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February 28, 1994

To: DOI, EPA, DOE, DOT AmeriCorps Projects
From: Joel Berg, USDA
Subject: Possible Joint DOI, EPA, DOE, and DOT AmeriCorps Projects

1) Everglades Recovery Corps (South Florida), 100 residential participants, budget about \$1.2 million

Possible agencies involved: USDA's Soil Conservation Service, USDA's Extension Service, EPA's Office of Water, Dept. of Interior's Fish & Wildlife Service, South Florida Water Management District

Malaluca Eradication Project

Malaluca is an exotic, rapid growing plant that absorbs a lot of water and has been disrupting the Everglades ecosystem. Removal of the plant and replacement with native flora is critical to restoring the health of the Everglades. Under the guidance and direction of USDA, EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service, an Americorps ecosystem management project would be established and in operation by Fall 1994. This project would involve at least a 10 person crew, with one supervisor/crew leader, doing the physical removal of the plant and replacement with other native species. During the course of the project, volunteers would learn about the wetlands ecosystem, botany, and hydrology. Although the acreage covered would not seem extensive in relation to the size of the Everglades area, the project's benefits to the health of the ecosystem would be enormous.

The Florida Conservation Corps has been conducting a malaluca removal project north of Lake Okechobee. Coordination and cross-training with FCC would be critical to the success of an Americorps project.

Water Quality Management in the Everglades Agricultural Area

Water pollution caused by pesticide and fertilizer run-off from the approximately 600,000 acres of farm land is a major problem in South Florida. Water quality management education and training for farmers would help them adopt practices to decrease water pollution and improve the quality of the groundwater, rivers, and streams.

USDA's Extension Service and Soil Conservation Service would work with the EPA's water quality experts to design an educational and technical water quality management/enhancement program for farmers in the Everglades Agricultural Area. The program would be operating by Fall 1994.

USDA's Extension Service already has an effective national program called "Farm *A* Syst" which helps farmers do a voluntary assessment of their groundwater and the impacts their farming activities and farmstead structures have on water quality. Once the assessment is completed, voluntary actions to protect drinking water at the site are recommended. Participating farmers are also given information on available financial, technical, and educational resources available.

The Farm *A* Syst program is currently working with Future Farmers of America (FFA) students in Kansas to enable the students to help educate farmers about water quality. This concept could be adopted for Americorps volunteers.

Americorps volunteers would work with local conservationists, Extension agents, and EPA hydrologists and water quality analysts to teach surveying, assessment, and remedial activities to farmers. The volunteers would ideally have some science or engineering background because of the technical nature of the project.

USDA's Extension Service would coordinate with the EPA to provide educational and training materials for both volunteers and the participating farmers in this project.

This project would likely require coordination and consultation with the South Florida Water Management District.

2) River Corps (Hudson River, Columbia River), 50 participants each, \$1 million each; wide variety of water quality, physical clean-up, wildlife protection, environmental education, and pollution prevention work in and around rivers

3) Well Testing in South Texas - EPA Projects? (Exact location?, number of total participants?, cost?)

4) Pacific Northwest Public Lands Corps (Olympia Peninsula, Central Oregon, Northern California) Each residential site would have 50 participants and cost \$1 million. 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.

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.

5) Rural Development Teams (The Mississippi Delta, The Texas/Mexico Border, Maine, Kansas, The Pacific Northwest, Oklahoma, New England, The Dakotas, Southern Illinois, Four Corners, Alaska, Appalachia, Oklahoma, California) Each pilot site would have about 40 participants and each participant would cost about \$30,000 per year.

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.

6) Sustainable Agriculture Teams - (Dakotas, Southern Illinois, Mississippi) Teams of 50 costing \$1 million each. 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.

7. Rural and Urban Environmental Corps (New York City, Atlanta, Seattle, Chicago, Mississippi Delta, New Jersey Shore, etc) Each project has fifty participants and costs \$1 million. Wide variety of task, including:

Environmental 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Other potential tasks include wetlands restoration and working with the Department of Transportation on right-of-ways and working with the Department of Commerce on Fisheries.