

---

# **Retaining Sportsman Education instructors: Insights from current and former volunteer instructors**



**December 2016**

**HDRU Series No 16-6**

---

Prepared by:

Michael R. Quartuch, Daniel J. Decker,  
Richard C. Stedman, William F. Siemer, and  
Meghan S. Baumer

Human Dimensions Research Unit  
Department of Natural Resources  
Cornell University

## HUMAN DIMENSIONS RESEARCH UNIT PUBLICATION SERIES

This publication is one of a series of reports resulting from investigations dealing with public issues in environmental and natural resources management. The Human Dimensions Research Unit (HDRU) in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University studies the social and economic aspects of natural resources and the environment and the application of social and economic insights in management planning and policy. A list of HDRU publications may be obtained by writing to the Human Dimensions Research Unit, Department of Natural Resources, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, or by accessing our World Wide Web site at: <https://hdru.dnr.cornell.edu/publications/>.



### TO CITE THIS REPORT

Quartuch, M.R., R.C. Stedman, D.J. Decker, W.F. Siemer, and M.S. Baumer. 2016. Retaining Sportsman Education instructors: Insights from current and former volunteer instructors. Human Dimensions Research Unit Publ. Series 16-6. Dept. of Nat. Resources, Coll. of Agric. and Life Sci., Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. pp. 28.

This report is available electronically at <https://hdru.dnr.cornell.edu/publications/>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

Successfully passing a sportsman education (SE) course is required for all first-time hunters in New York State (NYS). SE courses are taught by volunteer instructors under the direction of NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) central office (Albany) staff, regional sportsman education program staff, and Master instructors. DEC SE staff are concerned about maintaining sufficient numbers and diversity of SE instructors to meet citizen demand for course offerings across the state, especially in urban areas. DEC SE staff believe that a decline in the number of SE instructors would lead to fewer courses offered each year and impede hunter recruitment. Adding to the worry about sufficient volunteer instructors to service demand for SE courses, many SE instructors are minimally active; i.e., they often do not meet the basic requirements for recertification (e.g., teach at least one SE course per year, attend one refresher course every two years) or have stopped teaching SE altogether. In addition, some apprentice instructors never become certified.

### Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the experiences of current and former SE instructors that influence instructors' decisions to continue or stop teaching SE. We identify the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction of different types of SE instructors at different stages in the volunteer process. Further, we explore whether and to what degree individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors influence decisions by active and inactive SE instructors to continue, reduce effort or stop teaching SE.

### Objectives

1. Describe certified active, Master, inactive, and inactive-apprentice instructors' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction with teaching SE in New York State.
2. Identify the extent and nature of individual, interpersonal, and organizational barriers and opportunities to teach SE and retain SE instructors.

### Methods

Telephone interviews were conducted with 38 SE instructors to explore their motivations, experiences, and perspectives about SE in New York State. Interviewees included 11 active, 10 Master, 10 inactive, and 7 inactive-apprentice instructors from across the state. Interview guides received approval from the Cornell University Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (protocol number: 1006001472).

## **Analysis**

Interview transcripts were coded using categories that reflected two themes and four subthemes. The theme categories were not specified a priori, they emerged from the data. Findings are organized by theme and corresponding subtheme below.

### **Key findings**

#### **Theme I: Motivations to teach SE influence long-term SE instructor retention.**

Motivations played an important role in instructors' satisfaction with their volunteer experience. Interviewees volunteer (or volunteered) with the SE program for a variety of reasons but most notably to share knowledge about firearm safety. Many interviewees also expressed concern about declining hunter numbers, lack of SE instructors in New York State, and overall diminished interest in hunting. These individuals believed that by teaching SE they might be able to sustain people's interest in hunting and in doing so, preserve hunting heritage. Additional analysis revealed the importance of social relationships, specifically the team-teaching experience, on interviewees' satisfaction.

#### ***Social relationships with team members facilitates "successful" experiences***

- The team teaching approach was described by most interviewees as beneficial. The majority of interviewees enjoyed teaching SE with members of their teaching team and believed their team was an effective group of SE instructors. The importance of group dynamics and group norms (e.g., deciding who will teach what section; rotating responsibilities; feeling comfortable "chiming" in) helped establish trust among team members and led to positive experiences. Several interviewees described having pre-existing relationships with SE volunteers, which made their transition to teaching SE courses easier. Many inactive-apprentice instructors lacked these relationships and expressed difficulty finding a teaching team. This experience reduced their satisfaction and several dropped out as a result.

#### **Theme II: Issues with and barriers to teaching SE span individual, interpersonal, and organizational-levels**

Most interviewees experienced problems with some aspect of the SE program. Many of these issues influenced instructor satisfaction and led to barriers or obstacles to instructors' ability to teach SE. Most interviewees expressed discontent with communication between themselves and DEC SE staff about the SE program as well as a lack of clarity surrounding the roles and responsibilities of volunteers. The latter was believed by interviewees as something that could diminish the quality of the SE program over time (i.e., poor instruction resulting from limited evaluation and accountability). Issues with and barriers to teaching SE often spanned individual-, interpersonal-, and organizational-levels and influenced interviewees' experiences to varying degrees.

***Individual issues or barriers to teaching SE: Lack of influence, poor instruction, and instructor certification***

- Several interviewees described feeling powerless to influence the SE program as a result of their relationship (or lack thereof) with DEC SE staff (see below). Some interviewees believed their opinions about SE were not taken seriously and are perceived by SE staff as “less important” because they are “volunteers.”
- Concerns about poor instruction represented a systemic issue across various levels of the SE program, from apprentice to Master instructors and was directly tied to instructor motivations. In some cases (i.e., instructor training) it was seen as a barrier to retaining volunteers. Many interviewees described poor instructors as long-time volunteers who “tell stories” rather than teaching course material and use outmoded teaching methods. Some instructors were interested in developing standardized modes of evaluating instructors as a mechanism to address this issue. Others suggested DEC SE staff remove these individuals altogether, although several instructors acknowledged the difficulty with “firing volunteers.” It is important to note that the topic of poor instruction was often seen as an issue relevant to “other” instructors rather than themselves or their teaching teams.
- As noted in the first subtheme (under Theme I), many inactive-apprentice instructors experienced substantial barriers to being certified as an instructor. For some, the amount of time it took to become certified exceeded their expectations. Others expected to receive additional assistance following their instructor training. These individuals found it difficult to identify a suitable teaching team and/or Master instructor in their region. One interviewee described this situation as analogous to starting a new job and not being told when to show up or where to go. These unmet expectations resulted in several inactive-apprentices quitting the SE program before obtaining any significant first-hand apprenticeship SE teaching experience.

***Interpersonal issues or barriers to teaching SE: External relationships, roles and responsibilities***

- Many interviewees indicated having very limited interaction with DEC SE staff. Relationships between these interviewees and SE staff were either non-existent or “strained.” Several interviewees expressed a desire for DEC SE staff to be more involved, especially in terms of instructor evaluation.
- The majority of interviewees agreed about the appropriate duties of the lead instructor but specific responsibilities of the Master instructor were less clear. For example, only a few Master instructors attended and evaluated SE courses and the majority of Master instructors who had done so experienced at least one negative interaction with the team they were there to evaluate. For a few Master instructors, these interactions were enough to dissuade them from continuing to evaluate courses.

### *Organizational issues or barriers to teaching SE: Instructor recruitment*

- Nearly all interviewees believed DEC SE staff were either doing very little to actively recruit new instructors or they were unaware if DEC was recruiting volunteers. Many agreed that DEC should be doing more to recruit instructors, while others – especially Master instructors – took it upon themselves to do so. Several active and inactive instructors mentioned that they made announcements at the beginning of each SE course to recruit potential volunteers. However, they were also quick to acknowledge the ineffectiveness in this approach. Several Master instructors suggested it was their responsibility to recruit new instructors.

### **Summary**

Overall, most interviewees enjoyed their volunteer experience. The majority reported similar motivations for volunteering and spoke highly of the team-teaching approach. Team teaching resulted in positive experiences and, in the case of many active and Master instructors, long-lasting relationships. Many interviewees had very limited interactions with DEC staff and believed DEC staff should be playing a more active role in the SE program (e.g., communicating with volunteers about SE). Several issues surfaced about poor instruction within the SE program and delays to instructor certification. In some cases, delays in certification caused volunteers to drop out of the program. Issues related to specific instructor roles and responsibilities were also detected. The most contentious issue involved instructor evaluation. Some Master instructors attended and evaluated other SE courses/instructors; while others were reluctant to do so. Findings also suggested that recruitment of SE instructors needs attention by both SE staff and current instructors.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank New York State Department of Environmental Conservation staff members Michael Schiavone, Charles Dente, Kenneth Baginski, Kelly Hamilton, Andrew MacDuff, and Michael Wasilco for service on the project contact team. We also appreciate the additional support provided by DEC SE staff including regional Sportsman Education coordinators. We thank all survey interviewees who participated in the study.

