable. Therefore, the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program will be customized to focus on distinct ecoregions and local ecosystems. When planning the training schedule, the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist Program Director ("Program Director") or a local Training Coordinator, in collaboration with the Advisory Council, should invite experts from local universities, nature centers, and research centers, as well as local land managers to assist with instruction. The Program Director or Training Coordinator should plan and facilitate the training sessions so that class and field sessions adequately cover the following suggested categories of topics:

- All aspects of the role of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the program, and the guidelines for participation.
- What a naturalist is and does and the significance of naturalists and natural history.
- The biogeography of PA, including the physiographic regions and the geological and ecological aspects that make them distinct.
- Basic concepts of ecology.
- Basic concepts of geology.
- Basic resource management principles.
- Some native flora and fauna in the region.
- The general process of science.
- The art of nature interpretation.
- The roles of Pennsylvania state agencies in the management and conservation of natural resources.
- Other topics as related to the local needs of the region.

Pennsylvania Master Naturalists receive formal training from their local partnership covering a wide range of pertinent natural resource topics. To become a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, a trainee must be accepted into the program, complete the training component and volunteer for the specified number of hours. The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of ways, depending on the needs determined by PICE and the Advisory Council. After the completion of the initial required volunteer time, Pennsylvania Master Naturalist volunteers are encouraged to continue to assist with natural resource program delivery. By providing volunteer service, Pennsylvania Master Naturalists enable local natural resource organizations to more effectively and efficiently deliver their programs to the general public.

### **Training**

The formal training program is the responsibility of PICE, the Program Director or local Training Coordinator, and the Advisory Council managing the program. With guidance from the Advisory Council, PICE develops policies and guidelines for the operation of the program, and will provide Training Coordinators with training and the necessary resources to conduct participant training. Instructors who teach the training may include college faculty, natural resource professionals, Extension Specialists or Associates, experienced naturalists, and other experts with a demonstrated knowledge in the subject matter being taught, as well as an ability to communicate that knowledge to a lay audience. The training program is intended to provide a balanced, integrated, practical course in natural resource science.

### **Attendance**

Each Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program trainee is expected to attend every class session for the core training and advanced training.

*In anticipating the need to set standards for maintaining class attendance, the following policy has been established:* A participant must make up missed coursework by attending the appropriate class(es) within 12 months. The definition of “appropriate classes” will be determined by the Program Director, Training Coordinator and Advisory Council. If an advanced training class were to be used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as advanced training. In this case the class must account for only one type of training -- initial training OR advanced training. A participant may also attend the same subject class of a neighboring training within the *same ecoregion* given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring training class. If a participant must miss more classes than the local standard allows, then the

respective chapter may consider an exception to their rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards becoming a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist.

### **Receiving and Maintaining Status**

PICE has established the following minimum requirements for receiving Pennsylvania Master Naturalist status. However, the Program Director or Training Coordinator may opt to increase these minimum requirements.

#### **YEAR ONE**

- **40** hours of combined classroom and field instruction
- **30** hours of approved volunteer service
- **8** hours of advanced training

#### **YEAR TWO**

- **20** hours of approved volunteer service
- **12** hours of advanced training

#### **ANNUALLY (following year two)**

- **12** hours of advanced training
- Participants may begin earning volunteer service hours once they complete the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist initial core training.
- Upon completing the core training portion of the program, each trainee will receive a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist name badge and a “completion of training” certificate. Upon fulfillment of the 30 hours of volunteer service and advanced training, the trainee will then receive a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist certificate of completion.
- Only unpaid public volunteer service in Pennsylvania Master Naturalist approved activities will count toward the requirement. The required volunteer hours must be completed within one year (or another time period designated by the Program Director) of completing the training course.

