



AmeriCorps

2023-24 ECO AmeriCorps

Clean Water Communications Specialist

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:

Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) | Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Address of Organization or Municipality:

1 National Life Drive, Davis 3 | Montpelier, VT 05602-3901

Primary Supervisor Name and Title:

Lauren Sopher | Lake Champlain Basin Program Grants Manager

Primary Supervisor's email:

lauren.sopher@vermont.gov

Primary Supervisor's phone #:

802-490-6134 | Work Cell

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

Assist with the management and administration of the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) State of Vermont grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); coordinate quarterly LCBP and semiannual EPA progress reports; create Request for Proposals (RFPs), Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs), and grant and contract agreements; develop grant monitoring systems; serve as Technical Project Manager for LCBP-funded projects; and help track and account for clean water projects.

Which hosting category are you applying to?

Full-Time (September-August)

What is the title of the position you are requesting?

Clean Water Communications Specialist

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 member will play an integral role in helping the Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) communicate the impacts of clean water partnerships, programs, and projects to the public. The member will serve as part of the CWIP team, learning from and communicating with state staff and external partners. This position provides a great opportunity to network and gain experience in many aspects of environmental service. We expect the member to focus on assisting with communications and data visualization, with flexibility depending on their areas of interest and program priorities.

1. Clean Water Communications

- Maintain and enhance clean water project communications via online and print communications tools.
- Coordinate DEC's Clean Water Conversations — a monthly presentation on a variety of clean water-related topics.
- Develop content for Vermont DEC's Instagram account, CWIP's website, and clean water e-newsletters, as well as manage CWIP's online photo management platform.
- Assist with developing and designing education and outreach materials to improve clean water communications.
- Assist in improving the relevance, understanding, and accessibility of our program communications (website, social media, online events, and other communications), including integration of ANR's Language Access Plan.
- Serve as part of the DEC social media team and cross-agency communications team to learn from and network with a diversity of communications professionals.

2. Data Analysis & Visualization

- Assist in developing and improving interactive data visualization tools, such as Microsoft Power BI, to increase public engagement in clean water data.
- Analyze clean water project data to better understand trends in clean water funding and project results, as well as exploring opportunities to better capture projects' co-benefits, including justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) impacts.

3. Other CWIP Program Support

- Support the CWIP team in implementing strategies to make our programs more diverse, equitable, and inclusive for our partners and the public. Serve on the DEC Environmental Justice Committee.
- Support field efforts to assess clean water projects, as needed.

- Support on-going efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of clean water data management and reporting processes.
- Participate in special projects, based on the member's interests; for example, serving on the Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership Communications Sub-committee.

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

State agencies are required to report to the Legislature on the extent of clean water activities statewide, including outreach, under the Vermont Clean Water Act (2015 Act 64). The Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) developed the Clean Water Outreach Efforts Online Form for event organizers to record information on individual events to consistently track outreach across state agencies and partners. Data and information recorded on individual events feed CWIP's outreach tracking system and are used to report to the public and the Legislature on the extent of clean water outreach efforts statewide. The member will complete the online form for the Clean Water Conversations outreach.

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

- The Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) is required to meet the accountability requirements of the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 64 of 2015) and the Clean Water Service Delivery Act (Act 76 of 2019), the Lake Champlain Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Vermont segments of Lake Champlain, and other major nutrient TMDLs. CWIP and other state entities provide funding to develop and implement projects that reduce pollutants and improve water quality to move towards compliance with the above TMDLs.
- One essential part of CWIP's mission is to communicate the efforts occurring throughout the state in the field of clean water. While staff mainly focus on funding, tracking, and accounting for this work, the successes are not always well-communicated to the public. This position would greatly enhance communication efforts, making clean water data and reports easier to access and understand. Clean Water Conversations is an outreach program that CWIP would not have the capacity to execute if not for AmeriCorps members. The Conversations are well attended and receive positive feedback.
- Lastly, this service-position would allow an AmeriCorps member to expand the efficiency and effectiveness of our reporting procedures through assisting with continuous improvement efforts and gain useful skills in the process. This is of great need in a time where we have increased workloads with limited capacity. The member would collaborate with CWIP staff and our partners to develop new and exciting approaches to track and communicate the state's clean water efforts and progress toward meeting TMDLs.

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.

- Since 2020, CWIP has focused on increasing our JEDI competencies at the program level, starting with a draft JEDI workplan with the following goals: 1) to make this work transformative and not transactional, 2) to encourage humility and foster a learning and iterative approach, 3) to focus on process and improved engagement rather than a final product, and 4) to maintain a catalogue of opportunities to routinely revisit and advance when feasible.