We thank Nancy Connelly and Karlene Smith, of Cornell's Human Dimensions Research Unit, for contributions to the survey implementation and analysis.

This work was supported by Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Grant W-125-S.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	i
Acknowledgments.....	v
List of Tables .....	vii
List of Figures .....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Background .....	1
Study Purpose and Objectives .....	3
Methods.....	4
Interview guides.....	4
Analysis.....	5
Results.....	5
Theme I: Motivations to teach SE influence long-term SE instructor retention.....	5
Social relationships with team members’ facilitates “successful” experiences.....	7
Theme II: Issues with and barriers to teaching SE span individual, interpersonal, and organizational-levels.....	9
Individual issues or barriers to teaching SE: Lack of influence, poor instruction, and instructor certification .....	9
Interpersonal issues and barriers to teaching SE: External relationships, roles and responsibilities .....	12
Organizational issues and barriers to teaching SE: Instructor recruitment.....	16
Discussion.....	17
Conclusion .....	19
Literature Cited .....	20
Appendix A.....	21



**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Core sportsmen education (SE) course instructor qualifications and responsibilities<sup>1</sup>. ... 3  
Table 2. Modified Volunteer Process Model (adapted from Snyder & Omatto 2008)..... 4

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. Model depicting stages of participation volunteers go through during their involvement in the New York State sportsmen education community..... 2

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

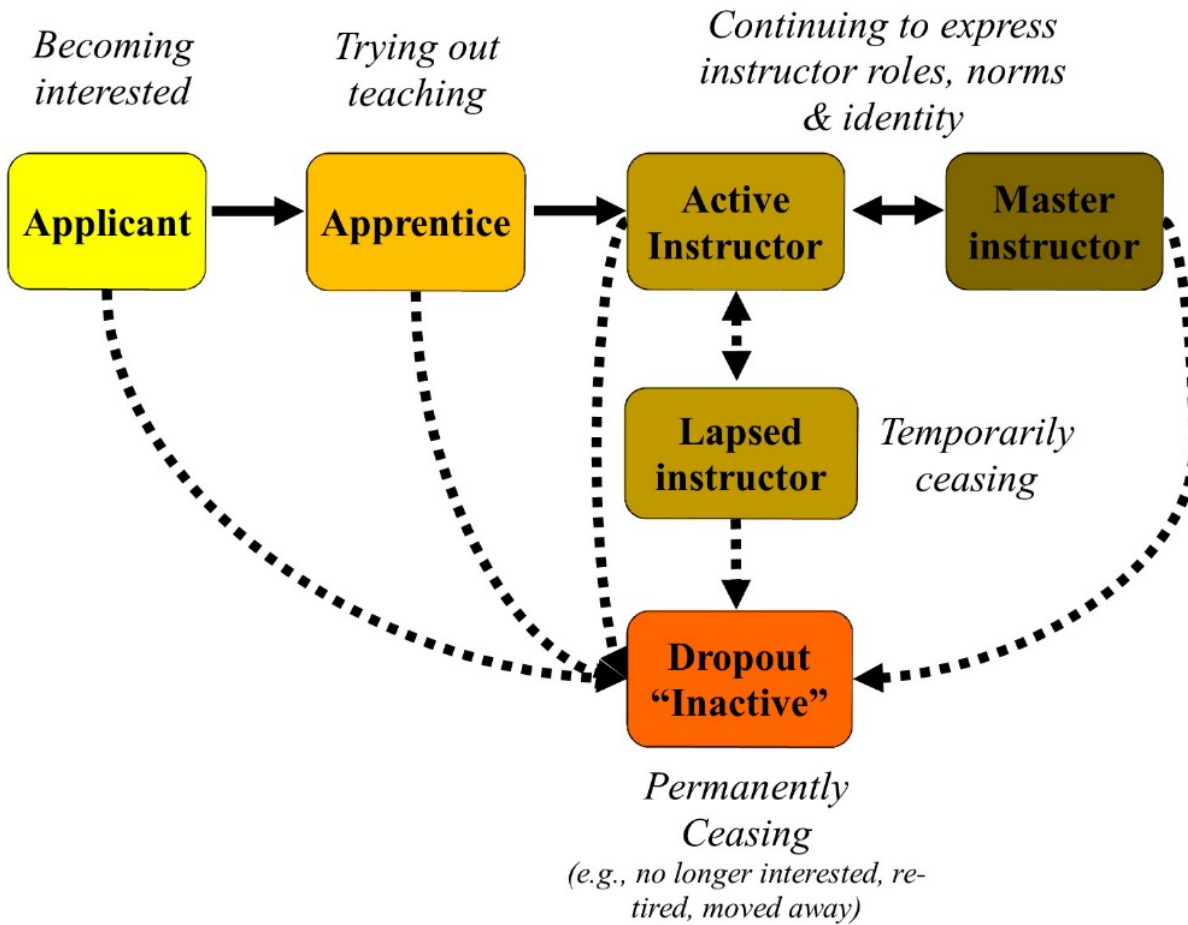
Sportsman education (SE) is required for all first-time hunters in New York State. Such courses teach students how to be safe, responsible and ethical hunters. Topics covered in the standardized hunter course include: firearm handling and safety techniques, history of firearms, knowledge of firearms and ammunition, proper gun handling and storage, marksmanship fundamentals, specific laws and regulations, principles of wildlife management and wildlife identification, outdoor safety, and hunter ethics and responsibilities (toward wildlife, the environment, landowners and the general public) (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/hunting.html>).

All SE courses are taught by volunteer instructors. Through their voluntary efforts, SE course instructors provide a significant resource for beginning hunters. There is concern among New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) professionals about maintaining sufficient numbers of instructors to meet demand for course offerings across NYS, especially in urban areas. Their concern is linked to the belief that a decline in the number of SE instructors would impede hunter recruitment, because fewer courses would be offered each year. Thus, it is important for wildlife managers to understand why some instructors continue teaching SE and others decide to stop. By identifying factors that influence these decisions, wildlife managers may be able to address potential areas of concern before volunteers decide to quit.

The model presented below depicts stages a potential SE instructor may experience as he or she enters and becomes part of the instructor community (Figure 1). Individuals interested in becoming a SE instructor (“applicant” stage) must be at least 18 years old, have at least three years of hunting experience in the area they are interested in teaching, and “have good personality and communication skills” (Table 1). To become a certified SE instructor, applicants must also complete approximately eight hours of instructor training and serve a period of apprenticeship. This apprentice stage represents a time when many volunteers are exposed to various roles and group norms about teaching SE. Volunteers who successfully complete their apprenticeship are certified as SE instructors (“active” instructor stage).

Following certification, instructors are expected to teach at least one SE course per year and attend a refresher course every two years. Instructors who do not meet these requirements may have their certification temporarily or permanently revoked. After teaching SE education for a minimum of five years, certified active instructors can apply to become Master instructors. Master instructors are responsible for teaching instructor training, conducting refresher courses, and often audit courses to help active instructors improve presentations.

At any stage in the volunteer process, an individual may decide to withdraw permanently from the SE program (“dropout/inactive”). The decision to stop volunteering can occur for various reasons ranging from changes in personal or professional situations (e.g., health, new job), to reasons related to changes occurring within the volunteer organization itself (McLennan et al. 2008). In many cases, the decision to cease volunteering represents a tradeoff between an individual’s motivations (e.g., reasons why the volunteer) and factors related to the volunteer experience itself (e.g., lack of organizational support) (Willems 2012; McLennan 2008).



**Figure 1.** Model depicting stages of participation volunteers go through during their involvement in the New York State sportsmen education community.

**Table 1.** Core sportsmen education (SE) course instructor qualifications and responsibilities<sup>1</sup>.

Types of SE Instructors	Qualifications and Training	Responsibilities
Certified active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 18 years old</li> <li>• Possess good communication skills</li> <li>• Hunting experience is preferred</li> <li>• Completed new instructor training course in area they wish to teach</li> <li>• Completed an apprenticeship</li> <li>• Passed local law enforcement investigation/background check (e.g., Public Registry of Sex Offenders, Environmental Conservation Appearance Ticket)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach/assist in a minimum of one course annually to be considered “active”</li> <li>• Attend refresher workshop at least once within previous two-year period to be considered “active”</li> <li>• Must adhere to all policies and procedures of the SE Program (e.g., course requirements, curriculums, etc.).</li> </ul>
Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The qualifications and training required of Master instructors are in addition to what is required of certified active instructors</li> <li>• 5 years of experience as instructor (additional training and apprenticeship with a certified Master instructor may be required)</li> <li>• Interviewed by DEC Regional SE Coordinator</li> <li>• Possess exceptional communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide at least 12 hours of training for prospective SE instructors</li> <li>• Conduct refresher courses for certified instructors</li> <li>• Audit courses (minimum of one student course per year) and assist instructors to enhance their teaching/presentation skills</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>Information obtained from NYS DEC Sportsman Education Program, Instructor Manual 2016.

