SEARCH FOR THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BLACK ROCK FOREST
Cornwall, New York

THE SEARCH

Black Rock Forest (BRF) seeks an Executive Director (ED) to provide vision and direction to the vibrant organization. Black Rock Forest is a living laboratory for field-based research, education and conservation encompassing native terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that are increasingly rare in the region. The 3,920-acre Forest features dramatic topography, more than 1,000 feet of relief, numerous lakes and streams, and high species and habitat diversity. Following more than three decades of dedicated leadership from outgoing Executive Director, Dr. William S.F. "Bill" Schuster, BRF is poised to enter a new era.

Reporting to and working closely with the Board of Directors, the Executive Director is responsible for providing leadership and day-to-day management for the Forest. Responsibilities include: strategic planning, scientific leadership, fiscal oversight of the operating budget, external engagement, fundraising, talent recruitment, and the management and development of ten full-time and five part-time staff. Partnerships are also critical to the Executive Director's work, including civic interactions relating to the portion of the local water and reservoir system contained within the Forest. The ED must foster strong working relationships with its consortium member institutions, the surrounding state parks and forests, Storm King Art Center, and other important community partners.

The position calls for a dynamic leader and spokesperson who brings proven managerial and organizational leadership skills, outstanding abilities in communication and collaboration, and an advanced scientific background in forest ecology, environmental science, or a related field.

Black Rock Forest has retained the Boston-based executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to conduct this search. Confidential nominations, inquiries, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT BLACK ROCK FOREST

Black Rock Forest is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization as well as a consortium of 18 member institutions with a mission of advancing scientific understanding of the natural world through research, education, and conservation programs. The organization maintains a 3,920-acre forest and a scientific field station in the Hudson Highlands, 60 miles north of New York City.

BRF collaborates with consortium members – universities, schools, and scientific and cultural institutions – to pursue and foster scientific inquiry, and to create educational programs for K-16 students, teachers, and the general public. Connections between the educators and researchers from institutions such as Columbia University, the American Museum of Natural History, and City University of New York (CUNY) foster a rich opportunity for students to learn and experience the forest, such as using environmental datasets while practicing authentic field methods scientists use to collect their data, or staying overnight in a living classroom.

Black Rock Forest also works with many local partners to pursue environmental conservation goals in the Hudson Highlands and the greater mid-Hudson Valley region, and offers 26 miles of hiking trails and another 17 miles of gated forest roads to the community for recreation and enjoyment.

Black Rock Forest's operating budget for the current fiscal year is $1.9 million, and the organization's endowment and special purpose funds are valued at $17 million.

Impact

Black Rock Forest has become one of the nation's most active scientific field stations. The Forest is a member of the Organization of Biological Fiend Stations (OBFS), and hosted the 2008 OBFS annual meeting. Scientists have produced more than 700 scientific papers, including 46 masters and PhD dissertations. As a consequence of this research, the organization has increased knowledge about the workings of the region's forests, including the effects on, and mechanisms of, carbon storage, water filtration, and ecosystem regulation by dominant species like oaks. They also have provided evidence about environmental challenges faced in the region, including rising temperatures, more severe drought regimes, and other environmental conditions that increase native tree species' vulnerability to pathogens or negatively affect their regeneration.

It has also become a regional center for hands-on education, particularly science education. In the 1990s, the Black Rock Forest Consortium raised $4 million to build two state-of-the-art green buildings, the Science and Education Center and the Forest Lodge, to enable productive pursuit of a broad range of scientific, education, and conservation activities. The organization now supports more than 13,000 student-visitor days annually at the Forest, and operates a Summer Science Camp that attracts a diverse group of students interested in environmental science and conservation biology.

In conservation, BRF has been effective in helping to preserve the Hudson Highlands' environmental legacy as a National Heritage Area and an increasingly important refuge for wildlife, by working in coalition on energy, water, and land management issues, and most recently by helping to secure an essential wildlife corridor between BRF and Schunnemunk Mountain State Park, keeping open migration pathways between more than 117,000 acres of protected land.

History

Black Rock Forest was established as a research forest in 1927 by Dr. Ernest G. Stillman, a landowner who was dedicated to science, and who left the forest to Harvard University, his alma mater, by bequest in 1949. By 1989, 75 scientific publications had been produced in Black Rock Forest. Stillman intended the Forest to be "constantly useful and constantly flourishing" (Trow, 1984). In the 1960s, however, a plan to build the country's first pumped storage power plant on neighboring Storm King Mountain posed a threat

to the Forest, much of which was to be submerged under Con Edison's proposed storage reservoir for the plant.

