

2020 Teacher Ranger Teacher Program Guidance –

Program Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) Teacher Ranger Teacher (TRT) program is an extended professional development program for K-12 educators. The purpose of the program is to provide teachers an opportunity to learn about NPS educational resources and themes while earning continuing education graduate credits through a partnership between the NPS and the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver). Teachers will spend several weeks in an immersive, on-site experience in a park or NPS program office producing a major project of NPS-based educational materials or programs and complete three graduate credit hours of coursework in Experiential Learning online. The program offers teachers a unique opportunity to enhance their teaching skills in Science, Technology, Math, and Engineering (STEM) or history and civics fields through working directly with NPS scientific data and primary resources. Both the NPS major project and on-site experience as well as the CU Denver online course are required for the participants to successfully complete the program.

The emphasis of the program is to engage teachers from schools with underserved student populations, especially schools in rural and urban areas and from tribal schools. The intended impact of the program is to reach out to underserved students by providing a professional development opportunity to their teachers. In order to impact the greatest number of students, the NPS should aim to recruit new teachers into the TRT program each year.

Program Goals

- Provide teachers with place-based learning experiences
- Provide access to the rich resources of the national parks for inclusion into classroom curricula
- Provide teachers with new knowledge and skills related to the resources and themes interpreted in the NPS
- Provide parks with the expertise of teachers to inform and shape education programs and materials
- Increase outreach to underserved students in rural and urban areas focusing on Title 1 and tribal schools

Program Administration

The TRT program is administered through a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) agreement with the University of Colorado Denver. While participating in the program, teachers are considered “student interns” of the university and not employees of NPS nor CU Denver. Stipends provided to teachers are administered through CU Denver upon their successful completion of both the NPS and CU Denver program requirements. CU Denver will also provide participants IRS tax statements. Participants are responsible for any applicable taxes on the stipend as income. Teacher participants are not covered by worker’s compensation under NPS or CU Denver.

Expected Level of Effort

Successful completion of the TRT program will equal approximately 240 hours of effort. The actual number of days or weeks that the teacher spends at the park or program office can be negotiated at the park or program office level as long as the program requirements can be met by the end of the teacher’s experience. TRTs are expected to spend approximately one to two hours each day in online course work.

240 hours of total effort

- 160 hours of major educational project and lesson plan (project and lesson plan will be based on NPS resources and will be included in online course requirements)- 65%
- 45 hours online coursework- 20%
- 35 hours other NPS operations experience- 15%

Training

All TRTs and park or program office coordinators are required to attend an orientation webinar that outlines the program and lesson plan requirements. The training webinar will be presented twice: June 17 and July 15, 2020.

Lesson Plan

Each TRT will complete at least one lesson plan to use in the classroom or as an on-site activity in the park. Lesson plans will be based on NPS resources including scientific data, primary source documents, or NPS produced materials. Lesson plans produced will be included in the online course requirements.

Online Graduate Course

All teachers participating in the TRT program are required to register and complete the online course in Experiential Learning with CU Denver. Tuition for all teachers in the program will be covered by the Washington office of Interpretation, Education and Volunteers with funding provided by the National Park Foundation. All graduate course readings, discussion forums and assignments must be fulfilled for the TRT to successfully complete the program and receive the full stipend offered at the end of the program. Following completion of the required course, TRTs may choose to continue their studies with CU Denver online and earn up to six additional graduate credit hours at their own expense resulting in a nine-credit hour graduate certificate in place-based education with CU Denver.

Background Check

If the park will require the TRT to operate government owned vehicles, have unsupervised access to non-public spaces on the park, or have access to DOI network computers, then the park will be responsible to obtain a background check for the teacher. The park will be expected to cover the cost of the background check. In most cases, it will take too long for the park to get a background check completed in time for the TRT program to be implemented.

Project Agreements

Park or program office will outline their TRT program requirements on a project agreement form provided by the national program coordinator. Project agreement forms will be signed by the TRT, the park or program office TRT coordinator, park superintendent, and a school or district administrator.

Program Evaluation Survey

Parks will complete a TRT program survey online upon the completion of the summer. TRTs will be required to complete a course survey administered by CU Denver.

Major Education Project

TRTs will produce a major education project or program as part of the requirements for both the NPS and CU Denver components of the program. The major project should equal approximately 160 hours of effort by the TRT. A list of suggested TRT projects is listed below.

- Junior Ranger activities/program development
- Every Kid in a Park activities for 4th graders

- Summer camp activities
- Educational podcasts
- Teacher professional development
- Family programs
- Outreach to students at schools connected to military bases
- Outreach to military families
- Healthy People/Healthy Parks projects
- Review of park education materials
- Common Core State Standards projects
- Applied STEM education materials and activities
- National Writing Project/writing labs activities
- National History Day projects
- Working with Bureau of Indian Education schools
- English Language Learner projects/activities
- Applying/incorporating the arts into NPS education programs
- Applying/incorporating interdisciplinary approaches to NPS education programs
- Creating online connections to students
- Incorporating technology-based projects into NPS education programs
- Teacher developed webinars
- Networking with local schools and districts
- Applications for primary source content/availability
- Service learning project identification and organization
- Working with organized groups such as scouts, boys & girls clubs, after school or summer camp programs
- Earth caching
- Liaison with cultural and natural resource divisions for education projects

Announcements for TRT Recruiting

Parks may post announcements for recruiting teachers for the TRT program on their park nps.gov web pages. The CU Denver operated website www.teacherrangerteacher.org will also provide links to park announcements. Forward links to the national TRT coordinator for posting to the CU Denver website.

Questions concerning the Teacher Ranger Teacher program can be referred to the national program coordinator at linda_rosenblum@nps.gov