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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION COLE COUNTY 1995 ANNUAL REPORT

AMERICORPS PROGRAM -- NEW TO COLE COUNTY



AmeriCorps is a national service that is set up to help American communities. AmeriCorps members working to meet human, environmental, public safety and educational needs.

As an AmeriCorps member, I will work with rural residents in doing the Farmstead Assessment System (Farm*A*Syst) to help rural residents interested in evaluating risks to their drinking water and other water quality risks on their farm. I will also help them find ways to further protect their water quality. University Extension and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are sponsoring the AmeriCorps Farm*A*Syst project.

*What is Farm*A*Syst by: LaTrise Wilson*

Farmstead Assessment System (Farm*A*Syst) is a voluntary, confidential program to help rural resident assess the risk to their drinking water and develop strategies to protect, improve or maintain water quality.

By identifying contamination risks around your farmstead and taking action to reduce them, you can better protect the health of your family and livestock, prevent liability from groundwater contamination and avoid difficulties in property transfer.

The Farm*A*Syst provides first-hand information about how your farmstead structures and activities, such as pesticide storage, fuel storage or livestock facilities might be affecting your drinking water.

The water that we drink is something that is important to all of us so if you are interested or have any questions please give me, LaTrise Wilson, a call at: Cole County University Extension Office (314) 634-2824.



**University
Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SYSTEM
LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Farm*A*Syst & AmeriCorps

Farmstead Assessment System

An action program for safe water

Contact:

David Myers
(573)445-9792

Flyer for USDA
state offices.

(Rural Development
NRCS
FSA
NASS)



From Missouri: AmeriCorps/USDA Quarterly Report

16. **COMMUNITY BUILDING:** Members have put together a game, "The Incredible Journey," that can be borrowed and used by teachers, Earth Team and other volunteers, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and other agency personnel to teach water quality protection and improvement. They built the parts for the game and developed easy to use instructions.
17. **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT:** Members continue to report on the value of their experience. In addition to the technical and scientific knowledge they have gained about water quality protection and agricultural production, they have also learned a number of teaching techniques, speaking skills, how to provide "sound bites," and how to work independently.

Members received formal Red Cross training and received certification for CPR and Adult First Aid. They also received training from Extension Service personnel concerning wellhead protection and teaching techniques.

18. **UNIQUE SUCCESSES:** One member serves on a county Wellhead Protection Advisory Committee. The committee works with SERVE volunteers, 4-H, and FFA groups to teach and properly plug abandoned wells.

One member participated in an Earth Day Town Meeting sponsored by a local Wal-Mart store. The group consisted of 30 community leaders. They identified 10 environmental projects for the community and are currently focused on completing two of the high-priority projects.

Two members attended the National COOL Conference at George Washington University. They were primarily sponsored by the Missouri Community Service Commission with some assistance from NRCS.

20. **NATIONAL IDENTITY:** Participated in NRCS Earth Team & AmeriCorps **Signature Project**. Five members distributed 5 Harmony packets and other water quality information, and taught 463 students.

Television coverage by two local, nationally affiliated, stations greatly increased regional awareness of AmeriCorps and water quality improvement efforts.



AmeriCorps & Farm*A*Syst

*A winning combination
Farmstead Assessment System
An Action Program for Safe Drinking Water*

Sent to all NRCS
employees in Boone
County, Mo.

My name is David Myers and I belong to a national service organization called AmeriCorps. The motto of AmeriCorps is "to get things done". An AmeriCorps project in mid-Missouri is the Farm*A*Syst program.

What is the Farmstead Assessment System ?

The Farmstead Assessment System is a series of work sheets to help you assess how effectively your farmstead practices protect your well drinking water.

* The worksheets ask you about your farmstead structures and activities. Your answers will help see how your farmstead practices affect water quality.

* A series of Fact sheets suggest things you can do to modify practices and direct you toward additional information and assistance if it is needed.

How does Farm*A*Syst Work

The Farm*A*Syst package is a voluntary and confidential service for concerned farmers and rural residents. As a user, you decide what to do with the results and keep them for your personal records. It's like hiring a private consultant to do a detailed assessment at no cost.

Select worksheets appropriate for your Farmstead

1. Drinking water well condition
2. Pesticide Storage and handling
3. Fertilizer storage and handling
4. Petroleum product storage
5. Hazardous waste management
6. Household waste management
7. Animal Manure Management facilities

The site evaluation worksheet helps you understand how soil and geological features affect water pollution on your farmstead. The overall evaluation combines the results of individual work sheets allowing you to:

- * Look at each potential source of contamination in light of your particular site condition.
- * Compare potential contamination sources to see where improvements are needed most.
- * Determine where to spend your time and money most effectively to protect the ground water that supplies your drinking water.

