



Friends of the Riverfront

Trail Ambassador Program Handbook 2026

Thank you for joining us as part of the team!

This Trail Ambassador program is an initiative of Friends of the Riverfront. Our mission is to build safe, clean, and accessible riverfront trails as part of the Three Rivers Heritage & Water Trail systems to create and maintain an outstanding experience for trail users while providing economic, environmental, and health benefits to the Pittsburgh region. **We were founded in 1991, which makes Friends 35 years old this year!**

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail is a designated National Recreation Trail system that spans 35 miles along both banks of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. The Three Rivers Water Trail is nationally designated Water Trail boasting 34 launches for non-motorized watercraft on the three rivers AND the Yough. The trails offer opportunities for recreation, transportation, education, and tourism, and connect to many neighborhoods, business districts, and attractions. Friends of the Riverfront works to expand the trails, connecting to new communities, and creating large, interconnected networks like the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, the GAP, the Industrial Heartlands Coalition network, and the Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway.

As a Trail Ambassador, you will play a vital role in enhancing the trail experience for everyone who uses it, inviting trail users to become a part of the Friends of the Riverfront community.

What is a Trail Ambassador?

As a Trail Ambassador, your main role is to be a friendly and helpful presence on the trail or during Friends events and to connect trail users to Friends of the Riverfront's work. You will interact with the public in a friendly and professional manner, provide information and assistance, distribute maps and brochures, report problems and hazards, support events and activities, and represent Friends of the Riverfront and the trails in a positive way. You represent the Three Rivers Heritage Land and Water Trail and help ensure that people feel safe and welcome. Trail users will come to you to ask questions, to learn about Trail projects, to ask for directions, etc.

IMPORTANT: Ambassadors are NOT responsible for law enforcement, rule enforcement, trail maintenance, or emergency response. If you encounter a life-threatening situation, you should always call 911 and/or report non-emergencies to 311. For non-emergency trail maintenance or safety issues you may report them via your Trail Ambassador post-shift volunteer report.

Trail Ambassador Role Descriptions

There are several ways to be a Trail Ambassador, depending on your interests and skills. Here are some of the ways you can engage as a Trail Ambassador:

- ***Cycling/Walking/Rolling ambassadors:*** These are ambassadors who ride the trail on their bike, skate, or walk along the trail looking for and reporting maintenance or safety issues, filling map boxes, and helping people on the trail as needed. Roaming ambassadors are especially important for covering more ground and reaching more trail users. These Ambassadors may also adopt a trailside business map drop-off location to help regularly stock maps at popular establishments for trail users to access.
- ***Event Ambassadors:*** These ambassadors represent Friends of the Riverfront at events and community festivals by assisting staff with tabling.
- ***Tabling on the Trail Ambassadors:*** These ambassadors volunteer by “trail-gating,” which involves setting up a small table with a visitor information sign to provide maps, information, and giveaways for trail users at designated locations along the Three Rivers Heritage Land and Water Trail launches. Volunteers can bring their favorite chair to relax while engaging with trail users who need maps, support, or guidance. Some ambassadors may choose to bring a small pop-up canopy tent for shade.
- ***Group Trail Guide Ambassadors:*** These are ambassadors who can lead walks, runs, or rides along the Three Rivers Heritage Trails. Programming can be educational, artistic, recreational, or for health. We love to hear your creative ideas and will support you in leading groups in programming that you wish to host.
- ***Ambassador Correspondent:*** This ambassador role is great for Trail Ambassadors who want to practice or strengthen their writing, photography or social media skills, and report fun trail stories, trip experiences and ride suggestions.



Training and Program Preparation

To become a Trail Ambassador, you need to complete the following steps:

- 1) **Attend an in-person training session** where you will learn background information about the trail, and the policies and procedures of the Trail Ambassador program.
- 2) **Sign a waiver**
- 3) **Sign the Trail Ambassador pledge** that you will follow the handbook protocols.
- 4) **Commit to volunteer a minimum of 4 hours on average per month** during the Trail Ambassador program season (April – October). The more hours you volunteer, the higher perks and rewards you can earn
- 5) **Optional:** Background Checks are no longer a requirement for volunteers but are useful to have on file if you wish to submit them.

Equipment and Resources

As a Trail Ambassador, you will receive the following equipment and resources to use while on duty:

- 1) **A Green Trail Ambassador vest** with the Friends of the Riverfront logo that identifies you as a volunteer.
- 2) **Maps, Friends of the Riverfront Volunteer Information, newsletter sign-up forms and additional printed resource materials and publications** are released over the season. You should distribute these materials to interested trail users or leave them at designated kiosks or map boxes.
- 4) Trail Ambassadors who would like to set up a **chair and/or small pop-up table** will need to provide their own table and chair as needed or table on a location along the Trail where a table, bench, or chair are already located on the Trail. Tabling for the Trail Ambassadors will be provided with a pop-up yard sign and printed materials.

