

THE SANTA FE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

VOLUNTEER Handbook



MISSION

The mission of the Santa Fe Watershed Association is to protect and restore the health and vibrancy of the Santa Fe River and its watershed for the benefit of people and the environment. We achieve this through education, restoration, stewardship, and advocacy. From the River's headwaters to the Rio Grande, we honor the connection of people and the watershed.



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WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Fe Watershed Association (SFWA) and our Adopt-the-River and Adopt-an-Arroyo programs! We are delighted to have you join our community of stewards who volunteer their time to manage the many reaches along the Santa Fe River and its tributary arroyos. This handbook provides basic information about the programs and outlines important considerations for stewards. For more information, please reach out to SFWA or visit our website: santafe-watershed.org.





ADOPT HISTORY

The “Adopt-the-River” program, which SFWA started in 2002, mainly focuses on trash pickup and some vegetation management along 30 Santa Fe River reaches within the City of Santa Fe. The “Adopt-an-Arroyo” program, which began in 2015, is intimately connected with and builds off the successes of the “Adopt-the-River” program. In addition to trash pickup and vegetation management, steward teams have the opportunity to take part in assessing the specific needs of their arroyo reach, planning activities that will help address those needs, and then implementing the plan with the help of the SFWA team.

Both “Adopt” programs are at the heart of SFWA’s mission to honor the connection of people and watershed by protecting and restoring the holistic health and vibrancy of the Santa Fe River watershed. The primary need of many river and arroyo reaches in the watershed remains trash removal, but other opportunities include erosion management, native species planting, invasive species thinning, various monitoring and citizen science projects, and any other ideas stewards may have for fostering a deeper connection and sense of WWresponsibility for our home watershed.



VOLUNTEERS

Making a difference in the watershed through trash removal and other projects can be a fun and rewarding way to become involved and invested in the local community. River and arroyo stewards have the opportunity to

make new friends, learn about local human and natural history, and be active outside while promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our watershed. There is always more to discover, and always more work to do!

THE STEWARD TEAM

A relationship of supportive teamwork is what makes our “Adopt” programs successful. First, SFWA assigns a reach to each new steward group based on availability and steward interest. Agreements are put in place for each new group. SFWA will then keep in contact with the steward leaders, who in turn are responsible for keeping their group updated with the latest news. A SFWA staff member meets with new groups

on their first outing, and then stays in touch with groups through visits, phone calls, or email. Communication with steward groups via email or telephone calls is important to reserve clean-up dates, distribute supplies to steward leaders (trash bags, gloves, etc.), gather data, and coordinate with the City of Santa Fe or Santa Fe County to collect trash after a clean-up.



TEAM LEADERS

Our enthusiastic steward teams are led by a steward leader who takes on a little extra during each outing.

LEAD A CLEAN UP

1 ORGANIZE

Set the date and time with your team. Next schedule with your SFWA volunteer coordinator. If we don't know you went out all your hard work will not be picked up by city crews. If you need to reserve gear this is a good time to let us know.

2 SAFETY

Review safety waiver with team then after everyone has signed it send it to your SFWA volunteer coordinator.

3 GUIDE

Manage cleanup. Make sure your team is working safely. Also be sure all trash bags are tied close, left by a city trash barrel, and counted.

4 DOCUMENT

Contact SFWA volunteer coordinator. Your cleanup is important to us. We document it for our reports to ensure the long term sustainability of this program. Be sure to pass on to us how many volunteers helped, the number of trash bags used, and how long the cleanup was. And if you have photos to share send them along too.

5 OBSERVE

It allows SFWA to keep track of progress and the ongoing needs of the watershed, to provide to program sponsors, and to share with the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County for further assistance.

THE TEAM

- Stewards are not asked to do more than they are able.
- Please supervise your children.
- Hydration is important during physical labor at high altitude. Each volunteer should bring water and snacks.
- Know where the closest medical facilities are.

TEAM LEADER

An effective steward leader is willing to:

- Represent and guide their team of volunteers to maintain their assigned River or arroyo reach
- Know the limits of your group. Consider age, skill and comfort level with the tasks at hand.
- Schedule clean-ups with SFWA
- Keep stewards up-to-date on schedules
- Distribute supplies
- Inform their group of safety procedures
- Report any necessary data to SFWA
- Above all, remind everyone to have fun!
- Find out if any volunteers have CPR or medical training.

