

“Look after the habitat and educate people about its importance...”

Bio-economy Career Profile

Position: Aquatic Ecologist

Name: Julianne Sullivan

Company: Jacques Whitford

Salary Range: \$30,000 to \$60,000 per year

What I do:

I work as an Aquatic Ecologist for Jacques Whitford. My role is to protect the water at the stream and lake levels, looking after fish, and ensuring the quality of their habitat. My day-to-day activities include protocol development for field sampling, data management and analysis, fieldwork, and report writing. My role includes working with freshwater ecology in Nova Scotia and other parts of the Maritimes. As an Aquatic Ecologist, I am a freshwater specialist for water ecosystems, while a Marine Biologist is a specialist who studies fish, mammals, and invertebrates in primarily saltwater locations.

My company is hired by private contractors, developers, and the government to study the effects that various projects (including construction and development) may have on various lakes and streams. Through water quality and chemistry testing, and habitat characterization, I develop baselines that clients need to maintain throughout the life of the project and thereafter. As part of my reporting, I provide mitigation strategies to my clients, so that their projects do not have a negative influence on the established baselines whenever possible. My company also performs follow-up testing to ensure that a project continues to follow suggested guidelines.

What education and skills do candidates need for this position?

I have a Bachelor of Sciences in Biology with a minor in English. I then completed a Masters of Science, specializing in Aquatic Ecology. For individuals who have graduated



recently, this tends to be a typical educational route for this type of position.

Candidates should be detail oriented, observant, and organized. Above all, you need to be multi-disciplinary in your approach to work. An Aquatic Ecologist needs to be strong in completing fieldwork, interpreting data, and report writing. You need to see the big picture and have common sense in your approach to the fieldwork and reporting to clients.

It is important to have a common-sense approach and be down to earth. The fieldwork can be very challenging, physically and emotionally. It is important that you have perseverance, understand that the work is tough, and not complain about it. A job in ecology will never be a nine-to-five job, so you should be flexible to allow for the time and effort you will need to spend in the field during particular seasons.

What are the best parts of your job?

I appreciate the diversity of my position because the work involves field research, data management, and report writing. I also have the opportunity to see many beautiful places that other people may never see. But in the end, I enjoy the fact that I'm looking after the fish habitat and, through my work, I can educate people about its importance.