- The Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) is currently working to develop and implement a strategic plan. Our strategic plan groupwork resulted in seven core strategies. We plan to integrate JEDI as a cross cutting theme across all our strategies.

- One of the strategies is JEDI-specific, “Increase integration of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) principles into clean water funding and reporting processes.” The following actions are a work in progress but thus far we plan to:

- Utilize continuous improvement and an adaptive mindset to integrate JEDI tools and resources into clean water funding processes.
- Develop and designate program’s staff capacity, either through existing staff or new hires, in leading and piloting JEDI initiatives within CWIP.
- Identify and prioritize projects or initiatives within CWIP that have opportunities to incorporate or support JEDI goals, leveraging the team’s expertise and relationships.
- Leverage our data tracking expertise to establish and track JEDI-focused metrics.
- Use coalition building skills and technical expertise to find common ground and momentum with JEDI initiatives.
- Use our strong team dynamic to have hard conversations with internal and external folks on JEDI issues.
- Establish and implement best practices for community engagement as part of the clean water project process, including to improve environmental justice considerations in community engagement.
- Advocate with leadership to evaluate institutional systems, including power and gender dynamics, that influence staff retention and identify tools to make meaningful improvements to the workplan and organization.
- Improve hiring practices to recruit more diverse staff and service members by emphasizing “soft skills” and improving advertising or new and open positions.

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

Below are examples of trainings, workshops, and partnerships that CWIP has engaged in

over the last two years. We are committed to collaborating with internal and external partners to incorporate JEDI principles into our daily work:

- March 2023: The DEC “Plain Language” trainings, two three-hour sessions, will help DEC staff and service members learn about plain language and how to incorporate it into permit applications, issued permits, and other informational and educational materials. The goal is to make permitting and communications more transparent, accessible, clear, and user friendly. The idea is to use a “train the trainer” model, where one staff/service member from each DEC program attends to learn about the topic. Then, that staff/service member can train their team on the concepts and continue to serve as a subject matter expert on the topic for other DEC staff/service members. The training will consist of two half days per participant. Lauren Sopher and Rachel McKimmy, our current ECO supervisor and member, are attending the trainings.

- October 2022 - February 2023: The ANR/DEC "Employee Retention, Support, and Safety" training series was coordinated by the ANR Diversity & Equity Committee. This series of seminars focused on equitable hiring and retention practices. The workshops featured facilitators from the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Office of Racial Equity (ORE), ANR, and more. The trainings included Equity in Hiring and Employee Retention; Pre-recruitment Strategies and Outreach; Interviewing 101 and Anti-Bias in the Interview Process; Employee Retention, Support, and Safety: Fueling Your Workplace Culture with Intention; and Key Learnings from this Seminar Series, Feedback, and Next Steps.
- June 2022: A panel discussion, "Abenaki Perspectives on Water" was presented to the Clean Water Service Delivery Act (Act 76 of 2019) partner network, including Clean Water Service Providers, Basin Water Quality Council members, and project implementers, such as watershed groups, conservation districts, and other interested partners. The recording of the discussion is on the Lake Champlain SeaGrant YouTube channel. They posted a full length recording of the talk and a shortened version of highlights.
- December 2021 - February 2022: The DEC Water Investment Division contracted with the Transformative Teaching Collective to provide social justice training to staff as part of DEC's environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) work. Within the theme of Strengthening Our Commitment to Racial and Social Justice, our Division took three three-hour trainings: An Invitation to Dialogue; Racism, Whiteness and Environmental Justice (or Embodied Ecologies); and Transforming Conflicts & Envisioning Equity.
- A virtual screening of Dr. Kendall Moore's documentary film "Can We Talk? Difficult Conversations with Underrepresented People of Color: Sense of Belonging and Obstacles to STEM Fields." A trailer of the film can be viewed [here](#).
- A PowerPlay training organized by Lake Champlain Sea Grant, "Speaking Up Against Implicit Bias." Learn more about the training here: <https://speakingupworkshop.com/>.

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

We recognize that this work involves retraining the way we think and is never ending. Continued progress on our JEDI competencies is one of seven key strategies in our CWIP strategic plan. To date, much of our work has been centered on personal and cultural growth within our program of roughly 11 staff. As a governmental entity, however, CWIP also faces state and federal-level requirements that obligate us to address equity, as well as environmental justice-focused and disadvantaged communities in our operations and programmatic design. While some of this progress awaits leadership guidance, CWIP strives to lead by example and seek out opportunities to integrate JEDI best practices into the nuts and bolts of our program-level systems. This includes integrating Environmental Justice-Focus community definitions into our grant prioritization framework, and exploring how capacity funding for clean water partners can grow network-wide competencies in JEDI.

