



“Summer Volunteer Opportunity” Innoko National Wildlife Refuge McGrath, Alaska

Innoko National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is looking for 6 volunteers to work as Biological Science Technicians during this (2012) summer field season. Volunteers will get a chance to work on projects including; moose browse abundance surveys, land cover map validation, intensive vegetation sampling in meadow-like habitats, and small mammal live trapping. You will also be provided valuable wildlife management / remote field safety training including; general aviation safety, aviation water ditching, motor boat operator certification, bear safety / awareness, using less-lethal deterrents for bears, and firearms training (note, not everyone will be required to carry a firearm, but everyone receives the training to be safer around firearms). First Aid/CPR training will be provided for those who do not have a current certification.

Those selected for these positions must be in Anchorage, Alaska by Sunday, May 13. Please expect these positions to end in late August or early September. For those whose schedule allows and are interested in assisting with computer data entry, camp close-up, etc. we may be able to extend this opportunity through September.

Each volunteer will be financially responsible for travel to Anchorage, Alaska and back to their point of origin. Innoko NWR will cover travel costs from Anchorage to McGrath and from McGrath back to Anchorage. Once in Anchorage, the refuge will provide a financial allowance for food and lodging. Volunteers will be required to stay in Anchorage for a few days to complete some of the aviation related safety training. Once in McGrath, all food and lodging will be provided. Volunteers can expect to stay in McGrath for a couple of weeks before departing for the refuge Field Camp. Once at Field Camp, all food, lodging and virtually all the field gear needed (right down to the hip boots and sleeping bag) will be provided. Field Camp is our year-round base of operations while on the refuge. There are cabins for sleeping, a combined sleeping/office/lab cabin, maintenance cabins, and a kitchen cabin.

Innoko NWR is headquartered in the small remote community of McGrath, Alaska. McGrath is accessible only by air, has a population of approximately 320 residents, and is located approximately 240 miles NNW of Anchorage, Alaska. The refuge is situated approximately 60 miles NW of McGrath and is accessible only by air. The refuge is very remote and isolated even by Alaska standards. This 3.85 million acre refuge has no communities, no roads, no trails, no air strips, no cell phone service, and no internet service within its boundary. (Imagine an area larger than Connecticut with no one living there, no roads, and no roads leading to the boundary.) Communication with the headquarters in McGrath is by 2-way radio and satellite phone. Due to the complexities in scheduling resupply flights, coordination among other projects, and space issues, please do not expect to be able to travel between the refuge and McGrath during the summer. Once you are on the refuge, plan on spending the rest of the summer there. Of course, emergency situations happen, and every effort is made to accommodate those situations.

Travel to the refuge is by float plane while most travel on the refuge is by open power boat (18-24'). If travel by small plane or open boats is a concern, this is not the place for you.

Both black bears and brown bears occur throughout the refuge. Also of concern are female moose in early summer with newborn calves. While there have only been three incidents in the 30 year history of the refuge requiring a bear be killed, applicants must be willing to use a firearm in order to protect their life or the lives of others in their crew. If this is a personal moral problem, then working on an Alaskan refuge is not for you.

Initial time spent at Field Camp is devoted to getting the camp up and running, assisting with servicing outboard motors, launching boats into the Innoko River, assembling camping gear, etc. During this time we will also be learning/practicing GPS navigation, practicing driving boats safely on the Innoko River, learning identification and classification of boreal habitats, learning how to record habitat data on pocket computers, and digital camera documentation standards. Crews will likely head down the Innoko River for a 4-6 week effort of classifying habitats and conducting an assessment of moose browse conditions. This work will be conducted from remote spike camps that will need to be relocated from time to time.

Following the habitat classification work, crews will return to Field Camp for a short break and to learn protocols for the next sampling efforts. One crew will conduct intensive vegetation transects (both point sampling and Daubenmier plots) in meadow-like habitats. Training will be provided in the sampling protocols as well as use of plant keys, plant presses, vegetation identification, and data entry standards. A second crew will conduct small mammal live trapping at 2 different locations. Training will be provided for all protocols of trap site set-up and setting traps; small mammal identification, handling, marking; study skin preparation; and data entry standards. Crews will likely be based out of remote spike camps for about 4 weeks. Due to the trapping protocol, those participating in the small mammal trapping project must be willing to work 10-11 consecutive days. All of the habitat classification / moose browse and intensive vegetation sampling work will be conducted during a normal 5-day work week.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System is America's only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation. Alaskan refuges offer the opportunity to work in virtually unspoiled ecosystems. Innoko National Wildlife Refuge is the only refuge with parts of the Iditarod National Historic Trail running through it; and relics of the Gold Rush are still evident today if one looks closely.

Innoko NWR is located in what is known as Interior Alaska. The refuge has over 22,000 lakes and more than 7,100 miles of rivers, creeks, and sloughs running through it; the Yukon River forms the western boundary of the refuge. Innoko NWR was specifically created for the conservation of waterfowl, black bear, moose, and furbearers, as well as other species. Interior Alaska is also home to an extremely healthy mosquito population. Innoko NWR is situated in a large river basin surrounded by low (generally less than 1,000 ft), rolling hills. Lowland areas are dominated by wetland, muskeg, and black spruce bog habitats. Upland areas are dominated by spruce forests, deciduous forests, and mixed spruce-deciduous forests. Tundra areas are intermixed throughout the refuge. There are no clear-water streams on the refuge, however, the fishing for northern pike and whitefish (shee fish) can be world class. In addition, bird watching, photography and wildlife viewing opportunities abound.

Applicants must be willing to live and work in very remote and primitive camping conditions and be physically fit to walk through marshes, boreal forests, and tundra environments – all of which have poor footing. These positions are for the adventurous who want to be away from modern conveniences for the summer and have a strong desire to assist the refuge by conducting these biological research projects.

Please email a resume with references and contact information to:

Christian_Eggleston@fws.gov by 10:00 a.m. AKST on March 19, 2012. For questions please contact Chris Eggleston, Deputy Refuge Manager at (907) 524-2023 or Toll Free 1-888-601-7970.