

# ECO AmeriCorps

2024-2025



## **Outreach, Education, and Restoration Assistant**

Connecticut River Conservancy, PO Box 6219, Brattleboro, VT 05302

Connecticut River Conservancy is a strong voice for the Connecticut River watershed, from source to sea. We collaborate with partners across four states to protect and advocate for your rivers and educate and engage communities. We bring people together to prevent pollution, improve habitat, and promote enjoyment of the river and its tributary streams. Healthy rivers support healthy economies.

Position Supervisor: Kathy Urffer, Dir. of Policy and Advocacy/VT River Steward

Kathy Urffer is Director of Policy and Advocacy and Vermont River Steward for the Connecticut River Conservancy. She serves the Connecticut River and its watershed in the upper river from the MA border to the Canadian border in VT. Kathy is on the ground field staff working with landowners, federal and state agencies, and volunteers to protect the Connecticut River. Kathy would be the hands-on supervisor for the AmeriCorps volunteer.

### The Role:

This service position would support Connecticut River Conservancy in efforts to assess watershed health, develop and implement stream restoration projects, support water quality testing, support volunteer groups taking part in our annual Source to Sea River Cleanup, support oversight and field work for the Connecticut River Paddlers Trail, and develop and implement public education campaigns to garner active engagement in watershed stewardship.

CRC currently functions with one River Steward in each state and other program staff that work across state boundaries. The River Steward's job covers a broad swath of content and projects and the geographic scope of our watershed is very large. The potential scope that could be done with the addition of an AmeriCorps member will expand the organization's reach and ability to respond to a variety of program and project-related needs. We are beginning a strategic planning process and will

likely continue to grow the organization over the coming years. The ability to work with an AmeriCorps member will also help clarify what additional staff roles may be incorporated as we grow.

We have recently taken over one of the longest running volunteer water quality monitoring programs in Vermont and participate in the LaRosa Partnership Program (LPP) to provide requested water quality sampling information to VT DEC. We have long depended on seasonal assistance to make this program a continued success both from VT DEC interns and AmeriCorps members stationed at other local organizations. The LPP monitoring calendar has been built around the availability and schedule of the ECO AmeriCorps program which has moved it out of the feasibility of VT DEC or other college-based summer intern opportunities. Having an ECO AmeriCorps member would ensure this program continues to contribute to the LPP and collect valuable water quality data at the request of VT DEC.

CRC is the fiscal sponsor and administrator of the Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail, which hosts a series of primitive campsites and river access points from its headwaters in New Hampshire's Great North Woods south to Long Island Sound. A variety of organizations assist with trail planning and development. Work continues to protect the river corridor, construct new campsites, portage trails, and expand the Paddlers' Trail from source to sea. People only protect what they love, so it is imperative to provide access to the river to engage the public in protection efforts.

According to the VT DEC Watershed Management Division 2017 Annual Report, 20% of our rivers and streams are either impaired by pollution or altered by physical impacts. The VT DEC Basin Plans that cover the Connecticut River watershed list dozens of potential restoration projects, and CRC identifies more every year. The VT Watershed Project database has hundreds of possible restoration projects that can be pursued. We have consistently been implementing between 5 and 8 restoration projects a year and each one has lasting effects on aquatic habitat and water quality.

On average, between 3,000 and 8,000 sea lamprey make their way upstream of the Vernon dam every year looking for nest sites in VT and NH tributary streams. For several years, in partnership with state and federal biologists, CRC has been engaging community science volunteers to evaluate nest sites and spawning rates which will aid in sea lamprey species' recovery.

Additionally, the VT Tactical Basin Plans identify many river segments that might be reclassified for higher protections, but each one needs to go through a petition process that requires public education, information gathering and research. All these efforts are needed to continue to improve water quality and habitat for our Vermont rivers.

#### Essential Functions:

- supporting the organization and coordination of water quality sampling efforts across multiple watershed groups, which might include transporting samples, collecting samples, and utilizing meters for water quality assessment.
- assisting the river steward and restoration program manager with landowner outreach, coordination with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, landowners, funding sources, and any required on the ground site visits for identifying and implementing stream and river restoration projects, which might include dam removals, floodplain restoration, riparian buffer restoration, and habitat enhancement projects,
- supporting the organization and coordination of community science volunteer sea lamprey nest surveys,

- supporting CRC staff and volunteer groups with logistical needs during our annual Source to Sea River Cleanup;
- supporting the river steward in conducting education and outreach to engage the community about the relicensing of three large hydro-electric facilities through events, print and social media,
- providing public education and outreach opportunities around river related issues, which would include organizing education campaigns geared toward supporting reclassification of river segments.

#### Secondary Functions:

- providing general support for membership tracking and marketing,
- providing educational presentations on request for public groups.

#### Desired Qualifications:

- excellent written, verbal, and online communication;
- driver's license;
- proficiency in Microsoft 365 Office tools, online data processing and collaboration using cloud services;
- high attention to detail;
- self-motivation and initiative;
- previous experience managing volunteers;
- capacity for field service on land, in and on water;
- public presentation skills.