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

- It's an exciting time for an ECO member to have a front row seat in JEDI work, as many of these initiatives are executed and new challenges are encountered.
- The ECO member will bring a welcomed fresh perspective to CWIP staff meetings. CWIP was in the practice of dedicating one staff meeting per month to focus on JEDI topics, learning, and workplan development — we'd like to bring this back.

- The CWIP team is in the process of implementing a strategic plan which informs how CWIP programmatically supports JEDI goals. The ECO member can help shape action steps and identify areas of improvement through adaptive management.
- The ECO member will have opportunities to participate in ANR/DEC JEDI trainings. Past CWIP ECO members have served on the DEC Environmental Justice Committee.
- The ECO member will play a key role in maintaining and improving CWIP's Communications SOP, particularly elements related to making our work more accessible and inclusive.

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

I (Lauren) have experience building and launching an internship program from the ground up at a watershed organization in Vermont. I was responsible for interviewing, selecting, and supervising our first intern. The organization also had ECO AmeriCorps members, whom I helped guide in the areas of communications and fieldwork. As a Program Manager at the Howard Center, I managed a caseload of 13 clients and their 15 support staff. As a Vermont Housing and Conservation Board AmeriCorps alumni, I am familiar with the service experience. In December 2022, I took over supervision of CWIP's current ECO AmeriCorps member. I have substantial professional experience in science communications, which is a core focus area of CWIP's service member. I understand the expectations for the ECO AmeriCorps program and, alongside CWIP team members, will strive to provide the member with an impactful learning experience, collaborate with the member to gain new skills, and explore their passions. I will also provide the member with substantial support, dedication, and mentorship to meet their service goals. I am invested in the projects that the AmeriCorps member will perform — I will be available to review tasks, answer questions, and provide constructive feedback. If I am not available, several other members of our program will be available to give guidance to the member.

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

The member will collaborate with numerous staff at DEC who have a wealth of knowledge across the environmental field. If they are interested in a particular study area, they may have the opportunity to help other DEC staff with their field duties or other small projects. For example, they could take a day to collect water samples with the Lakes and Ponds Program, they could help count insects collected by Monitoring and Assessment Program staff, or perhaps help with aquatic invasive species removal. They will also be reaching out to and interacting with our partners (watershed groups, municipalities, and other environmental organizations in Vermont). There are many opportunities to network. The member's efforts towards implementing the Clean Water Conversations present a great opportunity to network with clean water partners within DEC, sister departments and agencies, and external clean water partners. Supervisors will help to foster networking based on the member's interest.

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.

DEC has multiple AmeriCorps members in different programs.

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.).

The position may require boots and rain gear for fieldwork. All other tools and technical equipment will be provided.

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)

I (Lauren) am happy to help with all the above listed community connections, as well as any other links that are integral to making the member's experience positive and welcoming. The CWIP team is dedicated to creating a supportive, connected experience for the member.

Provide approximate impact numbers (e.g. miles of rivers treated) in each focus area.

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

0

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.

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Program:

ECO AmeriCorps

Sponsoring Organization Name:

Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) | Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Sponsoring Organization's Mission:

To efficiently, effectively, and equitably:

- Align and coordinate clean water efforts statewide,
- Develop financial and technical resources to implement projects, and
- Capture and assess data to communicate progress and impact of clean water efforts.

Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position:

- Maintain and improve education, outreach, and engagement on clean water projects to the public
- Develop a new science communications skill set
- Engage in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) initiatives

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

- Interest in learning and collaborating in water quality improvement efforts
- Interest in learning about and incorporating JEDI principles into service
- Strong written and verbal communication skills; interest and willingness to improve these skills
- Ability to communicate effectively and professionally with a range of audiences
- Team player
- Strong organizational and time management skills
- Strong attention to detail
- Self-motivated
- Ability to serve a majority of the time in an office environment, as well as perform occasional fieldwork
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office suite, including Excel
- Ability to collect and analyze data using various applications and software

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

- Experience, coursework, and strong interest in water quality or natural resources; environmental sciences or studies background
- Experience and interest in writing and designing communications for the public (i.e., social media, e-newsletters, and web)
- Experience or interest in data analysis
- Ability to manage multiple projects
- Familiar with Microsoft Teams and ability to effectively host a Teams meeting

- Familiar with online graphic design tools

Desired Qualifications:

- Ability to adapt to changing priorities
- Experience with communications, for example, comfortable with facilitating and giving presentations or writing content for and designing Instagram posts
- Experience with data management and analysis

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.) *

This service-position is largely desk-based. There will be some opportunities for fieldwork.

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

No

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