

## Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods Safety Guidelines for Public Coastal Programs

This document outlines the guidelines in which State Parks has authorized Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods staff to manage Volunteer in Parks Program docents for coastal education programs within the Russian River Sector of the Sonoma-Mendocino Coast District. Stewards staff will coordinate all educational coastal activities, including tidepool field trips, roving marine education, and public events, while maintaining oversight over the programs offered and volunteers participating. In their leadership role, Stewards staff will prioritize the safety of all participants—visitors, students, teachers, chaperones, and volunteers. Any incidents or injuries occurring to volunteers, field trip participants, or park visitors during field trips or events must be reported immediately to the SMCD Visitor Services Program Manager.

Coastal interpretive and educational programming and events will foster awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the marine environment among students and members of the public, encouraging them to become responsible stewards of the sea

### **Tidepool and Marine Education (Coastal) Field Trip Guidelines**

State Parks shall provide Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods with the following resources:

- A video recording of the Coastal Safety Training for VIPP volunteers participating in Tidepool and Marine Education Field Trips
- Coastal Safety toolkit which can be customized for pre-field trip site orientation and safety packets for teachers
- Pre-field trip PORTS Program (live or recorded) for all classrooms with confirmed field trips.
- A tide calendar highlighting dates and times which the State Parks Interpretation and Education (I&E) Division has recommended (weather and swell dependent) which can be used as a reference for scheduling school field trip tidepool exploration and non-tidepool (marine education field trips also known as coastal field trips) programs. (See Appendix A for 2025 recommendations)

### **Docent (Volunteer) Requirements:**

- Docents must be live scanned
- Have a VIPP signed Tidepool Education Docent duty statement on file with State Parks
- A Lead docent who has attended or watched the video recording of the

Interpretation and Education Division's Coastal Safety Training will be present. (It is recommended that all docents attend or watch the Coastal Safety Training).

- Wear vest, hat or other clothing identifying themselves as a docent
- The lead volunteer or designee will report any incidents, including any injuries to volunteers, field trip participants, or park visitors that occur during any field trip or event immediately to NORCOM (1-916-653-1300) and then Stewards staff.
- Docents shall sign up on the posted schedule and update Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods of any changes to their ability to participate.

#### Scheduling of Class Visits to the Tidepools:

- Spring months when tides low enough for exposure of organisms and safe exploration occur during morning hours, to coincide with school schedules.
- No field trips will be scheduled when tides exceed [the Sonoma Coast Tidepooling Beaches](#), if swells present any danger (or swell is over 6 feet). See Appendix A for dates and times recommended by State Parks I&E division.
- Prepare calendar of low-tide weekdays January thru' June, referencing [the Cal Coast Tide Finder](#) filtered by Bodega Bay (or NOAA website filtered by Bodega Bay) and materials provided by the I&E division. Graphical sine display tool recommended for confirming tide levels during anticipated time of visit. ([JTides](#) (application for generating tide tables and graphical sine display)). Use the filter for Fort Ross as it's more accurate for beaches facing open ocean.
- Communicate with teachers requesting field trips to determine appropriate date and beach.
- Review reservation request to confirm that at least 1 parent/guardian will be available for every 5 students (Grades K-4) or every 10 students (Grades 5-12). Maximum number of students dependent upon docent capacity which shouldn't exceed 10 students per docent.

#### Preparatory Materials Provided to Teachers:

- At time of scheduling pre-trip program instructions can be given to teachers on how to book either a virtual pre-trip or recorded interpretive program.
- Other teacher resources may be distributed depending on educational objectives and location of field trip
- Information from the Coastal Safety Toolkit will be updated for each location and can be provided to teachers.

#### Confirming Field Trip with Teachers and Pre-trip Condition Check:

- One week prior to scheduled field trip, beach is walked and assessed for

accessibility and safety issues (erosion, running streams or culverts, obstacles which may have washed in, collapsed sections of trail). Assess and determine alternate site if necessary

- Three days prior check surf forecast for anticipated swell and other surf conditions at [surf-forecast.com](http://surf-forecast.com) and weather forecast [weather.gov](http://weather.gov) for 95430
- Confirm field trip with teacher advising of any potential changes due to weather, beach or surf conditions. If conditions are unsafe, reschedule or cancel
- Exchange cell numbers of teacher and lead docent assigned as point person in case either person needs to reach the other on the morning of. (Verizon cell service works in each parking lot.)
- Provide teacher with Parking instructions and Ocean Safety and Tidepool Etiquette Talking Points (revised version 12/19/2023) and ask teacher to review in the classroom one day prior to trip.
- Reminder of appropriate footwear: closed-toe shoes with good tread, NO open toed shoes, sandals, or Crocs
- Check surf and weather forecast 24 hours prior to trip and reschedule if swell and/or weather is dangerous.

#### Field Trip Day Arrival:

- Parking lot: docents meet 20-30 minutes prior to classroom's ETA
- Identify any hazards in the parking lot, on the trail, and down on the beach.
- Watch surf (10 minutes recommended) to get a feel for its energy and potential for sneaker waves
- Lead docent will give safety and tidepool etiquette talk, including setting the boundaries of the field trip.
- Determine which docent will be responsible for watching the surf and staying alert to any large swell sets or incoming sneaker waves to alert the other docents and field trip participants. This person will continually monitor surf and tide conditions and track participants approaching field trip boundaries
- Distribute vests, field guides, magnifiers, etc from tidepool packs
- Determine which docents will lead rotational station activities for larger groups if applicable.

#### Walking the Beach to the Intertidal:

- Stay clear of the surf
- No docents or field trip participants will get into the water during the field trip (the intent here is not meant to prohibit docents from stepping into residual puddles but to keep them from wading or stepping into the ocean activity).

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- Wading in the ocean or tidepools is not permitted (the intent here is not meant to prohibit docents from stepping into residual puddles but to keep them from wading or stepping into the ocean activity).
- At the intertidal make sure backpacks and clothing are stored above high tide line
- Establish boundaries, and remind students of field trip boundaries, both laterally and how far out to go. Use the tall flags to mark the farthest outer edges of the boundaries.
- Point out rocks covered with slippery algae and camouflaged animals (aggregating anemones) and any other potential areas of the site that could pose a safety concern for students or animals.

#### Docent Responsibilities:

- First Aid: Docents carry first aid kit, but do not administer to students
- Student Safety: If docents observe students acting in a dangerous manner that will lead to injury of themselves or fellow student's, docents should immediately speak up to stop the behavior and alert the teachers and chaperones. Behavior such as wading in the water, climbing on rocks, going outside of the field trip boundaries, etc. are considered dangerous.
- Discipline: Discipline is the responsibility of teachers and chaperones only, not docents. If docents observe unkind behavior, or if a student is not participating or acting out, the docent should refer the issue to the teacher or chaperones.
- Reporting incidents: The lead docent or designee will immediately report any incidents, including any injuries to volunteers, field trip participants, or park visitors that occur during any field trip or event to NORCOM (1-916-653-1300) and then to Stewards staff.

### **Tidepool Roving Docent Safety Guidelines**

#### Roving Docent Requirements:

- Rovers must sign and submit VIPP duty statement as [Tidepool Roving Docent \(revised 2025\)](#)
- Attended or has watched the video recording of the Interpretation and Education Division's coastal safety training
- Sign up on the posted electronic/online schedule, including chosen beach, and let Stewards Staff know of any changes
- Wear vest, hat or other clothing identifying yourself as a roving naturalist
- Docent will check the weather and surf forecast for Salmon Creek anticipated swell and other surf conditions before heading out on [surf-forecast.com](#) or [Surfline.com](#) for their own safety.

- Will immediately report any incidents, including any injuries to volunteers, participants, or park visitors that occur during any roving event to NORCOM (1916-653-1300) and then to Stewards staff.

### Scheduling

- No roving event will be scheduled when the tide or swells present any danger. See Appendix A for a table of recommended dates and times provided by State Parks I&E division.
- Check tide tables referencing the [Cal Coast Tide Finder](#) filtered by Bodega Bay or NOAA website filtered by Bodega Bay (use Fort Ross for beaches other than Campbell Cove). Graphical sine display tool recommended for confirming tide levels during anticipated time of visit. [JTides](#) (*application for generating tide tables and graphical sine display*)

### Roving the Beach or Intertidal:

- Watch surf to get a feel for its energy and potential for runner waves before entering beach
- Stay clear of the surf
- No wading in the ocean (the intent here is not meant to prohibit docents from stepping into residual puddles but to keep them from wading or stepping into the ocean activity).
- No getting wet unless behind the rocks of the intertidal

### At the intertidal:

- Make sure backpacks and clothing are stored above high tide line
- Point out rocks covered with slippery algae and camouflaged animals (aggregating anemones) to park visitors
- Communicate ocean safety principles to visitors if noticing unsafe behavior
- Communicate tidepool etiquette to visitors if noticing behavior harmful to organisms living there. Rovers are not in charge of enforcement, just education, though the presence of rovers in identifying clothing helps encourage rule following.

## **Beach Event Safety Guidelines**

### Public Beach Event Docent Requirements:

- Rovers must sign and submit duty statement as [Tidepool Roving Docent \(revised 2025\)](#)
- Attended or has watched the video recording of the Interpretation and Education Division's coastal safety training
- Sign up on the posted electronic/online schedule, including chosen beach, and let us

know of any changes

- Wear vest, hat or other clothing identifying yourself as a roving naturalist
- Docent will check the weather and surf forecast for Bodega Bay anticipated swell and other surf conditions before heading out on <https://www.surf-forecast.com/breaks/Salmon-Creek> or [Surflines.com](http://Surflines.com) for their own safety.
- Will immediately report any incidents, including any injuries to volunteers, participants, or park visitors that occur during any roving event to NORCOM (1916-653-1300) and then to Stewards staff.

Scheduling:

- No roving event will be scheduled when the tide or swells present any danger. See Appendix A for a table of recommended dates and times provided by State Parks I&E division.
- Check tide tables referencing the [Cal Coast Tide Finder](#) filtered by Bodega Bay or NOAA website filtered by Bodega Bay (use Fort Ross for beaches facing open ocean). Graphical sine display tool recommended for confirming tide levels during anticipated time of visit. [JTides](#) (*application for generating tide tables and graphical sine display*)
- All Events which are advertised to the public must get file a special event permit so that the date can be checked and approved through State Parks Special Event Coordinator's Calendar to avoid double booking of areas.

Assessing Surf and Beach Conditions:

- Prior to scheduled event, beach is assessed for accessibility and safety issues (erosion, running streams or culverts, obstacles which may have washed in, collapsed sections of trail). Assess and determine alternate site if necessary
- Check surf forecast for Salmon Creek or Bodega Bay anticipated swell and other surf conditions before heading out on [surf-forecast.com](http://surf-forecast.com) or [Surflines.com](http://Surflines.com)

Event Procedures:

- Docents meet at the parking lot 20-30 minutes prior to start of event
- Watch surf to get a feel for its energy and potential for runner waves
- Determine who will give safety/etiquette talk prior to entering the beach
- Determine who will be the float, watching the surf as the tide comes in to alert the others to begin coming in
- Assist participants with parking if necessary

Walking The Beach:

- Stay clear of the surf
- No wading in the ocean or tidepools (the intent here is not meant to prohibit docents from stepping into residual puddles but to keep them from wading or stepping into the ocean activity).

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- No getting wet
- At the intertidal make sure backpacks and clothing are stored above high tide line
- Point out rocks covered with slippery algae and camouflaged animals (aggregating anemones)

At The Intertidal:

- Make sure personal items are stored above high tide line
  - Point out rocks covered with slippery algae and camouflaged animals (aggregating anemones) and any other potential areas of the site that could pose a safety concerns.
  - Communicate ocean safety principles to visitors if noticing unsafe behavior
  - Communicate tidepool etiquette to visitors if noticing behavior harmful to organisms living there. Rovers are not in charge of enforcement, just education.

Under these guidelines State Parks authorizes Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods staff to manage Volunteer in Parks Program docents for coastal education programs within the Russian River Sector of the Sonoma-Mendocino Coast District. The guidelines are to be reviewed annually by the Visitor Services Program Manager.