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August

Divider Title: _____



August 30, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR KEN COHEN, ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL

FROM: *for* JOEL BERG *Rn Hli Mh*
DIRECTOR NATIONAL SERVICE

SUBJECT: Establishment of the National Service Program

Attached is a copy of the Secretary's Memorandum which was signed by Deputy Secretary Romminger on August 25, 1995. It has gone to the printers and the official copy will come out shortly. You should also now that for now, the Secretary has determined that the Director of National Service will remain in the Office of Communications. I believe this may have some impact on work you are processing in your office such as delegations of authority and notice of a system of records for Privacy Act purposes.

Finally, I want to thank you for all of your efforts and the efforts of your staff in helping to get this memorandum approved. Truly, we couldn't have done it without you.

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM _____

USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program

1 PURPOSE

This memorandum establishes the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program and delegates the authority to manage the program for the Department to the Director of National Service.

2 BACKGROUND

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 established the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the AmeriCorps and Public Lands Corps Programs. The intent of the legislation is to engage Americans of varied ages and backgrounds in community-based service. This service addresses the Nation's educational, public safety, human, and environmental needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results. In doing so, national service will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service. The Act authorizes the CNCS to provide assistance to private organizations, States, and Federal departments to conduct national service programs. The Act further authorizes Federal departments to run national service programs directly or in partnerships with others.

3 POLICY

As the People's Department, it is the responsibility of all USDA agencies to strive for the maximum allowable participation by USDA in the area of national service. By identifying existing programs that can be used to support national service initiatives or by proposing new programs or

projects, the Department will strive to the fullest extent possible to use assistance from the CNCS to leverage existing resources and to integrate the national service concept more fully into Departmental programs and activities. USDA will run programs in which both the AmeriCorps members and managers at every project site will represent a socio-economically diverse group of Americans.

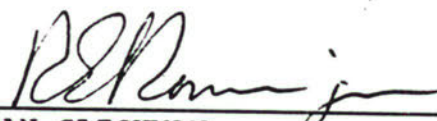
4 DELEGATION

The Director of National Service is hereby delegated the authority to manage the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program, including the Public Lands Corps, and coordinate the Department's national service initiatives. The Director is authorized to prepare the Department's annual application to CNCS and to execute on behalf of the Department agreements with the CNCS and other entities concerning the USDA National Service Program.

The Director is further authorized to develop and oversee implementation of detailed guidelines and procedures for agencies to follow in planning, operating, staffing, and funding the program.

5 EXPIRATION

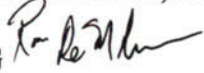
This memorandum shall expire after one year.


for DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary



August 30, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR KEN COHEN, ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL

FROM:  JOEL BERG
DIRECTOR NATIONAL SERVICE

SUBJECT: Establishment of Arbitration Procedures

Section 176(f) of National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12636(f)) establishes the grievance procedure to be followed for the AmeriCorps program. We have at least one AmeriCorps member of the USDA program who has exhausted the internal grievance process and now must be notified of his rights to arbitration as given in 42 U.S.C. 12636(f)(4). We require your guidance on what procedures should be established and how the arbitration process should be conducted, including how to select an arbitrator that meets the requirements of the statute. Because the statute sets forth specific deadlines for various stages of the arbitration process, I would appreciate meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this matter.

Mr. Ron De Munbrun is coordinating this matter for my office. Please contact him at (202) 690-3894 to set a time to meet or if you require any additional information.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

August 22, 1995

To: Inga

From: Joel *JR*

Per our discussion, attached is the memo from the Office of General Counsel making it clear that RECD legally can use FY95 S&E funds to run FY96 AmeriCorps projects. This memo was provided to RECD budget staff in May, so there should be no confusion at all now over this issue.

In order to use such FY95 funds, participation agreements must be signed with the new AmeriCorps Members before October 1. This is not a problem, since all our RECD AmeriCorps sites have been told to have all their AmeriCorps Members recruited by mid-September. However, this does reinforce the need to resolve the RECD funding issue as soon as possible.

Call me at 720-6350 if you have any additional questions. Thanks for your help.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the
General
Counsel

Washington,
D.C.
20250-1400

MAY 12 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR JOEL BERG
DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL SERVICE

FROM: Kenneth E. Cohen 
Assistant General Counsel
Research and Operations Division

SUBJECT: Funding of USDA AmeriCorps Program Rural
Development Participation Agreements

This clarifies the September 21, 1994, memorandum from James S. Gilliland, General Counsel, to Bob J. Nash, Under Secretary of Agriculture for Small Community and Rural Development (now the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Economic and Community Development), concerning the Farmers Home Administration ("FmHA") and Rural Development Administration ("RDA") AmeriCorps Program. In that memorandum, Mr. Gilliland concluded that, because FmHA and RDA had a *bona fide* need in fiscal year ("FY") 1994 to provide "assistance" to AmeriCorps participants by entering into the participation agreements during FY 1994, FmHA and RDA could use FY 1994 appropriations to fund the participation agreements, notwithstanding the fact that the services to be carried out by the AmeriCorps participants would be performed in FY 1995.

The opinion given in Mr. Gilliland's September 21, 1994, memorandum is not limited to FmHA and RDA use of FY 1994 appropriations. Because the *bona fide* need in each FY of the USDA AmeriCorps program is to provide immediately "assistance" to the AmeriCorps participants by entering into the participation agreements, each USDA agency involved in carrying out AmeriCorps programs may use its current FY's appropriations to fund the participation agreements, notwithstanding the fact that the services will be performed by the AmeriCorps participants in the subsequent FY.

August 15, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR USDA AMERICORPS PROGRAM MANAGERS/SITE
SUPERVISORS

FROM: JOEL BERG
USDA DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL SERVICE

SUBJECT: Review of Education Awards for USDA AmeriCorps Members Who did not
Complete Their Full Term of Service.

As we have come to this point in the first year of the program we are encountering situations that are not clearly covered in the Corporation for National Service's regulations or guidance with respect to the granting of education awards for AmeriCorps members who have not completed the full amount of service hours.

As you are aware, the determination of who is granted an education award, and in what amount, has been subject to increasing clarification during the course of the program's first year. Initially, the Corporation for National Service's regulations stated, "In general, AmeriCorps programs have the authority to define the circumstances by which a participant may be released for compelling personal circumstances." (45 CFR Part 2522.230 (a)) The definition of "compelling personal circumstances" was refined in AmeriCorps "UPDATE # 1" in January of 1995. In "Update # 2", compelling personal circumstances was defined to be:

- Sickness or critical illness of the Member
- Death or critical illness of a member of the Member's immediate family (spouse, parent, sibling, child, or guardian) or,
- Termination of a project if reassignment to another project is not possible.

A further clarification of the granting of education awards was provided in "GRANTS POLICY GUIDANCE # 2", Dated July 26, 1995.

In spite of all this guidance or perhaps because the guidance has evolved over time, we are still encountering situations that raise questions as to whether or not the individual member should be granted an education award and, if so, what type and for how much. Because our primary concern is that all USDA AmeriCorps members are treated fairly and in a consistent manner, I am taking the following steps:

1. I have established a USDA AmeriCorps Education Award Review Panel. This panel is chaired by myself and has as members, the national headquarters program managers from the Food and Consumer Services (FCS), Forest Service (FS), National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); the Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCDS), the Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service (RBCDS), a representative from the Corporation for National Service (CNS) General Counsel's office and a representative from the CNS Grants office. Mr. Ron De Munbrun of my staff and Ms. Dee Difiore of NRCS will also be members and act as recorders.
2. To ensure that all USDA AmeriCorps members have been treated fairly and that the relevant guidance was applied uniformly, the panel will review all instances to-date where a USDA AmeriCorps member was granted a pro-rated education award or where an AmeriCorps member was terminated for cause after completing at least 15 % of their required service hours.
3. The review will consist of identifying the proper status of the member (terminated for cause - not eligible for an education award; release for compelling personal reason - eligible for pro-rated education award; release for other than compelling personal reason - eligible for some form of education award; release for other than compelling personal reason - not eligible for education award. It will also identify the proper amount of the education award.

By completing this review I hope to accomplish three things:

1. Our members can be assured that they were dealt with fairly and consistently.
2. We have the opportunity to correct any potential misunderstandings at the field level with respect to the granting of education awards, especially instances where a member may have been denied an award but in fact is eligible for one.
3. Perhaps most importantly, we will be able to create a body of examples that we can all agree on that reflect the proper implementation of the Corporation's guidance on the granting of education awards.

At the same time as we have a requirement to conduct the member review we also have a requirement to make certain that the information contained in the CNS database concerning our members is correct. Members will have up to seven years to redeem their education awards and the only way to ensure that we don't have problems is to make certain that the information is accurate now.

To minimize any burden on you in assisting in a review of education awards/terminations and a validation of the Corporation's member database, I want to proceed as follows:

1. Attached is a copy of the Corporation's database showing the members in your state.
 - a. Please review this list to see that it includes the names of all members who have been enrolled in you program even if they left after a day or a week.
 - b. Make sure the member's name is spell correctly, the SSN # is correct and the Date of Birth is correct. If you need to make any corrections note them in the right hand margin.
 - c. The roster has a "Program Status" column and a "Trust Status" column. Check the status for your members to be sure it accurately reflects their status.

Member Status	Program Status Should Read	Trust Status Should Read
If a member is enrolled in the program and hasn't graduated yet:	E	E
If a member was enrolled, graduated and should receive a full education award	C	F
If a member was enrolled and left for compelling personal circumstances and should receive a prorated education award:	C	P
If a member was enrolled and simply left or was terminated for cause and is not eligible for an education award:	T	N

If the Program Status column is blank it means the Corporation does not have a copy of the members enrollment form. If the Trust Status column is blank it means that the Corporation does not have a copy of the Trust enrollment form. Please FAX me a copy of the missing form(s).

- d. There are several instances where we have no member name but a SSN #. Please check this sheet to see if the SSN #'s listed belong to any of your members. If so, please provide the full name and their status.

2. To conduct the member review, we intend to convene the review panel over a two or three day period and then call each of you to confirm status and circumstances of each member. We will go down each member by name that has either been terminated for cause, released and given a prorated education award, or completed the program and earned a full education award. We will be looking for the following:
- a. If the member was enrolled and then simply left the program with in a short period of time from signing up, indicate that this is what happened.
 - b. If the member was enrolled and then was terminated for cause because of problems, cite the specific reason(s).
 - c. If the member was enrolled and had to leave because of circumstances that did not fall under any accepted definition of compelling personal circumstances such as leaving to get a job, didn't like the pay or the work, etc., cite the specific reason(s).
 - d. If the member was enrolled and had to leave because of circumstances that did not fall under the accepted definition at the time but might be considered to be extenuating enough to consider meriting a prorated education award. For example, the member was scheduled to begin school in the Fall, a research grant that is critical to their school is awarded early or outside circumstances require the research to start early and so the member is forced to leave the program or sacrifice their education. Cite the specific reasons and be ready to indicate whether or not you feel the person deserves a prorated education award or if they have completed at least 900 hours of service, if they deserve at least a 50% education award.
 - e. If the member was enrolled and had to leave because of circumstances that were deemed to be compelling personal circumstances provide the specific circumstances.

This is also your opportunity to make a case for someone to receive a partial or prorated award if they have not already received one.

I realize that you may have already provided the requested information and in some instances you have provided this information more than once. All I can tell you is that I am doing everything to make sure the Corporation makes the appropriate entries and that procedures have been established to eliminate these problems in next years program. Please be assured that I am very grateful for your patience and cooperation.

The first day to convene the board is scheduled to be August 31, 1995. If you would like to FAX any material to me before hand please do so now. We will keep our calls brief and do everything we can to limit the burdens on your time. A schedule of when we expect to contact you will be faxed as soon as it is finalized.

cc: Terry Russell, CNS
Ken Cohen, USDA
Jim Coyle, USDA
Ron De Munbrun, USDA
Dee Difiore, USDA
Dave Gibson, USDA
Donna Hines, USDA
Paula Jones, USDA
John Seymour, USDA

CODES USED IN CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE
DATABASE
PROGRAM STATUS AND TRUST STATUS FIELDS

PROGRAM STATUS FIELD		TRUST STATUS FIELD	
Code	Definition	Code	Definition
C	Completed the program (end of term of service form received showing successful completion of the program)	E	Eligible for education award (trust enrollment form received)
E	Enrolled in the program (participant enrollment form received)	N	Not eligible for education award (end of term of service form received showing that person was terminated for cause)
R	Re-instated in the program	R	Receives a pro-rated education award (end of term of service form received showing that person left for compelling personal reasons and was awarded prorated education award)
S	Suspended from the program	F	Receives a full education award (end of term of service form received showing that person successfully completed the full term of service and was awarded a full education award)
T	Terminated from the program (end of term of service form received showing that person was terminated for cause)	P	Education award pending



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
INITIALS: RL DATE: 04/28/23

CONFIDENTIAL

August 1, 1995

To: Shirley Segawa
From: Joel Berg *JB*
Subject: Strategy for Finalizing the Size of the '95-96 USDA Program

I am writing to suggest that, rather than now ask USDA to reduce our planned '95-'96 AmeriCorps program year by 10% over the figure previously given to us by CNS, you allow us to continue planning for 1,500 Members --- while deferring a final decision on our program size until appropriations issues are clarified this Fall.

If you accept this suggestion, USDA would now publicize general recruitment efforts for next year, but would not announce either our total number of Members or our final operating sites for next year.

This procedure would give CNS and USDA the most leverage in negotiating with Congress, without sending Congress the false message that we are entirely ignoring their concerns about Federal agencies.

While converting some Rural Development Team Members to VISTA Members might meet some policy objectives of clarifying their ability to perform capacity-building activities, it would not relieve the political attack on the size of our program.

Obviously, if the Congress passes --- and the President signs --- appropriations language prohibiting the Forest Service from funding AmeriCorps, we will have no problem reducing the level of the USDA program to 1,350 Members. Yet, such language may be stricken either by the Senate or by a Presidential veto. (I had a very encouraging meeting this morning with a member of Senator Hattfield's staff.) Thus, I believe it would be counterproductive both politically and practically to make a firm decision at this time to cut the size of our program.

Policy Reasons a Cut Could Be Counterproductive

1) "Unilaterally disarming" before we engage in actual negotiations could harm the bargaining position of both CNS and USDA.

If we may eventually agree to reduce or dismantle Federal agency programs in order to save all of AmeriCorps, our negotiating hand will be stronger if the Federal programs are larger.

2) Downsizing the program ourselves could avoid a larger public debate that could benefit AmeriCorps.

It seems to me that our greatest weapon is the veto pen, not back-room bargaining. The opposition seems intent to avoid a large-scale public debate over AmeriCorps --- which they would lose. Instead, they seem to seek private deals which they later fail to honor. As we have seen, Senator Kassebaum promised in private not to support a filibuster --- then supported a filibuster. Congressman Lewis agreed in private not to zero-out AmeriCorps --- then zeroed-out AmeriCorps. By continuing to expand the USDA program, we would force the debate into the public discourse, where our position is much stronger than in private.

3) Reducing the program now could limit the Administration's ability to blame the opponents of AmeriCorps for limiting the program.

If we are later forced by an agreement with Congress to reduce the USDA program, we will be able to make it precisely clear to the public who was responsible for un-funding this vital program.

4) Cutting the USDA program could reduce support for the overall AmeriCorps program in key rural and suburban Congressional Districts represented by Members of Congress who hold swing votes on AmeriCorps.

Critical G.O.P. supporters like Jeffords, Snow, Gilcrest, Leach, Rogers, Torkildsen and Upton would have few --- if any --- AmeriCorps projects in their district were it not for USDA. While 21% of all Americans live in rural areas, far fewer than 21% of all AmeriCorps projects are in rural areas.

5) Reducing the size of USDA's planned program could elicit a strongly negative reaction from rural communities across the county --- many of which applied for and/or received Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities.

Attached is a chart, labeled "1996 RBCDS AmeriCorps," listing the 95 rural cities, community development corporations, counties, development districts, towns, etc. who are now expecting to receive aid through USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Team Members. While the EZ/EC initiative in rural areas has taken a while to fully get off the ground, Rural Development Team Members serving in those communities have provided tangible, immediate help. These Members are particularly critical in communities that we euphemistically call "champion communities;" i.e., communities that applied for but were denied EZ/or EC designation. Many of EZ/EC applicant communities have told USDA that receiving the placement of a USDA AmeriCorps Member has been their single most valuable benefit --- and in some instances, the only benefit they credit --- received from the Clinton Administration. Incredibly enough, one community leader told me personally that receiving an USDA AmeriCorps Member was even more valuable to his community than winning a designation would have been.

6) Downsizing a part of AmeriCorps that gives the most direct credit to the President could harm our overall effort's to explain the Administrations' accomplishments.

With the possible exception of the NCCC, no AmeriCorps program is more closely identified with the President than that of USDA. While Governors often take at least partial credit for state-funded projects, the Administration gets full credit for the USDA program. All our press releases --- national and local --- mention the President. All our project signs, uniforms, stationary, business cards, banners, videos, etc. prominently feature AmeriCorps. I believe that our opposition understands this, and that this is one of the prime reasons they are intent on eliminating Federally-run projects.

7) Scaling-back the USDA program would eliminate some of the most broadly-supportable service performed by AmeriCorps.

