



Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust
Preserving the land  Protecting the future

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

November 2017

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering with the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust! We are happy to have you as part of our organization. You have joined a unique group of nature-loving individuals like yourself, dedicated to the scenic rural character and ecological health of our region.

We know you will enjoy your work with us and hope that you achieve a deep sense of satisfaction through your vital role in the Land Trust's success.

If at any time you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for contributing your time, and we wish you an excellent volunteer experience.

Sincerely,



Howard Clifford
President



Who We Are and What We Do

The Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT) is a non-profit charitable organization that works in and on behalf of the people and communities in the region, both to acquire lands for preservation, and to help landowners preserve their lands for the long term. MMLT is an independent organization, not a government agency. As a registered charity incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act, it can work directly and flexibly with landowners interested in permanently protecting natural heritage, often bringing the support of a number of tax benefits.

The MMLT is a member of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA), a province wide umbrella organization for the several dozen land trusts in the province. OLTA provides professional training and workshops for volunteers, directors, and employees of land trusts.



Our Mission

To legally protect and steward private lands having ecological, biodiverse, aesthetic, and cultural value and to foster engagement with wilderness.

Determining Which Lands to Protect

- 🐾 A Land Trust can only consider properties that meet exacting standards based on sound ecological science and cultural resource assessment criteria. Such criteria include:
 - Diversity of Habitat
 - Nationally/provincially designated rare species
 - Old growth forest
 - Significant heritage buildings or landscape
 - High wilderness quality
 - Bog, fen or large marsh
- 🐾 Consideration of the broader landscapes to identify conservation needs and priorities (1500 acres in Lanark County where populations pressures are small is as significant as 15 acres along the Carp Ridge where development pressures are severe)
- 🐾 With the support and cooperation of private and public landowners, field work is carried out to identify the most ecologically valuable natural areas.
- 🐾 At the request and with the consent of property owners, site assessments are conducted using specific evaluation criteria common to Ontario land trusts.

Who We Are and What We Do

Long Term Management and Protection

- 🐾 Land Trust properties and easements are monitored regularly by a knowledgeable individual or a team of trained local volunteers.
- 🐾 Stewardship Endowment Funds cover ongoing costs of ownership.
- 🐾 Properties may be subject to specific management actions aimed at enriching the natural values.
- 🐾 Land Trusts may establish or participate in conservation training programs to teach volunteers about management techniques to be used on properties for which the MMLT takes responsibility.

Our Guiding Principles

- 🐾 To champion land conservation and the rights of all species to exist.
- 🐾 To practice the best standards of stewardship for the benefit of plants, animals, and landscapes.
- 🐾 To foster a respectful relationship between people and natural spaces.
- 🐾 To connect people with nature's healing power to meet their physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs.
- 🐾 To encourage community engagement and collaborative initiatives.
- 🐾 To lead in innovative approaches.