### Study Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of current and former SE instructors and how these experiences influence instructors’ decisions to continue or stop teaching SE. We identify the beliefs, motivations, and experiences of different types of SE instructors at different stages in the volunteer process (Figure 2). Further, we explore whether and to what degree individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors influence decisions by active and inactive SE instructors to continue, reduce effort or stop teaching SE (Snyder & Omato 2008).

Our objectives are to:

1. Describe certified active, Master, inactive, and inactive-apprentice instructors’ motivations, experiences, and satisfaction with teaching SE in New York State.
2. Identify the extent and nature of individual, interpersonal, and organizational barriers and opportunities to teach SE and retain SE instructors.

**Table 2.** Modified Volunteer Process Model (adapted from Snyder & Omato 2008).

Levels of Analysis	Stages of the Volunteer Process		
	Antecedents	Volunteer Experiences	Consequences
Individual	Personality, motivation, life circumstances, desired identity	Satisfaction, stigma, organizational integration, perceptions of their own work	Knowledge and attitude change, health ( <i>as result of volunteering</i> )
Interpersonal/ Social Group	Perspectives on group memberships, norms	Perspectives on the relationships between volunteers and their students	Perspectives on the composition of their social network, relationship development, connection to community ( <i>e.g., with other instructors, local community members, and DEC staff</i> )
Agency/ Organization	Perspectives on recruitment strategies/training	Perspectives on organizational culture, volunteer placement	Perspectives on volunteer retention ( <i>personally and as result of organizational framework</i> ), acknowledgment of services

## METHODS

Telephone interviews were conducted with 38 SE instructors to explore their motivations, experiences, and perspectives about SE in New York State. Interviewees were identified using DEC Regional Coordinator databases. Each database contained contact information for volunteers in the region. Most also included some demographic attributes (e.g., sex, date of birth), and other information used to describe instructors (e.g., certification date, DEC administrative region, type of courses taught). We attempted to maximize variation within each of the four instructor groups (certified active, Master, inactive, and inactive-apprentice instructors). We selected active and Master instructors based on their age, sex, and region (Table 3). Inactive and inactive-apprentice instructors were more difficult to identify but we were able to select volunteers based on sex, date of birth, region, and years inactive (when available) (Table 3). The final pool of interviewees included 11 active, 10 Master, 10 inactive, and 7 inactive-apprentice instructors from across the state (Appendix B).

### Interview guides

Three separate semi-structured interview guides (one for inactive; one for inactive-apprentice; and one for active and Master instructors) were used to ensure specific topics and questions were addressed during the interview (Appendix A). In each interview guide, questions were organized into three categories based on the Volunteer Process Model (VPM; i.e., antecedents, experiences, consequences) (Table 1). Interview guides received approval from the Cornell University Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (protocol number: 1006001472).

## ANALYSIS

Detailed notes and interview transcripts were analyzed using a three-step process. During the first step, we created broad categories or codes, informed by topics interviewees' discussed (e.g., Teaching team). Next, we populated each code with statements describing that particular topic (e.g., "My lead instructor is an old time friend of mine, I've known him...ever since I was a little kid"). Lastly, we identified similar patterns across statements within each code and used these to develop "themes" (e.g., "Social relationships enhance teaching team experiences"). Lastly, we developed sub-themes based on similar statements within a given theme. Findings are organized by theme and corresponding sub-themes below.

## RESULTS

### **Theme I: Motivations to teach SE influence long-term SE instructor retention**

Overall, instructor motivations (i.e., the reasons why they volunteer to teach SE) were powerful mechanisms playing a role in the retention of interviewees. Interviewees volunteer (or volunteered) with the SE program most notably to share knowledge about firearm safety, hunting ethics, and other important elements of hunting.

*"...all of us believe pretty much in the same thing...giving back to the program and ... putting people in the woods that are safe and trying to instill safety in people."*

Another active instructor described teaching SE as a way to encourage conservation among members of racial/ethnic minority groups.

*"I'm Asian so...what really inspired me was I heard a lot on the news about the poachers, the Asian poachers so I said 'well one way to combat that is to actually teach them. ...many of them don't even know the laws, they can't even speak the English language.' So I figure that's the way to curb the poaching."*

Several female interviewees expressed a desire to teach SE to make other women feel comfortable and to ultimately encourage hunting participation among women.

*"I wanted to kind of make other females feel more comfortable. I'm not really looking to be a lead instructor necessarily any time soon, I just kind of help out and...be there to kind of make it a little more comfortable for other females in the class."*

*"I can also tell you that there's a few (females) that got interested in it because of the way it was presented and because you know the yahoo's weren't allowed to give them attitude or show them the shoulder."*

Many interviewees described hunting as an important "tradition" and part their self-identity. The desire to pass on knowledge to the next generation about hunting and hunter safety, specifically to children, was a powerful motivation for interviewees. These same motivations were often re-

stated when active and Master instructors were asked about their intentions to continue teaching SE, suggesting the extent to which motivations are able to sustain long-term interest.

*“I want the kids to learn their responsibilities with the different ... guns, bows. ... It’s part of our heritage.”*

*“So I have to say...it was most rewarding for me just to know that I was part of keeping a heritage going in New York State by educating people how to go about it the right way.”*

*“I love to see children enjoying nature.”*

*“We wanted to give back to the people out there and teach these young folks...what we really do...kids need a chance. ... They don’t have people that, their parents are too busy working...it’s a very rewarding experience because...you see these kids that are interested.”*

Interviewees also expressed concern about generating and sustaining interest in hunting. This concern stemmed, in part, from a perceived lack of sufficient numbers of SE instructors needed to maintain the SE program. The lack of volunteers was described as a direct threat to maintaining interest in hunting. Thus, a variety of interviewees volunteer(ed) to meet this “need.” Doing so helped them ensure SE and, in turn, hunting would remain an important part of people’s lives.

*“I noticed that there is such a great demand for instruction because as you know New York State doesn’t pay for trained instructors so it’s the volunteers that are running (the program)...the need for instructors was really the main one...but then the secondary one of course was to work with the young people. We want...to pass on the tradition.”*

*“there’s so few of us instructors and there’s so few classes being offered...you’ve got everything competing for time and so there’s fewer instructors out I believe.*

*“...you hear about the statistics all the time, you know that there’s less and less people getting into hunting and hunting license sales are down over this year or that year and I think that...20 years from now there could be almost nobody left hunting...I think it’s important...for people to keep wanting to teach because as long as there’s still some people getting into it they’re going to need classes and they’re going to need this information”*

Across volunteer categories, motivations appear to be reflected in a shared belief in the importance of teaching SE, yet additional analysis suggested these beliefs can be enhanced by instructors’ satisfaction with certain aspects of their volunteer experience, including the team-teaching approach and personal relationships with team members. These findings provide insight as to why active and Master instructors intend to continue teaching SE and why some inactive and inactive-apprentices withdrew from the program.

## **Social relationships with team members' facilitates "successful" experiences**

For the most part, interviewees who were comfortable with their teaching team and enjoyed volunteering with them expressed positive attitudes about teaching SE. The vast majority of these individuals had positive experiences teaching SE with other instructors.

*"it was a brotherhood because you are there for the same reason, to bring knowledge...and teach young children...it was a heritage and a brotherhood. I loved it, I really did."*

*"...it works out well. You get to know the people and you know if somebody's not there you know what their part of the program is and you can pick it up for them...So working with the same group, I think it works out a lot better that way. You know each other personally and it's a good system as far as I'm concerned."*

*"I liked the people that I was teaching with and I...had I think a real good relationship with the instructors I worked with."*

*"...everybody knows what everybody's strong point is. We can all rely on each other. It's, really a fine-tuned machine at this point."*

*"I don't know everything and I don't think (name removed) does but...you draw from your people that you trust that are knowledgeable so you can learn and make sure that what you're doing is right."*

Several of these individuals were more likely to continue teaching SE as long as their team "needed them." When asked how long she would continue volunteering with the SE program, one Master instructor stated:

*"As long as I'm able and again as long as I'm able to be a meaningful member of the team. I'm willing to walk away tomorrow if...there really isn't a need for me to be there. But up until then, I'm going to speak up for the students, speak up for what instructors need as far as support and need as far as supplies."*

Some interviewees volunteered with more than one team and had very different experiences on these different teams. For example, one certified active, female instructor described both positive and negative experiences with team leaders when working across two teams.