USDA projects never even come close to political advocacy; rather, USDA projects meet what I call the "Jesse Test" --- performing tasks that would be supported by everyone from Jesse Jackson to Jesse Helms. By explaining how our Members renovate picnic areas in national forests, aid flood recovery, improve rural housing, provide nutrition education to senior citizens, help municipal recycling efforts, and restore urban parks, we can greatly help CNS shed the false perception that AmeriCorps pushes a narrow ideological agenda.

8) Limiting Federal agency programs unintentionally reinforces the libertarian argument that the Federal government is incapable of reinventing itself in order to run effective programs.

True, a small but dedicated band of far-right, anti-government activists are focusing on Federal agencies as supposedly the worst part of AmeriCorps; but it is important to note that many of these ideologues do not think either USDA or AmeriCorps should exist at all. They are so strongly opposed to our AmeriCorps programs mostly because they help prove that government actually can work well.

Practical, Program Reasons That a Cut Could be Counterproductive

1) Asking the Department to immediately cut 10% of all its positions --- nearly a month after CNS communicated the size of our '95-96 program --- could have a negative impact upon our ability to finalize recruitment, complete project planning, and utilize remaining FY95 funds in order to ensure the highest quality projects possible in time for next year's launch.

All our sites have now prepared objectives, workplans, and recruitment plans in expectation of a 1,500-Member program. Thus, it is ironic --- but true --- that it would now be much more difficult for USDA to implement a 1,350-Member program than a 1,500-Member program.

2) Reversing the original CNS decision could harm employees morale.

Over 200 USDA employees from throughout the country just attended a week-long training in Houston to prepare for running a 1,500 person program. They are already greatly worried that they are being asked to run a program that Congress may soon eliminate. If they believed the Administration was lessening its commitment to Federally-run programs, it could further harm morale. Our employees can certainly understand opposition from Congress, but they are unable to accept significant changes in internal support.

3) Reducing the USDA program would have the unexpected impact of increasing the cost per Member.

By stabilizing overhead costs and increasing funding from non-USDA partners, the Department would be able to support an increase to 1,500 members with only a slight increase (8%) in USDA spending. The overall per-Member Federal costs for would decrease by 13%, from \$19,711 to \$17,060 (not including educational award). The decrease in per Member costs would be less pronounced in a 1,350 Member-program.

4) Decreasing the USDA program would hurt the long-term institutional ability of USDA to run such programs.

Top Departmental officials representing 11 different agencies engaged in a painstaking, year-long process to identify \$25 million in funding for USDA AmeriCorps projects and to run extensive national competitions to include projects in the Department's program. Any significant changes now required in our program by CNS could start to unravel the countless comprises and negotiations that resulted in the final USDA program for next program year.

I look forward to discuss these and other matters with you in the very near future.

CC: Meg Maguire, Susan Stroud, Steve Selby

1996 RBCDS AmeriCorps

RB	Status	ID #	Applicant Entity	Address	City	State	ZIP	Counties	Phone	Fax	Contact Person
1	CH	13	Mat-Su Resource Conservation & Development Inc.	351 Parks Highway, Suite 100	Wasilla	AK	99654	Matanuska-Susitna Borough	907-373-1062	907-373-1064	Mike Simms
1	CH	111	Northwest Arctic Borough Economic Development Commission	P.O. Box 1110	Kotzebue	AK	99752	No Counties	907-442-2500	907-442-2027	Chuck Green
3	CH	171	Lower Kuskokwim Economic Development Council	P.O. Box 154	St. Mary's	AK	99658	No Counties	907-438-2233	907-438-2200	Susan Anderson
1	CH	2	Crowley's Ridge Development Council, Inc.	P.O. Box 1497	Jonesboro	AR	72403-1497	Polk	501-935-8610	501-935-0291	Bobby Yopp
1	EC	20	Mississippi County, Arkansas EOC, Inc.	211 N. Broadway	Blytheville	AR	72316	Mississippi	501-532-2348	501-532-2625	Sam Scruggs
1	CH	58	East Central AR Ec. Dev. Corporation - West Memphis	125 East Grant Street	Forrest City	AR	72335	St. Francis, Lee Monroe, Cross, Jackson, Woodruff, Polk	501-633-7686	501-633-8752	Shirley Tucker
1	EC	84	East Central Arkansas Economic Development Corporation - Brinkley	125 East Grant Street	Forrest City	AR	72335	St. Francis, Lee Monroe, Cross, Jackson, Woodruff, Polk	501-633-7686	501-633-8752	Shirley Tucker
1	EC	91	Newton County Resource Council	P. O. Box 513	Jasper	AR	72641	Newton	501-446-5898	501-446-2424	Nancy Haller
1	CH	136	Mid-Delta Enterprise Community	610 South Biscoe Street	Helena	AR	72342	Phillips, Monroe, Lee	501-338-6406	501-333-3629	Margaret Staub
1	EC	166	Southeast Arkansas Enterprise Community Partnership	P. O. Box 371	Dermott	AR	71638	Chicot, Desha, Ashley, Drew	501-538-5236	501-538-5586	Hurley M. Jones
1	EC	183	East Central Arkansas Economic Development Corporation - Forrest City	125 E. Grant Street	Forrest City	AR	72335	St. Francis, Lee, Monroe, Cross, Jackson, Woodruff, Polk	501-633-7686	501-633-8752	Shirley Tucker
1	CH	18	Eloy Chamber of Commerce	305 Stuart Blvd., P.O. Box 788	Eloy	AZ	85231	Pinal	520-466-3411	520-466-4698	Jenny Garvin
1	EC	168	City of Douglas	425 Tenth Street	Douglas	AZ	85607	Cochise	520-364-7501	520-364-7507	Adriana Garza
1	CH	168	City of San Luis	P.O. Box S, 23222 First Street	San Luis	AZ	85349-2027	Yuma	520-627-2027	520-627-3879	Victor Stevens
1	EC	35	Imperial County Enterprise Community	836 Main Street	El Centro	CA	92243	Imperial	619-337-7814	619-337-8907	Maria Matthews
1	CH	61	City of Shafter	336 Pacific Avenue	Shafter	CA	93263	Kern	805-746-6365	805-746-0607	Paul Saldana
1	EC	71	City of Watsonville	215 Union Street, 2nd Floor, P.O. Box 5000	Watsonville	CA	95077-5000	Santa Cruz	408-728-6033	408-761-0736	Carlos Palacios
1	CH	79	Kings Community Action Organization	1222 W. Lacey Blvd., Ste. 201	Hanford	CA	93230	King	209-582-4386		Juanita Galaviz

1996 RBCDS AmeriCorps

1	CH	131	Planada Community Development Corporation	2222 "m" Street	Merced	CA	95340	Merced	209-385-7366	209-385-7375(2)	Gloria Cortez Keene
1	CH	153	City of Hollister	375 Fifth Street	Hollister	CA	95023	San Benito	408-636-4316	408-636-4310	Barry Johnson
1	CH	207	County of Fresno, I-5 Business Development Corridor	1575 Eleventh Street	Firebaugh	CA	93622	Fresno	209-659-2043	209-659-3412	L. Keyth Durham
5	EC	89	Marianna Chamber of Commerce	P. O. Box 130	Marianna	FL	32447	Jackson	904-482-8061	904-922-9596	Karen Prentiss
1	CH	157	South Georgia Regional Development Centers	P.O. Box 1223, 320 West Savannah Avenue	Valdosta	GA	30603	Tift, Lowndes	912-333-5277	912-333-5312	Dr. Amanda Brown
1	EC	211	Crisp/Dooly EZ/EC Coordinating Committee	118 E. 12th Ave.	Cordele	GA	31015	Crisp, Dooly	912-273-9570	912-273-9571	Lonnle Edenfield
2	EC	216	CSRA Regional Development Center	P.O. Box 2800	Augusta	GA	30914		706-737-1823	706-737-1459	Tim Maund
1	CH	73	City of Ft. Dodge	819 1st Avenue South	FL Dodge	IA	50501	Webster	515-573-8321	515-573-5097	Dennis Plautz
1	CH	198	City of Cairo	P.O. Box 151/1501 Washington Avenue	Cairo	IL	62914	Alexander	618-734-1840	618-734-9346	Helen Bishoff
1	CH	70	Flat Woods Community-Based Development Corporation, Inc.	Route One, Box 476	Oneida	KY	40972	Clay, Leslie, Owsley, Perry	606-847-4819	606-847-4359	Doug Amett
1	CH	90	Kentucky Communities Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.	P. O. Box 490	Barboursville	KY	40906	Knox	606-546-3152	606-546-5057	Louis Elliott
1	CH	125	Kentucky River Area Development District	381 Perry County Park Road	Hazard	KY	41701	Breathitt, Knott, Lee Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry, Wolfe	606-436-3158	606-436-2144	Linda Gayheart
1	EZ	159	Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation	P. O. Box 1738, 362 Old Whitley Road	London	KY	40743-1738	Jackson, Clinton, Wayne	606-864-5175	606-864-5194	Jerry Rickett
1	CH	165	Big Sandy Area Development District	100 Resource Drive	Prestonburg	KY	41653	Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin, Pike	606-886-2374	606-886-3382	Roger Recktenwald
1	CH	172	City of Bowling Green, Operation P.R.I.D.E.	859 Fairview Avenue	Bowling Green	KY	42101	Warren	502-745-0090	502-745-0090	Kathie Curtis
1	CH	195	Appalachian Foundation Inc.	300 Louisa Street	Catlettsburg	KY	41129	Elliot, Lawrence	606-739-5191		David Salisbury
1	CH	212	Lake Cumberland Area Development District	P.O. Box 1570, Lakeway Drive	Russell Springs	KY	42642	Casey, Pulaski, Wayne, McCreary, Clinton	502-866-4200	502-866-2044	Bennie Garland
1	CH	TN127	Bell County	P.O. Box 788, North 20th Street	Middlesboro	KY	40965	Bell	606-248-1075	606-248-8851	B.G. Edwards
1	CH	TN186	McCreary Co. Fiscal Court (TN 186)	P.O. Box 579	Whitley City	KY	42653	McCreary	606-376-2050	606-376-9499	Bruce Murphy

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1	CH	TN19	Cumberland Valley ADD	P.O. Box 1740, 342 Old Whitley Road	London	KY	40743-1740	Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, Whitley	606-864-7391	606-878-7361	James Cass
1	CH	54	South Central Planning & Development Commission	P.O. Box 846	Thibodaux	LA	70302	Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, Terrebonne	504-446-0514	504-446-0515	Craig Roussel
1	CH	72	Clifton Choctaw Reservation, Inc.	P.O. Box 32	Gardner	LA	71431	Rapides	318-793-8796	318-793-8796	Anna Neal
1	CH	100	St. Tammy Community Housing Resource Board	2992 Pontchartrain Dr.	Slidell	LA	70458-0203	St. Tammany Parish	504-649-3859	504-645-0095	Emma Dixon
1	EC	115	Madison Parish Police Jury	404 E. Green St.	Talulah	LA	71282	Madison	318-574-3451	318-574-3122	Thomas Williams
1	CH	119	City of Plaquemine	P.O. Box 675	Plaquemine	LA	70765-0675	Iberville, Ascension	504-687-3116	504-687-7418	Kristine Morales
1	CH	152	Southern Mutual Help Association, Inc.	5002 Old Jeanerette Road	New Iberia	LA	70560	E. St. Mary, W. St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, Plaquemine	318-367-3277	318-367-3279	Lorna Bourg
1	CH	160	St. Landry Economic Inducement District	361 S. Main St	Opelousas	LA	70570	Landry Parish	318-948-1202	318-948-6301	Jack Tolson
1	CH	164	St. Mary Community Action Agency, Incorporated	P. O. Box 271	Franklin	LA	70538	St. Mary	318-828-5703	318-828-5754	Almetra Franklin
1	CH	170	Northeast Acadia Development Corporation (NADCD)	P. O. Box 218	Church Point	LA	70525	Acadia, St. Landry	318-684-3030	31-684-6891	Carole Guldry
1	CH	173	Town of Cullen	P. O. Box 679	Cullen	LA	71021	Webster	318-994-2263	318-994-2191	Bobby Washington
1	EC	215	Macon Ridge Economic Development Region, Inc.	3830 Front St	Winnsboro	LA	71295	Catahoula, Concordia, Franklin, Tensas	318-435-3781	318-435-2308	Buddy Spillers
1	CH	221	Project Celebration, Inc.	580 West Main	Many	LA	71449	Sabine	318-256-6242	318-256-2064	Tamara Baxter
1	CH	226	City of Covington, Louisiana	P.O. Box 778	Covington	LA	70434	St. Tammany	504-892-1811	504-898-4723	Nahketah Bagby
1	CH	4	Town of Edwards	101 Front Street	Edwards	MS		Hinds	601-852-5461	601-965-5384 (RECD Office)	Mayor Daron Pritchard
1	CH	9	Holly Springs/Marshall County	160 South Memphis Street	Holly Springs	MS	38635	Marshall	601-252-4280	601-252-4281	Eddie Lee Smith
2	CH	14	Madison County Human Resource Agency	Post Office Box 726	Canton	MS	39046	Madison	601-859-5703	601-859-2023	Walter Jones

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12	EZ	45	Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance (MDEZA)	819 Main Street	Greenville	MS	38701	Bollivar, Washington, Sunflower, Leflore, Humphreys, Holmes	601-335-5291	601-335-5295	Harry Bowle
5	CH	108	Alcorn State University	1000 ASU Drive #1285	Lorman	MS	39096	Claiborne, Jefferson	601-877-2908	601-877-6694	Dr. T.J. Pinnock
1	EC	140	Tallahatchie Housing, Inc. - RECD	P.O. Box 860	Webb	MS	38966	Tallahatchie, Quitman, Yalobushe, Panola	601-375-8030	601-375-8070	Edna Winford
1	EC	140	North Delta Planning and Development District, Inc.	P.O. Box 1496	Batesville	MS	38606-1496	Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie	601-561-4100	601-561-4112	Glen Brown
1	CH	174	Yazoo Community Action Inc.	P. O. Box 290	Yazoo City	MS	39194	Yazoo	601-746-5742	601-746-0910	Arthur James
1	CH	203	Natchez Adams County Economic Development Authority	123 S. Pearl Street	Natchez	MS	39120	Natchez	601-445-7518	601-445-6653	James Shelby
1	CH	241	Tunica County	P.O. Box 1496	Batesville	MS	38606-1496	Tunica	601-561-4100	601-561-4112	Glenn Brown
1	EC	189	Lumber River Council of Governments	4721 Fayetteville Road	Lumberton	NC	28359	Robeson	910-618-5533	910-618-5576	Jim Perry
1	CH	214	Town of Boone	P.O. Drawer 192	Boone	NC	28607	Watauga	704-265-3206	704-265-3607	Jim Byrne
1	CH	214	Madison County	P.O. Drawer 192	Boone	NC	28607	Madison	704-265-3206	704-265-3607	Jim Byrne
1	EC	67	La Jicarilla Enterprise Community	P.O. Box 1914	Taos	NM	87571	Taos, Rio Arriba, Mora	505-758-8681	505-758-5538	Anita LaRan
2	CH	80	Eastern Plains Council of Governments	104 West Second Street	Clovis	NM	88101	Curry, Roosevelt	505-762-7714	505-762-7715	Lisa Noble
1	CH	98	NW New Mexico Council of Governments	208 West Coal	Gallup	NM	87301	McKinley, Cibola	505-722-4327	505-722-9211	Patricia Lundstrom
2	EC	85	Illinois Valley Community Response Team	P.O. Box 356	Cave Junction	OR	97523	Josephine	503-592-4440	503-592-4796	Al Koski
1	CH	156	Fay Penn Economic Development Council	Integra Bank Building, Ste 487, P.O. Box 2101	Uniontown	PA	15401-1701	Fayette	412-437-7913	412-437-7315	David Roger
1	CH	27	Denmark Community Outreach Enterprise Committee	131 South Palmetto Avenue	Denmark	SC	29042	Bamberg	803-793-3676	803-793-5409	Elona Carolyn Davis
1	CH	83	Penn Center	P. O. Box 126	St. Helena Island	SC	29920	Beaufort	803-838-2432	803-838-3139	Emory Campbell
1	CH	99	Allendale-Barnwell Redevelopment Program	P. O. Box 343	Fairfax	SC	29827	Allendale, Barnwell	803-632-3693	803-584-7042	Charles Riley
1	CH	121	The Greater Orangeburg Enterprise Community Coalition	878 Highland Circle	Orangeburg	SC	29115	Orangeburg	803-534-4298	803-533-3792	John Stroman
1	EC	186	Scott County Executive	407 Industrial Land, Suite 2	Onelda	TN	37841	Scott	(615) 659-6380	615-569-5710	Leslie Winningham

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1	CH	188	Norris Lake Enterprise Community	P. O Box 332	Tazewell	TN	37879	Claiborne, Union, Grainger, Hancock, Campbell	615-626-7211	615-626-1149	Q.G. Fortson
1	CH	21	Quanah Economic Development Corporation	Box 327	Quanah	TX	79252	Hardeman	817-663-2690	817-663-6241	Lorraine Clements
2	CH	49	City of Luling	P.O. Box 630	Luling	TX	78648	Caldwell	210-875-9358	210-875-5860	Linda Moore
2	CH	59	Middle Rio Grand Development Council		Uvalde	TX		Uvalde, Val Verde, Zavala			
1	CH	76	City of Gonzales		Gonzales	TX					
1	CH	92	Dimmit County Commissioners Court	103 North Fifth Street	Carrizo Springs	TX	78834	Dimmit	210-876-2323	210-876-5036	Charles Johnson
1	EC	107	Rio Grande Valley Empowerment Zone-C/O Valley Chamber of Commerce	P.O. Box 1499	Weslaco	TX	78599	Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Willacy	210-968-3141	210-968-0210	David Gonzalez
1	CH	12	New River Valley Planning District Commission	1612 Wadsworth Street, P.O. Box 3726	Radford	VA	24143	Montgomery	703-639-9313	703-831-6093	Holly Larson Lesko
3	EC	218	The Economic Empowerment & Housing Corporation of the	P.O. Box 814	Nassawadox	VA	22413	Northampton, Accomack	804-442-4509	804-442-7530	Monte Penney
1	EC	116	Yakima County	P.O. Box 329	Sunnyside	WA	98944	Yakima	509-839-0399	509-839-7462	Dave Fonfara
1	CH	177	Grant County Community Action Council	604 West 3rd Avenue	Moses Lake	WA	98837	Grant	509-765-9206	509-765-9619	Ken Sterner
1	CH	137	Mingo County Commission	P.O. Box 2239	Williamson	WV	25661	Mingo	304-235-2673	304-235-3479	Virginia Branham
1	CH	138	Wyoming County Commission	P.O. Box 309	Pineville	WV	24874	Wyoming	304-732-8000	304-732-9659	Jeffrey Lusk
1	CH	139	City of Fairmont	P.O. Box 1628	Fairmont	WV	26555	Marion	304-366-3331		Don Goldbloom
1	CH	184	P.R.I.D.E In Logan County, Inc.	699 Stratton Street, McDade Hall	Logan	WV	25601	Logan	304-752-8033	304-752-6868	Ervin Queen
1	CH	185	Webster County Commission	112 Bell Street	Webster Springs	WV	26288	Webster, Nicholas	304-847-5602	304-847-2120	
5	EC	187	McDowell County Action Network	P.O. Box 158	Wilcoe	WV	24895	McDowell	304-448-2118	304-448-3287	Cliff Moore
1	CH	196	City of Morgantown	389 Spruce Street	Morgantown	WV	26505	Monongalia	304-284-7404	304-284-7430	David Bruffy, William Bechtel
1	CH	205	Lincoln County Economic Development Authority, Inc.	P.O. Box 100	West Hamlin	WV	25571	Lincoln	304-824-3838	304-824-5804	Gerry Stover
1	CH	206	Barbour County Development Authority	124 N. Main St	Phillippi	WV	26416	Barbour	304-457-1225	304-457-1225	Lisa Mundy
1		RDC	West Virginia Rural Development Council	101 Dee Drive	Charleston	WV	25311	Barbour, Central Appalachia, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Webster, Wyoming	304-558-1240	304-558-1241	Joe Barker

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July

Divider Title: _____



July 24, 1995

MEMORANDUM

To: Greg Frazier, Martha Phipps

From: Joel Berg *JB*

Subject: Approval Needed for Next Year's AmeriCorps Program

The compromise rescissions bill just passed by Congress basically spares the Corporation from National Service (CNS) from significant cuts in FY95 funding. Consequently, CNS has informed USDA that it will allow the Department to expand its AmeriCorps program to 1,500 Members in at least 44 states from the current total of 1,200 Members in 38 states.

By lowering overhead costs and increasing funding from non-USDA partners, the Department will be able to support this large increase (25%) of Members with only a slight increase (8%) in USDA spending. Largely because the Forest Service is dramatically decreasing per-Member costs, the overall per Member costs for the Department would decrease by 13%, from \$19,711 to \$17,060. (These costs do not include the \$4,725 educational awards provided to each member by CNS).

USDA agencies propose to increase their direct spending to sponsor Members from \$23.653 million in FY95 to \$25.589 million in FY96. (See attached chart). While NRCS, FS, FCS, and ARS propose maintaining the current level of funding, RECD would increase from \$3.100 million in FY95 to \$4.163 million in FY96; FSA would increase from no funding in FY95 to \$500,000 in FY96. Of course, these spending levels are contingent upon Congress providing the FY96 appropriations levels now expected by the agencies.

While it is likely that the Senate will not include language in the Interior Appropriations prohibiting the Forest Service from running AmeriCorps projects, the House has done so. However, if we wait until both Houses finally agree on this issue next Fall, we will be unable to run our program. In order for our sites across the country to begin recruiting enough quality Members for the program in advance of the start of next's years "class" in October, the Department needs to immediately announce the tentative approval for next year's sites. Therefore, I recommend that all our announcement materials and discussions make it clear that our projects are tentative and that their final implementation is dependent upon Congress allowing USDA to use appropriated funds for these projects.

I propose to work with OCR to ensure that all appropriate Congressional offices are notified in advance of our announcement. Please inform me whether you or the Secretary need additional information before approving next year's program.

The Department's AmeriCorps program continues to attract broad-based support. Attached is a copy of a letter from Congressman Meehan of Massachusetts requesting that we fund the proposed project in his District; if the Secretary approves the proposed funding, we will be able to meet the Congressman Meehan's request, as well as many similar requests from Congresspeople and constituency groups.

CC: Ali Webb, Scott Shearer

July 22, 1995

To the 1995 Graduating Class of AmeriCorps/DC Service Corps:

It is my honor to congratulate you heartily on this day of celebration marking the end of your year of national service.

You have helped begin an important new chapter in American history by inaugurating the very first year of the new AmeriCorps national service program.

You have "gotten things done" while strengthening your community, expanding educational opportunity, and promoting personal responsibility.

You have fed hungry people, protected the environment, educated school children, and escorted senior citizens. You have made a real-life difference in lives of countless fellow citizens.

You have worked hard, sweated greatly, struggled mightily --- and even smiled frequently.

I know that your work this year was only the beginning of a life-long commitment to public service.

You have made your city and your country proud. Congratulations again for all your achievements.

Sincerely,

Joel Berg
Director of National Service



July 17, 1995

To: AmeriCorps/USDA Staff

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service, USDA JB

Subject: **17 "GOLDEN RULES" FOR SUCCESSFUL AMERICORPS PROJECTS**

(Or How to Get Things Done, Stay Out of Trouble, Have Fun, Advance Your Career, Stay Sane, and Serve Your Country --- All While Keeping Your Agency, Your Community, and Your AmeriCorps Members Ecstatic)

1) Recruit Members from a wide diversity of backgrounds.

Projects work best when members learn from the varying life experiences of each other. Vigorously seek out energetic and service-minded Members who are diverse by family income, gender, educational level, race, and physical abilities.

2) Communicate clearly and honestly to potential Members about the true nature of the work of be performed.

The greatest single determinant of whether Members will do a good job, enjoy their service, and serve the full term is whether they had a realistic understanding during recruitment about what they should expect in the project. Don't gloss over hardships. If most of the year will be spent in back-breaking, physical environmental work outdoors during both searing heat and biting cold, say so up front. If much of the service will be in crime-ridden neighborhoods, admit it. If Members will spend part of the year living in primitive cabins or spike camps, explain the reality that the "adventure" of such an experience often wears off quickly.

3) Engage Members in productive work that achieves concrete, measurable results in the community on a daily basis.

Plan carefully so that --- from the first to the last day of the term of service -- all the Members are busy performing challenging and important work. Make sure that you obtain the needed tools, equipment, and materials --- and provide the necessary training -- well in advance of the start of each new task.

4) Provide continual supervision and guidance to all Members.

Even the older and better-educated Members of the Rural Development Team need constant management, encouragement, and aid. Be clear with your own supervisors that you will need to spend massive amounts of your time on the AmeriCorps program to meet your legal and programmatic management responsibilities. However, you are likely to find that, the greater investment of your time and energy in the program, the greater dividends for your agency and community.

5) Balance direct service activities with adequate training and education.

AmeriCorps projects may spend up to 20% of their time in training and educating Members --- most successful projects set aside the equivalent of one day a week to specifically focus on training and educating Members. In addition, continually look for "teachable moments," that is, times during the actual service work that you can highlight a specific aspect of the work to educate about a related topic.

6) Place all service activities in perspective to ensure that Members understand why those activities are important.

Nobody likes to feel they are engaged in pointless or futile activities. Thus, if Members must engage in seemingly mundane or especially difficult tasks, fully explain why those tasks are critical to achieving the greater goal of protecting the environment, fighting hunger, or re-building rural communities. AmeriCorps members will do almost any task asked of them --- if only that task is placed in context. Continually remind Members that they are getting important things done, while strengthening their community, expanding their own educational opportunity, and learning the importance of personal responsibility. Also, allow Members to have time for "critical reflection" and discussion about the meaning of their service.

7) Treat AmeriCorps Members as peers, not as children.

Actively engage Members --- perhaps through formalized committees --- in helping plan projects, set disciplinary procedures, and create education programs. Treat all Members with respect and dignity, even as you are strict about enforcing the rules of the program. Be sensitive to cultural differences. And remember -- it wasn't that long ago that YOUR parents thought your hair was too long and your music was too loud.

8) Continually bolster the AmeriCorps "spirit or service."

Focus on always building among the Members a spirit of commitment to national service, the community, and each other. One good way to do this is to coordinate frequent interactions between your members, those of other USDA agencies, and those non-USDA projects. (For ideas, refer to pages 127 - 129 of the operations manual).

9) Create projects that flow logically from community service objectives to workplans to quarterly reports.

Each operating site should have its own community service objectives that explain specifically and clearly in non-technical language precisely what service will be accomplished and how that work will benefit the surrounding community; these objectives should have concrete, numerical goals. Each operating site should have its own workplan that explains precisely how --- on a weekly basis --- that work will be carried out. Subsequently, each operating site needs to report each quarter exactly what numerical progress has been achieved towards meeting the site's community service objectives. (See chapter starting on page 137 of operations manual.)

10) Involve the local community in every aspect of the program.

Include community-based organizations, local elected officials, and community residents in every step of recruitment, project planning, evaluation, and media outreach.

11) Do not allow members to displace existing workers or duplicate the typical work of either the government agency or non-profit organization for whom they service.

AmeriCorps Members may not be used to perform service or duties performed by current or former employees of the sponsoring organization. Additionally, AmeriCorps Members "may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality in the program." In other words, if an office is already performing a certain function, AmeriCorps Members cannot be used to perform more of that function. On the other hand, the service performed in each USDA AmeriCorps project must carry out both the general mission of the Department and the specific mission of the USDA agency funding that project. The best way to deal with this paradox is to ensure that all our AmeriCorps Members are engaged in creative new projects which our Department would not normally be able to support, but nevertheless directly meet critical community needs.

12) Rapidly discover -- and fix --- problems.

All sites will have unforeseen problems sometime in the course of the service year --- we promise it. The real question is whether the sites discover the difficulties, admit them, and take rapid and constructive steps to correct them. The best sites are the best problem solvers.

13) Work as a team with all other USDA agencies.

This year, the Department is more fully empowering our field staff throughout the country by institutionalizing a new management structure at the state level that will ensure joint management of all of AmeriCorps USDA projects by an inter-agency Coordination Team composed of each agency's AmeriCorps project directors.

All major decisions in a state that affect more than one agency AmeriCorps program --- such as decisions involving recruitment, joint service projects, launch activities, coordinated training activities, etc --- will be determined by a consensus of the AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team. (Please refer to a July 10 letter from myself to Meg Maguire of the Corporation for National service.)

14) Know the legal requirements and restrictions of AmeriCorps.

The good news is that AmeriCorps has relatively few legal restrictions and regulatory burdens. However, it is critical for you to be extremely familiar with all the laws, rules, and regulations that do exist --- especially since AmeriCorps is so very different legally and structurally from any other USDA program. Please pay special attention to the restrictions on service activities (p. 11 of the operations manual) and the personnel requirements for AmeriCorps Members (chapter starts on page 69 of operations manual).

15) Pay careful attention to required paperwork.

Yes, paperwork is a royal pain in the anatomy, but the paperwork required for AmeriCorps is vital. Make sure that all your sites and all your Members have the proper forms completed to ensure official registration or exit from the program. Make sure you write and submit your quarterly site reports in a timely and complete manner. Include your "Operating Site ID" on all forms.

16) Always reinforce the central message of AmeriCorps.

Work hard to make sure that neither your members, your community, nor your agency lose site of the overall mission of AmeriCorps: Getting Things Done While Strengthening Communities, Expanding Opportunity, and Demanding Responsibility. Please make sure to include the two standard paragraphs about the program (p. 133 of operations manual) in any press releases, brochures, or recruitment information, or promotional materials you produce. Be careful to always point out that the USDA AmeriCorps program is only a small part of the overall AmeriCorps program. Be careful to never imply that AmeriCorps is either a "jobs" program or that AmeriCorps Members are agency employees.

17) Constantly document your successes.

Comprehensively collect thank you letters from every person or organization your members service. Produce "before and after" photographs and videotapes of projects. Ask members to keep personal journals of their achievements. Make copies of all newspaper articles, audio tapes of all radio reports, and videotapes of all television reports. Force yourself and your AmeriCorps Members to shed much of your usual modesty ---- take credit for all your wonderful accomplishments.

Surely, there are countless other factors that produce effective AmeriCorps projects, but these top 17 are a good start.

Thank you again for all your hard work in building and expanding this exciting new program!



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

July 17, 1995

To: Tom Hebert, Dave White

From: Joel Berg JB

Subject: Continuing Problems with NRCS AmeriCorps Media

In the months since we mutually agreed to test a new Departmental policy for AmeriCorps media outreach, the problems with NRCS AmeriCorps coverage have increased rather than decreased. Since that time:

- 1) An article in Tennessee once again implied that USDA ran the entire AmeriCorps program. (Eli Segal's deputy again wrote me a handwritten note asking why ---- since USDA is only about 1/18th of the overall program --- the Department continues to take credit for the whole thing.)
- 2) In Oregon, an article announced expansion of, and recruitment for, the second year of a project that had not yet been approved by either the Department or the Corporation for National Service. In addition, the article said an AmeriCorps Member would spend the year "creating a handbook."
- 3) An article about our South Carolina projects quoted a Member as saying: "Our program is only 25 percent federally funded... Seventy-five percent comes out of the existing budget of the National (sic) Resources Conservation Service. They had to eliminate a few positions to fund us - that's how much they believe in the program." I'm sure you agree how dangerous it is to give the false impression either that NRCS is not Federally-funded or that we fired employees to fund AmeriCorps.
- 4) In Virginia, an article outlined how a Member was spending the whole year year basically preparing press releases and coordinating meetings.
- 5) Despite having had a extremely negative article already written about our project in East. St. Louis --- and despite my having asked the NRCS project manager there to contact me immediately if that reporter ever called about another story --- I just learned that from the Corporation for National Service (not NRCS) that the same reporter was writing another negative story about the project.

Given the ever-growing Congressional and media scrutiny of AmeriCorps, it is more important than ever that we work together to ensure that the Department communicates only accurate information about the program. I hope we can discuss this matter after our AmeriCorps staff training in Houston this week.

From: Tom Hebert
To: jberg
Date: 7/18/95 2:36pm
Subject: Americorps Issues

I am in receipt of your memo and am having the agency give me their sense of the matter now. You mentioned working on some of these things in your memo at the meeting in Houston. Please let me know if you do not get what you need out of that so you and I can set a time to visit.

Tom

New Hampshire

July 12, 1995

To: Paula Cole Jones
From: Joel Berg
Subject: Remaining Questions About Next Year's NRCS Projects

Clustering:

Arizona -- Will all Members actually report to work in Holbrook every morning?

Kansas- ⁷Farlington is not on my map. In what county is it located?

Maryland - Who are supervising the DC and Maryland programs? Is there a project to be renewed on the Eastern Shore?

Michigan - Lake Leelanau is not on my map. What county is it in?

New Mexico - Albuquerque cluster only has three Members, who will be many hours way from the 4-Corners.

Oregon - My map doesn't list Butte Falls -- where is it?

South Carolina - Why do all the clusters only have ^{Four}five Members?

For the following states, I list distances of operating sites from their cluster meetings locations. How can we be assured that Members will meet regularly?:

Arkansas - Little Rock is 70 miles from Fargo, and Marion is 63 miles from Fargo.

California - Twenty Nines Pines is 78 Miles from Apple Valley; Ukiah is 78 miles from Petaluma.

Idaho - St. Anthony is 74 miles from Pocatello; Moscow is 75 miles from Coeur d'Alene.

Louisiana - Cullen is over 100 miles and Rustin is 83 miles from Natchitoches.

Maine - Rockland is a far longer ride from Gorham than 1 hour.

Michiagn - Sandusky is 115 miles away from Ann Arbor. Traverse City is 115 miles away from Fremont. Kalamazoo is 80 miles from East Lansing

Nebraska - Plainview is 75 miles from Sioux City.

New Jersey - Mount Holly is at least an hour and a half ride from Bridgewater

Oregon - (25 or 28 Members?) Coquille is over 100 miles and Drain is over 120 miles from Grants Pass.

Tennessee -- Wavery is 79 miles from Jackson

Utah - Why does the Price cluster have only three Members?

Vermont - As I can personally attest from having driven the ride, Williston is at least an hour and a half ride from Randolph.

