

Volunteer Quarterly

April / May / June 2026



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MaconCCD.org

Dates to Remember

Volunteer Recognition Dinner

*Richland Community College, Salon I & II
Thursday, April 9*

Join us for the 45th Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner. Registration begins at 5:30 pm, followed by a buffet dinner at 6 pm. Guests are welcome for a fee of \$20. RSVP to Jenny Garver by March 30.



Tidbits of Information

- **Holiday Closures:** Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed **April 5**. Administrative Offices will be closed **April 3, May 25, & June 19**.
- **Our Mission:** The mission of the Macon County Conservation District is to promote the conservation of natural and cultural resources by acquiring, maintaining, and restoring areas of natural and cultural significance within Macon County, and to protect and preserve those spaces for the education, recreation, and enjoyment of all its citizens in perpetuity.
- **Upcoming Special Events:** If you enjoy volunteering at special events, please mark your calendar for these upcoming opportunities: Festival of Spring (April 25), Independence Day 1860 (June 27), Astronomy Jamboree (August 8), Fall Harvest Festival (September 12), Prairie Pedal (September 27), Treat Trail (October 16-17), and the Candlelight Tour (November 14).
- **Email Updates:** Monthly volunteer updates are sent between newsletters via email. Please add JGarver@MaconCCD.org to your address book to help prevent messages from going to your spam folder. If you have not been receiving these updates, please contact Jenny Garver to be added to the volunteer email list.



Rock Springs Quilters

*Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9 -11 am*

Dulcimer Club

*Rock Springs Nature Center
Saturday, April 11 & 25, 10 am
Saturday, May 9 & 23, 10 am
Saturday, June 6 & 20, 10 am*



Acoustic Jam Session

*Rock Springs Nature Center
Sunday, April 12, May 10, &
June 14, 2 - 4 pm*



Vintage Base Ball Home Games

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, May 2, 12 pm- Squirrels vs. Voles
Saturday, May 16, 12 pm- Squirrels vs. Clippers*

60th Anniversary Conservation Area Walk

Saturday, May 9, 12 - 4 pm

Take a self-guided tour of our five Conservation Areas! At each site, a staff member will be available with information about the site and an activity. Learn what makes Macon County's greenspaces special and see what 60 years of conservation has done, right in our own backyards. \$5/person. Register online by May 8.



WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS!

- Native Garden-** Elizabeth Hoppe
- Natural Resources-** David White, Jane White
- Nest Box Monitor-** Gabrielle Baldrige, Heather Purdeu, Madison Schoenfeld
- Special Events-** Chase Miller
- Special Projects-** Christina Campbell
- Trail Monitor-** Elyssian Rawdin
- Wildlife Monitor-** Lizzie VanErt



Volunteer Program Update

Jenny Garver, CVA - Volunteer Coordinator

Did you know that April is Volunteer Appreciation Month? We have two special events to celebrate our volunteers:



#1 – The 45th Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner will take place on April 9. We will honor 30 volunteers for their dedicated service while also celebrating our 60th anniversary. Awards are presented for every four years of active service.

#2 – Volunteer Goodie Day will be held on April 25 during the Festival of Spring. Stop by the Information Desk during the festival to pick up a small goodie as our token of appreciation. Please note there is a limit of one goodie per volunteer.

In 2025, 412 volunteers contributed more than 9,600 hours of service. What an incredible achievement! The year 2026 is off to a strong start, with 138 volunteers logging over 1,050 hours in just January and February.

I've also been working on the three major goals mentioned in the last newsletter.



Goal One: Strengthening Volunteer Roles

We are reviewing current opportunities and developing new roles to better connect with our mission. A major project underway is creating position descriptions for all volunteer opportunities. Sixteen descriptions have been completed so far, with about twenty more to go. We are also updating the volunteer application and volunteer webpage.

