

Mission:Wolf Staff Volunteers

www.MissionWolf.com • kent@missionwolf.com
PO Box 211 • Silver Cliff, CO 81252 • 719-859-2157

So you want to work with wolves.

Here is information on how to volunteer your time and energy at the refuge.

We gratefully accept help ranging from one hour to a lifetime.

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer here at the Mission:Wolf Sanctuary. The rigors of caring for any animal are great and doing so for wild-spirited animals such as wolves teaches us a great many lessons in patience and determination. These demands, coupled with the isolation we've surrounded ourselves in, keep life at the sanctuary interesting to say the very least. To help you prepare for your volunteer experience, we have put together a brief packet of information that will inform you a little more of our goals, facilities, chores, expectations of volunteers, daily life and of course, the interactions with our four-legged friends, in the hope that your time spent here will be as productive as possible for both you and Mission: Wolf.

Mission: Wolf is operated by 7-8 key staff positions (listed below). These positions may be filled at present by full time staff but may become vacant at any time and can be filled by motivated people who can dedicate a substantial period of time and energy to the position.

Core Staff:

6 month commitment

- Education and Office Director
- Animal Caretaker
- Refuge Director
- Refuge Educator

Support Staff:

2 month commitment

- Assistant Animal Caretaker
- Construction Coordinator
- Office Assistant

All of these positions require a lot of stamina, hard work, and motivation. If you are interested in any of these positions you must possess these qualities. We do not offer formal internships because the nature of this job is one of unpredictability. The Staff is expected to fulfill their own responsibilities as well as to work on group projects, and those unexpected things that happen to arise. The Core Staff, in return for their commitment, is guaranteed housing, all their food, and a stipend of \$25 a week. The Support Staff is given housing (usually in a teepee, trailer, tent, or bus), all their food, and a stipend of \$15 a week. Additional volunteer staff, which is limited to five people are welcome to stay between one and six weeks, receive a place to camp, a community fire pit, and use of our outdoor kitchen, and possibly some staple foods.

If these positions are filled or you do not wish to dedicate a long period of time to the refuge but you still wish to help, we still require assistance in all of the above positions. **All we request is that you do not take any resources away from the refuge.** This means you need to provide and cook your own food, (with limited access to the outdoor kitchen), provide your own water, tent, sleeping bag and pad. And if you have a positive attitude with energy to spare, we have countless projects in need of help.

In other words it is up to you to create your own experience.

1 hour – two weeks: You bring your own food, tent, sleeping bag, and transportation.

Two weeks – two months: You bring your tent, sleeping bag we provide food and use of outdoor kitchen

Two months – six months: You arrive at M:W with sleeping bag, we provide Tipi, food, local transportation and use of staff kitchen, \$15 per week stipend.

Six months and longer: You bring your own sleeping bag, we provide tipi or cabin with woodstove, food, local transportation, use of staff kitchen, \$25 per week stipend.

We do not set limits based on a volunteers age, but rather more on **ability, motivation and maturity**. To date we have received productive help from folks ranging from a 12-year old to retirees- it is all totally dependent on the individual and to what degree they are able to motivate and provide for themselves in an informal, unstructured work environment. Regardless of ability or experience, there is always a task in need of attention. The one request we do make of any person wishing to come and contribute by sharing their time, energy and resources is to start by spending a day or two at the sanctuary prior to committing to an extended amount of time. This is not only enjoyable, but allows you to see the remote and primitive setting of the refuge and the nature of the work that needs doing. Then, as you become more familiar with the workings and happenings of the sanctuary and of the resident wolves, we can decide how and where your talents can be best applied.

FACILITIES

The Mission:Wolf Sanctuary is comprised of 37 adult resident wolves and wolf-dog hybrids, 2 full time directors, 2-8 permanent staff (seasonal), and three (soon to be four) buildings. We are located in the remote foothills of the Wet Mountains in southern Colorado. We have a semi-reliable cell phone, but our office, e-mail, and phone are 20 miles from the refuge. We are 16 miles (of mostly dirt roads) to the nearest gas pump, laundry, post office, convenience store, and restaurant, all located in Gardener. The nearest grocery store, drug store, motel, and showers are a 22-mile drive (40 min.) to Westcliffe. At an elevation of 9,300 feet, the sun's rays are intense, as are frequent storms and other violent weather conditions. This remoteness, so vital to the wolves and their care also makes life an everyday challenge to those who care for them, especially during the winter months (Nov.-Mar.). Because of this we suggest that first time volunteers come in the warmer months (April-Oct.).

