



VetsWork GreenCorps AmeriCorps Internship Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is VetsWork GreenCorps?

VetsWork GreenCorps is an AmeriCorps program that trains U.S. military veterans for a potential career in wildfire landscape management, wild land firefighting and/or other potential public land management and natural resource work. It was developed with the dual purposes of: 1.) supporting the transition of veterans from a military career to a civilian career while 2.) addressing the unmet needs of our nation's public lands/natural resource management agencies.

VetsWork GreenCorps is a 12 week program in which participants learn new skills, gain new knowledge and build professional contacts within the integrated fuels management sector. Members spend their time in trainings and working on an extensive thinning project on the Umatilla National Forest. The goal of VetsWork GreenCorps is to help participants increase their opportunity to secure permanent jobs and help potential employers identify qualified veteran candidates.

Q: What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages more than 75,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. Since the program's founding in 1994, more than one million AmeriCorps members have contributed more than 1.2 billion hours in service across America while tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of volunteers.

AmeriCorps assists members by creating jobs and providing pathways to opportunity for people entering the workforce. AmeriCorps places thousands of people into intensive service positions where they learn valuable work skills, earn money for education, and develop an appreciation for citizenship.

All VetsWork GreenCorps participants are enrolled as AmeriCorps members (or AmeriCorps volunteers) for the duration of the program. They are not considered to be Forest Service or Mt. Adams Institute employees.

Q: What is the Mt. Adams Institute?

Mt. Adams Institute (MAI) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with the mission to strengthen the connection between people and the natural world through education, service learning, career development and research. MAI is headquartered in Trout Lake, Washington and operates through the Pacific Northwest, Missouri and soon the Southeastern United States. Learn more at: www.mtadamsinstitute.org



MAI co-designed, co-developed and co-manages the VetsWork GreenCorps program in partnership with the Umatilla National Forest.

Q: What is the Umatilla National Forest?

The Umatilla National Forest is part of the USDA Forest Service. It is located in the Blue Mountains of northeast Oregon and southeast Washington and covers an area of 1.4 million acres. Learn more at: www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla

Forest Service fire staff provide day-to-day oversight and direction for the VetsWork GreenCorps program.

Q: Is the position full-time?

Yes. VetsWork GreenCorps members will work an average of 40 hours per week. Typically, these will be 10 hour days, Monday-Thursday. If a member misses training due to sickness or other personal compelling circumstances, those hours will need to be made up on an "off" day.

Q: What will I learn/earn?

GreenCorps members will learn all of the basic requirements/skills necessary to become a wildland firefighter. This includes coursework and certifications in chainsaw operation (S212), basic fire skills (red card) and risk assessment and management. Most of this training will be in the format of on-the-job training.

Q: Do VetsWork GreenCorps members get paid?

Interns earn a living stipend of \$300 per week (pre-tax amount), or \$3,600 for the entire term. Stipends are direct deposited on the 10th of the following month. It is important to note that some firefighting training programs charge participants for this type of experience.

It is not a lot of money so potential participants need to consider if it is financially possible to participate.

Q: What are the others benefits of VetsWork GreenCorps?

In addition to the living stipend, VetsWork GreenCorps members earn an education award of \$1,612.43 upon satisfactory completion of the program, qualification to apply for food stamps and student loan forbearance.

Another less tangible, but potentially invaluable benefit is the networking and resume building opportunities available. Members will meet and work with Forest Service program managers. This is especially important given the statistic that over 50% of all employment opportunities come from personal relationships/acquaintances.

Q: Where is the program located?



VetsWork GreenCorps is operated on the Umatilla National Forest, North Fork John Day Ranger District in Ukiah, Oregon. Ukiah is a remote, rural



community in the eastern part of the state. The closest full-service towns are Pendleton (50 miles) and La Grande (57 miles).

Q: Where do VetsWork GreenCorps participants live?

Participants are provided housing (Frazier Bunkhouse) for the duration of the program by the Forest Service. It is bunkhouse style and for participants only. Participants must comply with bunkhouse rules provided by the Forest Service. Participants are responsible for providing their own food. Frazier bunkhouse is located 17 miles from Ukiah and has limited cell access and no internet access. Participants will share a sleeping room with one other participant of the same sex. The large kitchen is shared among participants as are the same sex bathrooms.

Q: Is this a team or individual placement program model?

VetsWork GreenCorps utilizes a team model. Members live and work together for the duration of the experience. Participants need to work well with others, follow instructions and rules, and be receptive to learning and receiving performance feedback. The safety and efficient functioning of the team depends on adhering to these standards.

If you are unable to meet these parameters from the start of the program, you should consider another program.

Q: Will I get a job at the end of the internship?

There is no guarantee of employment when the program is completed, but the intention of the program is to train the crew so that they can be hired directly on to the Umatilla Vet Crew once the program is over. This decision will be based on member’s performance and veteran hiring authority. VetsWork GreenCorps interns will have had ample opportunity to network, learn new skills and explore potential jobs during their term of service. In 2018, all members were hired onto the seasonal crew at the end of the program.

Q: I have a family. Can they come with me?

Potential participants with families are not excluded from the program, but it is difficult. Lodging is only provided for participants. In the past, participants have opted to be separated from family members during the program. They utilized their off days to visit with them.

