



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



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Memorandum

To: Regional Refuge Chiefs, Regions 1-8

From: Acting Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

Subject: Service Volunteers and Friends Nature Stores

This memorandum offers additional guidance on the interpretation of existing policy on Friends organizations regarding the use of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) volunteers in nature stores operated by official Friends organizations.

Service volunteers who conduct visitor orientation in Service visitor centers may also assist with Friends nature stores sales if those functions cannot be separated. In order to do this, these volunteers are required to complete and sign both a Service Volunteer Services Agreement and a Friends volunteer agreement. Two examples of Friends agreements are provided for use by Friends organizations in creating their own agreements. Project Leaders are required to ensure that all these dual-function volunteers in Service visitor centers complete both a Service and Friends volunteer agreement.

All hours associated with these dual-function volunteers in Service visitor centers can be counted as Service volunteer hours and while the volunteer is wearing a Service volunteer uniform, as long as the primary role of the volunteer is visitor orientation. A separate Friends uniform or identifier is not needed in this instance.

This interpretation does not change the Friends policy and is offered only to provide flexibility in those situations where it would be helpful and is at the discretion of the Project Leader. The overall operation and administration of nature stores remains the sole responsibility of a Friends organization. Friends organizations should ensure that their existing insurance policies adequately cover their nature store inventory and their Friends volunteers who assist with nature

store operations. If a Service volunteer is injured while working in a Friends nature store, even though they are under dual agreements, the Friends organization is responsible for tort and liability. The Service and its employees are still not permitted to operate and manage revenue-generating operations, such as nature stores, including making sales transactions.

The intent of this guidance is to help ensure quality customer service in Service visitor centers and to alleviate some staffing difficulties with Friends nature stores. These staffing difficulties have caused some Friends organizations to consider closing their nature stores, which was never the intent of the new Friends policy.

Please direct questions and requests for additional information to Ms. Joanna Webb, at (703) 358-2392.