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Rural Enrerprise Assistance Project

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Project Proposal
to
AmeriCorps/USDA
from
Center for Rural Affairs

PROPOSAL:

Use volunteers to expand the activities of two existing programs that facilitate people banding together to help themselves and each other.

- 1) Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP): REAP helps form and advise local "associations" of small and aspiring businesses in small towns. These associations raise much of their own revolving loan funds, manage the loans, and set their own business education agenda.
- 2) Beginning Farmer Sustainable Agriculture Project (BFSAP): BFSAP helps form local mutual-help groups of beginning and established farmers for education in sustainable agriculture practices.

ACTIVITIES:

REAP: A volunteer under CRA supervision would develop, collect, and analyze the program effectiveness for both program and local association use. The second year the volunteer would help implement the results of the evaluation with mini-training sessions for the associations.

BFSAP: A volunteer under CRA supervision would help organize, evaluate, and report on sustainable agriculture education activities (workshops, tours, etc.) for groups of beginning and established farmers in mutual-help groups across Nebraska.

VOLUNTEERS:

REAP: One senior or graduate-level business student with communications experience for two summer periods.

BFSAP: One senior or graduate-level student with an agriculture background (education or experience) and communications experience for 1 year.

BENEFITS:

Direct work in USDA priority areas of rural economic development, sustainable agriculture, and rural leadership development.

Coordination and networking with many rural service and advisory agencies.

Volunteer skill development in communications, leadership, group facilitation, and networking.

Volunteer exposure to pioneering work in other CRA projects in agriculture, the environment, and social justice.

Project Proposal
to
AmeriCorps/USDA
from
Center for Rural Affairs

The Center for Rural Affairs is proposing to sponsor a project within the AmeriCorps/USDA pilot project umbrella. The Center for Rural Affairs (CRA) is a private, nonprofit organization that works to support sustainable agriculture, family farming and healthy rural communities. Many of CRA's projects have hosted interns over the past twenty years and two of CRA's service-oriented projects, the Rural Enterprise Assistance Project and the Beginning Farmer Sustainable Agriculture Project, now can provide working/learning experiences for volunteers under the AmeriCorps program. Both of these projects emphasize people helping each other through growth of knowledge, skills, and local economies.

Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP)

The Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) is based at the CRA main office in Walthill, NE. REAP began as a demonstration and pilot project in 1990 for supporting microenterprise development in small agricultural communities through revolving loan funds and education. At that time, the primary economic development strategy used by small rural towns in the midwest was to try to attract a factory to town. For a majority of these communities, that would never happen. In the 1980's, these agricultural communities experienced loss of farms, businesses, employment and population, and many are still fighting to maintain population. CRA studies showed that an exceptionally high percentage of the population in these communities was self-employed. So a program was launched to assist the establishment of "microenterprises" by filling three gaps: 1) training, 2) networking, and 3) lending opportunities, primarily in communities of 2,000 or less population.

REAP assists small and aspiring business people to start local "associations" to raise money for a revolving loan fund and loan loss reserve, to manage the loans, and to set up a business education program. Fifteen associations of microenterprises have formed in Nebraska and one in Kansas, serving 200 members and representing 57 communities. Of the businesses served by REAP, 56% are home-based. REAP is also an intermediary in the Small Business Administration (SBA) microloan program, using SBA capital for making loans to these associations. REAP is currently exploring the possibility of a youth component to an adult association that would extend business training and microbusiness loans to high school students.

REAP now needs to review and enhance its processes for evaluating its own effectiveness in serving microenterprises. Loan numbers, loan amounts, etc. are being tracked, but the professional

competence and personal growth in the businesses being served is unknown. Improved evaluations would assist in determining the future direction of the project and in improving service to the associations in education, lending and networking.

An AmeriCorps worker would be hired part-time for two summers to review REAP's existing evaluation tools, help develop future evaluation tools for the project, collect and tally data from current members, locate and arrange speakers, and assist with association meetings. The first summer would concentrate on developing the evaluation protocol and data collection. During the second summer the worker would develop mini-training sessions for association members and assist them with questions they may have regarding the operation of their association and their businesses.

Approximately 200 microenterprise programs are currently operating in the US. Although REAP's customer base and service mix are unique among these, an evaluation tool or process designed for REAP could be shared with other programs. This could be easily achieved through presentations to the national Association for Enterprise Opportunity and the International Community Development Society, and by expanding use of AmeriCorps volunteers to these other programs.

