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# **AMERICORPS/USDA**

## **DRAFT ACTION PLAN, DECEMBER 15, 1993**

As Secretary Espy announced in his Senate testimony last summer in support of National Service, we are now planning a Rural Development Team, an Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team, and a Public Lands and Environment Team. All three teams will concretely demonstrate USDA commitment to reinventing government, boosting the forgotten middle class, and empowering the poor.

This report provides a synopsis of what our pilot programs might do, who would participate, how they would work, and what benefits they could provide.

### **Who Would Participate in AmeriCorps/Teams USDA:**

Starting in the fall of 1994, up to 2,500 diverse participants could serve in 45 AmeriCorps/Team USDA pilot projects in every region of the country. The Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team and the Public Lands and Environment Team will allow participants to join the programs before, during, or after post-secondary education or job training; the Rural Development Team will be composed mostly of college or professional schools graduates. Participants in the Empowerment Team and the Environmental Team will earn small living stipends of around \$8,000 per year, while the older and better educated participants in the Rural Development Team will earn around \$15,000 per year. In addition, participants in all three teams will earn an educational voucher of \$4,725, which they may use to pay for college, vocational school, job training, or graduate school. All participants will also be entitled to health insurance, as well as child care if they have children. Participants in all three programs teams will be from diverse racial, social, and economic backgrounds.

### **How the Rural Development Team Would Work:**

The Rural Development Team would establish regional clusters of "professional" and "paraprofessional" participants who would be placed in individual communities to help the communities identify needs and resources necessary for economic well-being. The participants would have diverse education and training and would be matched up with individual communities or regions that have specific needs that can be filled by someone with that specific background. The need to develop new leadership in rural America was a continuing theme of Secretary Espy's Rural Development Forum. The USDA Rural Development Team can help redress that need. We will make a concerted effort to recruit participants who want to return to areas similar to those in which they were raised. Thus, this program can help begin reversing the "brain drain" from rural America.

Some possible job descriptions:

1) Assistant State Rural Development Coordinator - Assists USDA State Rural Development Coordinators in helping boost Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Collects data, provides outreach, coordinates community resources, helps develop strategic plans, helps implement the program, analyzes local data for agencies and organizations so that the needs of the under-served are considered.

2) Regional Circuit Rider - Works part time in a number of towns in a region. Provides technical assistance to communities throughout a region in brokering, strategic planning, and community assessment.

3) Sustainable Agriculture Advisor - Works with farmers in the region to help them develop model sustainable agriculture farms. Directs 4-H volunteers to perform some of the labor intensive work, such as fence building, needed for successful sustainable farming.

4) Natural Resource Specialist - Under the direction of a Soil Conservation Service professional employee, the team member would work in low-income and socially disadvantaged areas to assist in the acceleration of watershed protection, work with field engineers in the design and layout of community projects, and work with the local Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Coordinator for economic development for disadvantaged groups.

5) Recreation Specialist - The team member would provide technical assistance for all activities relating to recreation and tourism, including coordinating efforts among all government agencies, furnishing recreation planning and design, and collecting and disseminating information on what alternatives will best fit local needs.

6) Regional 4-H Youth Development Coordinator - The team member would work with county Extension agents and 4-H coordinators to manage local students involved in youth service.

**How the Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team Would Work:**

Participants would work in brigades of ten in urban and rural areas to help low-income families and individuals move towards self-sufficiency. The main focus of the team would be fighting domestic hunger. Team members could help individuals apply for food stamps, Women, Infants, and Children, and the school breakfast program; overhaul their diets; learn to prevent foodborne illnesses; and obtain the expanded Earned Income Tax Credits, microenterprise loans, and help from community development banks. In short, this team would help put into effect the entire empowerment agenda promoted by you and President Clinton.

### Some possible tasks:

1) Providing Outreach/access services - The team member would educate eligible people about program availability and helping make benefits accessible. Outreach workers would inform target populations about program availability. Drivers would take people to social welfare offices to help eligible people apply for and receive program benefits. Delivery aides would help deliver program benefits to homebound elderly, physically disadvantaged, and homeless people. Bilingual aides would provide program information, help with applications, and perform other tasks to help to non-English-speaking citizens. Service facilitators would follow-up with people who don't keep appointments and direct people to 2related services.

2) Bolstering the infrastructure - The team member would provide the human capital necessary to deliver the programs. Food handlers would stock, warehouse, manage, and distribute food products. Day care workers would provide child/adult care services to allow eligible people to apply for and receive program benefits. Bilingual case assistants would help case manager with non-English-speaking clients. Nutrition assistants would help with nutrition education and cooking demonstrations. WIC office staff would be assigned to support duties at WIC clinics in order to boost state participation in the WIC program. Team members can also help staff homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks.

3) Boosting innovative new empowerment programs - The team members would go door-to-door in neighborhoods dispensing information on a wide array of empowerment initiatives for which that neighborhood's residents might be eligible. The information distributed would be holistic, tying together our nutrition, anti-hunger, welfare reform, and food safety initiatives. We can also experiment with innovative approaches such as "healthy baby festivals," where we attract crowds with music and food and then provide nutrition education and anti-hunger services. Team members could help families obtain the newly expanded Earned Income Tax Credit, aid individuals in securing microenterprise loans to start small businesses, assist poor urban communities in developing urban gardens in which they can grow their own food, inform families on how to apply for loans from community development banks, work with families to develop savings plans as part of assets development programs. Indian reservations could be encouraged to grow foods that could be sold to USDA commodity programs and then provided to the reservation through various USDA feeding programs.

### How the Public Lands and Environment Team Would Work:

Participants would work in brigades of ten in both urban and rural components. Participants could renovate urban and rural parks, plant trees, perform conservation work in national forests,

teach environmental education, promote urban farming, test water quality, boost sustainable agriculture, clean-up rivers and lakes, help families weatherize their homes, instruct the public on how to dispose of household chemicals, and restore wetlands. Many of the participants in our rural programs will be housed on national forests and will perform work mostly on the forests, thereby meeting the congressional mandate that USDA manage a Public Lands Corps.

Some possible tasks:

1. Conservation work on national forests and parks - Team members can also engage in some of the following types of work, which are already performed by participants in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) that is now run by the Forest Service: trail maintenance, recreation management, fish and wildlife management, timber management, facility construction and maintenance, water and soil work, range and forage management, administration, and research.

2. Disaster relief and Recovery - Existing youth corps have played a vital role in the recovery of the flooded Midwest. For most disasters, team members could provide physical labor so critical to short-term clean-up, as well as human services needed for long-term recovery. They could also assist in some of the long-term infrastructure repair such as levee re-building.

3. Tree planting - As part of the Clinton Administration's initiative to combat global warming, the team members could play a lead role in tremendously expanding the number of trees planted annually in urban and rural areas throughout America.

4. Urban Conservation Projects - Team members can repair facilities in public parks, paint murals, fix playgrounds and other facilities at public schools, run recycling programs, and run urban farming programs in which low-income individuals grow their own food.

5. Wetlands Restoration - The Interior Department and EPA have expressed interest in jointly running programs to restore large wetlands ecosystems, such as the Everglades.

6. Urban Farming Projects - Team members could help low-income urban residents to grow their own food. We could possibly run such a program at public housing complexes in tandem with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We could possibly run a citywide program in Chicago in tandem with the Chicago high school of agriculture.

7. Sustainable Agriculture - Team members could work under the direction of Extension agents or other sustainable agriculture experts to help local farmers complete some of the labor-intensive work, such as building fences, needed to implement a sustainable agriculture plan.

## *AMERICORPS/USDA*

### **DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN -- FEBRUARY 1, 1994**

*National service is a civic compact in which any citizen can be tied to the nation by the simple virtue of making a difference in the lives of others...President Clinton has made it absolutely clear to his cabinet members that he wants every one of us to make national service a top priority.*

- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy

#### I. PURPOSE OF ACTION PLAN

President Clinton's national service initiative --- now known as AmeriCorps -- will fund programs around the country in which Americans will perform at least a year of full-time community service in exchange for significant educational benefits.

The focus of this action plan is on the three AmeriCorps programs that USDA itself will run through a provision of the National Service Trust Act that dedicates over \$18 million for federal agencies to manage Americorps programs of their own. Secretary Espy has directed us to prepare three different Americorps team proposals as grant applications for submission to the Corporation for National Service:

#### **Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team**

#### **Public Lands and Environment Team**

#### **Rural Development Team**

Participants will earn small living stipends while performing work that addresses unmet human, environmental, educational, and public safety needs. For each year of service successfully performed, participants will also earn an educational voucher of \$4,725, which they may use to pay for college, vocational school, job training, or graduate school.

The purpose of this plan is to outline how we will turn our generalized rural development and environmental plans for Americorps/USDA into concrete, specific, realistic, and comprehensive grant proposals to be submitted to the new Corporation for National Service.

Most of the funds provided by the National Service Trust Act will be distributed through state commissions to programs managed by existing youth corps, non-profit organizations, and state and local governments. Consequently, USDA will provide significant information and technical assistance to the wide range of our constituency groups --- including environmental, consumer, farming, higher education, minority, rural development, agribusiness, and nutrition groups --- to help them apply for such funds or otherwise become involved in Americorps.

USDA will also develop curricula in key areas --- such as nutrition, sustainable agriculture, the environment, and rural development- -- for external groups that are planning to run Americorps programs related to these areas. Still, the focus of the plan is one three teams we will run ourselves.

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The Rural Development Team will be a professional corps of mostly college and professional school graduates in which the participants will perform the majority of their work individually and at separate locations. The Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team and the Public Lands and Environment Team, more similar to traditional youth corps, will allow participants to join the programs before, during, or after post-secondary education or job training; most of the participants in these two programs will perform their work together at project sites in crews of ten.

## II. TWENTY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES FOR ALL AMERICORPS/USDA PROGRAMS

We intend to make our programs models of reinventing government. Each and every AmeriCorps/USDA pilot project will be guided by the following critical 20 principles:

- \* Reunite the interests of the middle class and the poor by allowing young people from all types of families to earn their way through post-secondary education.
- \* Recruit groups of participants in each pilot project that are socio-economically diverse.
- \* Ensure that citizens of every race, class, gender, age, and region work side-by-side.
- \* Give the participants at least a minimum-wage living expense, as well as adequate supervision, training, and education.
- \* Allow young people to perform service either before, during, or after attending post-secondary education.
- \* Provide valuable service to the community by systematically filling unmet social

needs.

- \* Ensure that none of the work performed duplicates existing programs.
- \* Limit the work performed to tasks that fulfill significant missions of USDA and are generally acceptable to our main farming, consumer, environmental, and rural development interest groups.
- \* Base participant and site selection on quality, not patronage.
- \* Reinvent government by promoting opportunity, responsibility, and community.
- \* Provide models for how the federal government can manage national service programs.
- \* Build a distinct identity for the President's AmeriCorps program that is explicitly different from either targeted jobs programs or diffuse "Points of Light" volunteerism efforts
- \* Ensure that projects are based on local community's needs -- based on each local community's needs -- rather than mandates of Washington-based bureaucrats. Projects will be expected to build effective partnerships between community, state, and local groups and the federal government.
- \* Expand dramatically in the next few years as full-scale national program is phased-in.
- \* Forge links to other key Administration initiatives such as empowerment zones, youth apprenticeship, welfare reform, microenterprise, and health care reform.
- \* Act as a multiplier of other national service programs throughout the country.
- \* Forge a new form of entrepreneurial and non-bureaucratic government.
- \* Obtain funding from a combination of sources, including the Corporation for National and Community Service, USDA program monies, non-profit organizations, charitable foundations, corporations, contributions from USDA employees, and state and local governments.
- \* Build a management team from existing USDA personnel.
- \* Be managed across traditional USDA agency lines.

The above 20 principles are essential and should be evident in every pilot proposal.

AmeriCorps can only succeed if every entity helping carry out the program insists on the highest standards of consistent quality.

### III. RURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Rural Development Team would establish regional clusters of "professional" and "paraprofessional" participants who could assist communities in identifying needs and resources necessary for economic well-being. The participants would have diverse education and training and would be matched up with individual communities or regions that have specific needs that can be filled by someone with that specific background.

The need to develop new leadership in rural America was a continuing theme of Secretary Espy's recent Rural Development Forum. Americorps/USDA Rural Development Team can help redress that need by playing a major role in developing that leadership.

We will make a concerted effort to recruit participants who want to return to areas similar to those in which they were raised. Thus, this program can help begin reversing the "brain drain" from rural America.

Individuals will be placed in communities where their particular talents can be best utilized. Experts in connecting rural homes to municipal water systems will be matched up to areas with that need. Experts in tourism will be matched up with communities that want to develop their tourism. Experts in sustainable agriculture will be matched up with groups of farmers who need technical assistance in that area. Experts in grant writing will be matched up with communities that need grant writing. Experts in attracting small businesses will be matched up with communities that want to attract more small business. Experts in watershed protection will be matched up with areas that need such help. General planners would also be matched up with communities that need to develop overall economic plans.

This group of individuals would be able to assist communities in planning and prioritizing efforts. The corps would then assist the community in locating financial resources, preparing proposals, designing educational programs, and implementing strategies necessary for revitalization. The focus would be on the community generating its own vision for the future and the USDA corps assisting them in creating and attaining that vision.

Our eventual goal is for as many Rural Development Team graduates as possible to be permanently hired by host communities.

**a. Social problems to be solved**

Some of the worst pockets of poverty and highest rates of unemployment exist in rural America. While President Clinton's overall economic program should help significantly, special efforts are needed to boost rural America. A recent study by USDA indicates that physical infrastructure is rarely sufficient by itself to promote rural economic development; in order to significantly boost economic growth, it is necessary to develop the human infrastructure.

**b. Meeting the rural development goals of USDA**

This team will meet many of the top rural development goals of President Clinton, Secretary Espy, and Undersecretary of Small Community and Rural Development Bob Nash, by empowering communities to develop local leadership to help themselves. The team could accomplish much needed community planning activities necessary to assure the economic vitality and productivity of our rural and mid-sized communities; teach specific skills in community building, coalition building, and strategic planning; and develop improved federal ties with units of local government which people encounter in their everyday living.

The team could also focus on meeting Secretary Espy's personal goal of bringing running water to every rural home in America.

One issue that must be addressed is how to define measurable goals in terms of meeting human needs?

**c. Working with existing programs**

How will this Americorps Team build upon existing programs, including federal programs?

Most states have local Planning and Development Districts which provide for the overall strategic and project planning efforts for a multi-jurisdictional area. Some of these cover several counties, and some cover multiple communities within a county or township. They are staffed by local citizens and all have one thing in common: they are understaffed.

Some of our team participants will be physically located within the offices of local districts, so that they work with the districts and do not pose the threat of competition over turf.

We could also work with: Rural Development Administration Coordinators, Soil Conservation Service RC&D program, the Extension Service, community-based organizations, and independent agencies such as the Appalachian Regional Commission

or the Tennessee Valley Authority.

To support these team members, there already exists an information data base at the National Agriculture Library called the Rural Information Center. This information center maintains a data base of organizations which provide financial support to communities on a national, regional, and local basis. This data base should be made available to all team members for assisting the community in developing its own action plan and applying for funding. Participants should be able to easily add to the database and find information about the activities of their peers. Access to this information could be through the Rural Information Center's Bulletin Board System.

We must still answer how this program will specifically interact with the districts, with existing government programs, with 4-H programs, with existing non-profit and volunteer organizations, with VISTA, and with the ambitious new rural development initiatives being planned by the Administration.

**d. Specific types of service to be performed**

Some possible job descriptions:

1) Assistant State Rural Development Coordinator - Assists USDA State Rural Development Coordinators in helping boost Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Collects data, provides outreach, coordinates community resources, helps develop strategic plans, helps implement the program, analyzes local data for agencies and organizations so that the needs of the under-served are considered.

2) Small Business Plan Developer and Information Broker - Assists in the assessment and development of markets for unique local products.

3) Regional Circuit Rider - Works part time in a number of towns in a region. Provides technical assistance to communities throughout a region in brokering, strategic planning, and community assessment.