Goal Two: Expanding the Impact of Natural Resources

Natural Resources volunteer opportunities have recently been updated to better focus and track volunteer efforts. Opportunities include: Invasive Plant Removal Crew, Native Garden Crew, Nest Box Monitor, Prescribed Fire Crew, Roots & Shoots Crew, Seed Collection, Seed Scattering, Trail Monitor, Volunteer Steward, and Wildlife Monitor. Wildlife Monitor and Volunteer Steward are new this year.



Goal Three: Enhancing Volunteer Technology

We are exploring options for an online volunteer management platform. Our goal is to adopt a system that allows volunteers to update their information, submit hours, and sign up for opportunities online. More details will be shared as plans fall into place. Options will continue to be available for volunteers without computer access.

Thank you for being a part of our volunteer team!



Volunteer Fun & Learning

Spring Volunteer Hikes

Wednesday, April 1, 2 pm- Sand Creek

Monday, April 6, 11 am- Friends Creek

Thursday, April 16, 1 pm- Griswold

Tuesday, April 21, 10 am- Rock Springs

Thursday, April 30, 12 pm- Fort Daniel



We invite volunteers to join us in exploring various Conservation Areas while observing local flora and fauna. Please meet us at the designated Conservation Area. Although RSVPs to Jenny Garver are appreciated, they are not required. If you do register, we will keep an eye out for you and will contact you if the volunteer hike is canceled due to weather conditions.



Astronomy Program Helpers

Woodbine Farm- 7306 Sefton Road, Dalton City

Wednesday, April 22, 10 am – 12 pm

Help bring astronomy to life for our community.

Astronomy Program Helpers work alongside knowledgeable staff to support telescope use and the StarLab dome, while welcoming visitors and helping create a safe, engaging experience for all. This training will cover how to set up, operate, and care for the equipment, and includes the chance to step inside the StarLab dome for a firsthand experience. Open to volunteers ages 18 and older. Please RSVP to Alysia Callison by April 21.

Volunteer Fun & Learning

Summer Camp Training

Rock Springs Nature Center
Washburn Classroom
Friday, May 29, 1- 2:30 pm



Prepare for an exciting summer! Join this training to assist camp counselors working with children ages 5 to 15. Volunteers help with activities such as games, crafts, and hikes while creating a fun and supportive camp experience. Summer Camp sessions run June 1 – July 31 at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Volunteers ages 13 and older are welcome to participate. For more information, to sign up, or to RSVP, contact Jenny Garver by May 28.

Summer Birds - Seldom Seen

Rock Springs Nature Center
Greenberg Auditorium
Friday, June 12, 10 am – 11:30 am



In the spring, we birdwatchers are thrilled to see colorful species, such as Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, and Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks in our yards. However, their whereabouts during the summer months often remain a mystery. Melody Arnold will shed light on the summer habits of these stunning birds through a visual presentation exploring their behaviors and seasonal patterns. Afterward, we will visit the Window on Wildlife and go on a trail walk to look for birds in summer. RSVP to Jenny Garver by June 10.

Volunteer Opportunities

Heirloom Garden Workdays

Homestead Prairie Farm Garden
Friday, April 10, 10 am - 12 pm
Saturday, May 9, 10 am – 12 pm



Join us in the Heritage Garden to lend a hand and learn along the way. On April 10, we'll be planting cool-season vegetable seeds, and on May 9, we'll move on to hardier vegetable crops. No experience or tools are required, and Master Gardeners will be on hand to assist with planting, share gardening tips, and answer your questions. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring garden gloves; if you have them, you're welcome to bring a trowel and/or hoe.

Volunteer Opportunities

Native Garden Workdays

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Thursday, April 9, 10 am – 12 pm
Thursday, April 23, May 28, & June 25, 10 am



The Macon County Master Naturalists are seeking volunteers to help maintain the native tier garden in front of the Nature Center along with new garden areas in the Hidden Hollow patio and on the west side of the Nature Center. These morning workdays will last one to two hours, depending on the amount of work needed in the garden. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own tools, including work gloves, a hand trowel, shovel, bucket, and hand pruners. The gardens showcase native prairie and woodland species. Please RSVP to either Jenny Garver or Melody Arnold (melody2a@hotmail.com) at least one day before each workday, so we know who to expect.



