



Expert Journalist Job Description – 2025

The [Mississippi River Basin Ag & Water Desk](#) seeks two Expert Journalists to join our team. The part-time, remote appointment comes with a \$5,000 stipend per year and free travel to annual conferences. The initial commitment is one year, renewable for a second year.

The Ag & Water Desk is a collaborative environmental reporting network based at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, in partnership with Report for America and with major funding from the Walton Family Foundation. Our stories are free for news outlets to republish. The Desk seeks to deepen coverage of underreported stories throughout the nation's largest watershed and increase public awareness of intersecting environmental, climate and agricultural issues.

Our Experts are experienced, collaborative journalists with relevant skills and knowledge of the Mississippi River watershed who are interested in working on in-depth projects and providing mentoring for our [Report for America reporters](#) based at news outlets throughout the basin.

Candidates may be full-time staff journalists based at news outlets OR freelance journalists. We are especially seeking candidates with broadcast media skills and/or news editing experience.

Apply

Apply by Aug. 8 here: <https://forms.gle/vYtaDpyWadSKMrNP6>

Expectations

Expert Journalists may lead projects, mentor reporters, organize trainings and/or contribute data, photography or videography skills. They will be asked to participate in virtual weekly Desk meetings, join our Slack channel, and work in close collaboration with our Editorial Director on a variable basis. Stories created with the Desk will be distributed for free across our network.

Our Experts also will be asked to attend in-person training sessions with our Report for America corps members, including at the Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia, Missouri, and at the Society of Environmental Journalists annual conferences. These travel and lodging expenses will be paid by the Desk.

We ask our Expert Journalists to help provide leadership and mentorship for Desk reporters, especially those who are earlier in their careers, on an as-needed basis. An Expert Journalist might, for example, lead collaborative reporting projects ([example](#)), arrange or provide a backgrounder for our reporters on an upcoming news event, offer source suggestions or otherwise share journalistic expertise. We estimate the workload to be about 2 hours per week.

We understand that Expert Journalists have regular jobs, and we hope that this position enhances and extends their own reporting capacity. We also hope but do not require that our



Expert Journalists' newsrooms will want to collaborate with the Desk, lending expertise and capacity, as well as republishing relevant content.

Here's a testimonial from past Expert Journalist Erin Jordan, investigative reporter at The Cedar Rapids Gazette: *"Being an Expert Journalist has allowed me to be kind of a player-coach, teaming up with RFA reporters to write some stories, but also providing sources, links, and advice. I've been covering agriculture and the environment in Iowa for a long time, but it's been great to work with journalists across the basin to share how many of today's most pressing issues transcend state boundaries."*

Stipend

The Missouri School of Journalism, which hosts the Desk, will pay \$5,000 to each Expert Journalist for each year of participation, payable in two installments of \$2,500 every six months.

The host publication's role

Expert Journalists' newsroom editors will be invited to join the team's weekly call as needed. The Editorial Director will be available for regular check-ins with the Expert Journalist and their editor. We aim for open communication, clear and reasonable expectations, and work that is mutually beneficial.

Host publications will be invited to share stories created through the Desk with our distribution network, which offers content for free to interested newsrooms. Participants also will be able to publish other stories from our network. Original bylines and publication credits will be retained. Host newsrooms will be asked to sign an Expert Journalist Host Newsroom MOU.

Questions?

Please email info@agwaterdesk.org. Thank you for your interest!