4) Sustainable Agriculture Advisor - Works with farmers in the region to help them develop model sustainable agriculture farms. Directs 4-H volunteers to perform some of the labor intensive work, such as fence-building, needed for successful sustainable farming.

5) Watershed Assistance Process Facilitator - Works to coordinate local watershed protection programs in order to save wetlands, guard drinking-water quality, and prevent flooding. The team member would explain watershed assistance programs, identify key potential participants in local watershed steering committees, arrange local organizational meetings, and facilitate the identification of watershed needs, problems, and concerns.

6) Natural Resource Specialist - Under the direction of a Soil Conservation Service professional employee, the team member would work in low-income and socially disadvantaged areas to assist in the acceleration of watershed protection, work with field engineers in the design and layout of community projects, and work with the local Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Coordinator for economic development for disadvantaged groups.

7) Landscape Architect - The team member would work with soil conservation districts, RC&D councils, and area conservationists to coordinate and include landscape architectural planning for the purpose of maintaining, enhancing, or restoring ecological, social, and economic conditions.

8) Recreation Specialist - The team member would provide technical assistance for all activities relating to recreation and tourism, including coordinating efforts among all government agencies, furnish recreation planning and design, and collect and disseminate information on what alternatives will best fit local needs.

9) Regional 4-H Youth Development Coordinator - The team member would work with county Extension agents and 4-H coordinators to manage local students involved in youth service.

10) Forest Service and SCS Volunteer Coordinators - The team member would recruit and supervise adult and youth volunteers from local communities to work on Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service projects.

11) Forest Service Resource Assistants - This position is outlined in the Public Lands Corps section of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. In this position, Rural Development team participants could work with District Rangers to identify and manage service projects in the forest for Public Lands and Environment Team members.

#### **e. Recruiting and selecting applicants**

With regard to recruitment, what percentage of participants will be recruited from a national pool of applicants to USDA or the Corporation?

Participants will be paid \$15,000 per year. In addition, they will receive an educational voucher worth \$4,725 at the end of a year of service. Participants may be of any age, but, because of the special educational requirements of the Rural Development Team, it is unlikely that any participants will be younger than 21.

Recruitment and selection will be ultimately be accomplished at a centralized, national level, but applications from pilot locations will be given priority.

We need a comprehensive recruitment strategy. Some ideas: Information and applications should be sent to post-secondary institutions in or near the pilot project areas. Packets should be sent to financial aid counselors, placement officers, deans, and student organizations. We should also target news stories and public service announcements at the student media. We should also attempt to hold recruitment seminars on key campuses. We should work closely with the Peace Corps and VISTA to recruit former volunteers in those programs.

**f. Matching participants with host communities**

Communities should apply for team members through an informal competitive process. Target communities should be asked what kind of resources would be offered enrollees-- such as office space, computer equipment, social support, travel, office support -- in exchange for their services. Extra credit should be given to communities that apply jointly for the services of a team member or members. Our program should strongly encourage partnerships and teamwork arrangements between and among adjacent jurisdictions, multi-county consortiums, and/or regional entities.

We will develop a needs profile for each applicant community and a skills bank and inventory for the enrollees. The communities and the enrollees would then be matched up by computer.

All assignments for participants should be mutually agreed upon by USDA and by any community, county, or organization with whom that participant would closely work. Local labor unions should also agree to any position in which the participant would perform work even somewhat similar to work performed by local unionized workers.

**g. Creating and maintaining program diversity**

How do we ensure that this program is managed by a diverse team and includes a diverse set of participants each and every year?

Diversity must be a key consideration during recruitment, curriculum design, project development, and training. The first year's program must meet all our diversity requirements since original problems are nearly impossible to fix.

How will we balance the need to recruit participants from their own communities, some of which are not very diverse, with the need to have an overall program that is very diverse?

A concentrated recruitment effort must be made at 1890s schools and at all Historically

Black Colleges and Universities. We must also target Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), as well as the many junior and community colleges throughout the Southwest and other regions of the country with substantial American Indian populations.

Special plans should be developed to recruit and place Americans with disabilities

#### **h. Training the team members**

Curriculums for teaching leadership, volunteer development, program management, basic life skills, and understanding of basic business principles would be necessary. Participants of this program would hold either Bachelor's degrees or graduate degrees. Participants could also be trained in Rural Sociology, Adult and Extension Education, Agricultural Communications, Marketing, Organizational Development, Applied Social Research, Urban and Regional Planning, Applied Anthropology, Architecture, Economics, Business, Geography, Environmental Science, and Computer Science, Public Administration, Civil Engineering, or Agricultural Science. What other degrees would be useful for participants to have?

The participants would also need to spend a period of training before being assigned to the local districts. This training should be planned and held nationally. Who will conduct the training? How much of the training should be identical for all participants and how much should be unique to the specific jobs that each participant will be performing?

What type of training will participants receive after they have started the program? They should receive regional training between 2-4 times a year. This could happen in a one-week seminar format that included elements of direct education, experience-sharing, and a critical debriefing session where members input lessons learned, problems overcome, and significant relationships created into the program's ongoing monitoring and evaluation process.

Will there be a pre-professional training program element of the rural development corps? Can universities train people for these skills?

#### **i. Supervising the team members**

Who will supervise the team members? There will be a need to judge performance, initiate additional training when needed, and to terminate or initiate re-assignment when necessary. What role can State RDA Rural Development Coordinators have in supervision?

How will the Team involve participants in leadership positions in implementing and evaluating the programs?

How much self-government will team members have? How will team members be able to participate in designing their own programs, mandating their own rules, and helping enforce the rules?

What types of interactions will team members have with participants in other areas?

#### **j. Effect on the Participants**

How will the program promote civic responsibility and produce positive change in participants through training and participation in meaningful service with opportunities for reflection?

What measurable goals can we set for personal benefits obtained by team members?

#### **k. Evaluating the team programs**

How will we ensure constant evaluation of the program in order to correct problems immediately?

Will we contract out for evaluation or ask the Corporation for a waiver so we can do our own evaluation?

How can we judge whether the program has met the general goals of Americorps and the specific goals of the Team? The program should be evaluated as to whether it has met each of the 20 basic principles in the Section II of this plan.

How many graduates of the program remained in the communities?

#### **l. Sizes and sites of pilot projects**

Where should the pilot projects be situated and how large should they be? Should there be a limit on the population size of communities where there will be pilot projects?

One suggestion has been to limit USDA/Americorps teams to communities of less than 15,000 people and counties with no town larger than 15,000 residents. In Texas alone, over 1,000 communities meet this description. While limiting community size would wipe some medium-sized rural towns out of consideration, it would ensure that each placement would have a sizable impact.

How many participants will be able to be placed in pilot programs? What will be the ultimate capacity of these programs?

Thirty-two states currently have economic development councils or rural development councils, so early pilot programs would be easy. Some of the following regions or states would provide a good mix of pilots:

- The Mississippi Delta
- The Texas/Mexico Border
- Maine
- Kansas
- The Pacific Northwest
- Oklahoma
- North Dakota
- Southern Illinois
- Tennessee
- Four Corners (Arizona, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico)
- Alaska
- Appalachia
- Oklahoma
- California

Pilot programs could also be specifically targeted at rural communities facing short-term job dislocations because of NAFTA, the Northwest Forest Plan, or military base closings or defense plant shut-downs.

For Corporation for National and Community Service application, we need a description of the criteria and process through which our grantee programs were selected.

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a description of the type and number of positions that will receive awards and a description of how approved national service positions will be apportioned by the applicant.

For each pilot location, how will we consult with participants and potential participants, representatives of communities served, community-based agencies with demonstrated records of experience in providing services, and labor organizations?

How will our pilots help priority areas affected adversely by federal policies?

Where are recently closed military installations need potential pilot projects?

#### **m. Growth scenarios**

Where, and how quickly, should the program grow? Should we grow by expanding our pilot projects or by creating new ones?

How will we create a program so popular that it will continue to expand, regardless of the Administration in power?

**n. Management structure**

How much of the programs should we run ourselves and how much should we contract out to existing groups?

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a detailed description of key members of the management team.

How will we ensure that we don't create yet another cumbersome Washington bureaucracy?

How can our programs utilize the latest communications technologies?

How will OWCP (liability) be covered?

How will health care be provided to participants?

What percentage of participants will need child care? How will we provide it to them?

What kind of support will disabled participants need?

**o. Staff needed**

The Rural Development Teams should have a Director, who reports directly to the head of USDA national service programs, as well as to the Undersecretary for Rural Economic and Community Development. The Director of the Rural Development Team should have the following staff:

Recruitment and Training Coordinator  
Internal and External Communications Coordinator  
Project Management Coordinator  
USDA Inter-Agency Coordinator  
Partnership Liaison  
Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator  
Support Staff

**p. Costs**

We roughly estimate that each server in the Rural Development Team will cost roughly \$30,000 per year. Thus 400 servers --- 40 in each of ten states or regions --- would cost \$10 million.

Each participant will need access to a computer network in order to communicate with each other via an easy-to-use e-mail, access to the National Agriculture Library's Rural Development Center Bulletin Board System, and access to INTERNET. Can we get this system donated? If not, how much will it cost?

Can we get every member of the team an outdated 286 or 386 laptop computer? Can we get these donated? If so, could they interface with the rest of the system?

**q. Outreach needed for stakeholders**

We need a strategy for reaching out to the local planning districts, the state districts, and political and community leaders throughout rural America.

**r. Funding sources**

What non-profit groups, corporations, individuals, and/or foundations might be willing to help fund this?

**s. Learning from the VISTA model**

What can we learn from both previous and ongoing VISTA rural development projects?

**IV. PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENT TEAM**

The Public Lands and Environment Team would have both urban and rural components. Participants could renovate urban and rural parks, plant trees, perform conservation work in national forests, teach environmental education, promote urban farming, test water quality, boost sustainable agriculture, clean-up rivers and lakes, help families weatherize their homes, instruct the public on how to dispose of household chemicals, and restore wetlands.

The urban component would be mostly non-residential and members would work on conservation projects on public and private lands in cities of various sizes. The rural component would be both residential and non-residential and would perform conservation-related work projects on private and public lands in rural America.

The urban and rural programs could be linked, with teams members having the option

of transferring between the rural and urban settings. For example, a team member could work in a rural environment for ten months and then in an urban environment for another two months.

This wide scope of projects will be possible because the new National Service Trust Act gives all federal agencies --- including all USDA agencies --- broad authority to manage community service projects on private and public lands in both urban and rural areas.

Significant portions of these programs will perform work on federal, state, and municipal lands, thus fulfilling the specifications of the Public Lands Corps, which Congress -- with the full support of the Clinton Administration -- has recently required the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to run.

**a. Social problems to be solved**

There are currently an estimated 8 million tree-planting sites in communities across America with the current replacement rate being one tree planted for every four removed. Thousands of water quality projects nationwide are awaiting manpower in our communities and our rural areas, as are wetlands restoration, erosion control, stream improvement, roadbank stabilization, and wildlife habitat projects. Urban farming and sustainable agriculture would also have important places in this program.

**Urban:** More than 80 percent of the American population now live in cities of varying size. Currently, the Forest Service, with 620 Ranger Districts across the country, and the Soil Conservation Service, with more than 2,000 offices nationwide, have existing partnerships and delivery systems in many cities.

The program would take the teams to where the people are, operating in any urban community with an existing network of Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, or Extension Service programs in partnerships with local governments or nonprofit organizations.

This non-residential program would focus on urban conservation projects in the areas of water quality, waste disposal, erosion control, running environmental program in schools, roadbank and streambank stabilization, urban gardening, the creation of urban buffers, rehabilitation and maintenance of deteriorating community infrastructure, urban forestry, and the recycling and reuse of resources. Team members would live in the community or already be a community member.

**Rural:** Team members would live in a residential setting in a rural area. The program would provide full-time logistical support for team members. As in the urban program, the team members would be expected to pay for living expenses from their wages.

Work projects could be in erosion control, fire prevention, fire suppression, building or

improving recreation areas, restoration of infrastructure such as buildings and bridges, watershed protection, and other similar conservation projects. The land base of the National Forests would be available for projects as well as the privately held land in partnerships with the Soil Conservation Service.

Team members could also focus on teaching sustainable agriculture, helping small farmers stay on the land, building rural housing, and engaging in rural development projects. Environmental Team members could also work under the direction of older participants in the USDA Rural Development Corps.

The team would provide much needed peoplepower for nationwide conservation projects. The work of the team could reduce the backlog of conservation-related work across the country.

With the shift from a rural population to an urban one, Americans are losing the ability to learn firsthand about natural resources. We currently have a relatively uneducated and uninformed citizenry with regard to natural resources and conservation issues. The team would provide an opportunity to learn about America's natural resources, their uses, and the need to protect them. The end result would be a citizenry better informed on national conservation issues.

#### **b. Meeting the public lands and environment goals of USDA**

The team will meet many of the top public lands and environmental goals of President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Secretary Espy, and Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Jim Lyons.

The Team can be used, as part of the Administration's global warming initiative, to help dramatically increase the number of trees planted throughout America.

The Team can also begin to reduce the massive backlog of repair and improvement projects needed for National Forest and other public lands. Youth service corps are perhaps the single most cost-effective providers of such project work; the Forest Service estimates that Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) participants in 1992 performed \$1.32 worth of work for each dollar spent on the YCC program by the American taxpayer.

With total spending of only \$2.508 million in 1992, YCC participants provided a \$3.339 million worth of work, broken down into the following areas:

|                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Recreation Management        | \$1,789,447 |
| Fish and Wildlife Management | \$401,093   |
| Timber Management            | \$317,723   |

# **AMERICORPS/USDA**

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

### **Program Design and Strategic Plan, Draft April 1, 1994**

#### **I. PROGRAM DESIGN**

##### **General Goals of Program**

President Clinton's national service initiative --- now known as AmeriCorps -- will fund programs around the country in which Americans will perform at least a year of full-time community service in exchange for significant educational benefits.

As part of that program, USDA will run three Americorps Teams in pilot locations nationwide: a Nutrition, Anti-Hunger, and Empowerment Team, a Public Lands and Environment Team, and a Rural Development Team. This plan focuses on the Rural Development Team --- how it will work, how community-based organizations can partner with USDA in the program, and how USDA will take the steps necessary to complete the Department's application to the Corporation for National Community Service by April 29, 1994.

The Rural Development Team will engage a socio-economic mix of recent college graduates and professional school graduates in helping local communities solve their own economic, social, and environmental problems. Participants will earn a small living stipend of \$15,000 per year, in addition to obtaining health care and child care if they need it, while performing work that meets critical needs of the community or region in which they are working. For each year of service successfully performed, participants will also earn an educational voucher of \$4,725, which they may use to re-pay previous educational loans or pay for graduate school.

The program would establish regional pilot projects consisting of between 20- 50 "professional" and "paraprofessional" participants who could assist communities in identifying needs and resources necessary for economic, social, and environmental well-being. The program would define "regions" as either entire rural states or multi-county regions that cross state lines. The participants would have diverse education and training and would be matched up with individual communities or regions that have specific needs that can be filled by someone with that specific background.

Regions under consideration for pilot programs include:

- The Mississippi Delta (LA, MS, AR)
- Appalachia (TN, KY, GA, VA, WV, NC)
- The Texas/Mexico Border
- Northern New England (ME, VT, NH)
- South Carolina
- Midwest Flood Region (IL, MO, SD, MN, NB, KA, WI, IO, ND)
- Minnesota
- Kansas
- The Pacific Northwest
- Illinois
- Four Corners (AZ, CO, UT, NM)
- Alaska
- California

Final pilot locations will be determined based upon the economic, human, and environmental problems of the region, as well as upon the capability of partnership organizations to help create an application and run high quality programs on an extremely tight deadline.

The need to develop new leadership in rural America was a continuing theme of Secretary Espy's recent Rural Development Forum. Americorps/USDA Rural Development Team can help redress that need by playing a major role in developing that leadership. We will make a concerted effort to recruit participants who want to return to areas similar to those in which they were raised.

Thus, this program can help begin reversing the "brain drain" from rural America.

This team will meet many of the top rural development goals of President Clinton, Secretary Espy, and Under Secretary of Small Community and Rural Development Bob Nash, by empowering communities to develop local leadership to help themselves. The team could accomplish much needed community planning activities necessary to assure the economic vitality and productivity of our rural and mid-sized communities; teach specific skills in community building, coalition building, and strategic planning; and develop improved federal ties with units of local government which people encounter in their everyday living.

The team could also focus on meeting Secretary Espy's personal goal of bringing running water to every rural home in America.

Communities will decide for themselves what help they most need. Individuals, working with either government agencies, educational institutions, or non-profit agencies, will be placed in communities where their particular talents can be best utilized.

Experts in connecting rural homes to municipal water systems will be matched up to areas with that need. Experts in tourism will be matched up with communities that want to develop their tourism. Experts in sustainable agriculture will be matched up with groups of farmers who need technical assistance in that area. Experts in grant writing will be matched up with communities that need grant writing. Experts in attracting small businesses will be matched up with communities that want to attract more small business. Experts in watershed protection will be matched up with areas that need such help. General planners would also be matched up with communities that need to develop overall economic plans.

This group of individuals would be able to assist communities in planning and prioritizing efforts. The corps would then assist the community in locating financial resources, preparing proposals, designing educational programs, and implementing strategies necessary for revitalization. The focus would be on the community generating its own vision for the future and the USDA corps assisting them in creating and attaining that vision.

If the program really works and the participants prove their worth to the host communities, many host communities will then develop the resources to place the participant permanently in the community. The eventual goal is for as many Rural Development Team graduates as possible to be permanently hired by host communities.

### **The Unique Economic and Human Problems of Rural America**

When Americans imagine unemployment, teenage pregnancy, polluted drinking water, hunger, sub-standard housing and crime, they generally imagine large urban centers. But the reality is that all of the above problems are prevalent in rural areas throughout America. Among rural counties, more than a fifth -- a total of 540 -- have had poverty levels of 20 percent or more over the last three decades. Fewer than 10 urban counties have had such persistent poverty.

With few exceptions, this poverty reflects one of two populations:

- 1) Poverty in the caucasian communities of the Southern Highlands of Appalachia or Ozark-Quachita. As reported in the Washington Post article, "War on Poverty: Three Decades and No Victory," by Guy Gugliotta (December 12, 1993), "The symptoms of hardship in America -- ignorance, unemployment, sickness, isolation, crime and drugs -- are still as visible in the hardwood-cloaked hollows of East Kentucky as they are in the asphalt wastes of East Harlem."
- 2) Poverty in the African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, or Alaska Native communities throughout rural America. The poverty of African-Americans living in rural areas continues to be worse than that of African-Americans living in central cities. The 1990 poverty rate of rural African-Americans was 39.6 percent, versus the 31.1 percent rate for central city African-Americans.

The number of rural households with families with minor children that are headed by a female had risen by 1990 to more than 1.3 million, or 17.5 percent of all families with minor children. Almost two-thirds (65.2 percent) of all rural female-headed households live in poverty, compared to just over half (53.5 percent) in urban and suburban areas. In addition, the number of such families is rising faster in rural areas than in urban and suburban areas.

Fully 3.2 percent of all rural housing units still have an inadequate water source, compared to just 0.4 percent of metro housing units.

Rural population grew more slowly than urban population during the 1980's, as the rural renaissance of the 1970's evaporated. Net outmigration returned as a common factor in dampening rural population growth during the 1980's. Young adults, ages 18 to 34, comprised a smaller population in 1990 than they had in 1980. Managerial and executive positions continued to concentrate in urban and suburban areas, leaving rural areas with lower proportions of high-wage jobs. Real family income in rural areas declined slightly between 1980 and 1990 and poverty -- which had fallen during the 1970's -- rose once again.

- \* Counties defined as rural in 1980 grew as a whole by 4.1 between 1980 and 1990, while urban and suburban grew by 11.6 percent. In that decade, rural counties lost 5.6 percent of their population under age 18 and 4.4 percent of their working age population between the ages of 18-24.

- \* The small rural growth rate was due entirely to natural increase (births minus deaths), since the rural U.S. experienced net outmigration for the decade. Remote rural areas (those not adjacent to a metropolitan area) fared the worst, losing 4.7 percent due to net outmigration.

- \* In 1990, only 19.8 of employed rural Americans were in managerial and specialty occupations, versus 28.1 percent for employed urban and suburban Americans.

- \* The relatively low proportion of high-wage, high skill jobs in rural areas is a large part of the explanation for the urban/rural education differential, both through outmigration of the more highly educated and the lack of future job incentives among rural young adults. Only 12.9 percent of rural persons over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, versus 22.5 in urban and suburban areas.

- \* In 1989, median household income was \$23,075 versus \$32,086 in urban and suburban areas.

- \* Rural poverty rose during the decade by a little more than one percent to 16.8 percent in 1990, versus the urban and suburban poverty rate of 12 percent.

A recent study by USDA indicates that physical infrastructure is rarely sufficient by itself to promote rural economic development; in order to significantly boost economic growth, it is necessary to develop the human infrastructure. {NEED STUDY}

In addition, according to the recent USDA report "Rural America and the Changing Structure of Manufacturing:

"Interaction between public and private sector in a locale, indeed, appears to be of considerable importance in creating and maintaining contacts, and in creating a supportive milieu for new firms...The provision of intermediaries or liaisons who are technically proficient can greatly raise the level of knowledge in a region."

Thus, research demonstrates that the technical advice and coordination that will be offered by the USDA Rural Development Team can provide a significant boost to new businesses and other economic activities in rural areas.

### **How the Program Would Work**

The program would, in essence, be a huge computer matching+ service for rural development. By April 15, 1994, USDA field offices, state and local government offices, state extension services, local non-profit organizations, and institutions of higher education will have identified priority service projects in their state or region that can reasonably be performed by a well-trained recent college or professional school graduate. Communities should apply for team members through an informal competitive process. Target communities should be asked what kind of resources would be offered enrollees- - such as office space, computer equipment, social support, travel, office support -- in exchange for their services. Extra credit should be given to communities that apply jointly for the services of a team member or members. Our program should strongly encourage partnerships and teamwork arrangements between and among adjacent jurisdictions, multi-county consortiums, and/or regional entities.

By May 1, 1994, each pilot region will have self-selected a Local Advisory Committee, staffed by the USDA employee who be the Pilot Project Coordinator in that region. By May 10, 1994, the USDA national office and all Pilot Project Coordinators will have mailed recruitment materials and applications to all potential recruitment entities and interested individuals. Special emphasis will be placed on recruiting participants to serve in their home communities or in communities substantially similar to the communities in which they grew up.

Applicants will be asked to fill-out detailed descriptions of their education, training, practical work experience, and vocational interests. Applications will be due by June 30, 1994. By July 15, 1994, the Pilot Project Coordinator and local Advisory Committee will have interviewed all applicants in person and by phone. Final participants selections will be announced by August 1, 1994.

At the time they are selected, participants will also be told which federal agencies, state or local government offices, state extension services, non-profit organizations, or educational institutions they will be partnered with. All assignments for participants must be mutually agreed upon by USDA and by any community, county, or organization with whom that participant would closely work. Local labor unions should also agree to any position in which the participant would perform work even somewhat similar to work performed by local unionized workers.

Soon after Labor Day of 1994, participants will attend local or regional training workshops that will last a month. By October 10, 1994, they will then fan out to their host communities or travel throughout the pilot region to perform their service activities. While participants will work jointly with partnering organizations, they will be directly supervised, evaluated, and disciplined (if need be) by the Pilot Project Coordinator in consultation with the Local Advisory Committee.

Participants will in each pilot region communicate once a day by computer or fax, once a week by conference call, and at least once a month in person. All participants nationally may meet for a national conference or graduation ceremony.

### **What Types of Tasks Participants Might Perform**

Some possible job descriptions:

- 1) Assistant State Rural Development Coordinator - Assists USDA State Rural Development Coordinators in helping boost Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Collects data, provides outreach, coordinates community resources, helps develop strategic plans, helps implement the program, analyzes local data for agencies and organizations so that the needs of the under-served are considered.
- 2) Small Business Plan Developer and Information Broker - Assists in the assessment and development of markets for unique local products.
- 3) Regional Circuit Rider - Works part time in a number of towns in a region. Provides technical assistance to communities throughout a region in brokering, strategic planning, and community assessment.
- 4) Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Assistant - Helps selected communities implement strategic plans and conduct special projects to implement program.
- 5) Pacific Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative Facilitator - Helps carry out programs aimed at the economic recovery of communities hurt by reduced timber harvests.
- 6) 1890 Universities Outreach Coordinator - Works with historically African-American land

grant universities to provide outreach to underserved populations.

7) Sustainable Agriculture Advisor - Works with farmers in the region to help them develop model sustainable agriculture farms. Directs 4-H volunteers to perform some of the labor intensive work, such as fence-building, needed for successful sustainable farming.

8) Telecommunications Expert - Works with local communities and regions to provide technical assistance to join Internet or plan for the Information Superhighway.

9) Watershed Assistance Process Facilitator - Works to coordinate local watershed protection programs in order to save wetlands, guard drinking-water quality, and prevent flooding. The team member would explain watershed assistance programs, identify key potential participants in local watershed steering committees, arrange local organizational meetings, and facilitate the identification of watershed needs, problems, and concerns. Conducts and implements sanitary surveys.

10) Natural Resource Specialist - Under the direction of a Soil Conservation Service professional employee, the team member would work in low-income and socially disadvantaged areas to assist in the acceleration of watershed protection, work with field engineers in the design and layout of community projects, and work with the local Resource Conservation & Development(RC&D) Coordinator for economic development for disadvantaged groups.

11) Landscape Architect - The team member would work with soil conservation districts, RC&D councils, and area conservationists to coordinate and include landscape architectural planning for the purpose of maintaining, enhancing, or restoring ecological, social, and economic conditions.

12) Recreation Specialist - The team member would provide technical assistance for all activities relating to recreation and tourism, including coordinating efforts among all government agencies, furnish recreation planning and design, and collect and disseminate information on what alternatives will best fit local needs.

13) Regional 4-H Youth Development Coordinator - The team member would work with county Extension agents and 4-H coordinators to manage local students involved in youth service.

14) Forest Service and SCS Volunteer Coordinators - The team member would recruit and supervise adult and youth volunteers from local communities to work on Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service projects.

15) Coordinator for Other USDA AmeriCorps Teams - In certain geographical entities, such as the Mississippi Delta, where other USDA AmeriCorps programs with younger participants will also exist, the Rural Development Team participants can help manage the work of the younger participants in the other teams.

16) Forest Service Resource Assistants - This position is outlined in the Public Lands Corps section of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. In this position, Rural Development team participants could work with District Rangers to identify and manage service projects in the forest for Public Lands and Environment Team members.

17) Assets Developer - This team member would work with local banks, local government agencies, and local non-profit agencies to create a pilot project in which money saved by participants would be matched by another source and kept in a special savings account.

18) Microenterprise Developer - This team member would work with participants and other area residents to help them obtain small loans to start microenterprise projects. Microenterprise is a development strategy in which small loans, peer support, and technical assistance are made available to those starting "small" small businesses. Such small business are usually capitalized under \$5,000, employ less than five people, and tend to be in the retail or service sector, yet they can play a critical role in breaking the cycle of dependency on government programs and help individuals build assets while moving towards self-sufficiency.

19) Apprenticeship Facilitator - This team member would work with participants, regional businesses, local educational institutions, and other local residents to create opportunities for regional business to sponsor apprenticeships for young people to train for real jobs while continuing their studies.

20) Community Development Bank Promoter - Would provide technical assistance to organizations desiring to create rural community development banks.

20) Solid Waste Consultant - Team member would work with municipalities to help solve their solid waste difficulties.

21) Small and Beginning Farmer Outreach Worker - Team member would provide technical assistance, accounting help, and government program liaison to small and beginning farmers.

22) Nutrition Outreach Expert - Team member will education communities and families on proper nutrition and food safety.

24) Rural Housing Renovator - Team member will direct the work of Environment and Public Lands team members and other volunteers in renovating rural housing.

25) USDA Minority Businesses Outreach Worker - Team member will provide outreach to citizens on USDA minority business opportunities.

26) Fisheries Specialist - Would stock fish in historical runs, assist in egg-take activities, and record biological and environmental data.

### **What Administrative Structure Would Exist in Washington**

The work of each pilot locations Pilot Project Coordinator and Local Advisory Committee will be supervised by a very small management team in Washington. The management team could include some or all of the following:

- Rural Development Team Director
- Recruitment and Training Coordinator
- Internal and External Communications Coordinator
- Project Management Coordinator
- Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator
- Administrative Coordinator
- Support Staff

The National Finance Center will provide payroll for the participants and the management team. The Office of Personnel will provide support in hiring, detailing, and evaluation. The Office of Information and Resources Management will provide assistance in creating and maintaining a computer network and bulletin board for the program. The Office of Operations will help obtain and maintain office space.

### **What USDA Staff Might Help at Each Pilot Location:**

Each pilot region may be able to obtain support from some of the following staff from field offices or state extension services on full-time detail or part-time assignment:

- 1) Extension Agent in Small Farming - Will teach participants and others how to grow their own food and provide agricultural education.
- 2) Extension Agent in 4-H - Will coordinate program with local 4-H youth programs and provide environmental education.
- 3) Extension Agent in Small Farming - Will teach participants and others how to grow their own food and provide agricultural education.
- 4) Soil Conservation Service Soil Expert - Will provide technical assistance for environmental team members and will provide environmental education.
- 5) Soil Conservation Service Rural Development Expert - Will coordinate interface with local RC&D programs.

6) Soil Conservation Service Earth Team Coordinator - A SCS employee with a proven track record of success in coordinating volunteer efforts will help incorporate part-time volunteers into the efforts of the environmental team.

7) ASCS Sustainable Agriculture or Beginning Farming Expert - Will coordinate sustainable agriculture projects and facilitate participation in USDA beginning farmer programs.

8) Forest Service State and Private Forestry Expert - Will supervise tree-plantings in towns.

9) AMS Farmers Market Specialist - Will work with team members to open farmers markets in poor small towns and allow local small farmers or gardeners to sell their goods.

10) AMS Organic Standards Specialist - Will work with team members to help explain new organic standards regulations.

11) AMS Transportation Specialist - Would work with team members to improve local transportation systems used for agricultural marketing.

12) ARS Sustainable Agriculture Expert - Would work with team members to implement local sustainable agriculture projects.

13) ACS Specialist - Would work with team members to provide technical assistance to agricultural and craft cooperatives.

14) FCIC Underwriting Expert - Will work with team members to help explain to area farmers the provision in the crop insurance regulations.

15) FmHA Loan Expert- Will help participants and other area residents apply for loans and provide general outreach on USDA programs.

16) FmHA Housing Expert- Will coordinate rural housing renovations, implementation of inventory property program, home ownership counseling, and pilot programs to build homes out of straw.

17) RDA District Water Loan Specialist - Would work with team members to conduct environmental assessments communities need to perform before building new water systems.

18) RDA Economic Planning Expert - Would work with team members to provide general economic strategic planning for communities and regions.

19) REA Business Development Expert - Would work to help develop small businesses regionally.

20) REA Telecommunications Expert - Provide technical assistance to allow rural areas to link up to the Information Superhighway and other modern telecommunications.

21) Farm-a-Syst Coordinator - Will work with local farmers to conduct environmental and groundwater assessments of their farmsteads.

22) NASS Statistics Collector - Would work with team members to collect agricultural statistics.

### **Fifteen Essential Principles for the Program**

We intend to make our programs models of reinventing government. Each and every AmeriCorps/USDA pilot project will be guided by the following critical 15 principles:

- \* Emerge from the grass-roots up -- based on each local community's needs -- rather than fulfill mandates of Washington-based bureaucrats. Projects will be planned by local residents and will be expected to build effective partnerships between community, state, and local groups and the federal government.
- \* Recruit groups of participants in each pilot project that are socio-economically diverse.
- \* Ensure that citizens of every race, class, gender, age, and region work side-by-side.
- \* Provide valuable service to the community by systematically filling unmet social needs.
- \* Ensure that none of the work performed duplicates existing programs or work done by existing USDA employees.
- \* Limit the work performed to tasks that fulfill significant missions of USDA and are generally acceptable to our main farming, consumer, environmental, and rural development interest groups.
- \* Base participant and site selection on quality, not patronage.
- \* Reinvent government by promoting opportunity, responsibility, and community.
- \* Build a distinct identity for the President's AmeriCorps program that is explicitly different from either targeted jobs programs or diffuse "Points of Light" volunteerism efforts
- \* Expand dramatically in the next few years as full-scale national program is phased-in.

