



### **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: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets		
Primary Supervisor Name: Mary Montour	Primary Supervisor Title: Ag. Water Quality Program Coordinator	
Mailing Address: 116 State Street		
City: Montpelier	State: VT	Zip: 05620
Phone: 802-461-6087	Fax:	
Email: Mary.Montour@Vermont.gov	Website: agriculture.vermont.gov	
Sponsoring Organization’s Mission:		
The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF) facilitates, supports and encourages the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while protecting the working landscape, human health, animal health, plant health, consumers and the environment.		

Please provide a brief description of your role at your site:
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In my position, I serve in a variety of roles including coordination of educational and outreach programs for agricultural water quality topics to farmers in Vermont. I assist with technical and financial assistance programs provided by VAAFM as well as supporting the development of the agricultural sections in tactical basin plans. My team of colleagues at VAAFM are program coordinators who assist in voluntary conservation on farms across the Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership, in coordination with the Clean Water Investment Division and Tactical Basin Planning Program at the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation. We also work closely with VAAFM engineering, inspection, and enforcement staff within the Water Quality Division.

What is the title of the position you are requesting? **Agricultural Water Quality Outreach and BMP Verification Specialist**

Describe your proposed service position:

VAAFM is applying to host an Eco AmeriCorps service member to serve with the Water Quality Division as an Agricultural Water Quality Outreach and Best Management Practice (BMP) Verification Specialist, assisting the Vermont agricultural community in reducing non-point runoff from agricultural operations. Depending on the interests of the service member, we hope to develop a holistic and flexible service plan specific to their learning goals. We have outlined a few specific areas of service that the service member may choose to develop service goals. These include education and outreach, conservation practice verification, and technical assistance for conservation implementation.

Education and outreach service opportunities include coordinating and developing targeted educational programs for the agricultural community, the general public, and agricultural service providers. Outreach efforts may include the development or creation of new materials identified to be a need in educational activities as well as coordination with a variety of partners to finalize and publish these materials. Identification of educational opportunities or events and coordination with colleagues to attend and deliver education is also an opportunity for service. The encouraged focus will be on educating farmers and landowners on impacts of their land management to water quality and the benefits of conservation.

Verification and documentation of conservation practices opportunities may include coordination with team members on practice verifications, scheduling and coordinating with landowners, gathering information, and field verifying practice implementation. Some aspects of service may include research and development of guidance around verifying practice effectiveness in different soil types or regions of the state, and field visits to farms during the field season. Field visits to farms may also include opportunities for the ECO member to share educational materials with the farmer and engage in conversations around water and soil conservation, as well as learn about Vermont agricultural systems. Some data management skills will be involved with this service activity including use of the novel and award-winning Multi- Partner Agricultural Conservation Practice Tracking and Planning Geospatial Database or Partner Database. Field verifying and geospatial tracking of implemented conservation practices is an exciting and important part of the VAAFM's water quality programs, such that phosphorus reductions can be assigned towards meeting TMDLs in Vermont.

Technical assistance related opportunities will vary greatly on the interest, experience, and learning goals of the member. They may include outreach and program assistance to agricultural operations, project development and implementation assistance, or assistance related to a specific resource concern on farmland. Technical assistance service may also be coordinated and delivered to municipalities, students, member of the public, or watershed organizations.

Additional service projects may include creative and collaborate projects or events across programs in VAAFM or with partner organizations, such as exploring and engaging with tactical basin planning efforts, cost-share programs and partnerships, and innovative agricultural projects. The VAAFM Water Quality division is a dynamic team with a variety of opportunities to assist in program coordination with a team of dedicated, fun and interesting folks!

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

- Possess a desire to learn new skills and to explore information in a variety of forms
- Navigate and use computer programs such as Microsoft Excel, Word, Power Point, and Adobe Acrobat
- Ability to drive an automatic vehicle, and basic navigational skills for the times when cellphone service is low, and you find yourself on a back road in rural Vermont
- Effective and honest verbal and written communication
- Ability and willingness to engage in conversations around land stewardship and water quality with partner organizations, farmers, landowners, other agricultural service providers
- Basic understanding of the relationship between nutrients and water quality
- Creativity and flexibility to design a work-plan that meets your individual service and learning goals
- Self-driven and motivated to serve, as well as interest in water quality and agriculture
- Willing to listen to other perspectives, and ask questions

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:

- Use Adobe Suite programs to create or design visually engaging and effective outreach materials
- Identify a variety of farm equipment and its uses in relation to conservation goals
- Identify farm field management techniques based on existing crop residue or visual inspection of field, as well as identification of crop or plant species composition
- Read and interpret agricultural regulations or statutes and interpret meaning or applicability to a subset of individuals or constituents
- Engage in conversations around land stewardship and water quality with a variety of stakeholders
- Identify potential or actual resource concerns on the landscape whether occurring as a result of management or natural processes, develop realistic solutions, and engage with landowners and operators to discuss mechanisms to abate those resource concerns.

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.).

Boots, rain gear, and clothing for field work in a variety of weather conditions, including rain coat, rain pants, warm clothes, and appropriate gear for tick safety.

Desired qualifications:

Bachelor or associates degree in the field of agriculture, land use planning, environmental science/studies, natural resources management, forestry, environmental policy or a related field. Applicant may substitute educational history with relevant experience.

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

The VAAFMECO member position will contribute to the program's National Performance Measures primarily under category 1 - Number of individuals educated on environmental stewardship; number of individuals with an intention to change behavior.