The nationally publicized, 20-year battle over the proposed Storm King plant is considered by many to be the genesis of the modern environmental movement in the United States. The proceedings were the first in which citizen groups gained legal standing to object to a development on the basis of conservation and environmental impact. The earliest groups to oppose the plant were the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, which later became a member of the Black Rock Forest Consortium; the Cornwall-on-Hudson Garden Club; the Nature Conservancy; and early founders of the National Resources Defense Council and Scenic Hudson. They were joined by the Garden Club of America, the Sierra Club, the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, and the Palisades Interstate Parks Commission, among others. Scenic Hudson won a settlement with Con Edison in 1980 and the plant was never built. Several Cornwall-based founders of Scenic Hudson later helped as Black Rock Forest was being established.

Black Rock Forest Consortium (now known simply as Black Rock Forest) was formed in 1989 by William T. Golden, following his purchase of the Forest from Harvard, and by 15 founding institutional members, many of which are still consortium members today. For nearly 60 years, Golden played a pivotal role at the intersection of science and society: he recommended creating the position of Science Advisor to the President to President Truman, and had major influence during the formation of the National Science Foundation. He also served on the boards of many important scientific organizations including the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and was co-chair of the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government. In giving the forest lands to a not-for-profit organization, Golden facilitated the creation of the only scientific research organization in the Hudson Highlands and an enduring resource for research-informed conservation and science education.

MAJOR FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The key objectives for the new Executive Director include:

Strategic leadership*:* The ED will continue to coalesce and galvanize staff, board, members, donors, and others in support of BRF's mission and values. With the board, the ED will pursue the goals of the current strategic plan and lay the groundwork for the next aspirational plan. The ED will support and align current program activity, research, outreach, and engagement initiatives to these strategic priorities. They will ensure Black Rock Forest remains nimble and strategically responsive to unexpected opportunities and challenges.

Scientific leadership: The ED will have oversight of the scientific mission of the organization and will ensure that the strong traditions of data collection, scientific inquiry and publishing continue. The forest has a unique long-term record of forest growth based on permanent plots established in the 1930's and these plots have been continually monitored since then, making this a nearly one-of-a-kind resource in the Northeastern United States. It is the responsibility of the ED to steward existing research programs and evaluate new scientific developments and opportunities. Knowledge of local, state, and national research programs, obtaining grants, and participation in professional organizations such as the Organization of Biological Field Stations, The Ecological Society of America or the American Geophysical Union are expected. Opportunities for mentoring of postdoctoral scholars and graduate students is possible.

Communications and public representation: The ED will serve as the key organizational spokesperson and promote an even stronger and more widely recognized organizational brand, sustaining BRF's reputation for excellence. Interacting successfully with scientists and researchers, local and state elected officials, government agencies, and community leaders, they will build and reinforce strategic alliances within and beyond the greater forest ecology community to advance the organization's mission and influence public policy. The ED ensures all outreach and engagement activities are aligned with BRF's strategic priorities and organizational vision.

Staff leadership*:* The ED will serve as a unifying and inspiring staff leader, sustaining a culture that attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse and highly skilled team. The ED will work closely with senior staff to develop goals and work plans, and oversee and evaluate progress and outcomes in line with the mission and strategic plan. The ED will reinforce rigor, quality, clarity, and transparency of communication and decision-making. With senior staff, the ED will focus on staff development, and support and work to build additional human resources infrastructure for the organization.

Management and operations: The ED will ensure that the organization is well managed fiscally and administratively and that its structure and roles align well with its vision and strategy. The ED is responsible for ensuring compliance with all legal, tax, and administrative filings.

Diversity and inclusion: The ED will pursue vigorously and visibly a commitment to diversity and inclusion among BRF's staff, board, volunteers, and partners. They will work to increase education and awareness across the organization and align the goals and learnings throughout the programming, governance, operations, and messaging of BRF to work to foster inclusion and equity.

Fundraising*:* The ED will lead fundraising through personal involvement, particularly with major individual donors and prospects; through board and volunteer engagement; and in partnership with the development director. The ED will play a lead role in cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major and planned gifts, external grants, and other revenue sources for BRF.

Board and consortium member relations: The ED will engage effectively with the board and consortium members. They will draw on the deep knowledge and experience offered by board members and consortium member institution representatives and provide them with concise, rigorously presented information to make sound strategy, policy, and governance decisions.

EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

- Experience in forest ecology, environmental science, or a related field; knowledge of key leaders and partners in forest ecology is strongly preferred.
- Experience in running a scientific research program including proposal writing, experimental design, data collection and analysis, publication and presentation of results.
- Strong leadership skills with an entrepreneurial spirit, solid business acumen, and management operations skills.
- Demonstrated ability to inspire, motivate, and grow staff; to engage and energize volunteers, donors, and potential partners; and the ability to build consensus and foster collaboration, are essential.

- Demonstrated experience leading the execution of complex projects through to success, including meeting financial goals, project deadlines, and coordinating the work of key staff and partners, in organizations of similar or greater size.
- Demonstrated success with building a culture of philanthropy and leading development efforts with comprehensive campaigns. Significant experience and enthusiasm for raising funds from a variety of sources, especially individuals, foundations, and government funders.
- Experience in public policy development and advocacy, campaigns, lobbying, and/or working with local, state, and federal government is ideal.
- Demonstrated commitment to creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment; ability to build and lead a diverse team of staff, board members, and supporters, and to advance positive change in a complex environment.
- A sharp eye for operational efficiency and the best use of resources, including a demonstrated understanding of budgets and the ability to manage them.
- Exemplary interpersonal skills, judgment, and a demonstrated ability to collaborate and build coalitions with a wide range of individuals and organizations at the local, regional, and national levels.
- Excellent and persuasive communication skills, both written and verbal, including public speaking experience, and the ability to succinctly communicate a vision and process; skilled at adjusting register to communicate effectively with the audience at hand.
- Impeccable attention to detail; superb follow-through; a self-starter, comfortable with ambiguity.
- Strong personal integrity, charisma, and work ethic coupled with a sense of humor and perspective, and an accessible, genuine, and approachable leadership style.

QUALIFICATIONS

- A broad scientific background with a Ph.D. in forest ecology, environmental science, or a related field.
- Extensive (10+ years) of organizational development, leadership, and strategy experience, especially in dynamic, complex mission-focused organizations.
- Proven business acumen, including discipline and focus in setting priorities, meeting or exceeding goals, and running a fiscally sound, resilient, and sustainable operation. Experience working with or reporting to a volunteer board would be an advantage.
- Strengths in recruiting, developing, motivating, mentoring, and retaining high potential staff.
- Understanding of the region's forest ecology and political landscape and existing connections to policymakers and the advocacy community is preferred.
- Knowledge of funders engaged in forest ecology philanthropy and major institutional players in research, education, and conservation in the region is preferred.
- Willingness and ability to routinely explore and work in the forest (which requires navigating substantial distances across complex terrain), and to travel through the region and nationally, as required.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resumes and one- to three-page letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller executive search team:

Kennedy Kearney-Fischer, Managing Associate
Becky Piper, Senior Associate
Monica Ochoa, Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

www.imsearch.com/8432

Black Rock Forest is an equal opportunity employer.

APPENDIX

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) was founded in 1869 and has served as one of the world's most preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. While the Museum is most known for their 45 exhibition halls and extensive galleries, it also houses five active research divisions. AMNH visits BRF with a variety of age groups, covering many different topics throughout the year. The Science Research Mentoring Program (SRMP) visits for a week-long fieldwork experience each summer. Students spend their time in the field learning about active turtle research, freshwater habitat ecology, dendrology, Forest history and many others.

Barnard College is a small selective liberal arts college for women located in the heart of NYC. The college is part of Columbia University which offers its students extensive research and scientific opportunities in a variety of fields and laboratories. Barnard students visit the BRF to experience a real life look at the biological processes found in nature. The Forest also hosts summer field internship programs for Barnard students looking to pursue a career in environmental science.

The Browning School is an independent school for boys, grades K-12 located in the heart of Manhattan. Browning students get a glimpse into the life of real-world scientists in the Forest, as well as the tools and equipment they use every day. Each year, middle school students enter the Forest to ask their own research questions, using their skills and equipment to find the answers.

The Calhoun School is a progressive independent school for students ranging from preschool to 12th grade, located on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Black Rock Forest serves as an outdoor learning laboratory for multiple age groups at Calhoun. The Lower school's overnight trip to the Forest is known as a capstone experience in their education.

The City University of New York (CUNY) system is a network of 25 different college campuses under a single university. This expansive network of colleges spans across the five boroughs with programs from undergraduate to doctoral levels. Professors from the multiple campuses take their students into the Forest in a variety of courses. For example, students from Queens college visit the Forest each year both on winter and summer field ecology trips ranging from days to multiple weeks. These trips give students an in depth look at the lives of biologists and researchers in the field. Additionally, both students and

CUNY staff use the Forest as an active research site, studying photosynthesis and nutrient cycling at varying elevations.

