



Preserve Monitor Guide for Volunteers

Little Traverse Conservancy · 3264 Powell Rd., Harbor Springs, MI 49740 · (231) 347-0991 · www.landtrust.org

Volunteer preserve monitors are vital to Little Traverse Conservancy's stewardship program. With over 140 preserves to manage and maintain, regular monitoring is required to ensure all preserves remain protected and well maintained. These Preserve Monitor Guidelines provide basic information about preserve management and monitoring procedures. Please contact stewardship staff if you have any questions regarding the management or monitoring of Conservancy preserves. Thank you for your interest in and assistance with preserve monitoring.

Preserve Management

Little Traverse Conservancy Stewardship staff, overseen by the Executive Director and Stewardship Committee of the Board, carry out the planning and day-to-day responsibilities of managing nature preserves. These responsibilities include: preparing management plans; marking boundaries; ordering and installing signs; planning and developing trails; performing various maintenance activities; and monitoring. Volunteers, seasonal employees, and interns periodically assist with on-site tasks.

Management Plans

A management plan is created for each preserve owned by the Little Traverse Conservancy. Overall management of a preserve - which takes into account the size, habitat, sensitivity, neighboring area, and suitability for recreational or educational activities - includes monitoring, marking boundaries, installing preserve signs, special projects, and maintenance. Preserve management is determined on a case-by-case basis, and the Conservancy's general policy currently calls for minimal intervention on preserves. However, we have conducted a limited number of management projects. Currently, we are conducting appropriate timber management on two preserves, and we periodically maintain field or meadow habitat by mowing.

Rules For Public Use

All preserves are open to the public for uses such as hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, fishing, birdwatching, photography, and other similar, low-impact activities.

The following activities are NOT allowed at any preserve: camping, removal of plants, dumping, fires, overnight use, or off-road vehicles.

Dogs are permitted and, according to state law, must be on a leash.

Hunting is permitted on some preserves where deemed appropriate. Individuals wanting to hunt on a particular preserve must obtain written permission by the Conservancy.

The Andreae Preserve, located on the Pigeon River and six miles east of Indian River, has a six-room cabin on it that is available for community groups (such as scouts) for overnight use. There is no charge. Reservations are required by calling (231) 347-0991.

Boundaries

Marked boundaries facilitate monitoring and help prevent encroachments onto preserves or trespassing off of preserves. Preserve boundaries are marked to the extent possible utilizing existing corner or on-line survey marker information. The following may be used alone or in combination to mark boundaries: 3" aluminum emblem markers, 5' carsonite (composite plastic) survey markers, and tree

paint. Corners, partial boundaries, or full boundaries are marked depending on available information and habitat. A professional survey will be ordered if necessary and feasible. Due to increased activity and liability concerns, preserves with trails or allowed hunting take precedence for boundary marking over others. Due to the high cost of surveys and time involved, all boundaries are not yet marked, but we continue to work towards that goal.

Signs

LTC logo signs, which are approximately 35" x 46" on 10' posts, are placed at key locations on preserves, usually at a location easily visible from access roads and parking areas. Other signs used on preserves include: interpretive, trail markers, trail maps, and preserve use information signs.

Trails

To facilitate access and enhance visitor use of nature preserves, trails - which may include bridges, boardwalks, or platforms - are created when and where they are determined appropriate. The Conservancy has several volunteers participating in our *Trail Steward Program*. A trail steward visits a selected trail at least three times throughout the summer to check the trail and perform maintenance as needed.

Maintenance

To ensure the integrity of preserves and quality of trail systems, maintenance tasks are completed as needed. These include the following: repairing/replacing signs; replacing boundary and trail markers; clearing; mowing or woodchipping trails; and cleaning up dumped garbage or litter.

Monitoring

Preserve monitoring is completed by staff and volunteer monitors at least annually. Staff periodically monitors selected preserves by air.

Timing and Reports

Preserve monitoring occurs each spring and fall. A letter and blank report form is sent by stewardship staff to volunteer monitors in April and September. The monitor visits as much of the preserve as possible, noting the condition of its natural features, signs, markers, structures, and anything unusual. Reports are typically expected to be returned within 4 weeks. Reports are reviewed, staff follows up on any concerns or comments, and the report is then stored in a permanent preserve file.

If for any reason an individual would like to help monitor a preserve, but the typical times are not convenient, alternative arrangements may be made.

Staff will meet with a new preserve monitor at a preserve for the first monitoring visit. Other joint visits will occur to identify boundaries or if any concern arises.

Maps

Preserve location and boundary maps are provided to volunteers. Any volunteer monitor wanting additional information is welcome to contact stewardship staff.

Violations

Monitors are not required to confront violators. In the event a monitor observes inappropriate activity occurring on a preserve, please note as much information as possible including: descriptions of person(s) or vehicle, license plate numbers, date and time, and then notify the Conservancy as soon as possible.

Newsletter

A Volunteer Steward Newsletter is sent to all monitors and trail stewards every spring. This newsletter provides updates on preserve projects and maintenance activities, program changes, new monitors, volunteer profiles, and other information.

The following are signs you may see at a Conservancy preserve:

