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AMERICORPS/USDA



First Quarter Report

(September 12, 1994 - November 31, 1994)



Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger meets with USDA AmeriCorps Members in California.

"All of you have taken government and made it your own. You've turned a concept into some solid, practical action ... It's people pulling together to solve community problems. This is what government should be about."

- Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger, January 28, 1995

Executive Summary

The United States Department of Agriculture is sponsoring approximately 1,200 AmeriCorps Members serving in 38 states in urban and rural projects fighting hunger, protecting the environment, and re-building rural America. During only their first two and a half months of service --- from September 12 - November 31, 1994 --- the Members provided over 360,000 hours of service to their communities.

Members of the Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team cooked and prepared meals at soup kitchens, conducted nutrition and food safety workshops for the elderly, sorted goods at food banks, developed nutrition education programs for schools, provided outreach for the Women's, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program, worked to increase the number of children receiving immunizations, began efforts to improve participation in the summer feeding program, located sites for revitalizing community gardens in low-income neighborhoods, assisted earthquake victims with emergency food information, and informed pantries about how their clients who are working but are still poor can boost their incomes by utilizing the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Members of the Public Lands and Environment Team working on Forest Service lands performed rehabilitation and watershed protection work, constructed stream structures for fish habitat, reforested fire-damaged lands, constructed and maintained trails for hiking and horseback riding, planted cuttings for riparian and wildlife restorations, maintained and rehabilitated campgrounds and made campgrounds accessible for the disabled, completed timber stand improvements, restored historic sites, conducted threatened and endangered species habitat surveys, removed and installed fences, improved wildlife habitats, and hung erosion control netting on roads.

Members of the Public Lands and Environment Team working on private and local municipal lands repaired and restored flood-damaged areas, re-created fish habitats, conducted water quality monitoring, built community greenhouses, constructed urban, suburban, and rural nature trails, built playgrounds, restored windbreaks originally created by the Civilian Conservation Corps, revegetated coastal marshes, restored collections at the National Arboretum, created a safe-haven lot at a public housing development, landscaped at a public high school, cleaned up an urban wetland, revitalized historical sites, improved camping sites, protected stream banks, created community gardens, and cleaned out a public fountain.

Members of the Rural Development Team provided service on a wide range of projects related to running water and indoor plumbing, sustainable agriculture, emergency response and prevention, fisheries restoration, alternative uses of natural resources, environmental education facilities, community improvement and personal responsibility development, tourism to boost local economies, water quality protection, recycling promotion, American Indian tribal empowerment, water quality protection, rural housing improvement, and cultural resource preservation.

AmeriCorps/USDA is "Getting Things Done" on Forest Service Lands

The following is a brief summary of first quarter accomplishments in the nine Public Lands and Environment Team projects managed by the USDA Forest Service in seven states. These accomplishments include activities from six of the eight camps operating on National Forest Land through the USDA direct grant and one camp operating through the Northwest Service Academy, which receives significant technical support from the Forest Service. Most of the camps through the USDA direct grant weren't fully operational until early October 1994 and the report covers only until November 30, 1994. The White Mountain and the Green Mountain National Forest camps started operations in January 1995. USDA AmeriCorps Members:

- * Performed rehabilitation/watershed protection work on 12,000 acres of fire-damaged land.
- * Constructed 25 stream structures for anadromous fisheries on .75 miles of stream and completed 10 acres of reforestation.
- * Maintained 61.3 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails and constructed 6 miles of new hiking trails, of which 1.2 miles were designed for the physically challenged.
- * Gathered and planted 45,000 willow and cottonwood cuttings for riparian and wildlife restorations.
- * Maintained eight campgrounds, rehabilitated 10 campground sites, and provided handicapped access on six sites.
- * Completed 197 acres of timber stand improvement.
- * Restored two historic sites.
- * Completed threatened and endangered species habitat surveys on 900 acres, completed 355 acres of wildlife habitat improvement, installed two range waterlots, removed three miles of fence, and constructed 1.25 miles of new fence.
- * Protected 82 acres of huckleberry fields sacred to the Warm Springs Takima Tribal Nations by burning 12 acres of fields and by hand grinding and pruning conifer trees on another 70 acres.
- * Hung erosion control netting on 300 feet of steep Forest Service road cutbacks and helped clear 15 miles of road that provide critical access to water monitoring sites after an early winter snowstorm.

AmeriCorps/USDA is "Getting Things Done" Fighting Against Hunger

The following is a summary of the first quarter accomplishments of the five USDA Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team projects managed by the USDA Food and Consumer Service through local partnerships with anti-hunger groups and youth service corps. Most of the projects started service in October 1994. This report does not include accomplishments from Vermont, since that project did not fully start until January of 1995. USDA/AmeriCorps Members:

- * Cooked and prepared meals for over 6,000 people at local soup kitchens.
- * Conducted a nutrition and food safety workshop for the elderly attended by 39 senior citizens.
- * Conducted nutrition outreach to senior citizens and aided 200 senior citizens in filling out food stamp applications.
- * Surveyed 60 low-income households about hunger insecurity and 29 of those homes have been referred to receive food assistance.
- * Sorted over 93,000 pounds of food at local food banks.
- * Developed educational skits teaching how "Healthy eating is fun" for ten elementary schools.
- * Four days a week, reached an average of 200 people with educational efforts regarding public services such as WIC.
- * Produced and distributed 20 informational posters, distributed 300 informational flyers, and made 150 reminder phone calls to relevant families to increase the number of children receiving immunizations.
- * Contacted 250 schools in five cities about the participating in the summer feeding program; distributed 500 flyers in targeted areas about the School Breakfast Program.
- * Located three sites for revitalizing community gardens in low-income neighborhoods.
- * Assisted 200 earthquake victims with emergency food information through an informational referral service.
- * Informed 130 local pantries about how their clients who are working but are still poor can obtain help through the Earned Income Tax Credit Program.

AmeriCorps/USDA is "Getting Things Done" Helping the Environment

The following are highlights from the first quarter accomplishments of the 14 Environmental Team projects sponsored by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on private lands in urban and rural areas and the one project sponsored by the USDA Agricultural Research Service at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Many projects did not start until October of 1994. USDA AmeriCorps Members:

- * Repaired and restored five reservoir flood-damaged recreation areas in Kansas by fixing 22 miles of fence, cleaning five miles of shoreline, removing 160 damaged trees, clearing three miles of trails, replanting 40 trees, re-creating fish habitats, repairing 50 picnic tables, restoring five restrooms, repairing one bridge, trimming 3 miles of trees on dikes, cleaning out one outdoor learning classroom, debris from 2 miles of roads, and posting signs on 19 miles of roads.
- * In and around Atlanta, Georgia, conducted water quality monitoring at thirty locations throughout the Big Creek Watershed. In one urban neighborhood, Members benefitted 400 residents by cleaning eight acres, mulching 1,000 feet of walking trails, placing three waterbars into trails, seeded a half acre, and carried away six dump trucks of trash. Built a greenhouse and began constructing a nature trail at the North Metro Technical Institute in Acworth.
- * Completed stream walks on four streams in New Jersey to categorize potential non-point pollution in the South Branch Raritan River Watershed. Desnagged and re-established reflectors in two streams to improve fish habitat and removed debris and reseeded 375 feet of streambank to improve water quality. Designed and flagged 500 feet of trail and built a playground set at Lake Hopatcong State Park.
- * In Western Oklahoma, restored 15 windbreaks originally created by the Civilian Conservation Corps on 7.5 miles of land in five counties.
- * In and around Baytown, Texas, cleaned and mowed five 10-meter by 75-meter ponds, vegetated two acres of marsh demonstration projects, harvested and threshed by hand 4 acres of smooth cordgrass seed, harvested by hand and then planted 800 mangrove seeds, harvested, threshed, and planted 3,000 Scirpus seeds. Members also assisted the Red Cross in flood relief efforts in the Houston area by loading and unloading trucks and delivering supplies to local flood victims.
- * At the National Arboretum, in Washington, D.C, Members completed the first two stages of restoring the Azalea Overlook, cut and removed sections of the Boxwood collection, and cleared weeds and vines to restore 150 yards of Juniper hedge.
- * In South Dakota, Members demonstrated to cattlemen the benefits of managing vegetation areas along waterways, including during periods of flooding.

* In Chicago, Members maintained and beautified streambanks and created a safe-haven lot at Lathrop Homes, cleaned up a lagoon in Washington Park, landscaped a public high school, remodeled and prepared a play lot at Kennicott Park, helped organize a "Neighbors Against Gang Violence - Day of Dead Memorial," remodeled the Donnelly Youth Center, and planted bulbs at the Fellowship Youth Center.

* In Nebraska, Members designed three recreation trails, cleaned up an urban wetland "Heron Haven" owned by the local Audubon Club, revitalized the Lincoln Normal historical project, improved 20 miles of recreation trails, assisted in flood debris removal from 14 sites at the National Arbor Day Foundation headquarters, helped prepare an inspection and maintenance report of flood control facilities, maintained and improved historical sites, and performed recreation and conservation maintenance in Lower Elkhorn River area and Norfolk public parks.

* In areas damaged by the floods of 1993 in Central Illinois, Members developed 1.3 miles of hiking trails, improved five acres of camp sites, and pruned 5 acres of evergreen trees at a Pittsfield City park. Members also removed about 15 tons of debris (tires, appliances, automobiles, etc.) from half of mile of a stream that outlets into a city owned recreation lake for the City of Rushville. In Kampsville, Members replaced 75 feet of sidewalks damaged during the flood. Members in Quincy also renovated a brick road in an historic alley.

* In Portland, Oregon, Members at the Whitaker Pond Restoration improved 150 feet of pond bank by removing pest species including blackberries, night shade, and everlasting pea then revegetating the area. Members also revegetated three acres on the northern portion of Fairview Creek. The Members worked-side-by-side with 80 different community volunteers who served 450 volunteer hours.

* In East. St. Louis, Illinois, Members established nurseries at East. St. Louis Senior High School, Lovejoy High School, and Jones Park, removed debris and broken materials from the high school greenhouse, cleaned out a fountain in Jones Park, and assisted Operation NewSpirit in planting bulbs throughout the city. The Forest service also provided technical assistance to this project.

* Members in Goldendale, Washington, rebuilt a half-mile stretch of fence that protects a key riparian area along the Little Klickitat River. Members also protected water quality on one mile of stream by treating 300 acres with log check dams across steep slopes and installed eight sediment retention dams. They also protected Pine Creek by installing eight log check dams, built a new playground at a Head Start Center on the Yakima Indian Reservation, removed dozens of pick-up dead wood on public lands and provided them as firewood for low-income families.

* Members worked with the Izaak Walton League in Charles County, Maryland to complete four erosion control structures on a site that will be open to the public.

AmeriCorps/USDA is "Getting Things Done" Rebuilding Rural America

USDA has fully embraced the vision --- held by both the President and the Corporation for National and Community Service --- that AmeriCorps be community-based, community-designed, and community-run. The USDA Rural Development Team has different community service objectives for each and every individual site, based on the needs of each local community. Consequently, the Rural Development Team Members are providing such a wide variety of services that they are nearly impossible to aggregate.

The best illustration of how the Rural Development Team is "getting things done," is a list of success stories in each of the following areas: running water and indoor plumbing, sustainable agriculture, emergency response and prevention, fisheries restoration, alternative uses of natural resources, environmental education facilities, community improvement and personal responsibility development, tourism to boost local economies, water quality protection, recycling promotion, American Indian tribal empowerment, rural housing improvement, and cultural resource preservation.

Running Water and Indoor Plumbing

- * Member in Marion, Arkansas helped provide a rural water line that furnished seven households -- with 22 residents -- with running water for the first time.
- * Members in Louisiana and Mississippi assisted individuals in joining and developing rural water associations.
- * In Texas, Member in Brownsville helped 25 families without bathroom and kitchen plumbing obtain sanitary and safe plumbing facilities. Members in Hidalgo County have been responsible for the construction of nine bathrooms at homes previously without indoor plumbing; by the end of the quarter, three more installations were finalized but not yet built. Member in San Benito started work to provide indoor plumbing to 153 families without such plumbing. Member in Raymondville started work to provide indoor plumbing to 30 families without such plumbing.

Rural Economic Development

- * Member in Holmes County, Mississippi devised a plan to reduce employee turnover at the Durant Electric Corporation, the largest employer in the county --- with 600 employees and a payroll of \$8 million. The plan not only convinced the company to reverse its plans to move to Mexico, but allowed the company to plan to hire 400 new employees. Thus, the one USDA AmeriCorps Member directly saved or created 1,100 jobs.

* In Boone, North Carolina, Member is working with the local Enterprise Community (EC) applicant to implement their strategic plan for economic development. Working in cooperation with the Boone Housing Authority, the Member is organizing and making functional a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to assist the low-income residents of Boone. To date, over \$1.8 million has been awarded for water and sewer infrastructure and housing assistance as a result of her help.

* Members in West Virginia assisted with implementation of a business retention and expansion program including the production and distribution of a monthly newsletter that is intended to improve dialogue, link communities together, and provide funding opportunities; they also developed a computer program for the West Virginia Division of Forestry that allows small business owners to calculate costs of producing various materials for long term investment strategies.

* In Bell County, Tennessee, Member helped the local Industrial Foundation obtain a \$201,000 grant.

* In Cleveland, Mississippi, Member recruited new and emerging leaders in Bolivar County for a community and economic development leadership seminar and conducted a survey of an 18 county area as an integral part of the regional strategic plan. In another county of Mississippi, a Member produced a comprehensive report of available buildings, the labor supply, financial options, cost of utilities, etc. in an 18-county region in order to expand existing local businesses or attract new businesses.

* In Pittsfield, Illinois, Members completed a Small Businesses Research and Revitalization Project and are helping update the town's overall economic development plan. Their efforts have been praised by the Mayor.

* In Texas, one Member has begun grant applications to start a revolving loan fund to provide seed money to create new small businesses locally.

* In Allendale/Blackville, South Carolina, Member established a downtown redevelopment effort concentrating on an historical abandoned hotel. In Penn Center, South Carolina, Member is completing a survey of community land ownership to stabilize development and establish a plan for a cooperative effort for agriculture processing and development.

Sustainable Agriculture

* In Machias, Maine, Member received funding from the Maine Wild Blueberry Commission to set-up a state-wide series of best management practices for Blueberry Growers and began implementation of workshops.

Another Member in Maine assisted in the establishment of a pilot Integrated Pest Management Program for cranberry growers to help the growers economically reduce the amount of pesticides that end up in the groundwater, assisted with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's upland cranberry bed demonstration project, and has visited lands of thirteen cranberry growers to provide personal assistance.

* In California, Member in Petaluma has begun water quality sampling on three adjacent dairies and has completed one conservation plan. In Santa Rosa, Member has trained one dairy operator to use a water quality test kit, is developing plans to provide such assistance to members of four different local organizations, and has completed inventory work for a watershed group.

* In Minnesota, Members based in Hiawatha began work to improve forage/grassland conditions to the good or excellent category on 5,000 acres, affecting 50 farmers in 11 counties. Members based in Thief River Falls began work to improve water quality and reduce producer fertilizer input costs by developing and implementing animal waste nutrient utilization and management plans on 120 livestock operations.

* In South Carolina, Members conducted waste water sampling of waste management facilities (lagoons) and prepared detailed summary reports for 16 individual farm systems; this testing procedure was the first in South Carolina and will serve as a model for other conservation activities. They also tested 600 different soil samples to determine croplands with high levels of phosphorus and acidity and prepared a report on their findings to local farmers. Members expanded inventory on data on farm grasslands to reflect 40,000 acres in order to reduce erosion and improve water quality of nearby streams and lakes.

* In Redlands, California, Members have surveyed three dairies totaling 130 acres, eventually leading to recycling or eliminating 6,867 tons of waste once practices have been implemented. Each farmer saved an average of about \$9,000 by having the service performed by AmeriCorps members instead of private contractors. The Members also completed a survey of a five-acre ranch which will eventually lead to the recycling of 26.5 tons of waste a year.

* Member in Pine Bluff, Arkansas developed farm and home plans for small and disadvantaged farmers to help them obtain loans to stay on their land.

* In Western New York, Members have helped digitalize soil surveys and make that information accessible and practical to surrounding communities, including the Seneca Nation of Indians.

Emergency Response and Prevention

- * Members on the Vermont Fire Protection project contacted 48 Fire Departments in Vermont, installed one dry fire hydrant, performed 30 dry fire hydrant site surveys, and initiated and participated in meetings with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Fire Safety Association, Vermont Fire Chiefs Association, and Vermont League of Cities and Towns.
- * In Missouri, one Member began preparing guide sheets and a handbook to aid reclamation of two smaller tributaries of the Missouri River, another Member obtained existing floodplain management data to begin developing a Decision Support System computer model for floodplain management, another Member produced an informational fact sheet on flood recovery that was distributed by the Extension and also began collecting hydrologic and agronomic data in order to propose land-use alternatives for the area, another Member provided emergency program assistance to 32 landusers, another Member investigated local floodwater retarding dams to determine workload, another Member worked to assist sponsors to complete five dam safety reports and perform maintenance on 15 floodwater retarding dams, another Member completed maps of five farms of the sands deposits created by the floods of 1993, and another Member assisted five sponsors and 15 landowners to provide flood protection recovery through the Emergency Watershed Program.
- * In Middlebourne, West Virginia, Member organized a dry fire hydrant in the area by working with fire departments and local communities to get access to water for rural fire protection.
- * In South Carolina, Members helped local officials improve emergency response procedures by conducting a county road survey to inventory and update names and locations, as the first base procedure to reduce delays in 911 emergency responses. Over 600 miles of roads were recorded on base maps and entered into local computer software in order to maintain accurate files. The entire effort saved the county approximately \$20,000, and each AmeriCorps Member was presented a certificate of achievement from County Officials.
- * Members in Monticello, Mississippi also sponsored a regional meeting, attended by 11 of the 13 counties in the area, to improve rural fire protection services. Members in Tupelo and Grenada have generated maps and use them in meetings with local fire coordinators to plan dry fire hydrants that will increase local fire protection. Members in Holy Grove, Mississippi began work to help community residents move out of a flood zone.
- * Members in Louisiana made significant progress towards installing 35 dry fire hydrants per parish in order to aid rural fire protection.

