



## Colorado Canyons Association Volunteer Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide volunteers with the necessary information and materials needed to begin volunteering with CCA. The volunteer handbook is for informational purposes only and does not create any kind of contract.

---

### Welcome to Colorado Canyons Association (CCA)

Greetings volunteer and welcome to the CCA community! We are so excited to have you onboard, contributing to our important mission of fostering community stewardship, awareness, and education of our local National Conservation Areas (NCAs) – McInnis Canyons, Dominguez-Escalante, and Gunnison Gorge. If you've been in western Colorado for a while, you've likely had ample time to discover the wonder of these landscapes. If you're new to the area, you have a lot of great adventures within the NCAs ahead of you! I certainly feel extremely grateful for the endless recreation, resource protection, and open space the NCAs offer.

Over the past decade, CCA has connected thousands of kids and adults to their public land through outdoor education programs, community hikes and lectures, and stewardship projects each year. As a small non-profit, CCA staff has a lot on their plates – this is where CCA's volunteers come in! With help from dedicated individuals and groups, CCA can make an even larger impact in our community. Each year, volunteers help us educate students, clean-up trash, and protect the landscapes of our NCAs. Your help is vital to achieving our mission and we value the work of *every* volunteer.

Whether you are a new or recurring volunteer, we hope you find this handbook helpful to learn more about the organization, as well as expectations we have for volunteers. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like additional details about volunteer opportunities.

Best,

Sara Brooker

Operations Director

## About CCA

### Our Mission

Colorado Canyons Association fosters community stewardship, education, and awareness of our National Conservation Lands with a focus on McInnis Canyons, Dominguez-Escalante, and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Areas (NCAs) in western Colorado.

### Our Values

Education ● Collaboration ● Connection ● Inclusion ● Stewardship of the National Conservation Lands

### Our History

Colorado Canyons Association (CCA), formerly Friends of McInnis Canyons, was founded in 2006 to conserve, protect, and preserve the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA). The group consisted mainly of volunteer board members who rallied community members to participate in highway clean-ups, trail clean-ups, and informative outreach events. In 2010, a bold new vision was formed for the organization to include the other two regional NCAs, Dominguez-Escalante and Gunnison Gorge. In 2011, the organization changed its name to Colorado Canyons Association and hired its first Executive Director. The new expansion allowed CCA to formalize a Strategic Plan, hire an Outreach Coordinator, and build education programs that took nearly 300 students outdoors into the NCAs.

Since our founding in 2011, CCA has significantly expanded our programs and grown into one of the premiere Friends groups in the country through our mission to foster education, awareness, and stewardship of our regional protected public lands. CCA is a non-partisan organization that continues to grow each year in offering place-based youth environmental education programs, interpretive and community outreach programs, and stewardship projects on the lands and rivers within these three NCAs. CCA has been a leader for environmental education in Mesa, Delta, and Montrose counties and collaborates with many local organizations to offer unique programs with a focus on leadership development, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM)-based learning, and engaging at-risk youth.



CCA has been recognized by our congressional representatives, and statewide and national organizations for our educational programs, planning, maintenance of facilities and trails, stewardship projects, and restoration work. In 2021, CCA was awarded a nationally competitive grant from National Environmental Education Foundation for a Greening STEM project. In 2020, our staff was recognized by the Colorado Association for Environmental Education and in 2018, CCA received the Public Lands Foundation's National Landscape Stewardship Award.

## Our Staff & Board

CCA's staff is a dedicated team of experienced professionals. Below you can find the directory and contact information for CCA's full time staff.

**Chris Herrman** – Executive Director

chris@canyonsassociation.org

**Sara Brooker** – Operations Director

sara@canyonsassociation.org

**Robert Gay** – Land Programs Director

rob@canyonsassociation.org

**Dawn Cooper** – River Program Director

dawn@canyonsassociation.org

**Marisa Fay** - Bookkeeper & Administrative Assistant

marisa@canyonsassociation.org

\*Office number to contact all staff is (970) 263-7902.

We also employ seasonal river educators and Americorps VISTAs.

CCA's board is composed of a wide range of local experts and invested community members representing our land users' multiple interests. Visit our website to see our current board members.

---

## CCA's Programs

To achieve our mission, CCA implements a variety of programs throughout the NCAs focusing on education, stewardship, and outreach. Read more about each program below!

### Youth Education

For over a decade, CCA has been turning our National Conservation Areas into outdoor classrooms for thousands of students from Mesa, Delta, and Montrose counties. Local K-12 students have the opportunity to connect to the outdoors by learning about a variety of topics in a hands-on, exciting, and standards-based way.

CCA partners with many local educational organizations and has a cadre of dedicated volunteers to assist with many of the events held in the NCAs. CCA works with social service-oriented organizations to provide programs for at-risk and underserved youth, as well as environmental science organizations and local school districts to provide place-based educational programming within the NCAs.

### *Lands Program*

Our land-based educational programs include four week-long events including Nature Knowledge Days, Escalante Field Experience, and Cottonwood Days, along with other stand-alone events throughout the year. Nature Knowledge Days is held in McInnis Canyons NCA and Dominguez-Escalante NCA, with third grade participants from Mesa and Delta counties. Escalante Field Days is held in Dominguez-Escalante NCA and includes hundreds of seventh graders from Delta and Montrose counties. Cottonwood Days is held within the Gunnison Gorge NCA and includes hundreds of sixth grade participants from Delta and Montrose counties.

Each of these educational events are jointly hosted by CCA and the BLM within the NCAs. Each event is manned by experts from CCA, BLM, and our partner organizations. Students engage in hands-on, standards-based stations while learning about the ecology, archaeology, paleontology, and history of the land. All of these educational events are offered to local schools at no or very minimal costs to participate. CCA covers the cost of transportation for students to attend these events.



### *River Program*



Since its inception in 2017, CCA's river program has been offering unique, place-based education to kids from all over the western slope. Students get to leave their desk behind for a day (or several) and float through red-rock canyons, turning the river and its surroundings into their classroom. Keeping a holistic experience in mind, our river guides not only focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education and state standards-based curriculum, but

expand teachable moments to develop important life skills such as team building, self-confidence, and leadership abilities. Along with belly laughs, splash battles, and the occasional slip-n-slide, it's safe to say the students have a lot of fun, too!

In 2016, CCA established the multi-phase Catalpa Project. Catalpa, a private inholding located on the Colorado River within McInnis Canyons NCA, has been generously leased to CCA for the purpose of expanding outdoor education opportunities in our community. The programs hosted at the Catalpa Camp are designed to bring largely under-served high school youth to the camp for leadership development and STEAM-based outdoor education programs both during the school year and summer break. Due to the greater total contact hours and the unique environment of being on a raft with others,

our river programs provide opportunities for leadership development, expanded physical health benefits, nature-based education and recreation, countless mental health benefits, and social/emotional skill development.

### Stewardship

CCA works with the Bureau of Land Management and many other partners to improve the ecosystems of our NCAs. We conduct restoration projects that remove invasive species, clean-up trash from our waterways and trails, and maintain native habitat. Rivers are the lifeblood of our regional NCAs and play a vital role in keeping the ecosystems balanced and healthy. Over the past decade, CCA has removed thousands of invasive species from the river corridor (riparian areas), creating space and habitat for native species to flourish. We have also partnered with REI to help maintain and improve campsites along Ruby-Horsethief, keeping them accessible for all visitors enjoy. Educating youth and community members on the ecological, cultural, and historical resources of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers builds a committed and responsible community of land users who love and respect the natural treasures right in their backyards.



### Outreach

From hikes and lectures to rafting trips, CCA's outreach program focuses on the scientific significance and cultural heritage of the NCAs. By educating the community on the importance of our NCAs, CCA hopes to foster a deeper connection between visitors and the land. Our goal is to provide unique experiences for the community, to not only connect to the NCAs, but also to connect with one another.