*"Team teaching I think is good if you have a good team. If you have a not so great team I guess it's not good...The lead instructor...the one I had the most experience with...he's just awesome, setting everything up and again making sure everything is taken care of and he's knowledgeable and very personable. But then again I went to the other one and he's, for lack of a better word, is an ass so...there's basically one guy takes charge and he's just...boring and likes to hear himself talk and he's the one that wants to talk like 75% of the time."*



Feelings of inclusiveness also influenced instructors' perspectives about the efficacy of their teams' teaching approach. Many individuals expressed concrete ideas about what leads to successful team teaching, such as: (a) dividing the class into sections allowing instructors to teach areas of SE they were passionate about or were comfortable teaching and (b) rotating teaching responsibilities/topics to allow instructors to become familiar with each aspect of the course. The ability to "chime in" or add to the conversation while another instructor was teaching was important to many active and Master instructors and indicated a level of trust among team members. Several inactive-apprentice instructors had not been afforded this freedom and did not feel like they were able to contribute to the group as much as they would have liked if given the opportunity.

*"somebody says 'well I'm really comfortable doing tree stands and I've got all my stuff so I'll do that'. Somebody else says 'well I really like teaching this one so I'm going to do that.' So we just kind of go with what they're more comfortable with...and you're split up that way which is a great way to do it...allows us to rotate a class through different field stations instead of just sitting in a classroom and taking turns up there preaching at them."*

*"I did like the team approach...as a team everyone[taught] topics they were interested in and knew about and could then just develop more of those areas and it worked out really well because a) you didn't have to remember everything for the entire course and b) you had stuff that you were more interested in than anything else. ... we divided stuff up and we were fortunate enough that...when we got into different parts of the class...we were able to split the class up into 3 different groups and rotate them around."*

*"we were a team, everybody had their own thing. I did first aid and hunter's orange and sight alignment. Another guy did ballistics...and we all had our own thing so not one guy's taking over the whole class...we broke it up you know...we had a very good group"*  
*"But it's just doing the parts you're comfortable with and being able to tag in, tag out you know like with the wrestling."*

*"In fact, we as instructors don't treat anyone as the so called king of the roost or anything. If we're doing a course and somebody wants to jump in while an instructor is saying something or doing whatever, that's the way it happens. So we all get along together quite well."*

Overall, inactive and inactive-apprentice instructors shared many of the same motivations to teach SE as active and Master instructors, but further analysis revealed a slightly different pattern in terms of the experiences of inactive instructors. Despite having fairly positive experiences working with other instructors, many of these individuals felt teaching SE had become "too political" (i.e., bureaucratic decision making), "was no longer fun" or "was not what it used to be." These issues were often related to specific instructor responsibilities within teaching teams. Other inactive instructors who had previously enjoyed teaching SE and shared many of the same motivations to teach as other interviewees, indicated they quit teaching SE because it began "to feel like work" or because it took too much time away from their current job and family

responsibilities. These statements, illustrating the interconnection between motivations, satisfactions, and behaviors were also shared by many inactive-apprentice instructors.

Interviewee: *“We were thinking of moving and I just like got tired. I... it lost its fun-ness, it became work.”*

Interviewer: *“...What aspects became ‘work-like’ about it or what responsibilities?”*

Interviewee: *“Well finding a location to hold the class. That was hard. ...Since a lot of the guys,...were set in their ways...and so that’s another reason why we stopped.”*

*“...the demand for my time got to a point where I was working 70, 80, 100 hours a week and...my wife at the time was interested in doing instruction...her interest in it waned pretty quickly and that made it hard for me to stay involved in the program...and you know she didn’t like that I was...running around...spending time with other people’s kids instead of spending the time with my own.”*

## **Theme II: Issues with and barriers to teaching SE span individual, interpersonal, and organizational-levels**

Many interviewees described the existing structure of communication within the SE program as impeding their ability to express their opinions about SE in a meaningful way to SE staff. These same interviewees expressed concern about not being able to share insight with DEC and believed their opinions were rarely seriously considered. As a result, many interviewees were discouraged. This situation culminated in the perception that volunteers are unable to effect change within the larger context of SE.

*“It seems like everybody throws out their opinions during the refresher but it never really goes anywhere...it’s almost like just a sounding board for everybody once a year but as far as DEC taking any of that information and running with it, it never really seems to go anywhere.”*

*“a lot of times...you can bring it up but you know it goes in one ear and out the other ear and doesn’t even slow down long enough to catch.”*

### **Individual issues or barriers to teaching SE: Lack of influence, poor instruction, and instructor certification**

#### **Lack of influence**

Many current and former instructor’s believed their opinions about teaching SE were not taken seriously by DEC SE staff because of the role they held within the SE program. In these instances, instructors would attribute this to the existing hierarchical structure within the SE program. For example, certified instructors were described by interviewees as being the least important position within the SE program.

*“Some of the staff is absolutely incredible and then you’ve got other members of the staff that myself and several other instructors feel like...we’re taken for granted like hey yeah, you’re an instructor, so what.”*

*“I realize that I’m nobody right, I’m just a lousy little instructor, I’m not a master instructor, I’m not a coordinator, I’m not anything other than a card-carrying member of this organization.”*

Interviewer: *“And it was received well you said?”*

Interviewee: *“Oh without a doubt. They (DEC SE staff) said yes, we understand, we think that’s great.”*

Interviewer: *“So are you going to be doing that?”*

Interviewee: *“They do what they always do...they throw it up in the air and they wait and see where it falls or whose desk it falls on. ... they don’t want to listen to guys like us. ... you get stonewalled.”*

### **Poor instruction**

The topic of poor instruction permeated discussions about SE at multiple levels. It was often framed within the context of interviewees’ personal experiences as an SE student, a trainee in the New Instructor Training (i.e., instructors teaching the NIT were less than adequate), or observation while volunteering with other teams. Poor instructors were often described as older, more senior volunteers who had been teaching SE for many years. According to interviewees, these “old timers” would use outmoded teaching methods and tell “stories” about their own hunting experiences rather than teaching course material. Poor instructors were often described by interviewees as “boring” and unable to connect with students. For these individuals, inadequate instruction was viewed as a disservice to potential hunters and a direct threat to hunting heritage. Further, they believed they could do a better job teaching SE than some current instructors. In this way, poor instruction served as a motivation to start and continue teaching SE.

*“The training, the curriculum was good...I think some of the instructors who instructed us did need a training themselves...They won’t give anybody a chance to talk, things like that but these are the old timers teaching so what are you going to do?”*

*“older instructors still want to do it the old way and they like storytelling...and I keep telling them it’s not a storytelling session, you’re supposed to teach this material.”*

*“I’ve asked them do you know what a PowerPoint (is)...and he has no clue. He’s one of those old timers that’s been doing it for years.”*

*“the less desirable instructors that I’ve seen teach some classes were older guys that were pretty set in their ways and were more interested in telling more stories than they were about covering the information...There are some really great ones out there and there’s some others that really just should not be speaking in front of groups of people...my perhaps underlying motivation was like ‘well geez is this guy going to get up*

*there and just babble for 8 hours? I can get up there and teach a class that people will actually go away with some information'.*"

Some interviewees believed it was a disservice for SE instructors to focus exclusively on teaching content found in the final examination. To these individuals, "teaching to the test" was seen as undesirable and in direct conflict with helping students to become safe hunters. There was limited agreement among interviewees as to why this method of teaching SE was prevalent but several interviewees described it as a mechanism to make sure all students successfully pass the course. For example:

*"[W]hat the master instructor told us to do is take them in, especially the ones that were really close, and read the questions to them and see if they understand it, which is fine. We read to about 10 people in that class and most of them actually still failed...so they wanted us to...basically read the question to them and get them to answer the right answer until they pass. I didn't like that because our job is not to pass them, our job is to create safe hunters and educated hunters."*

*"I go to all the refresher courses and...all they talk about is how many kids they can get through. 'Well I had a course with 50 people in it.' 'I had a course with 45 people. I wish we could get more.'...It's not the quantity, it should be quality...You can't teach to the test right, really you shouldn't do that...and that's the only thing that the state's worried about, well that and selling hunting licenses."*

Other instructors were slightly less critical of this tactic acknowledging that the information contained in the examination is, in fact, critical to creating safe, knowledgeable hunters.