* In Auburn, California, Members have made significant progress creating and implementing fuel reduction plans to reduce forest and other fires in the area. In Lancaster and Somis, California, Members have focused on areas previously impacted by fires and by flooding and have completed a mitigation plan for the Kinneola area and have completed field work for the Laguna mitigation plan.

Fisheries Restoration

* In Maine, Member sorted 78 samples of ichthoplankton, identifying eggs and larvae in the samples, in order to aid in the restoration of striped bass through locating and protecting spawning areas in the Kennebec and Eastern Rivers. Transferred 20,000 individual shads from grow-out ponds into a re-stocking truck.

* Another Member in Maine located and identified streams suitable for streamside installation of boxes for salmonid spawning, rearing, and staging,

* In Middlebourne, West Virginia the Member worked to develop a pond system for the production of striped bass on a commercial basis. He also began forming an organization of warm water fish producers in the area.

Alternative Uses of Natural Resources

* In Minnesota, Members developed a public access TV show that explains a project being conducted by the RC&Ds to promote the development of a bio-fuels program in cooperation with the US Dept. of Energy.

* In Louisiana, a Member worked on a bridge information summary for Mississippi Delta counties to prepare a bridge infrastructure report for possible timber bridge construction projects, and a Member in Mississippi completed one timber bridge application.

* Members in Batesville, Arkansas made significant progress towards helping create a local woodland owners association.

* Another Member in North Little Rock has identified 10 sites for Pellet Stove Demonstration Projects to stimulate demand for a new product that will boost industry in the region.

* Members in Utah have begun a service conducting a comprehensive analysis of the potential for local resource-based, value-added industries in the region and assisting limited resource farmers in developing small-scale agriculture enterprises.

Environmental Education Facilities

- * In South Carolina, Members built a new front entrance gate and nature trails at the Adair Outdoor Learning Center, which is visited by 3,000 students each year.
- * Based in Waverly, Tennessee, Members have significantly improved and expanded the Humphreys County Spoil Conservation District environmental center, also known as the Blue Creek Nature Center. Members developed one new trail, improved existing trails, and conducted six nature tours involving 199 students and 63 adults.
- * Member in Pearl, Mississippi nearly completed two outdoor classrooms and a nature trail at Madison Elementary School.

Community Improvement and Personal responsibility Development

- * In West Virginia, Member served on the organization and implementation committee for Tug River Health Clinic and sent surveys to all employers, child care providers, and parents to collect data to apply for a grant to establish a clinic. Another Member in West Virginia organized a Community Service Day for the all Northern West Virginia AmeriCorps Members in which they worked at the Union Mission of Fairmont to help decorate for the youth holiday party, tape plastic to windows in the homeless shelter, and prepare information packets for a fundraising event. In Wilcoe, West Virginia, another Member sent surveys to prominent businesses in McDowell County that employ 25 people or more, in-home day care providers, private day care owners, and parents of Head Start children to collect data to include in grant applications to obtain funding for local day care programs.
 - * Member in Natchez, Mississippi is working to reduce teenage pregnancy; she spoke personally about her efforts with Senate Majority Whip Trent Lott who "promised to support (her) efforts in Natchez and declared he would be in Natchez in any events that take place if his schedule permits." The Member has also formed a task force to work on reestablishing a YMCA center in Natchez.
- Another Member in Natchez helped two different families obtain funds to repair their home. In her "free time" this member is volunteering for the Illiteracy Program at a local United Methodist Church. Another Member in Mississippi held two town meetings, attended by 80 local senior citizens, to inform them of common consumer fraud scams targeted at the elderly.

- * Member in Arkansas helped improve the quality of standard living for 950 low income families by the end of this quarter in obtaining Home Energy Assistance (HEAP) and to provide assistance through the Crisis Intervention Program (CIP).
- * Members in Holly Grove, Mississippi have also worked on helping start a "Dads Program," to focus attention on young boys without fathers in the home.
- * In Santee-Lynches, South Carolina, Member has been working to statistically document and then reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

Tourism Development to Boost Local Economies

- * In Virginia, Member developed a video program showing natural resources on the National Forest, State and private lands to promote recreation resources, and tourism in the region. Other Members in Virginia prepared a plan for a local greenway trail.
- * Members based in Twin Valley worked on the Agassie Recreational Trail Project and designed a tourism brochure along with a logo created through a local contest, worked with the Ada City Council to integrate the trail project with community development, completed a grant proposal for the Heritage & Information Center, and judged at the Norman County East Science Fair for students.
- * In Tennessee, Members who are working on the Clinch-Powell Specialty Recreation and Tourism Initiative interviewed 43 federal, state, and local tourism professionals, six independent consultants, and 64 local citizens to initially assess project feasibility, community attitudes, tourism development processes, and sources of funding or technical assistance. These Members the first-ever tourism advisor board in the region. They also began a community-based initiative in Hancock and Grainger Counties to provide technical assistance and "hands-on" service in the establishment and renovation of county museums.
- * In Kentucky, Member produced brochure to help increase tourism to the nearby Kentucky Craft Village. Member is also planning instruction workshops for 15 local craft producers.
- * Members in Hattiesburg, Mississippi began an inventory of tourism resources in an 18 county area of Southeast Mississippi.
- * Members in Iowa conducted outreach to increase the number of farmers in the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program. Members in Iowa have prepared maps and written materials to assist County Conservation Boards in Fremont Mills, Pottawattamie, Harrison, Monona, and Woodbury counties in locating areas for potential in recreation, tourism, economic development, and wildlife areas. They

also revised a brochure for Western Iowa and worked to develop bicycle loops for area cycling clubs. Additionally, Members updated tourism guides, wrote scripts for tours, restored a farmer's market, and took an inventory of resources in the African-American community to create an agricultural heritage area in Northeast Iowa.

Recycling Promotion

* In Tennessee, a Member developed a marketing program for recyclable materials; a program called "Garbage Busters" was developed for second graders. Members wrote grants for various proposals and one was approved for a "Learn and Service America" program that focuses on recycling management for elementary students in a five-county area; prepared articles for local newspapers entitled "Trashy Talk"; and completed a presentation for a public education program on oil recycling in Tennessee.

* In another part of Tennessee, Members have created a database to track the status of solid waste/recycling progress in each of 14 counties. Members also began a 14 county poster contest in local schools with the theme "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle." Members successfully convinced 16 schools to start on-site recycling programs. Members have also presented eight environmental education programs to 400 students.

* In Texas, a Member has made significant progress towards creating a 5,000 acre Regional Environmental Enterprise Zone to build and implement a comprehensive facility to meet the solid waste needs of the region for the next 75 to 100 years.

American Indian Tribal Empowerment

* In North Carolina, a Member developed a Parks and Recreation Department proposal for the Cherokee Indian Reservation in NC.

* In Waynesville, North Carolina, a Member is working towards establishing a good, trusting relationship with the Cherokee Indian reservation and to make the residents aware of various USDA home ownership and repair programs.

* Members in Holbrook, Arizona began an assessment of small-scale agriculture needs on the Hopi and Navajo Reservations.

* In San Juan, New Mexico, Members have begun to inventory private woodlands and started to conduct a resource and rangeland inventory on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation.

* In Ukiah, California, a Member has formed client partnerships to aid two severely eroded streams, has helped the Round Valley Tribal Community treat two miles of stream, and signed up four local growers for a cost share program to convert to the water-saving drip irrigation program.

Water Quality Protection

* In Houlton, Maine, a Member completed a sanitary survey on Shin Pound to help community residents make future decisions about how to best protect the health of their lake.

* Members on the Winooski River Project in Vermont conducted a 21 mile reconnaissance survey from Jonesville to Essex Junction, Vermont to evaluate the state of erosion control and bioengineering measures installed in the late 1930's in order to improve current conservation measures.

* In Kingwood, West Virginia, a Member performed soil nutrient content analysis and animal manure nutrient analysis in order to improve local water quality. In Morefield, West Virginia, the Member performed nutrient and pesticide management activities to improve the local water quality. The two members have provided assistance on a combined total of 1,000 acres.

* Members based in the Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council in Tennessee have dewatered 2.5 million gallons of waste from the storage facilities of five local landowners, and collected soil samples at those sites to ensure safe discharge.

* In Louisiana, Members performed over 100 pre-assessment surveys that benefited over 100 rural families by identifying threats water quality on their home and farmsteads. They made presentations on the water quality program to 240 high school students.

* In Ohio, Members completed a filed map of Pickaway County to help protect the Darby Creek watershed, completed survey and design work to implement Best Management Practices in rural areas, identified local landowners who want trees to be planted on riparian areas, and began identifying places on the Big and Little Darby Creeks where point and non-point pollution enters the stream system.

* In Michigan, Members conducted quality assessments and provided water quality protection plans to 29 farm families.

* Members based in Cloquet, Minnesota developed a public participation plan for the Nemadji River Basin Project and completed a watershed roadside erosion inventory.

Rural Housing Improvement

- * In Williamson, West Virginia, a Member assisted in helping 30 families apply for rental housing assistance.
- * In Hendersonville, North Carolina, Member is helping finance home improvements for very low income families in Ashe County. To do so, he established relationships with the Housing Assistance Corporation and the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission so that they will now package applications for FmHA housing loans. He also met with several individuals to educate them about the USDA programs, and processed two loans to make repairs to low income individuals.
- * In Mississippi, a Member helped five families with poor credit histories turn their credit around so they could obtain housing loans.
- * In Webb, Mississippi, a Member helped six low-income citizens obtain single self-help housing units. Member has also provided counseling to the families that have homes under construction to acquaint them with the responsibilities that go along with home ownership. In Indianola, Mississippi, a Member began providing a "Home Buyer's Education Program" for 932 individuals.
- * In Texas, a Member in Brownsville helped 16 families remodel their homes to remove health hazards such as broken windows, old roofs, insulation, etc and helped two families obtain new homes that are now under construction. A Member in Laredo made significant progress towards rehabilitating 42 housing units. A Member in El Paso helped two elderly women obtain funds to repair their homes, and for a third women ineligible for government loans, recruited a volunteer plumber to repair her bathroom and volunteers through the Salvation army to winterize her home.
- * Members in El Centro, California have been conducting outreach to expand usage of the 504 program to prove grants and loans for low income families to repair their homes; by the end of the first quarter, two applications for repairs had been approved and the work was completed, two more had just been approved, and four more were in the process of being approved.
- * A Member in Gallup, New Mexico conducted on training on loan packaging for 19 community residents including representatives from local non-profit groups, church leaders, and Native American Community leaders.

* In Pendleton, Oregon, a Member helped two low-income individuals receive a loan and one individual to receive a grant to repair their homes. In Elgin, Oregon, Member assisted HELP, inc. in Housing Preservation Grant that allowed 11 low income and very low income families to repair and rehabilitate their homes. The Member verified eligibility, determined preservation needs, identified environmental effects, and awarded bids to housing contractors.

Cultural and Historic Resource Preservation

* In Kentucky, Members developed an infrastructure database; served as project manager for the historic Stearns building renovation project and administered the Folk Life Study on historical buildings, people, and local folklore in KY.

* Based in Morgantown, West Virginia, a Member performed an archaeologist inventory on five major sites in economically depressed sites around the state in order to provide cultural resource protection through inventory, investigation, and documentation of sites. At one site, he discovered three historic and one pre-historic sites that he will be documenting. He also worked with another AmeriCorps member to develop Fort Randolph -- a Civil War fort in Point Pleasant -- for public use.

