



September 2021- August 2022 Service Year

Position Title

Clean Water Communications and Data Analysis Assistant

Sponsoring Organization

DEC, Watershed Management Division, Clean Water Initiative Program
Montpelier, VT

Sponsoring Organization's Mission

The Watershed Management Division's primary mission is to protect, maintain, enhance, and restore the quality of Vermont's surface water resources. Inherent in this effort is the support of both healthy ecosystems and public uses in and on 800 lakes and ponds; 23,000 miles of rivers and streams; and 300,000 acres of wetlands that exist within the State of Vermont.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position

This member can participate in up to four different project categories to help serve CWIP's mission. We expect the member to focus more heavily the first two project categories below, with some flexibility depending on their areas of interest and program priorities.

1. Clean Water Communications

- a. Enhance clean water project communications using print and online communication tools,
- b. Develop content for Vermont DEC's Facebook page, CWIP's website, and clean water e-newsletters, as well as manage CWIP's online photo management platform.
- c. Coordinate DEC's Clean Water Lecture Series, which provides monthly presentations on a variety of clean water-related topics.
- d. Assist with implementing outcomes from the Vermont Clean Water Annual Performance Report lean initiative to improve clean water communications to the public, Vermont State Legislature, and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- e. Assist with research and development of a method for reporting the co-benefits of clean water projects, such as increasing workforce opportunities, economic stimulus, species habitat/diversity, carbon sequestration, etc.
- f. Serve as part of the DEC Social Media Team and Cross-Agency Communications team to learn from and network with a diversity of communications professionals.
- g. Assist in incorporating inclusive language across our program's website, social media, online events and other communications.

2. Data Analysis & Visualization

- a. Assist in developing/ improving interactive data visualization tools, such as through Microsoft Power BI, to increase public engagement in clean water data.
- b. Analyze clean water project data at fine scales (e.g., sub-watershed, towns) and large scales (e.g., tactical basin plans, Lake Champlain Basin) to better understand trends in clean water funding and project results. Results of these analyses can be used to inform tactical basin planning and other policy-related efforts.

3. Best Management Practices (BMP) Verification

- a. Coordinate and perform site visits to assess BMP's such as stormwater treatment practices, road erosion remediation, river buffer planting, and lakeshore projects throughout the state using a GIS-based survey application. This helps to verify the status of clean water projects and ensure they are performing their proper function in reducing pollutants.
 - b. Assist in developing a process for transferring survey data to DEC's Watershed Projects Database.
 - c. Reach out to the BMP's owner or responsible party with any maintenance concerns or suggestions, if applicable. This will foster strong partnerships across the state and help to educate stakeholders about the importance of maintenance.
4. Lean & Continuous Improvement
- a. Support on-going lean efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of clean water data management and reporting processes. Lean is a popular approach to streamlining processes by eliminating waste and optimizing flow while continuing to deliver value to stakeholders.
 - b. Learn skills related to continuous improvement and participate in trainings provided by the Center for Achievement in Public Service.

Overall, this member will play an integral role in helping CWIP communicate the impacts of state-funded clean water projects to the public. The member will serve as part of the CWIP team, learning from and communicating with state staff and partners. This position provides a great opportunity to network with and gain experience in many aspects of environmental stewardship.

Essential Functions. Functions that the applicant must be able to perform

- Strong written and verbal communication skills and/or interest and willingness to improve these skills
- Ability to work majority of time in an office environment, as well as perform occasional fieldwork
- Ability to collect and analyze field data using various applications and software
- Ability to process, organize, and manage project data with strong attention to detail
- Strong organizational skills
- Proficiency in writing
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office suite, including Excel
- Ability to communicate effectively and professionally with a range of audiences
- Self-motivated, time management skills, enjoys variety in projects
- Team player, interested in learning and collaborating in water quality improvement efforts

Marginal Functions. These are secondary to Essential Functions, may be negotiable, and can be completed as time allows.

