



ECO AmeriCorps Program Year 2021–2022

Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps is an AmeriCorps program within the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC). The emphasis of the program is on building capacity in nonprofit organizations and municipalities throughout rural Vermont communities. Program focus areas include the following:

- engagement, outreach, and education
- improvement of water quality
- protection and restoration of public lands

ECO AmeriCorps is funded in part by an AmeriCorps state grant provided through SerVermont from the Corporation for National & Community Service.

All ECO AmeriCorps members have some college education (preference given to college graduates with a science background) and will receive technical training and mentorship from VTDEC throughout their term of service. VTDEC handles the administrative components of the program, including providing living stipends, health insurance, and monthly trainings to members.

Full-Time Member Benefits

Living Stipend: \$17,300

Education Award: \$6,345

Other Benefits: Training, networking opportunities, health care, childcare assistance, program support, mileage reimbursement for ECO AmeriCorps–related travel.

VTDEC administers the member’s living stipend, health care benefits, childcare benefits, time sheets, activity reports, and other AmeriCorps and employee-related benefits and documentation.

Applicant Information		
Name of Organization or Municipality: Stowe Trails Partnership		
Primary Supervisor Name: Rachel Fussell	Primary Supervisor Title: Executive Director	
Mailing Address: PO Box 3722		
City: Stowe	State: VT	Zip: 05672
Phone: 802-585-1001	Fax: N/A	
Email: rachel@stowetrails.org	Website: stowetrails.org	
Sponsoring Organization’s Mission:		
<p>Stowe Trails Partnership (STP) is a non-profit, member-driven organization that partners with the community in building and maintaining a world-class trail network. STP cultivates a multi-use and interconnected trail network of over 38 miles that supports and sustains a vibrant recreation culture in Stowe. Stowe's trails are links within the community; they create avenues by which residents and visitors can experience Stowe in an immersive natural way, and they encourage an active, healthy appreciation for the outdoors.</p>		

Please provide a brief description of your role at your site:

I manage the general operations of STP, including staff and board members. Ensure a high level of execution and enhancement of our programs, including finance, fundraising/development, membership, trail acquisition and stewardship, communications and marketing, and volunteer management. Actively engage and partner with the community, our members, town officials, landowners, partnering organizations, sponsors, and volunteers to build a broad and strategic coalition around multi-use trails and recreation.

What is the title of the position you are requesting? **Stewardship Coordinator**

Describe your proposed service position:

Stowe Trails Partnership's proposed service position is to improve our 38 miles of public trails by maintaining and improving our trail corridors and engaging with users through trail outreach programs. The position's primary goals and responsibilities include managing trail data information, coordinating volunteer and programs, and maintaining and improving our trail network due to increased demand for recreational opportunities. The position focuses on these three areas to address ECO AmeriCorps performance measures. Over 22,400 acres of trails in Stowe will be improved through the trail enhancements and maintenance work and data collection to help understanding users' behavior patterns and frequency. The community outreach program provides environmental education to our users and volunteers. In 2019, we worked with over 250 volunteers on various trail projects throughout Stowe, and in 2020 we logged over 1,950 volunteer hours. Our project would also focus on gathering information to help determine best practices for trail building and maintenance. This would positively affect water quality in our area, including the seven miles of the Little River that runs through our community. Please see the position description attached to this proposal.

Essential Functions. Functions that the applicant must be able to perform. These may be listed in bullet form:

- . Maintain and enhance public trail corridors within Stowe, VT for the betterment of our community, to increase trail lifespan, and repair annual damage caused by visitor use.
- . Communicate and collaborate with stakeholders and partners to ensure trail management goals are being met.
- . Manage informational trail sits for STP, including the collection of trail surveys, trail counter data, and engaging with the public on environmental education topics.
- . Develop standards for best management practices for maintenance and building on public trails in the State of Vermont. Factors include, but not limited to, water quality impacts, erosion controls, and long-term trail sustainability.
- . Assist in researching the impacts of emerging recreation trends on the local trail system and the environmental and community impact.
- . Coordinate weekly engagement events for a variety of populations including veterans, LGBTQ+, individuals with disabilities, and youth by creating and maintaining partnerships, recruiting participants, managing volunteers and leading the event.
- . Maintain volunteer logs, records, etc.
- . Recruit, coordinate, and support volunteers to assist with weekly trail days, stewardship projects, and activities scheduled in STP's trail management plan including trail and infrastructure maintenance.
- . Create press releases, newsletter articles, and content for print, web, and social media.
- . Represent STP at various public outreach events, including the B3 Festival, Season Kickoff Party, StowkBury Trail Event, and Leaf Blower Fall Mountain Bike Festival.
- . Assisting with communications and registration before events, helping coordinate and host events.
- . Writing a final report outlining the year of service, documenting the number of hours spent providing outreach, recommendations for future outreach, and evaluating the Trails & Outreach program.
- . Participate in ECO AmeriCorps Training, Service Days, Events, and Program Initiatives.
- . Engage in professional and personal development activities and networking opportunities.

Marginal Functions. These are secondary to Essential Functions, may be negotiable, and can be completed as time allows. These may be listed in bullet form:

- Additional outreach may entail advertising, communicating with landowners who host public trails, promoting collaborative efforts among organizations/programs, membership assistance, direct mailing, and database updates.
- Complete special projects as STP needs and member interests dictate.

Please list any clothing/equipment the member will need that you cannot provide (e.g., hiking boots, waders, rain gear, etc.). As the host site, you are responsible for providing all tools and technical equipment needed for the position (e.g., computer, phone, GPS, etc.).

- Hiking boots
- Work pants
- Rain gear

Desired qualifications:

- . General love for and enthusiasm of the outdoors, trails and recreation (including mountain biking)
- . Highly motivated individual willing to solve problems and take on challenging tasks
- . Service ethic and a desire to do meaningful and challenging service to better a community
- . Conscientious, reliable, punctual, organized, well-organized and detail-oriented
- . Must have access to a car and have the ability to travel independently to statewide events
- . Ability to serve outdoors in inclement weather
- . Strong public speaking and writing skills
- . Ability to use hand tools on community trails
- . Be able to work independently and as part of a team while maintaining excellent communication with supervisor
- . Have excellent people skills; be outgoing and tactful; have a positive and collaborative attitude
- . Be able to coordinate and direct adult and youth volunteers
- . Willingness to serve evenings and weekends
- . Be US citizen or have permanent resident status
- . Be at least 18 years of age upon entering the Pre-Service Orientation, or 17 years of age with verified parental permission
- . Has not been convicted of murder or sexual assault and is willing to undergo a National Service Criminal History Check
- . Be committed to the ECO AmeriCorps program's ethic of service and personal and professional development of its participants
- . Have the ability and enthusiasm to drive to, attend, and participate in all required trainings and events, and be prepared to drive up to 2-3 hours each way

Describe how the position will contribute to the program's National Performance Measures:

1. Number of individuals educated on environmental stewardship; number of individuals with an intention to change behavior
2. Number of miles of trails/streams/rivers improved
3. Number of acres of publicly owned or managed land improved

This position will address each of these three categories.

In 2020 STP recorded over 74,000 annual visitors on our trails. The member interacts and provides environmental stewardship education to a large portion of these visitors through trail sits and as a trail ambassador when completing trail maintenance and improvements on a weekly basis. Leave noTrace ethics, trail etiquette, and environmental stewardship will be discussed with our visitors.

The member will also educate over 250 volunteers during weekly trail events throughout the summer season on topics such as erosion control measures, invasive species removal, trail etiquette and safety measures, and clearing debris. The member will improve and enhance over 38 miles of trails located on 22,400 acres of publicly owned and managed land during their service with STP. This includes making trails newly available through adaptive refurbishments for disabled users and blazing trails for various trail users and outdoor opportunities.

Focus Areas

Provide approximate impact numbers (e.g., miles of rivers treated) in each focus area. Refer to the 2021–2022 Performance Goals document for an explanation on each focus area.

Focus Area	Projected Impact Numbers	
Water Quality Improvement	Miles of river/stream/trail treated and/or improved	7
Protection and Restoration of Public Land	Acres of parks or public land treated and/or improved	22,400
Engagement, Outreach, and Education	Number of individuals receiving environmental stewardship education or training	250

Provide additional information (data, statistics, reports, etc.) that demonstrates the compelling need for the proposed position(s).