Through the education and outreach service opportunities introduced above, the ECO member will have the opportunity to identify, develop and deploy educational materials to the agricultural community, the general public, and agricultural service providers. These opportunities may include published materials, such as through the VAAFMECO monthly AgriView newsletter that reaches nearly 10,000 landowners each month, and/or events providing water quality education or training, such as through the Lake Lessons program facilitated by the St. Albans Museum. Additionally, the ECO Member may identify, develop and/or deploy new or enhanced educational opportunities through publications and events during their service.

Through the verification and documentation service opportunities introduced above, the ECO member will have the opportunity to engage with farmers individually during practice verification field visits. These visits may also provide opportunity for the ECO member to provide information to the farmer related to water quality conservation while also gather information about the farmers personal experience with water quality programs.

Although not directly a National Performance Measure, the ECO Member service opportunities will contribute to water quality improvements through reduced nutrient runoff into Vermont's watersheds. Through verification and documentation and technical assistance service opportunities, acres and number (rather than miles of trails, streams, river) of agricultural best management practices are documented through the Vermont Partner Database. These measurements are reported directly to the DEC Vermont Clean Water Investment Division and result in documentation and tracking of phosphorus reductions towards meeting TMDLs in Vermont. At the Vermont, local level, the proposed VAAFMECO member has the opportunity to provide a direct benefit to improving water quality through nutrient reduction education, practice verification and documentation, and technical assistance.

#### 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	
Protection and Restoration of Public Land	Acres of parks or public land treated and/or improved	
Engagement, Outreach, and Education	Number of individuals receiving environmental stewardship education or training	100

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

In many watershed modeling efforts related to water quality impacts, including the Lake Champlain Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), agriculture is a major land use sector contributing to water quality degradation as well as a land use sector with the largest opportunity to make measurable changes in water quality as a result of reduced runoff from agricultural fields and cropland.

Specifically the Lake Champlain TMDL modeled agriculture as contributing as much as 41% of the phosphorus runoff impacting water quality in the lake, and calculated required total phosphorus reductions for the agricultural sector alone at 143 metric tons per year, out of a total reduction of 213 metric tons per year across all land use sectors.

The efforts to make substantive changes to water quality in Vermont rely on adoption of conservation farming techniques and sustained agricultural management techniques, conservation cropping methods, and improved nutrient application systems on all sizes and types of farms.

This proposed position would enhance VAAFMs water quality educational, technical assistant, and tracking programs by; Educating farmers and landowners on impacts of their land management to water quality and the benefits of conservation; Assisting with VAAFMs grants to farmers for financial assistance towards implementing conservation practices; and Field verifying and geospatial tracking of implemented conservation practices, such that phosphorus reductions can be assigned towards meeting TMDLs in Vermont.

Education, technical assistance, and tracking are all critical pieces to promoting and enabling the agricultural community to make changes and in understanding conservation efforts, successes, and gaps. The ECO member would have the opportunity to learn about, enhance and support the continuation of these programs designed to achieve the improvement and protection of water quality.

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

My current position at VAAFMs provides the time and opportunity to supervise an ECO member. As a project coordinator, collaboration with colleagues and partners is an integral part of my day-to-day. This has prepared and equipped me with tools to lead and enable colleagues in the development and delivery of water quality work. Additionally, previous experience as a farm inspector for VAAFMs, a district manager at the White River NRCD, and a Natural Resource Instructor/Hunter Education Instructor at Buck Lake GMCC, has given me a breadth of experience teaching and mentoring others, developing and delivering educational materials, experience and knowledge with identify natural resource concerns and solutions, and experience coordinating and working with colleagues, partners, farmers, landowners and the public to implement conservation practices.

Within my current position, I have the capacity and time to dedicate to management and supervision of a ECO member. Above capacity and time, I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to partner alongside an ECO member who is ready to grow their experience, knowledge, and network within the natural resources community. From personal experience, networking, mentors and gaining experience within the small, but mighty, partnership of natural resource conservationists in Vermont has elevated my career and deepened my passion and interest for environmental conservation. Supervising and collaborating with an ECO member is a meaningful way to help another environmentally passionate individual elevate their own professional and personal growth.

Not only will the ECO member receive support from me directly as their supervisor, but will also be supported and provided opportunity to collaborate with multiple members of our water quality division. We are a very team-oriented group, focusing on everyone's strengths, interests, and expertise to keep projects moving, as well as remain creative and adaptable to the needs of our constituents and partners. The ECO member would be well supported both professional and personally, as well as mentored in a service position at our organization.

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

The member will have access to a major network of agricultural conservation and water quality organizations across the State of Vermont, including extensive collaborative opportunities with all organizations in the Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership which include the following agencies and organizations:  
United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) And  
Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs) United States  
Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
University of Vermont Cooperative  
Extension (UVM Extension) United  
States Department of Agriculture,  
Farm Service Agency (FSA)  
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of  
Environmental Conservation (VANR- DEC) Lake  
Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)  
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)

In addition to these partners, the member will have ample opportunity to engage with conservation organizations that work to improve water quality through stakeholder meetings, water quality conferences, and more.

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).

To the best of my knowledge, our organization does not currently host or plan to host a member from a different AmeriCorps program.

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

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets (VAAFAM) supports and encourages diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice. VAAFAM has formed a working group called IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accountability). This group includes representation from across VAAFAM.

To date, the IDEA working group has:

- Received VAAFAM leadership's approval of a vision and mission for the IDEA efforts,
- Met as a group to create space for learning and sharing about these important issues,
- Included representation from each VAAFAM Division,
- Shared the IDEA working group mission and organizational concept with Xusana Davis Racial Equity Director for the State of Vermont, and
- Presents updates on issues of diversity and equity as part of VAAFAM's weekly Managers and Directors meetings.

Everyone from VAAFAM is welcome to engage in this working group and participate in the IDEA meetings.

The ECO program will begin mid-September 2021 and end in August 2022. We look forward to meeting you!

