

A guide for new volunteers

originally written by Kathy Cartwright

As the volunteer coordinator the Empire-Sauk Chapter, I am always looking for new volunteers to help at the work parties. And we always need new volunteers, especially with the number of properties we manage!!! I often think that many new members don't come because they think they'd be uncomfortable, especially since they don't know what to expect. I've tried to answer some of your questions in this article.

What work will be done? Work activities depend on the season. During the fall and winter, we cut brush using hand-held saws, loppers and pruners. Some people use chain saws. We create brush piles and burn them once there is snow on the ground and the piles are large enough. This is the fun part.

Do I need to bring my own equipment? No -- TPE has a large supply of saws, loppers and pruners. You should bring your own work gloves.

Do I need to bring my own water or snacks? Unless the notice states otherwise, the work party leader is responsible for bringing water and snacks. We always have one break, but you can take breaks any time you need one. I always take time to talk to the other volunteers.

What do I wear? During the winter, you should dress in layers so you can remove layers of clothing as you get warmed up. Sturdy boots and gloves are also needed. Wear clothing that can get dirty or ripped.

How do I get there? TPE has work sites all over south central Wisconsin. The work party leader can give you directions to the site. You always need to contact the leader beforehand to ensure that the work party is still scheduled -- this is especially true during bad weather.

Can I work at my own pace? Absolutely, You can also take breaks whenever you want, and you can leave when you want.

What will I get out of the experience? Lots -- exercise, sharing time with like-minded people, learning plants and ecology, learning restoration management techniques, seeing and hearing birds and other wildlife are some of the things you will get from the work party.

Now you know why it's called a work "party"!!