Q: What are the physical requirements?

The physical requirements of VetsWork GreenCorps are extremely high. Participants will regularly carry loads of more than 50 pounds, they could hike 5-10 miles per day, and they will be on their feet for up to 10 hours day including bending, squatting, lifting and utilizing a variety of hand tools and power tools. Much of the work is repetitive and must be done for multiple days. Participants will engage in regular PT activities including running, hiking and strengthening exercises

Participants will have to pass the “pack test” – walk 3 miles with a 45 pound pack within 45 minutes. The test will be done on the first day of the program. Secondary standards test will be performed the second week and every Monday until all members pass the standards (1.5 mile run in 12 min, 25 push-ups, 25 sit-ups, 7 pull-ups).



Given the arduous nature of the program, it is important to be realistic about what you are capable of doing.

Q: What does fuels reduction mean?

Fuel reduction projects are designed as a means of mitigating wildfire hazards, to lessen catastrophic fire and its threat to public and damage to property. The objective is to remove enough fuel so that when a wildfire burns, it is less severe and can be more easily suppressed. When fuels accumulate, they allow fires to burn hotter, faster and with higher flame lengths. When fire encounters areas of continuous brush or small trees it can burn these “ladder fuels” and may quickly move from a ground fire into a crown fire.

Hazardous fuel reduction generally requires the reduction of surface and ladder fuels. It may also require thinning out dense tree stands, preserving mature sized trees in some instances. Thinning trees, removing underbrush, and limbing trees are done using hand crews. Cut material is ground into chips or piled and burned during the winter.

Q: Can I work or go to a school while participating in the program?

It is extremely difficult to fulfill the obligations of the program and be in school or working another job.

Q: I have a ___% service connected disability. Can I still take part in the program?

Yes, if you can meet the requirements of the individual position. You do need to be honest and realistic about your capabilities.

Q: Who can apply for VetsWork?

Applicants must be a U.S. Military Veteran (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, or Army Reserve) with a DD 214 (Honorable or General Under Honorable Conditions). You must also be within the ages of 19-35. These two requirements are due to federal AmeriCorps funding initiatives, and we cannot make exceptions.

Q: Why is this program just for veterans?

VetsWork was established to support military veterans as they transition into the civilian world. MAI recognized that there was a need to provide transition services that addressed some of the barriers that veterans have faced in securing employment in the civilian sector.

Q: Why is the program only for veterans ages 19-35?

In order to align with national initiatives such as the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, which has identified veterans, ages 19-35, as a special focus area.



Q: I have been convicted of a crime. Can I still take part in the program?

Yes. The only automatic disqualifiers are a murder charge/conviction and registration on the National Sex Offender Registry. Participation in the VetsWork program is contingent upon passing a state and federal background check as well as a name based search in the National Sex Offender Registry.

A prior criminal record could impact your selection, but it will not immediately disqualify you. If you fail to disclose any infraction (even minor ones) on your application and it shows up on your criminal background check, you can be immediately disqualified. It is better to be forthright with this information from the beginning of the application process.

Q: I am an active member of the National Guard/Reserves and have training obligations.

Generally, the Reserves of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, the Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard require reservists to serve one weekend a month plus 12 to 15 days a year (hereafter referred to as the two-week active duty service). If members have a choice of when to fulfill their annual two-week active duty requirement, they should do so when it will not disrupt their AmeriCorps service. In instances where the dates of active duty are inflexible and conflict with AmeriCorps service, members should be granted a leave of absence for the two-week period of active duty service in the Reserves.

Members may not receive time-off for additional Reserves-related service beyond the two-week active duty service. No AmeriCorps service credit is earned for the once-a-month weekend service in the Reserves. Members will receive credit for AmeriCorps service hours during their two weeks of active duty service in the Reserves if it occurs during their AmeriCorps service. The member would receive credit for the number of hours he or she would have served during that period had there been no interruption. For example, if a full-time member is signed up to serve 30 hours of AmeriCorps service one week and 40 hours of AmeriCorps service on the following week, she or he would receive 70 hours of AmeriCorps service credit for the two weeks of active duty service regardless of the actual number of hours served in the Reserves.

Members will continue to receive the living stipend for the two-week period of active duty.

Q: Are there other VetsWork positions available?

Mt. Adams Institute also operates the VetsWork internship program, a 10.5 month program experience (45 weeks). VetsWork internships cover the spectrum of the type of jobs available in the public lands / natural resources management / environmental sector. Some positions involve serving outside every day on trails, wilderness or forestry projects; others are more office situated and can involve writing, communication, project management or volunteer coordination. Interns must complete at least 1700 hours of service during that time.

Each internship depends on the individual position, but the bulk of the experience will be spent serving on real natural resources management / public lands / education projects as determined by the local supervisor. Participants will receive on-the-job training while completing their duties. On a monthly basis, participants will



gather together regionally for self-identified training opportunities. On a quarterly basis, participants engage with MAI program staff on professional development workshops.

For the most up-to-date open positions, please visit our internships page at mtadamsinstitute.org/internships or contact our Recruitment Coordinator, Katie Schmidt, at: katie@mtadamsinstitute.org or (509) 395-3465.