Festival of Spring

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, April 25, 12 – 4 pm

Celebrate the season by helping bring the annual Festival of Spring to life. Volunteers assist in a variety of areas, including the canoe rodeo, activity stations, prize table, photography, farmhouse tours, and more. This opportunity is open to individuals ages 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by April 17.



Honeysuckle Workday

Griswold Conservation Area
Saturday, May 2, 9 am -12 pm

Volunteers are needed to assist natural resources staff with the removal of bush honeysuckle inside the kame at Griswold Conservation Area. This workday will involve cutting shrubs while navigating uneven terrain, brushy areas, and loose rocks. Please wear long pants and sturdy shoes such as boots or tennis shoes and be prepared to get dirty. Tools and work gloves will be provided. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 16 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Mitch Lovgren by April 30.

Volunteer Opportunities

Independence Day 1860

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Homestead Prairie Farm*

Saturday, June 27, 6 – 8 pm

Step back in time and help celebrate Independence Day, 1860s style! Volunteers will assist with hands-on activities and help guide visitors through the Homestead Prairie Farm during this historic evening. It's a fun opportunity to interact with visitors while bringing history to life. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 13 and older. For more information, please contact Brent Wielt by June 18.



Historic Sites Tour Guide

Homestead Prairie Farm

Volunteers share the sights, sounds, and daily rhythms of 1860s rural Illinois through guided tours, educational programs, open houses, and special events at this rare pre-Civil War homestead.



Training, shadowing, and period clothing are provided, and interpretation is done in the third person, making it easy to get started. With a commitment of just an hour or two per month, this rewarding role offers a true “wow” moment—especially for younger visitors discovering life before electricity, phones, and modern technology. This opportunity is open to volunteers ages 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Invasive Species Crew

Various Conservation Areas

Join us in protecting Macon County's natural areas! Volunteers help remove non-native plants that threaten prairies, woodlands, and wetlands, giving native plants and wildlife the chance to thrive. Pop-up workdays will begin this season, offering flexible opportunities to get outside and make a real impact. Volunteers must be ages 18 and older. Contact Jenny Garver to be added to the interest list and receive details when emails go out in May to schedule upcoming workdays.

Nature Center Librarian

Rock Springs Nature Center

If you enjoy books, quiet conversation, and being part of a welcoming community, consider volunteering as a Library Assistant. This role is a wonderful fit for adults who enjoy sharing knowledge and helping others feel at home. Volunteers assist with checking materials and supplies in and out, keeping shelves organized, creating inviting displays, and helping visitors discover books on nature, wildlife, conservation, and local history. With flexible morning and afternoon shifts available, this low-stress, indoor opportunity offers a comfortable routine and a meaningful way to give back. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Volunteer Steward

Various Conservation Areas

Lead the way in restoring Macon County's natural areas by coordinating workdays, mentoring volunteers, and caring for prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Training and job shadowing are provided. You will gain the skills and confidence to guide others while making a real impact. This hands-on role combines teamwork, outdoor adventure, and conservation, giving you the chance to inspire others and help nature thrive. Flexible scheduling makes it easy to join in regularly or as your availability allows. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.

Woodshop Docent

Homestead Prairie Farm

Step into the 1860s and demonstrate historic woodworking techniques while interpreting the tools and skills used in a



pre-industrial world. Share with visitors how everyday items were crafted, repaired, and reused, creating hands-on, memorable learning experiences. Training and shadowing are provided, and interpretation is done in the third person to make getting started easy. This role is open to volunteers ages 18 and older, with a flexible commitment of just a few hours per month. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Volunteer Opportunities



Wildlife Monitor

Various Conservation Areas

Help support citizen science by monitoring wildlife across District conservation areas. Volunteers will help with bird studies, identifying species by sight and call, while also noting other animal activity observed along designated trails. Observations help staff track wildlife presence and habitat use at specific locations. For more information or to sign up, contact Taylor Buley.

