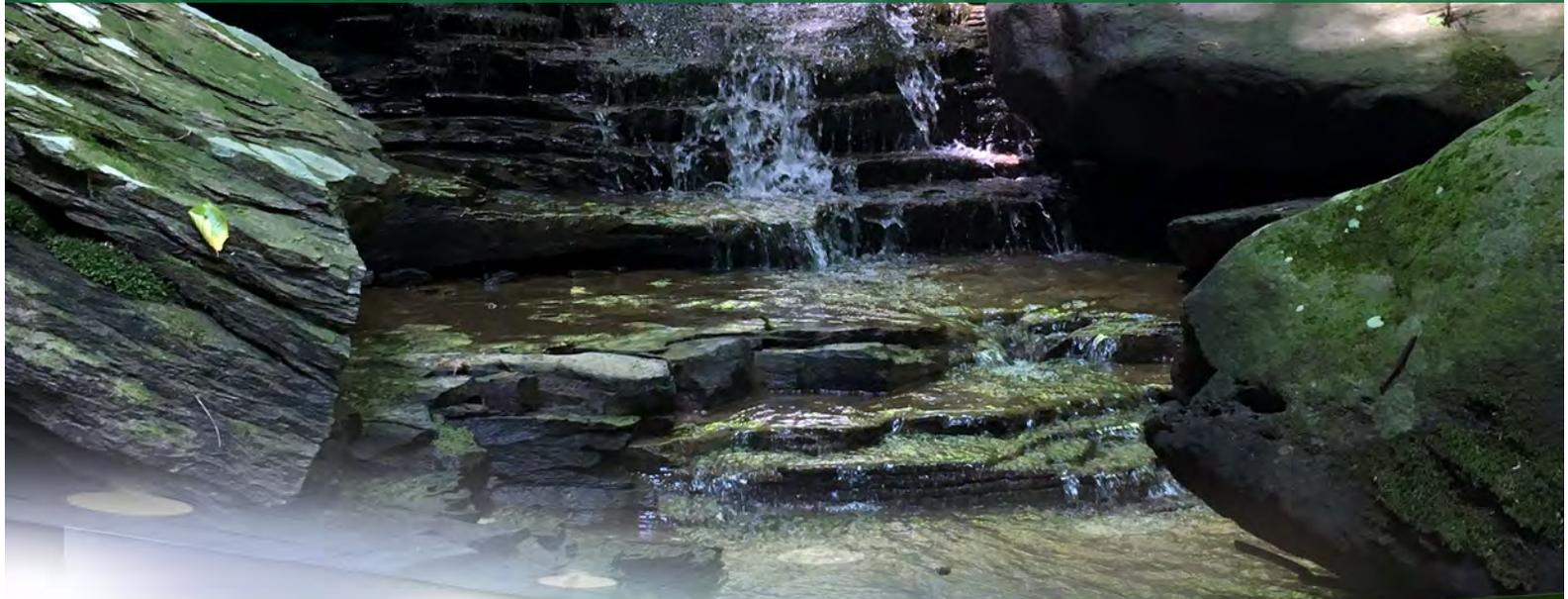




# PARKS TO SCHOOLS



## PROGRAM GUIDE



# OVERVIEW

# PARKS TO SCHOOLS

## Program Overview

The Parks to Schools/Schools to Parks Program (PSSP) brings the Allegheny County Parks to local school districts and other community organizations. The goal of PSSP is to reach as many children as possible to foster an interest in conservation, outdoor recreation, and stewardship. Through this program, Park Rangers will not only visit classrooms, but classrooms will be encouraged to visit the county parks and participate in programming directly linked to their curriculum. The PSSP program offers a variety of programming to choose from or we can create programs specifically designed for your classroom or organizations need.