Once an individual has completed the necessary requirements and receives his/her status as a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, he or she is not automatically a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist for life. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists must be complete advanced training and additional service hours each year to remain on the “active” list and maintain the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist title. Pennsylvania Master Naturalist status is achieved by fulfilling the following minimum requirements:

- 1) Serve a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service for year two.
- 2) Complete a minimum of 12 hours of advanced training or continuing education annually through any of the following options:
  - i) Participation in any PICE natural history programs.
  - ii) Participation in any program approved by the Program Director for advanced training to maintain status.

### **Advanced Training**

The purpose of advanced training is to provide Pennsylvania Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also, advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Pennsylvania Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts.

Advanced training courses may be made available directly through PICE or any number of short courses provided by universities, local parks, nature centers, or other partners. The Program Director must pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. Advanced training hours are counted as one hour for each hour of advanced training; however, travel time is not included for advanced training hours.

In addition, Pennsylvania Master Naturalists will be notified of approved advanced training opportunities that exist locally and statewide.

The following criteria should be followed when reviewing and approving advanced training opportunities:

**How does the advanced training opportunity:**

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide Pennsylvania Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Provide Pennsylvania Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?
4. Build on the initial core curriculum?
5. Provide natural resource information applicable to Pennsylvania and the particular ecoregion?

**Selection**

Volunteer selection for the program is managed by PICE and the Program Director or the Training Coordinator. Information in the service record file is treated confidentially. Volunteers' records are kept in separate files in a secured place and are accessible only by trained staff. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to make sure that the information on his or her application (e.g., address, contact information, etc.) and service record are kept current and accurate. This is necessary for liability reasons and for the protection of the volunteer as well as program clientele.

**Use of Title**

The title "Pennsylvania Master Naturalist" is to be used exclusively in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public volunteer service work under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program. Pennsylvania Master Naturalists are advised not to advertise their place of business during program-sponsored activities and are not to be listed as Pennsylvania Master Naturalist on the advertisements of businesses that they own or where they are employed. Because the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program is a source of unbiased, research-based information, the following are considered inappropriate: appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or implying the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program's endorsement of any product or place of business.

**Inactive Status**

An inactive Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is one who is unable to commit to the annual training requirements at present but would like the opportunity to remain in the program and re-train in the future. The following policies apply:

- 1) To request “inactive status,” the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist must be in good standing and must have completed the original commitment of initial core training and completed the required hours of volunteer service.
- 2) The Pennsylvania Master Naturalist must complete an Inactive Status Request Form.
- 3) If the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist is able to renew his/her “active” status **within a 3 year period** and commit to the training requirements, he/she must attend 12 hours of acceptable advanced training for each year of inactive status in addition to the required 12 hours of training for the current year.
- 4) An inactive Pennsylvania Master Naturalist may retrain within 3 years as long as the defined criteria are met. Individuals on inactive status for more than three years must retake the initial core training course, in addition to meeting the defined requirements.

### **Transfers from Out of State Master Naturalist Programs**

A person who was certified in another state’s Master Naturalist program will be required to take the 40 hour core training of his/her Pennsylvania ecoregion location and maintain status by completing volunteer service in year one (30 hours) and year two (20 hours) as well as 12 hours of advanced training in year two and annually. He/she will not have to complete advanced training in the first year.

### **In State Ecoregion Transfers**

Pennsylvania Master Naturalists transferring from one ecoregion to another must be in good standing and have their file transferred to the Program Director or the Training Coordinator in the new ecoregion . Transfers will need to complete the new ecoregion core training.

### **Participation in Multiple Ecoregions**

It is not recommended that Pennsylvania Master Naturalists carry on activities in multiple ecoregions.

### **Dismissal of Pennsylvania Master Naturalist**

Failure to adhere to the “Standards of Behavior” established for the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program can result in dismissal as a volunteer. When the Program Director or Training Coordinator finds it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, the volunteer must be informed in writing of the termination of his or her volunteer status. This notice of dismissal will become a part of the volunteer’s confidential file.

*\*Please note that this is the pilot program policy and will be reviewed and evaluated after the inaugural 2010 program. Updates may be made and implemented in future program years.*

