



AmeriCorps

2023-24 ECO AmeriCorps

Outreach, Education, and Restoration Assistant

Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps is an AmeriCorps program within the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC). ECO AmeriCorps is funded in part by an AmeriCorps state grant provided through SerVermont from the Corporation for National & Community Service. Service sites will provide meaningful service opportunities, regular supervision with oversight of service hours and timesheets, office space and office equipment, orientation to the worksite, additional training (as needed) and mileage reimbursement. The 2023-2024 program will begin mid-September 2023 and end in August 2024.

To be considered, service sites must:

- Demonstrate a commitment to DEIJ principles and provide a pathway for involvement at the host site and program level.
- Be a non-profit, municipality, state agency, tribal government, or educational institution.
- Provide a position description showcasing activities that are appropriate to the mission of ECO AmeriCorps.
- Provide a work environment that is ADA compliant, drug-free, and carries supplies and equipment necessary for members to perform their duties.
- Be able to provide the cash match and mileage reimbursement at the federal General Services Administration (GSA) rate for service-related travel for the member.
- Attend a supervisor orientation and be available for a minimum of two subsequent site visits and check-ins from ECO AmeriCorps staff.
- Clarify any additional responsibilities to the member according to your organization's policies.
- Notify ECO AmeriCorps staff about conflicts or other issues as they arise.

Other Requirements and Responsibilities:

- Confirm member selection, on-site training, member supervision and support throughout term of service, other forms and documentation as required by AmeriCorps, mileage reimbursement for service-related travel.
- Main supervisor must attend AmeriCorps supervisor orientation (or make special arrangements).

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

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

- 0-3 \$8,000
- 4-10 \$9,000
- >10 \$10,500

Half-Time (900 hours over 6 months)

- \$5,250 regardless of size

Quarter-Time (450 hours over 3 months)

- \$2,625 regardless of size

For more information about the host site application:

- Visit the ECO Website for supporting documents: www.ecoamericorps.org
- Or contact Program Supervisor, Dustin Bowman, dustin.bowman@vermont.gov, 802-461-5222

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation is sponsoring AmeriCorps positions through its AmeriCorps Program. The State of Vermont is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Positions are open to all applicants without regard to race color, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, veteran's status, religion, or creed.

Name of Organization or Municipality:

Connecticut River Conservancy

Address of Organization or Municipality:

PO Box 6219, Brattleboro, VT 05302

Primary Supervisor Name and Title:

Kathy Urffer, River Steward

Primary Supervisor's email:

kurffer@ctriver.org

Primary Supervisor's phone #:

802-258-0413

Please provide a brief description of your role at your site:

Kathy Urffer is River Steward for the Connecticut River Conservancy. She serves the Connecticut River and its watershed in the upper river from the MA border to the Canadian border in VT. Kathy is on the ground field staff working with landowners, federal and state agencies, and volunteers to protect the Connecticut River. Kathy would be the hands-on supervisor for the AmeriCorps volunteer.

Which hosting category are you applying to?

Full-Time (September-August)

What is the title of the position you are requesting?

Outreach, Education, and Restoration Assistant

Describe your proposed service project.

[Note: performance measures are based on improved acres of public land, improved miles of waterways or trails, number of Vermonters provided environmental stewardship education or training, and number of members placed in green jobs after completing their AmeriCorps service. Capacity- building activities are allowed. Please describe any projected impact.]

This service position would support Connecticut River Conservancy in efforts to assess watershed health, develop and implement stream restoration projects, support water quality testing, support volunteer groups taking part in our annual Source to Sea River Cleanup, and develop and implement public education campaigns to garner active engagement in watershed stewardship.

What data collection tools will the member use to record the impacts of their service activity?

The member will develop and utilize post-event evaluation surveys for educational and public outreach events. We are developing a database to track landowner outreach communication and routinely track the number of acres or miles of stream improved during our restoration projects.

Please provide any additional information (data, statistics, reports, etc.) that demonstrates the compelling need for the proposed position:

We have recently taken over one of the longest running volunteer water quality monitoring programs in Vermont and participate in the LaRosa Partnership Program (LPP) to provide requested water quality sampling information to VT DEC. We have long depended on seasonal assistance to make this program a continued success both from VT DEC interns and AmeriCorps members stationed at other local organizations. The LPP monitoring calendar has been built around the availability and schedule of the ECO AmeriCorps program which has moved it out of the feasibility of VT DEC summer interns. Having an ECO AmeriCorps member would ensure this program continues to be able to contribute to the LPP and collect valuable water quality data at the request of VT DEC.

