

# ECO AmeriCorps



2024-2025



## **Watershed Engagement Coordinator**

Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA) and the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers (UMATR) Wild & Scenic Committee 2839 VT-105, East Berkshire, VT 05447

MRBA: To restore and maintain the ecological integrity of the Missisquoi River system so that the uses and values desired by the community are supported by the waterways and the quality of their waters.

UMATR: The Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild & Scenic Committee's mission is to collaborate with our partners and the communities that the rivers run through and are adjacent to, in order to promote, protect, and enhance the rivers and their resources, and to support good river management.

Position Supervisor: Sarah Lunn, Field Coordinator

Sarah is the Field Coordinator for both the MRBA and UMATR, with their time split between both organizations similarly to how the ECO member's position will be divided. For both organizations Sarah manages our field projects (invasives, riparian plantings, etc); facilitate MRBA and UMATR events (river clean-ups, paddle instructions, online seminars); work directly with landowners and partners on watershed projects; apply for and administer grant funds on behalf of the MRBA and UMATR; update each organizations website and event tracking; and conduct and track all field work for both organizations.

### The Role:

Our ECO Americorps member will serve at both the MRBA and UMATR, split between both as in years past. Through this service project, the Watershed Engagement Coordinator will be collaborating with previously established MRBA and UMATR educator connections to provide meaningful educational programs to local youth. The ECO member will spend the fall of 2024 assisting in an afterschool program in Enosburg with MRBA staff and the LEAPS after school educators. The class will likely be a seven week long course with the purpose to educate youth about watersheds and the Missisquoi river. The program will be the basis in which other schools can be taught, and the ECOs role will be spreading this course to other schools including Montgomery Elementary School with their librarian and 7th grade science teacher. The goal of this position is to create a flexible role in which the ECO will assist teachers at local schools within Missisquoi watershed towns providing educational programs regularly throughout the 2024 - 2025 school year. Additionally, this position will extend beyond teaching opportunities with assisting in other watershed projects, and explicitly with the need of tracking and development of watershed projects with assistance in ArcGIS mapping software. The MRBA will also be opening and operating a new native tree nursery in Orleans County in which the Americorps member will be able to assist in managing and taking care of nursery stock in addition to riparian plantings. During their service, this ECO position will have the opportunity to help manage river clean-ups and conservation along miles of the Missisquoi river, and assist in outdoor paddling events (prior canoe paddling experience NOT required!), provide extensive environmental education, and participate in the repopulation of native seeds within the Orleans County at our Native Tree Nursery.

Both the MRBA and UMATR have small staffs that are split doing several various roles. Over the years, the MRBA has had requests from educators of curating educational programs that can be recurring at our local schools. In recent years, MRBA has grown to include three full time employees which have built connections to local educators, however, we have still lacked the time to provide regularly scheduled educational programs. Since we are largely grant funded, many of our educational programs rely on distinct funding pools with little room for school-year length longevity. Through this ECO position, we will be able to have a dedicated staff person to educate local school groups on a regular basis (i.e bi-weekly at the minimum) throughout the 2024-2024 school year. With our existing connections, and grant programs that have been approved for 2024 - 2025, we aim to create a sustainable program within the Missisquoi community's youth about water quality, soil health, and more with the use of great capabilities we know ECO members provide. The MRBA and UMATR have always, and will continue to, view the ECO Americorps members we host as valuable members of our team.

The MRBA and UMATR region is designated as economically disadvantaged, and in need of continual educational support. Through this position, we hope to provide much needed support to our local educators at little or not extra cost to them besides the time required to host these programs. As climate change and environmental factors continue to worsen, the need to continue education on how our actions impact our planet, especially for our younger generation, is heightened. Through the creation of this position, we are able to further support these efforts while enabling a meaningful education program to watershed youth.

### Essential Functions:

- Strong written communication and interpersonal skills

- Ability to complete tasks independently
- Ability to teach with youth ranging from elementary to high school age groups in an educational setting
- Physical capability to perform outdoor field projects (Can consist of walking up and down steep bank; lifting 40lbs)
- Must have a personal vehicle and valid driver's license, and be willing to travel through our large watershed (mileage will be paid when performing duties assigned by supervisor)
- Must have functional cell phone or landline where they can be contacted when outside of the MRBA/UMATR Office
- Ability to represent our organizations professionally, as needed, even in the absence of the supervisor
- Knowledge or interest/ ability to learn arcGIS skills for mapping previous MRBA and UMATR projects

#### Secondary Functions:

- Planning and hosting their own MRBA or UMATR river event
- Building and expanding our local connections with watershed partners
- Creating outreach/educational materials for public (using programs including Canva, Wix, Google drive)

#### Desired Qualifications:

- Experience conducting outreach activities or providing educational programs
- Demonstrated interest in water quality
- Interest and willingness to participate in canoe paddle events (previous canoe experience not required!)
- Previous professional experience in environmental field or other professional setting
- Bachelor's degree, with preference in the field of Environmental Science, Natural Resources, or related field

#### What initiatives has your organization undertaken to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ)?

MRBA and UMATR serve a rural area of Vermont, which has high instances of poverty, lack of higher-education, and limited English proficiency. Many of the educational programs in this area are highly underfunded and lack the proper educational tools and resources to make long lasting programming. Many of the youth that we interact with do not get the opportunity to not only learn about watershed issues, but also have access to recreation on our rivers. All of our public events are free, and provide all recreational needs (canoes, paddles, lifejackets, instruction), as well as our educational programs, and our invasive management program of Japanese knotweed is focused on finding the lowest cost for landowners that are seeking treatment of invasives. All of these initiatives are focused on lowering the economic burden that many of our residents and community members face in the Missisquoi region.

