



AmeriCorps Project Conserve

2016 – 2017 Host Site Fact Sheet



Thank you for your interest in becoming an AmeriCorps Project Conserve Host Site! We are thrilled to partner with local organizations to address critical conservation needs in Western North Carolina. This *Host Site Fact Sheet* has been created to give you a better understanding of the AmeriCorps Project Conserve program and its objectives, structure, and operating procedures, as well as the benefits and responsibilities of being a Project Conserve host site.

What is AmeriCorps Project Conserve?

Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy's (CMLC) AmeriCorps Project Conserve is a national service program. In September 2016, thirty-two members will come from across the nation to dedicate themselves to serving western North Carolina for an 11-month service term. Members are selected based on skill, education, experience, passion and commitment to service. It is our sincere hope that your participation as a host site will prove to be a positive experience, with talented members of the Project Conserve team serving as one of your organization's greatest assets. We are dedicated to providing consistent quality service not only from our members, but also from CMLC staff devoted to making sure you benefit from partnering with us as a host site. Project Conserve was founded in September of 2004 as an initiative of CMLC to respond to the growing conservation needs in Western North Carolina. The program focuses on collaboration with nonprofit organizations, community groups and local governments to provide service throughout the region.

Program Basics

Our program year runs from the **beginning of September through the end of July**. Over this 11-month period, each full-time member is required to complete a minimum of 1,700 hours of service. Members are provided a modest living stipend of at least \$12,530, health benefits, and an educational award of \$5,775 upon completion of the program.

Please remember that the concept of **service** is central to the objectives of AmeriCorps Project Conserve. Our team strives to promote the notion that the service provided by each member is exactly that – *service* to the community – and is not to be considered “work.” The service performed should not be seen as a job, nor should members be viewed as employees or volunteers. Host sites are expected to treat all members with the utmost respect due any professional colleague.

Funding

AmeriCorps Project Conserve is funded by Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service via the North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. Additional matching support is provided by CMLC and the host site organizations on the team.

Program Design and Service Activities

AmeriCorps Project Conserve members serve in five core program Focus Areas – Conservation Education, Volunteer Engagement, Rivers/Trails/Public Lands, Disaster Services, and Capacity Building. More information about the Project Conserve Focus Areas, Service Activities, and Performance Measures can be found in the Host Site Application Instructions. Please contact Project Conserve Program Director Amy Stout (828-697-5777, amy@carolinamountain.org) with any questions or concerns.



Host Site and Project Conserve Time Commitments

Each member's day-to-day service will be coordinated and managed by the member's host site. Most member service hours will be spent on projects outlined by host sites in the approved service descriptions. However, a significant portion of the member's time will be spent on Project Conserve reporting requirements and participation in mandatory Project Conserve training days and events. In cases where there is a conflict between host site activities and required Project Conserve activities, the member's Project Conserve responsibilities must take priority. It is important that host sites be supportive of their members in meeting these requirements. All dates and deadlines will be provided at the beginning of the program year, to reduce scheduling conflicts.

We also want to be clear about the approximate time commitment for Project Conserve activities. Project Conserve members can expect to spend about **9 hours per month** on Project Conserve reports, paperwork, and preparation for team days. In addition, the member will be away from their host site at Project Conserve trainings, service projects and events for **24 days** over the 11 month term of service (1 – 3 days per month). Up to **17%** of the member's 1,700 hours of service may be spent on these Project Conserve requirements.

Project Conserve Member Reporting (97 Hours Total)

- Member Timesheets (twice per month) - 1.5 hour / timesheet
- Progress Reports (quarterly) – 10 hours / report
- Peer Training / Support Group Preparation – 24 hours total

Required Project Conserve Days (24 Days Total)

- Project Conserve Orientation (3 days)
- National Identity Day Service Projects (5 days)
- Peer Trainings (member-led trainings for the whole team) (5 days)
- Statewide Events (2 overnight trips to Raleigh or Greensboro)
- Additional Project Conserve Trainings (9 days)

AmeriCorps Member Prohibited Activities

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program, members may not engage in the following activities:

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- Providing a direct benefit to a business organized for profit, a labor union, or a partisan political organization;
- Providing a direct benefit to a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative;
- Providing a direct benefit to an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of the Code of Federal Regulations section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
- Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

- Coordinating or training volunteers to participate in prohibited activities.
- Participating in activities not approved in the member's service description or inconsistent with the goals and focus of AmeriCorps Project Conserve.
- Performing activities that are considered the responsibility of the host site, such as office cleaning, filing, answering phones, installing computer software, etc.
- Engaging in activities that displace employees, supplant the hiring of employees, and/or duplicate the services of employees.
- Engaging in fundraising for AmeriCorps grant match funds, fundraising for an organization's operating expenses or endowment, or writing grant applications for AmeriCorps funding or for any other funding provided by a federal agency;

PLEASE NOTE: Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so. Additionally, host site supervisors are not permitted to request that members spend time on any of the prohibited activities outlined above.