Beginning Farmer Sustainable Agriculture Project (BFSAP)

The Beginning Farmer Sustainable Agriculture Project (BFSAP) is based in the CRA's Hartington, NE office. The BFSAP was begun in 1991 in response to decreasing numbers of beginning farmers in Nebraska and across the country and the need for more sustainable agricultural practices. In Nebraska, the number of farmers under age 25 fell by 43% between 1978 and 1987, while the number over age 65 increased by 15%. Nearly half of U.S. farmland is operated by farmers likely to retire in the next ten years. Beginning farmers are more open to sustainable farming practices that protect soil, water and biological resources than are farmers who have already made financial and emotional commitments to conventional farming systems. Recent studies have shown that about 80% of the farmers who practice sustainable agriculture made the decision to do so before reaching age 40. Without a new generation of farmers, a large share of the nation's farm opportunities will be lost, and both rural communities and the environment will suffer.

The BFSAP works to increase opportunities for beginning farmers to learn about and implement sustainable farming methods through mutual-help discussion groups and continuing education opportunities. The project also collects and analyzes data to evaluate the economic and environmental performance of participating beginning farm families. A pilot project in northeast Nebraska is scheduled to go state-wide in mid-1994.

The project has found that young farmers have unique information, financial, and social needs that are not met by conventional

services. They have limited capital. They often work off-farm while starting the farm business and have little free time for education or social activities. They often feel isolated from their neighbors by time and financial limitations. They need information for lowest-cost and least input farming methods as well as information for farmers with limited practical experience. Yet they want to use environmentally sound farming practices to allow them to stay in their home communities and bring their children up to enjoy farming. BFSAP work with farmers in northeast Nebraska has shown that local support groups can overcome these obstacles and meet these needs.

The BFSAP has initiated five local mutual-help groups in northeast Nebraska and plans to support five more across the state in 1994 and at least 15 by 1996, in conjunction with the University of Nebraska Extension Service and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society. Staff of the three organizations will share an office and a pool of cost-share funds for on-farm projects, in taking this effort state-wide. Staff support of these groups includes group meeting facilitation, organizing and conducting educational activities, on-farm consultation, cost-share for on-farm research and education, and group communications. Though we will make a special effort to recruit beginning farmers, we will also recruit established farmers interested in sustainable agriculture.

A full-time AmeriCorps volunteer in this project would coordinate the continuing sustainable agriculture education activities of these groups. This work would include scheduling speakers and facilities, arranging farm tours and demonstrations, discussing education topics and activity evaluations with farmers, and writing press releases and news stories about the activities.

Project Administration

Day-to-day supervision, administration, and training for this proposed project would be carried out under existing CRA administrative structure. CRA is a public charity under Internal Revenue code sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) with a budget of over \$1 million, an annual audit and an excellent record of fiscal responsibility. REAP and BFSAP project leaders who would supervise the AmeriCorps volunteers have several years of experience training and supervising other staff. No additional supervisory training would be necessary.

Project volunteers would probably be recruited locally, although the opportunity to peruse a national pool compiled by AmeriCorps would be helpful. CRA follows a nondiscrimination policy in hiring.

Each of the two proposed positions would require senior-level or graduate-level college students with communications experience. The REAP position would require at least a senior-level business student for each of two summers. The BFSAP position would require

at least a senior-level college student with an agriculture background, full time for a year.

AmeriCorps project volunteers would be trained initially in REAP and BFSAP goals, objectives, and methods. Additional on-the-job training would occur alongside existing staff at REAP association meetings and local farmer group meetings.

Costs for these positions would include direct costs of salary, health and possible child care, travel and per diem expenses, and phone and printing costs. Indirect costs include administration, support, and governance associated with each employee of CRA. Supplies and equipment would include office supplies and presentation equipment for the REAP position (such as a flipchart stand). A breakdown of costs follows:

	<u>REAP*</u>	<u>BFSAP**</u>
Salary***	\$ 7500	\$15000
Fringe benefits***	2303	6648
travel	1420	2859
telephone	800	1089
postage	837	2400
training	105	310
supplies	369	1027
special rent	30	90
printing	489	1385
indirect	4598	12588
total	\$18443	\$43394

* REAP expenses cover two summers @ about 480 hours each.

** BFSAP expenses cover one year.

*** contributed by AmeriCorps/USDA

Program Benefits

This proposed project would address several USDA priority areas, including rural economic development, sustainable agriculture, and rural leadership development. REAP works directly with rural communities to help them develop their economic resources from within. Associations raise their own loan loss reserve funds and administer their own loan funds. They set their own business education agendas and solicit new association members.

BFSAP helps beginning and established farmers in sustainable agriculture come together to share information and discuss each other's problems. They learn and observe resource-conserving

farming practices from each other and from experts whom they invite to speak. These farmers learn leadership, communication, and civic skills as they present information about their farms to their groups, to other farmers, and to policymakers at tours, field days, and public meetings. They minimize their mistakes and increase their management skills through dialogue with other farmers and mentors developed through the group process. These processes all improve the likelihood that these farmers will successfully establish their farms, support local economies and practice environmental stewardship.

