

**Yale University President's Public Service Fellowship**  
**Summer 2021**

**Proposal for Fellow working remotely for organization**

- Organization: Mill River Watershed Association
- Full street address of organization: 30 Court Street, New Haven, CT 06511
- Website: <https://millriverofsouthcentralct.org/>
- Name and title of person who will be the Fellow's direct supervisor:

Kimberly DiGiovanni, PhD, PE

- Phone number and e-mail address of proposed direct supervisor:

Cell: 609-481-5977 Office: 203-582-7764

Email: kadigiovanni@qu.edu

- Placement dates:

June 7 – Aug. 6

- Are placement dates flexible? Are you able to accommodate a Fellow working in a different time zone?

Yes, placement dates are flexible and a fellow working in a different time zone could be accommodated with a minimum of 2 hours availability during normal working hours.

- Proposed 37.5 hour per week work schedule:

Total of 37.5 hours per week. Flexible work hours (e.g. M-F 7.5 hours per day or M-R 9+ hours per), some weekend/evenings hours will be required for events, attendance of MRWA meeting once per month from 6-8 pm ET.

- Organization description:

The mission of the Mill River Watershed Association to promote effective stewardship of the Watershed through conservation and restoration focused on long term watershed health, informed community involvement and utilization of watershed's resources. The MRWA serves those the Mill River Watershed, an area of approximately 38 square miles (24,584 acres) including New Haven. The Mill River is approximately 12.6 miles long originating in Cheshire and ultimately flowing through New Haven into New Haven Harbor.

- **Write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting:**
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The PPSF Fellow will work closely with the MRWA in support of our mission to promote effective stewardship of the Mill River and may serve in various capacities including membership development and engagement, maintaining and building partner relations, planning and executing community outreach and engagement events, creating content for social media and press releases, website updates and fundraising initiatives.

- Write a more complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow.

The PPSF Fellow will work closely with the MRWA in support of our mission to promote effective stewardship of the Mill River and focus their activities in New Haven. The PPSF Fellow will execute initiatives identified in the Mill River Watershed Based Plan (2018), developed with support from a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection through a U.S. EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 grant, and Strategic Public Relations Plans (2019) developed for the MRWA by Quinnipiac University graduate students in communications following an in depth analysis of the MRWA and opportunities for further advancement of our mission. Several key objectives and strategies with which the PPSF Fellow would participate are outlined below:

*Goal 1: Promote the Mill River and participation in MRWA among New Haven residents.*

*Objectives and Strategies:*

1. Increase awareness of the Mill River and MRWA
    - a. Audience engagement: Organizing and advertising relevant events e.g. informative historical, environmental and other speaking engagements to provide interest, feedback, and participation, and engage communities.
    - b. News Peg: Strategically identify and relate the Mill River to news items on which media is already reporting. These opportunities exist at the intersection of public interest, interests of the news media, and organizational interest. Media coverage can generate conversation starters and bring the Mill River into the local lexicon. Reporters may use the Mill River to provide a geographical reference for local stories, to exemplify the results of weather patterns, or contextualize stories of development and infrastructure.
  2. Increase the social media presence of the MRWA
    - a. Present Newsworthy Information: Mine the MRWA's internal expertise and watershed management plan for newsworthy information. Presenting this information in a public-ready form via social media will attract followers, encourage sharing, and provide assets with which to expand social reach.
    - b. Social Media Engagement: Implement a structure for the MRWA's social media accounts that will help to keep content organized and scheduled for easier distribution. Depending on how many individuals will be responsible for social media efforts, a content calendar is an efficient way to outline what each team member will post on which outlets on specific days and times.
    - c. Search Engine Optimization (SEO): This strategy is imperative to building the MRWA's online presence because the higher ranked an organization is on a search results page, the more visitors it will receive.
  3. Increase media coverage of the MRWA
    - a. Publicity: Gaining publicity of the MRWA is valuable because it is believed that there is a causal link between publicity and public support. Publicity also provides third-party
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endorsement regarding the organization's message. This endorsement is viewed even stronger when it comes from an outside, unbiased entity.

*Goal 2:* Raise awareness around water quality in the Mill River and contributing factors.

*Objectives and Strategies:*

1. To raise awareness of the Mill River and community involvement
  - a. Audience participation: Bring individual residents of the New Haven area into direct contact with the Mill River for recreational opportunities (e.g. paddling events) and cleanups. Encourage the audience to pick up litter in the watershed and share their findings on social media. Invite members of the public to cooperative cleanup days and provide guidance for what to look for and how to safely collect properly dispose of pollutants.
  - b. Special Events: Staged activities orchestrated to gain attention and acceptance will increase community involvement and further raise awareness. Recreation centers on the Mill River, outdoor enthusiast events, and educational opportunities will bring people together for the shared goal of enjoying the outdoors, a prime opportunity to raise awareness of pollutants and the river.
  - c. Newsworthy information: The impact of pollutants in the Mill River water supply is significant, local, and timely. Homing in on the unusual elements of pollutants further magnifies newsworthiness e.g. amounts of trash collected from a particular location before draining directly into the river.
2. Build partner relationships
  - a. Advance coalitions and alliance with shared interests' groups including and expanding current working relations.

Detailed metrics and tactics are further included in the above linked plans. The PPSF Fellow will work with the MRWA to execute and evaluate these goals.

- List specific skills/experience required for this work:

Communications, public relations, media and/or website design experience  
Community outreach and engagement (especially STEM related)  
Strong written and oral communication skills  
Passion for environmental work

- Equipment/resources you will provide to help Fellow conduct work:

The PPSF Fellow will be provided mentorship and guidance from the MRWA, which includes industry professionals, academics and knowledgeable community members, and any necessary equipment/resources to fulfill their role, including access to MRWA email.

- Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your organization in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, describe any work that Yale students have done with your organization.

Our organization has no past experience working with Yale PPSF Fellows or Yale undergraduate students.

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