

**The Corporation of the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory at Gothic**

**Volunteer Handbook**

**DATED May 26, 2016**

## **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

- Administration Office: 970-349-7231
- Visitor Center (summer only): 970-349-7156
- Dining Hall (summer only): 970-349-0892
- Board room in Community Center: 970-251-1078
- Executive Director's (Ian Billick) Office: 970-349-6669
- Youth Programs (Ann Colbert) Cell Phone: 970-901-1395
- Facilities Office (Mike Fabbre): 970-349-7770

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 519, Crested Butte, CO 81224

**Physical Summer Address:** 8000 CR 317, Gothic, CO

**Physical Winter Address:** 308 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Crested Butte, CO

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory! This material is intended to acquaint new volunteers with our volunteer program. In addition, volunteers are encouraged to use the many other RMBL resources available: RMBL staff, other volunteers, the weekly Gothic email newsletter, free Visitor Center tours, volunteer training materials, the rmbll.org and Digital RMBL websites, scientific seminars (Tuesday nights), programs, and exhibits in the Visitor Center to continue to learn about the variety of projects, programs, policies, practices, and procedures at RMBL.

“Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer.” *Unknown*

## **HISTORY OF RMBL**

A silver boomtown in the 1880s, Gothic’s heyday was short lived. By 1890 prospectors seeking the mother lode had moved on. In the 1920s Dr. John C. Johnson, a biology professor at what is now Western State Colorado University, led his students on field trips near Gothic. Recognizing the rare and rich ecology of the remote high valley, in 1928 he set up a field station amid the ruins of the old mining town.

With more than 85 years of continuous long-term research and data collection RMBL is an internationally renowned and highly respected scientific institution, making RMBL one of the best places anywhere to study how the world is changing. Each year RMBL assembles a greater concentration of leading biologists, ecologists, and students from around the world than any other terrestrial field station.

Living and working in this historical setting has been part of the charm and character of field work at RMBL and we have aggressively moved to preserve our heritage. Seven buildings have been designated on the local register of historic places by the County of Gunnison. With support from a range of sources, including private donors and the Colorado State Historical Fund, these buildings and many other of RMBL’s older buildings have been renovated. In 2015 RMBL received the Stephen H. Hart award from History Colorado for our work to preserve the town site.

## **WHO WE ARE**

The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL), founded in 1928, is an independent, high-altitude biological field station located in Gothic, Colorado. RMBL provides logistical support for scientists and students, including access to living quarters, research laboratories, and protected, diverse research sites. Each summer, scientist and students from the United States and some foreign nations come to Gothic to join a collaborative and internationally recognized scientific community. Because scientists have been conducting research in Gothic and the surrounding region for the past 85+ years, RMBL has extensive data sets and a broad knowledge base regarding the ecology of mountain environments. This depth and breadth of expertise along with RMBL’s pristine mountain location sets it apart as a unique and scientifically productive field station.

RMBL’s mission is to advance the scientific understanding of nature that promotes informed stewardship of the earth. We are a scientific institution that

- supports scientific research,

- delivers science education at all levels, and
- partners in land preservation efforts.

## **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

RMBL's volunteer programs are part of the Informal Science Education department, supervised by the Director of Science Communications and Engagement, and managed by various staff or scientists, depending on the volunteer program. The RMBL maintains an open door policy - any volunteer or staff member can speak with members of the department at any time. Feel free to visit us in our offices. Volunteers can also schedule a formal time to meet. For any concerns, volunteers can call the main number (970-349-7231) to be assisted or connected with one of the staff concerned with volunteers. The SCE Director can also be reached at [amy@rmbbl.org](mailto:amy@rmbbl.org).

## **THE RMBL VOLUNTEER**

A RMBL volunteer is an individual who contributes services that directly benefit RMBL, for which there is no academic or financial compensation. The services are to be given on a scheduled basis for assigned projects under the supervision of a RMBL staff member or RMBL scientist.

Volunteers provide the vital link that helps bring RMBL alive for roughly 20,000 people each summer. You can bring a smile to a child, elicit a nod of appreciation from a visitor, protect long-term research through education and outreach, or help behind-the-scenes with collections, research, and record keeping. You can make a difference here!

## **MISSION OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

It is the mission of the RMBL volunteer program to match qualified individuals with volunteer opportunities that benefit both the individual and RMBL. We seek to maximize volunteers' knowledge, skills, and experience and at the same time to elevate services and operations of RMBL.

## **PLACEMENT**

By recognizing and learning the needs of our staff for volunteer assistance, we are able to achieve a careful and timely matching of volunteers to particular assignments. Volunteers will be assigned to specific positions only with the approval of the staff member to whom they are reporting. Potential volunteers must meet with the supervisor of the specific project and be accepted by that supervisor before they can begin volunteering. Assignments may be of short or long duration. When short, the volunteer may be reassigned.

## **REASSIGNMENT**

If a current volunteer is interested in pursuing other volunteer opportunities at RMBL (whether because of a personal desire for change or completion of a project or exhibition), we ask that the Director of Science Communications and Engagement be contacted. We will work with you to try to find another appropriate volunteer opportunity.

## **SUPERVISORS, TRAINING AND ORIENTATION**

A RMBL staff member or scientist will supervise each volunteer. Volunteering under the direction of an assigned staff supervisor, volunteers are expected to learn the subject matter and/or skills required for the job and to attend training sessions when provided.

## **CONDUCT**

All volunteers are expected to adhere to the same standards of conduct as RMBL staff. Volunteers are expected to treat visitors, staff, scientists, and other volunteers with respect and in a courteous manner. If conduct is inappropriate, the volunteer will meet with his/her supervisor and docent coordinators. Volunteers can be released from their volunteer service for inappropriate actions and behaviors. Please see Section IV: Employee Conduct in the RMBL Personnel Handbook for details (<http://www.rmbbl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FS-2016-RMBL-Personnel-Manual.pdf>).

## **ATTIRE**

Volunteers that work with the public are expected to dress in clean and neat field-appropriate attire. Volunteers working behind the scenes should talk with their supervisors regarding appropriate clothing.

## **REPRESENTING RMBL**

When wearing an ID, a volunteer is representing RMBL. Be aware that visitors with questions will approach you. Please be courteous and helpful. Volunteers can direct visitors to the Visitor Center to answer specific questions.

## **REFERRALS**

Often our volunteers introduce potential new volunteers to RMBL. All prospective volunteers are required to complete a volunteer survey. The survey is available on-line. Email [amy@rmbbl.org](mailto:amy@rmbbl.org) for a link to the survey.

## **MINIMUM AGE**

The minimum age for volunteers is 18 years. However, a program for middle and high school students is available during the summer. Email [amy@rmbbl.org](mailto:amy@rmbbl.org) for more information.

## **VOLUNTEER TIME REQUIREMENTS**

Volunteer schedules will vary based on the position, project and mutual convenience of both the volunteer and the RMBL supervisor. Volunteer opportunities in the docent program are available both weekdays and weekends. Behind-the-scenes scientific research schedules will depend upon the project and scientist supervisor. Short-term or more flexible commitments are also available. See our website for current opportunities: <http://www.rmbbl.org/volunteer/>

Volunteers will design a schedule with their supervisors. Volunteers are asked to inform their supervisors of any schedule change as soon as possible. If a volunteer is unable to volunteer on a scheduled day, we ask that the direct supervisor be contacted in advance. Volunteers may call directly or call the museum's main number to be connected to their

supervisors. Reliability and communication is essential.

## **END OF SERVICE**

Volunteer service may come to an end at any time if service is no longer required or if performance fails to meet acceptable standards. When a volunteer concludes service for any reason, we ask that the volunteer's supervisor and the Director of Science Communications and Engagement be notified. A volunteer may request a leave of absence for such reasons as health, travel, or other personal requirements. If this is the case, the volunteer should arrange the leave with his or her supervisor before the leave period begins.

## **RMBL DOCENTS**

In addition to wearing clean and neat field-appropriate attire, docents are required to wear their RMBL-issued lanyard with ID badge as well as the blue "i" (for information) button – both should be visible at all times while on duty. Docents are also required to wear an orange safety vest when in high traffic areas and to carry a radio when away from the Visitor Center. Docents have additional responsibilities and receive additional benefits that are outlined in their volunteer agreements.

## **VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION**

### **RECORDING VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS**

All volunteers must track their time and report it to their supervisor twice each month. Signed volunteer time sheets must be submitted to the Director of Science Communications on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of each month. Supervisors will log their volunteer hours through a shared Google spreadsheet.

### **Docent specific instructions:**

- Docent will check their schedule posted at the Visitor Center in Gothic.
- Docent will clock-in on a time sheet at the Visitor Center 15 minutes before the start of the shift.
- When they clock-in, the docent will also pick up relevant information, survey sheets, orange vest, and assigned radio. (Any early station assignments (before 10 am) will make other arrangements.)
- At shift end, docent will return to Visitor Center to debrief, return surveys and enter data, clock-out, and return their vest and assigned radio.

### **RMBL BUSINESS HOURS**

RMBL administrative staff are typically on site in Willey Laboratory from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. The RMBL Visitor Center is open from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm daily. Scientists have variable schedules.

### **PARKING**

Parking fees for RMBL parking areas within Gothic are in effect between June 1 and

August 24. Seasonal parking permits are \$50 per vehicle. Contact [office@rmb.org](mailto:office@rmb.org) or visit <http://www.rmb.org/field-station-info/parking/> for more information. Free parking is available in Mt. Crested Butte at the Snodgrass Trailhead.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Mountain Express provides free transportation between Crested Butte, Mt Crested Butte and Gothic. For information about routes and times, please check our website <http://www.rmb.org/field-station-info/getting-here/gothic-bus/>

### **IRS TAX DEDUCTION**

As a volunteer, you may claim a tax deduction for transportation fares or expenses on itemized personal returns from the IRS. Volunteers can deduct mileage to and from Gothic. Volunteers can also deduct the cost of any parking fees, education materials, or other items that were required for the position of volunteer. Please contact the IRS with any questions. The IRS can be reached at 1-800-829-1040 or at <http://www.irs.gov>.

### **ADDITIONAL POLICIES**

Please see the RMBL Personnel Manual for policies regarding non discrimination, employee conduct, and other relevant information.