



Mt. Adams Institute VetsWork Environment Internship Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is VetsWork Environment?

VetsWork Environment is an AmeriCorps program connecting U.S. military veterans with federal, state, and local public land management and natural resource agencies for 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 and organizations.

VetsWork is a 45 week internship program in which participants learn new skills, gain new knowledge and build professional contacts within the public lands / natural resources management / environmental career field. Internship partners include U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), conservation districts and regional non-profits.

The goal of VetsWork is to help participants increase their opportunity to secure permanent jobs and assist potential employers seeking qualified veteran candidates.

Q: What is AmeriCorps?

[AmeriCorps](#) is a national volunteer 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 900,000 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 providing pathways for people entering the workforce. AmeriCorps places thousands of people into intensive service positions where they learn valuable work skills, earn a modest living stipend and money for education, and develop an appreciation for volunteerism and community service.

All VetsWork participants are enrolled as AmeriCorps members for the duration of the program.

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 currently operates in 13 states across the country. Learn more at: www.mtadamsinstitute.org MAI designed, developed and manages the VetsWork program.



Q: Is the Internship full-time?

Yes. VetsWork interns will work an average of 40 hours per week. Individual positions might vary in how and when that time is spread throughout the week. Some interns may work four 10 hour days; others will have scheduled hours on weekends; and still others may work 7 days straight and then have 5 days off.

Q: Do VetsWork Interns get paid?

Interns earn a modest living stipend of \$350/week paid monthly (pre-tax amount). The actual amount is dependent on the number of weeks of service in each month. Months with four weeks of service = \$1,400 (pre-tax); five weeks = \$1,750 (pre-tax). Stipends are deposited directly into interns' bank accounts on the 10th of each month. Applicants are highly encouraged to actively work with a budget to make sure that participating in the program is financially feasible. Continue reading about additional benefits that will be supplemental to the living stipend.

Q: Can I use my G.I. Bill benefits while in the program?

Yes, VetsWork is an apprenticeship program approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor. Members with G.I. Bill benefits may be able to dual enroll as an apprentice and access their Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) of approximately \$2,400 per month. Actual benefits vary by individuals' available benefits.

Q: What are the others benefits of VetsWork?

In addition to the living stipend, VetsWork interns earn an education award of \$6,345 (upon satisfactory completion of the program), health insurance, child-care assistance, qualification to apply for food stamps and student loan forbearance. Many VW positions also have free or reduced agency housing or offer an additional housing stipend. Please read each position's benefits section to find out if and what type of housing options are available. Current positions can be found at: <https://mtadamsinstitute.org/vetswork-environment-internships/>.

VetsWork is a career development program designed to help interns navigate a career in the natural resource and public land management fields. The internship provides opportunities to build professional networks, experience a desired career path, and understand hiring practices. Training will address position specific skills and certifications as well as developing resumes and other application materials.

Q: How long are the internships?

VetsWork is a 10.5 month program (45 weeks). Interns must complete at least 1700 hours of service during that time. This averages out to be 40 hours per week.



Q: How will my time be spent during the internship?

VetsWork internships represent a variety of positions offered through the natural resource / public land management field and will vary according to the specific needs of each agency / ranger district. Interns can expect to spend at least 80% of their time in service activities and on the job training. Service activities may include recreation site maintenance, volunteer coordination, restoration work, invasive species removal, education and outreach, facility improvement, forestry projects, trail maintenance or emergency dispatch. Up to 20% of an intern's time is spent on activities focused on an intern's growth and development in the field. These include MAI's week-long orientation, community service projects, professional development trainings, sharing experiences with other interns and self-directed learning.

Q: What positions are available?

VetsWork internships cover the spectrum of job types 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, education or volunteer coordination.

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

Positions for the 2021 service year are posted in mid-September of 2020. The MAI recruitment timeline begins in mid-September when the following years' positions are posted to the website. Applications are accepted until positions are filled, but keep in mind that interviews will be offered starting in mid-October and many positions can fill 2-3 months before the program start date in early February or early March.

Q: Where are the positions located?

There are two VetsWork cohorts. The Northwest Cohort includes positions in Oregon, Washington and Alaska. The Southeast / Central Cohort has included positions in Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, West Virginia and Puerto Rico. (Please note that VetsWork does not always offer the same positions in the same locations from year to year). Some positions are in the heart of major cities and suburban communities, while others are situated in very remote, rural locations.

For the most up-to-date service location see our jobs page: <https://mtadamsinstitute.org/internships/>.

