

Apply for the Ag & Water Desk through Report for America!

The [Mississippi River Basin Ag & Water Desk](#) invites newsrooms throughout the region to apply for one of 10 new reporting positions through [Report for America](#). The Ag & Water Desk is a multi-newsroom collaboration covering agriculture and the environment based at University of Missouri School of Journalism. Benefits of joining the Desk include:

- A full-time reporter to cover agriculture, water, climate and other environmental issues
- Editing assistance from the Desk's experienced editorial staff
- Specialized training and mentoring from the Desk's journalists
- \$1,000 annual stipend for your newsroom for your reporter's expenses
- A free trip to the Society of Environmental Journalists' annual conference
- Increased reach for your newsroom via our distribution network
- Increased visibility for your newsroom thanks to media appearances, awards and more

Interested newsrooms should [apply](#) by the **deadline of September 18**. Your application will detail your proposed beat and explain why you want to be part of this project. Click here to [watch an info session we held on Aug. 16, 2023](#).

How does it work?

Newsrooms are selected for the program by November. Report for America recruits talented journalists and presents finalists to newsrooms to hire their top choice. Through a grant from the Walton Family Foundation, the program covers 50% of the salary in the first year, 33% in the second year, and 20% in the optional third year. Reporters will begin working in July 2024.

What will these reporters cover?

The Desk focuses on environmental and agricultural issues that impact people in the Mississippi River Basin. Our reporters spend roughly 80 percent of their time covering local issues and 20 percent on regional stories, edited by our editorial director. Coverage priorities are up to your newsroom. We cover climate change, changing farming practices, policy, drinking water, environmental justice, the shipping industry, and more. Read some of our regional coverage [here](#).

Who's eligible?

The Mississippi River Basin includes [31 states](#), and newsrooms in all of them are welcome to apply. We're especially interested in building our team in the South and working with outlets that serve Black, Indigenous and other communities of color.

How does my newsroom apply?

[Here's more information](#) about Report for America. You'll [fill out an application here](#) that details your proposed beat and explains why you want to be part of this project. We love working with newsrooms that are mission-driven and collaborative.

What are your biggest successes so far?

Since launching a year ago, journalists with Ag & Water Desk have produced more than 700 stories. Our work is shared with more than 50 outlets that reach an estimated audience of 128 million. Our stories are also being picked up by national outlets, including NPR's [All Things Considered](#), [Consider This](#) and [Here & Now](#), [The Associated Press](#), [Indian Country Today](#), [USA Today](#), [Undark](#), [Grist](#) and [Inside Climate News](#). Our reporters have also been featured on several local and national radio shows, including [Science Friday](#), Morning Edition, and [Iowa Public Radio](#). Our first big project, [When It Rains](#), is a finalist for an international climate reporting award.

Why join? Hear what our newsrooms have to say about the Ag & Water Desk:

The Ag & Water Desk has proved itself essential to our newsroom, even in just a short amount of time. It covers topics our newsroom is interested in but doesn't have the time or bandwidth to pursue. It has also helped us present news more frequently and helped us provide more perspective on important topics that apply to the region we cover. The reporter it placed in our newsroom has been critical to our success, as well.

- Sky Chadde, Assistant Editor, Investigate Midwest

We've appreciated the high-caliber story visioning and editing expertise that the Ag and Water Desk provides. Covering such complex topics and policies affecting the environment would be challenging for one reporter alone or for a smaller newsroom like ours. With the Desk and our partner stations along the Mississippi River Basin, the coverage we can offer our audience is more comprehensive, collaborative, and contextual.

- Jenna Dooley, News Director, WNIJ

The Ag & Water desk offers journalists an invaluable space to support each other as they make sense of the most pressing — and vexing — environmental challenges in their communities. The Desk facilitates a spirit of collaboration that, for most news partners, is unprecedented in scope and intensity. That stretches far behind cross-publishing partner stories and co-bylining projects. Some desk journalists swap ideas and notes on a daily basis, even when they're not sharing a byline. As Wisconsin Watch seeks to understand the challenges most affecting the communities we serve, it's rare for us to encounter an issue that someone on the Desk hasn't covered in some way. Harnessing the collective power of 10 newsrooms helps us more quickly understand the science of each challenge — and the potential solutions.

- Jim Malewitz, Deputy Managing Editor, Wisconsin Watch

Since the Star Tribune joined the Ag & Water Desk network in 2022, I've felt as if my newsroom has grown to include correspondents and experts across the entire basin. I've truly enjoyed getting to know my counterparts at a dozen news organizations, plus the Ag & Water Desk staff, as we've worked on creating an audience for news from a river basin. Our readers have benefited from the expanded content, and it has deepened our own coverage of water quality and climate.

- James Shiffer, Topic Team Leader, Star Tribune

What if I have other questions?

Please contact Teri Hayt at Report for America at thayt@reportforamerica.org or Tegan Wendland at tegan@agwaterdesk.org. Or Join us for a virtual information session, Wednesday, Aug. 16 at 1 p.m. ET. Register for the session [here](#).



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