Trail Ambassador Vests:

All Ambassadors must return their volunteering vest at the end of the season, unless you are committed to serving the following year. The vest can be dropped off with Friends or sent in a mailer to



our address. Those who do not return their Trail Ambassador vest by December 1st will be charged a \$25 replacement fee.

Need more materials?

Email our Trail Ambassador at Ambassador@friendsoftheriverfront.org to arrange for a materials pick up at the office, or at a designated spot.



General Volunteer Policies and Procedures

1) Adhere to safety protocols such as wearing appropriate clothing and footwear, carrying enough water and snacks, applying sunscreen and insect repellent, wearing a helmet if biking, staying alert and aware of your surroundings, avoiding confrontations or conflicts with anyone on the trail, respecting wildlife and plants, and following traffic rules and signs. You may want to carry a small bike repair kit; however, that is not required for this role.

2) Respect privacy and confidentiality by not disclosing any personal or sensitive information about yourself, other volunteers, staff, trail users, or the organization. ***You should ask for permission before taking or sharing any photos or videos of anyone on the trail.***

3) Follow ethical standards by being honest, respectful, responsible, and courteous to everyone on the trail. You should also avoid any actions or behaviors that may harm or offend anyone or damage the reputation of Friends of the Riverfront or the Trail. Friends of the Riverfront has a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory behavior or actions towards trail users based on their race, class, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, mental illness, or housing status.

4) It's OK to say, "I don't know." There will be many instances where you may not have enough information regarding a trail user's request, complaint, or comment. You should be prepared to refer questions to Friends of the Riverfront staff when appropriate. Questions can be directed to ambassador@friendsoftheriverfront.org.

5) How to get more materials- maps, stickers, email lists, brochures, etc. You can pick up materials at the office by arranging a time in advance. You can also arrange to pick up materials at one of the public events where Friends of the Riverfront will be tabling.

6) If you have any questions or concerns communicate with our intern at Ambassador@friendsoftheriverfront.org or text or email Kate at 412-925-2537. If you have direct feedback - you can document that along with any significant events or interactions using the post-volunteer shift reporting link:

<https://forms.monday.com/forms/48fa7bc137d0b98e14627ddd5d411835?r=use1>

If there is an emergency – do not contact Friends of the Riverfront- please use 911 and alert emergency services.

Many issues that are non-emergencies can be reported using 311.

<https://www.pittsburghpa.gov/Resident-Services/311/Contacting-311>



Policies and Procedures for Ambassador Roles

Each Trail Ambassador role has unique responsibilities- these are the policies and procedures specific to each role.

Event Ambassadors:

To table at events, sign up at least 5 days in advance via volunteersignup.org/M7EEB. You can choose events that fit your schedule and location preferences. Notify Friends of the Riverfront at least 48 hours in advance if you need to cancel or change your shift. Event Ambassadors will assist full-time staff and will not be responsible for setup or tabling alone. If you are experiencing cold or flu symptoms, contact Friends of the Riverfront to cancel your shift.

Cycling/Walking/Paddling/Rolling Ambassadors:

No advance sign-up is required, offering flexibility for weather and trail conditions. Choose shifts at times and locations that suit you, but consider peak trail usage (evenings and weekends). Track your hours independently and submit a post-shift reporting form after every shift to log hours, monitor trail conditions, and share experiences:

<https://forms.monday.com/forms/48fa7bc137d0b98e14627ddd5d411835?r=use1>

Tabling on the Trail Ambassadors:

No advance sign-up required. Choose shift times and locations along the trail that work best for you, with peak usage times being most effective. Track your hours and submit a post shift report after each shift to log hours, monitor trail conditions, and share experiences. Tabling must occur at designated locations along the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. For new locations, email Ambassador@friendsoftheriverfront.org for approval. Please confirm sites with Friends of the Riverfront, as some parts of the trail are private property or lack sufficient space.

Group Trail Guide Ambassadors:

Lead group experiences in partnership with Friends of the Riverfront or other groups. Trips must be approved by staff. Once approved, the Ambassador leads the trip, with support from Friends of the Riverfront for promotion, marketing materials, and volunteer assistance. Independent group leaders are also welcome to collaborate with Friends of the Riverfront for cross-promotion and support.

Ambassador Correspondent:

Submit photos, narrative, or try your hand at writing a blog article. You may also want to create a social media post, tag "Friendsoftheriverfront" or invite us to join you as a collaborator! Occasionally throughout the season, prompts for articles or blog posts will be shared in the monthly Trail Ambassador newsletter. All submissions for writing, articles, narrative, photos, and collaborative posts can be submitted to Ambassador@friendsoftheriverfront.org and are subject to approval. No writing, photos, or posts are guaranteed to be published by Friends of the Riverfront.