Participants in both REAP and BFSAP coordinate with other federal and state agencies and some existing volunteer efforts. REAP works very closely with volunteers in rural communities to raise loan loss reserve funds and to recruit membership for the associations. Associations are introduced to service providers such as community colleges, development districts, small business centers, the Nebraska Home-Based Business Association, the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and USDA Resource Conservation and Development districts, to expand the expertise of the REAP staff and each association. BFSAP works closely with the University of Nebraska, local and regional Cooperative Extension educators, the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, and the USDA SARE program. We tie local groups to existing organizations such as FFA Alumni clubs, church groups, and rural school districts, and will involve local extension staff in establishing and coordinating mutual help groups. Although extension staff currently express interest in sustainable agriculture, they often lack the time, expertise, and funding to lead the programs supported by the BFSAP.

AmeriCorps volunteers would benefit from participation in these projects as well. Volunteers would improve their communication skills, especially in public presentations, small group facilitation, and publicity writing. They would gain experience in using modern communication techniques, including small group process and technologies such as computer training, fax and modem communications, interactive video teleconferencing, and telephone conferences. They would also gain knowledge of service and support organizations across rural Nebraska. They would learn about sustainable agriculture practices, microenterprise development, and lending programs. Volunteers would gain the satisfaction of helping people to help themselves and of helping communities to build themselves up from their members' skills and abilities. Both projects expect to foster the volunteers' development in individual consultation skills and would expose them to the other pioneering work at CRA in global climate change, agricultural research policy, agriculture and environmental policy, rural schools and communities, and other rural and social justice issues.

PARTNERS IN SERVICE:

A COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

An AmeriCorps Proposal Submitted with the U.S. Department of Agriculture
by
the Atlantic Center for the Environment
March 1994

Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is uniquely poised to effectively implement the National Service Trust Act's goals – to deliver national and community services “on the ground,” and to reinvent government while doing so. Programs like the Soil and Water Conservation Service, Cooperative Extension Service, Resource Conservation and Development Areas, the US Forest Service and others are working at the local level to address community-based issues and needs. Of all Federal agencies, USDA is perhaps the most active at the community level in rural areas.

In addition, their local presence means USDA programs are well positioned to address a new era of environmental priorities. Threats to many watersheds, for example, have shifted from national – large dams, diversions, industrial pollution – to local impact – incremental riparian land development, non-point source pollution, and public access. Developing and implementing integrated protection programs and fostering public/private partnerships on a regional basis will enhance citizen leadership and broaden community support for wise, sustainable resource management. Working through the AmeriCorps program, this approach will also provide national service opportunities and vital experience for participants in the program, with lasting positive effect on the communities they serve.

The Atlantic Center for the Environment's experience with the USDA's programs bear this out. Since 1961, the Atlantic Center and its parent not-for-profit, binational organization – the Quebec-Labrador Foundation – have promoted local leadership and helped conserve the natural and cultural resources of rural communities, working with local partners in northern New England and eastern Canada. In addition to its regional environmental education and research projects, the Atlantic Center provides international leadership training programs to conservation nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. (See Appendix A for Organizational Background and Philosophy).

Partners in Service: A Model for National Community Service

To meet rural conservation and development needs in northern New England, we propose Partners in Service, a three-year community service program designed to serve rural New England communities and to provide a model for other regions of North America. Based on our experience and

contacts with government agencies and others, the program will include community-based rural development assignments for 10 participants in Year 1, beginning in Fall, 1994, increasing to 15 participants in 1995 and 20 participants in 1996. Atlantic Center staff will closely coordinate assignments with state and local agencies and state community service commissions in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine and will provide orientation, project direction, supervision, and evaluation. Regular reports and training materials will provide information on designing and implementing successful community service projects in rural communities using case studies from the Partners program.

Project sites under consideration include the Caribou/Presque Isle/Fort Kent region of Aroostook County, Maine (site of Loring Air Force Base, which is slated for closure, and several rural development proposals), Washington County, Maine (one of the poorest counties in the United States but rich in natural resources, fisheries, and potential for sound tourism and other sustainable development), northern Vermont and possibly New Hampshire (including the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest and sections within the Northern Forest Land Study area). (See Appendix B for more specific examples).

Following the model of previous Atlantic Center projects (see Appendix C), preference will be to hire resident coordinators based in the region, to work with teachers, planners, etc. in addressing local watershed issues (including fisheries, coastal wetland protection, and land use) in schools, public forums and in the media. Emphasis will also be put on developing strategies and coordinating partnerships toward sustainable, community development through specific projects.