## Parks to Schools

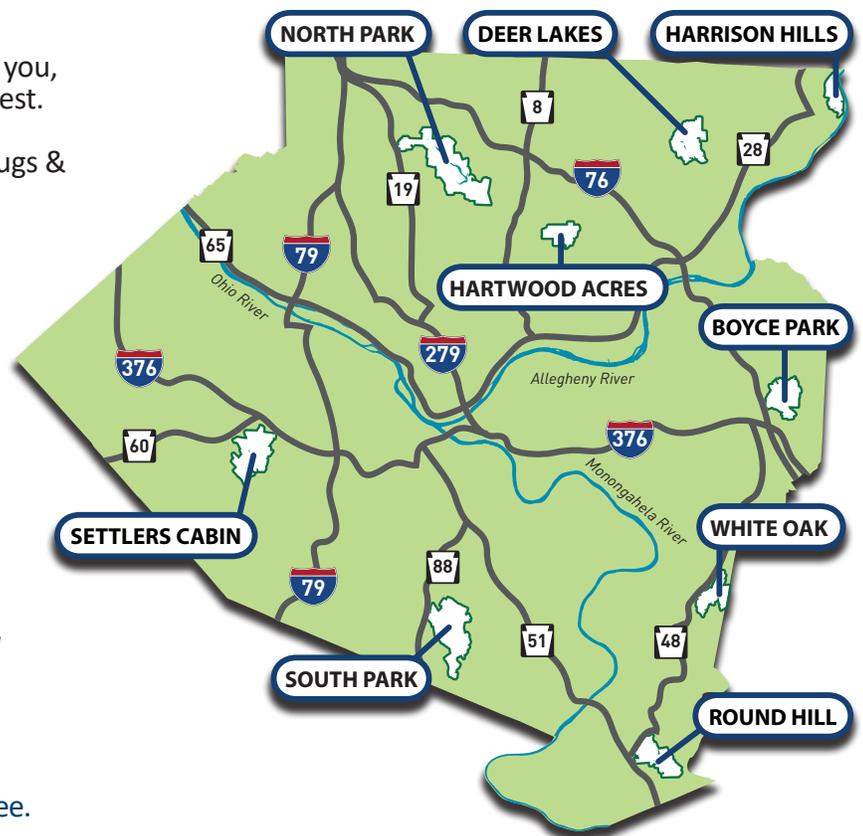
Park Rangers can bring a variety of programming to you, focusing on current curriculum or your area of interest. Programs can include: biology, archaeology, species identification, ecosystem ecology, native animals, bugs & insects, invasive species, and much more!

## Schools to Parks

Get outside and explore with the Allegheny County Park Rangers. Your school or organization can join us at one of the nine Allegheny County Parks and participate in programs such as a guided nature hike, wetland exploration, large group programs or service projects.

## Requirements

- Organizations must be located in Allegheny County for Parks to Schools visits, but any organization may participate in the Schools to Parks visits.
- Programs are free unless a program that requires a significant expense is requested.



**Allegheny County  
Parks Trail App**

Search *"Allegheny County Parks Trails"* in the Google Play or the App Store and download for free.

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The following is a list of the programs that we offer. If you do not see what you are looking for, please ask, and we can possibly create a custom experience for your group. The program descriptions below are general and can be adapted for specific age groups upon requested.

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## MEET OUR EDUCATIONAL ANIMAL

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Please note that group sizes are recommended for a program led by two Park Rangers in a single session – if staffing permits or multiple sessions are available, we can accommodate larger groups. Please see the Large Group Programs or Service Projects sections for park visits with groups that have more than 40 participants.

# ANIMALS



## **I. SKINS & SKULLS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about the different native animal species that live in our county by exploring our extensive collection of animal skins and skulls. Participants will have the opportunity to touch and examine the specimens. Book a general Skins & Skulls program or request a program that focuses on a specific topic such as aquatic mammals, predator/prey relationships, habitats, adaptations, diet and winter animals.

## **II. ANIMAL ADAPTATIONS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Discover how different adaptations benefit some animals over others. Some animals are generalists, and some are specialists – both have advantages and disadvantages that have evolved over time to give animals a better chance for survival in their native environment. Book a general Animal Adaptations program or request a program that focuses on a specific topic such as insects, birds, nocturnal animals or winter animals.

## **III. TRACKS & SCAT**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Learn how to recognize different signs that animals have left behind. Examine replicas of animals tracks and scat and learn how to identify which animal they belong to.

## **IV. BEAVER HABITAT**

**LENGTH: 45 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about beavers and how they affect their environment. Beavers are second only to humans when it comes to changing the landscape they live in. Learn about their habitat, how they build dams and lodges, and what positive and negative impacts they can have. If in the park, participants can look for evidence of beavers. Participants can also create their own “beaver dam” and see if theirs holds back water as well as a beaver’s.

## **V. BIRDS & NESTS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Why do birds build nests? Where do they build nests? How can we tell the difference between an Oriole nest and a Robin nest? Participants will discover the fascinating diversity of bird homes through interactive activities and hands-on exploration of different bird nests.

## **VI. BISON**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: SOUTH PARK / ALL LOCATIONS**

One of North America’s largest mammals, the American Bison is important both culturally and ecologically across the country. Learn about the historic significance of these giant animals and take a tour of the South Park Game Preserve to get an up-close look at the bison that call Allegheny County home.

