



IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DEP SEEKS RECRUITS FOR 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICORPS NEW JERSEY WATERSHED AMBASSADOR PROGRAM TO HELP PROTECT WATER QUALITY

(19/P63) TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is seeking 20 new AmeriCorps members to serve as Watershed Ambassadors for the 2019-2020 season, Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe announced today.

The upcoming season will be the 20th anniversary for the AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program within the DEP.

“The AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program benefits our state by engaging residents in the critical work of environmental protection and stewardship in their local watershed, adding to our overall quality of life,” Commissioner McCabe said. “The program provides training for our future environmental leaders by educating communities about how to protect and improve water quality in their neighborhoods and towns.”

Applications for the 2019-2020 class will be accepted through Friday, Aug. 16, or until all positions are filled.



For the 2019-2020 term, candidates are particularly needed to serve at the County of Passaic Planning Department, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, the Hackensack Riverkeeper, the Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center, the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and Cape May County.

From host agencies throughout New Jersey’s 20 watershed management areas, ambassadors provide direct service to all sectors of the public to improve the quality of New Jersey’s waterways and foster community-based environmental activities. They also empower state residents to make responsible and informed decisions

about their daily actions and how what happens on land affects local waterbodies and larger watersheds.

Through their partnerships, field work and thousands of presentations, ambassadors engage the public in science, stewardship and education. Members increase public awareness about the impact of litter and nonpoint

source pollution on water quality, as well as the need to reduce nutrient sources such as fertilizers from reaching local waters.

“The AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program begins in September and Ambassadors graduate from the program in July,” DEP Division of Water Monitoring and Standards Director Bruce Friedman said. “It’s remarkable to see all that the ambassadors accomplish throughout their 10 months, engaging with New Jersey’s communities and providing stewardship opportunities. The program continues to establish strong partnerships within the environmental community. These relationships strengthen our communities and the ambassadors’ experience often leads to job opportunities after graduation.”

Since the inception of the program in 2000, nearly 400 individuals have been the DEP’s facilitators in the field, collecting water quality information, giving presentations on clean water and championing partnership projects in which the public help make a difference in their communities. Today, many former ambassadors are leaders in their communities serving in various roles both within as well as outside of government.

“The Watershed Ambassador program really nurtured me as a budding young scientist fresh out of college,” said Erin (McCollum) Strez, Assistant Director of Science and Stewardship at The Watershed Institute and a member of the 2007-2008 Ambassador class. “More than a decade after my term of service ended, I am fortunate enough to continue working with the (ambassador) program in a training role. I enjoy watching these talented ambassadors grow both professionally and personally throughout the year and I can’t wait to see what great things they accomplish next.”

Ambassadors are required to complete 1,700 hours of service over 10 or 11 months. Compensation includes a pretax annual stipend of \$13,732; eligibility for health insurance benefits while serving as an ambassador; subsidized childcare, if qualified; deferment of qualified student loans during service; and extensive training throughout the program year. In addition, members are eligible to receive an education award of \$5,920 upon successful completion of the program.

Applicants must be U.S. citizens, have a bachelor’s degree, a valid driver’s license, and must have reliable transportation to get to and from field sites.

Accomplishments and notable projects by the current 2018-2019 Ambassadors include:

- Leading educational watershed demonstrations and public presentations on environmental stewardship to nearly 24, 000 participants/students;
- Removing more than 100 tons of garbage and recyclables from New Jersey waterways;
- Completing more than 500 visual and biological stream assessments;
- Improving more than 50 acres of parks and public lands;
- Planting more than 40,000 native trees and shrubs to restore floodplains statewide;
- Creating 225 rain barrels which, once installed, will prevent 315,000 gallons of excess stormwater from entering New Jersey’s waterways annually;
- Installing a rain garden at Clifton’s City Hall Property, in partnership with the Clifton Environmental Commission, Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Health;
- Working with 300 volunteers to plant more than 25,000 dune grass plants at Island Beach State Park;
- Learning about invasive plant species at an event where participants were invited to bring an invasive plant from their yard



to swap with a native plant alternative;

- Bagging more than 300 bags of whelk shells to create new reef habitat for marine wildlife at Cooks Beach, held in partnership with the America Littoral Society;
- Doing six ambassador-led cleanups during the second annual South Jersey Scrub, a week-long collaborative cleanup initiative with a focus on removing trash and plastics from Delaware River coastal tributaries and marshes, from Trenton to Cape May;
- Holding a monofilament recycling bin workshop resulting in the building of 20 fishing line disposal containers. The containers will be installed throughout the Upper Delaware watershed to reduce microfilament pollution and monitored to measure how much fishing line is recycled as a result of these receptacles.

Interested applicants may apply to the New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program through the national AmeriCorps site link at <https://my.americorps.gov/mp/listing/viewListing.do?id=89683&fromSearch=true>

For more information, visit www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/amicorps.htm or call Program Manager Amanda Lotto or Program Support Specialist Kathryn Harrison at (609) 633-1441.