CCA also provides interpretive materials to the public to promote increased education and awareness of the rich scientific, cultural, and historical significance of the NCAs. Whether it's on our website or out on the trails, visitors can find detailed maps of the NCAs' trail systems

---

## Volunteer Program and Opportunities

Volunteers are an integral part to CCA's programs. For over a decade, volunteers have helped grow and develop our education and stewardship programs, helping us raise awareness for the NCAs. We need dedicated volunteers now more than ever as we continue to expand our programs to the community. We have many opportunities for volunteers to become involved!

### Benefits of being a CCA Volunteer

There are many benefits that come with volunteering for any organization. We hope you receive the following benefits from working with CCA:

- **Giving back** – We hope each volunteer feels accomplishment and success after each project. A volunteer's work is a benefit to the entire community.
- **Training** – Throughout the year, CCA provides training to volunteers on STEAM-based educational curriculum, current stewardship practices, and more.

- **Materials** – Whenever possible, CCA will provide any materials and equipment volunteers need to participate in our events.
- **Recognition** – Every year, CCA recognizes each volunteer who has participated in one of our volunteer opportunities through private “thank yous” and a public volunteer appreciation event.
- **Connect to the community** – CCA has a vibrant community of volunteers and members – CCA provides the opportunity to connect to fellow individuals and groups.
- **Community service** – Volunteer hours with CCA may be eligible to apply to community service hours for students or court-ordered requirements.
- **And so much more!**



### Volunteer for youth education

Our youth education volunteers primarily help us lead and teach environmental education lessons on our larger field trips with the school districts.

#### *Roles and responsibilities:*

- Lead educational stations on a variety of topics including ecology, archaeology, geology, and more. Stations usually last 8-10 minutes with each group.
- Teach and engage 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade kids on the above listed topics.
- A teacher or parent will be present to help manage the group; however, volunteers may still need to help manage the group.
- Additional training may be required for certain events.

### Volunteer for stewardship

#### ***Trash Clean-ups***

No one likes to see trash out in nature – to help keep the NCAs pristine, CCA organizes trash clean-up events for volunteers throughout the year on both the river and land.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities for River Clean-ups*

- Spend 1-2 days on the river, providing your own watercraft and personal gear.
  - Some spots may be available on CCA boats if needed.
- Clean up trash from the riparian corridor and heavily used sites along the river.
- Wear appropriate clothes and personal protective equipment to keep yourself safe.
  - CCA can provide gloves and trash bags.
- Volunteers may be exposed to inclement weather and outdoor hazards, often in a remote backcountry setting.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities for Land Clean-ups*

- Spend 1-4 hours hiking trails within the NCAs, picking any trash along the way.

- Adopt-a-trail to clean up trash each month outside of an organized event; you pick the time and day for the clean-up.
- Wear appropriate clothes and personal protective equipment to keep yourself safe.
  - CCA can provide gloves and trash bags, if needed.
- Volunteers may be exposed to inclement weather and outdoor hazards.

### **Restoration events**

CCA partners with the BLM on various restoration projects throughout the year, many of which include opportunities for volunteers.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities:*

- Assist in various restoration projects throughout the NCAs. Past projects have involved invasive species removal, monitoring, and more. Responsibilities vary project to project.
- These projects typically involve moderate/strenuous physical labor.
- Additional training may be required.
- Volunteers may be exposed to inclement weather and outdoor hazards, often in a remote backcountry setting.

### **Volunteer for outreach**

Outreach volunteers help us engage with visitors and provide interpretive information about the NCAs.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities*

- Assist CCA staff with tabling and outreach events.
- Provide information about CCA and the NCAs to visitors.
- Attend a training to learn how to successfully table for CCA.

### **Administrative volunteers**

Administrative volunteers assist staff with office-related tasks on a case-by-case basis.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities*

- Assist CCA staff with a variety of office related tasks including fundraising, development, outreach, and more.
- Depending on interests and background, volunteers may need additional training.

