

CITIZENS'  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
COALITION



# Volunteer Handbook & Policy Manual

August 12, 2015

## *Welcome to Citizens' Environmental Coalition*

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in providing your skills to serve Citizen's Environmental Coalition. We recognize that volunteers are a crucial part of our organization which we depend on to grow and serve our community. It is our hope that your volunteer experience will be both a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity for you.

The Volunteer Handbook is your main resource to provide you with valuable information which will help make your volunteering successful. It covers the policies and procedures of the CEC as well as our mutual responsibilities. It is your responsibility to read and understand the Volunteer Handbook as well as maintain familiarity with and adhere to all policies put in place by CEC. If you have any questions about the content of this handbook please don't hesitate to contact us.

The information in the Volunteer Handbook may be updated or changed at any time, and we will make every effort to keep volunteers updated on these changes as they occur.

We hope that volunteering with us will allow you to gain a sense of personal satisfaction. We value your participation in our program and are dedicated to ensuring you a positive volunteer experience.

Sincerely,

Rachel Powers  
Executive Director

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## *About CEC*

### *Connecting our environmental community*

CEC is an information clearinghouse and communications network for environmental issues in the Houston / Galveston, Texas, area. We serve the public by bringing many diverse groups together to build awareness and stimulate discussion about environmental issues in the region. Our programs include forums that give a balanced perspective on environmental issues and information vehicles that enhance understanding.

### **History**

The Citizens' Environmental Coalition was founded in 1971 by an outstanding group of women who were proactive in the environmental causes of the day. They successfully lobbied for many quality of life issues. They saved Buffalo Bayou from being straightened and lined with concrete, they created a nature center at Armand Bayou, and they built safe places to ride bicycles – just to name a few. These visionary women saw that there was a real need for all the local environmental groups to communicate with each other, to coordinate their efforts, and to support each other. They created the CEC to serve that need. Originally, the Coalition published a joint calendar listing the activities of member groups in order to avoid conflicting events and duplication of programs. Soon the annual Environmental Resource Guide was born, an answering service was established, and community forums were organized.

Over 40 years later, communication remains our mission. We work to foster dialogue and collaboration regarding environmental issues, and serve as an information clearinghouse for our member groups and the community at large through a variety of programs.

### **Mission Statement & Vision**

Mission: To foster dialogue, education, and collaboration on environmental issues in the Houston / Gulf Coast region.

### **Staff Contacts**

Rachel Powers

Executive Director

[Rachel@cechouston.org](mailto:Rachel@cechouston.org)

## *Volunteering with CEC*

### **About Volunteering**

The United States Department of Labor defines “volunteer” as an individual who donates services, usually on a part-time basis, for public service, religious or humanitarian objectives without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation.

### **Becoming a Volunteer**

1. Fill out an application, being sure to indicate which positions you are interested in fulfilling
2. Submit application to the Executive Director who will review it and contact you with further questions and information
3. CEC understands that volunteers are active people with a variety of commitments, however, we ask that you review your schedule and make a realistic time commitment during the volunteer application process to ensure the success of the projects which you will take on

### **Volunteer Responsibilities & Requirements**

- Must view volunteering as a professional commitment
- Must be a positive representative of CEC during all public events/volunteering opportunities
- Understand and follow all CEC policies and procedures
- Communicate effectively orally and in writing
- Able to meet all deadlines on given projects
- Maintain contact with Supervisor and let them know of any conflicts with volunteering
- Provide your own transportation to CEC office and/or events
- Keep contact information (address, phone number) up to date
- Be flexible and open minded about tasks, willing to accommodate tasks with which the Executive Director may lay out for you on a given day
- Attendance is crucial to our success. Please let the Executive Director know if you cannot make a scheduled shift as soon as possible
- All volunteer hours will be logged through Volunteer Houston and training will be provided in order to teach you how to track your hours online

## Orientation & Training

Orientation and training for volunteer positions will be set up after the completion of the volunteer application process. You will set up a time to meet with the Executive Director and be provided with any additional information you may need in order to be successful.

