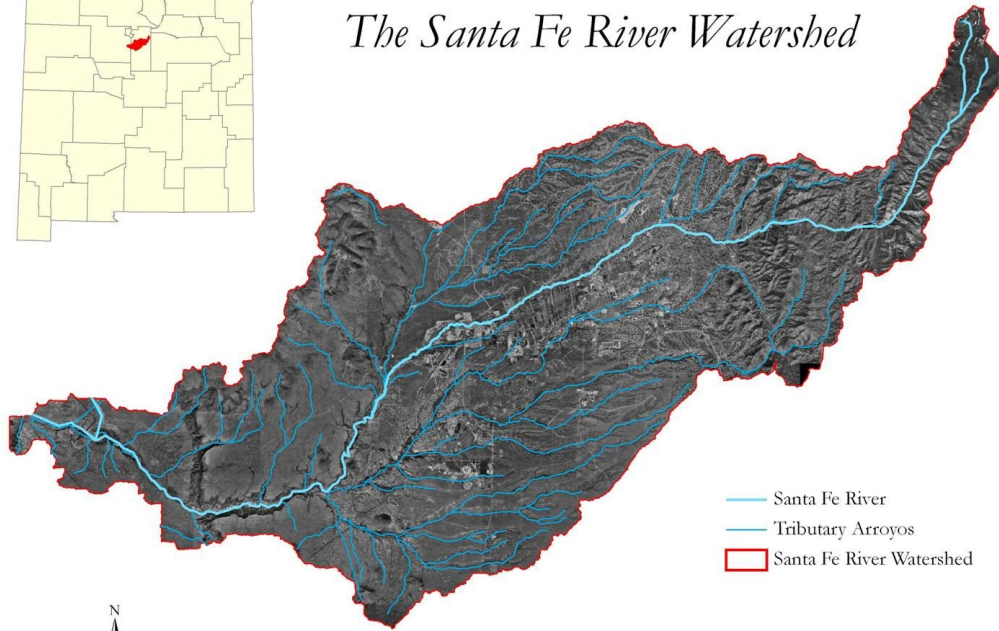




The Santa Fe River Watershed



- Santa Fe River
- Tributary Arroyos
- Santa Fe River Watershed



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Volunteer Handbook



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: www.santafewatershed.org.

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 responsibility for our home watershed.

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!

- * 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 water, soil, wildlife, and people of the Santa Fe River watershed.
- * 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 greenspace 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.

Water Use and Equity

- * 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!

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

Santa Fe Watershed Association

1413 Second Street, Suite 3

Santa Fe, NM 87505

(505) 820 – 1696

info@santafewatershed.org

Visit our website at www.santafewatershed.org

For more information and current staff contacts!

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 hotline, 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.

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, cheatgrass, Russian thistle, and perennial pepperweed.
- * 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.

Each of our enthusiastic steward teams is led by a steward leader who takes on a little extra during each outing. An effective steward leader is willing to:

- Represent and guide their team of volunteers to maintain their assigned River or arroyo reach
- 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!

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.

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/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!

Thank you for all you do!!!

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.

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. They are also in the safety inserts.

⇒ **Any emergency: 911**

⇒ Non-emergency dispatch: (505) 428-3710

⇒ Drug tip hotline: (505) 428-3737

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

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

Understand Your Group

- ◇ Know the limits of your group. Consider age, skill and comfort level with the tasks at hand.
- ◇ Stewards are not asked to do more than they are able.
- ◇ Stewards are responsible for child supervision.
- ◇ Hydration is important during physical labor at high altitude. Each volunteer should bring water and snacks.
- ◇ Know where the closest medical facilities are.
- ◇ Find out if any volunteers have CPR or medical training.

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.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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.

Human Populations

- * 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 to connect with great resources.

Finishing up

The Steward Leader reports to SFWA with the following data **no more than 5 days after each outing**:

- Activity
- Number of bags collected (for trash collection)
- Number of attending stewards
- Number of hours spent in the river or arroyo
- Any other observations and/or concerns

This information is very important for the long term sustainability of the “Adopt” programs. 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.



- ◇ 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 cleanup 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.

Identify and be aware of risks in the outdoors

- ◇ These risks include encounters with snakes, biting insects, poison ivy, other wildlife, and extreme weather.
- ◇ **Encountering snakes the Santa Fe River watershed is a possibility!** Most snakes are not venomous, but 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!

Handling 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!**

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.

Avoid Hazardous Materials

- ◇ Needles and other biohazardous 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.

Optional Pre-Project Safety Sweeps

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 (either 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. These sweeps will assess the following:

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

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Bagging Trash

- ◆ 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 and gloves 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.

Invasive Plant Species Management

- ◆ If you are interested in learning more about vegetation management, we'd love to work with 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 Care and Reintroduction

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

Monitoring and Citizen Science

- ◆ SFWA can coordinate trainings and materials with interested stewards.

Expanded 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.