



VMN Admin Info Sheet

Recognition of Service Hour Milestone Achievements

*This Info Sheet is intended for Chapter Board Members in the VMN Program.
Authored by Virginia Master Naturalist State Office*

Overview of Volunteer Recognition

The VMN Program has many ways to recognize its volunteers for their service and certifications. These include certificates, pins for recertification and milestones, and electronic badges in Better Impact. Please read through this document and the others listed under “Information on other VMN Recognition guidelines” to better understand what each recognition is for and how they are awarded to volunteers.

If after reading this, or the other documents, you have any questions, please direct them to masternaturalist@vt.edu and a staff member from the VMN State Office will get back to you.

In this document, you will find guidelines on the following:

- Milestone Pins
- Golden Circle
- Procedures for Requesting Milestone Pins
- Better Impact Badges for Milestone Qualification
- Additional Recognition Options

Information on other VMN Recognition guidelines:

Both of these documents can be found on the [Volunteer Management page of the VMN website](#).

- Recognition for Basic Training course Graduation.
- Recognition of Certified Virginia Master Naturalist Status.

Volunteers May Decline Recognition Items

Volunteers are welcome to decline receiving pins. Some individuals do not want them. We are keeping track of this preference in Better Impact. We have added a question to everyone’s profile in Better Impact noting if a volunteer wants to receive recognition items. Everyone will default to YES for this question and individuals can update their response at any time. We will not send pins for anyone who changes their preference to NO.

Milestone Pins

What is it

The VMN State Program has special milestone pins for volunteers who complete 250, 500, 1000, and 2500 hours of service. At 250 hours, the first milestone, the volunteer receives a silver VMN base pin along with a rocker that says ‘250 hours’. For subsequent milestones, the rocker is changed out to one that says 500 hours, 1000 hours, and 2500 hours, but the volunteer keeps the same original base pin.

Who is Eligible

Accepted Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers who have completed and logged at least 250 hours of volunteer service in Better Impact. Service Hour Milestones are cumulative and are calculated based on a volunteer's lifetime service hours. Continuing Education hours are not part of this calculation. *Volunteers do not need to be Certified to earn a Service Hour Milestone.*

Responsibilities

Volunteers need to make sure that all of their service hours are entered on a regular basis so that their totals are accurate when the VMN State Office runs Mid-year and End-of-year Reports.

Milestone pins will be distributed twice a year to each chapter following the timeline and procedures outlined in the "Procedures for Requesting Milestone Pins" section of this document.

Golden Circle

What is it

When a volunteer achieves 5000 hours of volunteer service, they become part of the VMN Golden Circle and will be sent a gold VMN base pin to replace their silver base pin. The gold VMN base pin denotes the 5000-hour achievement (rather than a rocker). As for previous rockers, volunteers can choose to return them to the state for reuse/recycling or they can keep them to be reused with their gold VMN base pin, should they achieve that milestone. This means that a gold VMN base pin + a 250-hour rocker will denote that a volunteer has 5,250 volunteer hours.

Who is Eligible

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Responsibilities

Volunteers need to make sure that all of their service hours are entered on a regular basis so that their totals are accurate when the VMN State Office runs Mid-year and End-of-year Reports.

Milestone pins will be distributed twice a year to each chapter following the timeline and procedures outlined in the "Procedures for Requesting Milestone Pins" section of this document.

Better Impact Badge for Milestone Qualification

What is it

Each volunteer who achieves a milestone will also be able to see a corresponding badge in their Better Impact profile. These badges will be updated by the VMN State Staff in February and August in conjunction with the Mid-year and End-of-year Reports cycle. We understand that chapters would like to do this more often and are looking into a way to make that happen.

Who is Eligible

Accepted Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers who have logged at least 250 hours of volunteer service in Better Impact. Service Hour Milestones are cumulative and are calculated based on volunteer's lifetime service hours. Continuing Education hours are not part of this calculation. Volunteers do not need to be Certified to earn a Service Hour Milestone.

Responsibilities

The VMN State Office will update the “VMN Service Hour Milestone” qualification in Better Impact twice a year as part of the Mid-year and End-of-year Reports cycle. See the next section for further details.

Procedures for Requesting Milestone Pins

Our current Procedures for requesting Certificates and Pins

- The VMN State Office sends recognition items to chapters twice a year based on bi-annual reports generated by the VMN State Office.
- We call this Mid-year (MY) Reports and End-of-year (EOY) Reports.
- Mid-year Reports will be created and reviewed in July of each year and will report on hours logged from January 1 through June 30 of that year. Qualifications will be updated in Better Impact and packages sent to chapters in August.
- EOY Reports will be created and reviewed in January of each year and will report on hours logged from July 1 through December 31 of the year just ended. Qualifications will be updated in Better Impact and packages sent to chapters in February.
- Timelines for both the Mid-year and EOY Reports are outlined in the following section.