Virginia - Manassas is 92 miles (2 hour drive) and Ketville is 71 miles from from Richmond)

West Virginia - Morgantown is 93 miles and Moorefield is over 120 miles from Buckhannon.

Objectives:

Fours Corners #3a and #4a focus on impermissible aid to for-profit businesses; they need to be totally changed. #3B and #4B focus only on planning and should be changed.

New Hampshire - Objectives #2 and #4 would impermissibly focus on helping a for-profit business --- entirely new objectives need to be created.

Oregon - Grants Pass --- Both the objectives and my site visit indicate to me that the members are not providing direct community service as required by CNCS regulations. This year, many of the members served as de-facto staff for the sponsoring organizations by simply performing office work and coordinating meetings. Serving the needs of an agency or a non-profit group --- no matter how worthy the organization --- is not the same as directly serving the public. The recent recruitment article is received bolstered this belief by "writing handbooks." These objectives still need to be dramatically revised --- they need to indicate not just how many people will be "educated," but precisely how we can measure the cleaner water. What will demonstration projects actually do? Needs assessments can not be a AmeriCops task for a year --- our members need to fill needs, not just survey them.

South Dakota - #1 How will water sampling result in improved water quality? #2 - Members can not just identify archeaological sites --- they should take concrete actions to preserve them.

Tennessee ---

Rutledge - #2 would violate CNS mandate that our members not spend the year producing promotional materials; it should be entirely changed. #5 has Members focus on grantswriting and should be entirely changed.

Humphreys - #2 Needs to be more specific about trails , etc. to be built.

Washington County #3 focuses only on data collection and should be completely changed to focus on direct service.

Other Program Management Issues:

Illinois - Is NRCS ending the Pittsfield project? How will the East. St. Louis project be managed and how will the numerous current problems be redressed if the community college is no longer a sub-grantee?

Massachusetts - Does NRCS intend to continue the Boston project?

New York - We still need many more specifics on how the service crews will be managed on a daily basis.

North Carolina -- How exactly will Public Lands Team Members be managed?

Draft

July 10, 1995

Meg Maguire
Senior Program Officer
Corporation for National and Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

Dear Meg:

Thank you for your July 3, 1995, letter outlining concerns that must be addressed by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in developing our 1,500-member AmeriCorps program for next year. The Department takes your concerns very seriously and will work diligently to address them.

We greatly appreciate that you and your staff have taken so much time and care to thoughtfully review all the details of our very voluminous application.

We will discuss your concerns in great depth with over 150 AmeriCorps/USDA site managers from throughout the country who will be in Houston next week to attend our second annual staff training. Subsequent to this training --- by July 31, 1995 ---the Department will present CNCS with a detailed description of the revised objectives, cluster locations, and site supervisors for each AmeriCorps/USDA operating site.

In the meantime, this letter responds to each major concern outlined in your letter:

A) Management Structure

The Department intends to institutionalize a new management structure at the state level that will ensure joint management of all of AmeriCorps/USDA projects by an interagency Coordination Team composed of the state AmeriCorps/USDA project directors, who represent each of the four USDA agencies.

The basic concept of jointly managing all USDA projects has already succeeded this year in South Carolina, the Four Corners, and Louisiana, where our field staff themselves took the initiative to cooperatively coordinate AmeriCorps/USDA projects.

By empowering rank-and-file career employees at the local level, such joint management structures will institutionalize the long-term success of AmeriCorps within USDA and have many benefits for CNCS, the state commissions, the host communities, and the Members themselves.

Some of the expected benefits of this new approach:

- 1) Providing CNCS and USDA with one point of contact per state -- instead of dozens -- with whom to interact on pressing matters such as problem solving, long-term project planning, Member complaints, site visits, Congressional inquiries, joint service days, etc.
- 2) Ensuring that USDA rapidly responds to all challenges and can continuously improve all projects throughout the service year in a manner that is consistent with the vision of AmeriCorps, the agency's internal culture and resources at the local level.
- 3) Providing CNCS and USDA with one set of aggregated quarterly reports by state, instead of handfuls of separate, site-specific quarterly reports for each state.
- 4) Ensuring an accurate and timely distribution and collection of all required CNCS and USDA forms for Members and sites, resulting in compatible CNCS and USDA databases that are maintained throughout the service year.
- 5) Reducing the confusion to CNCS and to the state commissions as to which USDA agency or employee is ultimately responsible for the proper functioning of each site.
- 6) Increasing the number and quality of the interactions among AmeriCorps/USDA Members and between AmeriCorps/USDA Members and Members of other AmeriCorps programs.
- 7) Ensuring that all AmeriCorps/USDA Members --- no matter how rural their placement --- are continually educated on the full context of the program through regular trainings, frequent joint service activities, consistent distribution of the weekly AmeriCorps/USDA newsletter, and full use of modern telecommunications technologies.
- 8) Providing a "fail-safe" method for USDA agencies to "pick up the slack" if one agency either loses its AmeriCorps site managers or otherwise fails to provide the resources to effectively manage the program in the state.

- 9) Expanding the pool of rank-and-file career employees who are experienced in, and dedicated to, the Department's AmeriCorps program. These employees will thus be able to continue to effectively manage Americorps/USDA projects, regardless of potential future changes in political leadership in the Department.
- 10) Providing a model of realistic methods to reinvent government for other Federal agencies.
- 11) Reducing the roles of top-heavy Washington-based or regionally-based bureaucracies that inhibit the free flow of information between CNCS, USDA, and local project managers.
- 12) Avoiding both the duplication of effort and the waste of taxpayer dollars that occur when different agencies simultaneously perform overlapping duties in the states.
- 13) Utilizing the AmeriCorps experience of state and regional facilitators by more fully integrating the agencies into funding and managing AmeriCorps/USDA on an equal basis.
- 14) Bolstering the overall "Team USDA" reorganization efforts, which already combines USDA support functions in field offices throughout the country.
- 15) Expanding and improving media coverage for each project in a way that is consistent with the overall message of both USDA and AmeriCorps.
- 16) Better coordinating interactions with state commissions, Congressional offices, state and local governments, and interest groups.

Here's how the new structure will work:

* Each agency operating the program in any given state will assign one USDA employee to be the "State AmeriCorps Project Director." These Project Directors will either directly supervise that agency's AmeriCorps/USDA Members throughout the state or supervise the work of all operating site managers in the state who will directly supervise AmeriCorps/USDA Members.

* Each agency's State AmeriCorps Project Director will participate in an "AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team" which will meet at least once a month, either in person or by conference call. Each of these meetings will have a formal agenda prepared by one of the Team members. Staff representing Anti-Hunger projects and Public Lands and Environment projects will participate equally in this Team.

* Any agency that fails to provide a participant for these meetings for two consecutive months will be notified that it may lose AmeriCorps/USDA authorization the following year. If the situation is not resolved by the third monthly meeting, the agency in the state will be automatically eliminated for consideration for AmeriCorps/USDA projects the future year. While this measure may seem harsh, it is designed to guarantee that all agencies in a state that desire to benefit from the participation of AmeriCorps/USDA Members are willing to devote the staff resources necessary to manage those Members. Any agency may designate a representative of a sub-grantee or another governmental or non-profit agency to represent that agency on the AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team, provided that the representative is qualified and able to fulfill all the duties of Team Membership.

* All major decisions in a state that affect more than one agency AmeriCorps/USDA program --- such as decisions involving recruitment, joint service projects, launch activities, training activities, etc --- will be determined by a consensus of the AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team.

* As long as decisions are permissible based on law, regulations of CNCS, and budgetary restrictions, the USDA Director of National Service will work with the Office of the Secretary, Under and Assistant Secretaries, Agency Administrators and Chiefs, and regional and state agency leadership to ensure that the decisions of the AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team are supported by every level of the Department.

* While each participant in an AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team will individually answer to their individual supervisors in the state or region, the Team as a whole will report to the national AmeriCorps/USDA working group, comprised of the USDA Director of National Service, his staff, and the national AmeriCorps coordinators for each agency funding projects. Anytime a State Management Team fails to reach a consensus on an important issue, the Team can request that the issue be resolved by the national AmeriCorps/USDA working group.

* Each AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team will self-select Team participants to serve in each of the four following functions:

Project Management Liaison - This person will serve as the prime contact with CNCS, state commissions, the USDA Director of National Service, and agency national AmeriCorps/USDA coordinators. A finalized list of Project Management Liaisons will be provided to CNCS in advance of the launch of next year's program; all complaints or questions about individual AmeriCorps/USDA projects should be made directly to the Liaison in each

state. The Liaison will have broad knowledge of all AmeriCorps/USDA projects in the state and will coordinate overall project planning, problem solving, and continuous improvement activities.

Data Reporting Liaison - The Data Reporting Liaison will be responsible for distributing, explaining, and collecting all forms and reports required by CNCS and USDA for both Members and operating sites. This Liaison will compile all quarterly reports in their state, and provide one comprehensive set of aggregate data.

Cluster Meeting Liaison - The Liaison will coordinate all cluster meetings for the Rural Development Team, all joint signature service projects, and Member "swaps" between programs within the state or nationally. The Liaison also coordinate all joint Member and staff training activities. Additionally, the Liaison will be responsible for preparing the monthly staff meetings of the AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Team and distributing meeting agendas.

External Affairs Liaison - This individual will coordinate all outreach to the media, local Congressional offices, state and local governments, and interest groups. The Liaison will coordinate all joint recruitment activities.

* Clerical duties in each state --- such as completing time sheets and travel authorizations for Members --- will be provided jointly by the agencies based on the agencies' percentage of the overall total of AmeriCorps/USDA Members state-wide. For instance, in Nevada, if the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were to sponsor 25 Members, the Forest Service (FS) were to sponsor 15 Members, and the Rural Economic Community Development agency (RECD) were to sponsor 10 Members, then 50% of the clerical support should be provided by NRCS, 30% should be provided by FS, and 20% should be provided by RECD.

In addition to creating these new AmeriCorps/USDA State Management Teams, the Headquarters AmeriCorps/USDA leadership will improve management of the program by developing new ways to communicate directly with site managers. For example, each operating site will be placed on a speed fax to obtain the weekly newsletters and important updates from CNCS and USDA.

All AmeriCorps/USDA Members will participate in either a national training conference in person or by satellite.

As for the organizational chart, the following personnel currently will be interacting with both the State Management Teams and the local site supervisors:

USDA Director of National Service -- Joel Berg
 USDA Coordinator of Administration for National Service - Ron Demunbrum
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Arboretum AmeriCorps Coordinator - Larry Winston
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At the local level, AmeriCorps project managers report to the following supervisors:

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 FCS - National AmeriCorps Anti-Hunger Coordinator Donna Hines
 Forest Service Public Lands - Forest Supervisor
 Forest Service Rural Development - Regional AmeriCorps Coordinator

NRCS - NRCS State Conservationist
 RECD - RECD State Executive Director

B) Cluster Locations

The cluster configurations in the RECD application were difficult to discern in some cases because the USDA members will be clustered with non-USDA AmeriCorps projects that were not listed in the Department's application.

All clusters will be clearly listed in the updated objectives and site information USDA will be presenting to CNCS.

C) Joint Training Activities

All USDA AmeriCorps members nationally will participate together in a national training session, either in person or by satellite.

In addition, all AmeriCorps USDA Members in a given state will attend a comprehensive training program together.

D) Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

As described in the section on "Management Structure," all the quarterly reports will be compiled and aggregated jointly by state.

In addition, all other internal and external monitoring and evaluation activities will be completed jointly by state --- or jointly across issue area. Although USDA has placed significant resources into site visits and extensive evaluation of the quarterly reports, we are in the process currently of establishing a more comprehensive protocol for the scientific evaluation of our projects nationally.

USDA is also developing common units of measurement for all agencies --- that will be calculated, sorted, and reported on one single database for the entire Department --- to measure how each sites individually and all sites in aggregate are making progress towards meeting the Department's community service objectives.

E) Coordination with State Commissions

USDA has already established highly productive partnerships with state commissions in many states, including Vermont, Kansas, and New Hampshire. Unfortunately, in some states, the Department's repeated entreaties to the state commissions have been virtually ignored.

Still, the Department intends to pay even closer attention to communication with state commissions. Once CNCS approves our final site locations and community service objectives, we will send those to each state commission. In addition, we will make a practice of sending each of our projects' quarterly reports to the relevant state commissions. We will increase our efforts to work with state commissions on recruitment activities, orientation and training, and joint service activities.

F) Coordination of Messages to the Press

The message of AmeriCorps will be a prime topic of the staff training in Houston.

As described above under Management Structure, the Department will designate one media coordinator by state, simplifying our efforts to communicate one unified message as a Department.

Furthermore, the revised AmeriCorps USDA Operations Manual mandates that all USDA press releases, brochures, and recruitment materials include a standard two paragraphs about the overall AmeriCorps program. The manual also specifically relates "dos" and "don'ts" for communicating about AmeriCorps.

Lastly, the Department will provide each local site manager with sample press releases on a wide variety of topics such as recruitment, the release of quarterly reports, the launch, and the National Day of Service.

G) Rural Economic and Community Development

No USDA AmeriCorps Member ---- even those being renewed--- will spend the bulk of next year grant writing or fundraising, assisting for-profit businesses, coordinating meetings, developing plans, and or/prdocuing economic development promotional materials. In fact, the Department made it clear to RECD **this** year that such activities were unacceptable for the bulk of a service year. In only a few cases did some project slip through the cracks and nevertheless focus on such activities; next year, none will do so.

While the Department's quarterly reports clearly demonstrate how Rural Development Team Members are perform direct community service, many of our objectives in the application do not communicate this as clearly. We will clarify and or totally re-vamp such objectives. All RECD-sponsored Members will engage in direct service that achieves concrete, measurable results in communities addressing human, environmental, educational, and/or public safety needs.

In the case of projects that may indirectly benefit for-profit business, we will ask the CNCS Office of General Counsel to approve the project's community service objectives before the Department approves the project.

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The community service objectives for Los Angeles and the Member Development Objectives for Jackson will be clarified in the updated objectives and site listings document.

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In the case of problematic NRCS projects in Atlanta, Boston, Grants Pass, Oregon, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, the projects are either being eliminated or entirely revamped. The updated objectives and site listings document will clarify these issues.

Both the Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment and the Chief of NRCS has pledged to clarify the AmeriCorps line management structures of NRCS to ensure that both CNCS and USDA are satisfied that all potential problems encountered with NRCS projects are immediately and substantively addressed.

J) Forrest Service

The updated objectives and site listings document will clarify how all Forrest Service projects will relate to either the environment, sustainable agriculture, or other direct service meeting human or educational needs.

Sincerely,

Joel Berg
Director of National Service



July 10, 1995

Meg Maguire
Senior Program Officer
Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

Dear Meg:

Thank you for your July 3, 1995, letter outlining concerns that must be addressed by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in developing our 1,500-Member AmeriCorps program for next year. The Department takes your concerns very seriously and will work diligently to address them.

We greatly appreciate that you and your staff have taken so much time to thoughtfully review all the details of our voluminous application.

We will discuss your concerns in great depth with over 150 AmeriCorps USDA site managers from throughout the country who will be in Houston next week to attend our second annual staff training.

Subsequent to this training --- by July 31, 1995 ---the Department will present CNS with a detailed description of the revised objectives, cluster locations, and site supervisors for each AmeriCorps USDA operating site.

In the meantime, this letter responds to each major concern outlined in your letter:

A) USDA Agencies Involved

We agree with the Corporation that there is a need to reduce the number of information sources and management contacts for the agencies involved in USDA AmeriCorps projects. That is why we are recommending a new management structure --- outlined below --- that will providing CNS one point of contact per state covering all USDA agencies instead of current system of up to dozens of contacts in each states representing various USDA agencies.

However, USDA believes it would be extremely unwise to limit only four USDA agencies to involvement in AmeriCorps, given that a total of eleven different USDA agencies --- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Forest Service (FS), Food and Consumer Service (FCS), Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCDS), Rural Business & Cooperative Development Service (RBCDS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), Agricultural Research Service (AMS), and Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) --- are actively involved in supporting AmeriCorps by providing funding and/or technical assistance. This diversity and depth of support greatly aids the quality of the USDA AmeriCorps program. Also, by tapping issue experts already within the Department, we are able to get double the "bang for the buck" for taxpayer dollars already spent on USDA and CNS.

Given that the Farmer Service Agency has developed a tremendous amount of institutional knowledge about AmeriCorps by providing facilitators in every state during our first program year, we feel very strongly that the agency is highly qualified to directly fund projects this year as part of joint management teams with other agencies in each state.

Also, we strongly support continuation of the program funded by the Agricultural Resources Service at the National Arboretum. This project works on one of the most under-funded but highly-visited areas of public lands in the nation -- providing an unparalleled treasure for residents of a very poor neighborhood of the District of Columbia. Furthermore, the Members in this project receive considerable technical training in botany and provide service far more sophisticated and educational than could be provided by a seasonal work crew. In order to meet the concerns of CNS about the service ethic of this site, we will increase the already-frequent interactions between this site and our other environmental and our anti-hunger team in the District of Columbia.

B) Management Structure

The Department intends to institutionalize a new management structure at the state level that will ensure joint management of all of AmeriCorps USDA projects by an interagency Coordination Team composed of the state AmeriCorps USDA project directors, who represent each of the involved USDA agencies.