## Tracking Hours

- Visit [www.trackitforward.com](http://www.trackitforward.com)
- Under the orange “Get Started” button, click on the blue link that reads “find your organization”
- Below “Search for a Volunteer Organization” Type in “Citizens’ Environmental Coalition” and press search
- Click on “Citizens’ Environmental Coalition (Houston)” to continue
- Next to “Need an account?” click “sign up”
- Create an account with your information and click “sign up”
- Once you have done this you will be able to log hours, sign up for events, and manage your account.
- The process to log hours online is fairly straightforward once you have an account, but please feel free to contact us if you have any questions
- You can even track hours on the go! Search “Track it Forward” in your Android or iPhone app store and download the app to track hours from your mobile phone

Please make every attempt to log volunteer hours as you complete them so that we can both stay up to date on your volunteering and honor you for your hard work!

## *Policies & Procedures*

### **Equal Volunteering Opportunity**

CEC recruits and enrolls volunteers without regard to race, age, sex, religion, color, national origin, or physical ability. Special accommodations may be made upon request. Volunteers under the age of 18 must gain permission from a legal guardian in order to volunteer. In addition, volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

### **Background Checks**

The CEC generally does not require background checks for its volunteers due to the fact that volunteers will rarely work with minors. Should this policy change, all volunteers will be notified and asked to consent to a background check before volunteering. If a volunteer wishes to undergo a background check of their own accord, one can be obtained through Verified Volunteers and their partnership with Volunteer Houston.

### **Privacy Protection**

The CEC is committed to maintaining your privacy and will not give out your personal information, including but not limited to email address, phone number, and home address, except as required by law.

### **Harassment/Sexual Harassment**

CEC is committed to providing a volunteer environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. It is illegal to harass others based on sex, sexual orientation, age, race, national origin, disability, medical condition or any other basis made unlawful by federal, state or local law or ordination or regulation. This policy applies to all persons involved in the operations of the CEC, including employees, board members and volunteers, as well as by any person doing business with or for CEC. Unlawful discrimination and harassment in any form, including verbal, physical and visual conduct, threats, demands and retaliation are prohibited. Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. **Sexual harassment is prohibited.**

## **Conflict Resolution**

In the event of a conflict with another volunteer or staff member which you feel is unresolved, please contact the Executive Director immediately to discuss the issue. There will be no discrimination against those who wish to voice a complaint to the Executive Director and your complaint will be confidential. If your conflict relates to the Executive Director, please contact the Board chair about the issue.

## **Verbal Conduct & Public Relations**

Please refrain from commenting in a negative way about the CEC and our member organizations while volunteering with the CEC. Profanity or hateful speech will not be tolerated while you are volunteering with the CEC at a public event or otherwise.

Please remember volunteers are not official spokespeople for CEC. When addressing public meetings or in public advocacy situations, please identify yourself as a volunteer and clarify that your opinions are your own, not those of the CEC.

## **Confidentiality**

You may come across confidential information about the CEC, including but not limited to, information relating to its operations or activities, employees, business partners and volunteers. Please keep all proprietary and private information in confidence. You understand that this obligation does not prevent you from disclosing information in compliance with the law.

## **Resignation & Termination**

Should a volunteer wish to resign please notify the Executive Director in writing. CEC holds the right to evaluate your volunteer status at any time and dismiss any volunteer they feel violates CEC policy and procedure. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to the following:

- Incomplete tasks or missed deadlines
- Repeated missed volunteer commitments
- Inappropriate behavior or misconduct
- Violation of CEC policies or procedures
- Being under the influence of alcohol/drugs while volunteering
- Theft of property or illegal, unsafe, or violent acts
- Unwillingness or inability to support and further the mission of the CEC



## **Volunteer Safety & Compliance**

Volunteer safety is incredibly important to the CEC, and we are committed to providing you a safe volunteering environment. Despite the CEC's efforts, volunteer opportunities such as events come with inherent risks about which the volunteer should be aware of and work to avoid at all times. To confirm the volunteers are aware of and comfortable with these risks, all volunteers must sign a waiver of liability. Volunteers must comply with all safety and health requirements by the CEC, federal, state, and local law.

