

Member Spotlights

September 2019 – February 2020

Learn more about the service that some of our members are doing around the state!



Julia Cavicchi Member Spotlight



After graduating from the University of Glasgow in Scotland with a Master's degree in Human Geography, Julia Cavicchi (she/her) moved to Vermont to serve at the [Rich Earth Institute](#) in Brattleboro, Vermont. The Rich Earth Institute is pioneering research in reclaiming human urine to use as fertilizer; and manages the first urine recycling community program in North America. The Institute collects and stores the urine at their location in Brattleboro, and since 2012 has been conducting tests and trials in an on-site research garden and lab. Julia helps in all aspects of organization, including helping plan and set up for events in the area in which they collect voluntary participant's urine. This is done using their portable urine diverting toilets or collection cubes. Recently, she has been focused on collecting and transcribing the stories of local farmers that are part of their research trials. These stories are used to compile yearly reports to promote community outreach and communication surrounding their goals and mission. She also helps in communication efforts and public outreach goals through community tabling events, newsletters, and social media. Julia has also become involved in her community in Brattleboro, including events with Vermont350 and local writing circles. She never fails to bring forth the best puns, and if you're ever in Brattleboro consider reaching out and contributing a donation!

Ollie Cultrara Member Spotlight



Ollie Cultrara (they/them/theirs) is in their second year of service with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD) as their Waste Diversion Program Assistant. Since the start of their service last year, Ollie has taken on many projects and continues to build on and expand them. One of Ollie's biggest projects is the ACSWMD Repair Fair, a community event that is put on for free to the public. Community members can bring their old or broken items to the Repair Fair to be mended and restored, encouraging the diversion of household and personal items from entering landfills. Ollie has also consistently organized composting workshops and plastic bag recycling programs for businesses, schools, and community organizations. Of all their workshops, Ollie is specifically passionate about composting. After taking a Master's Composting Course last year, they participated in the Maine Composting School at the beginning of this service year. This course takes a deep dive in the complex layers of composting and addresses the different platforms and industries in which composting overlaps. In the last year, they have also headed a Composting Ambassadors program for Addison County. This program gives opportunities to community members who share this passion to educate and provide outreach to their neighbors on the value of composting. Ollie loves not just the complexities of the biological processes of composting, but the various reasons everyone decides to add to the compost pile. Ollie's passion and determination in waste education and outreach continues to make lasting impacts in her community, and they are looking forward to further developing and building on relationships and connections in their second service year!

Jac Huettenmoser Member Spotlight



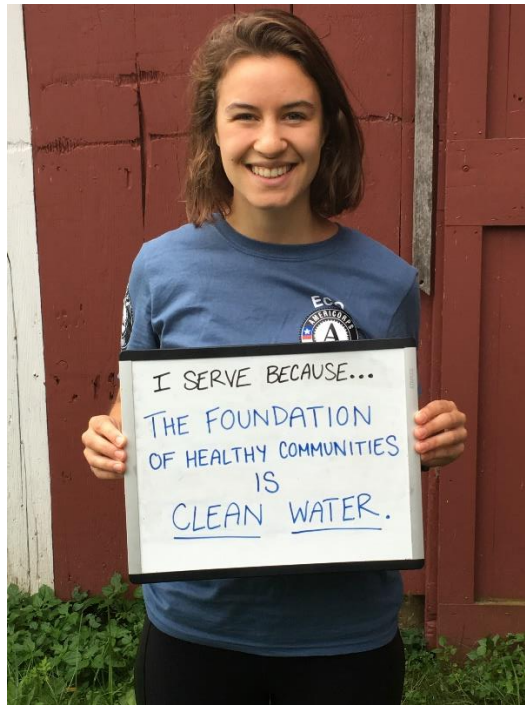
Jac Huettenmoser (she/her) is entering her second year of service with the Montpelier Parks and Trees Department as their Watershed Steward. In her role, Jac helps in management of the park watershed system by decreasing sediment erosion and improving riparian buffers along waterways. She has been specifically focusing on the buffers of the North Branch River along the Montpelier Bike Trail, as well as the banks of the Winooski River. Her service has allowed her to take on many projects within the park system in Montpelier. She has been diligently designing a new recreational trail map of the Montpelier region to allow easier accessibility to the public parks. They are also currently installing 30 new trail signs throughout Hubbard Park, which she created with another ECO member last winter. She is hoping to design and create similar trail signs this winter for North Branch Park as well. A typical day at the office at the Parks Department isn't as well defined as others but is arguably the best part about serving there. Some days, Jac finds herself in the office writing grants, creating educational materials, or meeting with her team to plan events. While other days, she'll be outside leading volunteer groups or serving alongside other crew members maintaining trails or pulling invasives. On top of her service, Jac has been keeping herself busy and involved in her community. She just finished her Vermont Master Naturalist Certification through the North Branch Nature Center (NBNC). Through the NBNC, she also led a weekend nature retreat in the Northeast Kingdom for local pre-teens. During their weekend camping retreat, they caught dragonflies, went fishing, and explored the forest on the hunt for owls. Jac also recently joined the advisory board for the Half-Earth Project as a part of the Vermont chapter (to learn more about this project and the conservation efforts they are doing around the world, visit <https://www.half-earthproject.org/>). Jumping into her second year of service with ECO, Jac is determined to take ownership of her projects; and to engage the public in meaningful ways.