The basic concept of jointly managing all USDA projects has already succeeded this year in South Carolina, the Four Corners, and Louisiana, where our field staff themselves took the initiative to cooperatively coordinate AmeriCorps/USDA projects.

By empowering rank-and-file career employees at the local level, such joint management structures will institutionalize the long-term success of AmeriCorps within USDA and have many benefits for CNS, the state commissions, the host communities, and the Members themselves.

Some of the expected benefits of this new approach:

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Berg', with a stylized, cursive script.

Joel Berg
Director of National Service

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

June

Divider Title: _____

June 26, 1995

To: Paula Cole Jones and Dave White, NRCS
Amy Wilson and Marlene Daniels, Southwest Oregon RC&D

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service

Subject: Press Release Announcing Recruitment for Next Year

It disturbs me that the Southwest Oregon RC&D released information to the media announcing recruitment for next year, even though their project has not been formally approved for next year.

It was made clear in the May 3 memorandum (copy attached) that "No press release or other information requesting applicants should be given to the media before such formal notification."

The Department and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) have repeatedly made it clear that there is a strong possibility that the Southwest Oregon RC&D AmeriCorps project may not be renewed because the Members may not be providing direct community service as required by CNCS regulations. The article attached provides further evidence that the Members may not be meeting the vision of AmeriCorps, implying that one of the Members is spending his AmeriCorps year "writing handbooks."

No more public recruitment activities should continue at this site --- or any site -- until our final grant award with CNCS is finalized.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (202) 720-6350 or Katherine Gibney at (202) 720-4369.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

June 22, 1995

To: Meg Maguire, Steve Selby

From: Joel Berg, USDA

Subject: How the USDA Rural Development Team (RDT) is Rescuing Rural Communities While Advancing the AmeriCorps Vision

Rural America Has Unique --- and Urgent --- Needs

Although both the media and policy makers often advance the stereotype that America's worst problems occur only in inner cities, many poor rural counties are ravaged by high rates of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, environmental degradation, illiteracy, and --- increasingly --- crime.

In truth, rural communities face some of the nation's gravest problems, yet often receive less help from government agencies and private charities.

While 21% Americans live in rural America, fully 25% of all Americans in poverty live in rural areas. In every year since 1960, 535 rural counties have had poverty in excess of 20%. In 1990, poverty rates in these rural counties ranged from 20% to a shocking 63%; these rural counties had average poverty rates of 29%, compared to 18.3% in non-rural counties.

Full-time, year-round workers in rural areas are more likely to be poor than full-time, year-round workers in non-rural areas. As a result, 30% of all "working poor" American families live in rural areas.

Even as we near the 21st century, one out of every fifty rural homes still lacks running water. While even inner city home ownership is now increasing, rural home ownership decreasing.

Rural youth are more likely than non-rural youth to drop out of high school. In addition, while 23% of non-rural youth complete college, only 13% of rural youth complete college.

Now wonder why --- at a time when most non-rural communities are gaining population --- most rural communities are losing population. Especially troubling is the fact that, out of the relatively few rural Americans who do obtain college educations, even fewer return home, thus fueling a "rural brain drain."

Most Rural Problems Stem from the Lack of High-wage Jobs

In last four decades --- as countless small family farmers were forced out of agriculture --- the number of rural residents employed in farming dropped from eight to three million. Decreases in mining and timber harvesting also cost jobs throughout rural America. Real earnings per job remain consistently lower in rural areas than in non-rural areas. From 1979 to 1989, these earnings declined by 6.5 percent in rural areas. Today, non-rural residents earn about \$25,000 per job compared to about \$30,000 per job in non-rural areas.

Thus, rural America's great single need is economic development.

The RDT Design is Uniquely Suited to Filling the Needs of Rural Communities

All USDA RDT project proposals are created at the lowest possible level --- usually at the county or town level --- and then are subject to a vigorous national competition process before being included in the USDA proposal to CNCS. Many of the proposals were submitted directly by the non-profit organizations who applied for and/or received empowerment zone and enterprise communities designations. The process is so competitive that USDA submitted only about one third of its original proposals to CNCS.

While crew-based physical work projects are highly suitable to urban areas, they are generally not the ideal service mechanism for rural areas. Work crews of five or ten in rural areas would be too difficult to recruit and too large for most managers to ensure that they had a continuous supply of useful work projects. As demonstrated by the long-standing Delta Service Corps, rural areas most benefit from a model that combines individual placements with frequent joint activities. Such hybrid "team/individual placement" models are best able to "get things done" in rural areas while still advancing the total vision of national service.

Furthermore, rural areas often need technical assistance more so than they need pure physical labor. While many rural areas lack modern "physical infrastructure," they also lack the "human infrastructure" --- highly educated and trained individuals --- who can help solve their most vexing problems. The RDT provides precisely that kind of human infrastructure.

In addition, the RDT provides direct, hands-on supervision for each Member, usually by an expert professional in the service field in which the Member is

working. This approach results in concrete, measurable achievements that really matter to the host communities.

The RDT combines the best of the youth corps, individual placement, and professional corps models in order to best meet local needs.

RDT Projects Are Precisely Filling Each Community's Greatest Needs

USDA has fully embraced the ideal that AmeriCorps be community-based, community-designed, and community-run. The RDT has different community service objectives for each and every individual site, based on the needs of each local community. Consequently, the RDT Members are providing a wide variety of services in each of the following areas: running water and indoor plumbing, rural economic development, emergency response and prevention, fisheries restoration, alternative uses of natural resources, environmental education facilities, community facilities improvement, personal responsibility development, tree planting, windbreak restoration, riparian improvement, tourism to boost local economies, community crime prevention, land use planning, recycling promotion, American Indian tribal empowerment, woodland management, water quality protection, rural housing improvement, and cultural resource preservation.

Most of the Members who are working on economic development issues are based in communities that applied for and/or received designation for rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise communities; they are working on economic development because the communities themselves --- through an extensive public involvement processes mandated by the EZ/EC application --- identified economic development as their greatest need.

In the relatively small number of RDT sites where Members are working on protecting natural resources and preserving and promoting cultural landmarks in order to increase tourism, they are doing so because the communities themselves identified increased tourism as their greatest goal. Tourism is currently the nation's top growing industry --- and it is the industry that is most likely to maintain "sustainable communities" because it has a minimal negative impact upon the local environment while it has the greatest potential to utilize the local workforce.

Given that a top goal of AmeriCorps is to directly fill the most urgent local needs identified by area residents, neither CNCS nor USDA should ignore communities when they tell us clearly that their greatest need is economic development or tourism promotion.

Few AmeriCorps Programs --- Other Than the RDT -- Are in Rural Areas

While 21% of all Americans live in rural areas, far fewer than 21% of the 20,000 Members of AmeriCorps are serving in rural areas.

RDT Members are concentrated in the rural regions that have suffered from persistent and widespread poverty over the past decades, such as Appalachia, the Texas/Mexico border, Mississippi Delta, and the Four Corners (New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Arizona). Few large AmeriCorps projects --- other than those of USDA -- exist in most of these areas.

It is important to also note that, while most AmeriCorps projects are located in urban districts represented in Congress by liberals who already support AmeriCorps, many RDT projects are in districts represented by moderates and conservatives who hold "swing" votes vital to survival of AmeriCorps.

RDT Projects Team Are Meeting CNCS Priority Areas

It is obvious to everyone that RDT environmental education projects relate to "school success," that RDT pre-school literacy projects relate to "School readiness," that RDT block crime watch projects relate to "Crime prevention," that RDT housing projects relate to "Home," that RDT land use planning projects related to "Community neighborhood environment," and that RDT watershed protection projects relate to "Natural environment." Yet it requires a detailed explanation to communicate how RDT economic development projects and tourism promotion projects meet CNCS priority areas; however, the explanation is compelling.

RDT economic development projects relate to "Home" by "rebuilding neighborhoods." These projects also relate to "Home" by creating jobs, thereby reducing poverty, which reduces the number of people who are hungry. Economic development is a far more effective long-term approach towards fighting hunger than is simply continuing to support soup kitchens and food pantries. These economic development projects also directly relate to the new priority area of creating "sustainable communities."

RDT tourism development projects are focused on renovating local historic sites, thereby focusing on "Neighborhood environment," and/or on protecting local scenic attractions, thereby focusing on "Natural environment." By focusing on long-term methods to boost local economies in ways that protect the environment, these tourism development projects are also directly focused on the new priority area of "sustainable communities."

Tourism and Economic Development Projects Have Multiple Benefits

When RDT Members are working on economic development projects, they generally are not aiding large corporations nor are they helping with "smokestack chasing" to lure large factories to their area. Rather, they are helping area residents leave welfare by starting their own small businesses, creating local bartering programs for goods and services, matching up local craftspeople with markets, or working to restore historic downtown areas. Thus, even if a few projects do not create as many jobs as we hope, they still empower individuals and communities. Welfare recipients begin to learn alternatives to dependence, local craft traditions are preserved, and communities enjoy renewed pride and public safety in their downtown areas.

When RDT Members are working on tourism promotion projects, they are generally not aiding tourism commissions or government or private tourism entities. Rather, they are usually preserving local scenic attractions, creating new museums, mapping historic trails, preserving American Indian ruins, creating historic tours, building nature trails, etc. Thus, even if the projects do not increase tourism and create as many local jobs as we would like, they still protect the environment, preserve cultural resources, enhance educational activities, and build community pride.

For example, a RDT member based in Winnfield, Louisiana (the hometown of both Huey and Earl Long) is helping create the Louisiana Museum of Political History, along with a plan to attract new tourists to the area to visit the museum. Even if no new tourists visit Winnfield, the entire county will be greatly enriched by allowing county residents to learn more about their history.

All RDT Projects Are Legal

No RDT project is designed to directly aid any individual for-profit entities. As explained in part of the revised USDA operations manual --- 1,500 of which are about to be distributed to all our AmeriCorps Members and staff --- the Department has adopted strict guidelines to prevent RDT members from engaging in activities that solely aid individual for-profit entities (pages attached). All RDT economic development projects are focused on general community development and advancement, not on increasing profits for single corporations.

USDA will continue to work with Terry Russell to further refine these guidelines. Furthermore, Terry has agreed to individually review the community service objectives and workplans for any USDA project related to economic development. If Terry objects to any single project, we will either immediately revise that project to his satisfaction or we will drop that project.

The RDT Is Tackling Problems Similar to Other, Non-USDA, AmeriCorps Projects

Other, non-USDA AmeriCorps projects, are performing economic development activities similar to some of those in the RDT.

For instance, according to the briefing book for the most recent CNCS board meeting, Hope VI sites --- in partnership with the National Council of Churches of Christ, the Columbia School of Business, and the Kauffman Foundation --- are providing "Loans and technical assistance to public housing residents and their neighbors interested in starting businesses."

I also understand that a legal team in Los Angeles is helping community residents start new businesses.

The RDT Program Gives CNCS Impressive Reporting Numbers

While crew-based work has many advantages, the logistical difficulties of such work (daily central meeting site, transportation to service site, tool distribution, etc.) often reduce the amount of actual service that can be directly performed.

RDT Members, who are quasi-professionals working on their own or in very small groups, avoid many of the logistical problems of crews and thus spend a large percentage of their time in direct service than most AmeriCorps members.

Furthermore, because many RDT members are using the "volunteer leveraging model," they are able to get more service performed for their areas than AmeriCorps projects in which Members physically do all the service themselves.

For instance, while many AmeriCorps members work for community organizations, certain RDT Members have been able to create new community organization themselves.

This advantage gives the RDT very impressive numbers to report each quarter, helping CNCS bolster its overall reporting numbers.

In other words, individual RDT Members are often able to report quarterly results as impressive as those achieved by much larger crew-based projects. Some examples:

- * In Brinkly, Arkansas, one Member provided to an EZ/EC community on locating resources for asbestos removal affecting 2,200 residents, organized the provision of natural gas to 25 people, and helped locate funds for new sewer waste pumps affecting 2,300 people.
- * One Member in New Mexico worked with the Carson National Forest and the village of Vallecitos to help locate fresh water and develop a fresh water delivery system that will provide 98 people with safe drinking water.
- * In Machias, Maine, one Member implemented a series of environmental conservation workshops which benefited 98 blueberry farmers.
- * In McDowell County, West Virginia, two Members are providing technical assistance, tools, equipment, and general encouragement to sustainable agriculture gardening project involving 1,300 local residents.
- * In Barbourville, Kentucky, one Member developed a series of lifeskill classes for 15 low-income families; demand was so great that she added two more classes, thereby serving a total of 45 low-income families.
- * In Madison County, North Carolina, one Member organized the opening --- attended by over 150 people --- of a family resource center to provide information on social assistance and human services in the area, and to connect families, schools, churches, government agencies, and businesses. She also organized 15 volunteers to assemble furniture, set up the computer, and clean the facility housing the center.
- * Five Members in Oregon organized, coordinated, and implemented a riparian enhancement demonstration involving the recruitment of 70 volunteers who planted 4,000 native trees and shrubs along 1,400 feet of streambank.
- * In Hancock County, Tennessee, 6,700 residents will soon have an approved collection site to take their recyclables to as a result of just a few AmeriCorps working through the state red-tape to permit a convenience center collection site. These Members also helped create a process to 111,000 residents in 5 counties to have a way to safely dispose of toxic household hazardous waste and crafted a unique and innovative program to help residents offset expensive and valuable landfill space by teaching consumers not to buy products with excessive packaging.
- * In Maine, a few Members trained students in ten high schools and citizens in eleven community groups in water quality monitoring and data management.

- * In Blytheville, Arkansas, one Member conducted low-income home buyers workshops, assisted in developing a housing preservation pre-application, and approximately 2000 families in completing applications for home buyer and utility assistance.
- * In Barbourville, Kentucky, one Member is assisting in the completion of an emergency shelter to serve 225 people by recruiting various civic, religious, and volunteer groups to contribute supplies and support, and develop a schedule of needed resources.
- * In Sumorset, Kentucky, a member has taken 11 applications for home repairs, worked on a project with the local sewer commission to install sewer lines for 300 families, and assisted a widow and an elderly home-bound man to find money for home repairs through a non-profit organization.
- * In Aztec, New Mexico, one Member has assisted applications for single family housing loans for the elderly and disabled, completed a housing preservation grant for the Upper Fruitland Chapter of the Navajo Nation, organized and implemented a home buyers education workshop for 150 loan applicants and community members, conducted three other education workshops at senior citizen centers for 88 seniors, completed a business assistance and retention survey for the NW New Mexico Council of Governments, and gave presentations to three realty companies on the RECD Guaranteed Loan Program which were attended by 28 people.

RDT Projects Will Have Longer-Term Impacts Than Most AmeriCorps Projects

While activities such as renovating a neighborhood park, repairing homes in low-income neighborhoods, or building a trail on a national forest are noble and important, most of these projects will have limited-long term impacts. Furthermore, many of these types of projects could theoretically be completed by volunteers with little training or even by a prison work-crew.

In contrast, RDT projects usually provide long-term help that will systematically improve the "structure" of communities. By creating jobs, we will decrease hunger for years to come. By improving watersheds, we will protect water quality potentially for decades.

Rather than just provide remedial "band-aids" for problems, the RDT systematically empowers communities to work with AmeriCorps to solve their own problems.

In my view, one of CNCS' greatest accomplishments is your focus not only on short-term "Community service" objectives, but also on long-term "Community-building objectives." The RDT supports that focus by so seriously concentrating community-building.

The RDT is Vital to the Rural Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Community Initiative

This year, most rural communities that applied for and/or received EZ/EC designations have RDT Members placed in them. We are proposing that next year we also give RDT members to all the remaining applicant communities that desire them. Unlike other AmeriCorps Members who just coincidentally are placed in EZ or EC communities to perform service only slightly related to the EZ/EC program, RDT Members are specifically implementing the strategic plan of that EZ or EC.

While the Administration's EZ/EC initiative in rural areas has taken a while to fully get off the ground, RDT Members serving in those communities have provided tangible, immediate help to those communities. These Members are particularly critical in communities that we euphemistically call "champion communities;" i.e., communities that applied for but were denied EZ/or EC designation.

Many of these communities have told USDA that receiving the placement of a RDT Member has been their single most valuable benefit --- and in some instances, the only benefit they credit --- received from the Clinton Administration.

Incredibly enough, one community leader told me personally that receiving an RDT AmeriCorps Member was even more valuable to his community than winning a designation would have been.

CNCS has continually highlighted the ties of AmeriCorps to the EZ/EC initiative. The RDT is the strongest of all such ties. Given the vast resources the Administration has devoted in other areas to EZ/EC, it makes sense to bolster the commitment of AmeriCorps to this initiative.

Independent Sources Continually Verify the Success of the RDT

The RDT has garnered countless letters of support from community leaders, environmental organizations, county governments, housing groups, etc. Furthermore, Out of the literally hundreds of newspaper clips about the RDT from every region of the country --- not one has been negative. These independent observers in the press have continually made it clear that RDT members are not office-based bureaucrats, but are directly serving their communities filling critical needs.

Furthermore, in states where the state national service commissions have reacted favorably to our overtures to provide information about, and site visits to, our RDT projects, their reaction has generally been favorable.

The RDT Helps Stem the Rural Brain Drain

By helping well-educated and highly-motivated young people return to live and serve in the communities in which they grew up, the Rural Development Team is one way to slow the tide of the rural "brain drain."

Given the wide gap between rural and non-rural college completion, this impact is vital to both the communities and to the Members.