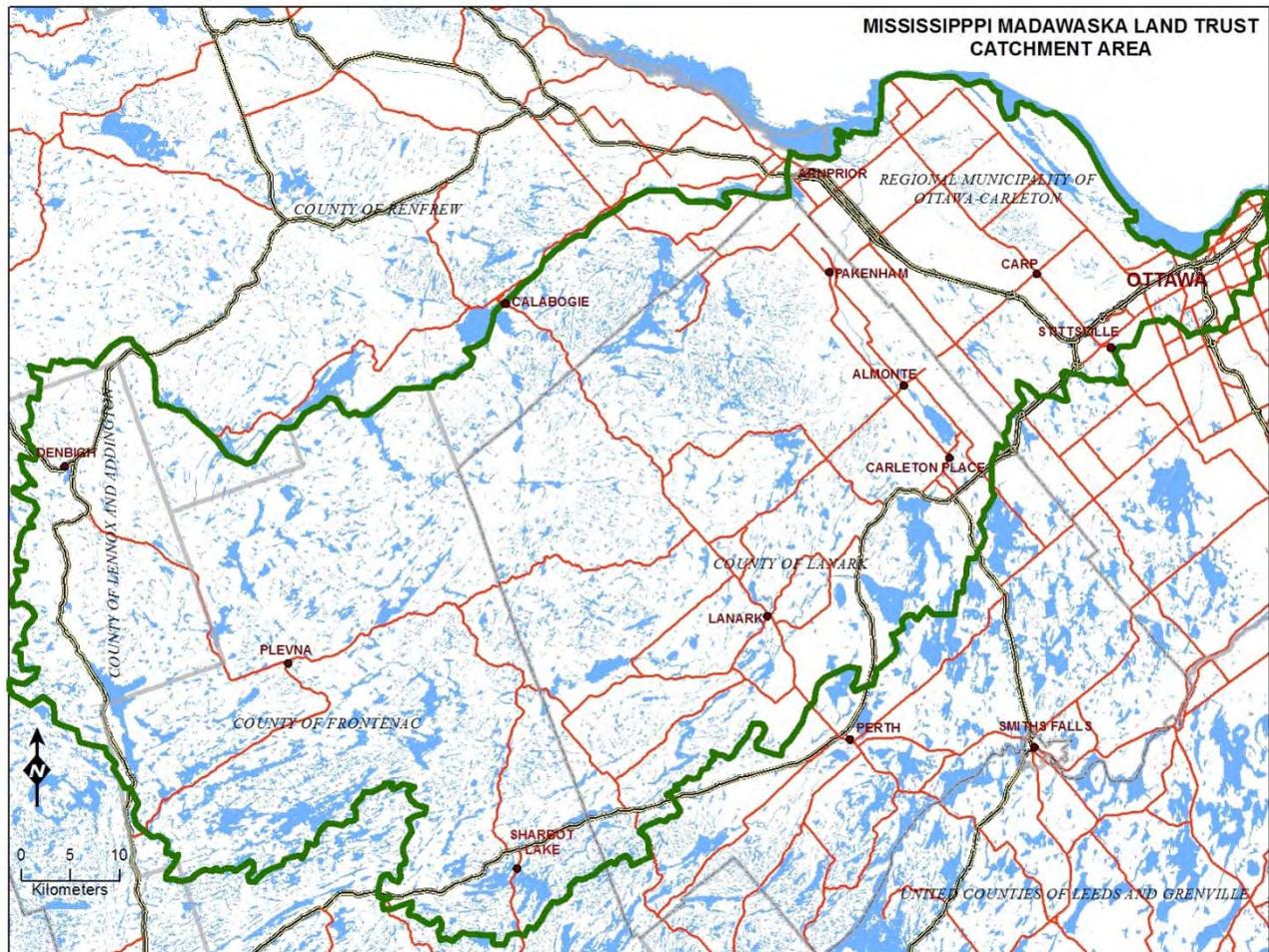
When the Land Trust takes on this enormous responsibility, it does so with serious consideration. It could not do so without the support of a strong membership and with hundreds of volunteers willing to share the responsibility.

Our Special Region

The Land Trust Area

The MMLT covers an area that extends from the western part of the City of Ottawa in the east to Bon Echo Provincial Park and Hwy. 41 in the west; from Sharbot Lake in the south to the lower Madawaska River in the north.

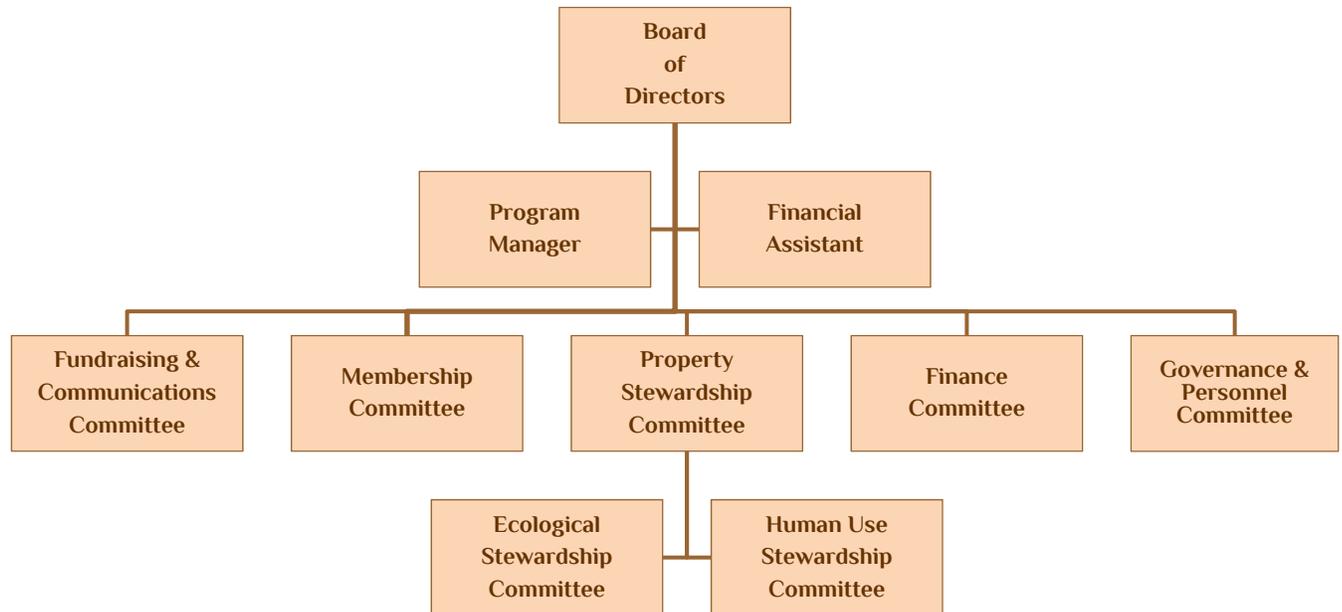
This region is geologically very complex and variable, comprised of both shield and highlands of granite, marble, gravel ridges, and lowland clay plains. Because both upland natural areas and wetlands still abound, the region as a whole is vital to wildlife preservation and to species and ecosystem diversity. Significant parts of these lands are still undisturbed which enables natural qualities to continue uninterrupted. A map of the Land Trust area is shown below.