Protect Your Water Quality! Contact David Myers (573) 445-9792

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Co-Mo Country

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Is Your Well Well?

Jeane Englemeyer has two goals for her work with Americorps: help to keep water wells from getting sick and to earn an education voucher so she can continue her college education. So she goes from her work station at the Cooper County Extension Center to farms and homes throughout Cooper and Moniteau Counties, carrying farm assessment packets.

These packets have worksheets and fact sheets; and the biggest fact is that a lot of work is needed to keep well water good to drink. A fact sheet points out that just as a person maintains a tractor in good working order, "your well deserves the same attention. Good maintenance means testing the water twice a year, keeping the well area clean and accessible, keeping pollutants as far away as possible and periodically having a qualified well driller or pump installer check the well mechanics."

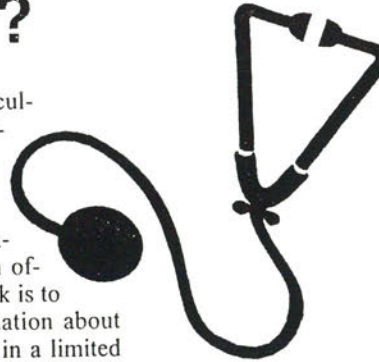
Water quality is something Jeane really likes talking about, and it's a subject she wants to pursue in college. A few years ago she had no interest in college and gave little thought to water quality. Life's pathways for the young while in her early twenties, however, would lead her to seek more education. Now she has completed two years at State Fair Community College. There, her agriculture courses required some internship work. One summer she learned more about business practices while working as an intern at Schafer's Equipment, Tipton; and last summer she performed intern work for the Natural Resource Conservation Service in Moniteau County. This brought her information about temporary work opportunities with Americorps through the

U.S. Department of Agriculture and University Extension. Jeane took advantage of the opportunity and became an Americorps member, working through the extension office in Boonville. Her task is to disperse as much information about water quality as possible in a limited amount of time.

So she goes wherever she can get an appointment, on farms or in homes, to have a brief discussion about water quality. She explains some of the consequences from not protecting the purity of a water supply, and some important steps to take to preserve quality. She leaves the packet of information and an evaluation form. And if she makes enough of these personal visits then she can receive an education voucher, allowing her to return to college to pursue a bachelor's degree.

She also does education for the young, even preschool age. For school programs she has activities vividly showing water and how it can be polluted. She also explains that just looking at water does not tell about the quality of the water: "Some of the most harmful things to be found in water cannot be seen; they can be found only with special tests." She tells about hazardous wastes, common household wastes, and the roll that plants play in water quality. In these prepared school programs she also explains how water is recycled and why water conservation is important.

Jeane is finding that this temporary assignment is leading her to become more interested in water quality; so interested



it may be her life's work. Everyone drinks water," she says, "and water is rapidly getting worse. Water has been bad for a long time other places. But here water quality has been taken for granted. Now, to have quality water we must protect it."

Here are reasons, listed in a fact sheet she distributes, for thorough and frequent testing of potable water": your family experiences unexplained illnesses; anyone in the family is pregnant; changes in livestock or poultry performance; neighbors find a particular contaminant in their water; you notice a change in water taste, odor, color, or clarity; you have a spill or backsiphonage of chemicals or petroleum products near your well or on your farmstead; you apply chemicals, manure or whey to your fields within 100 feet of your well; or your livestock operation inspectors require it. Bacteria and nitrates are two important indicators suggesting a problem with water quality. The sheet also suggests that unused wells or abandoned wells are candidates to be plugged and sealed. An unused well can provide direct access for the entry of contaminants into the ground water, and these contami-



nates can then be moved along and foul water in otherwise good wells.

New wells may be very good investments, and should be placed away from contaminating sources. When siting a well, follow the state recommendations for separation distances away from pollution sources; place the well in ground higher than surroundings, if possible, and always in higher ground at the surface than septic systems, fuel tanks, pesticide mixing area or livestock yards; and avoid a location prone to flooding. Also, make the well accessible for pump repair, cleaning, testing, and inspection. The fact sheet also suggests hiring only a competent, licensed well driller and pump installer. Make certain the driller disinfects the well with chlorine after construction and tests the water for bacteria after drilling. You also will need the driller to provide you with detailed information about the well's depth, construction, and water volume.

Jeane says she thinks taking care of water quality avoids the old quandary of "water, everywhere, but not a drop to drink." Her office in the Cooper County Courthouse can be reached at 816-882-5661.