*"I think instructors teach the test...so that the students pass the test and it appears that they've done their job, which essentially they have because the students passed the test so then that's all that the state's requiring them...is that test. I mean, that's why we give it at the end right? That's the information we want them to take from the class."*

Some interviewees expressed need for greater oversight and evaluation of individual instructors, including Master instructors, but rarely offered recommendations about their *own* teaching team(s). In other words, ideally, evaluating instructors would help individuals to avoid bad habits (e.g., reading from the manual, not engaging students, passing students who would have otherwise failed the exam), which they, themselves (or as a team), believe they already successfully avoided. This perspective represents a conundrum. Instructors desire autonomy over how they teach while at the same time expect someone to hold *other* instructors accountable for doing a "better job."

### **Certification and support following instructor training**

Many interviewees, especially inactive-apprentice instructors, expressed discontent with the amount of time it took to be certified and with what they perceived to be an overall lack of support following instructor training. A few interviewees indicated having to wait several months to one year to be certified. Others described the lengthy certification process as a lost

opportunity to recruit and retain new instructors. The following interviewee illustrates this sentiment stating:

*“I’ve had guys that in my opinion would make incredible instructors. They’ve contacted DEC, they’ve not received anything in the mail, they’ve not heard anything back, via the internet or the phone. They’ll make calls...he doesn’t get back. His secretary sometimes gets back, sometimes doesn’t. I had one guy that finally after almost two years said to me, I can’t do this...I want to volunteer but these guys aren’t doing anything to get back to me.”*

Following instructor training, many interviewees, especially those without pre-existing social networks in the SE program, expected to have help finding potential instructors with whom they could teach SE. For these individuals, finding a teaching team without a mentor represented a significant barrier to teaching SE. Other interviewees internalized this responsibility, seeking out opportunities to volunteer on their own.

*“the only thing that I thought was a little bit challenging was that the connectivity...between when you finished the [training] course...to connecting with people to become involved with presenting a course...I didn’t have like an immediate connection or a phone call coordination.”*

*“I felt like I really had to make the effort myself to get involved and to stay involved...It took me forever just to get hooked up with a master instructor that I could start teaching with. I finally ended up sending enough emails and being enough of a pain in the ass to hook up with somebody. ... It’s one thing you know to have people not calling but it’s another when you’re out there with your hand up saying ‘hey call me and...who’s my master instructor and what do I do next?’ and you don’t get any response. ... in my experience as an apprentice it was a lot more up to me than I thought that it really needed to be.”*

*“Well the master instructor I was supposed to be under never got a hold of me, we never got classes going, I mean it just never went anywhere...I’m only going to reach out just so many times before I say ‘forget it’.”*

*“I don’t really have anybody that took me under their wing...I basically looked in my area to the clubs that were having classes and then I went and asked if I could help with those classes and sit in.”*

### **Interpersonal issues and barriers to teaching SE: External relationships, roles and responsibilities**

#### **Non-existent or strained relationship with DEC SE staff**

When we asked interviewees about their relationship with a variety of individuals and groups of people, including DEC SE staff, many described having very limited to no interaction with SE staff. Others described a slightly “strained” relationship with SE staff and struggling to obtain

information (or materials needed to teach courses) from them. In many instances, interviewees suggested that SE staff, while well intentioned, were either over-worked due to competing demands on their time or were simply not interested in SE.

*“Actually they’re re...really a non-entity, you really don’t even know they’re there.”*

*“I guess my feeling is that ‘yeah it’s strained’. My relationship as a sportsman’s ed instructor with the DEC is strained and I think that goes without saying across the board.”*

*“you don’t hear back from them for days. And you call, you know the one day I had to call half a dozen times...it’s not like we’re asking to give us the shirt off their back or money out of their pocket. We’re just asking for stuff for the class.”*

*“He was a DEC employee full time but when we talked to him he was like ‘you know what, I’m a wildlife biologist’...and so it’s always kind of like the hunter safety part of it was a second thought or an added responsibility onto somebody else’s plate.”*

*“...it’s like a secondary job or maybe it’s a full time job, I don’t really know what these people’s positions are and I don’t really care except that I know that for as helpful as they are...it’s not their only job.”*

It is important to note that many interviewees, primarily Master instructors, had positive relationships with DEC SE staff. In these instances, interviewees typically described one individual from DEC with whom they had direct contact.

*“You know they’re there to backstop us as instructors in getting materials we need, in getting the equipment...not only paperwork but also the equipment that we need to particularly conduct class. They’ve always been very helpful answering the phone when I got problems with their software stuff and so they’ve always been helpful to me.”*

*“The only person I ever really dealt with was (name removed) who was phenomenal. He had another part-time coordinator in the office that I talked to a couple of times and they were always story telling...you know, very helpful...Yeah I never really deal with anybody else from DEC.”*

*“the only one that I’ve really had to deal with is (name removed) out of region X and I’ve emailed him a couple times. I know he’s in and out of the office and he always says ‘give me like 3 or 4 days to get back to you if you email me’. Honestly, I email, I get an answer in a day or 2...he’s right on things.”*

A minority of interviewees struggled to “fit-in” with other volunteers or with DEC SE staff. These individuals described feeling like outsiders among certain groups of people, often using the term “clique” to describe certain teams or groups of people. In some instances, this led to instructors quitting the SE program altogether.

*“...The specific reason as to why I ended up stopping...the other instructors that I was teaching with were all older than I and they all decided that they weren’t able to, physically...continue instructing...a new group of people came in and were teaching the class and they made it quite clear that I really wasn’t needed or my help wasn’t wanted because they were the new clique...there was no other place...for me to be able to teach and whatnot so I just said ‘okay, well, I’ll just give up my instruction at this point then too’.”*

*“[O]ne of the two instructors that certified me...said, well, gee whiz you're up here all the time teaching courses, why don’t you join the club...when you join clubs and groups like that, they tend to be, for lack of a better word, cliquey. You have your cliques and I just didn't feel that I might or might not fit in or whatever.”*

### **Unclear roles and responsibilities**

Overall, there was a general sense of confusion among interviewees about the roles and responsibilities of Master instructors. Prior to becoming a Master instructor, one interviewee asked a regional coordinator for a job description but found out that they “*didn’t have one fully developed.*” This individual learned what is required of Master instructors “*on the job.*” Another Master instructor from a different region indicated that he had in fact received a job description and knew what was required of him in advance of accepting the position. The general ambiguity surrounding the role of Master instructors is captured in the following quotation:

*“I probably haven’t been that good at fulfilling the part of the master instructor. It’s more of a title or whatever. There may be people that could probably do better or whatever, I’m not really sure but I was asked to do it so...”*

Differences in opinion about what Master instructors do, could do, or what interviewees thought they should be doing, led to some animosity between volunteers. One area of contention involved the requirement that Master instructors attend and evaluate one SE course per year. Several active and inactive instructors believed this requirement led Master instructors’ to believe that they were “better” or “more important” than other SE volunteers. However, even among Master instructors there was a lack of consensus about whether evaluating other courses was part of their official duties. Some considered it a critical component of their job; while others believed they were not required to do so. A few Master instructors acknowledged this requirement but consciously chose not to attend other courses for various reasons (e.g., to avoid potential confrontation with other volunteers). In a few instances, Master instructors were encouraged not to sit-in on other instructors’ courses by regional coordinators.

Interviewer: *“...and do you as a master instructor, do you go to other courses and kind of sit in and, and see how things are going?”*

Interviewee: *“Well there was some thoughts about having master instructors go to other courses and monitoring them but that never really seemed to get off the ground. So no, at this point I don’t attend other instructors’ courses.”*

*“I’m a master instructor so I go out to a lot of classes and I don’t even tell the people that I’m coming out there...”*

*“So they explained the difference in the positions and it just sounded like obviously more work. And they says ‘okay you only have to do one, you don’t have to do 20. You can sit in on a class and you can either tell them you’re coming or you don’t have to, but it’s up to you.’ He says ‘you don’t want to make anybody angry because what’s going to happen is that guy that’s been teaching for 30 years is going to see this whippersnapper that’s only been teaching five years walk into his class and then start giving them advice’. So you’ve got to be careful how you play that.”*

*“Well it’s usually most of the instructors are a lot older than me and as soon as I walk through the door, what the [expletive] \_\_\_ is he doing here...who sent him?...I actually got, not yelled at, but I actually got a little annoyed and I almost stopped because my coordinator said ‘hey you went up to this one guy’s class...he said that you walked into his class and you know he wants to know why you’re there.’ And I said well if I have to explain that to you then our conversation is completely over right now. So it didn’t go too well with me anyway...I was a little turned off at that. I got over it.”*

The previous quotation exemplifies the complex relationship between Master instructors and other volunteers. Many active and inactive interviewees expressed negative sentiments about Master instructors, typically those not part of their own teaching team. Some described Master instructors as smug and suggested that Master instructors believed they were “more valuable” to the SE program than other members of the SE community. When describing her SE training, one interviewee described a master instructor as sexist, stating:

*“[W]e had a class of probably 14 or 15 and there was actually one other female in the class with myself and with me and he made comments and he was derogatory towards females and it was ridiculous...he was a terrible instructor...and it was very disappointing because I was excited about doing it.... I did report that actually and nothing has happened and I saw him in a meeting...this past spring and actually, I was very uncomfortable.”*

One inactive instructor described a negative encounter with a Master instructor which resulted in his withdrawal from program after more than 20 years of service.