According to the VT DEC Watershed Management Division 2017 Annual Report, 20% of our rivers and streams are either impaired by pollution or altered by physical impacts. The VT DEC Basin Plans that cover the Connecticut River watershed list dozens of potential restoration projects, and CRC identifies more every year. The VT Watershed Project database has hundreds of possible restoration projects that can be pursued. We have consistently been implementing between 5 and 8 restoration projects a year and each one has lasting effects on aquatic habitat and water quality.

The relicensing of the Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon dams began 10 years ago and we are entering into the final phase over the next year with an opportunity for the public to formally intervene and comment on the Amended Final License Application, and subsequent state 401 Water Quality Certifications. This license will last for the next 40 to 50 years, so this is our once in a lifetime opportunity to make sure that our communities' voices are heard regarding their desires for the health of the river. With this relicensing, we will increase passage rates for our migratory fish.

Over 1,700 sea lamprey made their way upstream of the Vernon dam last year looking for nest sites in VT tributary streams. For several years, in partnership with state and federal biologists, CRC has been engaging community science volunteers to evaluate nest sites and spawning rates which will aid in sea lamprey species' recovery.

Additionally, the VT Tactical Basin Plans identify many river segments that might be reclassified for higher protections, but each one needs to go through a petition process that requires public education, information gathering and research. All these efforts are needed to continue to improve water quality and habitat for our Vermont rivers.

What initiatives does your organization take to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice (DEIJ)? Please include any historical data or details for on-going strategic plans, partnerships, and projects, as relevant.

CRC has engaged in a very deliberate and comprehensive planning process over the past two years to begin intensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism organizational development. We have convened a Staff and Trustee Task Force, and contracted with a training consulting company in 2021, who provided staff and board trainings and an analysis of CRC systems and documents to understand the current diversity represented by our staff, evaluate our current successes and opportunities for inclusivity, and help us develop and implement a planning process with clear goals and metrics. As a result of that we convened staff workgroups to develop a DEI visioning statement, an internal guide to consider DEI in our event planning and have drafted changes to existing policy. We developed a list of new policies needed to further diversity our workplace and develop DEI benchmarks that will inform a new strategic plan for the organization. Our existing Executive Director left the organization in 2022 and our Board is currently conducting a search for a new ED using a search firm experienced in DEI consideration. Once our new ED is identified, we will be developing an updated strategic plan that integrates DEI and sets out our next strategic goals. The AmeriCorps member will be included as a participant in this collective process, and we welcome this additional perspective.

Outline how DEIJ principles can be incorporated into your organization's work moving forward. (Provide examples of any trainings, workshops, projects, partnerships, etc.)

We continue to incorporate DEIJ principles into our ongoing work. Our internal DEIJ event guide has been highlighting the need to develop different relationships in the watershed and create more pathways for access to our work, and our understanding of what local communities need and how they are impacted by degradation of the river. The development of our next strategic plan will also be focused on diversifying our work and reach and will have clear goals and outcomes for how we do that over the coming five years. We continue to bring in trainers to increase staff's understanding of privilege and the impacts of how we do our work.

Describe specific challenges that your organization has faced while integrating DEIJ Principles.

The main challenge when we started was facing the reality that we could not continue the pace of our work and integrate DEI learning at the same time. After the first year of working with a consultant, the staff collectively realized that we needed dedicated time to work on internal issues and since September of 2022, we have dedicated each Monday to internal workgroups to shift organizational dynamics and increase understanding. The search for a new Executive Director has also created some opportunities and challenges for continued engagement on DEIJ issues as we go through this leadership transition.

How will the ECO member be included or supported in on-going or future DEIJ work at the organization, if they so choose?

We are a very inclusive and collaborative organization. Our current ECO member has been participating in our internal trainings and workgroups and we would continue this model for the next member as well.

Does the supervisor have adequate time and leadership experience to manage an ECO member? Please explain how:

Prior to moving to Vermont 19 years ago, Kathy Urffer was Special Projects Manager and Operations Director for Hackensack Riverkeeper in New Jersey. In addition to managing the staff and day to day finances of the organization, she developed and ran their river cleanup program, assisted with their canoe and pontoon boat eco-cruise programs, managed stream restoration projects, and fish advisory, outreach, and education projects. More recently she has served on the Board of the Southeastern Vermont Watershed Association, as a Commissioner for the Windham Regional Commission, and has worked on education projects related to wastewater treatment. Kathy holds a M.S. in Natural Resource Management from Antioch New England University, a B.A. in Psychology from Rutgers, and is a former Vermont Leadership Institute Fellow from the Snelling Center for Government. Kathy supports the Dartmouth Social Practicum program by providing real world issues for Dartmouth students to work on, and CRC hosts a Vermont Law School intern during the Spring semester to support policy efforts. Kathy enjoys the opportunity to mentor and help develop environmental leaders. The AmeriCorps member will be housed in the Brattleboro office with Kathy to provide direct supervision.