Q: Where do VetsWork participants live?

Housing options depend on each service location. Participants are responsible for securing housing, but the local supervisor may assist with the process. Some positions have free or reduced cost, on-site options. Some positions offer an additional stipend to fully cover or help cover housing costs. Some positions do not have



either of these options, and the full cost must be borne by the intern. Housing details for each position can be located in the position descriptions found on the jobs page: <https://mtadamsinstitute.org/internships/>

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

There is no guarantee of employment when the program is completed, but VetsWork interns have ample opportunity to network, learn new skills and explore potential jobs during their term of service. Many service locations use the VetsWork program as a conduit to hiring. All of these factors make VetsWork interns more likely to get hired. VetsWork interns will take part in career development coaching and workshops during a required mid-term training with Mt. Adams Institute Staff. Intern experiences vary in scope and opportunity, but each individual participant is encouraged to proactively seek out opportunities that will enhance a resume, and help to become a more desirable applicant. 80% of the Interns that have successfully completed our program, have been offer employment as a direct result of their internship.

Q: I don't live near where a position is located. Do people relocate to take part in the program?

Yes, many participants do relocate to take part in the VetsWork program. This can be an added challenge that requires adequate research and planning, but is very much doable. MAI staff encourages applicants who are considering a move to make sure that the position and location are a good fit for each individual. Mt. Adams Institute is not able to offer relocation assistance, but does encourage applicants to seek out resources from other veteran serving organizations like Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Legion or smaller local organizations.

Q: I'm interested in a position, but I've never been there and it seems very rural and remote. What steps can I take to prepare myself for this transition?

Many VetsWork positions are definitely located in very remote locations. This is especially true of VetsWork positions in Alaska, but even if a position is in an urban or suburban area applicants are encouraged to take on research about the local offerings. Some things to consider are:

- accessibility to medical facilities, grocery stores, and other personal services
- vehicle required to access services and off-time recreation
- reliable internet
- weather and daylight conditions
- community / social activities.

Many of these questions can also be answered by site supervisors during an interview. Applicants are encouraged to research locations and have specific questions to ask site supervisors. Other resources to consider are: local Facebook groups, Chambers of Commerce and town or county websites. In some cases Mt. Adams Institute staff can connect applicants with current or former interns serving at a specific location. This is a good way to gather insight into a specific area.



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

Yes. Families may join you, but you will likely have to seek out your own housing. Potential housing provided by specific internships sites is often very limited and many times cannot accommodate families or pets.

Many current and former VetsWork interns with spouses and / or children have successfully participated in the program. Although it presents some more logistical challenges, these can be addressed. For more information, contact our Recruitment Coordinator, Katie Schmidt, at: katie@mtadamsinstitute.org or (509) 395-3465.

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

Interns are expected to work 40 hours per week which make in-person classes challenging to accommodate. Interns have completed online classes while participating in VetsWork, however. Interns are allowed to take part-time jobs in their time off, but those shouldn't interfere with their VetsWork schedule.

Q: What agencies or organizations partner with VetsWork?

Current and former partners include:

-[King Conservation District](#)

-U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:

[Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery](#)

[Historic Columbia River Gorge National Fish Hatchery](#)

-National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in partnership with:

[Tillamook Estuaries Partnership](#)

[Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership](#)

[Willamette Riverkeeper](#)

-[U. S. Forest Service](#)

Q: What are the physical requirements?

Physical requirements vary with each position. Some positions require 40 hours per week of desk time. Others are very physically demanding, and all work takes place outdoors in rugged wilderness. Many of the positions have components of both. If you are offered an interview with agency staff you will be asked to discuss your ability to take on the physical requirements of the position. All position descriptions on our jobs page <https://mtadamsinstitute.org/internships/> clearly explain the physical requirements of each position. Please speak with recruitment staff if you have questions or concerns about a specific position.

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. Mt. Adams Institute and our partners will provide reasonable accommodation.**

Q: Who can apply for VetsWork?

Applicants must be a U.S. Military Veteran (DD 214 required) (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, or Army Reserve), 21+ years or older.

An honorable discharge is required, but a General Under Honorable (GUH) designation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you have GUH status be prepared to discuss this with recruitment staff.

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. MAI does offer a general population program (ages 21-30.) Please visit our Public Lands Stewards program at: <https://mtadamsinstitute.org/public-lands-stewards/>.

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 any required 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) 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. Don't hesitate to contact MAI recruitment staff if you would like to discuss your particular situation.

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 will 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.