Columbia University Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology Department, better known as E3B, uses the Forest extensively as an active field station for collecting data, sampling study areas and processing samples within BRF facilities.

Cornwall Central School District, the primary school district for public school students in Cornwall, NY, has worked alongside BRF staff to create and develop curriculum for students of all ages. Cornwall elementary schools visit the Forest regularly for seasonal observations where they learn the basics of collecting data in the field at a young age. The Cornwall schools have also been a large contributor to the Brook Trout program over the years, raising the native fish both at the Forest and in their own classrooms.

The Dalton School is a leading, co-educational independent school for students K-12 located in Manhattan. Dalton immerses their students in nature during their lower school trips to the Forest. Students collect water samples from reservoirs, sample macroinvertebrates in our streams, and use the natural beauty of BRF as their classroom. Students have also completed overnight trips to learn more about the history and landscapes of the Forest as inspiration for sketches, paintings, and drawings.

New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks) is the steward of more than 30,000 acres of land — 14 percent of New York City — including more than 5,000 individual properties ranging from Coney Island Beach and Central Park to community gardens and Greenstreets. They are responsible for 600,000 street trees, and two million more in their parks. NYC Parks often partners with Black Rock Forest, sharing horticultural expertise, and research and programing opportunities.

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NYNJ-TC) is a network of multiple organizations and volunteers that work to build, maintain, and protect hiking trails for public use. The trail conference maintains several trails in BRF and many more throughout the Hudson Highlands. The Forest lodge hosts meetings, workshops, and trainings for the trail conference throughout the year.

New York University (NYU) is a private research university in the heart of Greenwich Village with multiple locations around the world. Students have the opportunity to enroll in field ecology courses that take place in the Forest. These courses allow students to gain a better understanding of the flora and fauna of BRF in comparison to that of Central Park where other sampling takes place. Students sample plant communities, soil cores and survey for birds, mammals, insects, and other macroinvertebrates.

Newburgh Enlarged City School District has an expansive network of schools that span four municipalities in Orange County. The district uses the Forest in a variety of ways from kindergarten through 12th grade helping to open the eyes of students to the natural world located just miles from the city of Newburgh. Students in grades 3-8, have the opportunity to enroll in a month-long summer STEM program that takes place in in Black Rock Forest. Students spend each day alongside both Newburgh teachers and BRF educators conducting stream surveys, sampling for turtles, and learning about the flora and fauna found in the forest. The Newburgh Free Academy high school also visits the Forest with a variety of classes aimed to give students a look into tools and tactics used by environmental professionals in the field.

Riverdale Country School is a Pre-K through grade 12 independent school in New York City. Riverdale's membership in the Black Rock Forest Consortium will help further its mission to empower lifelong learners

by developing minds, building character, and creating community in order to change the world for the good. Already, Riverdale is embracing the forest as a site for scientific inquiry, student bonding, and faculty development. Programs underway and in the planning phases include a science program investigating the epigenetic effects of environmental stress on trees in Black Rock Forest and the Arctic Boreal Forest, a ninth grade orientation centered on place-based workshops in the Forest, professional development for faculty, and Wilderness First Aid training.

The School At Columbia University (SAC) has been a member of the consortium since its founding in 2003 as an independent school for students K-8, located in Manhattan. Students visit the Forest with their entire class on overnight visits in the intermediate school. Topics of discovery range from hiking and general ecology to volunteer efforts and tree plantings. These visits stress the importance of both nature and community as they work together to accomplish their tasks.

The Spence School is an all-girls institution for students K-12 located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Spence brings an entire grade for retreats and hikes which utilize the Lodge and Stone House so that students experience an overnight in the heart of the Forest.

The Storm King School, located just across Route 9-W from the Forest, is a top ranked boarding school serving students grades 8-12. Their convenient location and proximity to the Forest make it a truly one-of-a-kind experience. Students often visit the Forest daily both on academic and extracurricular activities ranging from science and history classes to cross country and mountain biking. Students from SKS also give back to the Forest throughout the year with volunteer efforts including tree plantings, invasive species removal and Forest clean-ups.

Trevor Day School is a private co-educational school for nursery through 12th grade students. Classes visit the Forest in several grades, including the middle and high school. Students participate in a number of sampling procedures including macroinvertebrate surveys, water quality testing and tree mensuration on our long-term plots. These activities help students learn more about the ecosystems and methods used by scientists in Black Rock Forest.