

## ECO AmeriCorps Host Site Application 2022-'23

Since 2015, ECO has enjoyed working with an inspiring list of conservation partners in providing environmental leaders a paid opportunity to serve Vermont communities. ECO AmeriCorps values all voices and identities in the conservation space. We seek to uplift and engage diversity, equity and inclusion commitments in service and in our state. Thank you for your interest in joining us!

For more information on host site application supporting documents:

<https://dec.vermont.gov/administration-innovation/eco/current-host-organizations>

Contact:

[dustin.bowman@vermont.gov](mailto:dustin.bowman@vermont.gov)

802-461-5222

ECO AmeriCorps Living Stipend:

\$21,335 (full-time members)

\$11,295 (half-time members)

Host Site cost based on # of full-time employees:

Full-Time (1,700 hours over 11 months)

0-3 \$7,500

3-10 \$8,400

>10 \$9,800

Half-Time (900 hours over 6 months)

\$4,900 regardless of size

Quarter-Time (450 hours over 3 months)

\$2,450 regardless of size

### Service Site Responsibilities

- Provide host site match based on organizational size
- Participate in ECO member recruitment, confirm member selection, arrange site training, member supervision and support throughout term of service, other forms and documentation as required by AmeriCorps, reviews bi-weekly member timesheets, mileage reimbursement for service-related travel.
- Supervisor must attend AmeriCorps supervisor orientation (or make special arrangements).
- Applicants must submit a Certificate of Insurance, indicating that the entity or entities have met the insurance requirements listed in Attachment C (see risk assessment document).

**Full-Time Member Benefits\***

Living Stipend: \$21,335 Education Award: \$6,495

Other Benefits: Professional development training, networking opportunities, health care, child care assistance, program support, mileage/meals reimbursement for ECO AmeriCorps-related travel.

\*Benefits for half-time and part-time members are prorated.

VT-DEC administers the member's living stipend, health care benefits, child care benefits, timesheets, activity reports, and other AmeriCorps and employee-related benefits and documentation.

**Organization Name \***

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation - Watershed Planning Program

**Organization Address \***

1 National Life Drive, Davis 3, Montpelier, Vermont 05620

**Supervisor Name and Title \***

Chris Rottler, Environmental Analyst VI

**Email \***

chris.rottler@vermont.gov

**Phone number \***

802 461 6051

Which hosting category are you applying to? Note: ECO prefers full-time members for the vast majority of our program opportunities. Please contact Coordinator [dustin.bowman@vermont.gov](mailto:dustin.bowman@vermont.gov) with questions. \*

- Full-Time (September-August)
- Half-Time (flexible)
- Quarter-Time (May-August)

How many ECO Service Members are you applying to host? \*Note\* The program looks to disperse capacity builders geographically and by experience. Consideration will be given to those that can demonstrate unique need. \*

- 1
- 2

Host Site Contribution Method \*

- Lump Sum
- Quarterly, \*program preference is for one-time payment (reach out with questions)

Please provide a brief description of your role at your organization. \*

I coordinate the governance activities and oversight of Clean Water Service Providers (CWSPs), under Act 76. CWSPs are new entities created by the 2019 law, who are given formula grants to implement and ultimately construct clean water projects in a river watershed basin, to help improve water quality. CWSPs will receive approximately \$7mm annually (aggregate), and will focus on voluntarily implemented natural resource projects. Oversight of CWSP operations requires coordination with a team of professionals in DEC in CWIP, WPP, and WSMD, as well as external engagement with the CWSPs and their basin councils to ensure compliance with the requirements of Act 76 and the related rule and guidance document.

What is the title of the position you are requesting? \*

Watershed Planning Communications Specialist

Describe your proposed service position. Please outline the role. \*

The core work of this position is to engage with watershed stakeholders on water quality challenges and solutions, in a groundbreaking initiative that is the first of its kind in the nation. One of the most important ingredients to building healthy watersheds is clear communication. When stakeholders understand the issues and how to address them, they are empowered to take action. The Watershed Planning Communications Specialist will work both with Watershed Planners, as well as on implementation of Act 76 (with CWSPs). Working with Planners, the Specialist will develop a Communications Assessment & Action Plan (CAAP) for the Watershed Planning Program (WPP). The assessment will describe the current level of WPP effectiveness in communicating with internal and external stakeholders through our Tactical Basin Plans, Story Maps, public meetings, website, and social media. The action plan will identify actions to increase the effectiveness of our communications with special attention to incorporating Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles to do so. The Specialist will work on soliciting input from the public and statutory watershed partners to update website communications, the basin planning public survey, and public meeting materials while developing the CAAP, including the review of and follow-up correspondence to public survey and meeting input identifying non-point source water quality restoration project sites, therefore expanding the opportunity to identify such sites through public input. The Specialist will also help the Watershed Planners host public meetings, participate in field days, trainings, and collaborative meetings in the field with watershed partners throughout the state as time allows. For Act 76 work, the Specialist will set up and coordinate trainings for CWSPs and their councils, support communications with CWSPs, and problem solve specific policy questions - such as the consideration of co-benefits in project selection, and how to engage CWSPs and their councils in the basin planning process.