## **Personal Property**

The CEC does not assume responsibility for the loss, damage, or theft of personal belongings, and volunteers are strongly advised not to carry unnecessary amounts of cash or other valuables with them when they come to volunteer.

## **Periodic/Exit Review**

Beginning at the first 6 months of volunteer service and continuing yearly afterwards, volunteers will meet with the Executive Director to review your volunteer experience and ensure that your service is mutually beneficial. At the end of a volunteer event or once a volunteer's service ends an exit review will be given to the individual to complete. This review will help us to improve our program in the future as well as learn how to better serve our volunteers. We highly value your participation in this review, however, the content of the review will in no way effect future volunteer status.

## **Other CEC Policies**

*Driving:* You are not required to have a personal vehicle in order to volunteer for CEC, however, if you have one you may be asked to use it in order to transport materials to and from events. All operators of a motor vehicle while volunteering with CEC must be qualified to drive with proof of driver's license and insurance, and drive safely. Operators must have sufficient knowledge about vehicle handling, demonstrated by a safe driving record, so as to protect employees, volunteers, clients and the public from an unsafe driver.

*Computer Use:* CEC owned computers are provided for the use of volunteers, and are to be used in order to further the mission of the CEC and complete assigned tasks. Volunteers are prohibited from viewing sexually explicit web sites, web

sites depicting violence, or any other web sites that could be offensive to others. In some cases, an official CEC email account will be made for volunteers. You are asked to remember that any communication delivered via this email account represents the CEC. All CEC-owned equipment is liable to be monitored at any time and without warning and volunteers should not expect any privacy in their use of the same. Please handle equipment with care, ensuring its safe and proper operation and storage.

## *Recognition*

Volunteers play a crucial role in the success of Citizens' Environmental Coalition, and many of the rewards to be gained from volunteering cannot be obtained elsewhere. The CEC allows people to gain knowledge about the inner workings of an environmental non-profit, introduces volunteers to like-minded people, and provides a sense of satisfaction from hard work. In addition, the CEC likes to recognize volunteers periodically for their service provided the volunteer accepts and welcomes this recognition.

## *Volunteer Acknowledgement Form*

I \_\_\_\_\_,

acknowledge that I have read and understood the volunteer handbook and am familiar with all of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition's policies and procedures. By signing this document I acknowledge, understand, accept, and agree to comply with the policies and procedures laid out in the volunteer handbook provided to me. I understand that this handbook is not meant to cover every situation that may arise during my time as a volunteer, but is meant as a general guideline to which I will adhere. I understand that the CEC may revise, supplement, or rescind any policies or portion of the Handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, and I agree to comply with such policies as they are changed from time to time.

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

# Waiver of Liability: Adult

## CITIZEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION Waiver of Liability, Release and Indemnification Agreement

IN CONSIDERATION of having the opportunity to participate in Citizens' Environmental Coalition ("Organization") volunteer activities that may include office and administrative duties, coordinating special events, and other activities ("Activities"), I, \_\_\_\_\_, for myself, my personal representatives, assigns, heirs, and next of kin:

- (1) **ACKNOWLEDGE**, agree, and represent that I understand the nature of the Activities and that I am in good health and in proper physical condition to participate in such Activities. I fully understand that:
  - (a) the Activities involve risks and dangers of serious bodily injury, including permanent disability, paralysis and death ("Risks");
  - (b) these Risks and dangers may be caused by my own actions, or inactions, the actions or inactions of others involved in the Activities, the condition in which the Activities take place, or the negligence of the Released Parties named below; and
  - (c) there may be other risks and social and economic losses either not known to me or not readily foreseeable at this time.
  