Timeline for Mid-year (MY) and End-of-year (EOY) Reports

- MY and EOY packages will be sent to all chapters. Please make a plan to distribute the items we send as volunteers should be able to receive their latest recognitions at least twice a year.
- In May/June (for MY) and Nov/Dec (for EOY), Chapters will need a plan to encourage their members to have all hours updated in Better Impact by June 30 (for MY) and December 31 (for EOY).
- In early-July (for MY) and early-January (for EOY), Staff from the VMN State Office will pull reports from Better Impact to view all hours reported as of June 30 (for MY) and December 31 (for EOY).
- VMN Staff will send an email to each chapter’s Membership Chair and President around July 15 (for MY) and January 15 (for EOY) with two reports attached: 1) Milestone Report, and 2) Certification Report (new initial certifications). EOY will also include a third report: 3) Recert Report.
- Each chapter will have at least two weeks to review the reports and respond with any questions or corrections.
- Once both the VMN State Office and the chapter agree that the reports are correct, VMN Staff will update the chapters milestones and certifications (initial and recerts) in Better Impact.
- Next, the chapter’s package will be put together
- Mid-year packages will include certificates, re-certification pins (if any were missed at the previous EOY Reports) and milestones earned through June 30.
- EOY packages will include certificates, re-certification pins and milestone pins earned through December 31.

What Chapters should do when reviewing Reports

- We are not expecting chapters to re-run the reports (though we are happy to give you directions on how to do that if you are just the type of people who want to do it).
- The data in Better Impact should be such that we can tell who should be getting recognition items.
- However, at this point we know that the data in Better Impact isn’t complete just yet and so we want chapters to double check us
- If you have a big chapter where it is difficult to have individual knowledge of people then you may only be able to glance at it and say 'looks good'.
- A smaller chapter might know of some individual circumstances that need to be addressed.
- There is always the option to just trust us!
- Really, these reports are meant as a courtesy so that you can have input if you want to do so before we ship everything out AND to make sure we didn’t miss something that you know should be looked at.

Important note about packages

Check your package as soon as it comes in to make sure the items you received are correct. If the package sits for four weeks and only gets checked the day before your chapter-wide recognition event, there is no time to replace anything that might be missing. The person putting the package together is only human and can make mistakes (inadvertently, of course). Help them out and allow some time to send corrections if they are needed.

Make a plan to get every volunteer the recognition items they have earned, even if they are unable to attend the chapter meeting or other special event. If you choose to mail the items to members, document envelopes are recommended for sending certificates and padded envelopes are recommended for sending pins.

Roles for Chapter Leaders and the VMN State Office

These are the roles of the Chapter Leaders and the VMN State Office as we see them:

Chapter Leaders

- Encourage/remind volunteers in the chapter to enter any hours by June 30 and December 31 of each year.
- Apply Qualification for VMN Training to indicate new basic training graduates. We need this information so that we can determine who is eligible for certification.
- Please do not update any other Qualifications or Milestone info in Better Impact. Those updates will be done by the VMN State Office.
- Let volunteers know they can opt out of receiving pins by updating that field in their profile on Better Impact
- Review the Reports sent to you by the VMN State Office and respond with any questions or corrections by the deadline listed in the email.
- Receive the recognition items at a single address and distribute to volunteers

VMN State Office

- Generate reports from Better Impact to create lists of new certifications, new milestones, recertifications
- Send reports to chapter leaders for their review and respond to any resulting questions or corrections
- Apply Qualifications for 1) Certified VMN volunteers and 2) Milestone Levels, as well as the date of the last milestone to each volunteer's in Better Impact profile
- Compile and send out packages to each chapter with the recognition items

Additional Recognition Options

Chapters are welcome and encouraged to use additional means of recognizing volunteer service. Some possibilities include:

- Acknowledging additional levels of service hours. Chapters may wish to recognize volunteers for 100 hours, 3000 hours, or other levels for which we do not provide pins at the state level. The recognition could include creating additional pins or other token items and/or announcements at chapter meetings, in chapter publications, or in local media.
- Highlighting particular volunteer project accomplishments. Learn about and share stories of the impacts of the volunteers' service.
- Invite a volunteer to write a blog post for the chapter website about their volunteer service.

Visit Virginia Master Naturalist: virginiamasternaturalist.org

Visit Virginia Cooperative Extension: ext.vt.edu

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