- \* Forge links to other key Administration initiatives such as empowerment zones, youth apprenticeship, welfare reform, microenterprise, and health care reform.
- \* Act as a multiplier of other national service programs throughout the country.
- \* Forge a new form of entrepreneurial and non-bureaucratic government.
- \* Obtain funding from a combination of sources, including the Corporation for National and Community Service, USDA program monies, non-profit organizations, charitable foundations, corporations, contributions from USDA employees, and state and local governments.
- \* Be managed across traditional USDA agency lines.

The above fifteen principles are essential and must be evident in every pilot proposal. AmeriCorps can only succeed if every entity helping carry out the program insists on the highest standards of consistent quality. However, USDA will be extremely flexible in allow pilot projects to experiment with highly varied means to meet the above-listed goals.

### **Special Project in the Mississippi Delta Region**

Combining all three USDA teams, AmeriCorps participants in the Mississippi Delta would work to fight hunger and bolster nutrition, improve the local environment, boost the local rural economy, and reform the welfare system. Some of the participants would be AFDC participants themselves -- the program would provide them with the skills and resources they would need to empower themselves to move towards self-sufficiency. The project could possibly be run by the non-profit organization, the Mississippi Delta Corporation, formally the government agency, the Mississippi Delta Commission.

The first component would be two youth service teams of 50 participants each, composed of a mix of AFDC recipients, college students, and recent high school graduates. Each participant would receive a yearly salary of \$7,400, health insurance, child care if they have children, and an educational scholarship of \$4,725 that can be used for college, graduate school, trade school, or an approved apprenticeship program. One team of 50 participants would focus on work on public lands and the environment. The other team would focus on work on anti-hunger, nutrition education, and empowerment initiatives. Including administrative costs and overhead, each participant would cost USDA and/or our partners an average of \$15,000 per year. Thus, each 50-participant team would cost \$750,000 per year. Both teams together would cost \$1.5 million per year.

The second component would be a 40-person rural development team, composed of college graduates and professional school graduates. Each participant would receive a yearly salary of \$15,000, health insurance, child care if they have children, and an educational scholarship of \$4,725 that can be used for college, graduate school, trade school or an approved apprenticeship program. Fifteen members of this team would supervise the younger participants in the other two teams; the remaining 25 team members would plan and carry out broader empowerment, welfare reform, rural development, and environmental protection programs throughout the Mississippi Delta. Including administrative costs and overhead, each participant would cost USDA and/or our partners an average of \$20,000 per year. Thus, 40 participants would cost \$1 million per year.

Thus, all three teams, engaging a total of 140 participants in service, would cost \$2.5 million yearly.

This model would combine welfare reform with national service. This model would be unique because the welfare recipients in the program would both perform and receive service.

This model rejects the failed and stale ideologies of both the far left and far right. It rejects the conservative notion that poor people are basically lazy, and that if they are thrown off welfare they will somehow be able to magically find jobs for themselves. But it also rejects the traditional liberal approach of simply spending more money on a broken system that only leaves welfare recipients on an endless treadmill. Instead, this model focuses on helping participants gain for themselves both the work ethic and the economic tools needed to succeed.

The AFDC recipients -- like all the participants in this program -- would be providing critical service to the people of the Mississippi Delta. This experience would be empowering in and of itself by transforming these participants from clients passively being supported by government into community activists providing service to others. As currently demonstrated by existing youth service corps, this change can be a transforming experience for welfare recipients, stripping away their stigma and replacing it with a new and powerful understanding of their own power to help themselves and their community. By working alongside and completing exactly the same tasks as college students, the participants will come to realize they too can set higher personal goals.

Yet this program will provide AFDC recipients with much more than increased self-esteem and a structured work regimen: they will receive services, training, counseling, income, and educational benefits that would allow them to move off of welfare and towards self-sufficiency. Specifically, each participant on AFDC will receive the following material benefits:

- \* \$7,400 base salary yearly
- \* Free health insurance with a guaranteed set of minimum benefits
- \* Free day care for their children
- \* \$4,725 educational voucher for each year of service
- \* Up-front, general, training on citizenship, work skills, and teamwork

- \* Up-front, technical, training for each work project
- \* Free classes to obtain G.E.D. degrees
- \* Ongoing educational classes on environmental and anti-hunger issues
- \* Help with transportation to the work sites
- \* Ongoing counseling on their personal and economic problems
- \* Substance abuse counseling, if needed
- \* Job counseling and placement services

Ten of the Rural Development Team members will serve as crew leaders for the Environmental Team and the Anti-Hunger Team. Thus each crew of 10 participants will have one Rural Development Team member, who will be a college graduate or a professional school graduate, as a crew leader.

The crew leaders will plan projects, supervise projects, and work alongside the members of each crew. The crew leaders will also be specially selected and trained to serve as caseworkers for the AFDC recipients on their team.

Since each crew leaders/case workers will have no more than five AFDC recipients under their personal direction, they will have plenty of time to work with each person to help solve their individual problems.

The other five Rural Development team members will focus on providing the following services to the participants and the region-at-large.

1) Training, Education, Counseling - This team member will focus on coordinating specific job training, general education and G.E.D. classes, environmental and nutrition education, interview training, and personal counseling.

2) Job Placement Services - This team member will work with program participants and other community residents to try to match up their skills and interests with available jobs in the region.

3) Assets Development - This team member would work with local banks, local government agencies, and local non-profit agencies to create a pilot project in which money saved by program participants would be matched by another source and kept in a special savings account.

4) Microenterprise Development - This team member would work with participants and other area residents to help them obtain small loans to start microenterprise projects. Microenterprise is a development strategy in which small loans, peer support, and technical assistance are made available to those starting "small" small businesses. Such small business are usually capitalized under \$5,000, employ less than five people, and tend to be in the retail or service sector, yet they can play a critical role in breaking the cycle of dependency on government programs and help individuals build assets while moving towards self-sufficiency.

5) Apprenticeship Creation - This team member would work with participants, regional businesses, local educational institutions, and other local residents to create opportunities for regional business to sponsor apprenticeships for young people to train for real jobs while continuing their studies.

In addition to the types of USDA employees that might be detailed to any Rural Development team Project, the Delta project may include the following additional types of employees:

1) FNS Feeding Program Policy Expert - Will work to coordinate the interface between the anti-hunger teams, state welfare agencies, and federal feeding programs.

2) Agricultural Research Service Nutrition Education Specialist - A former HNIS employee will work with the Anti-hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team to provide nutrition education.

3) FSIS Outreach Worker - Would incorporate food safety curriculum into work of anti-hunger team.

4) Extension Agent in Nutrition - Will work to develop and implement curriculum in anti-hunger corps.

The program would operate in the following counties of Mississippi: Desoto, Tunica, Panola, Coahoma, Bolivar, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Leflore, Washington, Sunflower, Carrol, Sharkey, Holmes, Humphreys, Yazoo, Warren, Issaquena, Claiborne, and Jefferson.

The program would operate in the following counties of Arkansas: Crittenden, Lee, Phillips, Desha, and Chicot. The program would operate in the following counties of Louisiana: East Caroll, West Carrol, Madison, Tenas, and Concordia.

## II. STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COMPLETING APPLICATION

**By Tuesday, April 5: All members of rural development planning team will meet and decide upon tentative list of sites**

SCS has already identified project sites -- a unding for these projects -- throughout the country. We will have to match up what other agency resources will partner with these projects.

Paula Jones and Dee DiFiore will coordinate Soil Conservation Service involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate Forest Service involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate AMS involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate Rural Development Administration involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate Rural Electric Administration involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate Farmer's Home Administration involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate Agricultural Cooperative Service involvement.

Sara Mazie will coordinate Economic Research Service involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate FCIC involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_ will coordinate NASS involvement.

Dr. James Coppedge will be responsible for coordinating ARS participation in sustainable agriculture projects.

Jim Lucas of ASCS will be responsible for coordinating ASCS involvements in the projects.

Mary Ames of the Peace Corps will be responsible for designing the training components of the program.

Ron DeMunbrun of OPA will coordinate all budget and administrative issues.

Katherine Gibney of OPA will coordinate any interactions with other federal agencies such as Interior, EPA, Energy, Commerce, Peace Corps, DOD, and VISTA.

Joel Berg of OPA will provide general guidance on how to incorporate the Public Lands and Environment Team as part of the larger USDA application to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Steve Mullen of the Extension Service will be responsible for coordinating Extension Service involvement in the programs. He will also be responsible for designing and writing a description of how the programs will interact with existing 4-youth problems and with institutions of higher education.

Can Wayne Forbush of FMHA work with the planning team to incorporate his pilot project to provide financial planning services to beginning farmers?

**By Thursday, April 7: Contact all National Non-Profit Partners**

**By Thursday, April 7: Identify Local USDA Application Coordinator at Each Site**

The person at each site must commit to a significant amount of specific work in the following two weeks to provide specific information and coordination from that site.

**By Thursday, April 7: Ron DeMunbrun will answer USDA administrative questions**

**By Friday, April 8: Hold conference calls with all potential local partners**

**By Friday, April 8: Contact all local non-profit organizations at pilot sites working**

Our files need to be reviewed to contact those groups that have already communicated with us.

How can USDA incorporate the Atlantic Center for the Environment's proposal to engage 10 participants in work in Northern New England that combines environmental and rural development objectives?

How can USDA incorporate the request by the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service to run a 20 person Farm-A-Syst team in North Florida?

How can USDA work with the Tennessee Valley Authority to place participants in some of the counties TVA has suggested?

How can USDA work with the Center for Rural Affairs to support their suggestions to boost microenterprise and sustainable agriculture?

**By Friday, April 8: Precise geographical locations for each site must be finalized; agencies agree on lead agency roles for each site**

**By Friday, April 8: Request from ERS a complete description of the economic problems to be solved at each pilot location**

**By Friday, April 8: Ron DeMunbrun, working closely with the agencies and other members of the planning group, finalizes budgets from the RDA, FmHA, RDA, ACS, FS, SCS, ES, ARS, ASCS, AMS, and FCIC**

Ron needs to determine how money each agency will spend directly or in-kind in FY95, what appropriations lines they will use to obtain that funding, the statutory authority conferred with that appropriation, and a summary of what other projects in the agency might not be funded as a result of the national service allocation.

**By Friday, April 8: Need to contact state commission contacts, key committee members, and key state and local government officials**

**By Monday, April 11: Finalize agreements with national non-profit partners**

They should answer the following questions:

Can they provide office space for participants?

Can they provide computers, faxes, telephones, and office support for participants?

Can they help fund all or part of salaries or provide any matching funds at all for participants?

Can they help fund transportation of participants?

What specific tasks would they supervise participants in conducting?

How will they help recruit participants?

How many participants are they willing to take from a national recruitment pool?

How will they ensure the socio-economic, gender, and racial diversity of participants?

How will they ensure the socio-economic, gender, and racial diversity of the management team?

How will they work with the other partners and with local stakeholders to plan the projects?

How will they provide ongoing evaluation of the program?

How will they continuously tie themselves to the national USDA program?

How will the program promote civic responsibility and produce positive change in participants through training and participation in meaningful service with opportunities for reflection?

What measurable goals can we set for personal benefits obtained by Team members?

Where, and how quickly, should the program grow?

What management staff will be needed, and how much of it will come from existing USDA employees?

How can our program utilize the latest communications technologies?

**By Monday, April 11: Steve Mullen will finalized any partnerships with 4-H groups, other youth service groups, school districts, colleges, land grant universities, 1890's and HAACU institutions, community colleges, and trade schools to determine which may be partners**

**By Tuesday, April 12: Specify details of at least five different service projects in each pilot region**

Explain direct benefits of each project. What activities will the participants engage in, and how do these projects or activities result in direct, measurable service that addressed the identified needs? If possible, describe a typical week in the life of program participants, giving concrete examples of the types of activities or duties participants will perform. How are the individual programs connected through common program elements or activities, including participant training, in-service education, or service-learning curriculum employed to improve participants' skills, prepare them for placement, and foster positive civic values? What will be the principal applicant's role in placing, training, and matching participants with assignments, and orienting and preparing sponsors or host-sites for that placement?

**By Tuesday, April 12: Specify office site or sites for each project**

## **By Tuesday, April 12: Recruitment, training, education, and evaluation plans are finalized**

What are the expected number and characteristics of participants, including racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic status, gender and educational attainment? If the program will recruit fewer than 20 participants, please explain why this small number is appropriate to the purpose and design of the program. What will be your role in achieving the desired number and characteristics of participants through recruitment and selection? If appropriate, describe outreach, recruitment, and selection strategies. Any discussion of participant selection should include a description of selection criteria (including minimum qualifications for participants) and whether any participants will be drawn from the national recruitment system.

We need a comprehensive recruitment strategy. Some ideas: Information and applications should be sent to post-secondary institutions in or near the pilot project areas. Packets should be sent to financial aid counselors, placement officers, deans, and student organizations. We should also target news stories and public service announcements at the student media. We should also attempt to hold recruitment seminars on key campuses. We should work closely with the Peace Corps and VISTA to recruit former volunteers in those programs. A concentrated recruitment effort must be made at 1890s schools and at all Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We must also target HACU schools, as well as the many junior and community colleges throughout the Southwest with substantial American Indian populations. Special plans should be developed to recruit and place Americans with disabilities

Curriculums for teaching leadership, volunteer development, program management, basic life skills, and understanding of basic business principles would be necessary. Participants of this program would hold either Bachelor's degrees or graduate degrees. Participants could also be trained in Rural Sociology, Adult and Extension Education, Agricultural Communications, Marketing, Organizational Development, Applied Social Research, Urban and Regional Planning, Applied Anthropology, Architecture, Economics, Business, Geography, Environmental Science, and Computer Science, Public Administration, Civil Engineering, or Agricultural Science. What other degrees would be useful for participants to have?

The participants would also need to spend a period of training before being assigned to the local districts. This training should be planned and held nationally. Who will conduct the training? How much of the training should be identical for all participants and how much should be unique to the specific jobs that each participant will be performing?

What type of training will participants receive after they have started the program? They should receive regional training between 2-4 times a year. This could happen in a one-week seminar format that included elements of direct education, experience-sharing, and a critical debriefing session where members input lessons learned, problems overcome, and significant relationships created into the program's ongoing monitoring and evaluation process.

Describe Internal Evaluation and Monitoring. How will we monitor progress toward aggregate objectives? How will the principal applicant assess, on an on-going basis, the quality of services and the satisfaction of both the participants and the individuals or institutions served? How will the principal applicant collect the required descriptive and demographic data?

**By Tuesday, April 12: Describe the Needs Identification Process**

What was the process by which the needs were identified? Who was involved in identifying the needs? To what extent were residents of the community in which the service will be provided involved in the needs assessment activities?

**By Tuesday, April 12: Ron DeMunbrun will finalize total budgets, as well as Corporation request, USDA funding, and partnership funding**

**By Tuesday, April 12: Major elements of application are drafted**

**By Tuesday, April 12: Finalize USDA Agency involvement in terms of programs and personnel.**

**By Wednesday, April 13: Katherine Gibney will have identified which federal government agencies will be partners**

Will have contacted Department of Commerce and VISTA.

**By Wednesday, April 13: Specify the following about the management structures and teams:**

**Institutional and Personnel Information.** This section should provide a description of our past experience and institutional capacity to operate or coordinate a program comparable to the program(s) proposed. Describe the project director's background, experience and major accomplishments as they relate to his or her duties in and responsibilities for the proposed programs.

**Administering Organization.** What is the principal applicant's past experience in operating and coordinating a comparable program, and capacity? Indicate your experience and capacity to administer the program.