ONE RULE
Use good
judgment
in all
situations.

TRASH HANDLING

- Stewards clean along the banks and beds of the river and arroyos, avoiding the parks and picnic areas that are maintained by the city.
- Trash bags can be requested from SFWA.
- After collecting trash please leave the bags near trash receptacles on the curbside, or other designated areas.
- We encourage stewards to separate
- recyclables. Stewards are responsible for
- taking away recyclables, as city crews will not dispose of them.



ANGEL VOLUNTEERS

Individuals not currently part of a steward team can be involved in several ways. First, they can coordinate with SFWA about joining an existing team. Second, they can work on forming a new steward team (always encouraged!) with a group of friends, neighbors, or colleagues. They can also work as individuals, who SFWA recognizes as

“Angel Volunteers,” and work wherever in the watershed they want, however often they want. We still ask “Angel Volunteers” to communicate with SFWA in the same way as steward teams. All stewards and volunteers are also encouraged to participate in SFWA’s three yearly community cleanup events!





SAFETY

While all team members should help create a safe and fun work day, steward leaders are especially responsible for communicating safety guidelines to their teams and making decisions on behalf of everyone. Steward leaders can distribute the “Volunteer Safety Guidelines” insert to team members, and keep as a more concise reference

PROPER DRESS

Please wear appropriate clothing for working in the river and/or arroyo and for the weather conditions.

- Volunteers are encouraged to wear work gloves. Sturdy leather or rubber gardening gloves are best, but any will do.
 - Clothing made of synthetic material is recommended during winter activity.
 - Pants and long sleeves during hot weather protect against poison ivy, bug bites, and sunburn.
 - Sunscreen, hats, sunglasses, insect repellent can come in handy.
 - Wear work boots or waterproof boots to protect feet from sharp objects and provide ankle support, which is important for uneven terrain along the river and arroyos and their steep banks. Sandals are discouraged.
-

CHECK THE WEATHER

Rivers and arroyos are dynamic drainages

- Know the average water level of your reach, and do not attempt to clean it if water levels are too high.
 - Postpone your clean-up until water levels return to normal.
 - In rainy situations, water levels may change rapidly.
 - If heavy rains are forecasted, either in your reach or upstream, consider postponing due to flash flooding.
 - Do not collect trash during lightning storms.
-

WORKING OUTSIDE

Identify and be aware of risks in the outdoors. These risks include encounters with snakes, biting insects, poison ivy, other wildlife, and extreme weather.

LIFTING

Proper body positioning during lifting reduces back injuries.

- Lifting should always be done with the legs, bending at the knees and keeping the back straight. If you are moving an awkward or heavy object, stop and get help.
- If the object is too heavy to move, please mark and notify the steward leader who will then notify SFWA, who will have the City remove the object.

TRASH

Garbage in the river is often dirty, rusty, slimy, and sometimes sharp. Use caution when handling trash from the river to avoid injuries. Leave dangerous items, and report their location to SFWA. Remember: people are more important than trash!

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Any emergency: 911

Non-emergency dispatch: 505-428-3710

Drug tip hot line: 505-428-3737

**Southwest Care: 505-490-1147
(sharps disposal)**

Who to call if you find something suspicious/dangerous. While it is rare to have the need, please have these numbers accessible just in case.

Encountering snakes the Santa Fe River watershed is a possibility! Volunteers need to be aware that their activities could disturb a rattlesnake. Be careful when negotiating fallen logs, boulders, or rocky outcrops. Walk around these obstacles. If you encounter a rattlesnake, leave it alone. A cornered or threatened snake will strike in self-defense. Wait for the snake to retreat before continuing. A coiled snake will relax if it no longer feels threatened. You may need to wait a while for this to happen. This is why we recommend sturdy boots. Striking distance is 2-3 times the snake's body length!