What are the essential functions that the applicant must be able to perform? These may be listed in bullet form. \*

1. Develop a personal work plan with the Watershed Planner and Act 76 coordinator
2. Develop a Communications Assessment & Action Plan (CAAP)

As part of the CAAP:

- a. Evaluate and update website pages (as time allows) for the watershed planning program (training will be provided)
- b. Evaluate and update the basin planning public survey template (using Microsoft Forms)
- c. Develop a public meeting model for basin plan outreach using Microsoft Teams and ArcGIS Story Maps (online training available for Story Maps)
- d. Evaluate current WPP social media value and contribute education and outreach posts to watershed planning social media platforms (using Instagram and Facebook).
- e. Incorporate Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles into the CAAP.
- f. Consider opportunities for improving communications, devise plan based on feedback, research and input, and evaluate WPP capacity to implement the CAAP.

3. Organize and conduct communications with CWSPs, and their counsels, including in-person meetings, newsletters, and other engagement
4. Work collaboratively with stakeholders and staff to develop solutions to Act 76 policy questions, such as how CWSPs and BWQCs can and should engage in basin planning.
5. Coordinate and collaborate with Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) on their outreach and engagement initiatives (i.e. Clean Water Lecture Series, etc.)

What are the secondary functions? These are projects or tasks that may be accomplished as time allows or applicant's interests evolve. \*

1. Participate in field day activities and water quality monitoring (hiking in the forest, walking in stream channels, planting trees, driving state vehicles, taking notes and organizing into field day summaries)
2. Help Watershed Planners and Act 76 staff to host public meetings
3. Update and add projects to the Watershed Projects Database and potential QA/QC of new nForms (training included)
4. Attend staff meetings

What are the desired qualification for this position? \*

These are desired qualifications - if you feel like you have a strong connection to this opportunity, but may be lacking in an area (where you believe you can nevertheless still succeed in this work) please consider applying anyway.

- Academic background in natural resources, environmental planning and/or communications (background in water quality is a plus!)
- Experience developing communications materials, social media and surveys for environmental outreach
- Understanding of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles and ability to apply these principles to develop materials that serve the VT community more fully
- Experience using Microsoft Word, Microsoft Forms, Microsoft Teams, and ArcGIS Story Maps
- Additional experience with Adobe Design or other software is a plus
- Passion for conveying scientific information in a digestible format for the general public
- Genuine curiosity of people and behaviors related to environmental issues
- Willingness and interest in learning new techniques for communication
- High level of comfort reaching out to and collaborating with watershed stakeholders and general public
- Strong communication skills and attention to detail
- Self-motivated individual who enjoys problem solving

Will the member have access to "vulnerable populations"? This includes youth, elderly and individuals with disabilities. \*

Yes

No

What initiatives does your organization take to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice and how will the ECO member be included or supported in this work? \*

Our Agency has an environmental justice committee, and JEDI committee, and a Title VI committee that are each focused on developing and implementing relevant policies and procedures related to equity, inclusion, and diversity. Furthermore, a number of our Divisions, including the Watershed Planning Program, recently participated in a months-long training on Equity, Inclusion and Diversity offered by a nationally recognized consultant.

Our Department has two representatives on the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Diversity and Equity Committee that was established in January 2020. The mission of the committee is to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) for marginalized groups among our coworkers and stakeholders, the public, and Vermont's ecosystems through dialogue, collaboration, community building, and education. One of the outcomes of this project is to identify how basin planning can do a better job meeting the mission of the committee by integrating JEDI principles in our approach. We hope this position will collaborate with us on this new process moving forward. We are hoping this position will also help to support inclusion of JEDI principles in the implementation of Act 76.

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Please provide information that provides a compelling need for the proposed position (data, statistics, resources, etc.) \*

The WPP currently produces 15 Tactical Basin Plans every five years. These plans are used by Regional Planning Commissions, Natural Resources Conservation Districts, municipalities, local and statewide watershed groups, and the Agency of Natural Resources to identify and implement high priority clean water projects to protect and restore surface waters. In general, our basin plans are well known to our statutory partners, but not as well known to the public and when the public hears about them, they are not clear on how they should be interacting with them. Our public meetings to collect public comments on the plans are not well attended (on average 8-12 people per meeting) and don't generate much feedback. We'd like to involve people earlier in the process of the plan development and have a clear plan for outreach and how to use the correct materials to do the outreach. These plans direct funding for the highest priority projects while also highlighting the state's most important water resources. We'd like to ensure that people know about these opportunities and how to pursue them. The more people know about these plans the more likely we are to be successful in achieving clean water goals. Integrating this outreach (on basin plans) with the new Act 76 Clean Water Service Provider Network is one of the areas for improvement that this position will work on.