**Principal Staff.** What are the background, experience and major accomplishments of the program director and principal staff. How do their qualifications relate to their duties in the proposed program? If not yet hired, what qualifications must the candidate fulfill? If appropriate, describe the outreach, recruitment, and selection strategies used.

**Training.** What kind of orientation and training, if any, will you provide for staff?

**Institutional Strengths.** What institutional resources or expertise will the administering organizations(s) provide that will contribute to the overall success of the program?

**By Wednesday, April 13:** Issues relating to program responsibilities, budget, and personnel are resolved by partnering federal agencies under guidance from Katherine Gibney

**By Thursday, April 14:** Complete draft application

**By Friday, April 15,** submit proposals to the USDA Office of General Counsel, the USDA Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Under and Assistant Secretaries, and Agency Administrators for review

**By Tuesday,** receive all USDA and agency comments on draft application

**By Wednesday, April 20,** submit proposals to the Office of the Secretary for review

**By Monday, April 25,** final proposals to the Corporation for National and Community Service

# **AMERICORPS/USDA**

**DRAFT ACTION PLAN, DECEMBER 13, 1993**

*National service is a civic compact in which any citizen can be tied to the nation by the simple virtue of making a difference in the lives of others...President Clinton has made it absolutely clear to his cabinet members that he wants every one of us to make national service a top priority.*

- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy

## **I. PURPOSE OF ACTION PLAN**

President Clinton's national service initiative --- now known as AMERICORPS --- will fund programs around the country in which Americans will perform at least a year of full-time community service in exchange for significant educational benefits.

Participants will earn small living stipends while performing work that addresses unmet human, environmental, educational, and public safety needs. For each year of service successfully performed, participants will also earn an educational voucher of \$4,725, which they may use to pay for college, vocational school, job training, or graduate school. The purpose of this plan is to outline how we will turn our generalized plans for Americorps/USDA into concrete, specific, realistic, and comprehensive grant proposals to be submitted to the new Corporation for National Service.

Most of the funds provided by the National Service Trust Act will be distributed through state commissions to programs managed by existing youth corps, non-profit organizations, and state and local governments. Consequently, USDA will provide significant information and technical assistance to the wide range of our constituency groups --- including environmental, consumer, farming, higher education, minority, rural development, agribusiness, and nutrition groups --- to help them apply for such funds or otherwise become involved in Americorps.

USDA will also develop curricula in key areas --- such as nutrition, sustainable agriculture, the environment, and rural development- -- for external groups that are planning to run Americorps programs related to these areas.

Yet the focus of this action plan is on the three service programs that USDA itself will run through a provision of the National Service Trust Act that dedicates over \$18 million for federal agencies to manage Americorps programs of their own. Secretary Espy has directed us to prepare three different Americorps team proposals as grant applications for submission to the Corporation for National Service:

**Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team**

**Public Lands and Environment Team**

**Rural Development Team**

The Rural Development Team will be a professional corps of mostly college and professional school graduates in which the participants will perform the majority of their work individually and at separate locations. The Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team and the Public Lands and Environment Team, more similar to traditional youth corps, will allow participants to join the programs before, during, or after post-secondary education or job training; most of the participants in these two programs will perform their work together at project sites in crews of ten.

## II. TWENTY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES FOR ALL AMERICORPS/USDA PROGRAMS

We intend to make our programs models of reinventing government. Each and every AmeriCorps/USDA pilot project will be guided by the following critical 20 principles:

- \* Reunite the interests of the middle class and the poor by allowing young people from all types of families to earn their way through post-secondary education.
- \* Recruit groups of participants in each pilot project that are socio-economically diverse.
- \* Ensure that citizens of every race, class, gender, age, and region work side-by-side.
- \* Give the participants at least a minimum-wage living expense, as well as adequate supervision, training, and education.
- \* Allow young people to perform service either before, during, or after attending post-secondary education.
- \* Provide valuable service to the community by systematically filling unmet social needs.
- \* Ensure that none of the work performed duplicates existing programs.
- \* Limit the work performed to tasks that fulfill significant missions of USDA and are generally acceptable to our main farming, consumer, environmental, and rural development interest groups.
- \* Base participant and site selection on quality, not patronage.
- \* Reinvent government by promoting opportunity, responsibility, and community.
- \* Provide models for how the federal government can manage national service programs.
- \* Build a distinct identity for the President's AmeriCorps program that is explicitly different from either targeted jobs programs or diffuse "Points of Light" volunteerism efforts
- \* Expand dramatically in the next few years as full-scale national program is phased-in.
- \* Forge links to other key Administration initiatives such as empowerment zones, youth apprenticeship, welfare reform, microenterprise, and health care reform.
- \* Act as a multiplier of other national service programs throughout the country.
- \* Forge a new form of entrepreneurial and non-bureaucratic government.
- \* Build partnerships between community, state, and local groups and the federal government.
- \* Obtain funding from a combination of sources, including the Corporation for National and Community Service, USDA program monies, non-profit organizations, charitable

foundations, corporations, contributions from USDA employees, and state and local governments.

- \* Build a management team from existing USDA personnel.
- \* Be managed across traditional USDA agency lines.

The above 20 principles are essential and must be evident in every pilot proposal. AmeriCorps can only succeed if every entity helping carry out the program insists on the highest standards of consistent quality.

### III. RURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Rural Development Team would establish regional clusters of "professional" and "paraprofessional" participants who could assist communities in identifying needs and resources necessary for economic well-being. The participants would have diverse education and training and would be matched up with individual communities or regions that have specific needs that can be filled by someone with that specific background. The need to develop new leadership in rural America was a continuing theme of Secretary Espy's recent Rural Development Forum. Americorps/USDA Rural Development Team can help redress that need by playing a major role in developing that leadership. We will make a concerted effort to recruit participants who want to return to areas similar to those in which they were raised. Thus, this program can help begin reversing the "brain drain" from rural America.

Individuals will be placed in communities where their particular talents can be best utilized. Experts in connecting rural homes to municipal water systems will be matched up to areas with that need. Experts in tourism will be matched up with communities that want to develop their tourism. Experts in sustainable agriculture will be matched up with groups of farmers who need technical assistance in that area. Experts in grant writing will be matched up with communities that need grant writing. Experts in attracting small businesses will be matched up with communities that want to attract more small business. Experts in watershed protection will be matched up with areas that need such help. General planners would also be matched up with communities that need to develop overall economic plans.

This group of individuals would be able to assist communities in planning and prioritizing efforts. The corps would then assist the community in locating financial resources, preparing proposals, designing educational programs, and implementing strategies necessary for revitalization. The focus would be on the community generating its own vision for the future and the USDA corps assisting them in creating and attaining that vision.

Our eventual goal is for as many Rural Development Team graduates as possible to be permanently hired by host communities.

#### **a. Social problems to be solved**

Some of the worst pockets of poverty and highest rates of unemployment exist in rural America. While President Clinton's overall economic program should help significantly, special efforts are needed to boost rural America.

A recent study by USDA indicates that physical infrastructure is rarely sufficient by itself to promote rural economic development; in order to significantly boost economic growth, it is necessary to develop the human infrastructure.

Some rural communities that can afford to do so now pay expensive consultants to advise them on development; for instance, the Forest Service now gives grants to some communities to hire such consultants. With proper training, our team members could take the place of these consultants.

(How often are consultants really hired? How much are they paid? Can they really be replaced with Rural Development Team participants?)

#### **b. Meeting the rural development goals of USDA**

This team will meet many of the top rural development goals of President Clinton, Secretary Espy, and Undersecretary of Small Community and Rural Development Bob Nash, by empowering communities to develop local leadership to help themselves. The team could accomplish much needed community planning activities necessary to assure the economic vitality and productivity of our rural and mid-sized communities; teach specific skills in community building, coalition building, and strategic planning; and develop improved federal ties with units of local government which people encounter in their everyday living.

The team could also focus on meeting Secretary Espy's personal goal of bringing running water to every rural home in America.

How we define measurable goals for this program in meeting human needs?

#### **c. Working with existing programs**

How will this Americorps Team build upon existing programs, including federal programs?

Most states have local Planning and Development Districts which provide for the overall strategic and project planning efforts for a multi-jurisdictional area. Some of these cover several counties, and some cover multiple communities within a county or township. They are staffed by local citizens and all have one thing in common: they are understaffed.

Some of our team participants will be physically located within the offices of local districts, so that they work with the districts and do not pose the threat of competition over turf.

We could also work with: RDA Coordinators, SCS RC&D program, the Extension Service, community-based organizations, and independent agencies such as the Appalachian Regional Commission or the Tennessee Valley Authority.

To support these team members, there already exists an information data base at the National Agriculture Library called the Rural Information Center. This information center maintains a data base of organizations which provide financial support to communities on a national, regional, and local basis. This data base should be made available to all team members for assisting the community in developing its own action plan and applying for funding. Participants should be able to easily add to the database and find information about the activities of their peers. Access to this information could be through the Rural Information Center's Bulletin Board System.

We must still answer how this program will specifically interact with the districts, with existing government programs, with 4-H programs, with existing non-profit and volunteer organizations, with VISTA, and with the ambitious new rural development initiatives being planned by the Administration.

**d. Specific types of service to be performed**

Some possible job descriptions:

- 1) Assistant State Rural Development Coordinator - Assists USDA State Rural Development Coordinators in helping boost Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Collects data, provides outreach, coordinates community resources, helps develop strategic plans, helps implement the program, analyzes local data for agencies and organizations so that the needs of the under-served are considered.
- 2) Small Business Plan Developer and Information Broker - Assists in the assessment and development of markets for unique local products.
- 3) Regional Circuit Rider - Works part time in a number of towns in a region. Provides technical assistance to communities throughout a region in brokering, strategic planning, and community assessment.
- 4) Sustainable Agriculture Advisor - Works with farmers in the region to help them develop model sustainable agriculture farms. Directs 4-H volunteers to perform some of the labor intensive work, such as fence-building, needed for successful sustainable farming.
- 5) Watershed Assistance Process Facilitator - Works to coordinate local watershed protection programs in order to save wetlands, guard drinking-water quality, and prevent flooding. The team member would explain watershed assistance programs, identify key potential participants in local watershed steering committees, arrange local organizational meetings, and facilitate the identification of watershed needs, problems, and concerns.
- 6) Natural Resource Specialist - Under the direction of a Soil Conservation Service professional employee, the team member would work in low-income and socially disadvantaged areas to assist in the acceleration of watershed protection, work with field engineers in the design and layout of community projects, and work with the local Resource Conservation & Development(RC&D) Coordinator for economic development for disadvantaged groups.
- 7) Landscape Architect - The team member would work with soil conservation districts, RC&D councils, and area conservationists to coordinate and include landscape architectural planning for the purpose of maintaining, enhancing, or restoring ecological, social, and economic conditions.
- 8) Recreation Specialist - The team member would provide technical assistance for all activities relating to recreation and tourism, including coordinating efforts among all government agencies, furnish recreation planning and design, and collect and disseminate information on what alternatives will best fit local needs.
- 9) Regional 4-H Youth Development Coordinator - The team member would work with county Extension agents and 4-H coordinators to manage local students involved in youth service.
- 10) Forest Service and SCS Volunteer Coordinators - The team member would recruit and supervise adult and youth volunteers from local communities to work on Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service projects.
- 11) Forest Service Resource Assistants - This position is outlined in the Public Lands Corps section of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. In this position, Rural Development team participants could work with District Rangers to identify and manage service projects in the forest for Public Lands and Environment Team members.

**e. Recruiting and selecting applicants**

What percentage of participants will be recruited from a national pool of applicants to USDA or the Corporation?

Participants will be paid \$15,000 per year. In addition, they will receive an educational voucher worth \$4,725 at the end of a year of service. Participants may be of any age, but, because of the special educational requirements of the Rural Development Team, it is unlikely that any participants will be younger than 21.

Recruitment and selection will be ultimately be accomplished at a centralized, national level, but applications from pilot locations will be given priority.

We need a comprehensive recruitment strategy. Some ideas: Information and applications should be sent to post-secondary institutions in or near the pilot project areas. Packets should be sent to financial aid counselors, placement officers, deans, and student organizations. We should also target news stories and public service announcements at the student media. We should also attempt to hold recruitment seminars on key campuses. We should work closely with the Peace Corps and VISTA to recruit former volunteers in those programs.

**f. Matching participants with host communities**

Communities should apply for team members through an informal competitive process. Target communities should be asked what kind of resources would be offered enrollees-- such as office space, computer equipment, social support, travel, office support -- in exchange for their services. Extra credit should be given to communities that apply jointly for the services of a team member or members. Our program should strongly encourage partnerships and teamwork arrangements between and among adjacent jurisdictions, multi-county consortiums, and/or regional entities.

We will develop a needs profile for each applicant community and a skills bank and inventory for the enrollees. The communities and the enrollees would then be matched up by computer.

All assignments for participants must be mutually agreed upon by USDA and by any community, county, or organization with whom that participant would closely work. Local labor unions should also agree to any position in which the participant would perform work even somewhat similar to work performed by local unionized workers.

**g. Creating and maintaining program diversity**

How do we ensure that this program is managed by a diverse team and includes a diverse set of participants each and every year?

Diversity must be a key consideration during recruitment, curriculum design, project development, and training. The first year's program must meet all our diversity requirements since original problems are nearly impossible to fix.

How will we balance the need to recruit participants from their own communities, some of which are not very diverse, with the need to have an overall program that is very diverse?

A concentrated recruitment effort must be made at 1890s schools and at all Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We must also target HACU schools, as well as the many junior and community colleges throughout the Southwest with substantial American Indian populations. Special plans should be developed to recruit and place Americans with disabilities

#### **h. Training the team members**

Curriculums for teaching leadership, volunteer development, program management, basic life skills, and understanding of basic business principles would be necessary.

Participants of this program would hold either Bachelor's degrees or graduate degrees. There are only two graduate schools in the country now specifically teach rural development (WHERE? WHAT ARE THEIR CURRICULUMS?); perhaps we could form partnerships with others to do so. Participants could also be trained in Rural Sociology, Adult and Extension Education, Agricultural Communications, Marketing, Organizational Development, Applied Social Research, Urban and Regional Planning, Applied Anthropology, Architecture, Economics, Business, Geography, Environmental Science, and Computer Science, Public Administration, Civil Engineering, or Agricultural Science. What other degrees would be useful for participants to have?

The participants would also need to spend a period of training before being assigned to the local districts. This training should be planned and held nationally. Who will conduct the training? How much of the training should be identical for all participants and how much should be unique to the specific jobs that each participant will be performing?

What type of training will participants receive after they have started the program? They should receive regional training between 2-4 times a year. This could happen in a one-week seminar format that included elements of direct education, experience-sharing, and a critical debriefing session where members input lessons learned, problems overcome, and significant relationships created into the program's ongoing monitoring and evaluation process.

Will there be a pre-professional training program element of the rural development corps? Can universities train people for these skills?

#### **i. Supervising the team members**

Who will supervise the team member? There will be a need to judge performance, initiate additional training when needed, and to terminate or initiate re-assignment when necessary. What role can State RDA Rural Development Coordinators have in supervision?

How will the Team involve participants in leadership positions in implementing and evaluating the programs?

How much self-government will team members have? How will team members be able to participate in designing their own programs, mandating their own rules, and helping enforce the rules?

What types of interactions will team members have with participants in other areas?

#### **j. Effect on the Participants**

How will the program promote civic responsibility and produce positive change in participants through training and participation in meaningful service with opportunities for reflection?

What measurable goals can we set for personal benefits obtained by Team members?

### **k. Evaluating the team programs**

How will we ensure constant evaluation of the program in order to correct problems immediately?

Will we contract out for evaluation or ask the Corporation for a waiver so we can do our own evaluation?

How can we judge whether the program has met the general goals of Americorps and the specific goals of the Team? The program should be evaluated as to whether it has meet each of the 20 basic principles in the Section II of this plan.

How many graduates of the program remained in the communities?

### **l. Sizes and sites of pilot projects**

Where should the pilot projects be situated and how large should they be? Should there be a limit on the population size of communities where there will be pilot projects?

One suggestion has been to limit help to communities of less than 15,000 people and counties with no town larger than 15,000 residents. In Texas alone, over 1,000 communities meet this description. While limiting community size would wipe some medium-sized rural towns out of consideration, it would ensure than each placement would have a sizable impact.