Kathleen Lewis Member Spotlight



Kathleen (Kat) Lewis (she/her) graduated from University of Vermont in May 2019 with a degree in environmental science. She serves as an environmental technician with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Watershed Management Division in the Monitoring, Assessment, and Planning Program (MAPP). Kat helps manage the LaRosa Partnership Program, a volunteer water quality monitoring partnership with organizations around the state. MAPP assists in providing funding to organizations that contribute to the continuous monitoring of Vermont waters. Once a week, Kat (and occasionally fellow ECOs) heads to the Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Lab (VAEL) to help pick benthic macroinvertebrates collected from the Biological Assessment Sampling Section (BASS) Ambient Biomonitoring Network (ABN) field season. The ABN monitors long-term trends in water quality that are illustrated in ambient aquatic fish and macroinvertebrate communities in streams around the state. Kat is also excited to start the spring runoff monitoring that the DEC conducts for acid sensitive lakes around Vermont. Her and her team will ski in to remote sites to take water samples at the outlets of many of these lakes. Kat serves to give back to the community that has aided in her ever-growing love for the environment, and to inspire others to feel the same way. When Kat is not serving with the DEC, she is a part-time ski instructor at Stowe for kids and enjoys the beauty of Vermont winters. Although she loves to be on the slopes, she also loves staying warm inside and cooking lots of comfort food.

Kate Longfield Member Spotlight



Kate Longfield (she/her) is currently serving with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) in St. Albans, Vermont, as their Assistant Water Quality Program Coordinator. She joined ECO after graduating from University of Vermont in May of 2019, and has quickly gotten involved within her community and host site. In her first couple weeks, Kate co-taught at Lake Lessons, an annual environmental education program put on for 4th and 8th graders by the St. Albans Museum, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, Agency of Agriculture, and other local environmental groups. The program focuses on the science of stormwater, runoff, and watersheds, as well as the cultural heritage of Lake Champlain. Kate was specifically charged with co-teaching a station on land use, history, and human pollution of Lake Champlain. At NRPC, Kate is currently assisting with public meetings on Tactical Basin Planning, grant writing, and the identification of priority water quality issues throughout Franklin and Grand Isle counties. Specifically, she has been identifying misaligned, perched or significantly undersized culverts that could pose a threat to communities in the event of a flood. She is also looking forward to creating illustrative landscape design guides to educate homeowners in Northwestern Vermont on how to improve their properties for stormwater management. Kate has really enjoyed acting as a link between state government and the municipalities, advocating for topics she cares deeply about. Last year, she was drawn to ECO because of the unique opportunity it provided her early in her career. AmeriCorps has provided Kate valuable urban planning experience, enabled her to pursue professional development and service in her community, and given her a supportive cohort of fellow ECO members. On top of her busy service days, Kate has recently been selected as a University of Vermont Foundation Fellow, an honorable position for young alumni to contribute and give insight to the UVM Board of Directors. Over the course of her service, Kate is excited to take on more responsibilities at NRPC, build on her knowledge and skills of stormwater planning, and deepen her connections with her community in the Old North End of Burlington.

Ranier Lucas Member Spotlight



Ranier Lucas (him/his) is serving as the Assistant Coordinator at the [Missisquoi River Basin Association](#) (MRBA) and the [Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild & Scenic](#) (UMATR) in East Berkshire, VT. MRBA and UMATR work to protect and maintain the ecological health of the Missisquoi River basin and the surrounding watershed, as well as connect the surrounding community to their local river ecosystem. Originally from Binghamton, New York, Ranier received his B.S. in Environmental Geoscience from the University at Buffalo in 2018. With a passion in water quality, he serves with MRBA and UMATR in various capacities including organizing and participating in water sampling research, tree plantings, river cleanups, writing newsletters, and continually helping his organization grow through community events and outreach. At the beginning of his service he helped in the organization of the annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival tour held at Jay Peak and is now looking forward to a future project pursuing edible rain gardens in schools. Grant-pending and in hopes of partnering with the Green Mountain Farm to School, this program will teach kids the complex connections between run-off and infiltration with nutrition and gardening while collaboratively building an edible rain garden on-site. Ranier is active within the Missisquoi Watershed and his community in Swanton; and is willing to volunteer almost anywhere around the state to apply his skills. He serves as a steward of watersheds to encourage the growth of his communities, and to continually connect people to the environment around them.