## **VII. BUGS & INSECTS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

What kinds of bugs & insects can be found in our parks? Discover the different types of bugs and insects that can be found in our local environment, why insects are important and what roles they play in our ecosystem. Participants will have the opportunity to examine our collection of insect specimens. Book a general Bugs & Insects program or request a program that focuses on a specific topic such as anatomy, habitats, life cycles, diversity, butterflies, macroinvertebrates and praying mantises.

## **VIII. LIGHTNING BUGS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS/ALL LOCATIONS**

As the sky darkens, fireflies light the night. Learn about our official state insect, the fascinating lives they lead, and how we can all play a part in ensuring they are around for the enjoyment of future generations. This program is best suited as a night program during the months of June, July, and August.

## **IX. POLLINATORS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Description: Discover the different pollinators in our area and learn about their role in the ecosystem. From bats to bees, there are many different species that help plants reproduce, resulting in seeds, fruits and vegetables.

## **X. WINTER ANIMALS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS/ALL LOCATIONS**

Local wildlife survives our cold and snowy winters by either moving away, sleeping in, or toughing it out. Discover some of the amazing adaptations that allow animals to survive through the winter.

## **XI. NOCTURNAL ANIMALS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

What does it mean to be nocturnal? What are some advantages of being active in the night and asleep during the day? Discover the different species that are awake while we are asleep and why they are active at night. Book a general Nocturnal Animals program or request a program that focuses on a specific topic such as owls, moths and insects, bats and animals.

## **XII. BATS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

This program seeks to shed light on common myths and legends surrounding bats, as well as familiarize audiences with local bat species. Participants will be illuminated to the role bats play in our night skies and have the opportunity to try out their bat skills in fun and engaging activities.

## **XIII. OWLS**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Who, who, who is out in the parks at night? Owls of course! Discover the different adaptations these amazing birds have evolved to help them survive at night. Add an owl pellet dissection and discussion to your program for \$5/participant.

## **XIV. OWL PROWL**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Join a Park Ranger at the park after dark! Who, who, who is out there in the park at night? Owls of course! Learn about nature’s ultimate nocturnal predator and the adaptations they have evolved to make them deadly to their prey at night. Practice your owl calls as we try to hear these amazing birds while we make our way through the park on the trails at night. Add an owl pellet for participants to take home and dissect for \$5/participant.

# PLANTS

## **I. FALL FOLIAGE HIKES**

**LENGTH: 1+ HOURS**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS WHERE APPROPRIATE TREES EXIST**

Why do the leaves change color and fall off the trees every year? Why do some of them not change or even fall at all? Join the Park Rangers for a walk on the trail to see the beautiful fall colors and learn about seasonal change. \*This is a fall seasonal program.

## **II. TREES**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

A significant part of our native Pennsylvania ecosystem, trees are unique members in the plant world. From different ways to identify them, to how they grow, to how they can benefit humans and wildlife alike, this program aims to familiarize participants with a widely variable part of our everyday lives.

## **III. INVASIVE SPECIES**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about native, non-native and invasive species and how they affect each other. Many non-natives and invasive species have been introduced to our environment and some have profound effects on our natural ecosystem. Participants will learn how to identify common invasive species and non-natives, as well as some basic control methods to help protect native species.

## **IV. WILDFLOWER WALKS**

**LENGTH: 1+ HOURS**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Join the Park Rangers for a walk in the woods to look for spring wildflowers. Learn about which bloom first and which bloom last, as well as where to find different species. \*This is a spring seasonal program

# CULTURAL

## **I. PARK HISTORY**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Discover the history of the Allegheny County Parks. Learn about all nine of the parks or focus on one. Depending on the park, topics can also include: The Great Depression and North Park, the Civilian Conservation Corps, architecture of Paul Riis and Henry Hornbostel, South Park and the Vale of Cashmere and/or The Cascades, Rachel Carson, and historic structures.

## **II. INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about archaeological theory and practice, as well as the archaeological record of Western Pennsylvania. Can you identify the difference between a rock and a hammer stone? Learn how American Indians created stone tools like projectile points and net sinkers. Hands-on exploration of artifacts and activities are part of this program.



# EXPLORE

## **I. NATURE HIKE**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR +**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / SCHOOL LOCATIONS WHEN APPROPRIATE**

Explore the outdoors with a Park Ranger as your guide. Learn about local flora and fauna while getting outside, getting exercise and enjoying our parks. Programs can be tailored to specific interests and can cover a variety of topics including, but not limited to: invasive species; mammals; birds; wildflowers; hiking safety; ecosystems; trees; and much more.

## **II. STREAM STUDY**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: NORTH PARK, BOYCE PARK, DEER LAKES PARK, HARRISON HILLS PARK, SETTLERS CABIN PARK, WHITE OAK PARK, SOUTH PARK / FEW LOCATIONS – MUST HAVE STREAM ACCESS**

Discover the different macroinvertebrates that live in our streams. Macroinvertebrates are the decomposers that live in waterways and keep the streams clean, while also providing a valuable food source for many fish and birds. Participate in a stream study, collecting and identifying many of these species while learning about how water quality affects these species and how they are used as water quality indicators.

\*Participants will be in the water collecting species – appropriate clothing/footwear required.

\*This is a summer seasonal program.

## **III. WETLAND HABITAT**

**LENGTH: 1-2 HOURS**

**LOCATION: NORTH PARK, DEER LAKES PARK, HARRISON HILLS PARK, BOYCE PARK / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about different types of wetlands and which species have adapted to thrive in these unique environments. Park visits will include a visit to the wetland and up-close exploration of the ecosystem with discussion about resource management issues, native species and invasive species impacts. Lecture-based presentations are recommended for older participants.

## **IV. LEAVE NO TRACE**

**LENGTH: 30+ MINUTES**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about the practice of Leave No Trace and the seven principles of Leave No Trace ethics. These ethics can be applied to visiting a park and to everyday life in order to help protect the environment. This program can also be part of an activity-based nature hike.

## **V. COUNTY PARKS INFORMATION**

**LENGTH: 45 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ANY PARK / ANY INDOOR LOCATION**

Can you name all nine of the Allegheny County parks? Discover what the nine Allegheny County parks have to offer. Learn about the unique features of each park as well as the activities they have to offer.

## **VI. ACID MINE DRAINAGE**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR**

**LOCATION: BOYCE PARK / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about acid mine drainage and what steps are taken to remediate this pollution. Mining has a rich history in Pennsylvania, and some of it has caused negative environmental impacts. Acid mine drainage turns streams bright orange, or even white, because of heavy metals leeching out of old mines. Participants will be able to participate in activities to explore how an acid mine drainage remediation pond works.

## **VII. READER RANGER**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES – 1 HOUR**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Rangers will read a story that relates to the natural world and has components of environmental education. After the story, participants will discuss what they learned and explore our animal fur collection, insect collection, or other collections that relate to the story. Story may be complimented with a short nature hike in the parks.

## **VIII. ENVIROSCAPES**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Interact with a scale model of your environment and see how all of your actions play a role in the lives of our native plants and animals. From daily activity at home to farms and factories, everything is connected, and you are in control.

## **IX. NIGHT SKY**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Explore the myth, science, and beauty of the night sky. Learn about constellations and astronomy, then take your knowledge outside and directly view the majesty of the night sky.

## **X. CAMPFIRE PROGRAM**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

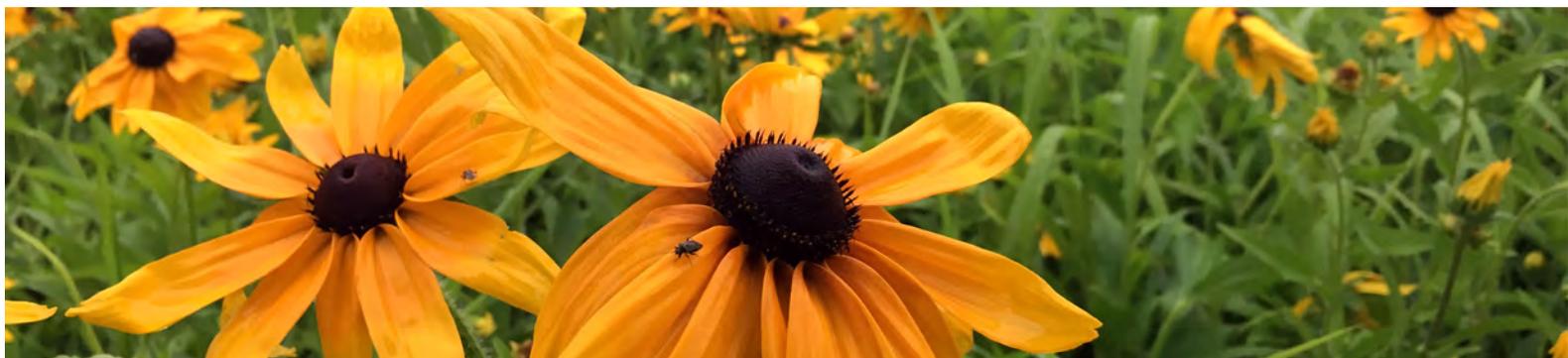
Join a Park Ranger at the park after dark! Enjoy a campfire as the rangers present a fireside program to the group. Topics can include: Nocturnal Animals, Star Gazing, Owls, Bats and more.

