



# A New Global Trajectory:

Catalyzing Change Through the UN Decade  
on Ecosystem Restoration

## Make a Difference Week Fact Sheet

Make a Difference Week (MADW) will run from 5–13 June 2021, beginning on World Environment Day, which is also the formal launch day for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

This document provides information on the details of how to plan and host a local MADW volunteer event. Once you've familiarized yourself with the information presented here, you can submit your event at <https://www.ser-rrc.org/make-a-difference/submit-a-mad-project/>. If you have any questions after reading this document, please contact [keith@ser.org](mailto:keith@ser.org).

## What Kind of Activity Will You Organize?

Make a Difference Week events do not need to be any different from a typical volunteer restoration event, and can take place on any day during the week of 5–13 June.

Some ideas for events include: restoration plantings, seed collection and seedball making, invasive plant pulls, citizen science monitoring of restoration sites, or any other restorative activity that positively impacts the ecology of your region. Please consider any local COVID restrictions in your area when thinking about what kind of event you'd like to host.

Volunteer restoration events are a great opportunity for local community members to reconnect with their local ecosystems, become invested in and supportive of restoration activities, and make a significant positive impact on their environment. As you start to plan your event, be sure to keep these questions in mind:

**Where Will the Event Take Place?** The choice of location determines what activities will be feasible and useful, and who will be likely to participate. If you are interested in planning an event but aren't sure what to do, consider reaching out to local government agencies or environmental/conservation groups to see if they have any suggestions or would be interested in co-hosting an event.

**What Will the Activity Be?** What type of restorative activity do you have the capacity and funding to organize? Some volunteer events require no funding (e.g. weed pulls), some might require materials (e.g. seedlings) that could be donated or could require payment. Do you want to: pull weeds along a stretch of river; plant 200 (or 2000) native seedlings; provide assistance in a native plant nursery; collect monitoring data; spread seeds at a restoration site? Make sure you can clearly articulate what volunteers will be doing, where they will be doing it, what supplies and materials that either they will need to bring or you will need to provide, and what the volunteers can realistically accomplish during your event.



**Who Will Participate?** Thinking through the previous questions should make it easy to answer who your volunteers will likely be and what type of outreach you may need to do. While SER will provide a platform for people from across the world to sign up to host or to participate in an event, it will also be important for hosts to do local outreach. Now is the time to figure out how many and what type of volunteers you'll need. Volunteer events can accommodate any number of people, perhaps as small as 3-5 people and as large as hundreds of people. You should consider whether your volunteers will need any training to participate, whether it will be accessible for people of all ages and physical abilities, or whether you need specific skills in your volunteers.

**When Will the Event Start and End?** You can host a volunteer event on any day of Make a Difference Week (June 5 – 13). It's important to consider local holidays when scheduling, and also important to consider what time of day might be best for your activity and your participants. We expect most MADW events will take place on the weekends, but you could also host an evening event during the week if that is most likely to work best for your volunteers. It's entirely up to you.

**Why volunteer?** Finally, make sure you can explain to your volunteers why their participation matters. A good introduction to the history of the site, local ecology, and the outcome of their actions will go a long way towards giving volunteers a sense of engagement with the project and your local ecosystem. By participating in Make a Difference Week, people will be part of a global collective restoration event and they will be supporting the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration – this is truly an opportunity to act locally and to show that if we all act, in our own backyards, restoration can start healing the planet. We'll be providing more information about the global impact of MADW with hosts to share with their volunteers. What your event accomplishes is something to celebrate!

You should also think about how you'll measure your achievements and acknowledge your volunteers' labour. If you're removing an invasive species, you could measure by number of garbage bags filled or the weight of organisms removed. If you're planting or seeding, you could measure the area treated, the number of seedlings planted, or the weight of seed spread. Do you want to have a small celebration with music and snacks at the end of the event? Take pictures or videos to share with volunteers, on social media, or on your organization's website or newsletter. We will be asking all hosts to share this reporting information, as well as photos and video if you have them, with SER so that we can report on the collective global impact of Make a Difference Week!

