

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT:

GEORGE MELENDEZ WRIGHT INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG LEADERS IN CLIMATE CHANGE

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the *George Melendez Wright Initiative for Young Leaders in Climate Change* (YLCC) to provide a pathway for exemplary students in higher education (graduate students and advanced undergraduate students) to apply their skills and ideas to park-based challenges and solutions. The Initiative offers 12-week paid internships which allow students to gain valuable work experience, explore career options, and develop leadership skills through mentorship and guidance while helping to advance the NPS response to climate change. Successful students may be eligible for non-competitive hire into federal positions for which they qualify following completion of all academic requirements.

Interpreting Climate Change in Coal Dependent Communities

New River Gorge National River
Glen Jean, WV

INTERNSHIP PROJECT BACKGROUND

The national parks of southern West Virginia (New River Gorge National River, Bluestone National Scenic River, and Gauley River National Recreation Area) sit in the heart of the globally significant Appalachian Forest, an area that is considered to provide a sink for atmospheric CO₂ emissions and a potential refuge for species displaced due to rising temperatures. Although natural resources inside the park are protected, activities outside park boundaries (i.e., mountain top removal, clear-cut logging) threaten forest and aquatic habitat with potential to lessen the region's ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Compounding the problem is the region's long history of economic dependence upon these and other mineral extraction occupations for jobs.

The park recently added interpreting climate change as one of its primary Interpretive themes. The goal of this project would be to examine our existing programs targeted at high school and middle school students and develop a strategy to incorporate the climate change message into these programs using digital media resources (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Periscope and website) and traditional interpretive/environmental education programming (summer in-park day camps and school year classroom programs) with emphasis on facilitative dialogue.

INTERNSHIP PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The targeted audience is 5th – 12th grade students from surrounding counties who are current participants in park programs and will later become shareholders in protection of the region's resources as well as wage-earners in the local economy. The intern will interact with students during scheduled programs and then, armed with knowledge of programming, media platforms, and cultural issues, develop a method and means of delivery to best convey the climate change message to the target audience. Park interpretive staff will incorporate suggestions into current programming, provide new programming at the high school level, and use social media platforms to reach target audiences.

Tasks include:

- **Becoming familiar with and demonstrating sensitivity to** the socioeconomic and political issues relative to educating local populations about climate change.
- **Gathering data** from a variety of academic sources on the most current climate change research ongoing in central Appalachia.
- **Working with the park media team** to develop a social media/web based strategy that targets youth and current followers.
- **Observing and assisting education staff** in summer youth outreach programs.
- **Developing a series of curriculum based classroom presentations** for high school science students using Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives for Science in West Virginia Schools.

Products include:

- **Social media “package”** that includes Facebook posts, tweets, photos for Instagram and Snapchat posts, suggested Periscope recordings and website page entries designed to educate and offer avenues for action.
- **Information packet of current research** for park interpreters with talking points for interpretive presentations.
- **1) Lesson plan and 2) outdoor activity** for presentation during subsequent years’ Science Youth Nature Camps targeting 5th-8th grades.
- **1) Lesson plan and 2) outdoor activity** for presentation during subsequent years’ Rangers In Training
- **Secondary curriculum-based presentations** on topics such as:
 - Economic benefits of a healthy environment
 - Threats to existing forest resources and resulting impacts
 - Good land stewardship practices

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Minimum requirements include a student working towards a bachelor’s degree with preference towards a graduate-level or prospective graduate-level student with instruction in social science, marketing, journalism, or other fields that broadly relate to understanding audience segmentation and/or cognitive psychology of climate change communication or a demonstrated ability to manage similar types of complex communications.
2. Eight (8) college hours in a science-related field **or** experience and a demonstrated ability to understand and communicate scientific principles.
3. Nine (9) college hours of education **or** experience researching, developing and presenting education programs in a classroom and outdoor setting.
4. Knowledge of or a demonstrated ability to learn a variety of digital media platforms.
5. Applicants must possess a valid state driver’s license, personal transportation, and, if opting to utilize government housing, be willing to share housing with other seasonal park staff and commute approximately 40 miles one-way over predominantly four-lane highway.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The success of this project will depend a great deal upon successful development and use of leadership skills in the areas of:

1. **Communication.** The intern will be tasked with developing materials to communicate a sensitive message to a non-receptive community, necessitating: a) a knowledge of the barriers that may arise due to the socioeconomics of the area, and being sensitive to and capable of responding to these barriers, and; b) the ability to understand and distill the science behind climate change into a message both interesting and relevant.
2. **Interpersonal/Work Relationships.** The intern will be working with a variety of people in many different settings including park resource managers, university staff and academics, education staff and park managers. Depending upon availability of local teachers, they will work with professional educators in the development and review of curriculum-based presentations.
3. **Peer networking.** A hallmark of effective leadership is the ability to inspire and provoke your audience. There will be ample opportunity for this during development of the social media package.

DATES OF POSITION

The preferred starting date is May 15, 2016, however dates of the position are flexible, depending upon availability. Ideally the intern will work 480 hours between May 15 and August 15.

COMPENSATION

This initiative supports one student at \$15/hour for 12 weeks, or 480 hours.

HOUSING

Shared government housing will be provided at Thurmond, near Glen Jean, approximately 40 miles from the duty station of the position at Sandstone. There are no services at Thurmond, with the closest community of Oak Hill, 8,000 in population, approximately ten miles distance. Oak Hill has grocery stores, shopping, stores, and restaurants. Beckley, population 18,000, is the regional hub, serves a population of around 100,000, and is approximately 15 miles from Thurmond.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work will be performed both in and outdoors, with outdoor work over a variety of terrain and involving various outdoor activities, including whitewater rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, and hiking. All outdoor activities are performed with safety as a primary concern and ample training and supervision is provided. Should there be concerns about performance of one or more of the outdoor activities concession will be made to accommodate the needs of the intern.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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