

# SCOUT UNIT ADOPTION OF NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS



Conservation Committee  
Longs Peak Council, Boy Scouts of America

CONSERVATION PROJECT ADOPTION FOR OPEN SPACE – PARK – REFUGE – ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS



# WHY ADOPT A NATURAL AREA?

Adopting a natural resources site is both an important effort for the pack, troop or crew; as well as something important for the area to be adopted. Adopting a site is something significant for the Scouts involved as it gets them outdoors, gives them something to do that can really makes a difference, and allows them to experience real work. Outside of the projects completed, this effort is a hands-on experience for teaching community service.

Adopting a natural resources site can also be a platform for Scouts to complete rank/award service requirements and to earn special conservation awards. In addition, it can be a focal point for Eagle Scout Projects that over time really add up to a significant community contribution.

From a natural resource agency perspective, adopting a site can help them accomplish their conservation and maintenance goals, assist them in their program goals to involve youth outdoors, and help them stretch their shrinking dollar resources. Many locations will have budgeted money for project materials but no money to hire workers. Other locations may have no budgeted dollars at all, and what a Scout unit does may be all the site ever sees in conservation and maintenance.

## SELECT A SITE

One great project effort that can involve many aspects of conservation is to work with your community park, open space, natural area, wildlife refuge, national park, federal forest, or some other important outdoor environment by adopting a specific site for the entire year at a time. Your role to begin with is to meet with a site official to arrange for a cooperative project. Inform them of what you are capable of doing, how big your Scout unit is, and what resources you can bring to the project. Let them have some time to think about what you have proposed, and be sure to tell them it is for the entire year, and not just one outing.

## ADOPTION PRINCIPLE

For your Scout unit to adopt a site you will need to take this “adoption” seriously with a commitment to be both *honored* and *completed*. To “solidify” the commitment you will need to have your Scout unit “formally” vote for adoption – after discussion and questions – at all levels that include unit adult leadership, youth membership, and parents.

## ADOPTION TIME PERIOD

The Scout unit’s adoption period should begin with as a twelve month time period, but it could expand beyond this time if both the Scout unit and the natural resources agency agree to do so. However, the suggestion is that the Scout unit site agreement be made for one year at a time. During this time period the Scout unit should conduct a minimum a four service/work sessions, preferably one each quarter of the year. It has been shown that a very long term effort can become an important part of a Scout unit’s annual program, and leave a lasting impact on the area adopted.



## WHAT COULD YOU DO?

*The project your Scout unit is to be involved in should be age appropriate for the youth involved and should match the skills and talents of the Scout unit's leadership. Check out these ideas:*

- Trail building, repair, and general maintenance.
- Plant large a number of trees and shrubs for wildlife habitat.
- Rip rapping a stream edge with stones to stop soil erosion and improve water quality.
- Creating brush piles for wildlife habitat.
- Constructing bird boxes for nesting sites.
- Construct squirrel boxes for nesting habitat.
- Place fencing around critical wildlife habitat.
- Removing ladder fuels on trees to prevent ground fires from climbing trees.
- Removing invasive plants from stream fields and streams beds.
- Marking all the drainage holes in your town to prevent hazardous material dumping.
- Remove stream debris to enhance a natural waterway.
- Plant open space in native grasses and flowers to reduce invasive plant encroachment.
- Construct an interpretive kiosk explaining the importance of habitat enhancement.
- Construct vehicle barriers to keep vehicles off of trails, grasslands, and sensitive areas.
- Construct a xeriscape demonstration garden.
- Mark all appropriate dead trees with "wildlife tree" markers.
- Place wind-break and snow fence plantings along roadsides for wildlife habitat.
- Use netting, straw, and appropriate seed to restore an eroded soil bank.
- Thin a forest or woods area to enhance tree growth.
- Place water bars or "waddles" on hillsides to prevent erosion and slow water flow.
- Construct a wetland by controlling water flow and planting water plants.
- Construct and place water tank "ramps" to prevent bird drowning.
- Restock fish in a stream or lake.
- Collect Christmas trees and place on lakes and ponds so they sink to form fish habitat.
- Construct a hard surface walkway or path to reduce dust air pollution and control run-off.
- Establish a spring fed watering site for wildlife.
- Remove cattails encroaching on a pond or waterway.
- Place fencing around trees and bushes to prevent beaver and deer damage.
- Remove Tamarisk from waterways.
- Create a large wildflower planted garden for butterflies.
- Construct and install bird feeders at senior citizens homes.
- Plant trees and shrubs to make visual and noise barriers between a road and a park.
- Construct and place bat boxes to increase the number of bats to eat more mosquitoes.

# PROJECT HINTS

*Please consider these “hints” when considering and planning your project:*

- Do a project that has lasting effects.
- Determine what tasks must be done by adults before you begin.
- Secure and wear proper safety clothing and equipment.
- Train adults and youth on proper tool use.
- Tell all workers why this project is important.
- Contact your local newspaper about your project and when you will be doing it.

**Safety First:** Safety comes through proper training and supervision. Be sure to read the Power Tools Guidelines at [www.longspeakbsa.org/health/LPCpowertools.pdf](http://www.longspeakbsa.org/health/LPCpowertools.pdf). Only adults can use chainsaws and they need to be certified in chainsaw operation by an authorized trainer. Obtain from the agency or other sources necessary safety equipment such as work gloves, safety helmets, eye protection, etc. Chemicals are to be handled by adults, but only after proper training concerning care and application.

**Let’s talk trash:** Trash and litter pick-ups can be very useful as projects but seldom do they leave a lasting impression or do they allow the participant to feel as though his skills and talents were well used. This type of project is probably okay if it is conducted as a part of a larger effort of site adoption, but it should not be a stand-alone project as Scouts and adults both tire of this kind of work very fast.