How many participants will be able to be placed in pilot programs? What will be the ultimate capacity of these programs?

Thirty-two states currently have economic development councils or rural development councils, so early pilot programs would be easy. Some of the following regions or states would provide a good mix of pilots:

The Mississippi Delta  
The Texas/Mexico Border  
Maine  
Kansas  
The Pacific Northwest  
Oklahoma  
North Dakota  
Southern Illinois  
Tennessee  
Four Corners (Arizona, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico)  
Alaska  
Appalachia  
Oklahoma  
California

Pilot programs could also be specifically targeted at rural communities facing short-term job dislocations because of NAFTA, the Northwest Forest Plan, or military base closings or defense plant shut-down.

For Corporation for National and Community Service application, we need a description of the criteria and process through which our grantee programs were selected.

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a description of the type and number of positions that will receive awards and a description of how approved national service positions will be apportioned by the applicant.

For each pilot location, how will we consult with participants and potential participants, representatives of community served, community-based agencies with demonstrated record of experience in providing services, and labor organizations?

How will our pilots help priority areas affected adversely by federal policies?

Where are recently closed military installations need potential pilot projects?

#### **m. Growth scenarios**

Where, and how quickly, should the program grow? Should we grow by expanding our pilot projects or by creating new ones?

How will we create a program so popular that it will continue to expand, regardless of the Administration in power?

#### **n. Management structure**

How much of the programs should we run ourselves and how much should we contract out to existing groups?

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a detailed description of key members of the management team.

How will we absolutely, positively ensure that we don't create yet another cumbersome Washington bureaucracy?

How can our programs utilize the latest communications technologies?

How will OWCP (liability) be covered?

How will health care be provided to participants?

What percentage of participants will need child care? How will we provide it to them?

What kind of support will disabled participants need?

#### **o. Staff needed**

The Rural Development Teams should have a Director, who reports directly to the head of USDA national service programs, as well as to the Undersecretary for Rural Economic and Community Development. The Director of the Rural Development Team should have the following staff:

Recruitment and Training Coordinator  
Internal and External Communications Coordinator  
Project Management Coordinator  
USDA Inter-Agency Coordinator  
Partnership Liaison  
Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator  
Support Staff

**p. Costs**

We roughly estimate that each server in the Rural Development Team will cost roughly \$30,000 per year. Thus 400 servers --- 40 in each of ten states or regions --- would cost \$10 million.

Each participant will need access to a computer network in order to communicate with each other via an easy-to-use e-mail, access to the National Agriculture Library's Rural Development Center Bulletin Board System, and access to INTERNET. Can we get this system donated? If not, how much will it cost?

Can we get every member of the team an outdated 286 or 386 laptop computer? Can we get these donated? If so, could they interface with the rest of the system?

**q. Outreach needed for stakeholders**

We need a strategy for reaching out to the local planning districts, the state districts, and political and community leaders throughout rural America.

**r. Funding sources**

What non-profit groups, corporations, individuals, and/or foundations might be willing to help fund this?

**s. Partnerships**

What kind of partnerships can we form with other federal agencies? Could the Departments of Commerce, Interior, Labor, and Health and Human Services, each of which has significant rural development roles, play significant parts in helping fund and manage these programs? How can we involve the Monday Management Group, a grouping of 17 federal agencies involved in rural development?

Other possible partnerships include:

- National Association of Counties
- National Association of Development Organizations
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- National Governors Organization
- National Association of Towns and Townships
- State Rural Development Councils
- State Economic Development Councils or Agencies
- Local Planning and Development entities both private and public
- National Association of State Foresters
- Department of Defense Agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers
- 1890's, land-grant, and historically Hispanic colleges
- VISTA
- National Rural Health Care association
- Center for Rural Affairs

**t. Learning from the VISTA model**

What can we learn from both previous and ongoing VISTA rural development projects?

#### IV. EMPOWERMENT AND ANTI-HUNGER TEAM

In the Anti-Hunger/Empowerment Team, participants would work in urban and rural areas to help low-income families and individuals move towards self-sufficiency. The main focus of the team would be fighting domestic hunger. Team members could help individuals apply for food stamps, Women, Infants, and Children, and the school breakfast program; overhaul their diets; learn to prevent foodborne illnesses; and obtain the expanded Earned Income Tax Credits, microenterprise loans, and help from community development banks. In short, this team would help put into effect the entire empowerment agenda promoted by President Clinton and Secretary Espy.

How can we tie into the DC initiative between HUD and DC government aimed at homelessness?

How can we connect with HUD anti-homeless initiative?

##### **a. Social problems to be solved**

Hunger has risen in America over the last decade, particularly among children. One in ten Americans now use food stamps, and many more are eligible.

Recent studies show that 60 percent of those eligible for the food stamps and WIC program do not participate. Many of those are the elderly, American Indians, and the homeless.

A new study by the Urban Institute found that 12 percent of older Americans sometimes went hungry or had to choose between paying the rent and eating or between buying their medications and eating. In poorer areas, the number is considerably higher. (One in two in poor New York neighborhoods.)

##### **T b. Meeting the empowerment and anti-hunger goals of USDA**

The new goals of Food and Consumer services are:

- 1) to increase outreach to those eligible, but not participating, in food assistance programs
- 2) to expand the nutrition component of food assistance programs
- 3) to promote self-sufficiency through job training, microenterprise development, and the earned income tax credit.

This team will meet many of the top empowerment and anti-hunger goals of President Clinton, Secretary Espy, and Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services Ellen Haas. It will help reduce domestic hunger, facilitate welfare reform, bolster the preventive medicine objectives of the Administration's health care plan, and empower citizens to work their own way out of poverty.

This program can also play a role in helping states enlarge their capacity to run WIC programs and thus move towards President Clinton's goal of eventually making WIC available to all eligible Americans.

How we define measurable goals for this program in meeting human needs?

### **c. Working with existing programs**

How will this Americorps Team build upon existing programs, including federal programs?

We must still answer how this program will specifically interact with the above existing programs and the ambitious new anti-hunger initiatives being planned by the Administration.

How will this initiative relate to existing volunteer organizations? To existing 4-H programs? To existing youth service corps? What kind of structure will the initiative have? How will the structure interact with state and local governments?

### **d. Specific types of service to be performed**

Participants would provide outreach and access services, build the anti-hunger and anti-poverty infrastructure, and run innovative new empowerment programs:

1) Provide outreach/access services (educating eligible people about program availability and helping make benefits accessible)

\* Outreach Workers - Inform target populations about program availability (all programs)

\* Drivers - Help eligible people apply for and receive program benefits (WIC, CACFP, TEFAP, NPE, CSFP)

\* Delivery Aides - Deliver program benefits to homebound elderly, physically disadvantaged, and homeless people (TEFAP, CSFP, FDPIR)

\* Bilingual Aides - Provide program information, help with applications, etc. to eligible, non-English-speaking people (all programs)

\* Service Facilitator - Conduct telephone follow-up with people who don't keep appointments, direct people to related health and welfare services (WIC, CSFP)

2) Bolster the infrastructure (providing the human capital necessary to deliver the programs according to congressional intent):

\* Food Handlers - Stock, warehouse, manage, distribute food products (TEFAP, charitable institutions, NPE, CSFP, school programs, FDPIR)

\* Day Care Workers - Provide child/adult care services to allow eligible people to apply for and receive program benefits (WIC, TEFAP, FDPIR)

\* Bilingual Case Assistants - Assist case manager with non-English-speaking clients (WIC)

\* Kitchen/Cafeteria Aides - Help with meal preparation and serving, maintaining, monitoring lunchrooms, and sanitation (school food, CACFP, and commodity programs)

\* Nutrition Assistants - Help with nutrition education, cooking demonstrations (WIC, school food programs)

\* CACFC Assistant - Improve supervision ratio of provider to participants in child care/meal preparation functions (CACFP)

3) Boost innovative new empowerment programs

- \* EITC - Help families obtain the newly expanded Earned Income Tax Credit
- \* Microenterprise - Teach people how to start small businesses
- \* Community Development Banks - Inform families on how to apply for loans from community development banks
- \* Assets Building - Work with families to develop savings plans
- \* Tenant management - Help public housing tenants to develop organizations for self-management
- \* Homelessness Programs - Help staff homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks; find innovative ways to include homeless citizens in USDA nutrition programs
- \* Apprenticeship - Work with local schools and businesses to develop new school-to-work transition programs
- \* Improvements in USDA Feeding Programs - Indian reservations could be encouraged to grow foods that could be sold to USDA commodity programs and then provided to the reservation through various USDA feeding programs. This could save taxpayers money while allowing the reservations to produce healthier and more culturally sensitive food for their residents.

4) Engage in Community Outreach

Team members can go door-to-door in neighborhoods dispensing information on all the above-listed programs. The information distributed would be holistic, tying together our nutrition, anti-hunger, welfare reform, and food safety initiatives.

We can also experiment with innovative approaches such as "healthy baby festivals," where we attract crowds with music and food and then provide nutrition and anti-hunger services.

**e. Selecting and matching applicants**

What percentage of participants will be recruited from a national pool of applicants to USDA or the Corporation?

We will pay participants either the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher in their particular locality. In addition, they will receive an educational voucher worth \$4,725 following their year of service. While Americans of any age will be eligible to participate in this program, the structure of the educational voucher will make it likely that the bulk of participants will be between the ages of 17-24.

How will Corps applicants be selected, matched with suitable assignments? Should participants be picked randomly from among applicants or should they be screened and ultimately hand-picked? What will be suitable service assignments? What role will USDA, state government, and local government agencies have in making these assignments?

**f. Creating and maintaining program diversity**

How we ensure that this program is managed by a diverse team and includes a diverse set of participants each and every year?

Diversity must be a key consideration during recruitment, curriculum design, project development, and training. The first year's program must meet all our diversity requirements since original problems are nearly impossible to fix.

**g. Training the team members**

How would the participants be trained? For how long? Where? With what kind of curriculum?

Team members will need training on working with diverse teammates. They will need training about how to interact with low-income citizens in a culturally and socially sensitive manner. They will need to be taught about the specific government programs they will be helping deliver.

**h. Supervising the team members**

How would they be supervised? Would they stay on one project throughout the year or frequently switch projects? What kind of extra supervision will be needed in residential programs?

Who will supervise the team member? There will be a need to judge performance, initiate additional training when needed, and even perhaps to terminate or initiate re-assignment when necessary.

We now assume one crew leader for every crew of ten people. What projects can suitably use ten people at once. If members of a crew are separated at different sites, how will the crew leader be able to manage them?

What types of interactions will team members have with participants in other areas?

What kind of uniforms should the crew leaders wear?

How will the Team involve participants in leadership positions in implementing and evaluating the programs?

How much self-government will team members have? How will team members be able to participate in designing their own programs, mandating their own rules, and helping enforce the rules?

**i. Effect on The Participants**

How will the program promote civic responsibility and produce positive change in participants through training and participation in meaningful service with opportunities for reflection?

What measurable goals can we set for personal benefits obtained by Team members?

**j. Evaluating the team**

How will we ensure constant evaluation of the program in order to correct problems immediately?

Will we contract out for evaluation or ask the Corporation for a waiver so we can do our own evaluation?

**k. Sizes and sites of pilot projects**

Where should the pilot projects be situated and how large should they be?

For the Corporation for National and Community Service application, we need a description of the criteria and process through which our grantee programs were selected

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a description of the type and number of positions that will receive awards and a description of how approved national service positions will be apportioned by the applicant.

For each pilot location how will we consult with participants and potential participants, representatives of the community served, community-based agencies with demonstrated record of experience in providing services, and labor organizations?

How will our pilots help priority areas affected adversely by federal policies?

Where are recently closed military installations on which we might be able to house participants?

**l. Growth scenarios**

Where, and how quickly, should the program grow? Should we grow by expanding our pilot projects or by creating new ones? How will we create a program that will grow on its own regardless of the Administration in power?

**m. Management structure needed**

How much of the programs should we run ourselves and how much should we contract out to existing groups?

Possible staff for Team:

Director

Recruitment and Training Coordinator

Internal and External Communications Coordinator

Pilot Project Liaison

Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator

Support Staff

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a detailed description of key members of the management team.

How will we absolutely, positively ensure that we don't create yet another cumbersome Washington bureaucracy?

How can our program utilize the latest communications technologies?

How will OWCP (liability) be covered?

**n. Staff needed**

How many USDA employees will be needed to manage the program? Will outside consultants also be required?

**o. Costs**

If we roughly estimate that each server in the Empowerment and Anti-Hungers Corps will cost \$15,000 per year, then 1,000 participants would cost \$15 million. That would fund twenty sites, half urban and half rural, with 50 participants in each site.

How will provide health care to participants?

What percentage of participants will need child care? How will we provide it to them?

What kind of support will disabled participants need?

**p. Outreach needed for stakeholders**

We will need strong support from state welfare agencies and from the current participants in USDA nutrition programs.

**q. Funding sources**

What section of the National Service Act could potentially fund this program?

What non-profit groups, corporations, individuals, and/or foundations might be willing to help fund this?

**r. Partnerships**

What kind of partnerships can we form with other federal agencies? Could we run projects at public housing units in tandem with HUD? Could we run health projects in tandem with HHS? Could we run community development projects in tandem with Commerce? Could we run weatherization projects in tandem with the Department of Energy? Could we run nutrition education programs in tandem with the Department of Education?

How can we utilize the 60,000 doctors in the Army Reserve and National Guard?

We must definitely work with state social service agencies. Other potential partners include:

Association of WIC Providers Food  
Research Action Center Children's Defense Fund  
Safe Food Coalition  
Urban League  
World Hunger Year

**s. Engaging senior citizens**

How can we engage senior citizens --- who generally underutilize food stamps -- involved in helping other senior citizens obtain nutrition help? How can this program work with the existing Retired Senior Volunteer Program?

**t. Lessons from EFNEP**

What lessons can we learn from the EFNEP nutrition program now run by the Extension Service?

**V. PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENT TEAM**

## V. PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENT TEAM

The Public Lands and Environment Team would have both urban and rural components. Participants could renovate urban and rural parks, plant trees, perform conservation work in national forests, teach environmental education, promote urban farming, test water quality, boost sustainable agriculture, clean-up rivers and lakes, help families weatherize their homes, instruct the public on how to dispose of household chemicals, and restore wetlands.

The urban component would be mostly non-residential and members would work on conservation projects on public and private lands in cities of various sizes. The rural component would be both residential and non-residential and would perform conservation-related work projects on private and public lands in rural America.

The urban and rural programs could be linked, with teams members having the option of transferring between the rural and urban settings. For example, a team member could work in a rural environment for ten months and then in an urban environment for another two months.

This wide scope of projects will be possible because the new National Service Trust Act gives all federal agencies --- including all USDA agencies --- broad authority to manage community service projects on private and public lands in both urban and rural areas.

Significant portions of these programs will perform work on federal, state, and municipal lands, thus fulfilling the specifications of the Public Lands Corps, which Congress -- with the full support of the Clinton Administration -- has recently required the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to run.

### **a. Social problems to be solved**

There are currently an estimated 8 million tree-planting sites in communities across America with the current replacement rate being one tree planted for every four removed. Thousands of water quality projects nationwide are awaiting manpower in our communities and our rural areas, as are wetlands restoration, erosion control, stream improvement, roadbank stabilization, and wildlife habitat projects. Urban farming and sustainable agriculture would also have important places in this program.

**Urban:** More than 80 percent of the American population now live in cities of varying size. Currently, the Forest Service, with 620 Ranger Districts across the country, and the Soil Conservation Service, with more than 2,000 offices nationwide, have existing partnerships and delivery systems in many cities.

The program would take the teams to where the people are, operating in any urban community with an existing network of Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, or Extension Service programs in partnerships with local governments or nonprofit organizations.

This non-residential program would focus on urban conservation projects in the areas of water quality, waste disposal, erosion control, running environmental program in schools, roadbank and streambank stabilization, urban gardening, the creation of urban buffers, rehabilitation and maintenance of deteriorating community infrastructure, urban forestry, and the recycling and reuse of resources. Team members would live in the community or already be a community member.