A. Project Development/Location/Administration

The Partners in Service program will begin in June 1994 with a three- to six month planning period. During the planning phase, Atlantic Center staff will meet with community leaders and organizations to determine best use and placement of participants. Project proposals will be solicited from the Atlantic Center's extensive network of rural organizations in New England and priority will be given to those projects that hold the best promise for sustainable results, in keeping with the USDA's mission. For example, projects will serve to improve public awareness of water quality issues (e.g., non-point source pollution) and will assist local and regional watershed planning, helping to fulfill USDA's stated mission of improving rural water quality.

Project parameters will be spelled out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with community-based partner organizations (some of which include USDA agency offices). In designing projects and expected

3/18/94

Page 2

outcomes, the Atlantic Center and its partners will cooperatively identify unmet community service needs in keeping with the program priorities so as to ensure that no work duplicates existing programs or displaces existing workers.

Support from community partner organizations, including USDA and possibly other Federal agencies, will take the form of in-kind office space, phone and administration, copying, and vehicle use and/or funding when available and needed. Such support will be spelled out in the MOU agreed upon by each partner and the Atlantic Center.

Elliott Gimble, Director of the Atlantic Center's River Conservation program, will become director of the program (see Appendix D) assisted by a full-time administrator. Other Atlantic Center program staff will contribute additional resources and time, as assignments complement their program goals and commitments. Ultimate supervisory responsibility rests with Atlantic Center staff, although partner organizations, including USDA personnel, will be expected to provide guidance and project support, as agreed upon.

Projects will be designed to complement existing programs (such as 4-H) and program staff will meet regularly (at least once every quarter) with community partners on site to monitor progress and adapt priorities and timetables as necessary.

B. Recruiting/Selection

Project participants will be recruited based on their specific skills and education and community needs. Project partners on site will be required to list desired qualifications and skills as part of the Memorandum of Understanding during the project planning period. Most participants are expected to be pursuing or have a masters-level degree in natural resource management or environmental studies, though some may have an undergraduate degree in addition to other experience.

Diversity of participants will be a high priority. The Atlantic Center receives hundreds of applications each year from throughout North America and will use that pool, plus the national pools compiled by the Corporation for National and Community Service and USDA, to select participants from varied backgrounds. Where appropriate, partners will also assist in identifying potential participants from within their communities (e.g., through universities and other institutions). Because of the small percentage of most minority groups in rural New England, qualified minority participants from other parts of the country will be recruited to work with counterparts from within their assigned community. All hiring will be conducted by program staff.

Participants will be selected based on their qualifications, their maturity and cultural sensitivity, their ability to work independently and with others, and their commitment to conservation, regional planning, and community service. The first group of 10 AmeriCorps - Partners in Service participants is scheduled to begin orientation in September 1994.

C. Implementation/Outreach

Projects will be conducted in communities with orientation and debriefing to take place at QLF Headquarters in Ipswich, Massachusetts and quarterly training sessions at designated centralized gathering locations. Projects will include an advisory committee made up of representatives of community organizations and agencies. Volunteers to serve on the committees, including former Peace Corps volunteers, will be solicited by staff during the planning phase.

Each participant may work on more than one project during his or her term of service. Day-to-day tasks will range from speaking to school, community groups, and resource managers to organizing meetings to researching issues and recommendations for watershed-based conservation and planning. Assignments will last from at least 3 months to a year or more, depending on community need and participants' suitability and availability. In all cases, participants will be expected to report on their assignment with recommendations in writing and to complete discrete project goals and objectives.

Participants will be trained in developing good community relations and will work with local and regional media sources to describe their project and the AmeriCorps concept and program in general, distinguishing it from other jobs programs. In addition, participants will promote awareness of community partner organizations toward strengthening public support that will outlast the project time period.

D. Orientation/Supervision/Training

Working with USDA staff, the program director and supervisors will conduct a one-week orientation to the AmeriCorps and the Partners in Service programs. During this period, participants will take part in group exercises and training (see below). Introduction to Atlantic Center philosophy and procedures (e.g., accounting, reporting, emergency procedures, etc.) will also be discussed as a group. Based on project assignments, team members will also meet individually or in small groups with supervisors to discuss specific communities and to review both project goals and participants' expectations/goals.

Based on the nature of assignments and Atlantic Center experience, participants will be given a large degree of autonomy on-site. Community partners and advisory groups will play an important role in guiding the projects and Atlantic Center supervisors are experienced in advising and supporting field staff through regular phone contacts and field visits. Overall, however, participants themselves will be looked to for assessing project priorities and for choosing appropriate actions. Both communities and participants benefit from this level of independence, which allows for more creative and effective bottom-up problem-solving.