---

## **Expectations and policies**

Please visit CCA's website for a full list of the policies and procedures.

### **Unlawful Drugs, Smoking and Alcohol in the Workplace**

To help ensure a safe, healthy, and supportive work environment, smoking is not permitted in or around CCA offices and/or work sites. Engaging in volunteer services while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.

## Communications and Media

CCA strives to communicate clearly and efficiently with all volunteers; in return, we ask volunteers to do the same. We encourage volunteers to reach out with any comments, questions, concerns, or feedback that they have.

No volunteer can act as an official spokesperson of Colorado Canyons Association without permission from the Executive Director or Board of Directors. This explicitly includes media interviews. Volunteers are encouraged to promote and share CCA's work through other venues and are welcome to share their experience on social media.

## Timeliness

As many of our events run on a tight schedule, CCA expects all volunteers to arrive on-time and perform their duties as scheduled. If you are running late for any reason, please communicate this to the program director leading the event.

## Professionalism

CCA is a professional organization and expects volunteers to conduct themselves professionally and expects volunteers to dress appropriately and use appropriate language.

## Political representation

CCA is a bipartisan organization and does not affiliate with partisan political issues. We expect volunteers to represent CCA as such and refrain from overly political language or attire.

## Leave No Trace (LNT)

We expect volunteers to follow all 7 Leave No Trace principles while working for CCA. These principles are crucial to protecting the fragile ecosystems of our NCAs and promoting a responsible stewardship ethic. Please visit our website to review the LNT principles.

## First Aid and Safety Procedures

Most of our volunteer events take place in an outdoor setting, sometimes in remote locations. It is important to keep outdoor hazards in mind and prepare for them appropriately. While CCA has measures in place to keep volunteers safe, there are steps volunteers can take as well.

- Dress for the outdoors – always bring layers, sturdy shoes, and rain gear. Be prepared for any weather!
- Bring plenty of water and snacks to keep you hydrated and energized throughout the day.
- Notify staff of any medical concerns prior to volunteering; communicate any concerns you have to staff prior to volunteering.
- Let us know if you need additional safety equipment or PPE.

All CCA field staff are First Aid and CPR certified. We do not expect volunteers to have their first aid/CPR certification, but if you do, please let us know.

**As always, in case of an emergency situation, contact 911 immediately.** If you are injured while volunteering, please report the incident to the Operations Director as soon as possible. CCA does not provide compensation for medical treatment in the case of injury. CCA is not liable for any injury, illness,



or death resulting from volunteer service. Volunteers will need to sign both CCA's and the BLM's volunteer agreement before volunteering for any project.

### Reporting

CCA requests that all volunteer hours are reported back to the Operations Director. When CCA staff is present at the event, a reporting form will be available to report hours. When individuals are volunteering outside of an organized event, it is the volunteer's responsibility to report their own hours. Please email your hours, tasks completed, and location to the volunteer coordinator via [sara@canyonsassociation.org](mailto:sara@canyonsassociation.org).

---

### Next Steps

If you are interested in volunteering, please follow these steps:

1. Visit our website to sign-up as a CCA volunteer. You can also view our current volunteer opportunities on our website.
2. Once you submit the online form, you will receive an email from CCA's Operations Director with additional information. Please reply and let us know what projects you are specifically interested in.
3. Once you are signed up to volunteer, you will receive volunteer newsletters with upcoming projects and events. There will be instructions provided on how to sign-up.
4. Fill out CCA's volunteer waiver.
5. Complete any necessary trainings and additional forms.
6. Start volunteering!

Once again, we are excited to welcome each and every volunteer to CCA! While this handbook is meant to provide an initial overview of the volunteer program, it is not comprehensive. We would love to talk to you in more detail regarding your future involvement. We look forward to meeting you and working with you soon!



---

**View attachments and additional links below.**

## Helpful Links

- CCA Website:  
[www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org](http://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org)
- CCA Volunteer Webpage (current opportunities)  
[www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/volunteer](http://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/volunteer)
- Educational Videos and Resources  
[www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/educational-resources](http://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/educational-resources)
- CCA Policies and Procedures  
[www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/policies-and-strategic-plan](http://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/policies-and-strategic-plan)
- Current Staff and Board Members  
[www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/who-we-are](http://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/who-we-are)

## **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT, RELEASE AND WAIVER**

This Volunteer Agreement, Release and Waiver of Liability (the "Release") executed on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ by (name of volunteer candidate) \_\_\_\_\_ ("Volunteer"), releases COLORADO CANYONS ASSOCIATION (CCA), a nonprofit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Colorado, and each of its directors, officers, employees, and agents. The Volunteer desires to provide volunteer services for CCA and engage in activities related to serving as a volunteer.

Volunteer understands that the scope of Volunteer's relationship with CCA is limited to a volunteer position and that no compensation is expected in return for services provided by Volunteer; that CCA will not provide any benefits traditionally associated with employment to Volunteer; and that Volunteer is responsible for his/her own insurance coverage in the event of personal injury or illness as a result of Volunteer's services to CCA.

Waiver and Release: I, the Volunteer, release and forever discharge and hold harmless CCA and its successors and assigns from any and all liability, claims, and demands of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, which arise or may hereafter arise from the services I provide to CCA. I understand and acknowledge that this Release discharges CCA from any liability or claim that I may have against CCA with respect to bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage that may result from the services I provide to CCA or occurring while I am providing volunteer services.

Conduct: I, as a Volunteer, understand that I am expected to comply with all applicable laws set by the state and federal government during the course of my relationship as a Volunteer with CCA. Further, I understand that I am expected to follow all CCA policies and related rules of conduct designed to protect the interests and safety of all volunteers, CCA staff and any and all other person(s) benefitting from my volunteer services in any way. By way of example and not limitation, the following are some examples of inappropriate conduct which would lead to my immediate dismissal as a Volunteer:

Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of CCA property or property belonging to any CCA volunteer, staff, employee or agent.

Engaging in volunteer services while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs and/or illegal or unauthorized possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Creating any disturbance or other disrespectful conduct while engaged in activities relating to serving as a volunteer which could jeopardize or threatens the safety of others.

The violation of any CCA-specific policy, including any of the rules set forth in the Colorado Canyons Association Discrimination and Harassment Prohibition Policy ("Sexual Harassment Policy"). The Sexual Harassment Policy is expressly incorporated in this Release by this reference. Copies of the Sexual Harassment Policy may be obtained from CCA and is available for review on CCA's website.

Insurance: Further, I understand that CCA does not assume any responsibility for or obligation to provide me with financial or other assistance, including but not limited to medical, health or disability benefits or insurance of any nature in the event of my injury, illness, death or damage to my property. I expressly waive any such claim for compensation or liability on the part of CCA beyond what may be offered freely by CCA in the event of such injury or medical expenses incurred by me.

Medical Treatment: I hereby release and forever discharge CCA from any claim whatsoever which arises or may hereafter arise on account of any first-aid treatment or other medical services rendered in connection with an emergency during my tenure as a volunteer with CCA.

Assumption of Risk: I understand that the services I provide to CCA may include activities that may be hazardous to me including, but not limited to, outdoor manual labor, exposure to natural elements and wildlife involving inherently dangerous activities. As a volunteer, I hereby expressly assume the risk of injury or harm from these activities and release CCA from all liability for injury, illness, death or property damage resulting from the services I provide as a volunteer or occurring while I am providing volunteer services.

Photographic Release: I grant and convey to CCA all right, title, and interests in any and all photographs, images, video or audio recordings of me or my likeness or voice made in connection with my providing volunteer services to CCA.

Other: As a volunteer, I expressly agree that this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of Colorado and that this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Colorado. I agree that in the event that any clause or provision of this Release is deemed invalid, the enforceability of the remaining provisions of this Release shall not be affected.

By signing below, I express my understanding and intent to enter into this Release and Waiver of Liability willingly and voluntarily.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_