



Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

2026 Field Technician/Biology Internship

Overview: Do you have a passion for conservation, ecological restoration, or land stewardship? The Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge are sponsoring two biology internships for the 2026 field season. The refuge is a unique ecological restoration project featuring endangered tall grass prairie, oak savanna, and sedge meadow ecosystems. Located 20 miles east of Des Moines, IA it was the first large scale prairie reconstruction project ever attempted. Since its inception in 1990, the 6,000-acre refuge has become a home to hundreds of prairie plant species; reintroduced bison, elk, and regal fritillary butterflies; rare grassland birds; and many other species dependent on large areas of prairie or grassland. Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge is an equal opportunity employer.

Duties: The biology interns are a vital addition to the biology team. Interns participate in prairie and savanna restoration work, involving invasive species management including use of herbicides, monitoring plants and wildlife (including out bison and elk herds!), hand harvesting seeds of native plants, and data entry and management. Based on interest, there is chance to cross-train along with Visitor Services in science communication and education.

Benefits: Internships will run 3-9 months each for 40 hours/week. Timing of internship is flexible, with positions available in spring, summer, and fall (April through October). Extensions may be possible. Each intern will be paid \$15 per hour. Housing will not be provided. Refuge staff will work with students to fulfill internship credit requirements at individual universities. Non-students are also eligible and encouraged to apply.

Qualifications: Anyone 18 years or older with a valid driver's license is eligible for an internship. Candidates must have an interest in native plants and a strong **desire to learn** about prairie and savanna ecosystems and restoration. Experience identifying prairie plants is preferred. Must enjoy working outdoors (even when it's uncomfortable). Must become an Iowa-certified pesticide applicator upon hiring. Instructions and study materials will be provided if you are selected. Interns will be provided training and certification on the safe operation and maintenance of utility terrain vehicles, pesticide sprayers, and other tools. Most important are **sincere interests, enthusiasm, and a good work ethic**.

To Apply: Submit the following: 1) a one-page **cover letter** highlighting your qualifications and describing why you would like to participate in this internship program and what you hope to gain from the experience. Please **include dates you are available**; 2) a detailed **resume**, including three references and their contact information. Materials should be emailed to: Nancy Corona, Visitor Services Manager, at nancy_corona@fws.gov. Intern applications and letters of recommendations must be emailed by the end of the day on March 1st.