



September 2020- August 2021 Service Year POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title

Planning and Assessment Assistant

Sponsoring Organization

Vermont Land Trust
Richmond, VT

Sponsoring Organization's Mission

The mission of Vermont Land Trust (VLT) is to protect land for the future of Vermont. Vermont Land Trust works with landowners to conserve their land and protect it from development. Conservation ensures the permanence of Vermont's community lands, productive forests, and family farms. The benefits of conservation include protection of natural resources such as wildlife and water quality, enhanced economic opportunities, and expanded local food offerings and recreational opportunities. In our 40-year history, we have conserved more than 595,000 acres, representing approximately 10% of Vermont's land.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position

- Provide a member with training and experience in the land conservation field.
- Enhance VLT's ability to protect and improve water quality through conservation project support and direct implementation of riparian buffers and wetland protection.

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

- Perform GIS mapping and analysis of conservation projects (all with water quality protections).
- Assist with direct implementation (e.g. field delineation, tree planting) of riparian buffers and wetland protections on conserved land.
- Provide support for conservation projects throughout the state.
- Manage volunteer riparian buffer planting projects.

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

Projects May Include

Vermont Land Trust (VLT) is a nationally recognized leader in land conservation. VLT holds and stewards over 2,000 conservation easements on Vermont's farmland and forests, representing about 10 percent of Vermont's land base. Each year, 60-70 new conservation projects are completed by VLT through purchase and donation.

Land conservation activities provide important opportunities to impact water quality. Nearly 90 percent of the properties that VLT has conserved have frontage along, or are located within 20 feet of, a stream or river. Given the current water quality challenges in the State, VLT is focused on developing new partnerships, new expectations and new tools to ensure that land conservation has the best possible impact on water quality now and in the future. The ECO AmeriCorps program launched by VT DEC in 2015 provided VLT with a significant opportunity to increase our capacity to advance water quality goals during this important time. The Assessment & Planning Assistant will serve with VLT staff and key partners to advance VLT's water quality objectives across both new and on-going conservation projects being developed in 2019-2020 as well as within the existing conserved lands portfolio statewide. This position at Vermont Land Trust provides an opportunity to serve and gain experience with a nationally recognized and accredited land conservation organization.

Building on the program initiatives first launched in 2015-16 with ECO AmeriCorps, VLT looks forward to continuing to address water quality in our conservation easements while deepening both our understanding of the issue and our investment in on-the-ground implementation. As the challenge of improving water quality has become more urgent, establishing and protecting vegetated buffers has become a significant focus on most, if not all, conservation projects - both past and present. Designing buffers for every new conservation project, as well as looking back at VLT's extensive portfolio of conserved land for opportunities to enhance water quality protection, is labor intensive and requires new skills, new partnerships, and new programs at VLT. We look to continue organizational investments in earlier assessments of water quality concerns, better integration with other state and nonprofit partners and USDA programs, and researching and developing new strategies to enhance water quality protection on conserved land.

An ECO AmeriCorps member will gain field experience serving with VLT as we continue to define and expand our role in facilitating water quality solutions in Vermont and transition to newly developed water quality and buffer protocols. An ECO AmeriCorps member will have the opportunity to impact the development of new conservation projects as well as conduct outreach and interact with the owners of conserved land on the development of water quality improvements, including implementing best management practices, buffer overlays, buffer plantings, invasives control and forest and agricultural management plan development.

Specifically, the Assessment and Planning Assistant ECO Americorps position will involve:

Water Quality Improvement:

- Buffer delineation and implementation support: Each VLT conservation project includes water quality considerations and permanent protections of floodplains, wetlands and waterways. ECO AmeriCorps member will have the opportunity to serve on the multiple phases of conservation projects, as VLT trials deeper into water quality implementation strategies where gaps exist- this includes riparian buffer protection and establishment, volunteer-led plantings, alternative watering systems, etc. For example, in the coming year, VLT is interested in developing a program to target specific landowners with identified conservation issues to develop demonstration projects and learn about landowner implementation needs.