*“...they have master instructors that could come and pop up on your class when they really feel like it, which is cool by me but he tried to manage me one time and then he was getting ‘out of hand’... When you reprimand somebody you do it in private, you don’t do it in the crowd... The guy was trying to embarrass me in front of students...well some of them are, pardon the pun, some of them think their [expletive] don’t stink ...some of them think because ‘I’m a master instructor I’m going to fire you’ you can’t fire a volunteer...some of them...think they’re almighty God, they think they’re better than you because they’re your boss.”*



The majority of Master instructors who attended and evaluated SE courses experienced at least one situation where they were un-welcome or openly harassed by other volunteers for doing so. Another Master instructor verified and agreed with the negative stereotype associated with Master instructors.

*“I’ve had very positive stuff and I’ve had one very nasty experience in the last 25 years. ...I went to a course and a gentleman has been teaching 40-42 years...and his comment as I walked in was, well I already got master instructors, why do I need three here today. And my comment to him was, those folks are in the process of teaching your course, I am here to evaluate the course. They can’t evaluate because they’re part of your course. He still didn’t like me.”*

*“...[O]nly one time I had a negative response to a class visit as a master...and that was a person who...taught for so many years but...never changed with the program... they’re doing the program a disservice.”*

*“I said ‘yeah I’m a master instructor... and he’s like ‘oh I wish somebody had told me there was a master instructor here ‘cause I wouldn’t have come because you guys are all a bunch of jerks’ and I...knew partly when I was a coordinator that the coordinators in a lot of regions also thought the master instructors were jerks because it was kind of like this status symbol that people wanted and they wanted a patch for their sleeve...most of them voice their opinion that we should change it from master instructor to instructor trainer or something like that and something less godly or kingly and take that hierarchy down a notch because I think it offends people and I think some people do abuse any power they get and that’s too bad.”*

## **Organizational issues and barriers to teaching SE: Instructor recruitment**

### **Limited recruitment**

Most interviewees believed that DEC SE staff do not actively recruit new instructors. As a result, many believed the responsibility to find new volunteers fell on the shoulders of active and Master instructors. Most thought DEC SE staff should be doing more to recruit instructors (e.g., greater advertising of the SE program) though some accepted the responsibility, suggesting their experiences as an instructor provided them with more intimate knowledge about the program and what it’s like to teach SE in NYS. However, instructors’ efforts to recruit new volunteers were minimal; they typically involved making an announcement prior to the start of class. As one instructor pointed out, the inherent problem with this approach is that most of the students in SE courses are young children who, by the time they are eligible to become certified instructors, have already forgotten about this opportunity.

Interviewer: *“do you know of any other things that DEC does to recruit new instructors?”*

Interviewee: *“Absolutely nothing.”*

Interviewer: *“Did you feel like that was...part of your responsibility to try and find other instructors?”*

Interviewee: *“No, nope. It shouldn’t be. It should be the game warden or maybe a region Coordinator...”*

*“I honestly don’t think there’s any type of like outreach recruitment program. I mean...everybody’s got to go through a class so I’m sure there’s a percentage of students at some point of time in their life say ‘hey you know what, I wouldn’t mind teaching, I enjoyed going through that class...but I don’t know of very many people under the age of 40 that teach.”*

Interviewer: *“Are there things that DEC does to, to recruit kind of new instructors?”*

Interviewee: *“Not a damn thing, not a damn thing. Have open house, have information night, you know put it out there. They leave it up to...the classes to get the information out...there’s no focus on it or, no sincere push on it...Don’t make the people all come to you, that’s what they do.”*

*“I think that they just hope that their own instructors will pull people in...You know I don’t remember it even being mentioned in training at all... When we go through a class ...and most times it was a parent...They come up and thank you, ‘you did a good job, hey I’m interested in this, how do I get involved’? Well I always had copies of the application so I went over to my folder, pulled it out and handed it to them. Now I know... 99 times out of 100, yep it goes home, sits on the counter, goes in the trash eventually. And that’s more of how the instructors do it I think. Or that’s how I used to anyway.”*

## DISCUSSION

Volunteer SE instructors in New York provide a critical service to the state. These individuals play an important role in hunter recruitment yet information about their motivations, experiences, satisfactions, and the barriers they encounter is limited. This study attempted to describe why current and former SE instructors teach SE courses and what types of experiences influence their decision to continue teaching or quit. Findings indicate that most SE instructors, including those who no longer volunteer with the program, were satisfied with their experience. However, several important individual, interpersonal, and organizational barriers were found that detract from instructors’ experiences. This discussion is organized into four sub-sections, each describing potential opportunities to enhance instructor experiences and in turn, increase retention of SE instructors.

### **Foster positive relationships between “like-minded” SE volunteers and recognize their dedication.**

Overall, interviewees enjoyed teaching SE with their particular teaching team and had many of the same motivations to teach SE as other volunteer instructors. Each of these attributes played a

critical role in sustaining instructors' long-term interests and led to greater instructor satisfaction. Thus, finding a way to foster (or continue fostering) relationships among "like-minded" (or similarly motivated) instructors may prove beneficial for retaining SE volunteers in the future. Findings may also prove effective for recruiting new instructors. For example, creating messages illustrating the need for SE instructors and emphasizing the importance of maintaining the tradition of hunting may resonate with potential instructors.

Most interviewees, especially active and Master instructors, were quick to acknowledge they are not involved in SE for the recognition or "accolades." However, there was general agreement that some form of recognition, even a "pat on the back" from time-to-time would be welcomed. Ultimately, acknowledging the important work that instructors do for the SE program may go a long way in helping retain instructors.

### **Enhance communication with volunteers through mentoring**

Developing mechanisms that facilitate two-way communication between DEC SE staff and SE volunteers may alleviate several individual (e.g., lack of influence; certification/support) and interpersonal (e.g., strained relationship) barriers. Many interviewees indicated having little to no relationship with DEC SE staff; others believed their requests for information or opinions about SE weren't taken seriously by SE staff. Additionally, many inactive-apprentice instructors expected to have assistance finding a suitable Master instructor and/or teaching team following the New Instructor Training. These expectations were unmet and as a result, several apprentice-instructors dropped out. According to Pearce (1983) and Wharton (1999), volunteers are more likely to continue volunteering when they believe their work makes a difference and when they believe they are competent to carry out specific tasks. Thus, providing instructors with a platform to share and receive feedback about SE may help establish or repair relationships between volunteers and between volunteers and paid SE staff.

Social relationships within teaching teams represent an important and overwhelmingly positive attribute of the SE program. The team-teaching approach provides instructors with an opportunity to build strong relationships with other volunteers while also providing them with the freedom and flexibility to structure and teach SE courses how they choose. However, this approach has potential drawbacks. Instructors with limited social support find it difficult to connect with teams willing to "take-in" a new instructor. Additionally, it may be difficult for long-time teaching teams to replace a trusted instructor who retired or ceased volunteering activities. Establishing some type of support network for new instructors may serve to retain additional instructors.

### **Clarify roles and responsibilities associated with instructor evaluation and recruitment.**

Master instructors are required to attend and evaluate SE courses. After doing so, they provide instructors with feedback identifying what they did well and areas where they can improve. However, findings indicated that many of the roles and responsibilities of Master instructors, including the ability to evaluate SE courses, were vague. Further, the "requirement" to evaluate SE classes represented a point of contention between Master instructors and other SE volunteers.

Some Master instructors chose not to evaluate courses over concerns about how they will be perceived; others simply did not believe it was a requirement of the job. When this finding is coupled with interviewee's concerns about poor instruction and poor instructors, a problem becomes apparent. Currently, there are no other mechanisms by which DEC SE staff receive feedback about the way SE courses are being taught. Meaning, if Master instructors are not evaluating SE courses, no one is. Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Master (and active) instructors is paramount to maintaining a successful and quality SE program.