The Organization

The MMLT is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors and currently has two part-time paid staff. Volunteers may be invited to assist on one of several Board Committees.

Volunteer opportunities at the MMLT are many and varied, so it is important to have an understanding of how volunteer activities are integrated into our work and management.



Board of Directors

The board is responsible for effectively pursuing the success of the MMLT's mission through determining policy and approving actions in all areas including human resources, program, planning, finance, development, and community relations.



Directors are also responsible for the quality of land transactions and the fiscal operations of the organization. In addition, Directors help ensure that the organization's programs address community needs and best promote the organization to the general public.

Back Row: Don Johnston, Art Goldsmith, Howard Clifford, Bethany Armstrong, Bob Betcher. Front Row: Donna Davidson, Janet Mason, Judy Buehler, Cathy Keddy, Bobby Clarke, Mary Vandenboff. Absent: Steve Katze.

The Organization

Board Committees

The MMLT has a number of committees which focus on specific activities of the board. Each is chaired by a board member but may include qualified volunteers from the MMLT membership. All committees bring forward recommendations to the board for the final decision. For our committees, we need special skills such as real estate law, accounting, fundraising, marketing, ecology, and volunteer management.

Finance Committee

The purpose of this committee is to assist the Board in fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities by overseeing of the financial reporting processes, internal control systems and by coordinating communication between the Board and the external reviewers and/or auditors.

Fundraising & Communications Committee

The purpose of the Fundraising & Communications Committee is to raise the funds required by MMLT to meet its objectives, to promote its activities and increase its visibility in the community.

Membership Committee

The purpose of the Membership Committee is to help find ways to recruit and welcome new members to the MMLT, and to support and inform active engagement by members in the activities of the MMLT. The Committee will ensure the maintenance and protection of membership records.

Property Stewardship Committee

The Property Stewardship Committee oversees the stewardship of properties protected by the MMLT and consists of two sub-committees that manage their respective responsibilities as follows:

- The Ecological Stewardship Committee
- The Human Use Stewardship Committee

Governance & Personnel Committee

The purpose of the Governance and Personnel Committee is two-fold:

- To oversee the long-term stability of the MMLT through the establishment of a governance framework and oversight of succession planning, recruitment and orientation of board directors; and
- To assist the Board in fulfilling its obligations relating to personnel matters and to establish a plan of continuity and development of staff.

Volunteer Opportunities

Additional Volunteer Activities

In addition to the volunteer opportunities on Board Committees, the Land Trust has a variety of activities that may require less time commitment but are equally important to achieving our conservation goals. We welcome any help whether a few hours, days or ongoing.

Following are some areas where volunteer help would be welcomed.

Soliciting Donations/Grant-Writing

Perhaps you are one of those amazing individuals who has a natural gift for inspiring donors to support a worthy cause. You may have the knack for grant-writing too. Maybe you've been involved in nature conservation for many years and know a lot of people who would gladly support our charity if they only knew about it. We always need passionate fundraisers who are able to convince others that MMLT is worthy to be their charity of choice.

Writing/Photography

The Land Trust publishes a website and regular newsletters. We soon plan to launch a blog and a Facebook page. Your natural story-telling ability is just looking for such venues to express itself. And what's a story without a picture? Any one of our publications could be the perfect forum for your inspiring description of a recent hike at High Lonesome, the amusing tale about your surprise encounter, or your careful description, with photo, of the rare species you discovered. We welcome enthusiastic scribes and photographers!

Publicity/Media Relations

Even if you're no expert on flora or fauna, your experience in PR could make a wonderful contribution to our publications. We hold fundraising events several times a year and getting a good response is so important to our cause. There are so many competing events and your persuasive skills could make a big difference. Your familiarity with media relations has huge advantages for a small non-profit organization.

Event Helper

When our events draw a large crowd, many hands are required to make everything run smoothly. From the smiling face that greets you to the person registering people to the group who set up and tear down all the tables and chairs, every little bit helps. Even if you can't make it to the event, distributing the posters around town is crucial to its success. No expertise needed – just willing hands.

Volunteer Opportunities

Guided Hikes

The MMLT board shares a deep belief that nature heals. We want groups to use our nature reserves for educational purposes, recreational outings, nature walks and simply being outdoors. We need informed guides willing to learn the special features and the story behind our special properties. If you have specific ecological expertise, we will happily organize an event around your speciality, be it mushrooms, mosses or musk turtles.

Trail & Field Work

Maybe you live nearby and like to hike the trails at the nature reserve frequently, so you've become quite familiar with them. You know them so well you could even help install signage. You've often moved fallen branches out of your path without a thought. Trail clearing is such an important contribution, especially after a big wind storm or a winter ice storm when trails quickly become impassable. At such times we organize a gathering and work in teams to clear fallen trees or improve sections of a trail. Not only is important work accomplished, but you can meet others who share your enjoyment of this special place.

Field Data Collection

When we first undertake the responsibility for a property we take an initial inventory of species observed there. Our Ecosystem Evaluation and Management Committee makes several field trips to the property during different seasons to gather information. Later, when developing Management Plans or Restoration Plans for a property, additional data may be required. Your expertise in data collection could of be invaluable assistance to us. Whatever your specialty -- botany, entomology, herpetology, ornithology, mycology or ichthyology -- we need all of them. Informed generalists are also welcomed.

Monitoring Properties

When you love and know a property very well, all the tiny changes are quickly noticed. You won't miss evidence of natural disturbances such as trail obstructions or beaver damage and human disturbances such as tree-cutting, bark stripping, or unauthorized vehicle access. You'll quickly learn how and when to recommend any remediation. With training, volunteers can help us monitor our properties by completing a Site Inspection Report.

Restoring Properties

If some areas of our properties have been degraded by previous human activities, we would like to restore them to their original, natural state. This might mean the removal of invasive species, reintroduction of native plants and trees and thinning of crowded saplings to accelerate the return of a native forest. If this type of work appeals to you and you'd like to lend your hands, tools, equipment and stamina, we will provide the leadership and guidance to the task at hand.



Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

Since its incorporation in 2003, the Land Trust has been dedicated to maintaining its good standing in the community. We are respected in the region because of the importance of our mission, the quality of our work, and the dedication and professionalism of our staff and all of our volunteers. In order for the Land Trust to maintain its commitment to the goals of our mission and to realize those goals, all of our volunteers must be the best possible representatives of our organization.

To that end, we ask that you learn about our general philosophy and become sufficiently aware of how the Land Trust works operationally and functions in the community.

Please read the following guidelines carefully, and please ask questions of the Land Trust staff regarding any issues about which you are unclear. A well-informed and well-trained volunteer force will be key to the Land Trust's long-term success. We look forward to many more conservation achievements through the work of our high caliber and dedicated volunteers.



Disclosing Conflicts of Interest

The effectiveness of the MMLT depends upon its credibility and reputation for fairness. Therefore, the Board of Directors must avoid conflicts of interest or even the appearance of conflicts, and this policy applies equally to the MMLT's advisors, employees, and volunteers.

Though the Directors are held to stricter standard in their positions as policy developers, all Land Trust staff and **certain volunteers, depending on their area of work, may be asked to sign a Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Statement** to assure that conflicts of interest are always disclosed and properly handled.

Such conflicts may come about in many contexts, but generally arise when an action or association with the Land Trust benefits not only the Land Trust, but may also benefit an individual. It is predictable that individual Directors, as landowners, professionals, and active community members may occasionally encounter situations where a real or perceived conflict exists.

Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

Our Conflict of Interest Policy describes how these occasions will be handled:

- No volunteer shall benefit financially from his or her association with the Land Trust or profit from the Land Trust, its name or properties.
- If a volunteer has an actual, potential or perceived personal, professional or financial interest in an issue that comes before the Land Trust, the volunteer shall fully disclose this interest to Land Trust as appropriate. The staff and/or Board, after due inquiry into the disclosure of any potential conflict of interest, shall determine whether said potential conflict is, or should be deemed to be, an actual conflict of interest.
- The volunteer shall not be present for any final board discussion or vote on the issue or on any potential conflict, and shall not attempt to influence the board.
- Volunteers shall keep information learned during the course of Land Trust business confidential when the information concerns activities of the Land Trust that are not generally a matter of public record.



Confidentiality

Volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of land trust information pertaining to the work they do as a volunteer. **Volunteers specifically assigned to assist with data management that works with records containing personal or financial information or who serve on a Board Committee will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement with the organization.** Additionally, volunteers may learn information that has not been released to the public or is not intended for the public. Volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of that information.



Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

Communication with Landowners

Proper communication between a landowner and Land Trust staff and volunteers is vital to the Land Trust's success in placing easements on properties and to the Land Trust's reputation in the community. Please treat all landowners with utmost respect in any exchanges or communications including, but not limited to, on-site monitoring of easements.

The following are a list of key points to remember when interacting with a landowner on behalf of the Land Trust:

- Do not give advice in any capacity, including but not limited to legal advice and/or advice on property maintenance.
- Be respectful of the landowner's goals for their property. In agreeing to place a conservation easement on their property, a landowner is making an important and permanent decision. Communications prior to the easement placement, after the easement has been accomplished, and during monitoring, for example, should always be informed by your understanding of the magnitude of the landowner's choice to permanently protect his or her property. Be appreciative of what a landowner is doing for the Land Trust and for our community.
- Do not make promises or guarantees to a landowner on behalf of the Land Trust.
- Please refer to Land Trust staff any questions or concerns on the part of a landowner that you are not sure of how to address. You can respond with politeness and respect by assuring the landowner that, though you cannot address their concern yourself, you will promptly relay it to Land Trust staff who will address the issue specifically and in a timely manner.



Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

Photo Release

The MMLT reserves the right to utilize photos taken during Land Trust meetings, events, and other Land Trust related activities to be used in, but not limited to newsletters, publications, press, brochures and flyers.

Please inform the Land Trust's staff if you do not want your photo to be used by the MMLT. In addition, please do not use publicly, in any capacity, photos you may take of Land Trust events or landowner properties.

Please request specific permission from the Land Trust to publicly use any and all photos taken while in a volunteer capacity for the Land Trust.

Safety

Your safety is of utmost concern to us. We ask that all volunteers follow common sense safety guidelines when working with the Land Trust. Consider the following tips at all times:



1. Be prepared with proper clothing, food, and water.
2. Understand the objectives of your assigned project.
3. Use proper safety equipment for the task at hand (i.e. gloves, helmet, etc.).
4. Ensure that all equipment is in good working condition.
5. Avoid working alone.
6. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
7. Avoid placing yourself in hazardous situations.
8. Don't attempt a job you are not qualified for.
9. In the event you are injured, please report the injury to the Land Trust's staff, or your supervisor, at once.
10. Bring a cell phone; know the property's address. FOR ANY EMERGENCY, CALL 911.

Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

Please read the following guidelines carefully:

- Walking properties requires an adequate amount of physical energy and should not be attempted if you are not feeling well, or if you have health concerns.
- Dress appropriately for the weather and remember bug/tick repellent, sunscreen, plenty of drinking water, and food if you are going to be out for a long period of time. Also, wear appropriate footwear.
- Be aware of the weather forecast and keep a close eye on any developing weather conditions that could endanger you in the field. Since rainstorms can develop suddenly, especially in summer months, always having an easy-to-carry rolled up rain poncho is a good idea.
- Be aware of your surroundings; poisonous plants and stinging insects are common throughout our area. Familiarize yourself with the identification of poison ivy and poison sumac in order to avoid learning about them the hard way!
- Remember to tuck pant legs into socks and wear hats and long sleeves to avoid tick problems.
- We suggest doing a full body tick check immediately after any time spent in the field.

General Responsibilities

As a volunteer for the Land Trust, we want you to feel comfortable and satisfied with the work that you do and with the interactions you have with the people around you. If you encounter a problem or a potential problem or conflict in your capacity as a volunteer for the Land Trust, please bring this to the attention of the staff or your supervisor immediately. Prompt reporting allows us to address any issues in a timely and appropriate manner and to provide resolutions to the problem or conflict quickly.