All RDT Members Do Work in Teams

While some at CNCS believe that the RDT is purely an individual placement model, in reality it is a hybrid team/individual placement/professional corps approach.

All RDT Members work out of "clusters" that are within a fifty mile radius or one hour drive of a central meeting point.

The Members general meet together physically --- or by conference call --- once a week.

The RDT project design is similar to the project design of many non-USDA AmeriCorps projects described as "team" models. For instance, the BAYAC AmeriCorps projects in San Francisco --- which I recently visited along with the board of CNCS --- work in separate agencies four days a week and meet together by crews one day a week; in fact, given that some BAYAC service sites might be two hours away from each other in traffic, those service sites are, in practice, more distant from each other than most RDT sites are from each other.

Additionally, all RDT Members in a state gather regularly for meetings and/or signature service projects, including for the Launch, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Earth Day, National Day of Service, and graduation.

All RDT Members engaged in economic planning and rural housing work met together for a week-long training in Memphis that focused on the AmeriCorps vision and community-building techniques. Next year, we will have even more focus on national and regional trainings for all RDT Members.

RDT Projects "Look and Feel" Like AmeriCorps Projects

While RDT projects generally do not fit the AmeriCorps stereotypes of just 18-24 year-olds repairing a park or immunizing children, the all RDT projects do meet the greater AmeriCorps vision of "getting things done" while strengthening communities, expanding educational opportunity, and encouraging personal responsibility.

Furthermore, RDT projects all are designed to perform direct service, not just build capacity. Each of the first two USDA quarterly reports detail a combined total of 27 pages of such direct service achieving concrete, measurable, immediate results. Next year, USDA will pay even greater attention to this focus on direct service.

The RDT program is incredibly diverse by race, gender, physical ability, and age. The vast majority of RDT members will use their educational award to either re-pay students loans or pay for graduate school.

Unlike some AmeriCorps Members in non-USDA programs who may think they are in a "jobs" or "education" program, RDT Members have the "AmeriCorps" spirit and are seriously dedicated to community service.

All RDT Members Have National Identity

While many non-USDA AmeriCorps grantees almost hide their AmeriCorps identification under the identification of the youth corps or other sponsoring organization, all USDA sites --- including the RDT --- make national AmeriCorps identity a top priority. All USDA Members have received significant orientation in the AmeriCorps vision and are exposed to constant reinforcement of that vision.

All USDA AmeriCorps Members are required to wear one AmeriCorps article of clothing at all times --- either a tee-shirt, sweat-shirt, cap, or button.

All USDA AmeriCorps publicity and recruitment materials --- brochures, press releases, background papers, displays at county fairs, etc. --- are required to include the AmeriCorps USDA logo and two standard paragraphs explaining the entire AmeriCorps program.

USDA printed ---- and distributed to every site --- special AmeriCorps/USDA stationary to be used for all press releases and correspondence.

USDA printed --- and is in the process of distributing to every site --- over 1,000 permanent metal signs that will be placed at AmeriCorps service sites to identify them as such. Many of this signs will be installed as part of graduation ceremonies.

A few USDA Members have already met with the President and the Vice-President. Many have met with Secretary of Agriculture Glickman. Many other USDA Under and Assistant Secretaries and agency chiefs --- including former Peace Corps volunteer Paul Johnson --- have traveled to sites throughout the country to spread the AmeriCorps vision.

As you know, I am systematically travelling to each and every USDA site --- including RDT sites --- to spread the AmeriCorps message and help improve our projects.

Finally, each USDA AmeriCorps Member is now receiving a weekly AmeriCorps/USDA newsletter further promoting the vision of the program.

The RDT Magnifies the Impact of AmeriCorps

While the average citizen of Atlanta or Chicago might not be aware that hundreds of AmeriCorps Members are serving in their city, even the few RDT Members placed in a rural county have extremely high levels of public recognition in that county.

Through its highly productive service, the RDT program is selling the benefits of AmeriCorps each and every day in each and every region of the country.

USDA Is Serious About Continuous Improvement of the RDT

Through extensive site visits, thorough reviews of the quarterly reports, an extensive media monitoring operation, and continual conversations with project managers ---as well as comprehensive national, regional, and state staff training programs --- USDA is committed to continually improving all AmeriCorps programs in order to meet all the concerns on CNCS. Unlike some other grantees, USDA takes the input on CNCS and state commissions very seriously and acts on that input. With our recommendation to expand the RDT only slightly, USDA is planning to focus the entire next year on quality improvement.

AmeriCorps at USDA Will Thrive Long Beyond Changes in Leadership

While some may worry that the USDA program might lose its focus if Secretary Glickman or myself eventually leave the Department, the truth is that the USDA program offers far more stability and long-term quality control than AmeriCorps projects run by small non-profits led by dynamic leaders.

The USDA AmeriCorps program has been institutionalized at every level of the Department. Over 150 USDA employees from throughout the country attended a week-long training session at which Rick Allen, Meg Maguire, and many other CNCS leaders made extensive presentations. An over 200 page operations manual --- covering every topic from the AmeriCorps vision to payroll to media policy to release for cause --- is being distributed to employees throughout the country. Literally thousands of USDA employees in 38 states have now had significant and sustained contact with the AmeriCorps program.

So many key USDA employees --- at both the national and county level --- understand both the vision and programmatic details of AmeriCorps, that the Department's program is sure to flourish no matter any future leadership changes.

Prohibited Activities

Prohibited activities may not be performed by members in the course of their duties, at the request of program staff, or in a manner that would associate the activities with the national service program or the Corporation. These activities include:

1. any effort to influence legislation,
2. organizing protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes,
3. assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing,
4. impairing existing contracts for activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office,
5. engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious education or worship constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization,
6. providing a direct benefit to:
 - a. a business organized for profit,
 - b. a labor union,
 - c. a partisan political organization,
 - d. a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restriction contained in part 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and
 - e. an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities, and
7. Serving for the majority of the year in activities:
 - a. providing office support for other members,
 - b. engaging in public affairs or media outreach activities,
 - c. fundraising,
 - d. Performing routine office work.



Restrictions on Economic Planning Work

Given that many USDA Rural Development Team Members are working on projects to promote economic development, these members must be especially careful not to violate the prohibition on service providing a "Direct benefit to a business organized for profit." Members who interact with for-profit entities should ensure that their work follows the following four principles:

- 1) The service must be focused on providing a general benefit to surrounding community, not a direct benefit to an individual business.
- 2) Any benefit to an individual for-profit entity must be "incidental" and minimal compared to the direct benefit provided to the community.
- 3) All services provided by AmeriCorps Members must be advertised publicly through the media and other information sources and must be made available equally and impartially to all parties in that area.
- 4) Under no conditions should a member work full-time on a project that would benefit solely one for-profit entity.

June 7, 1995

BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR THE SECRETARY

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service

Subject: AMERICORPS FLOOD RELIEF EVENT IN MISSOURI

SPECIFICS ON THE EVENT

At a flood-damaged site in St. Charles County, Missouri, you will meet on Friday afternoon with USDA AmeriCorps Members involved in flood relief, as well as some private individuals and local government officials who have benefited from their service. The event will be open to the press. Lt. Governor Roger Wilson, who is also chair of the governor's commission on national service, is expected to join you for the event. Congressman Volkmer may attend as well.

Per your direction, the event is designed mostly for you to listen and learn, while expressing empathy for the local flood victims. It is also an opportunity for you to reiterate the Administration's support for AmeriCorps ---- and particularly the Federal agency involvement in AmeriCorps --- two days after the President vetoed the recessions bill which would have slashed the program.

You might want to start the event by speaking for a few minutes about the overall importance of AmeriCorps, and about how the USDA AmeriCorps Members in Missouri and Illinois are obtaining concrete, measurable results "getting things done" for the people of the Midwest who are suffered from both the 1993 and the 1995 flooding.

You will meet with most of our Rural Development Team Members from Missouri, who have been working on projects focused on strategies for long-term flood relief, and prevention. You will also meet with a few of our Members from the E. St Louis (some of whom you met at the Rural Conference in Illinois) who are more focused on projects requiring physical labor. No matter their regular projects, many of our Members engaged in emergency sand-bagging during the recent crisis. One Member also helped staff the FEMA center in St. Charles County.

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS FOR THE EVENT

* USDA AmeriCorps Members are "getting things done" providing concrete, meaningful help to Missouri and Illinois residents and communities who suffered from both the flood of 1993 and the current flood. While we are careful to always remember that AmeriCorps itself can not solve all the complex problems related to the flooding, they are making a real difference. Just in the last few days, AmeriCorps Members have helped with sandbagging and have staffed FEMA Centers. Perhaps even more importantly, they have been providing technical assistance and physical labor to help with long-term clean-up and restoration of communities long after the network anchors have gone home.

* AmeriCorps is just another example of how the Clinton Administration has provided immediate, non-bureaucratic assistance to disaster victims. Communities didn't have to fill out a lot of forms and applications to receive help from AmeriCorps --- when the need is present, AmeriCorps Members immediately drop their other duties to help with disaster relief. AmeriCorps provides Federal agencies like USDA with an innovative new tool to deliver services rapidly, efficiently, and compassionately.

* USDA AmeriCorps Members have helped out with disaster relief throughout the country. Our members have helped with flood relief throughout the Midwest, earthquake relief in Los Angeles, tornado relief in Iowa, and flood relief in California. Just this past week, USDA AmeriCorps Members have helped with flood relief in Louisiana, leading one flood victim to write a thank you note to USDA, stating: "To know that there are people who still care when others cannot help themselves is something you can never forget."

* 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 demands 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. Lastly, AmeriCorps is based on one fundamentally conservative idea --- if you don't work, you don't get a benefit.

* 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 reunites 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 clearly insufficient.

POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. How much is the Department spending on AmeriCorps?

A. USDA is spending about \$20,000 per AmeriCorps Member --- including the educational awards --- less than most states spend for supporting a prisoner for a year. It is a great investment in the future of the country.

Q. But how much is the Department spending in total?

In fiscal year 1995, USDA funding for AmeriCorps programs is estimated to be approximately \$24 million. Despite the fact that this is a complex program operating in 38 states, only three full-time employees are working directly on coordinating the program for the Department, with the help of other employees on rotating details from different USDA agencies. However, it is necessary to study not only the costs of the program, but its benefits as well, since the USDA AmeriCorps program serves multiple purposes that benefit taxpayers. For instance, some USDA Forest Service projects are using some funding from existing trail repair budgets. Not only are the AmeriCorps Members repairing more miles of trails than would be repaired through regular means, but they are also bringing communities together, promoting personal responsibility, and helping earn their own way through college --- all for the same budget that normally would just fund the trail repair.

Q. What are some specific tasks that have been performed by USDA AmeriCorps Members outside of Missouri and Illinois?

A. In the first two months of full operation, USDA AmeriCorps projects maintained 61.3 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails, cooked and prepared meals for over 6,000 people at soup kitchens and sorted over 93,000 pounds of commodities at food banks, repaired and restored dozens of flood-damaged areas, helped farmers and ranchers in six different states find economical ways to decrease their run-off, saved a company with 600 employees from having to re-locate to Mexico, and helped communities in three states improve their efforts to prevent and combat fires.

Q: Is AmeriCorps taking money away from existing USDA programs and thus forcing you to serve fewer citizens with those programs?

A: No, AmeriCorps is helping us more effectively deliver the programs we already have and helping us provide outreach that has resulted in more citizens benefiting from our programs --- without an overall increase in our spending.

Q: If AmeriCorps is supposed to be a community-based, non-bureaucratic initiative, than why are you using the program to create 1,2000 more bureaucrats for your agencies?

A: AmeriCorps Members are not Federal employees and they are not performing USDA office work. Rather, AmeriCorps Members are performing service that meets critical community needs, but which our agency does not now have the resources to meet. In many cases, our Members are not even working directly in Federal offices, but are working for county and state agencies and local non-profit organizations. Moreover, the service projects were not designed or implemented in Washington -- all our projects are locally-proposed and locally-administered. Each project is filling needs determined as most critical by each individual community. Consequently, most of our projects have received broad-based bi-partisan support from local leaders.

Q: Don't AmeriCorps programs decrease the number of people who actually volunteer in communities?

A: No, the facts show that all our projects actually recruit additionally community volunteers who serve side-by-side with our AmeriCorps Members.

Q: Why is AmeriCorps paying people to volunteer, which they do anyway?

A: AmeriCorps Members are performing service that requires far more time and far more technical expertise than could be provided by volunteers. Because they are serving full-time for a year --- and because this Administration wants to ensure that service will not be just for young people from rich families --- we understand that AmeriCorps Members need a small living stipend to be able to support themselves for their year of service. AmeriCorps Members earn far less than Members of the military. In addition, working your way through college is a long American tradition. AmeriCorps represents a new kind of civic compact --- sort of a "GI Bill without the GI," encourages personal responsibility while expanding educational opportunity.

USDA AMERICORPS PROJECTS IN MISSOURI

There are 12 NRCS-sponsored USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Team Members in Missouri, who work on long-term projects in which they provide technical assistance more often than physical labor. Most Members of this team have at least undergraduate degrees. Before the latest round of flooding, they were engaged in the following projects:

- * One Member is developing a flood recovery resource notebook and identifying the efficient cropland recovery techniques.

- * One Member is developing a decision support system computer model for floodplain management for St. Charles County and other local governments.

- * A Member is compiling flood plain management and water quality information and utilizing GIS to provide information to communities and individuals regarding flood recovery. This Member is completing a survey of Missouri landowners affected by the flood of 1993. The survey focuses on the extent of physical damage, economic losses, and satisfaction with federal and state assistance programs.

- * Four Members are providing information and guidance to landowners and producers in order to assist in flood recovery and natural resource management decision-making. The member in Osage and Cole counties has worked with landowners towards development of the Osage and Cole County Pasture and Hayland Management Guide Manual. Another of these Members has assisted the Elsberry Drainage District with flood recovery surveying.

- * One Member is assisting sponsors to complete 27 dam safety reports and perform maintenance on 99 floodwater retarding dams. This Member has completed brush removal on 3 dams and seeded and mulched areas on four dams.

- * Two Members are helping landowners survey and map sand deposits from the 1993 flood. They have helped twenty-one framers with this project.

- * One Member is assisting the Moniteau Creek Watershed sponsors to implement a PL-566 flood and erosion control project. This Member has provided land treatment assistance and certification for five floodwater retarding dam sites and completed drainage area determinations for ninety-one watershed project dams.

USDA AMERICORPS PROJECTS IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

The USDA AmeriCorps members serving in and around East St. Louis perform mostly physical labor, and are a mix of high school drop-outs, high school graduates, college students, and college graduates. In recent days, they have been sandbagging and performing other flood relief work. In the previous few months they:

- * Prepared 10 community garden sites for planting.

- * Planted fifty-seven trees have been planted in the National Tree Trust on the SCC campus. Compacted soils were treated with Bio Mulch as a demonstration site on the SCC campus.

- * Hundreds of plants have been started in a greenhouse for use by community groups and Members completed 50% of the renovations on the East St. Louis High School greenhouse.

- * Six miles of trails were developed on the McCully Heritage Project by AmeriCorps Members.

- * They also cleared brush and helped stabilize roads along 5 miles of highway in Calhoun County.

- * Members graded and reseeded a playground that was used for trailers during the flood and are currently installing fencing at the site.

- * A two city block area in Quincy was cleared of brush and weeds.

- * Members completed plans to develop 5 acres of wetlands into an environmental education center.

HOW USDA FITS INTO THE OVERALL AMERICORPS PROGRAM

The vast majority of AmeriCorps programs are not "run" directly by Federal agencies or the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) --- they are run by non-profit organizations, and state and local governments. CNCS makes competitive grant awards. CNCS grants are broken down into two different types: **direct grants** and **state commission grants**.

State commission grants 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 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 national non-profit organizations --- like the American Red Cross and the National YMCA --- that 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 has projects operating in 38 different states.

Eli Segal and his staff want us to continually stress that Federal programs such as USDA's are only a small portion of the overall AmeriCorps program.

WHAT THE USDA AMERICORPS PROJECTS DO NATIONALLY

The United States Department of Agriculture is sponsoring approximately 1,200 AmeriCorps Members serving in 38 states in urban and rural projects fighting hunger, protecting the environment, and re-building rural America. During their second quarter of service --- from December 1, 1994 - March 30, 1995 --- the Members provided 607,047 hours of service to their communities, bringing the total number of hours of service performed since the launch in September to 905,381. AmeriCorps Members also recruited at least 1,858 unpaid volunteers who served at least 28,057 hours.

Members of the Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team cooked and prepared meals at soup kitchens, created community gardens, conducted nutrition and food safety workshops for the elderly, sorted goods at food banks, developed nutrition education programs for schools, provided WIC outreach, began efforts to improve participation in the summer feeding program, assisted earthquake victims with emergency food information, and informed pantries about how the working poor can boost their incomes by utilizing the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Members of the Public Lands and Environment Team working on Forest Service lands performed rehabilitation and watershed protection work, reforested fire-damaged lands, constructed and maintained trails for hiking and horseback riding, planted cuttings for riparian and wildlife restorations, maintained and rehabilitated campgrounds and made campgrounds accessible for the disabled, completed timber stand improvements, restored historic sites, conducted threatened and endangered species habitat surveys, removed and installed fences, improved wildlife habitats, and hung erosion control netting on roads.