Additional Restrictions: Overall, members cannot assist AmeriCorps Project Conserve or their site placement with major fundraising efforts such as capital campaigns, endowment drives, solicitation of gifts and bequest, or similar activities designed for the sole purpose of raising capital or obtaining financial contributions. **However, members are permitted to raise funds for a project that provides support to a specific and direct service activity, if the project is an integral part of their service to the organization.** An AmeriCorps member may spend no more than 10% of his/her originally agreed upon term of service performing fundraising activities. In addition, a member may spend no more than 20% of his/her time on Indirect Service activities, including training and approved fund-raising.

Site Supervisor Prohibited Activities

Host site staff members acting as site supervisors may not engage in the activities listed below while supervising members or participating in AmeriCorps Project Conserve events. Participating in these activities may result in the loss of AmeriCorps members and end participation as a host site with Project Conserve.

1. Asking or encouraging a member to engage in any member prohibited activities
2. Asking or encouraging a member to engage in any illegal, immoral, unethical, or dangerous activities
3. Failing to comply with the "Member-Staff Relations" section of the Policy and Procedure Manual
4. Failing to comply with the Policy and Procedure Manual

Host Site Responsibilities

General Responsibilities

- Sign Affiliate Agreement between host site and CMLC
- Consent to a National Service Criminal History Check (supervisors and any persons reporting in-kind match)
- Adhere to the AmeriCorps Project Conserve Policy and Procedure Manual
- Attend Host Site Orientation (required for any host site staff that will supervise members)
- Display AmeriCorps signs prominently at service location

Fiscal Commitment

- Commit approximately \$8,870 towards AmeriCorps member living allowance and project administration. **The exact amount of the host site match will be determined by March 15, 2016.** Host Sites will be billed bi-monthly as outlined in the Affiliate Agreement form throughout the program year. No amount of the Affiliate Participation fee can come from federal funding sources (if you have questions about this, please contact us).
- Commit to the cost of any trainings, supplies or safety equipment needed by the member.
- Commit to reimbursing members for all mileage, including participation in AmeriCorps Project Conserve trainings and service projects. CMLC will cover costs relative to statewide gatherings. ****Please note that Project Conserve host sites are typically more concentrated in Asheville and Hendersonville, so more**

events occur in that area. The cost of travel reimbursement for members located outside of this area may be significantly greater. Members are encouraged to carpool to Project Conserve events, whenever possible.

AmeriCorps Member Recruitment and Selection

- Create service descriptions for member positions to be approved by the Program Director. The roles and activities of members should specifically match those described in the service description
- Advertise individual service descriptions locally and through targeted job posting sites
- Review applications and conduct interviews and reference checks
- Offer position to qualified applicant, following the schedule outlined by Project Conserve
- Submit interview notes, reference check notes and other required selection documentation to AmeriCorps Project Conserve Program Director
- *To streamline the member recruitment and selection process, Project Conserve will post all service descriptions, the application process, and application documents on the AmeriCorps Project Conserve website. A general service description for the team will be posted on the national AmeriCorps website and other national, local, and conservation-related job posting sites. Host sites are required to use standardized interview questions and reference check forms developed by Project Conserve, but they may add their own questions. AmeriCorps Project Conserve will have the final authority in determining whether an individual qualifies to be accepted into the AmeriCorps program.*

AmeriCorps Member Support and Training

- Designate a staff person to serve as the AmeriCorps Site Supervisor
- Recognize that AmeriCorps members are not employees, volunteers, or interns of the host site
- Provide member(s) with orientation to the host site, including introduction to staff and equipment, relevant reference materials and reports, review of potential safety hazards, and any other resources needed to perform service
- Support member in his or her leadership development
- Provide member with an understanding of general expectations when serving with you and your organization (communication standards/procedures, office etiquette, punctuality, etc.)
- Provide a host site atmosphere where members feel comfortable and accepted. Provide an orientation for your staff regarding the role of AmeriCorps member(s)
- Provide on-site supervision in the form of regular check-in meetings, continual training, instruction, and technical assistance so members may satisfactorily complete projects. **Site supervisors are expected to spend at least 12 – 15 hours per month providing direct supervision, training, or mentoring for their AmeriCorps member.**
- Provide members with adequate work space (desk, phone, computer with internet access, etc.)
- Provide adequate service-related tasks to ensure optimal use of member's skills, time, and efforts
- Ensure that member projects do not displace regular employees of the host site
- Allow and support members' participation in Project Conserve team trainings, statewide events, and service projects

