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Briefings

September 7, 1994

BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR ALL STAFF
INVOLVED IN AMERICORPS/NATIONAL SERVICE

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service

Subject: TODAY'S WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

At 1:30 Eastern Time today, Eli Segal will hold a media briefing at the White House with Secretaries Babbitt, Cisneros, and Shalala, Attorney General Reno, Administrator Browner, and Secretary Espy. Today's briefing will announce the first round of grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to Federal agencies and national non-profit organizations.

CNCS, under the direction of Special Assistant to the President and Chief Executive Officer Segal, runs the President's national service initiative, also known as AmeriCorps. CNCS is also governed by a board appointed by the President, but most of the Clinton appointees have yet to be confirmed by the Senate. A handful of Cabinet Secretaries -- including Secretary Espy -- also sit on the board as ex-officio, non-voting members.

However, the vast majority of AmeriCorps programs will not be "run" directly by CNCS -- they will be run by non-profit organizations, state and local governments, and Federal government agencies to whom CNCS makes competitive grant awards. CNCS grants are broken down into two different types: **direct grants** and **state commission grants**.

State commission grants, which will be announced in a few weeks, comprise two-thirds of the total funding for AmeriCorps programs. These grants are funnelled through commissions in each state that are appointed by each state's governor.

Direct grants, the first year of which are being announced today, comprise the other one third of the AmeriCorps funding. Of that one-third, no more than a third of that (11% of the total) may be awarded to Federal agencies. Based on the funds appropriated in FY94, that formula allowed for \$17.6 million in grants to Federal agencies, not including the additional cost of the educational benefits. The remainder of the direct grants will go to non-profit organizations that will run

AmeriCorps projects that cross state lines.

In this competitive process, USDA fared extremely well:

* Out of the approximately 2,500 AmeriCorps slots awarded to Federal agencies, USDA received 1,200 -- almost half. USDA will have 42 different projects operating in 32 different states.

* The USDA program will have over twice as many participants as the next largest program in the Federal government. Additionally, USDA has taken the extraordinary step of running three distinctly different national programs in three distinctly different mission areas.

* In addition to allotting funds for 1,200 educational awards, CNCS is awarding \$2.6 million in operating funds to USDA. This monetary award is also the largest awarded to a Federal agency.

* The USDA program will not only be the largest Federal agency program, but will be the largest single AmeriCorps program of any kind. The largest grant to a non-profit organization will be for 1,000 participants. In addition, the National Civilian Community Corps, the one AmeriCorps program actually run directly by CNCS, will have 1,000 participants.

* Federal agencies, including USDA, have engaged in comprehensive planning efforts for over a year. USDA's final application exceeded 300 pages.

* This grant process is proof positive that the Clinton Administration is not just talking about reinventing government, we're getting concrete results. Today's announcement culminates a highly unusual process in which Federal agencies had to actually submit a detailed and comprehensive application to another federal entity in order to be considered for a grant. In other words, USDA and other Cabinet agencies were required to go through a process similar to those we require of others. (In fact, our application to CNCS required a strategic plan similar to the types of strategic plans that USDA and HUD are requiring in Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community applications). Unlike the way government usually operates, no one agency was guaranteed funding by a set formula. As a consequence of this open competition, Federal agencies were forced to work harder and more creatively to develop quality programs in their applications. The grants to 15 different Federal agencies announced today prove that this new process of competition boosts excellence and innovation in government.

WHY AMERICORPS IS CENTRAL TO THE PRESIDENT'S AGENDA

* AmeriCorps rebuilds the sense of community that made America great. By bringing together Americans of all races, classes, genders, religions, sexual orientations, and physical abilities to work side-by-side, AmeriCorps will strengthen the cords that bind us together as a people. The "sweat equity" created by AmeriCorps can play an important role in healing the nation's wounds and bridging our divisions. AmeriCorps will fundamentally change the country because it creates a new 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.

* AmeriCorps promotes personal responsibility. AmeriCorps gives all Americans a new way of giving something back to the country. It reminds us that, along with rights we enjoy as citizens, we all have certain obligations to protecting those rights and aiding our own communities. Furthermore, AmeriCorps gives young people a tangible way to take charge of their own lives.

* AmeriCorps expands educational and economic opportunity. Participants in the program will receive a living stipend and will also receive an educational award worth \$4,725 for each year of service successfully performed. AmeriCorps is one of the major Administration initiatives aimed at making post-secondary education once again affordable for most Americans.

* AmeriCorps reinvents the interests of the middle class and the poor. There is NO economic needs test to participate in this program -- the only requirement to participate is a desire to serve the country. This program will greatly boost students from the previously forgotten middle class, who now are told their families "make too much money" to qualify for existing Federal aid programs. Yet the program will also help poor families for whom aid programs are insufficient.

HOW THE AMERICORPS PROGRAM WILL WORK GENERALLY

* Most AmeriCorps projects will begin this September, placing 20,000 participants in projects throughout the country. All USDA programs will begin shortly after Labor Day, with the exception of our DC and Chicago programs which will begin this summer and the New Hampshire, program which will begin January 1995. While the 20,000 number may seem modest, it is larger than the highest-ever yearly number of people in the Peace Corps. Furthermore, the number of

participants will grow dramatically each year. This Administration doesn't just talk about problems, we get results.

