



Program: Prescribed Fire Trainee & Mentorship Participant (multiple available)
Classification: 3/1/2026 to 7/1/2026
Schedule: 5 days in-person (2 training, 3 on call burn days) + 40 hours virtual (flexible)
Compensation: Contract role (non-employee), up to \$500 stipend
Selection Timeline: Rolling application with final deadline Feb 28, 2026

The Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to create relationships and experiences that welcome and inspire people to discover, enjoy, value, and care for nature. Recognized by its peers as one of the top nature centers in the country, the Kalamazoo Nature Center is located on 1,500 acres of wooded, rolling countryside and includes over 15 miles of hiking trails winding through some of the most magnificent habitats in Michigan.

Because we value the strength diversity brings to the workplace, the Kalamazoo Nature Center is committed to the recruitment, retention, and development of a workforce that reflects the community in which we live.

Opportunity Summary:

Prescribed fire is a powerful restoration practice that benefits plants, wildlife, and humans and has roots in important cultural and natural history. Through this program you will get to connect with the land through the use of fire to restore habitats, improve climate resilience, and protect public safety. Join our team of staff and volunteers to learn the basic skills, benefits, and safety practices with hands-on experience. Become a part of southwest Michigan prescribed fire community (made up of landowners, non-profits, state and federal agencies, private contractors, environmental advocates, educators, students, and more). And achieve the deep satisfaction of completing hard work in community with others to make a meaningful contribution to environmental health.

The 2026 Prescribed Fire Trainee and Mentorship role is a short-term, contracted (non-employee) position responsible for the following:

- Completing required training modules (both online and in-person);
- Carrying out ecological restoration work at KNC and at partner properties (including installing burn breaks, prescribed fire implementation, equipment management, vegetation monitoring, and other associated tasks); and
- Participating in networking opportunities.

Participants who successfully complete the full intern-trainee program will achieve Wildland Firefighter Type II certification, receive a pair of wildland fire work boots, and receive a \$500 stipend. Benefits from this training program (valued at over \$1,000 per intern) are funded through a grant from the USDA Forest Service Cohesive Fire Strategy Program intended to broaden the prescribed fire workforce in Southwest Michigan.

Duties/Responsibilities:

- Complete all required online training modules.
- Participate in two days of in-person scheduled training sessions.
- Participate in at least three days of prescribed fire activities.
- Follow all required safety measures, including wearing personal protective equipment (provided).
- Maintain excellent communication and teamwork in the field with mentors, KNC staff, and other fire volunteers.
- Comply with all KNC policies.

Working Conditions:

This opportunity includes field-based activities that will require performing labor in often arduous conditions in all weather for up to 4 to 9 hours a day. Field days will require mobility over uneven terrain in hot and smoky conditions carrying up to 50 pounds of equipment (~5 gallons of water).

Required skills and abilities:

- Must be 18 years of age or older
- Flexibility to work on short notice (with a week or day ahead notice)
- Ability to work successfully and dependably as team member and in a self-directed capacity.
- Willing to advance KNC's equity, inclusion, and diversity goals.
- Ability to pass pre-employment background check and meet U.S. Drug-Free Workplace standards, as required for grant-based activities.
- Effective interpersonal, problem-solving, and communications skills.
- Ability to function well in an energetic, fast-paced, and at times stressful environment.
- Proficient with basic computer programs to complete online video modules.
- Access to reliable transportation to and from the Kalamazoo Nature Center main campus (7000 N Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49009). (Some assistance may be available if needed.)

Physical Requirements:

- Ability to work in difficult outdoor terrain and remote conditions in adverse weather conditions.
- Ability to lift at least 50 pounds.
- Ability to safely remain committed and motivated for up to 9 hours of physical work.
- Ability to work in smoky conditions. (Masks can be provided.)
- Willingness to work outdoors and maintain a positive attitude amid common discomforts and challenges such as stinging insects, ticks, poison ivy, lack of bathrooms, etc.

Preferred Education and Experience:

- Interest in prescribed fire, wildland fire, and/or environmental conservation.
- Ability to operate 4WD vehicles on off-road terrain safely or able to learn.
- A valid, insurable driver's license and willingness to drive trucks, trailers, and other equipment.

Benefits of the Role:

- Obtain a National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Basic Wildland Firefighter certification.
- Gain field experience and hands-on training in natural areas management and prescribed fire.
- One-year free membership to the Kalamazoo Nature Center.
- Assigned personal mentor from within KNC's current fire crew.
- Opportunity to network and shadow local professionals in the field of conservation.
- Paid stipend (up to \$500) and basic gear (work boots and gloves).

To Apply:

Complete the application form at: naturecenter.org/FIRE

The Kalamazoo Nature Center is an equal opportunity employer and provider.