



POSITION DESCRIPTION

Summer 2022

NPS UNIT: Chihuahuan Desert Network

Position #: 135

Position Title: Ecology Assistant

Primary natural resource discipline: Biological Sciences

Position Keywords: Ecology, Field Work, Fun, New Mexico, Texas, Botany, GIS, plant ecology, soil science, ecological monitoring,

Location: Las Cruces, New Mexico

COVID-19 NOTICE

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change and evolve, project timelines and structure remain flexible and it may be necessary to postpone start dates, begin work remotely, or reformulate the project's description. Should any development in the COVID-19 outbreak impair a project's timeline or results, the SIP Team will work with the park and project mentors to assess the situation and determine the best course of action at that time.

POSITION DESCRIPTION AND WORK PRODUCTS

Project Description: This position will work for the Chihuahuan Desert Inventory and Monitoring network and will assist us in completing long-term ecological monitoring in National Parks in New Mexico and Texas. This information is critical for understanding the status and trends in the health, diversity, and resilience of the park ecosystems. The intern will be required to work independently and, in a team, setting; in the field and in the office; and field work will be conducted throughout seven National Park units. This internship will provide the incumbent the chance to explore and learn the flora of the Chihuahuan Desert ecoregion while gaining valuable field sampling experience and learning critical data management protocols.

During the growing season, the intern will conduct vegetation sampling for long-term vegetation monitoring protocols both in upland and riparian systems. Work will include both re-visiting previously established sites and establishing a few new permanent vegetation and soils sampling plots. Ideally the intern will have strong background or strong interest in botany and plant sciences. Sampling methods on permanent plots include line-point intercept to measure plant cover, plant frequency, soil stability testing and biological soil crust identification and columnar cacti density. You will use sophisticated field sampling equipment including handheld GIS/GPS systems and ruggedized laptops; use database programs to maintain digital records of monitoring activities in the office. Work time (during the summer) will approximately be 60% field work and 40% office time. Intern would work as part of a 4-5-person team. Most sites are off-trail in the rugged backcountry, so hiking and carrying equipment is necessary.

From mid-Fall through the Spring, the intern will support water quality, quantity, benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring in springs, with the balance of their efforts focused on office tasks such as plant identification/curation, data entry, verification, and analysis, with time for completing their independent research project if they so choose.

Work Products: Collect detailed vegetation, exotic plant, and soils information from grassland and fire effects monitoring sites across seven parks. Intern will also assist in the collection of water quality, quantity, depth to groundwater, and riparian vegetation in parks with critical water resources. We also encourage interns to develop and individual project, and will provide time, materials, and guidance on developing a focused independent research project.

NATURAL & PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT



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Work setting will be approximately 60% in the field and 40% in the office. The position will be located at CHDN Field Office in Las Cruces, NM, which will be the primary office environment. Las Cruces is the second largest city in NM and part of the greater Las Cruces and El Paso, TX metropolitan areas. It boasts a vibrant culture and the amenities common to a large city. Climate in this area can range from 29-100 degrees and can experience intermittent snow and rain conditions.

The incumbent will conduct field work throughout the Chihuahuan Desert Inventory and Monitoring Network (CHPN; <https://www.nps.gov/im/chdn/index.htm>). CHPN encompasses seven parks in the desert and mountain landscapes of west Texas and southeastern New Mexico. The Chihuahuan Desert is shared by two nations and is the most biologically diverse desert in the Western Hemisphere. Summer temperatures can exceed 100F, with mild fall and winter conditions, and off-trail hiking in rough (and exceptionally beautiful) remote terrain will be common.

QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants must have completed at least three years toward an undergraduate degree in natural resources, botany, ecology, or a related field. Applicants must have an interest in and ability to work in a rural, mountainous location; must be physically able to work in rugged terrain and extreme temperatures; ability to conduct fieldwork in arduous backcountry situations (heavy backpack, tent camping, off-trail; wilderness); must have an ability to work well independently and with little supervision; must demonstrate skills and abilities to conduct scientific research and produce summary documents from this research; and must possess good computer and organizational skills. Plant taxonomy, botany, and vegetation field measurement experience and/or coursework is preferred.

The applicant must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. permanent legal resident (“green-card-holder”). Prior to starting this position, a government security background clearance will be required.

VEHICLE AND DRIVER LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Applicant must have a valid driver's license to drive a government vehicle.

A personal vehicle is REQUIRED for this position.

If the SIP is required to drive a park vehicle for their position, Stewards will perform a driving records search, and the SIP's ability to drive a park vehicle during work hours will be contingent upon the results. SIPs will have to have had their license for 3 years or be over the age of 21 to be insured as drivers under Stewards insurance policy. Examples of things that will preclude a SIP from driving a park vehicle include: SIP under the age of 21 years old that has been licensed less than three years, DUIs, multiple moving vehicle violations, suspended or revoked license, or three or more accidents (regardless of fault) in the last 3 years. If the driver's search is favorable, Stewards will provide driver's liability insurance while the intern is driving a NPS vehicle for their SIP position. If the SIP is denied coverage by Stewards, they will not be permitted to drive during work hours.

HOUSING

Park housing is NOT available. The intern will be responsible for finding housing in the nearby area. Park housing is not available. Housing options are predominately available in Las Cruces, NM and surrounding communities. Apartment rentals can range from \$350-\$1500+ a month in Las Cruces with the average for a 900sq ft. apartment being ~\$825.

INTERNSHIP DATES

Start Date: 07/25/2022

Number of Weeks: 52

Flexible Start Date: Yes

LIVING ALLOWANCE

52 Weeks (\$525.00/week = \$27300.00)



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RELOCATION ALLOWANCE

350.00

AMERICORPS PROGRAM



AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a program that engages individuals in intensive community service work with the goal of “helping others and meeting critical needs in the community”. The SIP Program is supported through AmeriCorps by providing a Segal Education Award in addition to the SIP’s living stipend and relocation allowance.

Upon successful completion of the SIP position, the SIPs (AmeriCorps members) are eligible for a \$1,638 - \$6,195 pre-tax education award that can be used for paying back student loans or for continuing their education. The amount of the education award is based on the length of the position.

AmeriCorps limits the number of terms an individual can serve to 4 terms. If an applicant has previously completed 4 SIP or other AmeriCorps positions, they will not be eligible to apply for an additional SIP position.

Partners

This position is offered through the National Park Service's Scientists in Parks (SIP) Program in partnership with various organizations.