* Service will be focused on meeting unmet human, environmental, public safety, and educational needs. The slogan of CNCS is "Getting Things Done" and AmeriCorps will continually focus on accomplishing useful and measurable work of high quality. AmeriCorps is NOT a jobs program, it is a service program.

* Individuals may apply for the program either through CNCS or through the individual projects at each location. Both CNCS and USDA will have their own toll-free 800, lines for recruitment. Recruitment will start immediately for the fall programs.

* AmeriCorps will recruit a socio-economically diverse group of Americans. AmeriCorps will bring together Americans of all races, classes, genders, and physical abilities. Participants must be age 17 or older, but there is no upper age limit for participation; while we expect that some senior citizens and middle age citizens will participate in the program, it is likely that most participants will be 18-26. Participants can be high school graduates, vocational school students, college students, college graduates, or professional school graduates. Participants can also be high school dropouts if they agree to work towards their GED while in the program.

* Participants will earn a living stipend of at least \$7,500 and will earn an educational benefit of \$4,725 in exchange for each year of service successfully performed. The stipend is provided because this Administration understands that citizens still have to pay for food, transportation, and housing for the year in which they provide full-time service. The educational benefit can be used to pay for college or graduate school in advance, or to repay student loans. It can also be used to pay for vocational school or job training programs approved by the Departments of Labor or Education.

HOW ALL USDA AMERICORPS PROJECTS WILL WORK

Starting in September 1994, USDA will run three nationwide AmeriCorps Teams: an Anti-Hunger Team; a Public Lands and Environment Team; and a Rural Development Team. USDA will also run special disaster-relief programs in the nine Midwest states most impacted by last year's record flooding.

The Teams will engage a total of 1,200 socio-economically diverse participants in human, environmental, and educational work in 42 different pilot

projects located in 32 different states covering over 100 Congressional districts. The projects will be spread across rural and urban areas in every region of the country.

Both the Anti-Hunger and the Public Lands and Environment Teams will share the same corps-type model of service, engaging a mix of high school dropouts, high school graduates, college students, and college graduates to perform service in work crews -- usually ten participants each -- at pilot locations with no less than 20 participants. Both the Anti-Hunger and Public Lands and Environment Teams will have an educational component in which participants will run environmental or nutrition education programs in local schools.

In the Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team, participants will work in five pilot locations -- three urban and two rural -- to help thousands of low-income families and individuals improve their diets and move toward self-sufficiency. Each pilot location will be run by a unique partnership consisting of an existing youth service corps, a local anti-hunger group, and USDA. While most of this Team will focus on expanding the use of Federal anti-hunger programs and increasing access to nutrition information, the Team will eventually work to implement new empowerment programs such as Earned Income Tax Credits, microenterprise projects, community development banks, assets development projects, and farmers' markets. These programs will meet President Clinton's goal of reforming welfare and breaking the cycle of persistent poverty.

In the Public Lands and Environment Team, participants will work in 18 pilot locations -- seven urban and 11 rural -- to perform service helping communities reduce environmental hazards and working on public lands to conserve, restore, and sustain natural habitats. Some of these pilot locations will be run directly by USDA and some will be run in partnership with existing youth service corps. Participants will 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 in disaster recovery, and restore wetlands.

The Rural Development Team will be similar to the professional corps model of service. The Team would establish 10 regional sites of at least 20 professional and paraprofessional participants who assist rural communities in identifying needs and resources necessary for economic, human, and environmental well-being. The participants would have highly varied educations and training and would be matched up with individual communities or regions with unmet needs that can be filled by someone with that specific background. Participants will be mostly college graduates or professional school graduates and will provide service improving local economic planning, boosting sustainable agriculture, bringing the

running water to areas now without it, increasing the success of Enterprise Zones and Enterprise Communities, protecting watersheds, improving rural housing, aiding disaster relief, and supporting existing youth volunteer programs.

Special disaster-relief projects will also be run in the nine Midwest states most impacted by last summer's record flooding to help ongoing long-term recovery efforts.

Each USDA Team will receive significant financial and technical support from USDA agencies, reflecting Secretary Espy's focus on inter-agency cooperation as a keystone of "TEAM USDA." The Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), the Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA), the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the Forest Service (FS), the Rural Development Administration (RDA), the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) all will play significant roles in funding and managing this program.

Recruitment for USDA programs has already begun. The Public Service Announcement that Secretary Espy taped is already running on some television stations throughout the country. Our toll-free number, 1-800-880-4183, has already received calls from such divergent areas as Maine and Utah.

ANTI-HUNGER SITES AND PROJECT EXAMPLES

Vermont, state-wide
 District of Columbia
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Mississippi Delta, Mississippi
 Los Angeles, California

Anti-Hunger Team Example #1 - District of Columbia:

Run in partnership between the DC Service Corps, DC Hunger Action, and USDA, this project will focus on performing outreach on food assistance programs, teaching about nutrition and food safety, providing transportation assistance, creating urban gardens and farmers' markets, and helping homeless people. One of the goals of the program will be to reach 5,000 students through a nutrition education program developed jointly by Team members and the faculty of the University of the District of Columbia.