- (2) **AGREE AND WARRANT** that I will examine and inspect each of the Activities in which I take part as a member, volunteer; and/or patron of the Organization and that if I observe any conditions which I consider to be unacceptably hazardous or dangerous, I will notify the proper authority in charge of the Activity and will refuse to participate in the Activity until the condition has been corrected to my satisfaction.
  
- (3) **ASSUME THE RISK AND HEREBY WAIVE, RELEASE, AND DISCHARGE** the Organization and its successors, assigns, administrators, directors, officers, agents, members, volunteers and employees, contractors, other participating, organizers, sponsors, advertisers, and if applicable owners and lessors of premises upon which the Activities take place ("Released Parties") from all liability, claims, demands, losses or damages on my account caused in whole or in part by the negligence, strict liability, statutory fault, action or inaction of the Released Parties or otherwise. This includes any claims arising out of any first aid, treatment, or medical service, including the lack of such or timing of such, given in connection with my participation in the Activities. I understand that I am not covered by or eligible for any insurance, health care, workers' compensation, or any other benefits maintained by the Organization.
  
- (4) **INDEMNIFY, SAVE, AND HOLD HARMLESS** each of the Released Parties from any litigation expenses, attorney fees, loss, liability, damage, or cost which any may incur as a result of a claim against any of the Released Parties made by me or anyone on my behalf.

I have read this agreement, fully understand its terms, understand that I give up substantial rights by signing it and sign it freely without any inducement or assurance of any nature and intend it to be a complete and unconditional release of all liability to the greatest extent allowed by law, and agree that if any portion of the agreement is held to be invalid, the balance, notwithstanding, shall continue in full force and effect.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Emergency Contact Name and Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Waiver of Liability: Minor*

### **CITIZEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION Minor Waiver of Liability, Release and Indemnification Agreement**

I grant permission for my child ("Participant") to participate in Citizens' Environmental Coalition ("Organization") volunteer activities that may include office and administrative duties, coordinating special events, and other activities ("Activities").

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pertinent medical information, if any: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Phone and Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family Doctor Name and Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**IN CONSIDERATION of Participant participating in the Activities, I agree as follows:**

- (1) **I ACKNOWLEDGE**, agree, and represent that I understand the nature of the Activities and that Participant is in good health and in proper physical condition to participate in such Activities. I fully understand that:
  - (a) the Activities involve risks and dangers of serious bodily injury, including permanent disability, paralysis and death ("Risks");
  - (b) these Risks and dangers may be caused by Participant's actions, or inactions, the actions or inactions of others involved in the Activities, the condition in which the Activities take place, or the negligence of the Released Parties named below; and
  - (c) there may be other risks and social and economic losses either not known to me or Participant or not readily foreseeable at this time.
  
- (2) **I ASSUME THE RISK AND HEREBY WAIVE, RELEASE, AND DISCHARGE** the Organization and its successors, assigns, administrators, directors, officers, agents, members, volunteers and employees, contractors, other participating, organizers, sponsors, advertisers, and if applicable owners and lessors of premises upon which the Activities take place ("Released Parties") from all liability, claims, demands, losses or damages on my and Participant's account caused in whole or in part by the negligence, strict liability, statutory fault, action or inaction of the Released Parties or otherwise. This includes any claims arising out of any first aid, treatment, or medical service, including the lack of such or timing of such, given in connection with Participant's participation in the Activities. I understand that the Participant is not covered by or eligible for any insurance, health care, workers' compensation, or any other benefits maintained by the Organization.
  
