



AmeriCorps Project Conserve 2023 – 2024 Service Description



AmeriCorps Position Title: HRI Stewardship and Conservation Education Associate
Host Site: WNC Communities – Hemlock Restoration Initiative Program

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Host Site Mission Statement:

The Hemlock Restoration Initiative’s mission is to work with a variety of partners and existing programs to restore hemlocks to long-term health throughout North Carolina and ensure that eastern and Carolina hemlocks can resist hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) and survive to maturity on North Carolina’s public and private lands. The Hemlock Restoration Initiative (HRI) is a grant-funded program managed by WNC Communities. WNC Communities is dedicated to providing a unique forum for leaders in the mountain region of Western North Carolina to convene, collaborate, and carry out innovative programs to improve the quality of life for rural communities and to enhance the economy of the agriculture and forestry sectors.

Summary of Position:

The purpose of the HRI Stewardship and Conservation Education Associate position is to ensure ongoing protection of eastern and Carolina hemlock trees from HWA by increasing the capacity of HRI partner agencies to treat trees using chemical and biological control methods; to educate, engage, and empower more community members and groups to understand why hemlocks are an imperiled, yet important natural resource in our region’s communities and forestlands; and to actively participate in hemlock conservation.

Qualifications – Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Required:

- Bachelor’s degree
- Enthusiasm for sharing the outdoors with people of all abilities and backgrounds
- Enthusiasm for reaching out to and engaging new audiences
- Exemplary writing, speaking, and presentation skills for a variety of different audiences
- Confidence, leadership, and tact in direct and indirect communications
- Comfort and proficiency in social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Energy, creativity, initiative, and good humor
- Ability to collect, evaluate, and summarize information from a variety of resources
- Strong attention to detail
- Experience with and/or ability to learn Microsoft Office and Google Workspace applications
- Ability to identify and learn new tools/programs to create and share content, track data, etc.
- Ability and willingness to work long hours outside in a variety of environmental conditions, off-trail on steep and/or rugged terrain, carrying up to 25 pounds of equipment
- A demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a team, collaborate with others, and receive and offer feedback
- Possession of a valid driver’s license and access to a reliable vehicle

- 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/Optional:

- Bachelor's or master's degree in a related field (Forestry, Entomology, Environmental Science, Communications, Outdoor Recreation, etc.)
- Experience and knowledge of Southern Appalachian forest ecosystems, invasive species control methods, forestry, entomology, or conservation biology
- Experience in field data collection
- Experience entering data into an Excel-based database
- One or more years' experience leading groups in task-based, goal-oriented activities
- Map reading and orienteering skills; ability to navigate off-trail through the woods
- Basic graphic design skills; familiarity with software such as InDesign, Photoshop, or Illustrator

Preferred Service Hours / Weekly Schedule:

Typically M-F, with occasional weekend days (average 2 per month); some days in the field may exceed 8-10 hours and occasional multi-night fieldwork trips will be required; however, comp time will be granted as necessary, and overall schedule is flexible.

Position Responsibilities and Duties

Conservation Education: 60%

- Increase awareness of the value of hemlocks in natural and human communities through multimedia descriptions of the diverse benefits of hemlocks' ecosystem services, including their role in mitigating climate change.
- Increase awareness of the threats to hemlocks and related forest health, including pests, pathogens, and climatic factors.
- Assist with virtual and in-person tabling/outreach events and presentations to introduce groups and community members to HRI and the importance of hemlocks and associated ecosystems to habitat, water quality, recreation, and sense-of-place; the impact of HWA; and options for control and restoration.
- Schedule, organize and publicize 1-3 hemlock educational hikes per season to showcase local hemlock populations and efforts to conserve them and to develop an appreciation for our native species and their unique niche in the ecosystems they contribute to.
- Share HRI and partner activities and accomplishments and HRI-related stories and research on Facebook or Instagram and HRI website (averaging three posts a month), along with two annual newsletters.
- One-on-One Education – Answer questions from public and partners as needed. Work with HRI Outreach Manager and HRI Director to develop appropriate answers.
- Group Education – Help plan and lead workshops and trainings on hemlock conservation and best management practices.
- Assist in program development to extend educational resources and technical assistance to a wider and more diverse audience.
- Develop new and/or synthesize existing outreach materials that are useful and specific to the audiences being served.
- Assist with youth education programs when needed and as appropriate.
- Assist with landowner site-visits and follow-up reports as needed.
- Write descriptions to incorporate into the interactive HCA story-map to introduce the public to established hemlock conservation areas across western North Carolina.
- Produce short videos that highlight hemlock conservation areas and HRI restoration activities.

At-Risk Ecosystem Impacts: 30%

- Fall through spring, perform stand assessments and HWA-control treatments on federal and state public lands and conserved lands, coordinating efforts with other crew members and volunteers.
- Support additional crew members or volunteers to perform treatments effectively and safely.
- Install hemlock treatment impact plots and collect baseline data for long-term monitoring.
- Review and update Hemlock Treatment Plans (HTPs) as needed.
- Compile Hemlock Conservation Area HTPs, maps, and other documents into organized binders.
- Maintain and keep track of all equipment used and data generated during treatment workdays.
- Fall through spring, provide HWA and predator beetle monitoring and collection support to HRI and partners in insectaries, hemlock conservation areas and other identified locations.
- Help private partners with hemlock inventories and management plans as needed.

Volunteer Infrastructure Program (VIP): 10%

- Support other HRI staff with the following:
 - Volunteer recruitment from demographically diverse communities.
 - Facilitation of volunteer workdays to support the work of HRI and partners, such as the Forest Restoration Alliance, Camcore, NCFS, and USFS.
 - Volunteer education regarding importance of hemlocks and associated ecosystems to habitat, water quality, recreation, and sense-of-place; the impact of HWA; and options for control and restoration.
 - Training of volunteers to safely and effectively complete hemlock restoration activities.
 - Improvement of training materials and recognition protocols for volunteers.
 - Volunteer tracking for reporting and recognition.

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: GPS unit, Microsoft Office Suite, Google Workspace, logger's tape, backpack/handheld sprayer.

Physical Demands: Must be able to hike off-trail on steep, uneven terrain for a full day carrying up to 25 pounds of equipment in a variety of weather situations, sometimes several days a week. Must be able to work at a desk (sitting or standing) doing computer work for several hours a day, sometimes up to five days a week at certain times in the term.

Transportation Needs: Requires reliable car for trips up to two hours from office.

Setting/Location of Service Activities: Based in Asheville, NC, but sites extend across Western NC. Duties are split between outdoor field settings and office/other indoor settings.

Other Considerations: Unpredictable weather may impact activities planned for any particular week or season.

- 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).
- Conducting field-based monitoring, assessment, and management of natural resources on conservation properties and public lands.
- Entering data and records electronically from written forms and data sheets.