

AmeriCorps Project Conserve 2023 – 2024 Service Description

Service Description

AmeriCorps Position Title: Resource Education and Interpretation Member
Host Site: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Supervisor Name: Julie Flores
Supervisor Title: Lead Park Ranger
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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.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is an Appalachian mountain sanctuary where life thrives, science advances and cultural connections resonate. The mission statement for the division of Visitor and Resource Protection is to prepare and empower professionals who foster the protection, support and guardianship of employees, visitors and resources.

Summary of Position:

Great Smoky Mountains National Park straddles the border of Tennessee and North Carolina and is the largest mountainous park east of the Mississippi River and is one of the most visited units managed by the National Park Service, welcoming over 14 million visitors in 2021. The park encompasses more than 800 square miles of these ancient mountains that exhibit the finest example of the ruggedness, magnitude, height, and scenic grandeur of the southern Appalachian Mountains, including 16 peaks over 6,000 feet. It was one of the first UNESCO World Heritage Sites and is an International Biosphere Reserve.

The Smokies are world-renowned for the diversity of its plant and animal life, beautiful scenery, and the size and integrity of the wilderness sanctuary within its boundaries where hikers can experience over 800 miles of trails. With more than 19,000 species documented in the park, no other area of equal size in a temperate climate can match the park's diversity of plants, animals, and invertebrates.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park also celebrates the rich cultural tapestry of Southern Appalachian mountain culture. Humans have lived here for more than 9,000 years and the park preserves diverse archaeological sites and historic structures, including one of the largest collections of Appalachian log buildings.

As the Resource Education and Interpretation Member for the South District, the AmeriCorps Project Conserve member will work closely with their supervisor and the park-wide Volunteer Coordinator to provide effective management for volunteer activities on the North Carolina side of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This includes recruiting and retaining volunteers from the surrounding community, maximizing the impact and capacity of those volunteers, writing position descriptions, establishing volunteer agreements, developing volunteer training, updating local volunteer management manual, analyzing risk and updating or creating job hazard analyses for volunteer functions, acting as communications liaison between volunteers and supervisor, and tracking and reporting data and statistics.

The Resource Education and Interpretation Member will also assist with conservation education and interpretive programs for youth and adults across western Northday Carolina, from the Cataloochee Valley to Fontana Lake. This includes activities such as Junior Ranger programs, recreational fly fishing, kayaking, snorkeling, guided hikes, geology talks, heritage farming, cultural demonstrations, wildlife education, astronomy programs, and much more. Members will have the opportunity to focus and develop programs on their own skills and interests within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park interpretive theme matrix.

Compensation for this position includes in-park, furnished housing near Cherokee, NC at no cost to the AmeriCorps member. Housing is typically a 2- or 3-bedroom house with shared common space (kitchen, living room, deck, laundry) and a private, lockable bedroom. Pets are not allowed.

Qualifications – Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Ability to take initiative and produce desired results
- Knowledge of people-management skills
- Demonstrated experience working effectively on a team with a diverse range of people
- Ability to accept professional feedback and integrate it into daily conduct and performance
- Demonstrated commitment to applying JEDAI (justice, equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion) values in all aspects of work
- Experience working with underserved communities
- Skill working outdoors in all weather conditions, including standing, sitting, and walking over uneven terrain for long periods of time. Reasonable accomodations will be made for selected applicant(s) who do not meet these standards due to physical, mental, or psychiatric limitations.
- Strong written and oral communication skills
- Knowledge of skills needed to engage and recruit individuals and groups to mission-oriented service
- Desire to work in a fast-paced environment and ability to respond seamlessly to competing priorities
- General knowledge of or ability to learn Microsoft Office Suite products
- 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:

Member will work 80 hours per pay period (2 weeks), with eight 9-hour days and one 8-hour day, with a three-day weekend every other week. Member may work nights, weekends, and holidays as this is a front-line public service oriented position. Great Smoky Mountains National Park is open 365 days/year.

Position Responsibilities and Duties:

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Description of Member Service Activities: The AmeriCorps Project Conserve member will be trained in principles of interpretation to develop educational programs about the significance and uniqueness of park resources. Education and interpretation programs will be presented to the general public, including children and adults of varying abilities and native languages, and to local school districts, using various techniques and platforms, such as in-person, virtual distance learning, and social media. This includes activities such as Junior Ranger programs, recreational fly fishing, kayaking, guided hikes, geology talks, heritage farming, cultural demonstrations, wildlife education, astronomy programs, and much more. Members will have the opportunity to focus and develop programs on their own skills and interests within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park interpretive theme matrix. The service member will be contributing to the preservation of the cultural and natural resource through visitor education and education.

Percentage of Time: 50%

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Description of Member Service Activities: The AmeriCorps Project Conserve member will work closely with their supervisor and the park-wide Volunteer Coordinator to provide effective management for volunteer activities on the North Carolina side of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This includes recruiting and retaining volunteers from the surrounding community, maximizing the impact and capacity of those volunteers, writing position descriptions, establishing volunteer agreements, developing volunteer training, creating or updating local volunteer management manual, analyzing risk and updating or creating job hazard analyses for volunteer functions, acting as communications liaison between volunteers and supervisor, and tracking and reporting data and statistics. Volunteer projects include a variety of activities, such as conservation education at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, Mountain Farm Museum, Clingman's Dome, and Cataloochee Valley, preservation and restoration of park resources, and citizen science.

Percentage of Time: 50%

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Equipment / Software Used: basic computer operational knowledge, Microsoft Office Suite

Physical Demands: standing or sitting for up to four hours at a time and walking up to five miles over uneven terrain. Reasonable accommodations will be made for selected applicant(s) who do not meet these standards due to physical, mental, or psychiatric limitations.

Transportation Needs: The park is remote, so while not required, it is critical to have a car for personal use. Public transportation is not available. A valid driver's license is required to operate government vehicles for work related transportation needs.

Setting/Location of Service Activities: Member will be based at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, near Cherokee, NC. A grocery store, gas stations, and a few restaurants are about 5 miles away, while medical facilities, WalMart, more gas, restaurant, and grocery options, and other amenities are about 20 miles away.

Other Considerations: Compensation for this position includes in-park, furnished housing near Cherokee, NC at no cost to the AmeriCorps member. Housing is typically a 2- or 3-bedroom house with shared common space (kitchen, living room, deck, laundry) and a private, lockable bedroom. Pets are not allowed

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.
- Conducting field-based monitoring, assessment, and management of conservation properties, public lands, and/or water quality monitoring sites. .

