



Floodplain Meadows Partnership 'Ambassadors' Training Opportunity

Following the successful start of Phase 1 of our FMP Ambassadorial training programme, we are now advertising for Phase 2. Please find information about the course and how to apply, below.

We are looking to develop a group of people who can act as ambassadors for the Floodplain Meadows Partnership and floodplain meadows in their area; people who understand floodplain meadow eco-hydrological function, who can interpret the state of a site and can give advice on management and restoration. In order to achieve this plan, we are offering a subsidised training opportunity that will take two years to complete. In exchange, we will invite our ambassadors to represent a county within which they will promote the value of floodplain meadows, share their knowledge with others, give management advice, help in restoration projects and help with the continued collection of long term data where appropriate. Throughout the process you will be supported by staff from the Floodplain Meadows Partnership and its Steering Group.

Ideally, we are looking for people to apply from counties where we do not already have representation. Counties where we currently *do* have Ambassadors are:

Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Wiltshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire, Kent, Devon, Somerset, Glamorgan, London, Co. Galway (Ireland), Sussex, Worcestershire and Leicestershire and Rutland.

About the course

A vocational course to understand the ecology and ecohydrology of floodplain meadows; enabling delegates to gather appropriate field data and provide an evidence base on which to take management decisions.

The content of the course and the practical experience it provides will make a significant contribution to the professional development of people involved in the restoration and conservation of these nationally important sites.

Aimed at: floodplain-meadow site managers, conservation advisors, volunteers and professional consultants, who wish to develop a specialism in this subject area.

Learning will be through:

- A start up 2-day residential course to practise field data collection and analysis techniques (12-13th May 2016)
- On-site installation of equipment under supervision or remote support preferably on own/local site

- Regular tasks over the two years of the course to help build expertise and confidence with field botanical ID and practical field data gathering and analysis techniques.
- Access to mentors to help with advice and practical support.
- Support network of similar people through site visits and buddying
- Final residential workshop involving data analysis using participants' own field data

Outcomes

A certificate confirming course attendance and completion of assessments.

A monitoring and management action plan for your site, based on collected and interpreted data.

Enhanced skills in understanding the ecology and ecohydrology of floodplain meadows in the UK.

Cost, commitment and application

We are asking for a commitment on a monthly basis, with between one hour and one day's input per month required, plus some additional days for site visits where possible. A chart is attached which shows the tasks expected in each month of the two year course. After the course has completed, we are asking for your availability to help others in your area, to answer queries by email and find ways to promote understanding of floodplain meadow function, management and restoration including undertaking site visits (where possible) to share your knowledge.

This programme is subsidised by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, however a small charge of £60 is payable as a contribution toward subsistence costs. This charge will also cover your attendance at both residential courses including accommodation and food, but not travel costs throughout the course. The course will be limited to twelve places in 2016.

Applications are invited through this form

<http://www3.open.ac.uk/forms/FMPambassadors/>

The form asks for two supporting documents. These are:

1. A letter of support or reference letter from your current employer. If you are not employed, this could be from a floodplain meadow manager that you work with. If from employer it should confirm that you have agreed how the training commitment can be incorporated within your current role.
2. A current CV.

Please send the requested attachments to this email address, floodplain-meadows-project@open.ac.uk stating text below in the subject line.

Your name. FMP Ambassadors Phase 2 Application documents.

The application process will close on 15th December 2015, and successful applicants will be informed by end of January 2016.

Course Programme Detail

Residential course Year 1, 12-13th May 2016 (2 days)

Location: Wiltshire

Day 1 Physical monitoring techniques

A short classroom session giving background and outline for the course. The focus of the day will be the installation of instrumentation into a site and taking field data for analysis

Delegates to:

- install a dipwell
- assess the texture of the soil
- consider the structure of the soil
- dig and interpret a soil core using a hand auger
- take soil samples for soil nutrient analysis
- Take an undisturbed core for soil porosity assessment
- Make a measurement of hydraulic conductivity if conditions allow.

Evening classroom activity: design a monitoring plan for your site which you will implement over the next 2 years¹

Day 2 Botanical data collection

Collect botanical data using quadrats and key out an NVC community. Use of a vasculum and how to prepare simple herbarium samples for later ID.

As part of the course delegates will be provided with everything needed to install a well (tubing, cap, auger, buzzing stick, length of geotextile) plus FSC Guide to Floodplain Meadows and a weather writer. Delegates will be expected to supply their own hand lens and any ID books. Suggested books are:

- Grasses: A Guide to Their Structure, Identification, Uses and Distribution. C. E. Hubbard. 1992
- Sedges of the British Isles: B.S.B.I. Handbook no. 1 (BSBI Handbooks). A.C. Jermy, D. A. Simpson, M. J. Y. Foley, and M.S. Porter. 2007
- The Wild Flower Key (Revised Edition) - How to identify wild plants, trees and shrubs in Britain and Ireland. F. Rose and C. O'Reilly. 2009

Other general books are:

- New Flora of the British Isles. 2010. C. Stace
- The Vegetative Key to the British Flora. 2009 J. Poland and E.J. Clement
- Excursion Flora of the British Isles Paperback. 1981 or 1995. A. R. Clapham, Tutin T.G. and Warburg, E.F.
- Field flora of the British Isles. C.Stace 2005.

¹ If you do not have responsibility for a site, or direct access to one currently, we would try to allocate you a site in the nearby area, and will help to arrange permissions and visiting arrangements.

Your monthly tasks after the residential course

For most months over the following 2 years, you will be given tasks to complete and report back on. These will be:

May/June 2016

Establish a series of 5 monitoring quadrats on your site according to your monitoring plan and identify all plants within each quadrat.

July 2016

Carry out an ID task. Estimate yield pre hay cut. Record the date the hay is cut at your site and the dry yield in terms of bales. Assess impact of vehicles on the site.

Aug 2016

Holiday/no tasks allocated

Sept 2016

Describe a soil profile from your site and produce a short report showing the soil profile including photos and interpretation. Install a dipwell on your site, location according to the monitoring plan, using materials provided

Oct 2016

Note the date animals are turned out on the site (if they are), including numbers and type of stock. Assess sward height. Take a soil sample and send to OU labs for fertility analysis.

Nov 2016

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick.

Dec 2016

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick. Note the duration of any flood and the route it took if possible. Install a sedimat and collect post flood.

Jan 2017

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick
Send sedimat to OU for analysis.

Feb 2017

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick

Mar 2017

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick.
Carry out an ID task.

April 2017

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick.
Carry out an ID task.

May 2017

Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick.
Carry out an ID task.
Attend a site visit on a different site to your own (or host a visit from other delegates).

June 2017

Carry out an NVC assessment using your quadrats (identify all plants in the quadrats and allocate a % abundance score). Estimate extent of MG4, MG8 or other target community on the site using hand-held GPS. Site support from FMP if required
Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick.
Attend a site visit on a different site to your own (or host a visit from other delegates).

- July 2017 Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick. Carry out an ID task.
- Aug 2017 Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick
- Sept 2017 Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick. Attend a site visit to help a new course starter install a dipwell and take a soil core.
- Oct 2017 Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick. Help new starter take soil sample
- Nov 2017 Return to your dipwell and take a reading using the buzzing stick. Enter your hydrological data into a spread sheet.
- Dec 2017 Attend a second residential course on data analysis using your own data.
- Jan 2018 Produce a report outlining the soil-water regime at your site, the soil nutrient status and the current plant community and include management recommendations.
- July 2018 Attend a lunch courtesy of the Partnership to receive your certificates and to reflect on the effectiveness of the programme.