Public Volunteer Events



1,000 Tree Planting Event

Fort Daniel Conservation Area

Saturday, April 18, 9 am

Help us celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Macon County Conservation District, the **45th anniversary of the Macon County Conservation Foundation**, as well as Arbor Day and Earth Day, by planting 1,000 trees at Fort Daniel Conservation Area. These trees will grow into an oak savanna that will benefit our community for generations.

Community members are invited to roll up their sleeves and take part in this hands-on fundraiser. Whether you come as an individual, family, club, business, or organization, you'll help plant something lasting—one tree at a time. To volunteer during this event, contact Ashton Dukeman. Find event details, pricing, sponsorship opportunities, and ways to get involved at:

<https://givebutter.com/1000TreesEvent>.



Sangamon River Cleanup

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Meet at Information Shelter

Saturday, April 25, 10 am – 12 pm

Help clear trash from the banks of the Sangamon River to make it a safer and more beautiful place for wildlife and people. Dress to get dirty and bring your own gloves. Bags will be provided. Come by yourself or bring the whole family. Organized groups should reach out to Alysia Callison in advance. Register and meet at the Rock Springs Information Shelter.

Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

The past few months have been filled with lots of planning, researching, and preparing for the busy spring and summer months ahead. As the weather warms and the flowers bloom, program requests start coming in and our calendar fills up quickly. We have started booking spring field trips for local schools, summer library programs, and of course – summer camps. As we move into April and May, staff will spend a lot of time finishing up plans so we can be ready for the hectic warmer months!

You may recall that 2026 marks the 60th anniversary of the Conservation District. In February, we kicked off the celebration with a Pancake Breakfast – a throwback to an annual event that the Conservation District stopped offering about 16 years ago. Nearly 200 people attended and shared stories over a tasty breakfast, and I am so grateful to the volunteers who showed up that day and helped us make it happen.



One of our next celebratory events is a Conservation Area Walk on Saturday, May 9. From 12-4pm, folks can stop by any of our five main Conservation Areas – Rock Springs, Sand Creek, Fort Daniel, Friends Creek, and Griswold – to learn about the history of the site, discover exciting recent and/or upcoming projects, and participate in an activity. We hope this will encourage people to visit a site they are less familiar with and learn about some of our rich history.

Thank you for all you've done to shape the District over the last 60 years. We could not do what we do without people just like you, and we look forward to the next 60. Happy Spring!

Volunteers in Action



A huge thank you to the sixteen volunteers who helped make our 60th Anniversary Pancake Breakfast a wonderful success on February 28. Volunteers prepared, served, and cleaned up throughout the event, helping provide approximately 200 meals to our guests.



Operations Update

Phil Julius - Director of Operations

The cold winter has given staff time to do preventative maintenance on most of the equipment that is used to maintain our conservation areas. The District has nice equipment and staff do a great job taking care of it. Several snow events have kept staff busy plowing and shoveling snow. Hopefully we are past winter weather and spring will bring back warmer temperatures.

The crew at Sand Creek and Natural Resources staff have continued to work in the area east of the parking lot at Sand Creek. They forestry mowed last fall and are now cutting out the larger

invasive trees. This will allow more sunlight to the forest floor and allow for native plants the opportunity to grow. Native seeds will be used to plant this area.

Burn season is well underway. Burn crews were able to conduct a few burns in January and had a full week of burning in February. At the time this article was written, crews had burned 772 acres. The District goal is approximately 1,000 acres to be burned each year as natural resource management tool.



Woodbine Farm Update: The garage has been removed so a new shelter and restroom can be built. Construction is scheduled to start mid-March 2026. The pothole prairie restoration is progressing with a targeted excavation completion of April 6, 2026. Then we will get the restoration site seeded with native grasses and forbs. April 18, is the tree planting event, and we will have 1,000 one-gallon potted trees to plant on this day. Come on out and give the Natural Resource crew a hand getting these trees in the ground.



Remembering Our Volunteers

Earline Inman (July 1939 – February 2026)- Quilter

To RSVP or Contact Staff in This Issue

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