

Volunteer Project Description

Position Title: Saugatuck River Watershed Continuity Project
Supervisors: Sally Harold and Cynthia Fowx
Location: Numerous sites along the Saugatuck River system (field work), and Devil's Den Preserve, 33 Pent Road, Weston, CT 06883 (office work)
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Purpose of this position:

A goal of The Conservancy's Saugatuck River Watershed Partnership is to reduce the impediments to fish, wildlife and other aquatic life that require passage in streams or along stream corridors. To accomplish this goal, volunteers conduct surveys to identify problem culverts, dams and bridge crossings.

The network of roads in the watershed fragments the continuity of our rivers and streams. Poorly designed culverts and bridges can prevent fish and wildlife from reaching spawning grounds and other important habitats. Through this project, volunteers can learn to identify these problems and work with The Nature Conservancy and other partners to prioritize and plan for solutions. There are over 500 [river crossings](#) in the watershed. The degree of habitat fragmentation and degradation caused by these crossings has not been fully evaluated.

Tasks related to this position:

- locate stream crossings, using map
- assess and record quality, and status of stream crossing, using list of parameters
- transfer data to Geographic Information System in office (or Excel spreadsheet if unfamiliar with GIS)
- maintain contact with project director to communicate findings

Qualifications:

- Training on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can be provided, but GIS knowledge is preferred
- 17 & up; under 18 accompanied by an adult
- This is, in part, an outdoor project. Depending on the season, volunteers must be willing to work in cold weather and in rough terrain.
- a general scientific background will be helpful; attention to detail is critical
- must have own transportation and be comfortable reading maps
- must be able to work independently (or in self-designated, unsupervised team)

Preferred Start Date: No specific start date

Deadline for completion of project: one year after start date

Estimated total time commitment: The duration of the commitment is dependent upon the number of monitors recruited.



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Preferred day and/or time of the week: Independent field work can be conducted any time. Training, communication and office work will be coordinated with supervising staff and will take place sometime during normal office hours (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM.)

How will a volunteer benefit from this position? This is an opportunity to develop spatial and ecological understandings of aquatic ecosystems in general; and the Saugatuck River and Long Island Sound watersheds, specifically. The connections between man-made infrastructure and the natural environment will be explored. Motivated volunteers will hone scientific techniques used in field studies, and GIS skills.

How does completion of this project assist The Nature Conservancy? Information gathered through these surveys can be used to help local highway departments and conservation commissions with planning and maintenance decisions. Additionally, the information collected about these crossings will become part of a basin-wide database. These accomplishments assist The Nature Conservancy with accomplishing goals towards the protection of the Saugatuck River and establishing guidelines for similar water resources.