Members of the Public Lands and Environment Team working on private and local municipal lands repaired and restored flood-damaged areas, re-created fish habitats, conducted water quality monitoring, built community greenhouses, constructed urban, suburban, and rural nature trails, built playgrounds, restored windbreaks originally created by the Civilian Conservation Corps, revegetated coastal marshes, restored collections at the National Arboretum, created a safe-haven lot at a public housing development, cleaned up an urban wetland, revitalized historical sites, improved camping sites, and protected stream banks.

Members of the Rural Development Team provided service on projects related to areas such as running water and indoor plumbing, sustainable agriculture, emergency response and prevention, fisheries restoration, alternative uses of natural resources, environmental education facilities, community improvement and personal responsibility, tourism promotion, water quality protection, recycling promotion, American Indian empowerment, water quality protection, rural housing improvement, and cultural resource preservation.

THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF USDA/AMERICORPS PROJECTS

The limited cost/benefit analyses prepared by or for AmeriCorps/USDA provide that the Department's program is extremely cost-effective.

The USDA Forest Service has just calculated that its 236 AmeriCorps Members serving on Public Lands Teams performed at least \$1.51 worth of service for each \$1.00 that the American taxpayer spent to support such service. Although it is difficult to blend cost benefits from different Forest Service regions around the country, the cost-benefit figures are based on an average of the combined cost savings of all recreation projects completed. These costs included all Federal spending, including the Member stipends and educational awards. The Forest Service AmeriCorps Public Lands crews completed recreation projects for 51% less than similar projects completed by force account (if completed by Federal employees), and 68% less than similar services completed by contracted services. For example, in one area it cost AmeriCorps \$64,185 to complete 53 miles of heavy trail maintenance. The same projects would have cost \$126,000 by force account, and \$212,000 if the services were contracted.

The Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation & Development Council in Tennessee calculated that, in the first half year of the program, USDA AmeriCorps Members managed by the Council performed \$2.82 worth of service for each \$1.00 that the American taxpayer spent to support such service. In the first quarter of the program, the four USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Team Members, who are managed by the Council, performed approximately \$2.73 worth of service for each \$1.00 that the American taxpayer spent to support such service. If purchased on the "open market," one service project performed by one Member would have cost an estimated \$23,975 while another service project performed by three Members would have cost an estimated, \$50,400, bringing the total value of the service performed to \$74,375. The cost of the AmeriCorps Members, pro-rated to the four months period in which they performed the projects, was \$27,272. According to the council's second quarter report, two Members, costing the Federal government \$11,579, performed \$26,629 worth of service.

Of course, these numbers do not add in the social and economic benefits of accrued by our society when AmeriCorps enables its Members to continue their educations, serve as role models, improve the economies of their local areas, leave welfare for work, volunteer in their communities after the end of their service year, and/or help decrease crime. As you may know, such additional benefits were recently outlined a report released by the Corporation for National Service.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

June 6, 1995

To: USDA/AmeriCorps Working Group Members
From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*
Subject: Revised Objectives and Cluster Locations

As you know, the revised objectives and cluster location plans for each of next year's sites were due to my office by last Thursday, July 1. It is critical that I receive this information immediately, since we will be negotiating our final grant award with the Corporation for National and Community Service this week.

As we have previously discussed at length, no site will be approved --- and no Members for that site can be renewed or selected --- until revised community service objectives and a clear indication of the cluster locations have been approved by my office.

Thank you for your assistance.

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UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

FHI - JAL

May 30, 1995

To: Steve Selby

From: Joel Berg JB

Subject: A Remarkable AmeriCorps Personal Success Story

9 pages, including this cover

Regina Lynn's parents divorced when she was six years old, and she spent the remainder of her childhood living in various places in the country with either her father or her mother, or under the custody of a local department of social services. She became an alcoholic, dropped out from school, spent ten years married to a man who physically and emotionally abused her, and gave birth to four children. In 1988, she moved back to one of the areas she living during childhood --- rural Madison, County, North Carolina --- and overcame her alcoholism and embarrassment to go back to school to earn her high school equivalency degree. She then attended college and -- after borrowing \$1,000 to pay for a lawyer ---- successfully won a legal battle to keep custody of her children. As she writes in her attached life story, "When my children were sick, my car quit, my two year old niece destroyed my only copy of a major research paper, and the hamster died, it required great effort to stay in school." Still, she persevered and received her B.A.

On November 22, 1992, President Bush personally awarded Regina with a gold "National Literacy Honor" medallion in a White House ceremony that was later broadcast on television nationwide. (Copy of picture of this ceremony is attached.)

Regina then joined AmeriCorps, which, she writes, "Allows me to pursue my goal of family self-sufficiency one step at a time," even as she helps countless other families in Madison County. Through AmeriCorps, Regina has played a leading role in creating a new non-profit center that provides literacy education, general tutoring, job skills training, employment information, parenting information and classes, GED classes, toy making workshops, adult reading programs, and arts and crafts classes.

Through a remarkable, life-long struggle, Regina has transformed herself from a recipient of social services to a provider of such services.

I'm glad to have this opportunity to share my story with you and how I was able to face many of my fears and turn my back on feelings of helplessness. It's wonderful to know that I have a voice in the story of my life. After years of believing there was nothing I could do to change my life, I found hope on the road to family self-sufficiency. More importantly, my children, Michael, Misty, Megan, and RL are on this road with me.

When I was two weeks old, my parents moved from Libby, Montana to the mountains of Madison County, NC. Mother was anxious to return to her native home. I was a quiet child; some thought I lived in "a dream world" and was not too bright. Sometime around my sixth birthday, my parents divorced and I spent the next ten years living with one parent awhile then the other. Daddy was in the National Guard so we moved often. Adventures with Daddy are among the happiest memories of my childhood. When I was fifteen, I was placed in the custody of the department of social services. A few months later I went to live with my father in Kingsport, TN.

I was happy to be there because I was a daddy's girl. Still, I was behind in school and I was afraid that I would never be able to do pass. In addition, I felt different from the other kids in school and thought there was something wrong with me. Each day the challenge to walk into the building grew until, halfway through my junior year, I dropped out. Many childhood dreams shared in late night talks with my dad lay shattered before me as I left school one day believing that I would never return. I felt shame at my failure. My father, though loving and kind had no idea what to do with a troubled teen.

In one way I did live in a "dream world." Sometime early in my life, I created a fairy tale in which someone very kind and loving would come and get me, care for and protect me. He would reach out, touch my cheek and never would another tear flow there. I imagined him to be tall, strong, and brave. Finally, as if he was made to order, he walked into my life with all the attributes I thought I needed to survive. That is, all the ones I lacked. He was bigger, stronger, braver than anyone I had ever known. I felt safe with him. I never had to be afraid anymore. I thought.

He began filling in all the empty spaces in my life. He believed I was a good person, a lovable person. "There is no one like you in all of the world," he would say. Moreover he needed me. "What more is there," I reasoned, "than being needed and never being afraid anymore." He had a problem with alcohol, but I could fix that. I thought.

I wanted to be worthy of this answer to my dreams, so I became just what he needed - an all-loving, all-forgiving, good person. I would do anything for love and protection. When I first encountered the rage within him, I thought it was a small price to pay for love and protection. I clung to my burdensome dream through ten years of physical and emotional abuse and despair. I played my role well always believing that I had said or done something that caused him to lose control. As time passed, I became more afraid of leaving than of staying. "I'll find you no matter where you go. You will wake up and find me at your bedside." he told me. I believed him.

Then in the spring of 1988 I stumbled head on into reality. I remember the despair I felt when I looked in my children's faces and knew they depended on me. Daydreams and fairy tales would not protect them and provide for their needs. I wanted to offer them strength and courage and protect them from the hopelessness I felt. I lifted my head and began looking for a way out of the horrible world I had created for my children and myself.

Fortunately, I learned that there was no waiting list for public housing in Madison County. I was reluctant to return to the county that was the keeper of so many unpleasant memories for me. Nevertheless, we moved into an apartment a couple of weeks before school started. Michael - 10, Misty - 7, Megan - 5, and RL - 3, ran through the apartment exploring their new home as I took my first step toward independence.

A few weeks later I came home one day and found a pamphlet in my door that read, "Are you a parent, grandparent, or guardian of a three or four year old and do you want to learn to read or get your GED?" I wondered what having a three or four year old had to do with getting my GED, but I read on. The pamphlet mentioned "family," "parenting skills," and "self-esteem." I remembered signing up for GED programs before. I always found plenty of excuses not to go. Once again I was about to say "maybe someday" when I read that meals and transportation were provided.

I imagined myself going back to school, and taking RL, my three year old son, with me. Michael, Misty, and Megan were in school so I didn't need a baby sitter. I remember how excited I was when I went to a neighbor's house and called Mildred Shelton, the director of the Madison County Kenan Family Literacy Project. When I hung up the phone, I sat for a minute and thought, "Maybe no one will find out that I am not very bright, I will just go and do my best and maybe it will help me get a job."

I didn't know that the phone call I just made was to mark the beginning of a new life for my children and myself. Someday was emerging from behind the clouds and hope was in view. I walked home a bit taller and more confident. I stopped and sat on the steps leading up the hill to our apartment and asked RL, "Would you like to ride the big bus to school with your brother and sisters?" He grinned. I took a deep breath and thought, "All I have to do is get on the bus, just get on the bus."

By evening my confidence was gone. I leafed through the many pages of excuses I had for not going back to school. "There is no way I can go back to school, not after all these years," I thought. After thirteen years it was too late for me. What would I wear? What will people think of me riding the bus with children and going back to school? I was too old to do that. Most of all, I was afraid that I would fail again.

Once again fear was closing the door on my second chance, but on this unique occasion, I guess you could say opportunity not only knocked, it took me by the hand when I got a visit from the teachers of the family literacy program. I learned that RL would attend preschool class in the morning while I attended GED class. After we had lunch together, we would participate in PACT - parent and child interaction. The program would prepare RL for kindergarten. When they left I looked around our apartment furnished with only one chair and a foam mattress on which to sleep and thought, "It's up to me. I have to try."

I remember how nervous I was getting ready to go back to school that September morning in 1988. It was no small endeavor to get everybody ready. We were all excited. Though I was scared, really scared, I don't think I could have backed out if I had wanted. The children expected me to go. I heard Michael and Misty talking. "Mama and RL are going to ride the bus," they giggled. "We'll all be in school. Mama Too!" Finally we were ready to go. My hands trembled as I fumbled with the lock. Trying to calm myself I decided to pretend that I was just walking my children to the bus stop. They were beaming and I felt almost as if I had no control over what was happening. Four pair of hopeful eyes were leading me toward a better life.

It wasn't easy to stand there and wait for the bus with Michael, Misty, Megan, and RL. I wanted to leave, to walk away, turn my back on the feelings that arose in me, but I felt as if our lives depended on my being brave - for once in my life. I could barely breath as I stared down the road and watched for the bus. Finally it came. I took a deep breath and held RL very close as I got on the bus. "Besides," I thought, "I don't have to go back if I don't want to."

During the next nine months I made plans to quit several times. As I encountered personal problems, new ones as well as those from the past, I saw no solutions. Each time I told Mildred that I would not be able to continue in the program, she said, "What do you mean you are not coming back!" As I tried to explain I realized that I did not have to quit. There was a way. With Mildred there was always a way. Slowly I grew to believe in myself. With baby steps I continued toward "someday" and the hope of a better life.

So with Mildred's strength and the encouragement of my friend and teacher, Alegria Alyward, I completed the year and earned my GED. More importantly, I learned that I am my children's first and most important teacher. Prior to this program, I believed that we were low achievers because we were not as "smart" as others. What a relief to learn that individuals learn differently and everyone has potential. My praise and example would encourage my children to do well in school. Perhaps they would stay in school and not go the long way around as I did. Together we embarked on a new life of learning. Michael - 10 and Misty 8, received their first awards for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Reading that year. Megan, after a struggling beginning in first grade, went on to make, as her teacher phrased it, "remarkable progress" and was ready for second grade. And my shy little RL, who once hid behind his mother's skirt, began exploring his surroundings and learned that he can have an effect on his environment. Later he completed kindergarten with perfect attendance and a wonderful feeling of accomplishment. RL's attitude toward learning is illustrated by a comment he made one evening when I told him how well he was coloring. He looked up at me with eyes aglow and said, "I'm good at everything, ain't I Mama!" It was then, looking at his bright face I knew that believing in oneself is half the battle.

I remember the day I considered the possibility of going to college. As a young girl I would not walk across the campus at Mars Hill College. I thought college was a place where other people go who were either really smart or came from wealthy families. When Mildred suggested that I apply to Mars Hill College I looked at her in disbelief. I felt as if someone else was talking when I replied, "I would give anything to go to Mars Hill College."

College was much different than the family literacy program. No longer was I able to work at my own pace. Determined to do my best, I worked very hard my first year. You can imagine my surprise when I ^{received a} letter from the dean inviting me to attend Honor's Day. I walked across campus reading that letter over and over. Shortly after that, I earned an academic scholarship.

Some semesters were more difficult than others. My endurance was tested by many personal problems. Thankfully I found the resources I needed to deal with those problems and continue on this road toward family self-sufficiency. When the child support enforcement agency located my children's father, he decided that it would be less expensive if the children lived with him. So we went to court. I borrowed \$1000.00 to pay an attorney; he continued to pay no child support; I appeared for court; he did not. Finally I was granted full custody. When my children were sick, my car quit, my two year old niece destroyed my only copy of a major research paper, and the hamster died, it required great effort to stay in school. Much of the strength to continue came from the joy of learning that I can care for and protect my children and myself. Another motivating force was the many rewards and accomplishments that my family enjoyed.

In the spring of 1992 I was selected to serve as a college marshal as I was in the top eight of the junior and senior classes. In the fall of that year, I was invited and joined Alpha Chi National College Honors Scholarship Society. Although I didn't know what it was, it sounded good. I was invited to speak at the graduation ceremony for those who earned their GED in 1989. In addition, I visited area schools and talked to students about the importance of staying in school. I spoke at the first and third National Conferences on Family Literacy in Chapel Hill, NC and Louisville, KY respectively. I shared my experiences in family literacy and the JOBS program at the Third Annual JOBS Conference in NC. In 1989, I spoke at the Barbara Bush Symposium on Family Literacy where I met Barbara Bush. In addition to other educational groups and volunteer organizations, I addressed the Mars Hill College Board of directors and Mars Hill College Alumni and Friends. I was fortunate to speak at the commendation ceremony for the parents and children in the Kenan Family Literacy Project, of which I am a former student. On May 15, 1994, I graduated summa cum laude from Mars Hill College with a degree in Social Work.

I think about these accomplishments and compare that to the days when I curled my toes in my shoes, stared at the ground and wished I could disappear. I was not looking down on November 22, 1992. I was looking up at President Bush as he said, "Regina Lynn, you have always wanted to thank your father for his faith and support. What better way than by earning your college degree and using it to teach others the joys and rewards of learning. For overcoming shyness, fear, and the challenges of single parenthood, we salute your courage and strength by presenting you with this symbol of achievement." President Bush placed a gold medallion around my neck and kissed me on the cheek. The program, entitled "To Be Free: The National Literacy Honors" aired on national TV on December 26, 1992.

Michael is 17 now. These tumultuous teen years have taken their toll, but thankfully we have reached calmer waters. Michael is no longer in school. Words can't describe the anguish I felt when he dropped out of school. However, in time I began to understand that nothing I could say or do would change his mind. I had to allow him to experience it for himself. Instead of concentrating on his decision to drop out of school, I affirm him for being diligent, trustworthy, and considerate of our financial needs. I believe he will recognize the importance of a formal education and his story will include a chapter on going back to school.

Misty is now a freshman in high school. She enjoys writing poetry and drawing. Megan, in the 7th grade, has established a baby sitting business in our neighborhood. She does well in school. She plays clarinet in the band and is learning to play the piano. RL is in the 4th grade. He likes math and enjoys reading. His hobbies include collecting rocks and playing ball. He reminds me daily of the promise in all of us as he looks at me with big brown eyes convinced that there is nothing he can't do.

Graduation from college with a degree in social work brought much joy and a sense of accomplishment. However, I was anxious about ~~about~~ going to work. I wondered if employment would bring challenges for which I was not ready and again I feared failure. After I considered a budget based on the earnings I would receive from a few employment opportunities, I wasn't sure if I could afford to get off the AFDC roles. If an emergency arose that required spending beyond my budget, what would I do? At the same time, I was eager to find employment. I wanted to show, that given the opportunity, I could succeed. Moreover, if I did not become self-sufficient, then others like myself may not receive a second chance as I did. So with mixed feelings, I prepared for the next step of this journey.

Then I heard about AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps would allow me to pursue my goal of family self-sufficiency - one step at a time. Rather than entering the work world unprepared for the responsibilities involved in full-time employment, I would volunteer in return for a stipend. This would allow me to give back to my community and support others in their efforts to meet their needs and pursue their dreams. In addition, I would gain invaluable work experience. I was supported by public assistance much of my life and had virtually no work experience. AmeriCorps lessened the fear of letting go of a way of life and setting out on an unfamiliar path.

Since I began in early October 1994, I have received much training in the social work field. I worked with the In-Home-Services in which I provided case management for clients/families of Madison County. Through this program, individuals/families receive assist with home management tasks to enable them to avoid out of home placement.