The topic of recruitment represents another "gray area" within the SE program. The majority of interviewees indicated that they were unaware of any attempts made by DEC SE staff to recruit new instructors. In some instances, instructor recruitment was internalized as a responsibility of active and Master instructors. As such, active instructors often made what they considered feeble attempts to recruit volunteers; Master instructors often made it a priority issue. Retaining current instructors and attracting new, more diverse volunteers is paramount to sustaining the SE program and meeting the demand for SE courses.

## CONCLUSION

Sustaining the SE program in New York State depends on volunteer support. Findings presented in this report revealed several areas of opportunity to enhance instructor experiences and ultimately, to retain volunteers. Sportsman Education instructors encounter a variety of issues and barriers while volunteering with the SE program. Identifying ways to minimize these negative experiences will improve instructor experiences.

Sportsman Education instructors take their responsibilities seriously and are dedicated to the SE program and their teaching teams. To the extent that results represent the experiences of other SE instructors, it may be pertinent to clarify the job descriptions of both paid staff and volunteer instructors. Disagreements about volunteer responsibilities can and do lead to animosity between groups of instructors (e.g., Master and active instructors). Establishing clear expectations about volunteer responsibilities may alleviate some of the confusion over who is (or should be) doing specific tasks. In the end, this may strengthen relationships across SE volunteers.

## LITERATURE CITED

- McLennan, J., Birch, A., Cowlshaw, S., and Hayes, P. (2008) I quit! Leadership and satisfaction with the volunteer role: Resignations and organizational responses. Paper presented at the Australian Psychological Society Annual Conference, Hobart, Australia.
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Sportsman Education Program Instructor Manual (2016).
- Pearce, J. L. (1983). Job attitude and motivation differences between volunteers and employees from comparable organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68, 646-652.
- Willems, J., Huybrechts, G., Jegers, M., Vantilborough, T., Bidee, J., & Pepermans, R. (2012). Volunteer decisions (not) to leave: Reasons to quit versus functional motives to stay. *Human Relations*, 65, 883-900.

## APPENDIX A

### Interview guides

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# years as instructor \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview Background & Consent Script

We are asking for your help with a study designed to understand why people volunteer to teach Sportsmen's Education (SE) in New York State. The general goal of the study is to provide our collaborators at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) with information about the experiences of volunteer instructors (and apprentices). As a SE volunteer, your insights will help DEC find ways to support and encourage SE instructors.

I would like to audio record the interview, with your permission, so that I can focus on listening to you rather than taking notes during our conversation. Participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may choose to stop at any time. If there are parts of the conversation you don't want recorded you can request that I stop the recorder. We will keep your identity confidential, and we won't link your name to any of the information you provide.

If you would like a summary of the results of our study, we would be pleased to send them to you upon request.

If you have any questions about the research project in general or the interview specifically, you can contact Dr. Michael Quartuch (607-255-7953; [mq63@cornell.edu](mailto:mq63@cornell.edu)) or Dr. Dan Decker ([djd6@cornell.edu](mailto:djd6@cornell.edu)). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 607-255-5138 or access their website at <http://www.irb.cornell.edu>.

#### Consent Questions:

- Do you agree to be interviewed?
- Do you agree to have the interview recorded?
- Do you have any other questions before we begin?

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
# years as instructor \_\_\_\_\_

SECI Interview Guide  
**Active instructors**  
7/3/2015

**Background:**

Thank you for offering to participate in our study. We are interested in learning about your experience as a volunteer Sportsman Education (SE) instructor. The interview has three parts. The first part focuses on the process leading up to becoming a certified instructor. In the second part we will discuss your experience as a volunteer instructor and the last part is an opportunity for us to discuss how likely you are to continue teaching SE in the future.

**Part 1 (Antecedents)**

I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about becoming an instructor and why you decided to volunteer with the Sportsman Education Program (SEP).

1. First, can you tell me about your hunting experience? (*Probe: When did you first go hunting? Did your family members hunt? Who [or what] influenced your interest in hunting?*)
2. When did you begin teaching SE?
3. How did you learn about the opportunity to teach SE?
4. Prior to becoming an instructor, had you ever volunteered for another agency or organization?
  - a. If yes: Can you describe what that experience was like? (*Probes: Age, type of "work", likes/dislikes, and comparison with SEC instruction?*)
5. How did the people closest to you feel about your decision to teach SE? (*Probe: Who, in particular and why were they supportive/opposed?*)
6. Can you tell me about the training you received to become an instructor? (*Probe: Did you feel adequately prepared to teach SE after going through the training/apprentice program?*)
  - a. What kinds of things does the DEC do to recruit new instructors?

We are just about through the first part, but I'd like to switch gears a little bit and ask you a few questions about your decision to become a certified SE instructor.

7. Can you walk me through *why* you wanted to teach SE and volunteer with the DEC? (*Probe: Did you ever experience one "A-Ha" moment or have a conversation with someone where you said to yourself, "I think I want to try this out"?*)
  - a. From the things you just described, which were more influential in your decision to become a SE instructor?

**Part 2 (Experiences)**

I'd like to move on to the second part of the interview and ask a few questions about why you volunteer as an SE instructor.

8. What would you say are the primary roles/responsibilities of lead instructors? (*Probe: "team instructors"?; Were you a lead/team instructor?; Do you feel you are able to balance these responsibilities?*)
9. Can you describe what it's like to conduct a SE course as a lead instructor (or as a team member)? (*Probe: Things you enjoy, don't enjoy, etc.?*)
10. Can you describe what volunteering for the DEC has been like? (*Probe: dis/similar to what you expected?*)

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
# years as instructor \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2 (Continued)**

11. When you first started teaching SE, who helped you get started?
12. Can you describe your relationship with the following people/groups of people? (*Probe: How frequently do you interact with them?*)
  - a. Other volunteer instructors
  - b. Master instructor you apprenticed under
  - c. DEC staff
  - d. Students who take SE course
  - e. Members of your sportsman's club
  - f. Community members
13. Can you explain the "teaching team" approach? (*Probe: In your experience, was this approach beneficial/detrimental, and why?*)
14. To what extent did you feel like you were (or were not) part of a "group" of instructors (or volunteers, etc.)? (*Probe: When did you first notice this, during/after training period, after teaching your first course?*)
15. Can you describe some of the things SEP staff or regional coordinators might do to provide support for instructors?
  - a. Can you explain what DEC does (or does not do) to maintain a long-term commitment to SE instructors? (*Probe: Do they involve volunteers in decision making or take their opinions into account?*)

**Part 3 (Consequences)**

As we start the final part of this interview, I would like to discuss things that may (or may not) have changed in your life since becoming an instructor.

16. As a result of volunteering, can you describe how your network of friends/acquaintances has changed over time?
17. In what ways have your opinions toward teaching SE changed since you first started volunteering? (*Probe: More/less interested in conservation, certain aspects of the course, other motivations?*)
  - a. Thinking about volunteering more generally, in what way(s) have your opinions or perspectives about volunteer work changed since you first started teaching SE? (*Probe: is your life more/less stressful since volunteering; Are you happier, over-worked, more relaxed, more anxious?*)

The last few questions are about your interest in volunteering in the future and some things that might help maintain your interest in teaching SE.

18. Looking down the road, how long do you see yourself teaching SE and why?
  - a. If you are losing interest, what could DEC staff do to encourage you to continue to volunteer? (*Probe: Payments/other role(s)?*)
19. In what ways do the DEC or SEP staff recognize volunteers? (*Probe: Have you ever been recognized/acknowledged for your service? Can you tell me about any things that the DEC has done to acknowledge your services?*)

*That is all of the questions I have for you, do you have any questions for me? Thank you for your time!*



Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
# years inactive \_\_\_\_\_

HECI Interview Guide  
**Inactive instructors**  
7/3/2015

**Background:**

Thank you for offering to participate in our study. We are interested in learning about your experience prior to and after volunteering as a SE instructor. The interview has three parts. The first part focuses on the process leading up to becoming a certified instructor. In the second part we will discuss your experience as a volunteer instructor and the last part is an opportunity for us to discuss how this process has changed you and why you decided to stop volunteering with the DEC SEP.

**Part 1 (Antecedents)**

I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about becoming an instructor and why you decided to volunteer with the SEP.

1. First, can you tell me about your hunting experience? (*Probe: When did you first go hunting? Did your family members hunt? Who [or what] influenced your interest in hunting?*)
2. When did you begin teaching SE?
3. Prior to becoming an instructor, had you ever volunteered for another agency or organization?
  - a. If yes: Can you describe what that experience was like? (*Probes: Age, type of "work", likes/dislikes, and comparison with SEC instruction?*)
4. How did the people closest to you feel about your decision to teach SE? (*Probe: Who, in particular and why were they supportive/opposed?*)
5. Can you tell me about the training you received to become an instructor? (*Probe: Did you feel adequately prepared to teach SE after going through the training/apprentice program?*)
  - a. What kinds of things does the DEC do to recruit new instructors?