- (3) **I WILL INDEMNIFY, SAVE, AND HOLD HARMLESS** each of the Released Parties from any litigation expenses, attorney fees, loss, liability, damage, or cost which any may incur as a result of Participant's involvement in the Activities, including injuries arising from Released Parties' negligence, strict liability, statutory fault, action or inaction.
  
- (4) **THIS AGREEMENT** contains the entire agreement of the parties. This Agreement may be modified only in writing signed by both parties. In the event that suit is filed by either party based on or pertaining to this Agreement, **the parties shall submit this dispute to mediation**, as described in Section 154.023 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code.



## Volunteer Opportunities & Descriptions

### Development Coordinator

The CEC would like to expand or improve its existing programs to better meet the needs of the environmental community. However, the CEC has not executed a coordinated, year-end solicitation from individual donors for several years. Annual strategic planning by the board has identified an annual fund drive as a critical task for CEC in 2015, and the intern will be essential to the implementation of this effort.

Duties:

- Developing a plan for the year-end solicitation
- Researching past donors and program participants to identify prospects
- Developing solicitation materials, including templates for letters, emails, thank you notes, and social media
- Inputting campaign information, including prospects, goals, documents, etc., into CEC's donor database
- Evaluating program for conformance with the "Donor Bill of Rights," IRS requirements, and other philanthropic best practices and requirements
- Attending fund development committee meetings, including giving a presentation about the year-end solicitation plan and soliciting input
- Developing a guide, including templates, for future year-end solicitation efforts

### Environmental Resource Guide Coordinator

With well over 100 organizations represented in the current guide, and a growing audience for the information, the CEC would like to create a version of the guide specifically for the educational setting. The audience will be school teachers, informal environmental educators, and afterschool programs.

Duties:

- Collecting, via email and phone, information about environmental programs that may be of interest to the target audience
- Compiling the information into a usable format—both electronic and printed.
- Conducting a focus group (educators will be pre-identified by the CEC) to determine educator needs and an matching format
- Working with a proofreader
- Soliciting sponsorships to support the cost of printing and shipping the guide
- Graphic design and typesetting
- Developing a list of recipients & arranging distribution
- Preparing an evaluation tool for the Guide

### Government Relations Coordinator

Local, state, and national governments have a great deal of influence on the environment and environmental policy. Unfortunately, it is often difficult for nonprofits—especially small nonprofits—to keep tabs on all relevant activity. The Government Relations Intern's job will be to track the environmental activities of one or more governing or administrative agencies and provide reports of both actions and opportunities to provide input.

Duties:

- Select one or more agencies to review
- Prepare weekly report on activities, which might include:

- Relevant upcoming agenda items
- Decisions made relating to agenda items
- Environmental groups who have expressed an interest in the issue
- Public meeting notices
- Public comment opportunities
- Availability of significant reports
- Attend meetings as schedule allows
- Draft issue-specific fact sheets for publication on website and distribution through newsletter
- Contact and interview representatives of member organizations
- Research environmental issues
- Work with a proofreader/editor

### Journalism Coordinator

Based on the results of surveys of member organizations and newsletter subscribers, the CEC would increase the depth of reporting provided by the CEC. To do this, the CEC would like to produce two series of articles about the environmental issues being addressed by its member communities. One series is intended for publication in the weekly newsletter. The other series will form the basis for an online library of articles for use in homeowner association newsletters and similar publications.

Duties:

- Contact and interview representatives of member organizations
- Research environmental issues
- Write 6-12 articles for the CEC newsletter
- Write 12 articles for online library. Articles will focus on activities that can be undertaken by individuals to improve or protect environmental resources, and will highlight efforts of member organizations.
- Work with a proofreader/editor
- Prepare online library and market to homeowner associations
- Develop an annual editorial calendar for use by CEC staff
- Graphic design and typesetting of the articles
- Soliciting sponsorships to support online library

### Marketing and Development Coordinator

The CEC would like to expand or improve its existing programs to better meet the needs of the environmental community. To do this, it needs to improve its development program.

Duties:

- Collecting, via email and phone, information about environmental programs that may be of interest to the target audience
- Compiling the information into a usable format—both electronic and printed.
- Conducting a focus group (educators will be pre-identified by the CEC) to determine educator needs and an matching format
- Working with a proofreader
- Soliciting sponsorships to support the cost of printing and shipping the guide
- Graphic design and typesetting
- Soliciting bids for printing and then coordinating with the printer
- Developing a list of recipients
- Arranging distribution



- Preparing an evaluation tool for the Guide

## Digital Media Coordinator

The internship will provide exposure to various aspects of marketing and digital media including but not limited to: communications strategy, social media, email marketing, digital graphics, video and photography, websites, and marketing material design and production.

Duties:

- Create a social media strategy in order to increase our online presence and promote our goals and initiatives
- Develop content and graphics for social media platforms in cooperation with staff to support the foundation's programs, campaigns, and events
- Update cechouston.org to reflect latest news, program updates, events etc. using the WordPress platform and Adobe software to create needed graphics and photo adjustments
- Take photo and video CEC events for use across marketing channels, and organize and manage archive of photo and video

## Administrative Support Volunteer

We have a lot of different things going on in our office that could always use your support. If you're looking to earn a few volunteer hours after school, utilize your administrative skills, or seeking other special in-office projects, let us know and we may be able to work with you.

## Events and Special Projects

Throughout the year, we host a variety of events and projects that educate, integrate, and inform the public about CEC and the environment. Event and project volunteer opportunities are perfect for groups or individuals looking for a one-time, fun, and interactive volunteer experience.

### **Current opportunities:**

*Wild & Scenic Film Festival*-The CEC needs volunteers to help us make the Wild & Scenic Film Festival of Houston a success. The festival will be held on January 28, 2016 at the River Oaks Theater. Volunteer needs include planning before the event, set-up and clean-up, ticket taking, projection booth, greeters, and more. Perks include free entry in to the festival and the opportunity to watch some of the amazing films chosen for this coming festival.

*Plastic Bag Crocheting*- Do you know how to crochet, or want to learn how? We are in need of volunteers to join us in reusing plastic grocery bags by crocheting them in to beautiful purses or totes. Collect your disposable plastic bags, bring them by, and help us make something beautiful!

## Photographer

If you have photography skills and want to help the CEC document some of our fantastic events, we need your help! We will contact you with upcoming event dates which could use your skills and you can sign up to photograph as many as you want.

## Board of Trustees Member

The CEC Board of Directors is composed of leaders from the nonprofit and for-profit sectors who are dedicated to the organization's mission. A board member will commit to serve on the CEC board for (at least one) 2 year term and should have the financial acumen to read and understand CEC's financial statements and otherwise help the board fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities. Board members will attend bi-monthly meetings and discuss special projects or general functioning of the organization, as well as

serve on at least one committee. Board members will also attend special events, identify potential donors, and help with fundraising activities.

### Committee Member

The CEC has 6 standing committees, along with its executive committee, which require volunteers to help manage the organization. The board of directors will elect committee members and hold meetings within each committee. Committee descriptions can be provided on request based on your interests.

### Archivist

CEC has been in Houston since 1971, and therefore has a tremendous number of documents from over the years. Many of these documents are held in the archives of both the Houston Public Library and the library at University of Houston. We are seeking an individual who loves to explore or is interested in history to go through our archives for documents of interest. In addition, this individual may spend time in the office reviewing files to submit to the archives at the University of Houston. Finally, as our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an organization approaches, the volunteer will be asked to help use their knowledge gained from the archives to create a timeline showing important events in the history of the CEC.

## *Acknowledgements*

The CEC would like to thank the generosity of Shell and Volunteer Houston for allowing our Shell Nonprofit Summer Intern Morgan to create this handbook. We would also like to thank Texas C-BAR for their legal assistance and review.