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- Needles and other bio hazardous wastes are dangerous. Volunteers should not remove needles unless they have a sharps container and have completed the proper training.*
- Drums or containers may contain toxic waste.
- Handle the following items with caution: broken glass, aerosol cans, gas cans, and other containers with chemical residues or traces of volatile materials.
- Wear protective gear when handling hazardous materials such as glass and metal.
- Most importantly use common sense.
- If it looks or smells dangerous it probably is.
- Do not pick it up, but notify SFWA of its location.

NEEDLES

Sadly, like most places in America, Santa Fe is suffering the symptoms of the opioid epidemic, poverty, and other challenges. Many people in the City suffer from various drug addictions. Needles are increasingly common sightings in more densely populated reaches of the River and arroyos. If you see a needle, please do not pick it up if you haven't been trained in proper disposal practices.*

- Please call the drug tip hot line, at 505 - 428-3737.
- Please notify SFWA.
- You can also call our friends at Southwest Care, at 505- 490-1147, for sharps disposal.
- If there are consistently needles in a particular location along your reach, Southwest Care can add it to their weekly sweep.
- Southwest Care also provides trainings for safe sharps disposal!
- Steward leaders can decide whether the team should still go out if needles are found along the reach. This is totally based on the comfort levels and needs of steward team members.

**Interested stewards can be trained in safe disposal practices, too!*

SFWA offers this option if there are special safety concerns for a particular reach and/or team. Upon steward team request at least one week in advance, a team of two adults (SFWA staff members or other engaged adults trained by SFWA) can conduct a preliminary safety sweep of the arroyo or river reach prior to the team visit. They will assess the safety hazards within the reach and notify the steward leader, who will decide if the project can continue or not.

OPTIONAL SAFETY SWEEP

These sweeps will assess the following:

- Discarded needles/sharps
- Homeless activity
- Other physical and weather-related hazards



OPTIONAL PROGRAMS





INVASIVE SPECIES

If you are interested in learning more about vegetation management, we'd love to teach you! You can help us manage these species by monitoring and alerting us to their presence. A steward group must take an SFWA approved vegetation identification and management class before removing vegetation.



NATIVE SPECIES

Please consult with SFWA about the possibility of plantings, care, location, and species. SFWA may be able to contribute seeds, saplings, tools, etc for reintroduction.



MONITORING AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

SFWA can coordinate trainings and materials with interested stewards.



LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Ask to see our "Learning Menu," designed for learners of all ages to engage with the Santa Fe River Watershed. SFWA is available to collaborate with educators on specific lesson plans, activities, and projects in a variety of disciplines, as well as alignment with education standards.



PERSPECTIVES

SFWA strives to promote holistic community stewardship. As such, we encourage our volunteers to think critically and compassionately about several key topics they are likely to encounter in the watershed (depending on the reach). Safety for our stewards and the community at large is our top priority. Therefore, it is important to address common stereotypes that can be harmful in a variety of ways.