**Rural:** Team members would live in a residential setting in a rural area. The program would provide full-time logistical support for team members. As in the urban program, the team members would be expected to pay for living expenses from their wages.

Work projects could be in erosion control, fire prevention, fire suppression, building or improving recreation areas, restoration of infrastructure such as buildings and bridges, watershed protection, and other similar conservation projects. The land base of the National Forests would be available for projects as well as the privately held land in partnerships with the Soil Conservation Service.

Team members could also focus on teaching sustainable agriculture, helping small farmers stay on the land, building rural housing, and engaging in rural development projects. Environmental Team members could also work under the direction of older participants in the USDA Rural Development Corps.

The team would provide much needed peoplepower for nationwide conservation projects. The work of the team could reduce the backlog of conservation-related work across the country.

With the shift from a rural population to an urban one, Americans are losing the ability to learn firsthand about natural resources. We currently have a relatively uneducated and uninformed citizenry with regard to natural resources and conservation issues. The team would provide an opportunity to learn about America's natural resources, their uses, and the need to protect them. The end result would be a citizenry better informed on national conservation issues.

#### **b. Meeting the public lands and environment goals of USDA**

The team will meet many of the top public lands and environmental goals of President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Secretary Espy, and Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Jim Lyons.

The Team can be used, as part of the Administration's global warming initiative, to help dramatically increase the number of trees planted throughout America.

The Team can also begin to reduce the massive backlog of repair and improvement projects needed for National Forest and other public lands. Youth service corps are perhaps the single most cost-effective providers of such project work; the Forest Service estimates that Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) participants in 1992 performed \$1.32 worth of work for each dollar spent on the YCC program by the American taxpayer. With total spending of only \$2.508 million in 1992, YCC participants provided a \$3.339 million worth of work, broken down into the following areas:

|                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Recreation Management                 | \$1,789,447 |
| Fish and Wildlife Management          | \$401,093   |
| Timber Management                     | \$317,723   |
| Facility Construction and Maintenance | \$218,863   |
| Water and Soil                        | \$197,706   |
| Range and Forage Management           | \$139,592   |
| Administration                        | \$138,665   |
| Protection                            | \$42,300    |
| Research                              | \$15,120    |
| All Other                             | \$79,344    |

How we define measurable goals for this program in meeting environmental needs?

**c. Working with existing programs**

How will this AmeriCorps Team build upon existing programs, including federal program?

How will this initiative relate to existing volunteer organizations? To existing 4-H programs? To existing youth service corps?

What kind of structure will the initiative have? How will the structure interact with state and local governments?

We still need to answer how this program will specifically interact with existing programs and the ambitious new environmental initiatives being planned by the Administration.  
How will it interact with the existing Soil Conservation Service Earth Team?

How will our program affect current Youth Conservation Corps programs managed by USDA and the Department of Interior? Will any staff or funds be transferred from the existing program? YCC coordinators believe strongly that the existing program should basically be left intact, and that it should be used as a "farm team" for 15-17 year-olds who may later enter year-round programs.

We need to fully research past programs such as CCC and YAC, as well as the current YCC, to learn any lessons that might be useful for planning our program.

How will this program interact with the National Civilian Community Corps, run in a quasi-military fashion, that was set up originally by the Boren bill?

**d. Specific types of service to be performed**

Here are just a few, non-representative, samples of work projects team members can perform:

**1. National forests and parks conservation**

Because all team members will be at least 18 years old, all of them will be able to use equipment and machinery that will allow them to perform the most valuable work needed on public lands.

One type of obvious work that team members can perform is trail maintenance. We should reach out to some of following groups that already perform similar work:

- Appalachian Trail Conference-David Startzell, 304-535-6331
- Appalachian Mountain Club-Kelly Short, 617-523-0636
- American Hiking Society-Susan Henley, 703-385-3252
- Student Conservation Association

Team members can also engage in some of the following types of work, which are already performed by YCC participants: recreation management, fish and wildlife management, timber management, facility construction and maintenance, water and soil work, range and forage management, administration, protection, and research. More specifically, they can build barricades around restoration areas, replace old fire pits with new fire grates/stoves, maintain anti-bear food storage bins, build foot bridges, build campsites, make facilities wheelchair accessible, and construct leach fields for collecting graywater.

According to a December 1992 report issued by the Forest service, 1,349 service slots could be created in our forests immediately to begin addressing the vast work backlog. 78,312 slots could be created within four years.

The attached chart outlines the major types of work that the Forest Service believes that youth servers can perform:

### YOUTH SERVICE CAPABILITY ON NATIONAL FORESTS

| NATURAL RESOURCE<br>CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES | COST (\$MILLIONS) AND JOBS POTENTIAL (Employment in |        |            |        |                       |        |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
|                                             | IMMEDIATE - First Year                              |        |            |        | 2ND THRU 4TH<br>YEARS |        |
|                                             | LOW RANGE                                           |        | HIGH RANGE |        |                       |        |
|                                             | COSTS                                               | JOBS   | COSTS      | JOBS   | COSTS                 | JOBS   |
| Watershed Improvements                      | 13.4                                                | 276    | 32.8       | 674    | 76.5                  | 1,560  |
| Range Improvements                          | 7.2                                                 | 181    | 17.5       | 438    | 22.2                  | 458    |
| Range Vegetative                            | 2.9                                                 | 56     | 4.8        | 96     | 146.4                 | 2,928  |
| Wildlife Habitat Improvement                | 20.6                                                | 514    | 50.1       | 1,253  | 97.5                  | 2,433  |
| Fish Habitat Improvement                    | 14.4                                                | 289    | 34.9       | 698    | 92.1                  | 1,846  |
| T&E Species Habitat                         | 4.3                                                 | 108    | 27.0       | 675    | 50.5                  | 1,268  |
| Timber Stand Improvement                    | 40.7                                                | 1,234  | 81.3       | 2,464  | 243.9                 | 7,392  |
| Insect and Disease Control                  | 6.0                                                 | 120    | 10.0       | 200    | 30.0                  | 600    |
| Minerals (Inactive Mine                     | --                                                  | --     | 4.5        | 90     | 6.0                   | 120    |
| Fuels management                            | 1.3                                                 | 40     | 132.0      | 4,000  | 396                   | 12,000 |
| Facilities                                  |                                                     |        |            |        |                       |        |
| Administrative Buildings                    | 21.4                                                | 325    | 39.6       | 600    | 150.0                 | 2,250  |
| Research Buildings                          | 15.6                                                | 237    | 29.3       | 443    | 82.0                  | 1,200  |
| Roads and Bridges                           | 48.3                                                | 805    | 80.8       | 1,347  | 300.0                 | 5,000  |
| Dams                                        | 3.0                                                 | 50     | 5.0        | 80     | 10.0                  | 170    |
| Recreation                                  |                                                     |        |            |        |                       |        |
| Facilities Backlog                          | 33.1                                                | 663    | 60.7       | 1,214  | 200.0                 | 4,000  |
| Trail Backlog                               | 18.1                                                | 548    | 30.0       | 909    | 140.0                 | 5,100  |
| Site Routine O&M                            | 84.0                                                | 2,230  | 140.0      | 3,720  | 364.0                 | 9,660  |
| Land Line: Boundary Survey                  | 3.5                                                 | 100    | 8.5        | 250    | 29.9                  | 885    |
| Research Inventory Plots                    | 4.3                                                 | 145    | 10.0       | 333    | 30.0                  | 999    |
| Post Graduate Training                      | 9.0                                                 | 300    | 15.0       | 500    | 45.0                  | 1,500  |
| Urban & Community Tree                      | 50.0                                                | 2,500  | 100.0      | 5,000  | 300.0                 | 15,000 |
| Reforestation and TSI on Non                |                                                     |        |            |        |                       |        |
| Forest Land                                 | 20.0                                                | 606    | 20.0       | 606    | 60.0                  | 1,818  |
| Timber Bridges                              | 1.2                                                 | 20     | 1.2        | 20     | 7.5                   | 125    |
| TOTALS                                      | \$422.3                                             | 11,349 | \$935.0    | 25,610 | \$2879.               | 78,312 |

Note: Employment estimated based on ratios of jobs per thousand dollars in costs. These ratios vary from \$20,000 per labor intensive job to over \$60,000 per heavy construction job. They include materials, supervision and program support.

A program initiated in 1993 could generate from 11,000 to 25,000 jobs at a cost of \$935 million. Thousands of backlogged and unfunded projects would be completed.

**Watershed Improvements** - Projects to protect wetlands, reestablish vegetative cover in riparian zones, shape gullied land, revegetate denuded areas and to eliminate acid and other pollutant drainage from abandoned mines and oil and gas wells -- all in order to improve watershed conditions, fisheries and wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities.

**Range Improvements** - Range improvements consist of fencing and water development structures, and revegetation of denuded areas to improve forage conditions, wildlife and fish habitat, and soil and water quality.

**Range Vegetation Management** - Encompasses all activities associated with the management of NFS rangelands. Includes the description of baseline resource information for rangeland ecosystems, resource management planning, monitoring, administration of permitted livestock grazing, coordination of other land uses, and tracking compliance with forest plan and other management objectives. This is an interdisciplinary effort requiring significant coordination and commitment of resources by affected resource areas, user groups, and interested members of the public.

**Wildlife Habitat Improvement** - Construction and maintenance of structures and enhancement of habitat. Improvement activities include prescribed burning, opening construction and rehabilitation, wildlife stand improvement, seeding and planting, and water hole construction.

**Fish Habitat Improvement** - Reservoir rejuvenation and enhancement, stream bank stabilization, construction of fish ponds and spawning riffles, access trails for the disabled, and fish viewing stations.

**Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species Habitat Improvement** - Protection and enhancement of required habitats, including breeding and nesting sites, feeding areas and escape cover, protection from adverse developments and disturbing human activities.

**Timber Stand Improvement** - Treatment of timber stands to remove excess and competing vegetation to improve species composition, quality, growth rates, vigor and resistance to attacks from insects and diseases. Treatments are generally labor intensive as they favor the enhancement of selected trees.

**Insect And Disease Control** - The Forest Service provides protection and control services from insects and diseases on both Federal and non-Federal lands. Work includes suppression of pests such as the gypsy moth, southern and mountain pine beetles, and the tussock moth.

**Minerals (Inactive Mine Rehab)** - Work includes stabilization of mine waste dumps and spoil piles, and the elimination of acid and other pollutants from abandoned and inactive mines or oil and gas wells.

**Fuels Management** - Treating fuels through prescribed burning and other methods to reduce fire hazard and the severity of fires that do occur. This also greatly enhances the vigor and healthiness of treated areas.

**Administrative Facilities** - Pertains to office buildings, warehouses, and living quarters that are primarily needed to administer the National Forests, rather than serve the public. Includes repair and maintenance in the short term and new construction for long term projects.

**Research Facilities** - Repair, maintenance, upgrade, and improvements to laboratories and support buildings. Includes providing access for disabled persons, gender separation of restrooms and sleeping facilities, and correcting health and safety deficiencies. Longterm activities include new construction where required.

**Roads and Bridges** - Addresses deferred maintenance of transportation infrastructure and new construction essential for public recreation, access for the disabled, fire control and other activities. This work will reduce negative environmental impacts of roads and bridges and increase the safety and enjoyment of persons accessing and traveling on the National Forests.

**Dams** - Work includes maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation to meet current dam safety requirements. Dam work will safeguard the public and reduce future costs of these facilities.

**Recreation Facility Backlog** - Rehabilitation, repair, and reconstruction of recreation facilities and sites to restore them to the established standard. Includes work to meet current legal, safety, or sanitation standards, restoration of soil and vegetation, and elimination of facilities and restoration of site.

**Trail Backlog** - Maintenance and reconstruction to restore trails to assigned standards. This is one-time restoration and repair to correct maintenance that has been deferred in the past. Include realignment of segments, upgrading to accommodate different uses, and obliteration of unneeded trails.

**Recreation Operations and Maintenance** - This activity includes the day-to-day care and operation of developed recreation sites cleaning, painting, routine maintenance, and other operational tasks are included. Increased attention over current budget levels is needed to prevent deterioration of facilities and to avoid potential health and safety problems.

**Land Line: Boundary Survey & Marking** - Only 38% of the 272,409 miles of Forest Service property have been properly established. This proposal would accurately locate the legal boundaries between National Forest and private land ownership. Work would enhance private sector employment of survey and engineering firms.

**Establishment and Remeasurement of Forest Inventory Plots** - Establish and extend permanent field plot grid in the Western United States so that both commodity and noncommodity value statistics would become available on all forest land regardless of ownership and management status. These statistics are necessary in carrying out needed long- term research studies and for making decisions on the sustainability of the forest ecosystems and a basis for rational resource decision-making.

**Reforestation and Timber Stand Improvement on Nonindustrial Private Lands:** To demonstrate U. S. commitment to world leadership in forestry, ensure an adequate timber supply, to sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide, and to provide employment in rural areas. Includes tree planting and methods to enhance natural regeneration of forest stands following timber harvest, and cultural activities to improve species composition, spacing, growth and vigor of nonindustrial private forests.

**Timber Bridges** - Installation of new modern timber bridges and the replacement of existing structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges with local labor to improve transportation infrastructure in rural areas. Almost one-half (215,398) of rural bridges greater than 20 feet in length in rural America are deficient.

## 2. Water quality assessments

Team members can conduct samplings and provide technical help with delivery systems. They can also work on sanitation and sewerage (wastewater treatment) system improvement.

We should reach out to the following groups that already perform similar work:

- Clean Water Action-Paul Schwartz, 202-457-1286, ext. 130
- Friends of the Earth-Velma Smith, 202-544-2600, ext. 294

### 3. Education

Team members --- going door-to-door, working in schools and speaking at civic clubs --- could teach a wide variety of topics: safe handling of food, how to make your household more eco-friendly, testing for radon (Greenpeace has information programs on the latter two); recycling and waste reduction; and reducing nonpoint-source pollution.

Some examples:

The Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) offers a "waste away" program each year to teach elementary students about the challenges of the solid waste problem. VINS provides program curriculum and tries to engage the entire community by culminating program with community-wide event - a "trash festival."

VINS also has an excellent education program called "ELF" -- Environmental Learning for the Future" geared for elementary students. VINS trains volunteers to go into the classrooms monthly for an afternoon filled with role playing, hands-on projects, and field trips. The complete curriculum is taught over the course of five years and is enthusiastically supported by the community. (802) 457-2779.

American Forest Foundation's Project Learning Tree is an award winning K-12 curriculum and training program. Contact: Kathy McGlauffin, (202) 463-2455.

4. Energy Conservation- --- Team members could work in crews to provide the physical assistance in weatherizing homes and generally making them more energy efficient. Participants could work in public housing and low-income areas in both urban and rural communities. Team members would need basic training in carpentry, electrical or plumbing skills. We would recruit professional carpenters, electricians, and plumbers to help with basic training or to serve as team leaders.

Team members could also provide practical advice about basic ways to make homes more energy efficient. The participants could also develop educational material on energy conservation, such as "how to save dollars and help the planet" or a "guide to existing cost-saving programs provided by utility companies," etc.

One somewhat similar example is Christmas in April (CIA), a national volunteer program established by University of Pennsylvania students in 1980s to address basic housing needs of low-income communities in urban areas. With the help of church and community groups, CIA identifies families that have the greatest need for assistance in home maintenance-weatherization, painting, carpentry, plumbing, cleaning - and organizes groups of volunteers to spend a full day doing the work. Materials are donated by corporate sponsors.

Christmas in April USA: 202-326-8268

Another example is EPA's Green Lights program.

### 5. River and Streams Protection

We could possibly run river protection teams in conjunction with the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency.

In a Hudson River Team, USDA participants could work with farmers in the river's watershed to reduce the run-off of agricultural pesticides.

Team members could clean up and restore rivers and lakes. We should consult the following groups who already perform similar work:

- Trout Unlimited- stream restoration project including clean-up, habitat mapping, water quality monitoring. Contact: Neil Emerald, 703-281-1100
- Izaak Walton League- Save our Stream program. Stream and river clean up and quality monitoring.

