



FRIENDS OF THE CHEAT

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

JOB DESCRIPTION

Position: Seasonal Hellbender Technician

Supervisor: Conservation Program Director

Direct Report: Conservation Technician

Position Summary:

This position is a full-time (40 hours per week) seasonal position (12 weeks, July - September 2026). Full weekday availability in the months of August and September is a requirement of the position. The position is centered around hellbender conservation activities, namely assisting with monitoring and outreach initiatives intended on improving the understanding of Eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*; hereafter referred to as “hellbender”) occupancy and recruitment in West Virginia as well as promoting conservation actions for the species. The Seasonal Hellbender Technician will be required to travel extensively as part of the position for ease of survey efforts and will need to be available for overnight stays in hotels or other lodging accommodations for the majority of the position’s term.

The Seasonal Hellbender Technician is supervised and managed by the Conservation Program Director. The Seasonal Hellbender Technician will report daily to the Conservation Technician/Crew Lead for the Project and assist them in all project tasks.

Specific Project Tasks include:

- Diurnal and potential nocturnal snorkel surveys that will occur in rivers and streams in West Virginia, require strong swimming abilities, and the ability to tolerate cold water conditions (wetsuit and/or drysuit will be provided); survey sites will be in remote locations and many will require hiking with gear to reach the designated survey site.
- Stream/river assessments such as habitat surveys, pebble counts, embeddedness surveys, and water quality monitoring
- Assisting Marshall University graduate students in permitted nest surveys and mark-recapture surveys
- Assisting project partners with environmental-DNA sampling
- Assisting Friends of the Cheat staff with snorkeling outreach events and other environmental education events for K-12 students and public groups
- Assisting with developing hellbender-focused outreach materials, activities, and/or lesson plans
- Installing conservation signage and distributing outreach materials to partners
- Cleaning and maintaining sampling gear
- Deploying underwater cameras and reviewing footage for species behavior
- Assisting with other FOC conservation activities as needed, such as water quality monitoring, acid mine drainage treatment maintenance, riparian buffer restoration,

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electrofishing monitoring, aquatic organism passage surveys, and in-stream water quality monitoring.

- Data entry and QA/QC
- Assisting other Friends of the Cheat programs or other project partners (West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Monongahela National Forest) as needed

The position **requires**:

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
- Withstanding 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
- 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