Additionally, we have established partnerships with the local Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi (ANM) and the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation to provide assistance in their event hosting whether through volunteer or monetary means, provided grant funding for a trailer to increase use of their traditional Abenaki war canoe, and have planned funding for Abenaki youth canoe paddle trips on the Missisquoi river. At the ANM headquarters in Swanton, previous ECO members have assisted in

treatment of an emerging patch of Japanese knotweed. Like MRBA/UMATR ECO service members of years past, this service member will have the opportunity to continue to build upon these partnerships, and assist in current projects during their service year.

Although we have not explicitly had a MRBA/UMATR DEIJ training as organizations, we intend to continue pursuing our initiatives in the Missisquoi river basin region, and expand upon our partnerships to instill further training in the DEIJ realm. In 2024, MRBA/UMATR will be looking into available DEIJ trainings in the watershed space, and intend to explore these opportunities in conjunction with other partners within our Missisquoi watershed group.

#### How is climate resiliency part of the work your organization does?

The overall mission of both organizations can be connected to improving and protecting the water that flows through the Missisquoi watershed. Through our projects, we focus on repairing and enhancing our riparian corridors through tree planting, invasive species treatments, and spreading awareness through our educational programs. Many of our implemented projects reduce runoff and sedimentation from reaching our rivers through maintenance of implemented rain gardens, bank stabilization projects, creation of adequate river access points and more. In addition to our projects, we also are focused on spreading awareness through our educational programming about what watersheds are, how our waterways interact with the landscape, and how we are responsible for maintaining and protecting our rivers for what comes downstream from us.

#### Networking Opportunities:

MRBA and UMATR have several partners within the Vermont environmental space with heavy emphasis on watershed partners. Both groups host monthly Board and Committee meetings which will give the ECO opportunities to meet local Vermonters in a rural area of the state, and additionally they will be making connections with landowners and educators during our projects. Furthermore, professionally, the MRBA frequently meets with our partner organizations in the Missisquoi watershed region monthly to discuss issues in our region giving the ECO an opportunity to meet other Vermont organizations working on water quality issues. For UMATR, there are opportunities to attend workshops and trainings provided by our partners at the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers (PWSR) group, which is made up of several National Parks partners. In 2024, there is a possibility that UMATR will be hosting the bi-annual gathering of the PWSR group which would enable our ECO to network with federal connections during the conference. There are several meetings and training opportunities that both MRBA and UMATR attend regularly, ranging from Missisquoi watershed, statewide, to regionally.

#### Misc.

Sarah served in the ECO Americorps for two years between 2021 - 2023 and understand the requirements of the programs, including the opportunities, the benefits, and the challenges that come with service. During the past year of post service, we have been planning the formation of this ECO position with the mindset of creating a meaningful role within our organizations that will be catered to the needs of this ECO. Additionally, all MRBA staff are immensely supportive of ECO members, and view ECO members as essential members to our team and will assist in ensuring our member feels supported.

MRBA and UMATR will provide rubber boots for water sampling and field activities at the beginning of

service at no cost to the member. The ECO member will also have access to a designated laptop, field tools and equipment, and educational supplies for all service activities. A reliable vehicle is expected.

The Missisquoi river basin region, especially the stretches of the Upper Missisquoi, are rural areas of Vermont, with distinct communities and towns within them. We understand that Vermont is unique, and at times may seem difficult to establish community connections especially of those who are living in Vermont for the first time. The MRBA and UMATR are two organizations that are founded on community engagement and involvement. The MRBA Board and UMATR Committee are made up of local Vermont residents that are concerned and committed to water quality issues, and are extremely welcoming and community minded. If the service member is interested in living within our watershed, we have many local community connections especially in the outdoor recreation space. The Jay Peak community is busy with seasonal employees made up with a youthful lifestyle anchored in exploration and outdoor activity. Hiking, skiing, mountain biking, rock climbing, swimming and more are all common activities enjoyed up in this area of Vermont and especially supported within the Jay space. The MRBA and UMATR will strive to be inclusive and inviting to our ECO member, and assist them in establishing roots in our watershed in whatever way we can.

#### Goals for the ECO AmeriCorps Position:

The goal of this position is to enable MRBA and UMATR to provide quality educational recurring programming throughout the 2024 school year, and beyond during our summer public events. Additionally, the ECO Americorps will assist in MRBA and UMATR project development and tracking through ArcGIS mapping. Furthermore, this position will provide assistance in the maintenance and operations of our new Native Tree Nursery in Orleans County.

#### 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:

This position will be in flexible service conditions based on time of year, and hybrid service is available. In the colder months (generally Dec - March), the ECO can be expected to spend more time inside doing computer based service, with some days spent in schools teaching with teachers. During the rest of the year, there will be service outside at times (tree plantings, river clean-ups, nursery field activities, invasive management, etc.) with some occasional computer based service projects,

specifically based on mapping software. Additionally, there will be several opportunities to canoe paddle on our river. MRBA and UMATR staff are typically in our office space on Mondays and Thursdays, with the other days of the week mainly reserved for fieldwork, hosting events, or hybrid computer projects.

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Position begins September 17th 2024 and ends August 15th 2025

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