

Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources

University of Vermont

Perennial Summer Internship Program - 2024

Internship Title: Agricultural Water Quality & Organic Waste Recycling Intern

Internship Site: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets – Division of Water Quality

Office Locations – 94 Harvest Lane, Williston and 116 State Street, Montpelier

Public transportation to office locations is available through Green Mountain Transit. From the Burlington Downtown Transit Center, the Williston office is accessible by the Williston bus line and the Montpelier office is accessible by the Montpelier LINK Express.

Please note that this internship position can support a hybrid work approach with both in person office experience and some remote work experience depending on the individual and their supervisor approval for specific aspects of their internship assignment that lend themselves to be completed remotely without supervision.

Description:

Vermont's Universal Recycling Law passed in 2014 and has phased in various requirements from composting to residential recycling collection. As many folks are aware, this law requires Vermonters to divert organic wastes from the state's single landfill. It is increasingly understood that these "wastes" have nutrient value and can be recycled for animal feed, fuel, or fertilizer, instead of taking up limited landfill capacity. Recognizing this potential, farms are increasingly on the receiving end of these materials and are helping to close the nutrient cycle. Here is a scenario: corn and hay are grown to feed dairy cows; cows produce milk that goes to a dairy processing plant; the plant produces VT's famous dairy products and, incidentally, processing waste; this waste (containing nutrients) goes back to the farm to fertilize the corn and hay land, closing the nutrient loop. Recycling these waste streams reduces the need for importing fertilizer from outside the watershed and, in turn, can lessen the water quality impacts to our lakes and rivers.

Different waste streams are created and/or imported onto farm operations every day for a variety of uses – from oddly shaped vegetables that aren't saleable to wash water from local craft breweries. The disposal of waste is regulated through several state government programs and determining the appropriate regulatory program that applies to each waste stream is increasingly complex and nuanced to understand. Each program has different eligibility criteria, such as the source, quantity, and/or management of the waste material on a farm. For instance, farms can receive food residuals (e.g. expired food waste) and, depending if it's managed by composting or feeding it to an anaerobic digester, will require enrollment in different programs. As businesses and community members work to find end locations for various organic waste streams, and as farm operations are being asked to accept these organic wastes more often, nuanced requirements are creating barriers to increased organic waste recycling. Additionally, the time and effort required to understand regulatory requirements may lead individuals or businesses to participate in activities outside of the requirements which can lead to short- and long-term environmental impacts.

This internship position will involve gaining an understanding of the various wastes that are managed on farms. It will then require researching existing Vermont laws and regulations and interviewing subject matter experts from various state agencies and Vermont businesses (including farms). This position will include opportunities for site visits to Vermont businesses and farms. The intern will strive to understand, clarify, and document regulatory nuances related to organic waste recycling on farms. The intern will develop appropriate visual and web-based guidance for farmers and the general public to better understand what laws and regulations apply under what circumstances as more waste products end up on farms for nutrient recycling and utilization efforts.

Desired qualifications/skills/coursework:

- The ideal candidate for this position will have completed coursework in environmental policy, natural resources, and/or biological sciences.
- Experience working on a farm, or a strong connection to the agricultural community will be beneficial for this position.
- Possessing a realistic approach to real world environmental problems and having the ability to distill complex information into clear public communication will be beneficial for this position.

Supervision: Jessica Mason, Agricultural Water Quality Specialist

Start and End Dates: Mid-May – Mid-August, 2024 (exact start/end dates are negotiable)

Total Hours: 20 hours/week for 12 weeks

Compensation: \$18/hour

How to apply: Rubenstein students who will have completed their sophomore or junior year by summer 2024 are eligible to apply. Students graduating in May 2024 are not eligible to apply. Earning Independent Study or Internship credit through the Rubenstein Internship Program is required.

1. Click the following link to view the Rubenstein Perennial Internship Descriptions in Handshake:

<https://uvm.joinhandshake.com/employers/226837>

- If asked to log in: click “UVM Net ID Login” & login.
- Click the Favorite button to enable easier searches in the future.

2. Click “View All Jobs” in Jobs at Rubenstein Perennial Internship Program box on right side of page.

3. You should now see the great Perennial Internship opportunities! Click “View Details” to learn more about each position.

- Please do take the time to carefully read each individual description so that you don’t miss a great opportunity by judging an internship solely on its title.
- You may apply for up to three Perennial Internships.
- All applications are due by **11:59pm, on Monday, February 5th, 2024.**

4. You'll need to upload both required documents in Handshake before you can apply for any Perennial Internship:

- Click on your name at top right of screen in Handshake
- Select Documents.

5. Please upload all documents as pdfs. The following are the required documents:

- Resume
 - Cover Letter
- i. You should write and upload a unique cover letter for each position to which you are applying.
 - ii. In your cover letter, provide the name & contact information for at least one professional reference. This could be someone who supervised you in a past work/internship/volunteer position, or a professor or teacher, etc. The person listed should not be the person who completes your recommendation form.

6. In addition to the documents listed above, a **recommendation form will need to be completed by a Rubenstein faculty, graduate student, or staff member of your choosing**. When you ask your recommender if they are willing to complete the form to support your application, please provide your recommender:

- This link: [RECOMMENDATION FORM](#)
- Only one recommendation form needs to be completed regardless of how many Perennial Internships you are applying for.
- Your recommender will complete & submit this form online and then your recommendation will be confidentially added to your application(s). This recommendation form needs to be submitted by the February 5th, deadline.

7. Make sure that your resume and cover letter(s) are as strong as they can be! Utilize the resources around you:

- The Rubenstein Student Advisory Board members are great at reviewing resumes/cover letters and providing helpful feedback! Email the SAB to schedule an appointment after the start of the semester, or stop by their peer mentoring hours when the Spring semester starts (schedule to be posted by Jan 16, 2024): rsenrsab@uvm.edu
- Get your resume and cover letter reviewed by a Career Counselor at the Career Center. You can check the Career Center's drop-in hours [here](#). The Career Center also offers a guide on building your resume available [here](#).
- Get connected with folks in the Rubenstein Student Services Office for resume and cover letter review during drop-in hours:
Meghan Young – Tuesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm, Aiken 219 Emily LeForce – Thursdays, 1:00-3:00pm, Aiken 220 Hub
Cathy Shiga-Gattullo – Mondays, 1:00-3:00pm, Aiken 220 Hub

8. If you are selected to interview for a Perennial Internship, you will be contacted by the site to set up an interview during late February to early March.