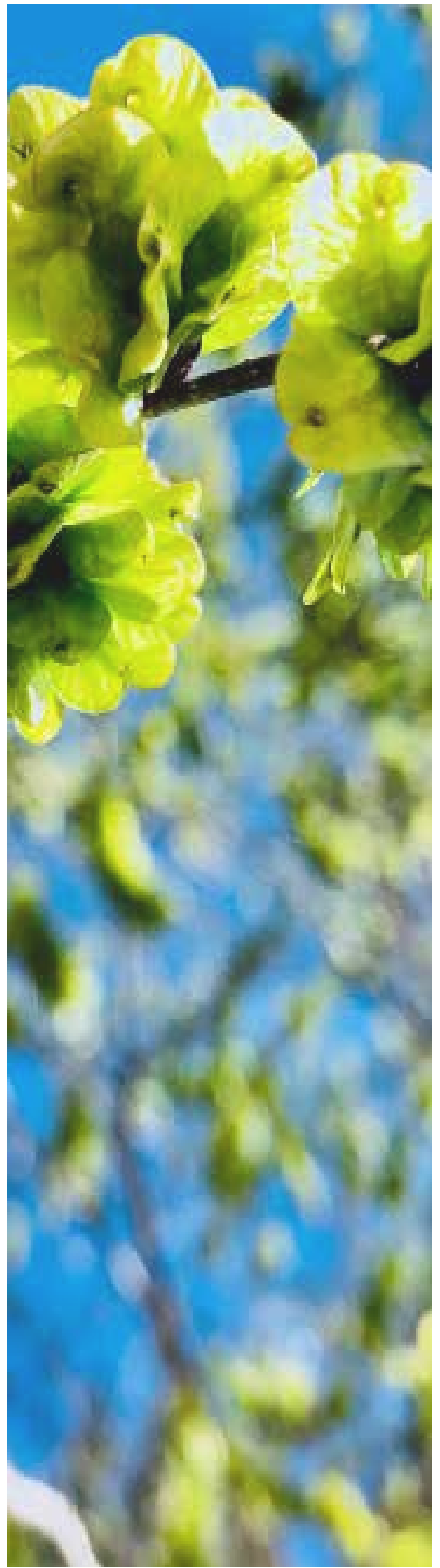
HOMELESSNESS

Whether you are stewarding your reach or going for a walk, you will likely encounter someone who is experiencing homelessness, any number of other afflictions, or simply makes you uncomfortable.

- Be respectful, use friendly body language, and use common sense.
- If you feel it's appropriate, say hi. You can even explain you are a steward with SFWA, and invite this person to join in your efforts!
- You can also give them supplies to clean their own area if they would like.
- If you feel uncomfortable or even slightly unsafe, simply give the person space and move on.
- If you find an occupied camp, be respectful of the individual's personal space. Even if they are not there, please avoid removing items that seem to be in use (such as tents, clothes, and blankets).
- If you find a person having a health emergency, please call 911.
- Please share your encounters with SFWA, so we can report them to the City of Santa Fe.
- Many individuals experiencing homelessness are suffering from mental illness, addictions, and other traumatic circumstances.
- Folks experiencing homelessness are statistically among the least dangerous members of our society.
- Homelessness is not a crime; homeless people are people.
- Solutions to homelessness are more complex than simply removing people off the street.
- If you're interested in learning more about homelessness in the Santa Fe River watershed, please reach out to SFWA for more resources.

INVASIVE SPECIES

- Moral of the management story: it's complicated!!!
- The Santa Fe River watershed suffers from an abundance of invasive vegetative species such as Siberian elm, cheat grass, and perennial pepper weed.
- Many invasive species were introduced by humans on purpose, but have since spread out of control.
- Such species out-compete native species for water, disrupt ecological relationships, and alter ecosystem functions. They can reduce soil moisture and increase the risk of fire.
- Long-term removal is almost impossible; it's a constant struggle!
- If an invasive species that has colonized an area is removed, it still has often irreparably altered the landscape. This makes reintroduction of native species difficult at best.
- After an invasive species colonizes an area, it dominates many of the ecological functions of native species. They become the main protection for soil from erosion, and keep soil temperature cooler and more consistent. After even a short period of time, invasive species can then become the only sources of food and shelter for native (and even endangered) wildlife.
- While it is important to do our part to stop the spread of invasives and try to reconcile some of the damage, it is vital to do so in a balanced and science-based way. Otherwise we could unintentionally make things much worse for the soil, wildlife, and people of the Santa Fe River watershed.





WATER USE AND EQUITY

- We can't go back in time and prevent these species from spreading where they "don't belong." Now, the best we can do is ask questions about which management strategies align with our goals: do animals have other sources of food and cover? Are there other plants holding the soil? How long will it take for native species to recolonize? Are there other trees and plants to provide shade and greens pace for human community members?
 - Please reach out to SFWA for more resources and conversations about this very important issue.
 - If you'd like to help manage invasive species along your reach, please attend an SFWA-approved training or workshop.
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Think about the place of your reach, steward team, and yourself as an individual in the broader story of the Santa Fe River watershed. Think about the human and ecological history of your reach. Think about how many uses it has, how many people may come in contact with the same drop of water on its way through the watershed. Think about who gets how much water, whether you agree or not, and the role of your elected officials. Think about the quality and abundance in different parts of the watershed, who is using it, and for what. Think about your vision for the watershed and your place in it.

Water is sacred; water is life!



THANK

YOU

FOR ALL
YOU DO!



If you have questions, please
feel free to stop by or contact:

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santafewatershed.org



Santa Fe
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION