
GOPHER TORTOISE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE™

FACT SHEET FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (GTCI) is a proactive program of a *non-profit foundation*, Ashton Biodiversity Research & Preservation Institute, Inc. (ABR&PI). This program is designed to encourage and support private citizens, landowners, individuals, corporations, scientists, and governments that are concerned about or are interested in gopher tortoise and upland wildlife conservation in the state of Florida. As part of this program, a major effort is being made to work with and educate these individuals and groups to become an important part of the conservation of gopher tortoises across the state.

We Need Volunteers!

The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (GTCI) needs volunteers. As you read the GTCI Brochure and the fact sheets, you can see that we serve a diversity of individuals and groups.

GTCI services center around two primary goals:

- 1. Gopher tortoise and uplands species conservation and**
- 2. Conservation of private lands that serve as tortoise habitat**

The primary method used by GTCI to achieve these goals is EDUCATION of groups and individuals. Putting the right INFORMATION in the hands of those who need it when they need it is key to making this Conservation Initiative work.

The Board of Directors of ABR&PI includes expert scientists and professionals but at best their time is limited. To make GTCI work and to be successful we will rely heavily on concerned members who want to help. Our ultimate goal is to eventually have volunteers in key areas around the state. Volunteers can help from home, from work or can actually assist in the field working with individuals and groups.

What Do Volunteers Do?

They provide expertise, time and enthusiasm to the program. We need volunteers to help in many areas and in a great diversity of ways. **VOLUNTEERS CAN**

- Offer time and expertise according to their own interests and backgrounds to help with program development, presentations or information dissemination in their area.
- Provide information and networking for ranchers, tree farmers, large landowners, habitat managers, lodge owners, and hunters who are interested in conservation.
- Assist Home Owner Associations or neighborhood groups in organizing and managing tortoise and upland mitigation after the builder has left.
- Help answer homeowner and student questions and work with individuals who have tortoise concerns in their neighborhoods and are unsure what to do.
- Work with local legislators, FWC personnel and local government officials to provide information and networking in a proactive manner to insure upland conservation is considered as development takes place.
- Provide their expert services (attorneys, consultants, surveyors, accountants, news media) to help groups or individuals interested in conservation on private lands to establish needed conservation easements, legislation, and legal interpretations.
- Serve as liaisons with conservation organizations, Cattlemen's Associations, Farm Bureau, Home Builder's Associations and others to work toward good but reasonable conservation solutions.
- Assist in public relations and fundraising activities including serving on networking "trees", helping with contacts and mailings, hosting local activities, and doing legwork.

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What do I get as a Volunteer?

- Special GTCI Volunteer training programs offered at the Ashton Biological Preserve.
- Opportunities to help develop and attend Special Workshops across the state.
- A Volunteer Name Badge
- A Volunteer Manual with on-going updates.
- Yearly Volunteer Service Certificates
- Program materials for presentations depending upon type of volunteer service.
- An annual GTCI volunteer and member get together at the Ashton Biological Preserve so people can get to know one another, have their questions answered and learn more about tortoise and uplands conservation.
- GTCI volunteer coordinator will be available via phone and email to answer questions and help schedule volunteer service activities.

How Do I Become a Volunteer?

1. Join the **Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative** as an individual or as a member of the Gopher Tortoise Reserve Program. (see attached membership form)
2. Then fill out the **Volunteer Questionnaire**. (Call and request a volunteer questionnaire if you do not have one)

The Volunteer Coordinator will contact you within 10 days of our receipt of your membership materials and questionnaire.

VOLUNTEERS CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE VOLUNTEERS MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!

What else can Volunteers Do to Help GTCI?

- Keep GTCI informed of local or regional happenings concerning gopher tortoises and uplands conservation issues in your own neighborhood
- Share information about GTCI with friends and bring new members and volunteers
- Distribute GTCI information at your local libraries and community meetings
- Keep in touch with the GTCI Volunteer Coordinator and communicate activities you are involved with that could involve GTCI. If we know you are attending a particular event or meeting then GTCI may be able to provide pertinent handouts or information materials for that group.
- Keep GTCI in mind if you or someone you know plans to make donations or have equipment (computers, cars, trucks, copiers, X-ray machine, GPS, etc.) that is in good working order but that could be donated to ABR&PI (non-profit 501 3c) to help GTCI
- Encourage "legacy" donations of sensitive lands or placement of gopher tortoise habitat into the Gopher Tortoise Reserve Program and in conservation easements.