**Suggest a Project to the Natural Resources Agency:** Prior to meeting with a local natural resources agency visit one of their areas to observe what might be needed. Look for forestry, trail work, erosion, facility, wildlife, and other needs. Find something your unit would be interested in doing, and suggest it to the agency director or manager.

**Consider Project Costs:** The intent of adopting an area is not to save money for agencies, cities, counties or states but it certainly will help them do so. The main reason is to help the environment! But in these difficult economic times financial considerations may enter into the mix for accomplishing projects. In most cases the natural resources agency will probably cover equipment and material costs. However, where this is not possible, the Scout unit may consider conducting a fundraising project or two to cover expenses. It is okay to raise funds through a project such as a car wash, pancake breakfast, etc., or use some of your popcorn sale profits. **HOWEVER, it is NOT okay to solicit funds from businesses, foundations, or individuals.** Your Scout unit could apply for a LPC Conservation Grant, but funds are limited. See the “conservation page” on the Longs Peak Council website.

## SELECTING A PROJECT ADVISOR

Your Scout unit should select an adult “project advisor or director”. This person could be someone who is well versed in natural resources management or perhaps to the project’s content. In some cases the community park, county open space, natural area, wildlife refuge, national park, federal forest, or some other important outdoor environment will also appoint a project leader to work with your Scout unit. In most cases, the project advisor will be found among your current adult leadership, among your parent group, or in your chartered partner organization.

# NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY INFORMATION

***Give this general information sheet to the natural resources agency whose property or project you will be adopting.***

**WHAT IS IT?** – An effort by the Longs Peak Council, BSA, to have each Scout pack, troop, or crew across the council – almost 500 of them! – adopt a LOCAL open space, park, wildlife refuge, or other environmental area in an effort to conduct meaningful conservation projects.

**WHAT KIND OF PROJECT SHOULD THEY DO?** – They should do a “conservation” project that benefits the environment in some respect. The project might involve recreation or facilities, such as trail; but the focus should be on natural resources and conservation. The project adoption should be significant enough to last the year with perhaps at least quarterly service sessions that match the capabilities of the Scout group. When the project adoption is completed they should be able to stand back and look at it and say: “I helped make a difference!”

**WHY PARTICIPATE?** – In the first place your agency probably has something that needs to be done. But consider these: youth in your community need positive and meaningful things to do, they need to develop a respect for nature and conservation, they need to have an investment in the future of their community, and they need to be able to look back in adulthood and say “I helped make a difference”. In addition: does your budget allow you to do everything you want to do?

**PROJECT ADVISOR** – Your agency should appoint a “project advisor” who serves as the contact person to the Scout unit, and who helps in developing the project and bringing it to completion. The Scout unit will also appoint a “project advisor”, so both groups will have a project contact person.

**SCOUT UNIT INFORMATION** – There are three main types of Scout units:

**Cub Scouts** – consisting of Tiger Cubs (grade 1), Wolf Cubs (grade 2) Bear Cubs (grade 3) and Webelos Scouts (grades 4 & 5). Cub Scouts are in “packs” with sub-groups in “dens”. Packs can range from 6 to 100 members, but remember, they are small boys with short spans of attention. Also, they tend to have high levels of parent participation, and they really like to have fun.

**Boy Scouts** – consisting of those who have finished grade 5 up to age 18. Boy Scouts are in “troops” with sub-groups called “patrols”. Generally, troops are 10 to 20 members in size, but some can have 30 to 60 members. Most are experienced in the outdoors. Larger troops tend to have lots of adult leader help. Some Boy Scouts may want to use the project adoption to complete natural resource related merit badge requirements or complete an Eagle Scout Award project.

**Venturers** – teenagers – boys and girls – who have finished grade 8 and up to age 21. Venturers are in “crews” that tend to be 6 to 20 members in size. They are “bigger” in size, but in some cases this may be their first real outside physical work project. They will want to be involved in leadership and decision making related to their project adoption. Some may want to use the project adoption to meet award requirements.

## LOCAL ADOPTING SCOUT UNIT CONTACT INFORMATION:

PACK/TROOP/CREW & NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT LEADER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY / STATE / ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_



## THE INSURANCE QUESTION

A question that may come up from a natural resources agency is that of insurance, both personal health and liability:

All **registered** members of the Boy Scouts of America in the Longs Peak Council are covered by a limited health and sickness insurance policy that covers all registered members on Scouting outings and activities, including transportation to and from those activities. See the Longs Peak Council's health and safety webpage for details [www.longspeakbsa.org/health/](http://www.longspeakbsa.org/health/). Please note those who are not registered members of the BSA are **NOT COVERED!** That includes parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles, dogs, cats, and more. As a general statement, the National BSA liability insurance coverage covers all who may be doing things on behalf of Scouting. It also covers all who are involved as registered Scouting leaders. It does not cover leaders or organizations in cases of negligence and/or illegal activities.



**PLEASE USE LEAVE NO TRACE CAMPING  
PRINCIPLES WHEN WORKING ON YOUR  
CONSERVATION PROJECTS, AND  
REMEMBER TO ALWAYS RECYCLE!**

## SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AVAILABLE

Scouting's **World Conservation Award** requirements may be completed by each Scout participating.

National BSA **William T. Hornaday Conservation Award "Unit Certificate"**. Complete requirements as listed on the application, and see the "Hornaday Awards" conservation webpage for details.

**Project SOAR Patch** – for youth and adult participants after at least three hours of conservation service.



## BRAND YOUR PROJECT WITH A SIGN

After obtaining permission from your partner natural resources agency, construct a nice sign to show your community that your pack/troop/crew is involved in helping to take care of this natural resources area. Place it at a location approved by the natural resources agency, and keep it looking sharp over the years.

