



September 2019- August 2020 Service Year POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title

Natural Resources Conservation Technician

Sponsoring Organization

Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District
St. Albans, VT

Sponsoring Organization's Mission

The Franklin County Conservation District (the District) is one of 14 conservation districts throughout Vermont. The District's mission is to promote land use that supports human livelihoods and sustains ecosystems in Franklin County, VT. The Conservation District empowers and convenes landowners and land-users to prioritize and address natural resource concerns and recognizes water quality and the continuance of our land-based economy as key concerns for Franklin County today.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position

1. Monitor water quality - Assist in the collection of water samples from tile drains and surface waters, analyze the results, and assist with planning for future monitoring projects.
2. Improve agricultural nutrient management - Support farmers with the development of nutrient management plans, from soil sampling to the creation of their fertilizing plans.
3. Outreach - Improve District connections to the public and our partners and improve communication skills.
4. Project identification - Identify and prioritize conservation needs within the District and assist with project development.

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

- Spend an entire day in the field collecting samples and recording data during a variety of weather conditions.
- Manage the District's surface water and tile drain water quality monitoring programs.
- Communicating scientific information to the public and natural resource professionals. This includes writing, data reduction, creating graphs, and spatially representing data using ArcGIS (only basic GIS skills required - can receive further on-site training.)
- Communicating and collaborating with farmers, landowners, other community stakeholders, and partner organizations. This requires a commitment to nuanced understandings of complex issues, empathy, and social sensitivity.

- Maintain the anonymity of farmers and other members of the public who participate in certain District programs.
- Participate in District outreach events, with the option to organize events as well.

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

- Writing articles promoting the District's programs and projects.
- Collaborating in the field with other ECO AmeriCorps members.
- Develop new initiatives within the District's mission, in consultation with site supervisor

Projects May Include

The responsibilities in this position will be seasonal and will build on each other.

Throughout the entire year, the ECO AmeriCorps member will collect bi-weekly water samples from tile drain outlets as part of a study managed by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture. They will also be responsible for the record keeping and data management required as part of this project. This service will be closely supported by the District Manager and other colleagues. The member will also be encouraged to analyze the data as it is collected and share the results with participating landowners and the general public.

The service year will begin with collecting soil samples for farms participating in that winter's Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) class, or for farms that require updated samples. Soil tests provide critical information to farmers for their nutrient management, and the sampling experience provides the AmeriCorps member with an excellent introduction to agricultural water quality services. While initial field service will be done in close collaboration with colleagues and supervisor, member will be encouraged to take increasing responsibility and independence. In the winter, during the six-week NMP class, the member will serve closely with one or two of the farmers they collected soil samples for to assist in the creation of their Nutrient Management Plan.

Also in the fall, the member will be responsible for managing the District's surface water quality monitoring program, which is a part of the Vermont DEC's LaRosa Partnership Program. This includes coordinating with volunteers, collecting samples, and managing data. In the winter, the member will be responsible for writing a report on the data collected in the previous year to be submitted to the DEC. The member will also work with the District's Conservation Specialist on developing a sampling plan for the following field season.

Throughout the year, the member will assist with the development of implementation projects the District is pursuing to improve water quality or wildlife habitat. The member will also be encouraged to pursue their own outreach or small implementation project depending on their own interests and passions. Examples from previous District ECO AmeriCorps members includes an outreach campaign to small dam owners or assisting specific producers in implementing new conservation practices like cover cropping or no-till.

The member will also be encouraged to collaborate with NRCS staff on field work and participate in trainings as opportunities arise. The member will also be encouraged to participate in NRCS/District outreach events as they occur.

At the end of their service, the member will be in an excellent position to be employed by the NRCD, Vermont Association of Conservation Districts, or a number of other water quality organizations and agencies.

Desired Qualifications

- Critical thinking
- Enthusiasm for water quality, sustainable human land use, and team work
- Excellent organizational skills and be capable of taking detailed field notes, managing databases, and prioritizing tasks when managing multiple projects.
- Outstanding communication skills and be comfortable both self-organizing and collaborating as part of a team.
- Experience with volunteer management and communicating scientific data to the public.
- Proficiency in ArcGIS, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Publisher.
- Strong interest and passion for agriculture, agronomy, plant and soil science, social science, community organizing, hydrology, water chemistry and/or geomorphology.
- Interest in continued work in NW Vermont after the service year (no guarantee of an open position, but positions at one organization or another come open with some frequency and it would be highly desirable for the service member to apply for such positions at the conclusion of their service.)

Networking Opportunities

Yes, an ECO AmeriCorps member serving with the District will have ample opportunities to collaborate with a wide variety of state, federal, non-profit, municipal, and private organizations as well as a wide variety of individual farmers, landowners, and community stakeholders. The District works closely with the USDA NRCS as we are housed within the St. Albans NRCS Field Office and regularly collaborate to promote each other's programs and mission. The District is an active member of both the Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership and Watersheds United Vermont where non-profit, state, and federal natural resource agencies and organizations meet throughout the year to learn about each other's work. The District regularly collaborates with UVM Extension on our annual Nutrient Management Plan and Grazing Plan classes. The District also works closely with the Vermont DEC through our involvement with the Tactical Basin Planning process in the Missisquoi, Lamoille, and North Lake Direct Basins. As the District has begun to take steps towards implementing river restoration projects, we have started to regularly work with DEC River and Wetlands programs. The District is also manages two projects as part of the DEC's LaRosa Partnership Program. The District also works closely with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture on a tile drain water quality monitoring project and through our outreach to agricultural producers.

Service Conditions

The member will have a desk space provided by the St. Albans NRCS field office and will typically serve from this location with the option to teleserve occasionally from home or a remote location when appropriate or desired. It is expected that a member will serve Monday through Friday in a typical week of service. The member will serve both indoors and outdoors throughout their entire service term with the majority of the field activities occurring in the fall, spring, and summer.

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.