## 6. Tree planting

As part of the Clinton Administration's initiative to combat global warming, the Public Lands and Environmental team could play a lead role in tremendously expanding the number of trees planted annually in America. Plantings could take place in urban and rural areas on both public and private lands.

We should consult with the following groups already engaged in similar work:

- National Arbor Day Foundation- sponsors numerous tree planting programs. 402-474-5655.
- American Forests' Global Relief Program, 202-667-3300.
- Trust for Public Land- Jenny Cross, 714-557-2575. Urban Forestry Program.
- Yale School of Forestry's Urban Resources Initiative. Lee Shemis, 203-432-5100
- Tree People, urban planting program in Los Angeles

## 7. Urban Conservation Projects

Team members can repair facilities in public parks, paint murals, fix playgrounds and other facilities at public schools, run recycling programs, and run urban farming programs in which low-income individuals grow their own food.

General Note: Community cleanup, restoration, and urban renewal activities should have an educational and outreach component. The long-term success of an effort is dependent on the personal investment of the participants. Groups of volunteers (led by an Americorps volunteer) who do the cleanup should include people who use the area, who are touched by the changes, who "benefit" from the restoration effort. This suggestion relates to the general challenge of attracting volunteers from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

## 8. Urban Farming Projects

Team members could help low-income urban residents to grow their own food. We could possibly run such a program at public housing complexes in tandem with the Department of Housing and Urban Renewal. We could possibly run a city-wide program in Chicago in tandem with the Chicago high school of agriculture.

## 9. Wetlands Restoration

The Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency has expressed interest in potentially running a joint program to help restore the Everglades.

10. Disaster relief and Recovery - Existing youth corps have played a vital role in the recovery of the flooded Midwest. For most disasters, team members could provide physical labor so critical to short-term clean-up, as well as human services needed for long-term recovery. They could also assist in some of the long-term infrastructure repair such as levee re-building.

11. Sustainable Agriculture - Team members could work under the direction of Extension agents or other sustainable agriculture experts to help local farmers complete some of the labor intensive work -- such as constructing fences -- that is needed to implement a sustainable agriculture plan.

**e. Selecting and matching applicants**

What percentage of participants will be recruited from a national pool of applicants to USDA or the Corporation? Can some participants meet the voucher requirement by working four summers in a row? Would such an approach hinder our ability to build diverse crews? Could possibly a small percentage of people in each program be on the four-year plan? We will pay participants either the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher in their particular locality. In addition, they will receive an educational voucher worth \$4,725 following a year of service. Team members will be between the ages of 18 and 25.

How will team applicants be selected and matched? Should participants be selected randomly or should they be screened and hand-picked?

What will be suitable service assignments? What role will the program have in making these assignments?

Will participants be engaged in the same type of work for the entire year or will they rotate between different types of projects?

**f. Creating and maintaining program diversity**

Diversity must be a key consideration during recruitment, curriculum design, project development, and training. The first year's program must meet all our diversity requirements since original problems are nearly impossible to fix.

How do we ensure that this program is managed by a diverse team and includes a diverse set of participants each and every year?

How can we engage participants in complex and challenging work without requiring educational levels that would stratify the participants and reduce participants? Simply put, how can we guarantee that less well educated participants don't spend all their time with shovels while better educated participants spend all their time with test tubes?

**g. Training the team members**

How would the participants be trained? For how long? Where? With what kind of curriculum?

Team members will need training about the general environment in which they will be working, especially in issues relating to safety. They will need training in use of the tools they will be using. They will need general training on often-used skills and specific training before each new project.

**h. Supervising the team members**

Who will supervise the team member? There will be a need to judge performance, initiate additional training when needed, and even perhaps to terminate or initiate re-assignment when necessary. How would they be supervised? Would they stay on one project throughout the year or frequently switch projects? What kind of extra supervision will be needed in residential programs?

We now assume one crew leader for every crew of about ten participants.

What kinds of uniform will team members be required to wear?

What kinds of tools, equipment, and supplies will the participants need and how will our programs obtain them?

How will the Team involve participants in leadership positions in implementing and evaluating the programs?

How much self-government will team members have? How will team members be able to participate in designing their own programs, mandating their own rules, and helping enforce the rules?

What types of interactions will team members have with participants in other areas?

#### **i. Effect on The Participants**

How will the program promote civic responsibility and produce positive change in participants through training and participation in meaningful service with opportunities for reflection?

What measurable goals can we set for personal benefits obtained by Team members?

This program can help future farmers attend college. Farmers who graduated college earn an average of \$68,652 in off-farm income, compared to \$29,334 for those who were only high school educated.

#### **j. Evaluating the Team**

How will we ensure constant evaluation of the program in order to correct problems immediately?

Will we contract out for evaluation or ask the Corporation for a waiver so we can do our own evaluation?

#### **k. Sizes and sites of pilot projects**

The Forest Service and youth corps from Oregon and Washington have just received a major grant from the Commission on National and Community Service to run a national service training academy. This project will be based on a highly successful summer program. This program provides us with a very useful model, as do existing YCC programs.

What other facilities now exist in usable shape or near usable shape in the national forests that have been leftover from the YCC, the YAC, or even the original CCC?

We also want to ensure that we run pilot projects in a wide variety of different ecosystems, such as old growth forests, cities, coastal areas, new growth forests, suburbs, wetlands, tundra, and grasslands.

For the Corporation for National Service Proposal, we need a description of the criteria and process through which our grantee programs were selected.

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a description of the type and number of positions that will receive awards and a description of how approved national service positions will be apportioned by the applicant.

For each pilot location, how will we consult with participants and potential participants, representatives of the communities served, community-based agencies with demonstrated record of experience in providing services, and local labor organizations?

How will our pilots help priority areas affected adversely by federal policies?

Where are recently closed military installations that we might be able to use to house participants?

### **l. Growth scenarios**

Where, and how quickly, should the program grow? Should we grow by expanding our pilot projects or by creating new ones?

How will we create a program so effective and so popular that will grow on its own regardless of the Administration in power?

### **m. Management structure needed**

How much of the programs should we run ourselves and how much should we contract out entirely or partially to existing groups?

The proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service will need a detailed description of key members of the management team.

How will we absolutely, positively ensure that we don't create yet another cumbersome Washington bureaucracy?

We need to devise a legal system in which funds can be delivered directly to national service programs run by USDA agencies without going through a bureaucracy to charge administrative overhead. For example, if certain Forest Service employees are running a pilot project, we need for the funds to go from the USDA Office of National Service directly to the pilot program, without going through either the national, regional, or local offices of the Forest Service. Can the USDA Office of National Service issue payment vouchers directly?

We need to investigate how we can produce payroll checks for less than the \$5-per-check fee now charged by the National Finance Center.

We need to produce one single enrollment form, including a code of conduct and a performance contract, instead of the seven-to-twelve different forms now required for entry into the YCC.

How can our program utilize the latest communications technologies?

How will OWCP (liability) be covered?

### **n. Staff needed**

How many USDA employees will be needed to manage the program? Will outside consultants also be required?

Possible staff for Team:

Director

Recruitment and Training Coordinator

Internal and External Communications Coordinator

Pilot Project Liaison

Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator

Support Staff

**o. Costs**

If most servers in the Environmental Corps are residential, then our estimated cost is about \$20,000 per server. Thus a pilot program with 1,000 servers would cost \$20 million. This would allow us five rural sites of 100 each, and ten urban or suburban sites of 250.

How will health care be provided to participants?

What percentage of participants will need child care? How will we provide it to them?

What kind of support will disabled participants need?

**p. Outreach needed for stakeholders**

We need to gain support from existing youth service corps, from environmental and conservation groups, from the National Forest Foundation, from labor unions, and from farming and commodity groups.

**q. Funding sources**

The National and Community Trust Acts mandates that 25% of all funds used to contract out work to non-federal conservation corps be obtained from non-federal sources.

What states, municipalities, non-profit groups, corporations, individuals, and/or foundations might be willing to help fund this?

What types of project might the team be able to complete on a fee-for-service basis?

**r. Partnerships**

What kind of partnerships can we form with other federal agencies? How would we run the Public Lands Corps in partnership with the Department of Interior? How can we revise our Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Interior that we already have to jointly run the YCC?

Could we run urban farming projects at public housing units in tandem with HUD? Could we run weatherization projects in tandem with the Department of Energy? Could we run environmental education programs in tandem with the Environmental Protection Agency or the Department of Education? Could we run a program in tandem with the Department of Transportation in which team members would perform conservation and planting projects on highway right-of-ways?

Could the team work with the Army Corps of Engineers to repair levees?

We have already discussed with the Department of Interior the idea of jointly running a "Greater Everglades Recovery Team" that would partner up farmers, National Park Service employees, and youth volunteers in replacing seagrass and taking other steps to save the fragile ecosystem of the Everglades.

Possible partnerships include:

National Association of Conservation Districts

Audubon Society

Land Grant universities

National Association of State Foresters

National Forest Foundation

National Parks Foundation

National Trust for Historic Preservation

National Tree Trust  
Nature Conservancy  
National League of Cities

**p. Residential and non-residential**

Most of the rural programs will be residential and most of the urban programs will be non-residential. How many residential facilities does the Forest Service now have? What is their capacity and how much money and time would it take to renovate them for year-round use.

Our partnership programs will be hampered by the lack of residential facilities owned by the Department of Interior. How can we work with the Department of Defense to use their residential facilities?

We will try to develop an exchange program so that young people in each type of program can experience at least a few weeks of the other. Where will rural residents be housed when visiting urban areas? Can we get local residents to put them up in their homes, as if they were exchange students from Europe? How will we transport participants between urban and rural areas?

What kinds of work will have to be performed and what kind of funds will have to be spent ensure adequate residential facilities for participants in rural areas?

**VI. HOW AMERICORPS/USDA PROGRAMS WILL INTERACT**

We will attempt to place as many of these programs as possible in newly created Empowerment Zones and Empowerment Communities. In one rural Empowerment Community, we might want to test placing a Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team program, a Public Lands and Environment Team, AND a Rural Development Team program. How will each of our three programs interact with each other? In one urban community, we might want to test placing a Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Team program AND a Public Lands and Environment Team. We should test how programs in the same area can trade staff, cross-train participants, and maybe even exchange participants in order to maximize benefits to the community.

In some rural areas, we might want to place both a Rural Development Team and a Public Lands and Environment Team; the Rural Development Team could actually plan projects for the Public Lands and Environment Team. For instance, after studying a local rural economy, members of a Rural Development Team might determine that the best way to help the area is to upgrade recreation facilities at a nearby National Forest; they would then design that upgrade and then direct local members of the Public Lands and Environment Team to actually perform the construction work.

How will we build a national identity for disparate pilot programs? How will we tie the identity of the USDA programs to the larger national initiative? Will these programs have joint training either before or during the period of service? Will we have a joint training session for all three corps? If so, where will it be held and who will manage it? We need to build this cost into the budget. Can they have caravans from around the country while performing service?

## VII. FUNDRAISING

We need clear guidelines from our Office of General Counsel on how we can raise money. Can we raise it directly? Can we funnel it through the Corporation of National Service? Can we funnel it through the National Forest Foundation? How can we avoid even the appearance of impropriety in raising money from interests that might be regulated or affected by the Department of Agriculture?

Can various funders sponsor all or part of pilot projects?

Can we get an exemption from the Combined Federal Campaign monopoly in raising money from federal employees?

Can we hold a national employees serve-a-thon in which USDA employees perform a day of service and get sponsored to do so by friends? If each of our 114,000 employees raises or personally donates an average of \$10, we will have raised over \$1 million.

Could we institute an employee check-off program in which our employees can donate weekly or yearly to our national service programs? Could we find a way to match those contributions with private contributions?

## VIII. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We need to study a wide variety of ways to boost the upward mobility of youth who participate in our programs.

We need to discuss our service-learning, national service transcripts, guidance counselor centers, peer discussion groups and self-management, to help in obtaining other forms of federal student aid, and help in job placement.

Can private money that we raise be used to supplement the national service voucher be given to participants?

## IX. DIVERSITY

How can we make diversity -- by race, age, religion, class, gender, and orientation -- a reality in both our management team and our participants?

Diversity must be a key consideration during recruitment, curriculum design, project development, and training.

How can we use a national recruitment pool to boost diversity?

How can we incorporate physically disabled participants and program managers?

## X. INTERACTING WITH ENTERPRISE ZONES AND COMMUNITIES

As much as possible, our program will interact with empowerment zones and enterprise communities.

Empowerment zones:

Each Empowerment Zone gets two HHS Title XX grants totalling \$40 million. Each Enterprise Community gets one HHS Title XX grant of up to \$3 million.

Employer tax credits to Eligible Enterprise Zone employers equal to 20% of the first 415,000 of wages or training expenses for qualified Enterprise zone employees. Can host organizations that hire Rural development corps participants obtain this benefit?

Are there other deductions that may be available?

## XI. USDA ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

Who will run this program at USDA and what we will have to do to free them from current programmatic and budgetary duties?

## XII. COSTS AND BUDGETS

If most servers in the Environmental Corps are residential, then our estimated cost is about \$20,000 per server. Thus a pilot program with 1,000 servers would cost \$20 million. This would allow us five rural sites of 100 each, and two urban sites of 250 each.

If we roughly estimate that each server in the Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Corps will cost \$15,000 per year, then 1,000 participants would cost \$15 million. That would fund twenty sites, half-urban and half-rural, with 50 participants at each site.

If we roughly estimate that each server in the Rural Development Corps will cost roughly \$30,000 per year, accounting for their higher pay, then 400 servers would cost \$10 million. That would fund ten state programs with 40 participants each.

The total for all three proposals is \$45 million. We could potentially meet this target with a combination of Corporation for National Service Funds, USDA program funds, and private and non-profit funds.

The above-listed proposals -- if fully funded -- would allow us to have 37 pilot operations with a total 2,400 participants in our very first year of operation.

We already have a significant source of funding for a Public Lands Corps this year. The FY 94 budget passed by Congress, authorizes the Forest Service to begin collecting fees at certain sites and to also jointly sell Golden Eagle passports in conjunction with the Department of Interior. The proceeds of all non-federal sales of the passports --- just also authorized by Congress -- will go to conservation corps activities run by Interior and Agriculture, to be divided up in proportion to the total amount of revenue each Department generates from entrance fees. The National Recreation Association estimates that this fund could generate an estimated \$50 million for youth service in FY 94, of which about \$2.5 million would go to USDA.

## XIII. TIMELINE FOR RUNNING AMERICORPS/USDA

By January 10, 1994: Work with OBPA to develop line-item budget requests for FY95 budget

By January 15, 1993: Identify possible pilot project locations and partnerships

institutions to create national service partnerships

By January 20, 1993: Sign memorandums of understanding with other agencies with whom we will jointly make proposals

By January 30, 1993: Preliminary proposal completed for submission to Corporation for National Service

By March 1994: Start-up plans finalized for projects approved by the Corporation for National Service

By April 1994: Project personnel interviewed and placed

April, 19, 1994 - NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY, (Possible national Serve-A-thon)

By May 1994: Recruitment of participants for Fall programs begin

By June 1994: Summer training starts for project managers and crew leaders

By September 1, 1994: Pilot projects begin

APPENDIX: TIMELINE FOR PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO  
CONSTITUENCY GROUPS

How can we provide technical assistance to USDA constituencies that want to apply for funding from the Corporation for National Service to run their own programs? How can we help them obtain their funds and how can we aid their actual programs?

Push the Vice-President to brief environmental groups, the First Lady to brief anti-hunger groups, and the Secretary to brief rural development, higher education, and farming groups.

By December 27, 1993: Send letter explaining new Corporation for National and Community Service regulations and explaining in simple English how groups may apply for the funding.

By January 10, 1994: Complete series of meetings and phone briefings with all possible constituency groups who might be interested in program

By January 15, 1993: Have identified staff responsible for preparing environment, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and rural development curriculum

By January 21, 1994: Consult with state commissions on national community service in states in which we are considering running pilot projects

By February 30, 1994: Have all four curriculum first drafts

By March 5, 1994: Have all four curriculum drafts reviewed and start the design process

By March 20, 1994: Mail printed reports to all key constituency groups