Host Site Reporting Requirements

- **In-Kind Reports** – Track and report monthly your supervisory time of members and other expended costs or in-kind contributions, such as member mileage, supplies, equipment or trainings. Supervisor time will be reported twice per month using the online time tracking system, OnCorps Reports. Signed hard copies of supervisor timesheets will be submitted monthly with all other in-kind contributions. These forms must be signed by the person reporting in-kind time and their Executive Director (or Board President).
- **Member Timesheets** – Review and approve member's online timesheets twice per month.
- **Member Evaluation** – Complete required mid-year and end-of-year evaluation forms and conduct performance evaluations with member. Return original forms signed by host site supervisor and member to AmeriCorps Project Conserve Program Director.
- **Site Visits** – Be available to meet with AmeriCorps Project Conserve Program Director and member during quarterly site visits.
- **Ongoing Communication** – Maintain open communication with member and AmeriCorps Project Conserve Program Director and notify the Program Director of any performance related issues immediately.

- **Performance Measures and Program Requirements** – Host sites are expected to be knowledgeable and supportive of the member’s performance measure reporting responsibilities to AmeriCorps Project Conserve. Reasonable accommodations should be made to ensure host site reporting mechanisms are compatible with AmeriCorps Project Conserve requirements (ex. backup documentation such as volunteer timesheets and educational activity surveys must collect all required information for AmeriCorps progress reporting).

AmeriCorps Project Conserve Responsibilities

General Responsibilities

- Oversee the program administration, vision, strategic planning, and long-term sustainability of AmeriCorps Project Conserve
- Assure program compliance with all established goals, objectives and standards from Project Conserve’s funders – the North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and the Corporation for National and Community Service
- Develop program performance measures and tracking documents, and support/train member in reporting progress
- Ensure that members maintain their identity as AmeriCorps members rather than identifying themselves and their service solely with their host site
- Provide and administer payroll, health insurance, and worker’s compensation insurance for all AmeriCorps members

Member Support

- Hold an Orientation for Project Conserve members at the start of their service
- Coordinate required AmeriCorps member trainings (Conflict Resolution, Effective Communication, First Aid, CPR, Disaster Preparedness, Diversity, Life After AmeriCorps, and Citizenship)
- Support members in planning National Identity Day Service Projects and Peer Trainings
- Facilitate networking and collaboration among host sites and Project Conserve members
- Train members on program reporting requirements, including timesheets and progress reports
- Meet with members and supervisors quarterly to check in and provide any technical assistance
- Provide ongoing guidance and support for members throughout the program year

Host Sites Support

- Maintain regular and consistent contact with Host Sites to coordinate and monitor service
- Ensure the service to be completed is accomplished as outlined by the service description
- Provide regular formal and informal opportunities for host site feedback
- Keep communication with host sites open to ensure inclusion on issues related to scheduling, reporting, and maintaining compliance

Host Site Application Process

In order to partner with Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy as an AmeriCorps Project Conserve Host Site, the following information must be submitted to the Project Conserve Program Director by **January 25, 2016** for current sites and new sites.

- Application Questions (one per position requested)
- Service Description (one per position requested)
- Certification of Understanding (one per applicant organization)

Please e-mail the three application components to Amy Stout (amy@carolinamountain.org).

AmeriCorps Project Conserve staff will review host site applications as they are submitted, and contact organizations for clarification regarding the applications. Project Conserve staff will also be available to meet with organizations applying to be host sites to answer any questions and discuss service activities and program requirements.

Selection Process – A significant factor in an organization’s selection as a Project Conserve host site will be the extent to which the proposed service description aligns with the Project Conserve mission, service activities, and performance measures. If your service description does not seem to fit within this framework, please contact the Project Conserve Program Director to discuss your ideas. Please keep in mind that all Project Conserve member positions should be focused on direct service activities, be consistent with AmeriCorps community service values, and contribute the team performance measures. Other selection factors include the organization’s capacity to effectively supervise and support an AmeriCorps member, professional development and training opportunities available to the member, and the organization’s prior participation in AmeriCorps Project Conserve.

CMLC will contact host site applicants by March 1, 2016 regarding selection into the program and inclusion in the Project Conserve grant proposal for the 2016 – 2017 program year.

Host Sites will be required to sign an Affiliate Agreement with CMLC, outlining each party’s responsibilities and formalizing commitment to participate, contingent upon Project Conserve’s continued funding.

The Project Conserve member recruitment process will begin in late March. Members will be hired by June and will begin service on September 1, 2016.

Contact Information

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