



## **THE SOUTHEASTERN NEW ENGLAND EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**

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### **CALL FOR INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS**

#### **Southeastern New England Educational and Charitable Foundation History**

The Southeastern New England Educational and Charitable Foundation (SNEC) was established in December 2016 by the Grills and Jackson families. Generations of the Grills family worked at the Bradford Dying Association (BDA), a fabric dyeing and finishing company in the Bradford section of Westerly, RI since the beginning of the 20th century. Richard Grills, upon return from service in the United States Navy, began working at BDA as a machine attendant. By the time the company went bankrupt in the 70's, Mr. Grills had risen to plant manager. With the former owner's son as partner, they bought BDA and ran the mill for the next twenty-five years, employing hundreds and positively impacting the economy of the Greater-Westerly area.

A portion of the proceeds from the operation of BDA were used to establish Southeastern New England Educational and Charitable Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to support students in higher education pursuing studies in two areas of interest: Environmental Conservation and Historic Preservation. The president and director of SNEC, Sharon Grills Jackson, MAT, was an educator for over forty years before retirement and brought to the Foundation a love of the natural world and educating others on its importance. Stephen Leal Jackson, PhD, vice president and director, has focused his studies on American history and historical preservation. With these avocations as a continuing guide, these founding members have developed and supported the focus areas of the Foundation.

The Grills and Jackson families come from the Rhode Island and Southeastern Connecticut areas. Ancestors of the current Grills family have lived here since the mid 1600's and were founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Wethersfield, CT, Preston, CT, and early inhabitants of New London, and Mystic, CT. The families still reside in Rhode Island and New London County, CT; this is the Foundation's geographic area of focus.

When BDA ultimately closed, the Grills family donated hundreds of acres of undeveloped land on and around the Pawcatuck River in Westerly and Hopkinton, Rhode Island. These lands are managed and maintained by conservancy organizations in both towns.

The families, and now the Foundation, have always had a strong commitment to higher education and its programs focus on assisting college students to obtain internships in their fields of study, work with cutting edge technology in their colleges, and partner with professors in research projects. Since its inception, SNEC has had as its core principle that all grants and awards must directly involve the student in research projects and experiential learning.

#### **Westerly Land Trust Mission and History**

The Westerly Land Trust (WLT) conserves open space, revitalizes culturally significant properties, and provides environmental programs for the enduring benefit of our community. Since incorporation in 1987, WLT has permanently protected more than 1,900 acres in Westerly, including a variety of landscapes such as forest, wetlands, river frontage, marsh, and farmland.

In 2023, the Board and staff created a strategic plan that will guide our work through 2028. The four main pillars of this plan are: 1.) Protect the land we cherish, 2.) Steward our lands for future generations, 3.)



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Enhance green space for every neighborhood, and 4.) Nurture lifelong love of nature. Essentially, we strive to strengthen our community through open space. For more information, please visit [westerlylandtrust.org](http://westerlylandtrust.org).

#### **Partnership**

The Southeastern New England Educational and Charitable Foundation supports colleges to encourage experiential learning in environmental conservation by college students. Applying college students, and, in some cases, their faculty partners, will work with the Westerly Land Trust (WLT) as interns to assist the organization with projects and activities in Environmental Conservation and other related tasks. The WLT will be the director of intern activities.

SNEC's partnership with WLT is rooted in a long history of collaboration that began in 2003, when WLT worked with the Grills Family to protect hundreds of acres of undeveloped land on and around the Pawcatuck River. Today [Grills Preserve](#) is one of WLT's marquee properties at 543.5 acres. Since 2020, WLT and SNEC have supported students in gaining hands-on experience in environmental conservation through paid internship opportunities.

**Application Deadline:** 5:00pm EST on Friday March 9, 2026

**Award Notification Date:** Friday April 3, 2026

**Note:** There are two open Conservation Programs Internship positions. WLT manages internships, SNEC funds the positions.

**Term:** 20- 25 hours/week. May 20- July 31, 2026

**Award:** \$5,600

#### **WLT/SNEC Conservation Programs Intern Description:**

The Conservation Programs Interns (CPI) will play a key role in delivering youth-focused environmental education while supporting community outreach and land stewardship. CPIs will primarily assist with outdoor, grade-level field trips for elementary and middle school students, our K-4 summer camp, [Farm Squad](#), and early childhood nature programs.

In addition to education responsibilities, interns will have the opportunity for community engagement through guided hikes, special events, and other land trust activities that foster public connection to nature and conservation. CPIs will contribute to our land stewardship work by assisting with trail/property maintenance, property monitoring, and habitat restoration including invasive species management to help protect the ecological integrity of our conserved lands. CPIs will have the opportunity to interact with two sustainable farmers from [Frontier Farm](#) and [Echo Rock Flower Farm](#) located at our homebase [Barlow Nature Preserve](#). The knowledge and skills gained through environmental education, land stewardship, and sustainable farming will round out this internship experience and support our WLT pollinator and children's produce garden.



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#### Qualifications

- Applicants must be permanent residents of or attend a college/university located in Rhode Island or New London County, Connecticut.
- Applicants must be enrolled currently as a sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate level at college/ university with a major in environmental science, biology, education, or a related field.
- Have an overall GPA above 3.0 in their major area of study.
- Have a recommendation from a professor in their major area of study.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Comfortable working outside.
- Demonstrated experience with- or interest in- interacting with members of the public in formal and informal settings.
- A reliable means of transportation
- Demonstrated interest or experience in environmental conservation

**The applicant must submit the following application materials in PDF or MS Word Format to the SNEC Foundation (applicants meeting requirements will be forwarded to WLT by SNEC).**

- WLT/SNEC Conservation Programs Internship Application Form
- Student's Statement of Experience and Interest: describe your activities and studies in the general area of Environmental Conservation. Include specific experiences that may relate to the specific internship. Describe major of study in detail if not listed.
- Faculty Recommendation-may attach letter or email from professor.
- Resume

#### NOTE:

- Selected candidates will be required to complete a background check. WLT will reimburse cost for background check.
- SNEC will be invited to observe/ meet with recipients' mid-term and upon completion of internship
- Upon completion of the internship, recipients **must** be prepared to complete a concise but comprehensive written report, video, or presentation to the SNEC Foundation

***NOTE: Applications received incomplete or after the deadline will NOT be considered. Prompts for information or clarification will NOT be given.***

***NOTE: Questions about the specifics of the internship may be directed to either Dr. Stephen L Jackson, Vice President, Programs and Operations, SNEC, (860)235-8245, [sljackson@snecfoundation.org](mailto:sljackson@snecfoundation.org) or Lauren Barber, Conservation Programs Manager, Westerly Land Trust, (401)315-2610 x 1, [lbarber@westerlylandtrust.org](mailto:lbarber@westerlylandtrust.org).***

**After completion submit your completed application and any supporting documents to:  
[sljackson@snecfoundation.org](mailto:sljackson@snecfoundation.org)**