## Safety Considerations

**COVID:** Familiarize yourself with your local COVID guidelines and consider how they'll influence your event – will you need to limit the size of the event? Can people share tools? Plan an introduction at the start of the event that informs your participants of the guidelines that they'll need to follow, and be ready with masks and hand sanitizer. It's a good idea to collect volunteer contact information at the start of the event in case you need to facilitate contact tracing. We want all of our event organizers and volunteers to have a safe, positive experience during Make a Difference Week and that means carefully following all local COVID guidelines. Be ready to enforce your guidelines if necessary!

**Safety:** Before the event, be sure to do a thorough walk through of your site. Note any potential hazards: rough terrain, steep slopes, traffic, wildlife, exposure to weather, etc. Make a plan to inform your volunteers of any hazards before the event, and make sure to inform your volunteers of appropriate clothing or supplies they'll need for the site and weather. Consider providing water, sunscreen, and a first aid kit. If your site is remote, please be sure to make an emergency evacuation plan in advance. Make a backup plan for your event in case weather prevents you from safely working on your site.

## Event Logistics

Planning out the logistics of your volunteer event in advance can help prevent unexpected problems. Some things to consider include:

**Promotion:** Make sure volunteers know about your event! In addition to adding your event to the [MADW platform](#), you should plan to advertise your event on social media, websites, in newsletters, by email, by posting the event in community centers, emailing groups who might be interested, or sending a press release to your local media. When you submit your event to the MADW team, we will also include it on our host website and interactive map, which will be promoted in order to help connect volunteers with local events.

**Registration:** How will local volunteers register for your event? Will you set up a web-based registration system, do people need to email you, or will you be promoting the event without registration? This may be especially of concern in regions where there are COVID-related limits to the size of gatherings.

**Structure for the day:** While your volunteer event doesn't need to follow a strict schedule, make sure you plan for the overall structure of the day and when activities will happen. Be prepared for volunteers to show up both early or late. Make a plan for how you will introduce volunteers to the restoration opportunities on the site and to the event. If you need to train your volunteers, have the training and trainers fully prepared for this portion of the project. Create a schedule, especially in particularly hot or cold climates to make sure you have planned breaks for people to drink water and cool off, or have an opportunity to warm up. Be prepared for both more and fewer people than expected (some people who sign up won't attend, some people may attend who didn't sign up).

**Cost:** While it is possible to host a volunteer restoration event at no cost, it's important to consider the potential cost of materials or tools, permits, and potentially providing water/snacks for volunteers (though they can also bring their own). There are many options available for local event sponsorship. Local businesses or municipalities may be interested in contributing to the project – often in the form of supplying refreshments or lending tools.

**Materials:** At the earliest planning stage you should consider what types of materials you may need and how you will provide them. Assign someone to be responsible for gathering any materials and bringing them to your volunteer site on time for the day of the event. Remember to plan for their return if they are loaned. If your project involves the removal of material (e.g. garbage or invasive species), make a plan for where this material will go, for having collection bags for the materials, and for safe and legal disposal after the event.

**Accessibility:** How will your volunteers get to your site? Are there limitations on the number of vehicles that can park at the site, or the type of vehicle needed to access it? If volunteers need transportation, be sure to plan ahead of time if you can offer this safely. Make sure all of your volunteers know when and where to meet. Be clear with your volunteers about the site conditions to prepare them for any challenges they may face in moving around your site.

**Refreshments:** If you're providing water and snacks, plan where they're coming from and how you're going to be disposing of any waste. Assign someone to be responsible for the refreshments. If you don't have a budget for water and snacks, remind your volunteers to bring their own, but still plan to have extra water on hand in case anyone forgets.



## Reporting

To show the impact of MAD Week as one of the largest restoration initiatives to ever take place, we're going to need some data! During your event, please take lots of photos and videos (with the consent of your volunteers). At the end of the day, remember to record how many volunteers you had and your measures of success. We will be collecting and combining all of this data into a final MAD Week report, so measurements that are easy to compare between projects are especially helpful. Ideas for common measurements include: area treated, number of seedlings planted, or weight of invasive species removed. We will be providing a simple google form to all hosts to help you collect/report this basic data. You may choose to collect additional information as well. Please make sure to record the number of volunteers who attend your event.

If you have any questions, please contact [keith@ser.org](mailto:keith@ser.org).

