



## *September 2020- August 2021 Service Year* POSITION DESCRIPTION

### Position Title

Agricultural Water Quality Outreach and BMP Verification Specialist

### Sponsoring Organization

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets  
Montpelier, VT

### Sponsoring Organization's Mission

VAAFM 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.

### Overview

- Engage with Vermont farmers to learn about and promote innovative agricultural practices and equipment to improve soil health, and reduce runoff from agricultural fields
- Dedicate service experience towards increased familiarity and understanding of Vermont landscape, topography, and waters including lakes, streams, rivers and their relationship with prime agricultural soils, and sub prime agricultural lands
- Refine existing or learn basic Geo-spatial information system (GIS) skills for technical service in the agricultural field
- Understand technical and financial assistance programs available for improving water quality on Vermont farms
- Gain familiarity with the different types of agronomic practices and management techniques that improve soil health and reduce surface runoff from agricultural fields
- Understand the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) rule and how it applies to agricultural operations in Vermont
- Explore the dynamics of managing a farm for water quality, and practical solutions to improve water quality on farms

### Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position

The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets is applying to host an Eco AmeriCorps service member to serve with the Water Quality Division in assisting the agricultural community of Vermont in reducing non-point source runoff from agricultural operations as an Agricultural Water Quality Outreach and Best Management Practice (BMP) Verification Specialist

Depending on the interests of the service member, we hope to develop a holistic and flexible work plan specific to the learning goals of the selected service member. We have outlined a few specific areas of service that the service member may choose to develop some service goals and plans for, 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, or 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 of relevant colleagues to attend and deliver education is also an opportunity for service.

Verification of conservation practices may include coordination with team members on practice verifications, scheduling and coordinating with landowners, and may include both state funded infrastructure and field practices as well as gathering information and verifying conservation implemented on farms without any funding assistance. Some aspects of service may include research and development of guidance around verifying practice effectiveness in different soil types or regions of the state. Some data management skills and experience 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.

Technical assistance related opportunities will vary greatly on the interest, experience, and learning goals of the member. They may include informational 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 the Agency of Agriculture or with partner organizations, as well as the opportunity to assist in program coordination across the water quality division with a team of dedicated, fun and interesting folks!

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

- Possess a desire to learn, to explore information in a variety of forms, and to learn new skills
- Navigate and use computer programs such as Microsoft excel, Microsoft word, Power-point, and adobe
- 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 truly interested in water quality and agriculture
- Willing to listen to other perspectives, and to be curious

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

- 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.

#### Projects May Include

- Collaborate with other Agency divisions, State Agencies and partner organizations to create open lines of communication and strong working relationships
- Provide technical assistance to farmers and organizations about program opportunities, agricultural water quality regulations, or conservation practice implementation
- Connect farms and operators with other technical or financial assistance programs as applicable
- Use GIS software to analyze hydrological connections, record polygons and line attributes
- Identify, develop and create outreach materials
- Identify, develop and coordinate educational programs for agricultural water quality topics
- Identify, develop, create, and coordinate communication pieces for publishing in Agriview, a monthly newsletter authored by the Agency of Agriculture and distributed to all agricultural producers in Vermont as well as paid subscribers (more than 5000 subscriptions)
- Field verify conservation practices implemented with or without state or federal funding programs for effectiveness and related tracking for phosphorus reduction accounting
- Review and verify conservation equipment acquired with state funding for proper operation and maintenance and related conservation practice implementation and effectiveness and related tracking for phosphorus reduction accounting
- Complete research and literature reviews and develop summary documents to inform programming and outreach to improve water quality
- Identify resource concerns on agricultural land, and connect landowners with applicable technical or financial assistance opportunities as applicable
- Use GIS software to analyze hydrological connections, record polygons and line attributes
- Identify, develop and deliver social impact assessment related to conservation practice adoption and implementation
- Analyze data developed through assistance programs and/or regulatory programs

#### 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 work history.

#### Networking Opportunities

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)

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.

#### Service Conditions

Service is to be performed indoors in an office setting as well as outdoors, and at events. Mainly 9-5 Mon-Fri with occasional nights or weekends.

#### 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.