* In Baker City, New Mexico, a Member has recruited three property owners who have agreed to use their properties as pilot locations for historic renovations.

AmeriCorps/USDA is "Getting Things Done" Educating Americans

Many USDA AmeriCorps environmental and rural development projects have educational components. Educational achievements related to hunger are detailed in the hunger section above. In the first quarter, USDA AmeriCorps Members:

- * In Redlands, California, a Member helped coordinate and teach an Nature Discovery Program that benefited 690 local elementary students.
- * In Maine, Members worked with 12 teachers to begin implementing an "Adopt-a-Stream curriculum in their classrooms. Members in another part of the state collected, revised, adapted, copied, and distributed a 20 page packet of educational materials including lesson plans on water quality, the water cycle, water conservation, and preventing surface and groundwater pollution to 16 Soil and Water Conservation District. In still another part of Maine, a Member facilitated three cooperative agreements between University of Maine at Machias, University of Maine Orono Cooperative Extension, and Maine Department of Environmental Resources in order to integrate hands-on water quality testing and shoreline sampling experience into the Environmental Chemistry and Special Topics in Environmental Sciences courses.
- * Member in Yazoo City, Mississippi, coordinated a program in which the Mississippi State Health Educator talked to 900 high school students about teenage pregnancy and abstinence.
- * Member in Louisiana assisted with the development of a tutoring program for individuals to obtain their GED and improve ACT test scores and an education program for adults
- * In South Carolina, Members conducted a "Junior Palmetto Leadership Training Course" for 30 high school students; another Member established an after-school tutorial project.
- * Members provided environmental education to 600 students visiting Forest Service lands.
- * In South Dakota, Members helped conduct 10 sessions in elementary classrooms on American Indian Heritage Month.
- * In Arkansas, Members motivated volunteers to assist with the "Educate the Children Project" which distributes educational material to school districts and some non-profit organizations.

* Member in Madison County, Mississippi recruited 46 local high school students and two teachers to participate in a series of money management workshops. Another Member in Madison and Jefferson Counties, Mississippi conducted financial management classes in six senior high school classes reaching 135 students.

AmeriCorps/USDA is "Getting Things Done" Fighting Crime

Some USDA AmeriCorps also have public safety components. In the first quarter, USDA AmeriCorps Members:

- * In Logan County, West Virginia, Member assisted the organization of nine local rural communities so they can bring resources together to effectively reduce certain criminal activities.
- * Member is working in Jackson, Mississippi to create a "peer Helpers' group to reduce crimes committed by teenagers.
- * On the Texas/Mexico border, one Member is helping create a community crime watch program.
- * In Greater Orangeburg, South Carolina, Member is seeking to reduce the number of vacant buildings used for illegal activities by helping identify those premises and working with the city to demolish or improve those buildings.

What Citizens Are Saying About AmeriCorps/ USDA

(Unique Successes and Great Stories)

Getting Things Done

"Its going to be a wonderful boon to us in the area of the environment, especially keeping Lake Champlain the gem that it is."

- Senator James Jeffords (R-VT), October 17, 1994

Describing USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Project on the Winooski River

"Rural Development is really a national concern we have - environmental concerns are extraordinary and one of the priorities of AmeriCorps really is environmental development - the natural environment, the neighborhood environment. We learn these lessons so we can do what is most important about national service --- which is getting things done."

- Eli J. Segal, CEO, Corporation for National and Community Service

October 17, 1994, also commenting on USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Project on the Winooski River

"The AmeriCorps program has been essential in our area. Through the use of our effluent discharge program, landowners have been able to reduce the impact on non-point source pollution problems. They have also become more aware of their responsibilities for water quality through our educational efforts."

Chris Hays, Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council
Jackson, Tennessee

"As a result of his diligent efforts... we have decided to remain in full operation in Durant, Mississippi (and) we are presently hiring and training additional employees."

Mark Lauritzen, President, Durant Electric Corporation

Explaining how a USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Team Member helped prevent his company with 600 employees and a \$8 million payroll from relocating to Mexico

"It's hard to know whether (critics of AmeriCorps) are opposed to national service programs in general, or because AmeriCorps is one of the few unambiguous successes President Clinton can point to in his first two years ... There are 38 young men and women at a work camp in the Applegate Ranger District this winter, working in the woods as well as renovating structures in Butte Falls and Prospect. So far, AmeriCorps is a success in America's forests and urban areas."

- Editorial, Medford, Oregon *Mail-Tribune*
October 18, 1995

"I never thought that being an AmeriCorps Member would have such an impact on someone's else's life, meaning that knowing that I had the power to help an elderly lady receive a grant to repair her home. One of the County Supervisors and I went to inspect the house and the lady was in a bad situation. When everything was processed and she was qualified, I felt as if I had helped someone to a brighter future. By being in this position, I was able to help someone, and that is what it is all about."

- AmeriCorps member Wydette Williams
Lake Providence, LA

"The first two weeks of the projects were the roughest. There was a surplus of remaining plants from a previous project. It was hot and muddy. Many of the Members had never worked that hard in their lives but, they all stayed with it and transplanted the plants that would not have survived much longer in their six-inch pots."

- Geoff Sanders, Natural Resources and Conservation Service
Texas Shoreline Protection Project Manger

While Building Community ...

"In addition to completing worthwhile projects, (Northwest Service) Academy participants will learn civic responsibility while serving their communities."

- Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R-OR)
June 23, 1994

"The communities that we have visited have invited us to come back and get more involved with their community. AmeriCorps was the glue the brought the agencies and the communities to start communicating and working together."

- AmeriCorps Member Anabelle Alvarez
El Centro, California

"I have had the opportunity to meet many different people since I started working with AmeriCorps. I must admit that I have changed my attitude a great deal on how to look at things. I say that because I have worked with many people who have a substandard living standard. They pay their bills and have no money left to enjoy.... It is comforting to know that I have had an opportunity to help these individuals to secure grants to get the help they needed."