## **XI. NIGHT HIKE**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Join a Park Ranger at the park after dark! Participants will accompany rangers on a night hike while searching for nocturnal animals and learning about navigating the forest at night. Night hikes can take place on any evening year-round, but we also offer special hikes for full moons and new moons. Full moons provide an amazing amount of light, and if the sky is clear, we can navigate without flashlights. New moon nights are as dark as it gets outside but provide a great opportunity to see the stars and experience the forest at night.



# RECREATION



## **I. ORIENTEERING**

**LENGTH: 2 HOURS+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Learn about orienteering and how to navigate in the wilderness using only a map and compass. After learning how to use a map and compass, participants will attempt to navigate an orienteering course in the park (or around the school grounds).

## **II. FIRE SKILLS**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Fire can be a life-saver in a wilderness survival situation. Learn various modern and primitive fire building techniques in a controlled environment. There is a fee of \$7 per participant for this program. Participants receive a small fire-starting kit.

## **III. SURVIVAL SKILLS**

**LENGTH: 1 HOUR+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

What do you do if you become lost in the forest? Learn about basic woodland survival skills in the forest and what to do if you become lost. Learn how to start an emergency fire, how to find water and how to plan ahead and prepare to avoid getting lost or to be ready in case you do. There is a fee of \$7 per participant for this program. Participants receive a small fire-starting kit.

## **IV. TEAM ADVENTURE HIKE**

**LENGTH: 2 HOURS**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Teams of participants will race through the park alongside their Park Ranger guide trying to find as many waypoints as possible before time runs out. Participants will have to answer as many questions as they can correctly at each waypoint to earn points. This is a great activity that combines nature, history and exercise.

## **V. TEAM BUILDING**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Rangers will work with participants to develop teamwork and leadership skills through several different teambuilding challenges. Activities are designed to encourage the group to work together as a team and encourage leadership development within the group.

## **VI. SNOWSHOEING**

**LENGTH: 1+ HOURS**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS WHERE APPROPRIATE TERRAIN EXISTS**

Park Rangers will take participants out on the trail in the snow and give them instruction on how to snowshoe. This fun winter activity is a great way to get out and see the park in the wintertime, while also getting some exercise (burn 600 calories and hour). This is a beginner to advanced program depending on the audience, so anyone can come and have fun. Participants will also learn about snow and other winter wonders.

*\*This is a winter seasonal program and requires at least 6 inches of snow. We are able to host snowshoeing at Boyce Park most winter days once the snow is established on the slopes. If you schedule a snowshoe program and there is not enough snow, we always run a Winter Nature Hike instead.*

# MEET OUR EDUCATIONAL ANIMAL



## **MR. MC SLITHERS, EASTERN BLACK RAT SNAKE**

**LENGTH: 30 MINUTES+**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Meet our Educational Animal, an Eastern Black Rat Snake named Mr. McSlithers. Learn about his habitat, diet and everyday life. Get up close to learn about his unique adaptations. Book a visit with our educational animal to experience an interactive program with a live animal encounter!

# LARGE GROUPS & SERVICE PROJECTS

## **I. ROUND ROBIN PROGRAMS**

**LENGTH: 1-5 HOURS**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS / ALL LOCATIONS**

Round Robin programs can accommodate larger groups. Large groups can be broken into smaller groups that rotate through a series of stations. We can take several of our programs and shorten them to about 20 minutes each.

## **II. SERVICE PROJECTS**

**LENGTH: 2-5 HOURS**

**LOCATION: ALL PARKS**

Service projects can encompass a variety of options and can include: litter clean up, tree planting, flower planting, trail work, or other available projects. Please inquire about currently available projects. Projects change seasonally and with the availability of planned improvement projects.

## ALLEGHENY COUNTY PARK RANGERS' MISSION

The Allegheny County Park Rangers are the ambassadors of our parks and the catalyst for stewardship among park visitors. Park Rangers offer educational and interpretive programming as well as outreach programming to local schools and communities. They also provide park visitors with orientation and information while ensuring park regulations are being followed. The Allegheny County Park Rangers represent the ideas of conservation and stewardship of our natural, cultural and recreational resources.

**TO SCHEDULE A PROGRAM, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Elise Cupps  
Education and Outreach Coordinator  
Allegheny County Department of Parks  
Elise.Cupps@AlleghenyCounty.US  
(412) 389-1533

