



**Position Title:** Visitor Center Assistant

**Position Service Site:** Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center Watersmeet MI

**Service Time:** September 9, 2024 – July 25, 2025 (1,700 Hour AmeriCorps Term, 46 weeks, 40 hours per week)

**Benefits:** Living stipend total for whole term = \$23,000 (\$500 per week). Education Award of approximately \$7,300 upon successful completion of service. To find out more about the Award: <https://americorps.gov/members-volunteers/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/find-out-more>. Health insurance optional (1 year/1,700 hour positions only, who are not already covered).

Housing is available.

**Requirements:** Valid Driver's license

**OVERVIEW:** The nearly one million-acre Ottawa National Forest is located in the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, an area known for its remote character, picturesque lakes and streams, vast northern hardwood forests, and abundant wildlife. The Ottawa offers numerous recreational opportunities including stream and lake fishing (blue-ribbon trout streams), deer and small-game hunting, canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking, hiking, birding, and cross-country and downhill skiing, among others.

The half million acres that make up the southern portion of the Ottawa contains numerous glacial lakes, which are home to bald eagles, ospreys, loons, smallmouth and largemouth bass, walleye, northern pike, and other native fish and wildlife species. Within this vast expanse lie three designated Wilderness areas: Sylvania, McCormick, and the Sturgeon River Gorge, each offering their own unique features.

**SERVICE DESCRIPTION:** Ottawa National Forest's Visitor Center Assistant is responsible for providing visitor information and helping to coordinate responses to inquiries about recreation facilities, user permits, points of interest, and related activities. Additionally, they are tasked with educating visitors on Leave No Trace principles, which aim to minimize negative impacts on the forest. This position may involve developing interpretive programs and assisting in delivering interpretive and environmental education initiatives. Furthermore, there may be opportunities for involvement in media and exhibit development for use within the unit and the Visitor Center.

They may also rotate into the recreation and Wilderness Crew periodically to help maintain and restore both developed and dispersed recreation sites in order to prevent resource damage and minimize the overall impact on the land. Facilities maintenance is crucial for ensuring sanitation impacts are minimized throughout the forest.

Service will be performed primarily in an office setting with some field components. During non-winter months, the position is expected to be 80% office/indoor-based and 20% field-based. Periodic field overnights will be required throughout non-winter months.

The Visitor Center Assistant will be trained/certified in:

- First Aid and CPR
- Defensive Driving
- Radio/SPOT device
- Avenza

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Manage Visitor Center operations
- Assist visitors by providing information about specific recreation opportunities and activities
- Greet visitors and answer phone calls
- Inform visitors of rules and regulations

- Support Visitor Center staff in educational programming
- Assist in development and presentation of interpretive/ educational programming at special events, school groups, community outreach
- Member uses initiative in carrying out recurring assignments independently. Detailed instructions are provided for new assignments. Unfamiliar situations or technical deviations from established practices are referred to mentor for guidance or resolution.
- Periodically rotate onto the Watersmeet Recreation crew perform and monitor day-to-day recreation maintenance, clean-up, and simple construction projects for sites, reporting issues. Day to day maintenance includes:
  - Mowing, trimming, and debris pick-up
  - Cleaning and maintaining fire rings, campsites, bathrooms, beaches, and other facilities
  - Helping to plow recreation sites in winter
- Member may take part in an overnight trip involving complex portage and campsite projects with the main mode of travel is by canoe and foot. Major duties include:
  - Backcountry maintenance using crosscut saws and axes, as part of the standard toolkit on designated wilderness campsites, and wilderness portage and hiking trails
  - Monitoring and inventory work to support Forest Plan objectives.

**HOUSING:** Members should be prepared to live in communal housing with other members of the program/organization/agency. Members should expect to have roommates, and must inform staff of any housing preferences or required accommodations.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Minimum age requirement is 18 years old
- Ability to work independently
- Excellent communication skills
- Understanding of or willingness to learn various conservation practices
- Passionate about outdoor recreation
- Possess a valid driver's license
- Physical demands and service environment regularly requires the service member to be outdoors in wooded areas and on uneven natural paths
- Ability to multitask and shift schedule and priorities to meet changing conditions
- Upon hire, a criminal background check will be conducted. Service with WisCorps will be considered probationary until all results are returned and have been reviewed

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