Also, please remember that in any and all capacities as our volunteer, you are a representative of the Land Trust. Therefore, it is important that you do not take it upon yourself to address a problem or conflict with any member of the public, other volunteers, or landowners that may arise during a volunteering task. Instead, please bring the issue to the Land Trust staff or board member who will then find the best way to resolve it.

Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

Logistics

The Land Trust will provide guidance for your assigned task. Orientation provides volunteers with information about the Land Trust's operations, guidelines and policies, easement monitoring, and other details relative to carrying out all tasks necessary to achieving our goals.

Volunteers are asked to fill out a volunteer registration form (located at the back of this manual). This form informs the Land Trust of your contact information and your volunteer preferences. We ask that you inform the Land Trust, if over the course of your tenure as a volunteer, any changes that need to be made to the information on this registration form. In particular, please update your information if your phone number, address, or email changes.

There are additional policy requirements for Board members and Board Committee members relative to their additional responsibilities within the Land Trust. If you are interested in serving on the Land Trust Board or being a member of a Committee, please speak directly with the staff or a current Board member.





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VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM

Name:

Address:

Town:

Province:

Postal Code:

Phone:

Email:

Emergency Contact:

Phone:

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES (PLEASE CHECK)

Writing

Trail & Field Work

Photography

Field Data Collection

Publicity/Media Relations

Monitoring Properties

Event Helper

Restoring Properties

Guided Hikes

Other:

Fundraising

Other:

Availability: weekdays weekends

COMMENTS

Please submit your form by email to admin@mmlt.ca or
mail to MMLT, 10970 Hwy 7, Carleton Place, ON K7C 3P1



WAIVER FOR VOLUNTEERS

I, _____ hereby agree to accept a position as a volunteer worker
Volunteer's Name
with the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT) and in so doing agree to comply with all policies, rules and regulations, which may be established by the MMLT from time to time. I also understand that failure to comply with said policies, rules and regulations may result in my immediate release as a volunteer.

I acknowledge that my services are provided strictly on a volunteer basis, without payment or compensation of any kind and without liability of any nature on behalf of the MMLT. I affirm that I am in good health, capable of participating in _____ and I accept as my
Volunteer Activity
personal risk the consequences of such participation. I also understand that I may refuse to perform any duty or task that I feel may place me or anyone else at personal risk. I will not participate in this activity if I am under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

I understand that in performing any volunteer task, there exist risks of injury or personal harm. On behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives or executors, I hereby release, discharge, indemnify and hold harmless the MMLT (including its volunteers, directors, employees and agents) from any and all claims, causes of action or demands of any nature or cause, even though such injuries and damages may result from the negligence of the MMLT and/or its volunteers, directors, employees and agents; including costs and attorney fees incurred or sustained by me in any way connected with my services for the MMLT, including but not limited to accidents or injuries.

In the event of an accident or medical problem suffered by me, I consent to the MMLT seeking out the appropriate medical care required.

I also understand that public relations are an important part of the work of the MMLT. On behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives and executors, I agree to allow the MMLT to use any photographs, films, videotapes or other visual representations taken of me in my volunteer services as aids in public relations efforts.

Signature

Date



Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust
 Preserving the land  Protecting the future

**Confidentiality & Conflict of Interest Agreement
 for Volunteers/Employees and Contractors**

In keeping with the intent of the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT) “Privacy and Security Policy”, the undersigned acknowledges that all information concerning MMLT, its employers, contractors, directors, members or volunteers to which the undersigned has or may have access through his/her volunteer activity or employment with or engagement by MMLT (the “Confidential Information”) is confidential and is held by the him/her solely for the benefit of MMLT. The undersigned agrees that he/she shall not, except as authorized by the MMLT Board or required by his/her duties, reveal to any person or corporation, any such confidential information. The undersigned acknowledges he/she has received and reviewed a copy of the Privacy and Security Policy and he/she further agrees that he/she will abide by the Privacy and Security Policy.

The undersigned also acknowledges that he/she has received and reviewed a copy of MMLT’s “Conflict of Interest Policy” and agrees that he/she will abide by the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Per Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust

Per Volunteer/Employee

 Signature

 Signature

 Print Name and Position

 Print Name

 Date

 Date

Please submit your form by email to admin@mmlt.ca or
 mail to MMLT, 10970 Hwy 7, Carleton Place, ON K7C 3P1



Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust

10970 Hwy 7, Carleton Place, ON K7C 3P1

613-253-2722 admin@mmlt.ca

mmlt.ca