#### DEIJ:

CRC has engaged in a very deliberate and comprehensive planning process over the past several years to begin intensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism organizational development. We convened a Staff and Trustee Task Force, and contracted with a training consulting company in 2021, who provided staff and board trainings and an analysis of CRC systems and documents to understand the current diversity represented by our staff, evaluate our current successes and opportunities for inclusivity, and help us develop and implement a planning process with clear goals and metrics. As a result of that we convened staff workgroups to develop a DEI visioning statement, an internal guide to consider DEI in our event planning and have drafted changes to existing policy. We developed a list of new policies needed to further diversity our workplace and develop DEI benchmarks that will inform a new strategic plan for the organization. Our previous Executive Director left the organization in 2022 and our Board conducted a search during 2023 for a new ED using a firm experienced in DEI consideration. Our new ED started in October of 2023 and we are beginning the process to develop an updated strategic plan that integrates DEI and sets out our next strategic goals. Through this whole process we have continued to have a staff and board DEI Taskforce that provides training and process improvements in many aspects of our organizational process. The AmeriCorps member will be included as a participant in our upcoming strategic planning process, and we welcome this additional perspective.

#### Climate Resiliency:

CRC works on climate resiliency through both policy development and project implementation. As part of our advocacy work in we assist in the development of state-wide policy and engage in agency rule-making processes. This includes helping to do research and provide evidence for changes to

policy that will create more resilient communities. For instance, CRC recently worked with a group of environmental studies students from Middlebury College who focused their capstone project on assessing how communities handled “flood mud” cleanup during July, and provided recommendations (<https://www.ctriver.org/flood-mud/>) that may be the seed for policy development to properly dispose of and potentially reuse flood sediment.

Additionally, we have a Restoration Program that works with landowners to implement clean water, habitat, and resiliency projects on their land such as dam removals, floodplain restoration, culvert replacement and riparian buffer plantings. We identify projects, grant funds for design phase and implementation phase and manage the project for the landowner. We typically are able to implement 3 to 6 projects a year, while we have dozens of others in a grant or design pipeline. :

### Networking:

CRC has hundreds of partners across its four-state watershed. The river stewards work collaboratively with each other on regional issues as well as in local partnerships. CRC routinely works with landowners, municipalities, regional planning commissions, contractors, environmental engineers, state environmental staff, partner watershed groups and NGOs. In fulfilling their duties, the ECO AmeriCorps member would be interacting routinely with staff and volunteers from our many different restoration and advocacy partner organizations.

### Misc.

Prior to moving to Vermont 20 years ago, Kathy Urffer was Special Projects Manager and Operations Director for Hackensack Riverkeeper in New Jersey. In addition to managing the staff and day to day finances of the organization, she developed and ran their river cleanup program, assisted with their canoe and pontoon boat eco-cruise programs, managed stream restoration projects, and fish advisory, outreach, and education projects. More recently she has served on the Board of the Southeastern Vermont Watershed Association, as a Commissioner for the Windham Regional Commission, and has worked on education projects related to wastewater treatment. Kathy holds a M.S. in Natural Resource Management from Antioch New England University, a B.A. in Psychology from Rutgers, and is a former Vermont Leadership Institute Fellow from the Snelling Center for Government. Kathy supports the Dartmouth Social Practicum program by providing real world issues for Dartmouth students to work on, and CRC hosts a Vermont Law School intern during the Spring semester to support policy efforts. Kathy has recently been promoted to Director of Policy and Advocacy in addition to continuing as Vermont River Steward and in that capacity supervises the other three River Stewards in NH, MA, and CT. Kathy enjoys the opportunity to mentor and help develop environmental leaders. The AmeriCorps member will be housed in the Brattleboro office with Kathy to provide direct supervision.

Personal outdoor gear should be provided by the member such as hiking boots and rain gear. The member will also need waders, and water shoes or boots for both cold and warm water situations. The member also needs access to a driver’s license and car for fieldwork and site visits, although CRC has a policy of using rental cars for longer distance travel. Reliable vehicle expected.

Kathy has lived in Brattleboro for 18 years and has multiple connections in the local community. She will work to make sure that the ECO Member meets people and understands what social options are

available to access. Additionally, CRC partners with many local organizations who will also have opportunities to be engaged and socialize.

The position will be a mix of office based, hybrid, outside and project dependent with attendance at potential events all through the watershed in Vermont.

Goals for the Position:

- Additional capacity for CRC projects in the watershed
- Additional public education and outreach on watershed issues in the watershed
- A comprehensive educational opportunity for the member to experience what it is like to work for a river advocacy organization.
- Networking opportunities for the ECO member to connect with local, state-wide, and regional environmental partners.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Be a US citizen, a national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S.;
- Be at least 18 years of age upon entering the Pre-Service Orientation (there is no upper age limit);
- Be a high school graduate or have a GED certificate or be willing to work towards their GED as part of their service-year successful completion requirement. A member cannot have dropped out of high school to join AmeriCorps. If a member has a documented medical reason/professional opinion why they cannot finish high school, they might be eligible; call in this case;
- Has not been convicted of murder or sexual assault and is willing to undergo a National Service Criminal History Check;
- Must submit to Agency of Human Services checks, i.e. Adult Abuse and Child Abuse Prevention;
- Be committed to the ECO AmeriCorps program, and its ethic of service and personal and professional development of its participants;
- Have the ability and enthusiasm to drive to, attend, and participate in required trainings and events, and be prepared to drive up to 2-3 hours each way

To Apply: [My AmeriCorps - Home Page](#)

Position begins September 17th, 2024 and ends August 15th, 2025

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