-AmeriCorps Member Lee Woodridge
Working in Winnsboro, LA on rural housing outreach

"I've found that just being in the community and talking to people about the project has made a difference. The public wants to be involved in what happens to their economy and their environment, as my position will affect both these factors, I've found people willing to talk, listen, and argue with me about the fishway project and my role in it ... The professionals -- school teachers, archive directors, librarians, town managers, etc. --- seemed especially appreciative of what I'm trying to do, and have extended offers to help and provide information. I also foresee myself being able to help the towns accomplish goals which have fallen by the wayside; for instance, many of the towns have tried to get funding for public access sites a number of times in the past few years, but have never been successful. They believe I can help them realize this goal, and I plan to live up to their expectations."

- AmeriCorps Member Pierson Smith-Hatch
Presque Isle, Maine

"One of the great stories about AmeriCorps people is that when we have our cluster meetings, there has been the bond of a close-knit family."

- AmeriCorps Member Henry Rosenthal
Alexandra, LA

"The five (AmeriCorps members) we have been communicating directly on a nearly daily basis with the full support of the agency and have gotten together not only professionally but also socially on a frequent basis. You see among them a real pride and excitement about what they are doing. It is an excitement and pride that is unique to the program."

- Patrick Bowen, Natural Resources and Conservation Service
AmeriCorps Project Director for West Virginia

"We would not have as credible a monitoring program without the assistance of the Clean Water Program and AmeriCorps Members who provide training, organizational, and technical assistance to our community."

- Bill Mook, Chairman
Darmariscotta River Tidewater Watch, Maine

Boosting Opportunity

"The impact of AmeriCorps is far greater than work being accomplished or public service in the communities. AmeriCorps is about growing up and becoming a productive citizen in our community. One of our Members, a 20 year old male, is supporting a wife and four children. He has been on the welfare program for 10 years and saw AmeriCorps as an opportunity to get out of the welfare vicious circle. He does not want his family to experience the same hardships he has had to experience. He has now completed his GED.... Another Member, a Native American female, is being portrayed as a role model in her tribe. Her native tribe fully supports the AmeriCorps program, and wants her to return to her tribal community after the completion of the program to teach the importance of education."

- **Mindy Martin**

Rogue River National Forest

"Members of the Port Townsend Community have opened their homes to Members who were staying at the Fort Warden Camp over the Thanksgiving Holiday. All Members were invited to have dinner and spend the day with local families."

- David Johnson, Forest Service Project Manager

Olympic National Forest

"Not only has AmeriCorps opened the doors of higher education to Sonoma County residents, it has given new life to meaningful new programs in our communities that have been neglected too long."

- Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)

September 27, 1994

And Promoting Personal Responsibility

"The further the Members have to hike to get to their work site, the worse the weather, and the more difficult the type of service, the more the Members enjoy the service and the harder they work."

- Crew Leader

Rogue River National Forest AmeriCorps Site

"I hope you feel good about being pioneers --- you should."

- Congressman Doug Bereuter (R-NE)

Speaking to AmeriCorps Members in Nebraska

"Mr. Lott (Republican Senator and Majority Whip) called me personally and promised to support my efforts (to combat teen pregnancy) in Natchez and declared he would be in Natchez in any events that take place if his schedule permits."

- AmeriCorps Rural Development Team Member Susan Foutz-Lowe

"I believe I speak for the Hormon Lake Ranger District and the Cocino National Forest in extending to you our thanks for the many projects the AmeriCorps crews were able to accomplish. Each week I witnessed a closer and more cohesive group. They listened well, worked hard, and received the benefit of knowing they did needed work to a high quality standards."

- David E, Michael, Work Supervisor

Cocino National Forest

"I personally want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and deep appreciation for the work your crew accomplished at the Palatki Cliff-dwelling complex in Sedona. The crew that worked at Palatki not only repaired the existing trails, they upgraded them in bad areas and in sensitive areas as well as obliterating old trails and disguising them in a sensitive and effective manner. Their job they did looks terrific and I am very impressed by their work ethic and the professionalism and commitment they showed on this project."

- Mareitta Davenport, Zone Archaeologist

USDA Forest Service

"Members are making personal accomplishments as well.. For many, this is the first time they have opened their own checking accounts. They have learned how to get along with a wide variety of people and work cooperatively."

- Geoff Sander, Natural Resources and Conservation Service

Texas Shoreline Protection Project Manager

AmeriCorps/USDA is Reinventing Government

The USDA/AmeriCorps program is helping USDA reinvent government by delivering USDA services in ways that work better but cost less. The program based on eight principles highlighted by Vice-President Gore and the National performance Review, and outlined by author David Osborne in his book *Reinventing Government*:

1) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Catalytic Government by Steering Rather Than Rowing.

Instead of managing programs from Washington, USDA has successfully created unique public/private partnerships at the local level to design and run the programs. For instance, to create anti-hunger projects, USDA brought together existing anti-hunger groups and existing youth service corps, provided them with the national vision of USDA and AmeriCorps, and then gave them great freedom to design and implement projects that best meet the unique needs of their local areas.

USDA provides seed money -- sometimes the bulk of the funds in this first year of AmeriCorps operation -- but also, as rightfully mandated by the National and Community Service Act of 1993, requires matching money from all sub-grantees.

In effect, the USDA is acting as a venture capitalist by funding the best local proposals and providing a general structural framework and philosophical guidelines which local groups can follow while meeting their own local needs.

2) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Community-Owned Government by Empowering Rather Than Serving.

All proposals for service at local USDA AmeriCorps sites around the country were created at the local level, not by Washington-based bureaucrats. All programs are conceptualized, designed, implemented, and monitored at the local level but are provided additional funds and technical assistance by USDA. The USDA program is partnered with a wide variety of non-Federal institutions; community colleges, Soil Conservation Districts, non-profit organizations, youth corps, school districts, etc.

Rather than trying to directly provide service ourselves out of Washington, USDA has empowered local communities by providing them with the resources to solve their own problems. While this creates many logistical difficulties for USDA --- such as the challenge that the program design for each of our projects is entirely different at each of our hundreds of sites spread throughout in 38 states -- the benefits have far outweighed the difficulties.

3) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Competitive Government by Injecting Competition Into Service Delivery.

The USDA AmeriCorps program has cultivated free and open competition at every step of the way.

First, each USDA agency involved in the program held tough internal competitions to select the best proposals to determine which USDA sites would be funded. For every USDA site funded, at least two others were rejected.

Then, USDA participated in a highly unusual process in which Federal agencies had to actually submit a detailed and comprehensive application to the Corporation for National and Community Service in order to be considered for a grant. In other words, USDA and other Cabinet agencies were required to go through a process similar to those we require of others. (In fact, our application to the Corporation for National and Community Service required a strategic plan similar to the types of strategic plans that USDA and HUD required in Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community applications).

Unlike the way government usually operates, no one agency was guaranteed funding by a set formula. As a consequence of this open competition, Federal agencies ---- including USDA --- were forced to work harder and more creatively to develop quality programs in their applications.

Lastly, USDA AmeriCorps Members were selected through a tough, nationwide, competition. Given that approximately four people applied for every open slot, USDA was able to select incredibly qualified Members from a wide variety of educational, racial, economic, and gender backgrounds.

4) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Mission-Driven Government by Transforming Rules-Driven Organizations.

USDA has erased the artificial boundaries between itself and other Federal Departments working in similar areas by partnering on AmeriCorps projects at the local level with Department of Interior in California, the Environmental Protection Agency in Maine, the Department of Education in Oregon, and the Department of Energy in Minnesota.

Focusing on many of the Department Of Agriculture's multiple missions, the USDA/AmeriCorps program fulfills the goals of key initiatives pushed by the Clinton Administration such, as:

- * Integrating nutrition education information into the delivery of aid through U S D A feeding programs;

- * Bridging the false choice between environmental protection and economic growth by promoting ecosystem management and multiple uses on National Forest lands;
- * Providing long-term strategic planning assistance to rural communities;
- * Promoting sustainable agriculture that protects water and soil quality while allowing farm families to make good incomes;
- * and, Implementing Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community designations in rural areas to bring together a wide variety of government services to work in tandem to promote community development.

5) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Results-Oriented Government by Funding Outcomes, Not Inputs.

The USDA/AmeriCorps program is requiring specific performance measures for each and every site that are agreed upon before the project starts and are measured and evaluated at quarterly intervals throughout the year. While it is sometimes difficult and painful to measure concrete and specific accomplishments every few months, such measurements are a cornerstone of the Department's program.

In cases where sites have accomplished far more than one fourth of their yearly community service objectives in the first quarter, we know those projects are highly successful. For instance, in West Virginia, a project sponsored by the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service, the Members completed most of their community service objectives for the year in just the first month and a half of the program and then began completing more ambitious projects. In some cases, where less progress was made towards the objectives in the first quarter, we can immediately assess the project to see how changes and improvements can be made before it is too late.

6) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Customer-Drive Government by Meeting the Needs of the Customer, Not The Bureaucracy.

All our programs are focused on results for the community, even if this means changing the culture of the USDA bureaucracy. One USDA project managers reported that Federal employees in his agency are still adjusting to reality that AmeriCorps Members "are working in different areas that we do not normally address which are more appropriate to a national service program." However, he reported that, "With time the rank and file employees will be more comfortable with the AmeriCorps project and the Members and that their challenge and charge is different."

Other cultural changes in the Federal culture are occurring as well. In Utah, two of our sometimes competing agencies formed a close partnership to jointly administer all aspects of the project. The Department has created a new way to transfer funds, a new way to payroll AmeriCorps Members, a new operations handbook, new ways of calculating budgets on spreadsheets--- all with the aim of reducing bureaucracy to best support the AmeriCorps Members and "get things done in communities." Some specific examples of administrative changes enacted for the USDA AmeriCorps program:

- * Worked with the USDA National Finance Center to devise a unique payroll system for AmeriCorps Members that has served as a model for the Federal government.
- * Created and implemented unique new systems to transfer funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service to USDA and from USDA to non-profit groups. The Executive Director of the Milwaukee Community Service Corps -- who sits on the Board of his state commission on national and community service -- reports that USDA transferred money to his organization more quickly than did his own state government.
- * Created different, complex, and constantly changing budgets for all our AmeriCorps projects. Created unique Lotus spreadsheets to manipulate budgets.
- * Chaired a task force of agency personnel that created and implemented all personnel, financial, budgetary, and administrative procedures used by USDA AmeriCorps projects.
- * Scrapped existing personnel regulations in favor of new ones we are creating for AmeriCorps participants.

6) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating an Enterprising Government by Earning Rather Than Spending.

Many USDA projects are, in effect, performing fee for service by obtaining funding from sponsors for whom they are performing work.

7) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Anticipatory Government by Focusing on Prevention Rather Than Cures.

By focusing on nutrition programs that keep senior citizens healthy, promoting WIC programs which prevent diseases for young children and for mothers, fire protection programs for rural areas, and sustainable agriculture projects that protect water quality, the USDA AmeriCorps program is stopping problems before they occur and thus saving taxpayer dollars.

8) The USDA/AmeriCorps Program is Creating a Decentralized Government by Moving From Hierarchy to Participation and Teamwork.

The USDA AmeriCorps program has empowered front line workers by allowing career civil servants in Washington to play key leadership roles in implementing this program.

The project managers at the state and local level have been given a great deal of flexibility in project planning and implementation, with the Washington office providing mostly "steering" to ensure that projects meet the requirements of both the law and the AmeriCorps vision.

In response to input from local managers, USDA and the Corporation for National Service have changed many requirements in only the first few months of operations, such as rules for recruitment and rules for replacing Members who leave the program.

The USDA program has seriously reviewed all the challenges described by local managers in the first quarter reports, and has taken extensive steps to meet those challenges. Breaking down the many levels of bureaucracy that stand between Washington and the field, the USDA Director of National Service communicates frequently and directly with project managers at the local level through site visits, telephone calls, and conference calls.