



AmeriCorps Project Conserve 2019 – 2020 Service Description



AmeriCorps Position Title: Stewardship & Volunteer Associate (2 positions)
Host Site: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

Service Term: September 3, 2019 – July 31, 2020

Supervisor Name: Sarah Sheeran
Supervisor Title: Stewardship Director
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Host Site Mission Statement:

Founded in 1974 as a non-profit, charitable organization, SAHC works to conserve the unique plant and animal habitat, clean water, local farmland, scenic beauty, and places for people to enjoy outdoor recreation in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee for the benefit of present and future generations. We achieve this by forging and maintaining long-term conservation relationships with private landowners and public agencies, owning and managing land, and encouraging healthy local communities.

Summary of Position:

This position will provide support to the Stewardship Director and SAHC stewardship staff to educate conservation landowners by monitoring conservation properties, assessing properties for anthropogenic threats/issues and conservation values through preparation of detailed baseline documentation reports and land management plans, and ensuring compliance with conservation easements. The position will prepare tailored reports educating property landowners of their property and management recommendations for at-risk ecosystems; develop educational resources for conservation easement landowners and assess impact of resources provided; and recruit volunteers and lead volunteer workdays to educate workday participants and enhance at-risk ecosystems.

Qualifications – Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- A strong commitment to community service and conservation.
- Excellent organizational and communication skills, attention to detail, and a self-motivated ability to see what needs to be done and to follow through
- Technical writing and interpreting technical documents are key components of this position.
- The candidate should have a degree or background in natural resource management, ecology, GIS mapping, geography, environmental or natural sciences, or resource policy
- He or she should have excellent written and verbal communication skills

- Proficiency in the basics of ArcMap 10.3 GIS mapping software, ArcCollector and the Microsoft Office suite
- The candidate should have a willingness to work in the office and in the field in sometimes adverse conditions and potentially steep terrain
- Desire and talent for serving as part of a team is expected
- The candidate should be an enthusiastic, creative and self-motivated person able to serve with and motivate coworkers
- Eligible applicants must be at least 18 years of age, be a citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States, and consent to a criminal history check.

Preferred Service Hours / Weekly Schedule:

40 hours/week, Monday - Friday, typically 9 - 5 PM (daily schedule may vary). One and possibly two weekend retreats with board and staff. There are opportunities to volunteer on weekends to participate in guided hikes, habitat management workdays and other activities that take place on SAHC's protected properties.

Position Responsibilities and Duties

Conservation Education: 80%

- Directly educate conservation easement landowners on a regular basis, providing landowners with environmentally-conscious practices tailored for their individual property:
- SAHC holds over 135 conservation easement properties, totaling over 33,000 acres. Each Stewardship & Volunteer Associate (2 positions) will visit over 50 of these properties per year, assessing each property's forest, water quality, and conservation health.
- During property visits, AmeriCorps members often engage in one-on-one conversations with landowners about management goals and recommendations for their conservation easement.
- After each property visit and where applicable, prepare a report educating the landowner on details of their property and best environmentally-conscious practices to improve their land, such as exotic-invasive species removal, water quality protection measures, wildlife habitat improvements, etc.
- Complete baseline documentation field work and reports for new properties going into conservation. These reports, given to landowners, thoroughly document conservation properties and include natural community inventories, species inventories, and documentation of man-made features using text, photos, and detailed mapping.
- Follow up with the landowner to receive feedback, provide education and assistance, and assess the impact of their environmentally-conscious practices in the short term and from year-to-year.
- Prepare electronic newsletter articles targeted to our general conservation easement landowner audience describing environmentally-conscious practices. (These articles will share, for example, the latest habitat improvement activities, effective trail design techniques, etc., helping landowners reach their goal of being good stewards to their property.)
- Where applicable, give presentations about Southern Appalachian at-risk ecosystems, emerging management issues and best resource management practices to civic, school and other community groups.

Volunteer Infrastructure Program (VIP): 10%

- Recruit and manage volunteers for SAHC in general and stewardship activities in particular.
- Recruit volunteers from a wide population base - including local schools, colleges, civic groups, senior centers, and faith-based communities - and via a variety of methods such as tabling at SAHC events, stewardship newsletter, blog posts.

At-Risk Ecosystem Impacts: 10%

- Assess properties (including their at-risk ecosystems and threats to the property's conservation values) for volunteer resource management projects. Prepare property plans, outlining management improvement priorities and needs.
- Organize Citizen Science individuals to accompany AmeriCorps Stewardship & Volunteer Associates and SAHC staff on appropriate property site assessments to collect data for larger volunteer workday projects (e.g., habitat management, invasive species inventory) or for landowner educational reports.
- Plan and organize group volunteer workdays to improve at-risk ecosystems on SAHC protected properties, following land management plans for the properties.
- Supervise volunteers for workdays (volunteer activities include removing invasive species, clearing debris, installing water protection devices, and creating wildlife habitat.)

PLEASE NOTE: In addition to fulfilling host site service responsibilities, all Project Conserve members are required to fully participate in team trainings, service projects and statewide AmeriCorps events. Project Conserve team events will occur approximately twice per month in locations throughout the service area and may require up to three overnight stays.

Essential Functions

Equipment / Software Used: GIS, Microsoft Office

Physical Demands: Ability to hike steep terrain under a variety of conditions

Transportation Needs: SAHC has vehicles for job-related duties, but AmeriCorps members must have reliable transportation to and from work

Setting/Location of Service Activities: Western NC, usually within 1-2 hours from Asheville

- Leading, coordinating, and interacting with diverse individuals in field-based and office settings (ex. landowners, students, low-income residents, partner organizations).
- Conducting field-based monitoring, assessment, and management of conservation properties, public lands, and/or water quality monitoring sites.
- Using mapping software and other computer programs to create quality reports, management plans, maps, and/or analysis, based on field data.
- Using computer software for conservation-based education and outreach initiatives, including written articles and press releases.