

DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

An effective parks group cannot be just one person; it should be a democratic institution that allows for an array of voices and talents. But many groups have difficulty expanding their membership beyond a core group of two or three (or one!) dedicated volunteers. What's the way around this?

NEVER DO WHAT YOU CAN DELEGATE

Delegating tasks to different members of the group allows the members to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership while taking the load off that core group. Delegating also builds leadership skills within the group's membership, cultivating that future president or treasurer.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE DELEGATING:

- ✓ **Generate tasks collectively.** People will have more ownership over tasks they help to identify. Before taking on a new project, brainstorm with the group the list of things that will need to be done. Then, have people volunteer for tasks.
- ✓ **Break down tasks into concrete, manageable parts.** Be realistic about deadlines and time commitments. Say, "This will require at least two evenings of phone calls this week," not "this shouldn't take much time."
- ✓ **Delegate tasks to people who will be able to carry them out.** As you get to know your group's membership better, you'll be able to identify who has what skills. Don't put people into a situation in which they are likely to fail.
- ✓ **Be realistic about what people are able to do.** No task is too small!
- ✓ **Use a positive approach when seeking help.** "I want you for this job; you have the skills we need to..." instead of, "I don't suppose you'd be interested..."
- ✓ **Let people do things differently than you might.** Once you have delegated a job, be available for help or questions but don't interfere.
- ✓ **Praise people's efforts in public;** offer constructive criticisms in private.
- ✓ **Be confident**—people like to be part of a winning team.
- ✓ **Be open to criticism; don't get defensive.** Take a mental step backwards when your leadership is challenged or criticized (see "Managing Conflict," attached).