Conservation Education Camp Counselor  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
Summer Environmental Education Camps

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CLASS  
Conservation Education Camp Counselors are temporary summer positions found only in the instructional camps operated by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Incumbents of these positions are responsible for the general welfare of the campers, children ages 11 to 17, and volunteers. Counselors organize and implement a variety of educational and recreational programs and activities designed to increase the campers’ awareness of environmental stewardship and related issues.

CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA  
Conservation Education Camp Counselors are employed on a temporary basis during the summer months. They supervise a small group of campers (cabin group) on a 24-hour basis, overseeing their daily activities.

Incumbents are responsible for conducting workshops and leading educational activities in areas such as general ecology, aquatic ecology, the forest environment and current environmental issues. They may also lead field activities such as stream sampling for aquatic life and soil quality testing. Counselors coordinate and conduct recreational activities including canoeing, hiking, archery, fishing, swimming and hunter safety.

RELATED CLASSES  
Conservation Education Camp Directors are responsible for developing and supervising a comprehensive training program for staff and volunteers at their camps. They set program and work schedules, make staff assignments and review and approve the Conservation Education Camp Counselors’ lesson plans. They evaluate staff’s work performance as well as the overall effectiveness of the program.

Environmental Educators conduct a broad range of environmental education and interpretative programs for school youth, teachers, special groups, and the general public. Environmental Educator positions are typically year-round positions located at an Environmental Education Center or in the central office in Albany.

ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES AND TASKS  
Organize education, recreation and work projects.  
• Meet with other camp staff to plan activities.  
• Draw up daily, weekly and seasonal plans.  
• Develop and implement education recreation and work projects.  
• Update and evaluate activities.

Conduct and supervise activities of campers on a 24-hour basis.  
• Register and orient campers.  
• Instruct and supervise campers in education and recreation projects such as live firing for the hunter safety education program and soil quality testing.  
• Administer first aid to campers if necessary.  
• Supervise waterfront activities.  
• Supervise and implement overnight camp-outs.
• Provide entertainment, such as skits, singing and stories.
• Shuttle campers to and from trail heads.
• Counsel campers who become homesick or disruptive.
• Conduct safety tours with campers to inform them of potential hazards.

Assist in the development and maintenance of camp construction projects.
• Participate in the set-up and breakdown of the camp.
• Assist in the purchasing, inventory and delivery of supplies, materials and equipment.
• Maintain an awareness of safety concerns in all camp activities.

Facilitate a positive camp experience.
• Assist in public relations and serve as camp liaison between the program and parents/sponsors.
• Support and assist other counselors in the development and completion of camp activities.
• Maintain a positive attitude towards camp objective and processes.

In the absence of the Conservation Education Camp Director.

**INDEPENDENCE OF OPERATION**
Conservation Education Camp Counselors are directly supervised by a Conservation Education Camp Director who sets schedules, makes assignments, provides training, and approves and evaluates counselors’ lesson plans. In addition, peer support and evaluation are provided in weekly meetings and training sessions. Counselors work essentially independently during field activities.

Conservation Education Camp Counselors must possess sound judgment and decision-making abilities since they are responsible for the education, health and safety of their campers. Errors in judgment could result in serious injury or, from a programmatic viewpoint, negatively influence the success of group lessons and activities. The Camp Program’s goals and objectives can only be achieved when counselors work cooperatively to insure that maximum learning potential is nurtured.

The Camp Program provides a handbook to all staff that discusses health and safety policies and procedures, environmental education lesson plans and resources, as well as other procedures for problems that commonly arise at camp.

**COMPLEXITY**
At all times, Conservation Education Camp Counselors are responsible for the health and safety of the campers according to standards set forth by DEC and the NYS Department of Health.

Conservation Education Camp Counselors perform a wide range of tasks that vary in difficulty level from planning and organizing educational programs to physically setting up and closing camp.
They must develop, implement, and evaluate environmental workshops and activities which require that incumbents be knowledgeable in areas such as natural sciences, environmental studies and environmental education. Incumbents of these positions must approach problem-solving creatively while demonstrating leadership capabilities and an acute sensitivity to the ever-changing needs of young people.

COMMUNICATION
Conservation Education Camp Counselors communicate orally on a continual basis with the Conservation Education Camp Director, other counselors, campers, parents and sponsors. They also communicate in writing in the preparation of lesson plans, registration of campers and preparation of reports.

The counselor is a parent-like figure to the campers serving as a role model, a mediator, and an educator at all times. As representatives of the Department, oral communications with campers, parents and sponsors are critical to developing trust and establishing credibility in the camper program.

In addition, counselors may occasionally communicate directly with vendors, other agency personnel and Department of Health staff to obtain information pertinent to the success of their programs.

SUPERVISION EXERCISED
Conservation Education Camp Counselor is a non-supervisory class. However, they may directly supervise volunteers that have been assigned to their group, trip or cabin. In addition, in the absence of the Conservation Education Camp Director, a counselor may be given temporary supervisory duties over the program until such time as the Conservation Education Camp Director returns.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILL AND ABILITY
- Working knowledge of natural resources, biological sciences, environmental studies and environmental education.
- Working knowledge of water safety instruction, canoeing, or lifeguard techniques.
- Working knowledge and interest in hunter safety instruction, archery, backpacking or camping.
- Ability to get along well with others and exhibit flexibility.
- Ability to communicate positively and energetically while motivating campers and peers.
- Ability to plan, organize, and implement environmental education programs and recreational activities.
- Ability to convey a sincere appreciation for and interest in the natural world.
- Ability to organize and lead field trips.
- Ability to instruct campers in the proper handling of tools and recreational equipment.
MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS
Conservation Education Camp Counselors must have 60 semester college credit hours, including at least 12 semester credit hours in natural resources, environmental studies, environmental education, outdoor recreation, STEM: Science (biology, chemistry, computer, earth, environmental, and physics) Technology Engineering Mathematics, elementary-middle-secondary-special education, or camp management or two years of work experience in natural resources, biological sciences, geology, environmental studies, environmental sciences, environmental education, outdoor recreation, elementary-middle-secondary-special education, or camp management. Conservation Education Camp Counselors must be certified in approved first aid courses as required by the NYS Department of Health, such as American Red Cross Responding to Emergencies or equivalent and in American Red Cross CPR/AED for the Professional Rescuer or equivalent. The CPR/AED certification must be in its first year. Depending upon individual assignments, certification in areas such as American Red Cross Water Safety Instruction or Life Guard with Waterfront Module may be required. May be required to serve as Conservation Education Camp Health Director alternate if you have a New York State Emergency Medical Technician or higher level of certification, such as licensed practical nurse, registered nurse or physician’s assistant. Must have and maintain a current Driver’s License.