Cormac Quinn Member Spotlight



Cormac Quinn (him/his) is currently serving at [Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District](#) (LRSWMD) in Morrisville, Vermont as their Community and Outreach Assistant. Originally from Ireland, and most recently a graduate from St. John's University in Minnesota, Cormac has moved to Vermont to serve communities through the increase in awareness and in education surrounding topics involving waste management. At LRSWMD, Cormac has spent the first part of his service developing and implementing educational workshops for local schools surrounding the importance of recycling and composting. He has conducted multiple waste audits at elementary schools, observing and surveying what is being discarded and how it is being diverted. He has also visited countless classrooms talking with kids on the do's and don'ts of recycling, and how to succeed in being "recycling hero's". On top of his daily service with LRSWMD, Cormac is a volunteer fire fighter for the town of Morrisville and has taken multiple online and certification courses to continue in developing his composting and environmental outreach skills. Through his passion of composting and waste diversion, he is looking forward to the new year to begin planning workshops for further outreach on the Vermont State Universal Food Scrap Ban that will go into effect in July of 2020. Cormac's energy and desire to collaborate for better communities will continue to drive him in this service year and beyond!

Jake Van Deursen Member Spotlight



Most recently a graduate from St. Lawrence University and a New Hampshire native, Jake (him/his) is currently serving with the Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative (FEMC) in Burlington, Vermont as their Monitoring and Outreach Specialist. The FEMC is a collaborative project focused on the monitoring and management of northeastern temperate forests. Within the program, Jake focuses primarily on the collection and analysis tree monitoring data utilized by FEMC. During the cold winter months, Jake has been diligently analyzing the data collected in the field season while trying to develop a plan to minimize human error and ensure data quality. Much of this data is used to measure long term trends of the trees within their 49 plots; and is essential for measuring tree and forest health. In the coming warmer months, Jake will be heading out with a crew of interns to take his own measurements of the tree plots, focusing on continuous metrics such as specific tree measurements (i.e. growth of tree, height) and health assessments (i.e. defoliation, general health). In between his field service and data analysis planning, Jake has also been elbow-deep in the planning and organization of the annual FEMC Conference. This year the conference is specifically focused on the impacts of climate change on our surrounding temperate forests; and is gathering climate experts, forest ecological professionals, students, and community members together to discuss the future of northeastern temperate forests. Despite his busy schedule with FEMC, Jake has also found time to focus on developing his skills and being more involved in his community. He is now a certified *Project Learning Tree* Environmental Education Facilitator which employs environmental place-based learning to engage students K-12th grade. Looking forward, he will also be volunteering with Cold Hollow to Canada reviewing and validating their citizen science data. Despite this full plate, Jake never fails to find the closest mountain and go for quick ski. We are so lucky to have Jake on board with ECO this year; and we cannot wait to see the directions he continues to grow and ways he impacts Vermont's ecological communities.

Rachel Wood Member Spotlight



Rachel Wood (she/her) is currently serving as the Best Management Practice (BMP) Verification Coordinator for the Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). After graduating from the Rubenstein School at the University of Vermont Rachel traveled to Maine and Oregon. In Maine she assisted in wetland surveys of salt marshes and rare plant searches. In Oregon she completed riparian vegetation surveys and looked at cattle impacted streams for the Bureau of Land Management before serving with ECO. This work on the ground surveying wetlands and riparian buffers has pushed her to pursue service in water quality. CWIP provides grants to organizations implementing water quality improvement projects around the state. These projects include riparian buffers, stormwater infrastructure, and shoreland restoration. Rachel helps verify that clean water projects implemented with state funds are built and properly maintained to ensure projects achieve the highest water quality benefit possible. Through data collection, organization, and looking forward to site visits in the spring, Rachel stays involved with many of their projects. Rachel is also an active member in communication efforts including collaborating on the implementation and continuation of the new DEC social media pages. A Vermont native, Rachel is passionate about her service to her home state and ensuring the residents of Vermont have access to safe and clean drinking water.

Benton Wright Member Spotlight



Benton Wright (he/him) joined ECO AmeriCorps after graduating from Ohio University with a B.S. in Urban Planning and Sustainability in Dayton, Ohio. He is now serving with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ARPC) as their Water Quality Planner. In his service, he is focused on projects related to writing and managing grants, classifying and editing culvert & road erosion data, conducting road erosion inventories, and assisting the Addison County River Watch Collaborative plan for the upcoming sampling season and to help facilitate communications with local landowners. Ben is currently involved with the Otter Creek Wetlands Complex Reclassification Steering Committee. The committee is heading efforts to increase the protections on the Otter Creek Wetlands, and Ben is assisting the committee in submitting a petition to the state in favor of reclassifying this area to a Class I wetland. He is active around the state volunteering and is always the first person at fellow member's events to ensure they are as successful as possible. He is also hoping to volunteer with the Green Mountain Club when the snow finally melts. Ben serves because "assisting others and sacrificing any form of personal gain in dedication of a cause is noble. I believe in preserving our watersheds and their ecology for the benefit of those who come after us and to allow natural systems to flourish while maintaining thriving communities." You can also find him exploring his new state of Vermont and its peaks and ridges, or deep in a Dungeons and Dragons campaign with other AmeriCorps members located in Addison County.