Our water system is primitive and small and consists of a natural spring, gravity fed, to provide drinking water for the wolves and occasionally for humans too. A small solar pump feeds a limited supply of water from a well for staff use. During the colder months the pipes freeze and all water is hauled in buckets. Water is limited, valuable, and precious. Please be careful about wasting or using too much water. Also, be sure to check the storage tank level before using large amounts of water. If you are planning on a longer stay please ask a staff person to show you the water system.

An outhouse is available and we ask those who use it to please dispose of toilet paper in the buckets, not down the hole! We found ourselves digging and filling in our outhouse holes far too quickly and we hope that this system will slow that cycle down somewhat. Thanks for your patience and cooperation.

Although it is not absolutely necessary to have a car we've found that, of the volunteers who come and stay for an extensive period of time, those that have their own vehicle or transportation generally find life here a bit easier, if for no other reason than they are able to get away when and if the urge strikes. Occasionally a Mission: Wolf vehicle will need to go to town but it is best not to be dependent on others for your transportation needs. For the short term volunteers the ability to fully take care of yourself will usually require trips to town to make phone calls, shower, do laundry, get food, etc... and therefore requires a car. Remember, town is a long journey away on a rough dirt road.

For those with four-legged companions of your own: We ask you to leave them at home. The wolves can become agitated by dogs, thereby making their captive lives stressful; obviously not something we want to encourage!

RULES OF THE PACK

For the protection and peace of the resident wolves we have compiled some guidelines to follow while living at the sanctuary:

Respect and Honesty

These are the most important attitudes an individual needs to possess if they are to help Mission: Wolf. By developing and sharing respect for the wolf we will hopefully develop respect for our environment and ultimately for each other.

M:W RULES

1. Never attempt to enter any enclosure on your own. Kent Weber or Tracy Brooks must accompany all visitors/volunteers. No exceptions!!!! Do not enter or attempt to enter any enclosure under the influence of any medications, prescriptions or otherwise, especially alcohol!

2. Regardless of your relationship with the animals, never put your fingers, hands, arms, clothing, or any other objects through or close to the fences. It is disrespectful, it can be in violation of the wolves' territory, and it is also very dangerous.

3. When entering or exiting enclosures, do it calmly but quickly. Avoid holding gates open and always be prepared to block or catch any sneaky wolves by backing out of the gate while keeping an eye on the animals.

4. After you have been shown around the sanctuary, and introduced to the resident wolves, you are free to visit the outside of the wolves' enclosures and sit quietly by the gates. Please do not walk around any enclosures without permission. **Do not yell or attempt to break up any wolf fights or dominance battles.** The animals may seem to be fighting but most often they are simply performing a very important ritual in their social structure. Notify any staff member if you feel that something is not right with a wolf or any enclosure/gate.

5. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times! No children are allowed in any of the enclosures. Whenever children are present, extra energy and attention is needed to ensure them a safe visit. Remember most parents are themselves so mesmerized by the wolves, they can easily lose sight of their children.

6. Roughhousing, yelling, partying, running, and general excitement are strongly discouraged. This is a refuge for wolves. They can be very sensitive to our behavior. Please limit these activities to the adjoining forest.

7. Some of the animals are very **shy** and for that reason we ask that you **respect their space** and not go near these enclosures without the permission of a staff person.

8. There are many wonderful places to walk and explore while out hiking around the sanctuary. Please enjoy the beauty and mountain scenery. **However, we ask that no one hike or walk around the wolf enclosures.** This will only scare and upset the animals. Ask a staff person for details.

9. Tools and Tasks- If you have any doubts of how to use a tool or complete a project ask for assistance. If something is broken tell a staff person immediately so that the situation can be corrected.