A key component of the Partners in Service program will be its leadership and professional training programming, designed to complement on-site service and experiential learning. In addition to discussions at orientation and debriefing sessions, regular quarterly workshops will bring all AmeriCorps - Partners in Service participants together to discuss successes, common problems, and solutions, and to concentrate on topics relevant to their work with community groups, to their careers and to their sense of volunteerism. Program staff and visiting professionals will lead and facilitate discussion. Each session will include readings assigned prior to the session, group exercises, and follow-up individual assignments to be reviewed by staff and discussed with team members. Goals are to promote: organizational capacity in communities; participant understanding of regional issues; leadership and personal development skills, and; a long-term community service ethic among participants. Topics/themes are to include:

- New England/North Atlantic Conservation & Rural Development Issues in the '90s
- Conservation in a Cultural Context: Achieving Cross-cultural Sensitivity
- Effective Organization, Team Building, and Communication (e.g., running meetings, motivating others, budgeting, reporting)
- Computer Networking & Video Tools and Methods
- Meeting Challenges that Face Small Non-Profit Citizen Groups
 - Recruiting and keeping volunteers
 - Devising and implementing organizational and program strategies
 - Public relations (newsletters, media contact, addressing critics, etc.)
 - Grassroots Fundraising
- What Color is Your Day Pack? Career Planning and Building a Professional Network

E. Evaluation/Continuation

Each participant will be required to complete evaluations of their projects and their experience at regular intervals (typically a mid-term report and final report for each distinct assignment). Also, community partners will

be asked to complete a form evaluating project and participant success based on original stated objectives.

A primary evaluation criterion for the program will be the level to which participants can establish sound, long-term, community-based, community-driven conservation and development efforts. Community service will be offered in a support capacity and will not assume tasks best managed by local groups. Though this approach requires patience and time, Atlantic Center experience has shown that it proves more effective in the long-run as communities assume a greater sense of stewardship.

Another major conservation goal will be the production, distribution, and implementation of locally-produced conservation/development strategies. In all cases, a comprehensive planning approach will be promoted.

Success will be measured in part by the number of:

- watersheds and communities served;
- students, teachers, volunteers, planners, and others influenced and trained in the program;
- participants who demonstrate commitment to community service and/or conservation/planning after their assignments by continuing to serve, through or other programs or activities;
- participating attendees at meetings and events;
- matching funds (including in-kind) contributed by partners;
- reports and other publications produced (including maps); and
- news stories in local media on local/regional environmental/development issues.

A vital measure of success will be the actual increase in membership of and funding or in-kind/volunteer support to local watershed/land use planning organizations. Objectives for the first year are listed in Appendix E.

F. Communications/Computer Bulletin Board

Taking advantage of the latest information and communication technologies, all participants will be trained to access the Internet through computers on-site and wherever possible, computer and phone line access will be provided through community partners. Program staff will facilitate a computer bulletin board between participants to serve as a communication and training tool in between regular training sessions.

Where applicable, participants will have access to computer mapping software and video equipment and training. In addition, all AmeriCorps - Partners in Service participants will be scheduled to report and discuss their progress weekly by phone and monthly through short written reports.

3/18/94

Page 6

G. Budget/Matching Funds

The total budget for Year 1 of Partners in Service is \$, of which \$ is requested from the Corporation for National and Community Service and \$ will be matched by the Atlantic Center for the Environment. Pending and prospective sources of matching funds or in-kind support include the Island Foundation, and community organizations and agencies.

Conclusion

The National Service Trust Act comes at a critical juncture in America's history. As this nation faces the problems of neglect in both urban centers and rural communities, the need has never been greater for empowering young and old alike to lend a hand in reshaping our communities and, in doing so, reshaping how government operates. The Atlantic Center for the Environment, with its experience in promoting community service and environmental conservation in New England and internationally, is prepared and eager to help meet this exciting challenge. We look forward to working with the Corporation for National and Community Service, USDA and state commissions to design and implement a model program that will serve not only our region, but rural areas across the United States. Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix A: Organizational Background

The Atlantic Center for the Environment is the conservation division of the Quebec-Labrador Foundation, Inc. (QLF), a not-for-profit organization incorporated in both the United States and Canada. The QLF annual budget is approximately \$1.5 million/year and is divided between conservation work and community services.

For over thirty years, QLF has worked to promote local leadership and to conserve the natural and cultural resources of rural communities in the Atlantic Region (northern New England and eastern Canada) through education and research projects in wildlife, rivers, fisheries, and land stewardship program areas. International fellowship and exchange programs are linked to non-government conservation organizations in the Middle East, Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. All QLF programs rely on a multi-disciplinary approach to conservation and the essential cooperation of local people.

