

Ice Age Trail Volunteers & Fire

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and built and maintained by volunteers, like you, who are largely overseen by the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Volunteers who are under formal Volunteer Services Agreements (either group agreements through Chapter membership, or individual agreements) within the NPS Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) Program, are afforded the same protections as regular government employees regarding medical reimbursement claims for work-related injuries, as well as protections from Tort liability. Additionally, the Alliance offers some insurance coverage to volunteers.

Since the NPS affords volunteers the same protections as federal employees regarding medical and tort coverage, VIPs are required to hold equivalent qualifications as NPS staff for the type of work being performed. These requirements are spelled out in the NPS's job descriptions found at https://www.nps.gov/iatr/getinvolved/supportyourpark/iatr_vip_program.htm.

Currently, no volunteers participating in fire management for the Trail carry the qualifications required by the federal government for employees working with wildland or prescribed fire. This means volunteers working with fire are not (and have not been) eligible for VIP coverage through the NPS. Volunteers and staff working at Alliance-sponsored work days where fire is utilized have some coverages provided they follow the Alliance's protocols – see attached IATA Burn Policy.

There may be opportunity in the future to train Trail volunteers to meet federal wildland and prescribed fire qualification standards, but for the time being, Alliance volunteer hours will be tracked separately from NPS volunteer hours when there is fire on a workday. The Alliance will continue to track hours using separate volunteer sign-in sheets (see attached) as these hours cannot currently be counted as NPS VIP hours.

If you have questions about burning with the Alliance contact Eva Ballering, Eva@iceagetrail.org, 608-798-4453 x242. If you have questions about VIP coverage contact the NPS Volunteer Coordinator for the IAT, Dan Watson, at Daniel_watson@nps.gov.

Thank you for volunteering.

Sincerely,
Eva Ballering,
Ice Age Trail Alliance