- Tracking water quality policy development and resources for the Field Conservation Team to enable VLT to stay current and effective.

Environmental Careers and Opportunities:

- GIS Mapping and Project Development: This position will provide critical project development support for new land conservation projects across the State. This will provide an Eco Americorps member with deeper GIS mapping experience, new field skills and an understanding of how land trust organizations prioritize and achieve their goals.
- Deepening Partnerships: This position will conduct early assessment and desktop data review of partnership opportunities for new conservation projects, as well as water quality enhancements on conserved land – such as CREP, DEC River Corridor program, VAAFAM and other NRCS programs.
- Enhancing Engagement with Local Watershed Groups: This position will work to help VLT match technical assistance with need on conserved lands and deepen VLT's partnerships with local groups working on water quality issues.

Ecosystem Enhancement:

- Stabilizing Riparian Corridors Impacted by Invasive Species: VLT has invested in considerable outreach and education to landowners about invasives control and prevention. The ECO Americorps position will have the opportunity to further projects in the coming year with the goal of protecting the ecological values of forest lands, riparian areas, waterbodies and watercourses by cooperating and coordinating activities and sharing resources necessary for the prevention and control of terrestrial and riparian invasive species on public and private lands in Vermont.
- Conducting Research: The ECO Americorps member will conduct research on opportunities for VLT to further water quality goals, as they arise throughout the year of service.

Agricultural Environmental Stewardship:

- Outreach and Education: This position provides VLT with a critical opportunity following the adoption of Vermont's new RAPs to provide resources to the large portfolio of conserved farmers and other landowners who need to understand and implement water quality improvements. For example, VLT is a critical partner in Vermont's RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) in the Lake Champlain Basin and will be actively involved in continued outreach to farmers in the Basin to assess conservation opportunities and assist them in accessing resources such as EQIP, CREP, etc. during these fourth and fifth years of the RCPP project.

Desired Qualifications

- ☐☐Duties require knowledge equivalent to completion of a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resources, Forestry, Agriculture, or a related field. Advanced degree in Resource Management, Environmental Science, Regional Planning, or a related field is desired. Another combination of education and experience providing comparable knowledge and skills may be acceptable.
- ☐☐Facility with GIS maps and mapping, and ability to read and understand deeds and related legal documents. Strong spatial, reading, and technical writing skills.

Ability to coordinate and serve on multiple projects simultaneously, and to maintain attention to detail while producing a steady volume of work in compliance with deadlines.

Excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Ability to communicate with different personalities.

Ability to represent the Land Trust and interact effectively with a wide range of organizations and individuals, both inside and outside the organization, and to work cooperatively with all VLT staff and Board members.

Ability to serve independently and to engage in independent and group problem solving.

Ability to effectively operate computers and assigned software, including Microsoft Office Suite, various mapping software (i.e. ArcMap and ArcGIS), and digital photography related software.

Ability to regularly perform field service and to serve outside in all weather conditions.

Strong planning, organizational, administrative, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.

Valid Driver's License and vehicle required.

Networking Opportunities

In addition to collaborating with the 45+ VLT employees located throughout the state, the member will serve closely with staff members of partner organizations such as the VT Housing & Conservation Board, US Fish and Wildlife and USDA-NRCS. There are also many opportunities to attend conferences and trainings with numerous other water quality partners.

Service Conditions

Some service is performed outdoors in all weather conditions and may involve exposure to noise, dirt, dust, smoke, vehicle and other fumes, and to large machinery and livestock. Frequent standing, walking, and climbing on rough, steep, wooded, and/or slippery terrain are required. Operates GPS unit, digital camera, and other tools. Operates motor vehicle and travels regularly. Occasional lifting is required.

Some service is performed in a normal indoor environment not subject to extremes of noise, temperature, odor, etc. Operates computer, printer, photocopier, fax machine, and other equipment. Service may require extended sitting and repetitive motion in the use of computer, keyboard, and mouse.

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.