ON-GOING AND UP-COMING WORK PROJECTS

Our primary goal is to provide the best possible life we can for the resident wolves. This will mean that for the next ten to fifteen years Mission: Wolf will have plenty to do. There will be both physical and lighter tasks that will need attention, so regardless of ability or experience, there is always a task that needs help doing. Your job as a volunteer/staff is to have the motivation to see a need and complete the task independently.

Want to feed a wolf?

As a wolf the one thing that is ever present on your mind is food. Simply put, wolves live for food. Every three to seven days we grant them their wish. Since this is similar to wild conditions, competition among pack members is high. Most food is dead livestock (horse & cow) or road kill elk and deer. These

are not of butcher-block quality, they look and smell bad. This meat must be cut into small pieces and distributed to the seventeen enclosures evenly.

It is very important that everyone's belly gets full and a minimal amount of dominance displays are provoked.

All staff must participate in the feeding. Since different packs have different needs, each has its own feeding strategies. Work closely with an experienced 'feeder' the first few times. **All food is to be thrown over the fence.** No hand or fence feeding! If you have to feed a piece too large to throw over, please ask a staff member to assist you. It is also very important that the animals have **fresh drinking water** at all times. This may require hauling buckets of water from the spring.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ENTER ANY ENCLOSURE ON YOUR OWN, FOR ANY REASON.

Our priority is to provide the wolves with as much space and habitat as possible and we are ever expanding their enclosures by adding fencing to existing pens. Currently, we have seventeen enclosures comprising approximately thirty acres. Once completed, Mission: Wolf will have roughly 50 acres of habitat available to our resident wolves. Fencing is a job that requires a great deal of strength and stamina as all the hauling of fence rolls, posts, etc. is done by human labor. There are other tasks such as attaching ground and top mesh to the 6-8 foot tall chain link that doesn't require as much energy. Fencing is always on going and is a great job to do when large groups are willing to lend hand and muscle. Especially in the summer, most of the work involves a lot of heavy lifting and hauling.

LAND, CABINS AND LIFE

Most all of what you see here at Mission: Wolf is the result of a lot of hard work by many dedicated people. Please respect it and set examples for others to follow. The wolves attracts a wide variety of people and personalities and, at times, people who would have very little else in common suddenly find themselves living and working in close quarters with each other. This can be difficult and stressful, but can also be a tremendous experience in learning to relate to our own kind, then translating this learning to include love and respect for the wild environment. By living in harmony as a community, we have a lot to learn from and share with each other. To have a positive and happy community life, honest communication is needed. Be aware of how your habits affect others.

Everyone knows the reason behind recycling, so let's recycle as much as possible. This goes for compostable food waste as well. Our compost is vital to the health of our greenhouses.

Unfortunately, we attract a small minority of visitors who have not become accustomed to disposing of their waste in a sane fashion and the result is bits and pieces of trash scattered by the wind and time. Please be a hero and pick up any trash you see within fifty miles of the sanctuary.

All of our lights, computer, music and video are operated by PV solar panels and a windmill, and the electricity necessary for power tools and appliances is supplied by a gasoline-powered generator. Our electrical system is small and limited so please be conservative. Please ask any of the staff before operating electrical items.

Most jobs have their perks and ours is no exception. There are many pleasurable things to do while staying here, both here at the sanctuary and within local driving distance. Mission: Wolf is surrounded on two sides by National Forest land offering miles and miles of wilderness walks and hikes. We are only minutes away from the picturesque grandeur of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and less than a days travel to the Great Sand Dunes National Monument.

One last important thing: Please freely express any questions or problems you may have while you are here. The four or five permanent staff members started their time with Mission: Wolf as a first time

visitor/volunteer and will be available to offer assistance. Chances are, we have experienced similar situations and will be more than happy to help out if we can. Volunteers must take the initiative to find work to do and ask questions if you are not certain of something. Direct communication is a must. Hopefully, by reading this packet thoroughly, most, if not all, of your questions will be answered. If not, let us know.

Winter 2001