Atlantic Center Philosophy: Turning Awareness into Action

At the core of all Atlantic Center programs and projects is the straightforward belief that nurturing conservation leadership and a stewardship ethic at the local level will lead to sustainable, long-term conservation action throughout our region. Over the years, we have learned the following lessons:

- Success depends on community support and that support depends on involving local partners and citizens early and sincerely. In truth, if we are to be successful, their informed agenda becomes our own.
- A broad base of constituencies depends on and follows from the trust garnered from our non-advocacy approach and a solid reputation established from our years of service to the region
- Service is as much process as product; both are needed for successful conservation and training.
- Models from within the region and from other regions worldwide offer useful examples and case studies for efforts in New England and Atlantic Canada. Programs often serve as models for other regions of North America and beyond.
- Hiring interns and participants from within communities as well as from other states and backgrounds promotes cross-cultural understanding and emerging leadership in the region.

Appendix B: Specific Project Examples

St. John River/Fish River Lakes, Aroostook County Maine - Provide watershed-based education and technical assistance programs in communities and schools, help implement joint US/Canadian conservation and community planning effort, support implementation of Maine Acadian Heritage Trust Act. Partners include St. John Aroostook RC&D, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, National Park Service (North Atlantic Regional Office).

Green Mountain/Finger Lakes National Forest/Mad River, Vermont - Provide support to US Forest Service, private landowners, local and regional planning agencies and the Friends of the Mad River in producing and implementing a watershed inventory and planning process.

Shin Pond, Aroostook County, Maine - Working with lake association and St. John Aroostook RC&D, conduct a sanitary survey of residents and homeowners along a rural pond that faces phosphorus overloading and non-point source pollution.

Fisheries Education, Washington, Lincoln, Waldo, and Hancock counties, Maine - Provide training to high school students and teachers in marine science, focusing on economic and ecological aspects of aquaculture in their community and its implications for community development and water quality.

Water Quality Education, Washington, Waldo, and Hancock counties, Maine - Provide training to student and citizen groups in water quality monitoring in coastal rivers and wetlands; develop strategies for protecting water quality from non-point source pollution especially as it relates to community development.

Upper Connecticut River, New Hampshire, Vermont - In conjunction with local land trusts, state river commissions, and other organizations, develop educational and land stewardship mapping programs to promote effective land use and planning on the upper Connecticut River and tributaries.

Appendix C: Examples of Atlantic Center Projects and Government Partnerships

Partners in Service represents an evolution of previous Atlantic Center projects in the greater Atlantic Region and internationally and complements on-going partnerships with various agencies. Examples include collaborations with:

U.S. Department of Agriculture - As part of a watershed study on Boyden Stream in eastern Maine, the Atlantic Center provided three years of water quality studies and monitoring projects to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, a local 4-H, and the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District. In northern Maine, the Atlantic Center worked with the St. John Aroostook RC&D to coordinate a binational conference on watershed conservation and development issues. In Vermont, Atlantic Center staff are working with US Forest Service personnel on salmon restoration efforts and a farming demonstration project.

National Park Service - Under a 5-year cooperative agreement, the Atlantic Center has produced several resource inventory studies on rivers in Maine, "How Greenways Work" - a joint publication now in its second printing on the ecological functions of greenways, the US/UK Countryside Stewardship Exchange, an international program that provides technical assistance to communities and experiential training to conservation professionals.

National Marine Fisheries Service - For six years Atlantic Center staff have been working under a grant from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to retrieve salmon tags from fish caught in remote villages in Newfoundland and Labrador.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Under a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Atlantic Center is helping the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in its efforts to design and muster public support for the Silvio Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge on the Connecticut River, providing school programs and land stewardship projects in New Hampshire and Vermont

U.S. Information Agency, U.S. Agency for International Development - Grants from these agencies have enabled the Atlantic Center to bring conservation professionals from other regions of the world to New England to exchange ideas and to receive management training. American counterparts take part in fellowships and assignments in Latin America, the Caribbean, East/Central Europe, and the United Kingdom.

In addition to these Federal partners, projects are conceived of and supported by state and provincial conservation and planning agencies and a host of local cooperating organizations.

Appendix E: Mission and Objectives

Program Mission Statement:

Increase public support for conservation and planning efforts in rural watersheds, building self-sustaining organizational capacity of local institutions and building leadership and service skills among participants.

Annual Objectives

A. Community Service - Environment

To provide public awareness programs in 10 watersheds or communities reaching 2,000 students and citizens, resulting in 35% greater awareness of existing and support for improving water quality (or other pertinent resource management such as fisheries).

To complete written conservation/planning strategic plans in 5 watershed or sub-watershed units, providing recommendations that will, when acted upon, meet natural resource guidelines for state and/or local comprehensive planning requirements.