Our organization has seen a steady increase in participation since 2013. We are currently hoping to place an ECO AmeriCorps member to help serve our trails and community as demand for our services outpaces our organizational capacity.

Our annual visitors have increased steadily every year. In 2017 our organization recorded over 25,000 visitors, and in 2020 we saw over 74,000 trail users on our networks. These trail visitors come from Vermont and all over the US- 89 different towns across 13 states. We logged over 1,950 volunteer hours of trail maintenance and service hours in 2020. These hours were up from 750 hours in 2018. Finally, our programs saw an uptick in activity, pre-Covid, with several hundred participants at our two most significant events. We anticipate that the interest in community events will only increase in 2021 if the pandemic dissipates from public life.

Recreation in the State of Vermont is also changing quickly. The legislature is currently deciding on updates to Act 250 and how recreational trails and the Vermont Trail System fits into this discussion. And although these conversations are necessary, STP and the trail community need the capacity to develop best management practices for trail building and maintenance for our public lands in Vermont. There are also new trends emerging within the outdoor recreation field. E-bikes and fat biking are just two examples, and little research has been done to understand what effects they'll have on our naturally-surfaced trails. An AmeriCorps member that could help build capacity to address these trail impacts would provide critical support for our organization.

Describe how the supervisor has adequate time and leadership experience to manage an ECO member?
Please explain how:

Yes, definitely.

Currently, Rachel Fussell, the Executive Director of STP and supervisor of the ECO member, is the only full-time employee. STP hired three part-time staff members; a bookkeeper, and two trail crew members. Rachel has been successfully overseeing their positions and day-to-day activities since 2018.

Rachel has a lot of leadership experience in her current role as E.D. of STP and her previous work. She has direct experience being an AmeriCorps member, as she served for two years in both North Carolina and Vermont. Previously Rachel oversaw 200 clients and five inspectors as an Organic Certification Manager with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT). As the Education Coordinator for NOFA-VT, she ran several programs, including the Journey Farmer Program and the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training, each with over a dozen participants each year. Rachel has also managed several non-profit programs as the Food System Manager at Vermont Tech and as the Program Manager for the Agricultural Economic Development Office of Polk County. Each of these positions and experiences has provided Rachel with the leadership experience to supervise and guide an ECO member daily.

Describe networking opportunities that will be available to the member during service?

Yes, although with COVID, some of this opportunities may vary. In a typical year, the member will have multiple opportunities to network in their service position with STP. Opportunities include:

- Vermont Mountain Bike Association Chapter meetings
- Vermont Trails and Greenways Council meetings
- Community partners meetings
- Lamoille County Non-Profit Roundtable discussions
- Racial Equity Alliance of Lamoille County

There are also many other meetings, discussion groups, and informal get-togethers with professionals in the environmental and recreation sector. The ECO member will have ample opportunities to network and be out in the community.

Does your organization currently host or plan to host a member from a different AmeriCorps program? If yes, explain the duties of the other AmeriCorps position(s).

No, this is our first year with ECO AmeriCorps and we are not hosting any other members.

In what ways does your organization support diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice?

STP is committed to supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice through our work as trail stewards for our community's multi-use trail network. STP created a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee in 2020 that meets every month to discuss and develop actionable items for our entire organization. From this new committee, we have hosted community workshops on "Equity in the Outdoors" and how trails and outdoor recreation can contribute to a more equitable Vermont. We have also partnered with several organizations to provide welcoming and safe spaces in the outdoor community, including with Stowe Land Trust, VMBA, and the Racial Equity Alliance of Lamoille County. STP has also been working with an equity consultant to understand how we can better support JEDI initiatives through our work. We know that we have a long road ahead of us, but we are taking the necessary steps to educate ourselves on this vital topic and create a solid foundation. STP will continue to host JEDI workshops and offer events targeting a diversity of users in 2021. Other initiatives include providing memberships to underserved groups and work towards acknowledging and educating our community about the indigenous history of the lands we currently occupy, among many other initiatives.

The service year will begin early-to-mid September 2021 and end in August 2022. We look forward to speaking with you!