Our Approach

While you are acting as an Ambassador, you represent Friends. Friends of the Riverfront has a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory language or behavior.

- We do not discriminate against anyone based on race, class, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, mental illness, or housing status.
- We are careful with the language that we use so that we do not assert assumptions about anyone's experiences or identities.
- We are willing to listen and apologize for wrongdoing if a person lets us know that they have been hurt or feel uncomfortable by our words or actions.
- We bring an open mind to listening to the experiences of trail users and try to refrain from judgements or criticisms.
- If you are not sure how to respond to a person's stories or experiences, or not sure what is appropriate in a conversation with a trail user, feel free to say, "I don't know," or "I am not sure," or "I don't have enough information about that to comment on that."

Perks and Benefits

As a Trail Ambassador, you will receive benefits for your efforts such as:

- Invitations to social events with other trail volunteers and staff via Ambassador email updates and social events for Friends of the Riverfront volunteers
- Exclusive updates on trail development projects and trail expansion initiatives.
- Representing Friends of the Riverfront at events, festivals, art fairs, and more
- Professional skills development and professional networking opportunities
- Leadership opportunities in leading group rides or walks and guiding the volunteer program
- Invitations to Friends volunteer appreciation celebrations with other trail volunteers
- 15% discount for ticketed Friends events – just let us know
- Free admission to members-only FriendsFest
- TRHT Swag Gift Levels for reaching a certain number of volunteer hours each season:

Ambassador Perks (April - October)

25 hours:	50 hours:	100 Hours:
		
📍 25 hours logged: Trail Ambassador or Friends of the Riverfront Hat		
🌿 50 hours logged: Friends of the Riverfront Hoodie or Sweatshirt		
💧 100 hours logged: Both hat and sweatshirt		



Additional Perks:

Invitations to all Friends Volunteer celebrations and experiences including our EOY invitational

20% off Aerotech Designs (Promo code: FOTRF)

Free admission to FriendsFest

Opportunities for Raffles and Giveaways



Friends of the Riverfront - Contact Information

Friends of the Riverfront Contact Information:

Trail Ambassador Intern – Ambassador@friendsoftheriverfront.org

Kate - kate@friendsoftheriverfront.org 412-925-2537

Maddie – madelyn@friendsoftheriverfront.org 412-488-0212

Friends of the Riverfront - Social Media

Reddit- [r/friendsoftherivfrnt](https://www.reddit.com/r/friendsoftherivfrnt)

Instagram- <https://www.instagram.com/FriendsoftheRiverfront/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/fotr.pgh>

LinkedIn- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-the-riverfront/posts/?feedView=all>

In case of emergency:

311 and 911

When to call 311 vs 911:

https://www.pittsburghpa.gov/files/assets/city/v/1/311/documents/residential_911-311_final.pdf

Tips for contacting emergency services on trails:

<https://www.ecoatm.com/blogs/news/how-to-share-your-location-on-iphone-and-android>

<https://www.alpinesavvy.com/blog/how-to-make-a-backcountry-911-call>

Tabling on the Trail Locations:

- Southside Riverview Park
- Color Park
- Millvale Riverfront Park
- Duck Hollow Water Trail Launch (Parking Lot)
- Lawrenceville Water Trail Launch (Picnic Area)
- Eliza Furnace Trail (Second Ave entrance, Picnic Area)
- Westhall Water Trail Launch Area

Ambassadors are welcome to suggest locations for tabling on the trail.

Map Box Locations on the Trail:

Eliza Furnace Trail Head- Located on the wooden beam of the picnic table area by 2nd St Parking lot

Baldwin- Affixed to the leg of the interpretive signage map (permanent interpretive signage of the Trail map)

Mon Wharf Connector Switchback- Located at the top of the Mon Wharf switchback at the end of the Smithfield St bridge

Westhall- Located on the Boat Rack in Westhall, next to the Water Trail Map Box.

Millvale Riverfront Park- Affixed to the bulletin board by the bathrooms at Millvale Riverfront Park

Important: *Please do not place Land Trail maps in Water Trail map boxes.* Land Trail map boxes have a clear lid, Water Trail map boxes have a white lid. If you notice that a map box is missing, please take a photo and submit in a Post Shift Report.

Important links and QR codes:

- **Post-Volunteer Shift Reporting Online form (required after every shift):**

<https://forms.monday.com/forms/48fa7bc137d0b98e14627ddd5d411835?r=use1>



- **Sign up to volunteer as a Trail Ambassador for upcoming outreach events:**

volunteersignup.org/M7EEB



- **Trail Ambassador Facebook Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/683021370113805>



- **Reporting Trail Maintenance Issues or City of Pittsburgh managed issues using 311:**

<https://www.pittsburghpa.gov/Resident-Services/311/Contacting-311>