To thoroughly review existing baseline conditions, including initiating sound monitoring programs, in 10 watershed or sub-watershed units, providing written reviews to partner organizations and, where appropriate, the public through reports and/or news articles.

B. Participant Development

To develop or maintain a commitment to conservation/planning in 70% of participants as demonstrated by continued work in related fields during the year following their service.

To improve managerial and communication (e.g., writing, public speaking) skills and self-confidence in 80% of participants based on partner and program staff evaluations.

To help individual interests in and support commitments to community service and leadership in 100% of participants as demonstrated by continued self-initiated volunteer work during the year following their service.

C. Community Building

To form partnerships with 10 agencies and organizations as reflected by co-sponsorship of joint programs and co-signing of Memoranda of Understanding.

To show increase membership of 5 private partner organizations by 25% and increased member participation (e.g., attendance at meetings/events) by 15% in first year.

To facilitate 5 on-going in-community partnerships between Federal, state and local agencies or organizations toward meeting goals set by the conservation/planning strategy.

Partners in Service - DRAFT Budget - Year 1

	Corporation	Match	Total
A. Participant Support Costs			
Living Allowance	63,240	11,160	74,400
Education Awards (held in trust)	47,725		47,725
Health Care			
Child Care			
Training & Education	10,000	5,000	15,000
Uniforms	2,000	500	2,500
FICA/Workers Comp.	5,293	934	6,227
Other			
Subtotal	128,258	17,594	145,852
B. Staff			
Salaries	70,000	30,000	100,000
Benefits	14,000	6,000	20,000
Training	5,000		5,000
Other			
Subtotal	89,000	36,000	125,000
C. Operational			
Travel/Transportation	10,000	2,000	12,000
Supplies	5,000	2,000	7,000
Equipment	5,000	1,000	6,000
Other			
Subtotal	20,000	5,000	25,000
D. Internal Evaluation/Monitoring	10,000	2,000	12,000
E. Administration	12,363	3,030	15,393
TOTAL	259,621	63,624	323,245
% (Corporation% + Match % = 100%)	80	20	100

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DRAFT

DESCRIPTION OF RUP AND ILGARD

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

The RURAL UNIVERSITY PROGRAM is designed to enhance the quality of education and information available to local governments in Ohio. Through applied research and technical assistance, the RUP primarily directs its attention toward serving the special needs of Ohio's rural and other small local governments. The Ohio General Assembly located the project in three of the state's major universities whose primary service areas include a large portion of Ohio's non-metropolitan and rural communities. The centers are housed at Ohio University in Athens, Miami University in Oxford, and Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green. The centers assist rural and small local governments through project assistance and applied research. Reports are prepared after each project which include a description of the project, the results and an estimate of the cost savings to the local government resulting from the university's assistance. The Rural University Program is complementary to the Urban University Program, which has centers at each urban state university in Ohio. The rural and urban programs share resources and experiences as they deal with similar issues facing both rural and urban communities. For example, five urban and rural universities are joining to create GISnet, a computer network which will provide geographic information to regions served by each university.

At Ohio University, the RUP is administered by The Institute for Local Government Administration and Rural Development (ILGARD). ILGARD works with a network including the University's five regional campuses as well as Shawnee State University that extends services throughout southeastern Ohio. ILGARD is at the heart of the twenty-nine counties that comprise Ohio Appalachia. These counties contain only 13 percent of the state's population, but its most severe concentrations of poverty. ILGARD offers assistance in rural management, including training and technical assistance in environmental management, public administration and financial management, information, including geographic and demographic computer data bases, economic profiles and entrepreneurial development; and research, with a focus on issues pertaining to rural government and development. University faculty and graduate students are utilized in planning and completing projects. The institute is not a development organization, but assists communities and development organizations by providing technical expertise and high-quality products such as research reports and mapping information. The undergraduate and graduate students who work for ILGARD are trained as professional technicians by assisting various entities in Southeastern Ohio on a wide variety of projects. Examples of recent projects include a graduate student providing direct training and development assistance to the village of Glouster, Ohio and ILGARD researching and writing the needs assessment portion of a federal grant that would bring an Educational Opportunity Center to Ohio Appalachia.

The Institute's Advisory Committee includes prominent national, state and local officials. ILGARD works closely with organizations such as the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development, the Ohio Township Association, the Ohio Municipal League, the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management. The Ohio General Assembly designated ILGARD the research and development arm of the Governor's Office of Appalachia, and the institute will become part of the State Policy Partnership Program as of July 1, 1994.

