



FRIENDS OF THE CHEAT

1343 North Preston Highway | Kingwood, WV 26537 | www.cheat.org

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: Seasonal Hellbender Technician

RELEASE DATE: March 18, 2026

Organization: Friends of the Cheat (FOC)

Office Location: Kingwood, West Virginia (Preston County)

Working Location: Survey work will occur in Preston, Randolph, Tucker, Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Webster, Nicolas, Upshur, Barbour, Lewis, and Harrison counties in West Virginia and will require significant overnight travel, with the majority of the work period requiring overnight stay in hotels or other lodging accommodations for ease of survey efforts. Lodging expenses will be covered by Friends of the Cheat during survey work. An FOC vehicle will be available for travel to and from survey sites.

Position: Seasonal Hellbender Technician

Type: Full-Time Seasonal – 40 hours per week, 12 week position

Start Date: No sooner than 07/01/26 and no later than 10/31/2026; only candidates that have full weekday availability in August and September 2026 will be considered for the position as this will be the peak monitoring window. The start date of the position shall occur between July 1 – July 15; the end date shall occur between October 1 – October 15.

Application Deadline: Application Packages are due April 20th, 2026 at 11:59 PM. Interviews with highly qualified candidates will be offered as application packages are received and reviewed, with a preference for in-person interviews. Virtual interviews will be offered to highly qualified candidates when extensive travel prohibits an in-person interview.

Summary

Friends of the Cheat is a 501(c)(3) non-profit watershed association with offices in Kingwood, Preston County, West Virginia, working to restore, preserve, and promote the outstanding natural qualities of the Cheat River watershed since 1994. In recent years, FOC has begun working with state and federal agencies, private landowners, academic institutions, and land managers to better understand hellbender occupancy, distribution, and recruitment in the Cheat River watershed as well as neighboring watersheds in West Virginia. This position is slated to be funded by foundational grant awards that will commence in April or May of 2026. The monitoring phase of this project is a part of the larger West Virginia Hellbender Conservation Collaborative initiative.

The Seasonal Hellbender Technician will assist FOC's Conservation Technician, other FOC staff, and project partners in all facets of permitted hellbender monitoring, including river and stream

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snorkeling, habitat and site condition surveys, water quality monitoring, nest monitoring, behavioral observations, and public outreach to promote hellbender conservation.

The Seasonal Hellbender Technician will be expected to spend long days (10-12 hours) traveling to and from remote sites without cell service, hiking to sites with gear and equipment, and spending multiple hours immersed in streams and rivers to conduct snorkel monitoring for hellbenders. A snorkel and mask, wetsuits and/or dry suits, and other gear will be provided.

The Seasonal Hellbender Technician may also be involved with other FOC staff or partner organizations for conservation activities and tasks. For a more extensive description of tasks the Seasonal Hellbender Technician will be expected to perform, please review the accompanying **Seasonal Hellbender Technician Job Description** document at <https://cheat.org/work-with-foc/>

Required Qualifications

Physical Requirements

- A strong ability to swim with a preference for documentation of swimming experience, such as previous lifeguard certification or training, snorkeling as part of a former position, or other indicators that swim ability is proficient
- The ability to hike in rough terrain up to 10 miles a day
- Lifting and carrying up to 40 pounds of gear while hiking
- The ability to withstand cold temperatures in water for long periods of time (appropriate gear will be provided)
- Comfortability in deeper portions of rivers and streams (deeper than 6 FT)
- Comfortability and familiarity with working in remote areas without cell service
- Wayfinding abilities using paper maps and familiarity with mapping software such as Avenza Maps, Forest Maps 2, and ArcGIS Field Maps
- Able to start early mornings (7 AM) and work long field days (8-12 hours)

Technical and Field Skills Requirements

- The ability to collect and record accurate and organized field data and digital data
- The ability to pay attention to detail and possess strong observation skills; the ability to notice small details and patterns of non-descript or cryptic species
- Willingness to adjust daily field plans based on weather, stream conditions, landowner access, other crew needs, often with minimal advanced notice
- Willingness to accept direction, feedback, and correction, restart tasks if needed, and incorporate feedback in order to improve technique or efficiency

Professional Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree, or working towards a Bachelor's Degree

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- The ability to work independently or as part of a team
- Direct and considerate communication skills
- The ability to maintain a positive attitude in physically and mentally demanding conditions
- Strong organizational skills and data management
- A passion for conservation, and specifically, for hellbenders and river ecosystems

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience with river and stream snorkeling in a work or personal capacity
- Experience with hellbender surveys or conservation efforts
- Experience with aquatic habitat surveys or water quality monitoring
- Experience with aquatic conservation or restoration practices
- Experience with aquatic species identification and knowledge of stream ecosystems

Compensation

- \$15 per hour up to 40 hours per week
- Company vehicle available for work-related travel
- Mileage reimbursement for using personal vehicle for work-related travel (excludes personal travel to and from work station) at \$0.725 cents per mile
- Lodging expenses (hotels, etc.) covered for overnight travel
- Opportunity for no-cost short term shared housing from June – September 2026

Application

Please go to <https://cheat.org/work-with-foc/> for the full **Seasonal Hellbender Technician Job Description**. Interested applicants should e-mail a cover letter, resume, and contact information for three references to FOC's Conservation Technician, Maggie Biss at maggie@cheat.org. Please include "Seasonal Hellbender Technician Application" in the subject line. Applications will be accepted until April 20th at 11:59 PM. Friends of the Cheat will offer interviews as highly qualified candidates are identified. FOC and partners will look to select a candidate no later than May 31st, 2026.