These plans also implement state TMDL goals which result in economic impacts when these goals are not met. We are currently able to track the number of projects completed as part of our basin planning process and the amount of funding awarded by basin. This information can be found in the Clean Water Performance Report ([https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/erp/docs/2021-01-15\\_CleanWaterPerformanceReport\\_SF2020-FINA-PDF-A.pdf](https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/erp/docs/2021-01-15_CleanWaterPerformanceReport_SF2020-FINA-PDF-A.pdf)) in Appendix A and B, and also in our basin plan report cards. The State of Vermont invested over \$257million in clean water projects through grants, contracts and loans from SFY 2016 through 2021. Annual clean water investments in Vermont have increased four-fold during this timeframe. Also, as noted elsewhere, the Clean Water Service Providers will receive \$7mm a year (aggregate) for implementing new clean water improvement projects.

Describe the supervisor's leadership experience. Will they have adequate time to manage and mentor an ECO AmeriCorps member? \*

The supervisor (Chris Rottler), has experience as an EcoAmericorps mentor, is a Certified Vermont Public Manager, is in the Agency's Leadership and Management training program, is a longstanding member of the Department's Environmental Justice committee, and has experience teaching at the collegiate level. The supervisor will prioritize supervision and support of this position, being mindful to provide meaningful opportunities for growth.

Describe how your organization has adapted to COVID-19. What communication strategies and tools have you implemented? i.e. teleservice, remote service, etc. \*

Our program has been 100% remote for over 2 years, due to COVID-19, with some limited in-person engagement resuming as of April, 2022. Teleworking is a model that the program supports, with in-person meetings occurring as appropriate (i.e. field work, etc.)

Describe networking opportunities that will be available to your service member. \*

With a focus on communications with the Watershed Planning Program, the Specialist will have access and exposure to a wide variety of professionals across the state of Vermont. The networking opportunities for this position are extensive and significant. Working with Watershed Planners will mostly likely provide the member with one of the best opportunities for networking in the state. Planners work with all Departments in the Agency of Natural Resources, Regional Planning Commissions, Natural Resource Conservation Districts, local and statewide watershed groups, sister Agencies (AOT, AAFM), federal partners (USFWS, USFS, NRCS), and municipalities on a regular basis. The member will have the opportunity to interact with and solicit feedback from these groups during field work, coordination meetings, and while developing the Communications Assessment & Action Plan.

Is there someone in your organization's network that might be interested in mentoring your ECO service member? \*Note, 1-2 hours per month, not required

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Does your organization currently host or plan to host an AmeriCorps member from another program? If yes, briefly describe the duties of this other position. \*

Our Division hosts an AmeriCorps member in the Clean Water Initiative Program. That position has also historically assisted CWIP with their communications, as well as with general program support.

Please list any clothing/equipment the member will need that you cannot provide (e.g., hiking boots, waders, raingear, etc.). Is a reliable vehicle expected? As the host site, you are responsible for providing all tools and technical equipment needed for the position (e.g., computer, phone, GPS, etc.). \*

Most field work will be in a meeting environment, although, some meetings could take place at a project site, which would require appropriate gear (hiking boots, appropriate clothing for the weather). A reliable vehicle would be needed when traveling to the main office in Montpelier. Clothing and gear for the days out in the field - backpack, waterproof boots that are comfortable to walk in, waders (we may be able to provide these when needed), rain coat and pants, hiking boots, backpack to carry food, water, and note taking materials, sun screen, and bug spray. \*If the candidate is unable to provide this equipment, we will do the best we can to accommodate them. This should not affect their ability to carry out the essential functions of this job. None of this equipment is required for the primary in-office work.

Are you willing to search with program staff over the summer to help your ECO member secure affordable and safe housing?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

## Performance Measures

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.

Document can be found here: <https://dec.vermont.gov/administration-innovation/eco/current-host-organizations/prospectivehostsites>

Water Quality and Trail Improvement - Please project Impact Numbers on miles of river/stream/trail treated and/or improved. \*

1

Land Conservation and Remediation - Please project impact numbers on acres of public parks or other public, publicly managed or tribal lands improved. \*

0

Community Engagement Outreach and Education - Please project number of individuals receiving environmental stewardship education or training. \*

200+

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