



Adopt-A-Natural-Resource Stewardship Program

Please note: the Adopt-A-Natural Resource (AANR) application form can be accessed through the related links section located in righthand column of this page.

Department ID: ONR 1

Issuing Authority: Peter S. Duncan, Deputy Commissioner

Originating Unit: Division of Lands and Forests

Signature: Peter S. Duncan

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Abstract:

This policy provides the system for the Department to enter into stewardship agreements with individuals and organizations for activities which help preserve or enhance natural resources on lands under its jurisdiction.

Related References:

Environmental Conservation Law Section 9-0113.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to foster public participation in the Adopt-A-Natural-Resource Stewardship Program authorized by Section 9-0113 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

II. Background

The Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for the management of natural resources on lands under its jurisdiction. With the intent of improving the environmental quality of those natural resources at minimum cost to the state, 1995 legislation established an Adopt-A-Natural Resource Stewardship Program (Section 9-0113, ECL) effective July 28, 1995.

Volunteerism is the cornerstone of this program. It is a means for completing work that helps preserve, maintain and enhance natural resources at minimum cost to the state. Individuals and groups interested in providing volunteer services are afforded a formal opportunity to propose activities that meet management needs of state-owned natural resources. Such activities may involve remediating vandalism, picking up litter and trash, establishing or maintaining access or nature trails, providing interpretive services for school groups and other citizens, managing fish and wildlife habitats, and otherwise providing positive benefits to the natural resource.

The statute authorizes the Department to use a stewardship agreement for activities it approves for the preservation, maintenance, or enhancement of state-owned natural resources. Application procedures must be established for the Department's use in considering stewardship proposals. At its discretion, the Department may provide the assistance of personnel, facilities and supplies in support of activities in the stewardship agreement. Consistent with all other laws and regulations, stewardship activities shall be recognized through placement of appropriate signs on or near the adopted natural resource. Other forms of recognition, including but not limited to certificates, press releases, and newsletters may be provided, as the Department deems appropriate.

The stewardship agreement may be modified upon mutual agreement by the Department and the Steward. Stewards shall have the option to renew agreements subject to approval by the Department and its

continuation of the program. Agreements may be terminated if the Department determines that conditions of the agreements are not being met.

III. Policy

It is the policy of the Department of Environmental Conservation to foster public participation in the Adopt-A-Natural Resource Stewardship Program to help preserve, maintain and enhance natural resources on lands under its jurisdiction at minimum cost to the state.

IV. Responsibility

The responsibility for interpretation and update of this document, and overall management shall reside with the Office of Natural Resources, or its successor.

V. Definitions

Natural Resource - for the purpose of this program, natural resource shall mean all natural areas and related assets under the jurisdiction of the Department.

Respective Management Authority - The Program Division within the Department of Environmental Conservation which has the administrative authority for the adopted natural resource.

Steward - The person who signs the Adopt-A-Natural Resource Stewardship Agreement as an individual; or organization or group, acting by or through its duly authorized representative, which assumes responsibility for the activities and related conditions stated therein.

Adopted Natural Resource - A natural area or asset, owned by the State of New York, under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Conservation, and covered by an agreement under the Adopt-A-Natural Resource Stewardship Program.

Department - The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

VI. Procedure

The Department will invite and encourage individuals and groups to become active supporters of natural resource management through participation in the program. They will be informed about the purpose of the program, the procedures for entering into stewardship agreements and the responsibilities of undertaking a stewardship agreement.

These implementation efforts are to ensure public understanding that any stewardship activities undertaken through this program must help the Department meet its natural resource management objectives at minimum cost to the state. Adopt-A-Natural-Resource Stewardship Program applications should be submitted to the appropriate Respective Management Authority.

The following guidelines provide the basis for Respective Management Authority review of stewardship proposals to render judgment of their suitability, the prospect for satisfactory completion and the availability of Department staff for oversight and support.

Application

Individuals or groups who wish to adopt a state-owned natural resource shall be given an application and information describing the stewardship program.

Applications for natural resource adoption shall be submitted to the Respective Management Authority.

Applicants shall provide the names and social security numbers of all individuals who participate in the project.

The Respective Management Authority shall complete a HR-3 form for each project. The starting and ending dates of proposed activities shall be shown on the application. This information is needed to afford liability and

workers' compensation protection to the participants.

Activities must be in conformance with all applicable laws, regulations, policies and approved Unit Management Plans. In the absence of a plan, interim authorization of activities may be given by the Respective Management Authority. The Department may consider factors such as safety, environmental sensitivity, need, cost and other factors deemed relevant in determining which natural resource or activities may be eligible or appropriate for a stewardship agreement.

Agreement

Upon approval of the application, the Respective Management Authority and the Steward shall review the proposed stewardship activities and other conditions of the agreement.

A Stewardship Agreement shall be completed and signed by both the Department and the Steward for each approved Adopted Natural Resource. Project specific conditions shall be a part of all agreements.

Stewardship activities may be amended in the agreement upon mutual agreement by the Department and the Steward.

The Department may suspend all activities immediately and may revoke the agreement on thirty days written notice to the Steward, at any time during the duration of the agreement, if the conditions of the agreement are not being met. The Steward shall provide the Department thirty (30) days written notice prior to terminating the agreement.

Stewardship activities shall be evaluated by the Respective Management Authority annually to determine whether they merit continuation or modification.

As volunteers, participants in the program are accorded the same liability and workers' compensation protection as salaried state employees, provided they are acting within the scope of the agreement.

The Department shall provide recognition of the stewardship activities by appropriate signage on or near the adopted natural resource and may provide recognition by such other measures as it may determine to be appropriate.

The Commissioner authorizes the Regional Directors to enter into stewardship agreements on his behalf. Generally stewardship agreements will be issued regionally. However, an agreement involving more than one region may be issued, provided it is signed by the Director of each region involved.

Copies of all approved stewardship agreements shall be forwarded to the appropriate Division's Central Office.