Will the member have access to networking opportunities in this position? Please explain:

CRC has hundreds of partners across its four-state watershed. The river stewards work collaboratively with each other on regional issues as well as in local partnerships. CRC routinely works with landowners, municipalities, regional planning commissions, contractors, environmental engineers, state environmental staff, partner watershed groups and NGOs. In fulfilling their duties, the ECO AmeriCorps member would be interacting routinely with staff and volunteers from our many different restoration and advocacy partner organizations.

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.

N/A

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.).

Personal outdoor gear should be provided by the member such as hiking boots and rain gear. The member will also need waders, and water shoes or boots for both cold and warm water situations. The member also needs access to a driver's license and car for field and site visits, although CRC has a policy of using rental cars for longer distance travel.

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

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

Yes

Many of our members are not from Vermont and are seeking a sense of community away from home. In what ways would you be willing to help them establish community connections? (Housing, peer networks, affinity spaces, local resources, fun places to go)

Kathy has lived in Brattleboro for 17 years and has multiple connections in the local community. She will work to make sure that the ECO Member meets people and understands what social options are available to access. Additionally, CRC partners with many local organizations who will also have opportunities to be engaged and socialize.

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

5 miles

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

Sponsoring Organization's Mission:

Connecticut River Conservancy is a strong voice for the Connecticut River watershed, from source to sea. We collaborate with partners across four states to protect and advocate for your rivers and educate and engage communities. We bring people together to prevent pollution, improve habitat, and promote enjoyment of the river and its tributary streams. Healthy rivers support healthy economies.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position:

- Additional capacity for CRC projects in the watershed
- Additional public education and outreach for the public in the watershed
- A comprehensive educational opportunity for the member to experience what it is like to be a part of a river advocacy organization
- Networking opportunities for the ECO member to connect with local, state-wide and regional environmental partners.

Essential Functions. Functions that applicant must be able to perform. These may be listed in bullet form:

- supporting the organization and coordination of water quality sampling efforts across multiple watershed groups, which might include transporting samples, collecting samples and utilizing meters for water quality assessment.
- assisting the river steward and restoration program manager with landowner outreach, coordination with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, landowners, funding sources, and any required on the ground site visits for identifying and implementing stream and river restoration projects, which might include dam removals, floodplain restoration, riparian buffer restoration, and habitat enhancement projects,
- supporting the organization and coordination of community science volunteer sea lamprey nest surveys,
- supporting CRC staff and volunteer groups with logistical needs during our annual Source to Sea River Cleanup;
- supporting the river steward in conducting education and outreach to engage the community about the relicensing of three large hydro-electric facilities through events, print and social media,
- providing public education and outreach opportunities around river related issues, which would include organizing education campaigns geared toward supporting reclassification of river segments.

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

- providing general administrative support for membership tracking and marketing,
- providing educational presentations on request for public groups.

Desired Qualifications:

- excellent written, verbal, and online communication;
- driver's license;
- proficiency in Microsoft Office tools, online data processing and collaboration using cloud services;
- high attention to detail;
- self-motivation and initiative;
- previous experience managing volunteers;
- capacity for field service on land, in and on water;
- public presentation skills.

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

Service Conditions (will the position be largely outside, office based, hybrid or seasonally/project dependent, in schools, etc.) *

Position will be a mix of office based, hybrid, outside and project dependent with attendance at potential events all through the watershed in Vermont.

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

Yes

Time Requirements:

Full time: will need to complete a minimum of 1700 service hours, serving approximately 40 hours/week over the course of the 11-month service term, September 13, 2023 - August 9, 2024

Orientation and Training:

ECO will provide members with orientation at the beginning of the service term. Host sites are expected to provide additional on-boarding training as well. Throughout the service term, ECO will provide in-person and virtual trainings to members on a variety of topics.

Benefits:

- Education award of \$6,895 (pre-tax) upon successful completion of service
- \$23,000 Living Allowance, paid bi-weekly
- Training
- Childcare assistance, if eligible
- Health Coverage
- Access to AmeriCorps Alumni Network
- Student loan forbearance and interest payments, if eligible

Evaluation and Reporting:

Mid and final performance reviews, quarterly reports, weekly

timesheets, and end of service survey. Thank you for your interest in AmeriCorps.