

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES TECHNICIAN – STUDENT SERVICES CONTRACTOR

A detailed-oriented, responsible individual with a strong interest in wildlife disease and ecology and experience with molecular laboratory techniques is sought to assist with surveillance and research activities related to bat white-nose syndrome at the USGS-National Wildlife Health Center (Madison, Wisconsin). Primary duties will consist of sample kit preparation & distribution, sample login, laboratory sample analysis, and data management for a long-term, national surveillance project for the white-nose syndrome fungus (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) in North American bat populations. The USGS-National Wildlife Health Center is a federal wildlife diagnostic and research laboratory which serves federal, state, and tribal wildlife management agencies in all 50 states and US territories.

This is a 1-year student services contract position with an additional 1 year renewal option (pending academic eligibility and available funding). Eligible applicants must have, at minimum, a BA/BS degree in a relevant field by the start date or have graduated within the past 12 months from the start date of the performance period.

Hours and Days: approx. 35-40 hours/week (Monday – Friday)

Knowledge and Skills Required:

- Experience working in a diagnostic or research laboratory
- Technical knowledge of basic molecular techniques (sterile technique, DNA extraction, standard and/or quantitative PCR)
- Accurate data entry and quality management of large datasets
- Strong organizational and communication (oral and written) skills
- Ability to complete routine tasks independently and accurately following established protocols within established deadlines
- Ability to manage time effectively among multiple tasks
- Degree program in Zoology, Biology, Ecology, Wildlife, Microbiology, Genetics, Natural Resources Management, Laboratory Technology or suitable equivalent
- Proficiency with MS Word, Excel, Powerpoint (experience with MS Access and/or ArcGIS is a plus)

Responsibilities:

Specific duties include: sample kit preparation and distribution; sample intake and processing including DNA extraction, standard/quantitative PCR, and tissue collection; assist with lab inventory; organization and maintenance of lab equipment, including proper cleaning and decontamination; data entry & data cleaning into a database consisting of diagnostic case information generated from bat submissions to the USGS-NWHC and for information sharing with the NABat Population Monitoring Program; and generating summary tables and graphs for reports and presentations. Basic communications with state, federal, and tribal wildlife agency partners. Other duties as assigned during periods of low surveillance activity. The potential exists for occasional fieldwork/laboratory assistance with other Center projects pending interests and abilities, however, fieldwork is not a primary component of this position. Student adheres to established standard operating procedures, Quality Management System for USGS Laboratories, data management procedures, Good Laboratory Practices Act, and all field safety regulations.

Level of Knowledge:

1. Technical Requirements

1. Specific Work Requirements

The Contractor enters data accurately into the NWHC bat database using a MS Access interface and contacts partners for incomplete information. Conducts quality control of the database and provides summary tables of shared information to appropriate partners. Creates records in public-accessible wildlife disease event database (WHISPers). The student is expected to adhere to appropriate NWHC guidelines, follow established procedures, and work in coordination with USGS-NWHC staff to complete work assignments. Knowledge of general approaches for laboratory & field research including maintaining a lab notebook. Ability to follow written protocols and guidelines and to consult with project leader or lead technician when issues arise. Knowledge of aseptic technique and biosafety procedures. Hand and finger dexterity, which is equal to the exacting use of small tools and equipment, is required.

2. Required expertise/skills:

The Contractor must have at minimum a BA/BS degree in a relevant field such as wildlife/natural resources management, biology, zoology, ecology, microbiology, genetics, or suitable equivalent. Preference will be given to those applicants with a strong academic record in coursework and strong lab skills directly relevant to this position. Prior research or laboratory experience is required with a basic understanding of common molecular techniques. Ability to work independently following on-the-job training. Candidate must demonstrate good organizational and communication skills and be able to enter data accurately in a timely manner. Must have the ability to manage time effectively among multiple tasks. A familiarity with MS Office Products (Word, Excel, and Powerpoint) is also required. Applicant must be a U.S. Citizen or is a current legal U.S. resident for a minimum of 3 years.

3. Desired expertise/skills:

Preferred candidate should demonstrate a strong interest in wildlife disease and/or ecology and have familiarity with disease processes and vocabulary. Demonstrated experience with common molecular techniques (DNA extraction, standard PCR, quantitative PCR, gel electrophoresis, sequencing, BLAST analysis) on biologic and/or environmental sample types and experience with maintaining large datasets. Familiarity with working in a BioSafety Level-2 laboratory is also helpful. Skills in reviewing current literature and compiling concise, well-written summaries are desirable as is knowledge of MS Access and ArcGIS software.

Working Conditions:

I. Supporting Information

A. Principal Duty Station- USGS, National Wildlife Health Center, 6006 Schroeder Rd., Madison, WI 53711

B. Period of Performance: approx. 10/23/2023 – 10/22/2024; option to extend up to 1 year pending available funding and academic eligibility

Work will be approx. 35-40 hours/week, not to exceed 2000 hours annually at a base rate of \$19.44/hr.

Work will be performed at the NWHC-Madison campus during regular business hours (Mon-Fri, 7:30a-5:30p) under the supervision of Dr. Anne Ballmann, USGS-NWHC Wildlife Disease Specialist, and lead project technician. Some work activities may be eligible for occasional telework. Employee must be able to work at a computer for ~20 hours/week. Work will be reviewed for technical correctness and compliance with instructions. The student will need access to NWHC offices and government computers and will be required to pass a background security check. The government will provide the necessary training in data entry and lab protocols. The student is expected to adhere to appropriate NWHC guidelines, follow established procedures, and work in coordination with USGS-NWHC to complete work assignments.

C. Compensation:

Compensation is \$19.44-\$24.08 per hour dependent on level of education, lab experience and superior academic record. The student is responsible for all transportation costs to and from the principal duty station (Madison, WI). Facility is located on a public bus route. Costs related to this position and occupational health program requirements (protective rabies titer, respirator evaluation and N-95 respirator fitting) will be covered by the employer. Student contractors are not eligible for paid holidays/ annual leave or federal employee health benefits however, they are eligible for paid sick leave (1 hour earned for every 30 hours worked). State and federal tax withholdings are the responsibility of the contractor.

To apply, please send cover letter, resume, college transcript/s (unofficial copy is ok), and contact information for 2 references to aballmann@usgs.gov by 11:59 pm Central FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2023.