Anti-Hunger Team Example #2 - Vermont, state-wide:

Run in partnership between the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and USDA, this program will operate out of five regional hubs in every section of Vermont. The program will aim to increase food stamp utilization by 5% statewide, increase the number of Summer Food Service Program sites by 15% statewide, increase the availability of School Breakfast Program sites by 5% statewide, and increase participation in the Women, Infants, and Children's program by 5% statewide.

PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENT SITES AND PROJECT EXAMPLES

Western Kansas
 Western Oklahoma
 Texas Coast
 Atlanta, Georgia
 Boston, Massachusetts
 East St. Louis, Illinois
 New Jersey, state-wide
 District of Columbia
 Chicago, Illinois
 Portland, Oregon
 San Bernadino National Forest, Southern California
 Six Rivers National Forest, Northern California
 Olympic National Forest Washington State
 Rogue River National Forest, Southern Oregon
 Arizona, state-wide National Forests
 Bienville National Forest, Mississippi
 Green Mountain National Forest, Vermont
 White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire

Public Lands and Environment Example # 1 - Texas Coast:

Participants will work to reduce shoreline erosion by 25% along one mile of the Texas gulf coast by establishing wave barriers intended to protect this unique and fragile ecosystem. The goal is to create more permanent vegetation and an increase in the fin fish population of the area.

Public Lands and Environment Example #2 - Boston, Massachusetts:

Participants will revitalize neighborhoods by identifying and eliminating environmental hazards and by creating and maintaining recreation areas and green spaces. Participants will clean up 25 vacant lots and renovate 10 greenspace parcels. They will also test soils at 300 vacant parcels to determine levels of lead and other public health hazards in soils, test water quality, and trace nonpoint source water pollutants through 50 storm drain systems. Additionally, they will translate materials about this project into Spanish, Vietnamese, or various Creole languages for non-English speaking citizens.

Public Lands and Environment Example # 3 - Rogue River N.F., S. Oregon:

Participants will enhance spotted owl ecosystems at 10 locations in the Forest. They will replace 10 trail bridges at 10 specific stream crossings on the Rogue River. They will also maintain 100 miles of hiking trails at high elevation sites determined to be priority maintenance locations, meeting regional hiking trail standards.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT SITES AND PROJECT EXAMPLES

New England (Maine, Vermont, Northwestern New York)

Appalachia (Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia)

South Carolina, state-wide

Mississippi Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi)

Great Lakes (Michigan, Ohio)

Minnesota, state-wide

Texas Colonias

Four Corners (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah)

Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington)

California, state-wide

Rural Development Example #1 - New England:

In Maine, participants will work with cranberry growers to develop more environmentally-sensitive farming operations, and will improve the quality of water on local lakes, assist four communities with the development of a railroad bed for community hiking, biking and snowmobiling trails, and engage in a wide variety of

other projects. In Vermont, they will work to protect the Winooski River Watershed and to provide skills and technical information to help 40 rural fire departments in Vermont develop comprehensive fire protection plans. In New York, participants will work to increase soil and water conservation measures throughout Erie County.

Rural Development Example #2 - Mississippi Delta:

Participants will work on a wide variety of economic development and environmental protection projects. Some examples include: installing 1,575 dry fire hydrants to increase fire protection in 45 parishes of Louisiana; moving 250 residents out of a floodplain in Arkansas; improving livestock waste treatment in 13 counties in southwest Mississippi; assisting elderly and limited resource farmers with routine animal husbandry practices; writing and producing environmental educational materials for teachers; and developing arboretums for on-site environmental education.

Rural Development Example #3 - Texas Colonias:

Participants will work on a wide variety of economic development and environmental protection projects. Some examples include: increasing the number of citizens whose homes are hooked up to running water by facilitating community applications for USDA rural water and waste programs; increasing knowledge among socially and economically disadvantaged individuals of the availability of loans for rural housing ownership, housing repair, and water hook-up services; and working with local residents to facilitate the creation of at least one local non-profit agency which will address a critical local need.

FLOOD RELIEF SITES AND PROJECT EXAMPLES

Illinois
Iowa
Kansas
Minnesota
Missouri
Nebraska
North Dakota
South Dakota
Wisconsin

Flood Relief Example # 1 - All Midwest Flood States:

Participants will inspect river systems by canoe and stream walks to prepare damage assessment plans on 25 miles of streams. They will also restore wetlands in 84 damaged areas to their original condition, benefiting 420 landowners. Additionally, the participants will restore flood control facilities according to already established plans in 49 counties.

Flood Relief Example # 2 - All Midwest Flood States:

Participants will work on a wide variety of flood relief, economic development, and environmental protection projects. Some examples include: determining and delineating 200 wetlands and incorporating this information into the flood-relief planning process; directly explaining the impact of the wetlands delineation to a minimum of 200 affected landowners; creating 420 wetlands plans to restore farmable areas back to original wetlands conditions; and planning and implementing the improvement of 420 animal waste systems in order to reduce groundwater pollution.