PROPOSED
 PROGRAM

HOW ILGARD AND RUP WOULD FIT INTO PROPOSED PROGRAM

ORGANIZATION

ILGARD and the other centers in the Rural University Program have the potential of being an integral part of the organization of any AmeriCorps/USDA projects located in rural and non-metropolitan Ohio, specifically with the Rural Development Team concept. The RUP is structured to provide the support and technical assistance to rural communities that USDA has as the goals of the Rural Development Corps. The program utilizes undergraduate and graduate students with a variety of academic backgrounds to provide a wide range of technical assistance to rural and other small communities and organizations working in such areas as economic development and environmental management. ILGARD as an example of a RUP site, has a strong reputation throughout Ohio Appalachia and is familiar with the unique characteristics and needs of the region. Since one goal of AmeriCorps/USDA is to work with existing programs and not duplicate any services, ILGARD as a management and operational base of any Rural Development Team in Ohio Appalachia makes sense. Utilizing ILGARD would build on existing programs, without creating a separate management structure or "reinventing the wheel." ILGARD and the other Rural University Centers have a history of working with local and state agencies and development organizations. New connections would not have to be forged by AmeriCorps/USDA with these entities.

OPERATION

Procedures must be developed for corp member selection, training and placement in various communities. The RUP sites at Ohio University, Miami University and Bowling Green State University could coordinate the selection, training and placement of corp members as they do the undergraduate and graduate students they currently house. Selection processes should account for the needs of a community, agency or organizations that will utilize the corp member's services. Training would include acclimation to the region, overview of available resources and technical training on computer software etc. if needed. If communities or other entities bid for team members, the Rural University Centers, in coordination with USDA could place appropriate team members with agencies or communities. Since a system for selection, training and placement of interns is already established by the centers in the Rural University Program, creating a separate system would be redundant and complicated.

ILGARD and the other RUP sites could house the corp member(s) in its offices full-time or part-time as they do their current public service associates. Some corp members will be working on-site most of the time, but a site may not have the office space, computer equipment etc. necessary. Offices, support staff and state-of-the-art equipment would be available at the universities. Software, INTERNET linkages, and demographic data are some of the needs that could be met by the institute. As team members are working with various communities, the RUP centers could provide ongoing technical assistance as well as periodic inservices.

Using the centers in the Rural University Program as bases for any Rural Development Team in Ohio would forge a federal partnership with a successful state initiative. This partnership would

alleviate concerns about duplicating existing programs and would allow the Rural Development Team to be more successful in its goal of assisting communities in economic well-being.

DRAFT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. How will the project ensure that none of the work performed duplicates work of existing programs?

Answer- Since ILGARD and RUP's mission is to assist rural and non-metropolitan communities, development organizations and other local entities through technical support and research, using us as the hub for any AmeriCorps activity in this area would build upon, not duplicate, existing programs.

2. What kinds of support is needed from other federal agencies, state and local government, nonprofit organizations etc? How does USDA get this support?

Support from federal, state and local entities is crucial for any comprehensive effort towards community development.

The Rural University Program works closely with state and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Using existing entities like the centers at Miami University, Bowling Green State University and Ohio University would allow these linkages to be extended to the AmeriCorps workers assigned to the region.

3. How will the planners consult with communities etc.

ILGARD is based in Ohio Appalachia and has conducted extensive research on the characteristics of the region. We have formed relationships with communities that AmeriCorps USDA could utilize

4. What kind of supervision of participants would be needed?

The Rural Development Team will be essentially a professional corps made up of individuals with undergraduate and graduate degrees. ILGARD, one of the three RUP sites, supervises undergraduates and graduates as a part of our program. Many of our public service associates are "farmed out" to communities and organizations in the same manner as the AmeriCorps workers will be. The same supervisory processes such as team meetings, project reporting requirements and technical assistance can be utilized for AmeriCorps personnel.

5. What kind of training would participants need?

Participants would need to be acclimated to the characteristics of the region. They would also need to be introduced to various computer software programs such as WordPerfect, Excel, MapInfo etc. General orientation detailing payroll, reporting and supervisory procedures would also be necessary. ILGARD already conducts similar training for our new and returning public service associates.

6. What materials and equipment would be necessary?

Team members would need access to computer software and hardware, data bases, information on federal, state and local programs etc. All of this is available through the ILGARD offices and the Ohio University Library, which is a depository library for government documents.

7. How will the projects be managed entrepreneurially instead of bureaucratically?

By decentralizing the management of the AmeriCorps/USDA programs to existing entities such as ILGARD/RUP, the management will be less overarching and bureaucratic. Local input and design will better fit the unique needs of each region.

8. How will the project utilize the latest communications and information technologies?

It will be essential for corps members to have access to state-of-the-art computer equipment and software, E-Mail, Internet services etc. in order to access information and work effectively. The Rural University Program currently utilizes these technologies.