

AmeriCorps Project Conserve 2023 – 2024 Service Description

Service Description

AmeriCorps Position Title: Citizen Science Assistant
Host Site: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Supervisor Name: Susan Sachs
Supervisor Title: Education Branch Coordinator
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Host Site Mission Statement:

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Summary of Position:

This position offers a diverse set of opportunities for someone interested in educating the public about the scientific process by involving them in real research. Research studies cover a wide array of topics including tree phenology, effects of acid deposition on salamanders, lichens, soils, streams and snails; monitoring of ground level ozone effects on sensitive plants, and monitoring for the impacts of changing weather patterns on park resources. Audiences include all ages but with a special focus on middle and high school aged children and community volunteers. Educational programs can be offered in a variety of formats to include in-person, virtual distance learning, and through social media platforms.

Qualifications – Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Have a background in the scientific process and be comfortable using it in education programs
- Applicant should have some experience working with student groups, most specifically with middle or high school ages
- Be comfortable developing and presenting programs to the public including school children and adults
- Be comfortable working with Microsoft products and in a variety of on-line platforms
- Be familiar with plants and animals of the Southern Appalachian mountains
- Have the ability to juggle multiple projects, work under pressure and maintain a positive attitude
- Be prepared to work outdoors in a variety of weather conditions
- Be comfortable with living and working in a remote location
- 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:

Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm with some occasional Saturday or evening work

Position Responsibilities and Duties:

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Description of Member Service Activities: The AmeriCorps member will present environmental education programs to primarily middle and high school audiences. Most programs are part of our citizen science educational offerings for area schools. Other education activities will involve working with partnering organizations who bring youth out to the park in the summer months for recreation and education programs. This may include Jr Ranger programs, after school programs, and possibly camp experiences for students when school is not in session.

Percentage of Time: 75%

AT-RISK ECOSYSTEM IMPACTS & TRAILS

Description of Member Service Activities: The Citizen Science AmeriCorps member will coordinate activities for community volunteers who participate in our Adopt-a-Phenology plot tree study. This study is an effort to track nature's calendar, from the first leaf bud in the spring to the final leaf drop in the fall; to help better understand year to year changes in weather patterns and how those changes affect our diverse ecosystem. The Adopt-a-Phenology plot tree study and adult volunteers are separate from our education programs. Coordination involves publicizing our need for volunteers, coordinating with park staff to provide training, providing support for the volunteers and communicating needs between the volunteers and park staff.

Percentage of Time: 15%

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Description of Member Service Activities: Volunteers recruited will work with the park's Adopt-a-Phenology plot tree study. The Citizen Science AmeriCorps member will work on tracking volunteer hours, collecting volunteer information and evaluating the volunteer program.

Percentage of Time: 10%

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Equipment / Software Used: computers with Microsoft Office 365 products

Physical Demands: Must be able to hike up to 5 miles in strenuous mountain terrain, some off trail work required

Transportation Needs: The park is remote, so it is critical to have a car for personal use; no public transportation is available. A government vehicle is usually available for work related transportation needs.

Setting/Location of Service Activities: The position is based out of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center near Cherokee, NC and the Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This is located near the town of Maggie Valley

Other Considerations: Housing can be provided at no cost in the park near the town of Cherokee, NC

Choose the essential functions of this position:

- Using computer software and online programs for conservation-based education and outreach initiatives, including social networking, written articles and press releases
- Leading, coordinating, and interacting with diverse individuals in field-based and office settings (ex. landowners, students, low-income residents, partner organizations).
- Developing and implementing educational programs and events for groups (presentations, workshops, educational hikes and outings, etc).
- Training, supporting, coordinating, and recognizing volunteers for conservation-based volunteer opportunities.
- Other Essential Functions: Entering data into a variety of different databases