- Experience with writing communications for the public (i.e. social media)
- Ability to manage multiple projects
- Environmental sciences/studies background
- Experience with outreach and education for the public
- Experience with data analysis
- Familiarity with best management practices (BMPs) such as green stormwater infrastructure and/or natural infrastructure restoration
- Experience/coursework related to water quality/natural resources
- Ability to organize a project/research plan and follow standard methodologies
- Ability to effectively present technical information for a public audience through verbal and written communications

Projects May Include

The Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) has developed tracking, accounting, and reporting procedures to meet the accountability requirements of the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 64 of 2015) and the Clean Water Service Delivery Act (Act 76 of 2019), the Lake Champlain Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Vermont segments of Lake Champlain, and other major nutrient TMDLs. CWIP and other state entities provide funding to develop and implement projects that reduce pollutants and improve water quality in order to move towards compliance with the above TMDLs.

One essential part of CWIP's mission is to communicate the efforts occurring throughout the state in the field of clean water. While staff is mainly focused on funding, tracking, and accounting, the successes are not always well-communicated to the public. This position would greatly enhance communication efforts, making clean water data and reports easier to access and understand. The Clean Water Lecture Series is something CWIP would not have the capacity to do if not for past AmeriCorps Members. It has been well attended and has gotten positive feedback.

This proposed service-position would also allow an AmeriCorps member to get into the field and help gather valuable data on the condition of best management practices (BMPs), expand our capability to track and account for these projects, and assist with education on the importance of maintenance of state-funded practices.

Lastly, this service-position would allow an AmeriCorps member to expand the efficiency and effectiveness of our reporting procedures through assisting with continuous improvement efforts and gain useful skills in the process. This is of great need in a time where we have increased workloads with limited capacity. The member would propose and pilot new methodologies to bridge data and information gaps, and work with CWIP staff and our partners to develop new and exciting approaches to track and communicate the state's clean water efforts and progress toward meeting TMDLs.

Desired Qualifications

- Background related to stormwater or water quality
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Course work related to environmental studies/sciences
- Experience with data management and analysis
- Enjoys a fast-paced and changing work environment
- Experience/coursework in green stormwater infrastructure and natural infrastructure restoration
- Positive and passionate attitude and a team player
- Familiarity with best management practices (BMPs) for water quality
- Ability to organize a project/research plan and follow standardized methodologies
- Ability to effectively present technical information for a public audience verbally and in writing

Networking Opportunities

The member will be working among numerous staff at DEC who have a wealth of knowledge across the environmental field. If they are interested in a particular study area, they may have the opportunity to help other DEC staff with their field duties or other small projects. For example, they could take a day to collect water samples with the Lakes and Ponds Program, they could help count bugs collected by Monitoring and Assessment Program staff, or perhaps help with aquatic invasive species removal. They will also be reaching out to and interacting with our partners (watershed groups, municipalities and other environmental organizations in VT). There are many opportunities to network. The member's efforts towards implementing the Clean Water Lecture Series present a great opportunity to network with clean water partners within DEC, and also within sister departments and agencies. Supervisors will help to foster networking based on the member's interest.

Service Conditions

Service is to be performed primarily in an indoor setting. The outdoor field season will take place during summer months and will encompass about 20 % of their time. This service position may involve irregular hours to accommodate external partner's schedules.

Support of DEI and Environmental Justice

CWIP is committed to incorporating diversity, equity inclusion and environmental justice into our daily work. Our program has several efforts underway to address these opportunities in its funding programs, reporting, and communications.

CWIP currently has a staff member on DEC's Environmental Justice Committee and three staff members representing the Water Investment Division (WID) in the environmental justice focus group discussion led by REJOICE. Our program also participated in the Vermont Certified Public Manager (VCPM) Program project to incorporate environmental justice into our clean water implementation granting programs. Three members of the program also recently completed a training on Speaking Up to Bias in the Workplace.

We plan to continue and expand our work in this area and see this as a great opportunity for an AmeriCorps member to participate in updating communications to be more inclusive. For example, the AmeriCorps member can help support diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice language and practices into social media, website, e-newsletter, etc. There are many opportunities for this AmeriCorps member to get involved, depending on their interest on this topic.

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