We are just about through the first part but I'd like to switch gears a little bit and ask you a few questions about your decision to become a certified SE instructor.

6. Can you walk me through *why* you wanted to teach SE and volunteer with the DEC? (*Probe: Did you ever experience one "A-Ha" moment or have a conversation with someone where you said to yourself, "I think I want to try this out"?*)
  - a. From the things you just described, which, if any, were more influential in your decision to become a SE instructor?

**Part 2 (Experiences)**

I'd like to move on to the second part of the interview and ask a few questions about why you volunteered as a SE instructor.

7. What would you say are the primary roles/responsibilities of lead instructors? (*Probe: "team instructors"?; Were you a lead/team instructor?; Do you feel you were able to balance these responsibilities?*)
8. Can you describe what it's like to conduct a SE course as a lead instructor (or as a team member)? (*Probe: Things you enjoyed, didn't enjoy, etc.?*)
9. Can you describe what volunteering for the DEC has been like? (*Probe: dis/similar to what you expected?*)

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
# years inactive \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2 (Continued)**

10. When you first started teaching SE, who helped you get started?
11. Can you describe your relationship with the following people/groups of people? (*Probe: How frequently did you interact with them?*)
  - a. Other volunteer instructors
  - b. Master instructor you apprenticed under
  - c. DEC staff
  - d. Students who take SE course
  - e. Members of your sportsman's club
  - f. Community members
12. Can you explain the "teaching team" approach? (*Probe: In your experience, was this approach beneficial/detrimental, and why?*)
13. To what extent did you feel like you were (or were not) part of a "group" of instructors (or volunteers, etc.)? (*Probe: When did you first notice this, during/after training period, after teaching your first course?*)
14. Can you describe some of the things SEP staff or regional coordinators might do to provide support for instructors?
  - a. Can you explain what DEC does (or does not do) to maintain a long-term commitment to SE instructors? (*Probe: Do they involve volunteers in decision making or take their opinions into account?*)

**Part 3 (Consequences)**

As we start the final part of this interview, I would like to discuss things that may (or may not) have changed in your life since becoming an instructor.

15. As a result of volunteering, can you describe how your network of friends/acquaintances has changed over time?
16. In what ways have your opinions toward teaching SE changed from the time you first started volunteering to now? (*Probe: More/less interested in conservation, certain aspects of the course, other motivations?*)
  - a. Thinking about volunteering more generally, in what ways have your opinions or perspectives about volunteer work changed from the time you first started teaching SE to now (*Probe: is your life more/less stressful since volunteering; Are you happier, over-worked, more relaxed, more anxious?*)
17. Can you explain why you decided to stop volunteering with the DEC?
18. In what ways do the DEC or SEP staff recognize volunteers? (*Probe: Have you ever been recognized/acknowledged for your service? Can you tell me about any things that the DEC has done to acknowledge your services?*)
19. Can you think of anything the DEC could do to encourage current volunteers to continue to teach SE? (*Probe: Payments/other role(s)?*)

*That is all of the questions I have for you, do you have any questions for me? Thank you for your time.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
# years as apprentice \_\_\_\_\_

HECI Interview Guide  
**Inactive apprentice instructors**  
7/3/2015

**Background:**

Thank you for offering to participate in our study. We are interested in learning about your experience as a SE apprentice. The interview has three parts. The first part focuses on the process leading up to becoming an apprentice instructor. In the second part we will discuss your experience as a volunteer apprentice instructor and the last part is an opportunity to discuss how this process has changed you and why you decided to stop volunteering with the DEC SEP.

**Part 1 (Antecedents)**

I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your experiences prior to becoming an apprentice instructor and why you decided to volunteer with the SEP.

1. First, can you tell me about your hunting experience? (*Probe: When did you first go hunting? Did your family members hunt? Who [or what] influenced your interest in hunting?*)
2. When did you begin volunteering as an apprentice instructor?
3. How did you learn about the opportunity to teach SE? (*Probe: Did you want to teach SE or apprentice?*)
4. Prior to becoming an apprentice, had you ever volunteered for another agency or organization?
  - a. If yes: Can you describe what that experience was like? (*Probes: Age, type of "work", likes/dislikes, and comparison with SEP?*)
5. How did the people closest to you feel about your decision to teach SE? (*Probe: Who, in particular and why were supportive/opposed?*)
6. Can you tell me about the training you received to this point to become an instructor? (*Probe: Did you feel adequately prepared to teach SE after taking the new instructor training course?*)
  - a. What kinds of things does the DEC do to recruit new instructors?

We are just about through the first part but I'd like to switch gears a little bit and ask you a few questions about your decision to become an apprentice (or certified SE) instructor.

7. Can you walk me through *why* you wanted to teach SE and volunteer with the DEC? (*Probe: Did you ever experience one "A-Ha" moment or have a conversation with someone where you said to yourself, "I think I want to try this out"?*)
  - a. From the things you just described, which, if any, were more influential in your decision to get involved in the SEP?

**Part 2 (Experiences)**

I'd like to move on to the second part of the interview and ask a few questions about why you volunteered as an apprentice instructor.

8. What would you say are the primary roles/responsibilities of apprentice instructors? (*Probe: "lead instructors, team instructors"?; Were you able to balance these responsibilities?*)
9. Can you describe your experience as an apprentice instructor (*Probe: What was it like to volunteer for the DEC; Similar/dissimilar to what you expected? Things you enjoyed, didn't enjoy?*)

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
# years as apprentice \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2 (Continued)**

10. When you first started your apprenticeship, who helped you get started?
11. Can you describe your relationship with the following people/groups of people? (*Probe: How frequently did you interact with them?*)
  - a. Other volunteer instructors
  - b. Master instructor you apprenticed under
  - c. DEC staff
  - d. Students who take SE course
  - e. Members of your sportsman's club
  - f. Community members
12. Can you explain the "teaching team" approach? (*Probe: In your experience, was this approach beneficial/detrimental, and why?*)
13. To what extent did you feel like you were (or were not) part of a "group" (of apprentice instructors, volunteers, etc.)? (*Probe: When did you first notice this, during/after the new instructor training course?*)
14. Can you describe some of the things SEP staff or regional coordinators might do to provide support for apprentice instructors? (*Probe: Anything they do (or might do) to maintain a long-term commitment to SE instructors [e.g., involving them in decision making/taking opinions into account]?*)

**Part 3 (Consequences)**

As we start the final part of this interview, I would like to discuss things that may (or may not) have changed in your life since your apprenticeship.

15. As a result of volunteering, can you describe how your network of friends/acquaintances has changed over time?
16. In what ways have your opinions toward teaching SE changed from the time you first started volunteering to now? (*Probe: More/less interested in conservation, certain aspects of the course, other motivations?*)
  - a. Thinking about volunteering more generally, in what ways have your opinions or perspectives about volunteer work changed from the time you first started your apprenticeship to now (*Probe: is your life more/less stressful since volunteering; Are you happier, over-worked, more relaxed, more anxious?*)
17. Can you explain why you decided to stop volunteering with the DEC?
18. Can you think of anything DEC could do to encourage current volunteers to continue to teach SE? (*Probe: Payments/other role(s), recognition?*)

*That is all of the questions I have for you, do you have any questions for me? Thank you for your time.*

## Appendix B

### Sampling criteria and interviewee characteristics

Types of SE Instructors	Sex	Age	DEC Administrative Region	Year inactive
Certified*	(3 Female; 8 Male)	20	1	N/A
		31	2	
		37	3	
		37	4	
		45	4	
		52	5	
		56	6	
		65	7	
		66	7	
		67	7	
Master	(1 Female; 9 Male)	69	9	
		39	1	N/A
		46	2	
		55	3	
		60	4	
		62	5	
		64	5	
		64	7	
		67	8	
		70	9	
Inactive (former volunteers)	(2 Female; 8 Male)	70	9	
		37	1	2007
		48	2	2010
		19	3	2010
		49	3	2010
		56	4	2012
		60	6	2012
		63	7	2012
		65	8	2012
		69	8	No data
73	9	No data		
Inactive-apprentice	(7 Male)	29	3	2010
		36	5	2014
		38	6	2015
		42	6	2015
		47	7	2015
		52	8	No data
		69	9	No data

\*One interviewee was a junior instructor and is not technically a “certified” SE instructor.