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Animas Riverkeeper

Job Announcement

January 6, 2025

San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA) is looking for a passionate, experienced, and motivated Animas Riverkeeper to lead campaigns to protect water quality and flows in the Animas River watershed, and to support safe and reliable river access. The position is full-time and located in either our Durango, Colorado or Farmington, New Mexico office.

The Animas River is one of just a handful of undammed, free-flowing tributaries in the Colorado River Basin. The Animas suffers from a legacy of historic mining that most recently resulted in the Gold King Mine spill in 2015, but also retains some of the most pristine mountain headwaters streams in Colorado's San Juan Mountains. The Environmental Protection Agency is slowly progressing towards remediation of 48 individual mines and waste dumps in the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund site around Silverton, while opportunities abound for enhanced protections of headwaters tributaries.

The Animas River connects Durango with its downstream neighbors in Aztec and Farmington. The river provides enormous potential for economic transformation as northwest New Mexico transitions from mining and burning coal. The river through New Mexico communities faces its own water quality challenges, but also its pastoral nature provides opportunities for enhanced recreation that have recently become a priority for expansion.

The Animas Riverkeeper will bring to bear passion around grassroots advocacy, communications, technical comments, and policy development. Program campaigns are focused on Superfund clean-up in the headwaters, securing safe and reliable river access from Durango downstream through Farmington, safeguarding the river's free-flowing condition, participating as an active member in collaboratives focused on improving river and stream health, and improving water quality and public health in downstream communities.

About San Juan Citizens Alliance

San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA) was formed in 1986 and advocates for clean air, pure water, and healthy lands – the foundations of resilient communities, ecosystems and economies in the San Juan Basin. Over its 40-year history, SJCA has successfully advocated for protection of communities from the impacts of energy extraction and production, defeated proposed power plants, safeguarded undeveloped valleys, and secured wildlands protections, among many other conservation victories. Our strength is premised on outreach to and engagement of local residents and communities, providing them the tools to effectively engage with decision-makers to implement policies that advance conservation. SJCA is headquartered in Durango, Colorado with a satellite office in Farmington, New Mexico.

SJCA provides a lively and supportive work environment. Our staff of 8 undertakes leading-edge policy reforms in climate change, energy generation, wildlife restoration, landscape preservation and river protection. Program staff are supported by enthusiastic and competent communications and financial managers.

Job Responsibilities

Lead campaigns to ensure that the Animas River supports a healthy fishery, meets water quality standards, and meets the needs of downstream communities:

- Facilitate engagement by SJCA members and the general public with the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund Community Advisory Group.
- Provide updates on Superfund site activities and facilitate public comments on EPA documents (e.g. Risk Assessments, Remedial Action Plans, etc.).
- Engage SJCA members and the general public on lower Animas River pollution concerns in the reaches through Aztec and Farmington.
- Advocate for nature-based stream and waterway restoration with multi-beneficial ecosystem outcomes by participating in ongoing collaborative partnerships.
- Identify additional opportunities to advocate for improving stream and river function throughout the Animas Watershed by engaging with community members and understanding needs/desired conditions.
- Communicate and educate SJCA members and the general public about river ecosystem topics, including snowpack and drought influences on stream flow, the role of stream function on landscape health, and the impacts of water quality on aquatic and terrestrial species.

Encourage responsible water management that protects instream flows, protects wetlands, enhances stream restoration and prevents new water diversions:

- Encourage public dialogue and participation in water management decisions including those by Southwest Water Conservation District and Southwest Basin Roundtable.
- Monitor threats to Animas River flows posed by new diversion and storage proposals, dewatering of the river system, and increase public awareness of these threats.
- Monitor legislative and regulatory developments with an eye toward impacts to the Animas River, such as Colorado River Basin compact discussions, Clean Water Act rules, and state legislation.
- Monitor and provide comments on proposed local, state, or federally permitted projects pertaining to water resources and stream health.
- Participate in opportunities to improve state and federal rules guiding dredge and fill activities, with a focus on effects on wetlands.
- Identify and pursue opportunities for stream restoration, including those rooted in process-based techniques and similar efforts.

Mobilize a constituency for river protection, with a particular focus from Durango downstream through Farmington, and secure safe and reliable river access:

- Highlight river recreation opportunities on the Animas from Durango to Aztec and Farmington, and advocate for enhanced access via boat ramps and safety improvements to diversion structures.

- Support a river advocacy presence in the New Mexico communities of Farmington and Aztec, and tie to economic transition opportunities.
- Organize and implement river recreation opportunities such as group floats, raft parades, and river races, particularly in conjunction with Riverfest in Farmington and Animas River Days in Durango.
- Recruit and coordinate a volunteer task force to facilitate recreation projects and events for the lower Animas River.
- Facilitate partnerships with local and regional non-profit organizations, businesses, and government agencies to identify and implement additional river access sites.

Qualifications

We are seeking an experienced, motivated and passionate Animas Riverkeeper to lead campaigns to advance protection of water quality, instream flows, and river recreation in the Animas River basin.

The ideal candidate possesses:

- 3+ years experience in river conservation advocacy, management or science.
- Familiarity with science and regulation around water quality and water management in Colorado, including Colorado Water Law, or other Western states.
- Ability to conceive overarching river protection campaign goals and identify actions necessary to achieve those goals.
- Knowledge of river ecosystems and waterways across Animas River watershed.
- Experience as a river recreationist and comfort using rafts, kayaks, canoes or other watercraft.
- Knowledge of GIS and ability to utilize GIS for analysis and map-making.
- Creativity and critical thinking when brainstorming and problem-solving.
- Demonstrated ability to be a “quick study” with experience distilling key elements of technical topics for a general audience.
- Comfort discussing river conservation issues with the media, business owners, local elected officials, partner organizations, and community members.
- Ability to communicate respectfully and effectively with diverse groups of stakeholders and partners with differing views on water management.
- Strong written and verbal communication tools, with experience in media and/or public outreach and digital advocacy.
- A commitment to equity and justice in river access and management.
- Ability to work independently and be a self-starter.
- Ability to multi-task with often overlapping deadlines.
- The ability to travel within the region for work, including some evenings and weekends.

Good-To-Have

- Personal familiarity with the Animas River and nearby regions of the San Juans and Colorado Plateau.

Compensation

This is a full-time, salaried position with generous vacation benefits that include 25 days of paid time off in the first year, health-care coverage, and employer-matched retirement plan after the first year of employment. Professional training opportunities are provided. Starting salary is \$60,000.

To Apply

Send a cover letter and resume with the subject line, "Animas Riverkeeper" to info@sanjuancitizens.org. Application deadline is January 21, 2025.