When I began 13 families were being served. Seven additional families are being served through this program. Case management includes assessing client's functional abilities in the following areas: physical health, mental health, social support, activities of daily living, environmental conditions and financial situation. The goal includes coordinating delivery of needed services.

In addition to the above, I assessed 15 families and prioritized those according to need and placed on a waiting list or referred them to other agencies. I developed a letter to inform applicants of their position on the waiting list and when services may be provided. I worked with community members and agencies to build a ramp for an elderly man, locate a wheelchair for an elderly man, and identified resources to make improvements to an elderly couple's home. To further enhance services to those being served by the program as well as provide some services to those on the waiting list, I visited Mars Hill College and presented students with information about volunteer opportunities. I received some interest, and will continue trying to establish an ongoing volunteer network with the college.

In early January, 1995, I began working with agency heads, county schools, businesses, and community members to establish a family resource center for the families of Madison County. A family resource center provides a comprehensive array of family support programs, services, and activities uniquely designed to meet the needs of each community.

Our center, entitled LISTENING TO FAMILIES, will open in February. I developed and pretested a survey to determine the needs and interests of county residents. A professor at Mars Hill college is volunteering his time to advise me and will identify students to help enter the data into the computer. These surveys will be sent home with students from all county schools. Likewise, many county businesses will present surveys to their employees. I established agreements with 7 community businesses to place drop boxes in their businesses. Hopefully this will increase input from families in more remote areas of the county. A newspaper ad invited community support and involvement. Students in the family literacy program made survey drop boxes and posters to distribute throughout the county. Further, our local paper is providing a charitable subscription for a newspaper. I am currently working with parents, community agency employees, and a graphic artist at Mars Hill College to develop a logo. All are volunteering their time.

I left Madison County some years ago, in search of someone to make my life better. I found only broken dreams and despair. Hope emerged when I enrolled in Madison County's Kenan Family Literacy Project. Though it was difficult, I'm thankful for my journey home, for home is where I found hope.



May 30, 1995

TO: Steve Selby

FROM: Joel Berg



Per your request, the top five ways that USDA brings "value-added" to AmeriCorps projects:

- 1) We serve rural and suburban areas virtually ignored by other grantees. These areas are represented by the swing Congresspeople critical to the future survival of AmeriCorps. For instance, only USDA has projects in Gingrich's and Lewis' Districts.
- 2) We serve areas with weak or non-existent state commissions, such North and South Dakota.
- 3) We enable AmeriCorps Members to perform tasks requiring technical expertise far beyond the capabilities of the vast majority of non-profit organizations. For instance, under direct and sustained supervision from experts in the field, USDA AmeriCorps Members are inspecting flood-damaged dams, implementing strategic plans to create local jobs, designing and implementing entire recycling plans for counties, helping farmers diversify their crops, bolstering the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise community initiative, designing timber bridges, and decreasing ground water pollution. If we want AmeriCorps Members to "Get things done" that require more than simple physical labor and that result in long-lasting improvements in communities, then Members need the kind of advanced technical training and supervision that can be best provided by Federal agencies.
- 4) We build new models for sophisticated service projects that meet complex needs. Programs such as the USDA Anti-Hunger Corps tackle complex social problems in a serious, comprehensive manner. Non-USDA programs might build a few shelves in a food pantry or cook a few meals in a soup kitchen, but only USDA programs focus on systematic ways to break the cycle of poverty and hunger.
- 5) Federal agencies have fewer money management problems. CNCS will never have to worry that USDA will miss a payroll, fail to meet a matching requirement, or use grant money on impermissible activities.

Paula } I Called Bobbi Carney and provided her
+ Dec with Earl Cos by phone no.
Asked her to work out the details
with him.

TO: PAULA COLE JONES

FROM: KATHERINE GIBNEY

DATE: MAY 22, 1995

RE: MARIETTA, GEORGIA PROJECT

I received a call and a fax last Thursday from Meg Maguire at the Corporation for National Service as Joel is out of town. She is requesting immediate attention to the NRCS project in Marietta, Georgia.

She asked that I call Bobbi Carney, AmeriCorps State Executive Director for Georgia. I left a message and got a callback from her today, requesting that I call her immediately.

Ms. Carney said that in the last five months, she has had "five or six, maybe seven" calls about the NRCS project, the only project in the state about which she has had complaints.

The latest complaint is that a Member called on May 2 saying that he is very discouraged, isolated and on his own, has no idea why they are working on specific projects, and that he is currently working on a grape vineyard on private property. The Member said that the vineyard was supposed to be turned over to the North Metro Technical School but that had not happened as yet. Ms. Carney was unclear whether he had said "we" and was speaking for several Members or himself. This Member said that he could not see how the public could support such a project. She has since received a call from him asking to be transferred into another AmeriCorps project.

Other complaints over the last five months: 1) no reimbursement for transportation and site is very far away; 2) project was called about statewide Martin Luther King holiday event and was told that was a federal holiday so project not interested; 3) one caller said there was difficulty in getting child care straightened out; 4) several Members were concerned about the nature of the projects, i. e. thought they would be doing environmental education projects but were working in wealthy areas; 5) Member asked that he be contacted directly about statewide events as he was never told about a VISTA 30th anniversary celebration. Ms. Carney said that it takes about 10 days to 2 weeks to get a callback from Cindy Carr.

I talked with Joel last week and told him about the call from Meg. At that time, I did not have the above information. He said to pass this on to you. When I talked to Ms. Carney this morning, she said that she thinks someone needs to make a site visit -- that a telephone call won't work.



May 17, 1995

To: Paul Johnson, Chief
Natural Resources and Conservation Service

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*

Subject: The Importance of Dee DiFiore to the NRCS AmeriCorps Program

I am writing to reinforce how important Dee DeFiore has been to the NRCS AmeriCorps program, and to communicate the potentially great loss to the program if she is reassigned to another project.

Dee has played an absolutely critical role in disseminating information to the field, collecting information from the field, and compiling all of that complex information into reports vital to both NRCS, the Department, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. She has also provided all USDA agencies running AmeriCorps projects with essential leadership in creating an operations manual for the program.

If an entirely new employee were assigned to such duties, there would be a lengthy and potentially harmful transition period as he or she obtained the institutional knowledge of the program that Dee has learned over the past year.

I understand that NRCS is undergoing a massive reorganization that will alter the roles of many employees, but I hope that Dee can either continue to work with Paula on AmeriCorps or that she can be detailed to work in my office alongside detailees from CSFA, RHCDS, and FSIS.

I would greatly appreciate any help you could provide in this matter. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or advice.

(File)

May 16, 1995

To: Dee
From: Joel
Subject: Final Revisions on Operations Manual

I am sorry the last chapter I gave you was so poorly edited, but I did it quickly. Just a few more changes on Chapter 11 of your last draft:

Please unify the description of the "workplan" or the "Plan of work" (POW) so that it is named the same thing throughout the chapter.

The section on quarterly reports on pages 160-162 has some number problems. Please include the numbered sections in the order listed below.

Quarterly Reports

The single most important component of this report is indicating the quantifiable, measurable progress your project has made towards meeting each of your already agreed-upon community service objectives.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) continues to refine each quarters site reporting format, thus the manual cannot be precise in the format requested for each quarter. However, in order to help project managers more easily produce paper and electronic copies of the reports in the exact formats that CNCS will be requesting, the Department will provide project managers with customized report templates compatible with whatever computer system is used by your office. However, we do expect that quarterly reports will request the following data for each site:

1) Operating Site Name, location, Operating Site ID #, Number of Quarter.

2) Name, title, address, and phone number, fax number, and e-mail address (if available) of person completing report.

3) Number of Members Serving and Number of Hours Served --- Each third quarter site report must state the number of full-time Members allotted to the site, the number of full-time Members enrolled on the last day of the third quarter, the number of full-time Members who served the entire third quarter, the total of service hours performed in the second quarter by full-time Members, and the total of service hours performed to date (since the launch of the program) by full-time Members. If your site has part-time Members, all five of the above questions should be answered separately for your part-time Members. Please answer all the above questions about number of Members and hours served on each individual site report, but also please aggregate for your state this information for all the Members sponsored by your agency in the state. Hours in training should be included in these hours and are treated no different than hours in direct service.

4) Number of Non-AmeriCorps Volunteers and Number of Volunteer Hours --- Each third quarter site report must specify how many non-AmeriCorps unpaid volunteers were recruited in the quarter to serve alongside your AmeriCorps Members, as well as the total number of hours these volunteers served in the quarter. This information is absolutely critical, because it allows us to refute the false charge that AmeriCorps' existence decreases the number of people who volunteer in communities. All our experience proves that AmeriCorps in fact boosts community volunteerism --- that is why our reports need to document that.

5) Comparison of Community Service Objectives Planned With Community Service Objectives Achieved --- Each quarter site report must re-state its complete set of existing community service objectives, before explaining precisely what progress has been made towards achieving those objectives. Answers should be as concrete and measurable as possible. Answers should **not** focus on "process" activities such as meetings held, surveys or inventories completed, citizens informed of programs, but rather should focus on direct benefits to the community, such as: number of trees planted, number of jobs or new businesses created, number of school children educated, number of homes built or repaired, number of (or acres of) conservation practices actually implemented, miles of trail built, percentage improvement in water quality, increase in recycling rate, etc.

6 Primary accomplishments in meeting Member development objectives. Please specify any progress you have made in boosting the personal development of the Members, i.e., types of training, team building activities, etc.

7 Primary accomplishments in meeting community building objectives.
Please amplify how the service your project has performed has begun meeting your community service objectives. Please also specify, using either empirical data or anecdotal stories, other important service you have performed that "get things done" in your community. Please specify any progress you have made in helping local communities build their long-term infrastructures.

8) Other Accomplishments This Quarter "Getting Things Done"

9) Unique Successes or "Great Stories"

10) Primary Challenges Encountered This Quarter

11) Training Needs

12) National Identity Problems This Quarter

Please report on activities this quarter that fostered the national identity of AmeriCorps. Examples could include signage or publicity materials projects with other AmeriCorps programs, training members in their national skills areas (communication, conflict resolution, or CPR/first aid, participating in citizenship education, graduation or swearing in ceremonies, use of national recruitment, use of AmeriCorps members handbook.

13) Significant Program Changes This Quarter

14) Media Coverage

Please provide all newspaper or magazine clippings, videotapes of TV news reports, and cassettes of radio news reports.

15) Other Creative Documentation

We strongly urge you to find other ways to creatively demonstrate the progress of your projects, such as:

 "before and after" photographs and videotapes
 excerpts from journal entries written by Members
 letters of support from satisfied individuals or groups

Lastly, I highly recommend simply deleting pages 166-176 with sample forms. CNCS will definitely change the form against this quarter. I'd rather that there be no form in the manual than wrong forms.

Thanks. It is ready to go.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

May 13, 1995

To: Eli Segal

From: Joel Berg *JR*

Subject: Ideas To Ensure The Long-Term Expansion of AmeriCorps

Thank you for your generous note. I agree with you wholeheartedly that we are building a long-lasting legacy. Toward that end, I am writing to suggest a list of some potential ways we can raise additional funds to expand AmeriCorps even in today's difficult political climate.

As you are better aware than anyone, the current program --- while bigger than the Peace Corps at its peak --- engages only a small fraction of the Americans who want to serve. Thus, for AmeriCorps to continue to dramatically transform our entire society by eventually becoming a "right-of-passage" for all interested Americans, I believe we need to continue to work towards a program that engages a minimum of 100,000 citizens each year.

Yet even assuming that the President wins re-election and that the Democrats win back control of both houses of Congress in 1996 (which, of course, I do assume) -- the deficit makes it unlikely that an expansion to 100,000 Members yearly could be funded with mostly Federal money.

Consequently, even as we fight tooth and nail to maintain and expand Federal funding, I suggest that we give serious attention to bold new ways to develop significant new funding streams.

To date, CNCS has done a remarkable job leveraging private and non-profit resources. Thus, my suggestions would only expand upon your successful work to date. Some of these suggestions would require legislative changes, but others could be accomplished administratively by CNCS:

1) Propose a new budget arrangement in which every two dollars of private or non-profit money raised by CNCS would be matched by one dollar of Federal money. Perhaps the Administration could propose a compromise in which CNCS' base funding would be leveled out at the amount already appropriated for FY95, but that all additional funds --- up to \$1 billion --- would be contingent upon a 2/1 ratio of private funds to Federal funds.

2) Call Upon Universities and Corporations to Meet a "One Percent For Service Challenge." I understand that some universities have already begun matching the educational award with their funds --- this could be encouraged and expanded. Perhaps the President could challenge all universities, colleges, and trade schools to reserve one percent of their incoming Freshman classes for AmeriCorps graduates --- and then give the graduates full scholarships, thereby saving the Federal government from having to pay for use of their educational awards. Perhaps the President could also challenge all corporations to reserve one percent of their new hires for AmeriCorps graduates --- and then repay their entire student loan debts, thereby also saving the Federal government from having to pay for use of their educational awards. If even a sizable minority of higher education institutions and corporations take up this challenge, they could pick up the full costs of tens of thousands of educational awards.

3) Current AmeriCorps Members could be asked to contribute a very small amount of money to fund future AmeriCorps Members. Perhaps Members could be given the option of having \$1 dollar taken out of their stipends every pay period to fund AmeriCorps in future years. Even though most Members can now barely survive on their current living allowance, I believe that many would nevertheless make a special effort to donate their own funds to help save the program. While this effort would be unlikely to earn significant new revenue, it could send an important symbolic message.

4) Create AmeriCorps Savings Accounts (ASAs) to allow families to save money now to ensure that their children would get a future spot in AmeriCorps. Perhaps we could ask for legislation that would allow families to have a tax-free way to save money for a special account for them to fund part of the AmeriCorps service year for their children. Their children would still have to apply for --- and get accepted by ---- individual AmeriCorps projects and would still have to successfully complete 1,700 hours of service to receive the educational award. Both working poor families obtaining Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs) and welfare families obtaining AFDC could agree voluntarily to save money for such an account by putting aside a small fraction of their yearly Federal payments; in order to increase their incentive, the Federal government could match the dollars they set-aside. These accounts would maintain the "no benefit without service ethic" of AmeriCorps while giving millions of families a direct stake in ensuring the long-term survival of the program.

5) Turn subsequent "National Days of Service" into Serve-A-Thons to raise money. If we engage only one in 200 Americans to perform a day of service sponsored by their friends and neighbors --- and if they raise only \$50 each --- then they would raise \$50 million for AmeriCorps while garnering tremendous public goodwill for the program.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance further in fleshing-out or implementing any of these ideas.

CC: Shirley Sagawa, Rick Allen, Larry Wilson, Susan Stroud

May 9, 1995

To: Eli Segal, Rick Allen
From: Joel Berg
Subject: Reasons to Support an AmeriCorps/USDA Rural Development Foundation

Political Reasons

- 1) Such a foundation would help us expand AmeriCorps sites and/or bolster national AmeriCorps identity in swing rural areas, thereby increasing support for the President in key battleground states such as Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, and Missouri.
- 2) This proposal would help Secretary Glickman meet the President's request to him that he propose "bold ideas" for rural development.
- 3) The proposal would force Congressional opponents of AmeriCorps to either support this new method of raising private sector funds, or to face increased media and public attention on their hypocritical opposition to a popular program simply because it is associated with President Clinton. Either way, it is a "win-win" proposal for the Administration.
- 4) Key supporters on the agricultures committees in Congress, such a Senator Pat Leahy, would fight aggressively to pass the proposal.
- 5) The foundation could increase Congressional support from swing rural and suburban Congresspeople, who may now feel (incorrectly) that the overall AmeriCorps program is now focused primarily on urban areas.
- 6) If enacted, the foundation would have a board of directors appointed by the administration, thereby creating another entity to appoint supporters who originally wanted to be on the CNCS board.

Policy Reasons

- 1) Such a foundation would bolster overall funding for AmeriCorps and would not pose a threat to CNCS fundraising, since those entities most likely to give to the foundation --- such as agribusinesses and timber companies --- are not now top fundraising targets for CNCS.
- 2) The foundation would help ensure that CNCS's current grants to USDA are indeed only "seed money" that will be increasingly supplemented by non-CNCS funds.
- 3) With a board appointed for three-year terms, the foundation would provide long-term structural stability to USDA programs, even if the Agriculture Secretary changes.

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
INITIALS: ELC DATE: 05/01/23

February 28, 1995

To: Eli Segal
From: Joel Berg
Subject: Why Fighting Hard for Federal Programs Will Help All of AmeriCorps

Given the concentrated conservative attack against the Federal agency role in AmeriCorps, I fully understand why many people believe that the Federal agencies are the "Achilles heel" of AmeriCorps. However, there are 14 solid reasons --- ten political and four policy --- why I believe fighting hard to maintain and expand Federal programs will boost the entire AmeriCorps program.

The reasons are based mostly on my knowledge of USDA programs, but should hold true for most Federal agency AmeriCorps programs.

Political Reasons

1) The services performed by Federal programs are among the most defensible of all services provided by AmeriCorps. USDA projects repairing trails on National Forests, boosting rural fire protection, protecting shorelines, or keeping businesses from re-locating to Mexico, or Department of Justice programs fighting crime, or Environmental Protection Agency projects protecting water quality are carrying out non-controversial service that is perceived as vital by most mainstream Americans. Almost all USDA projects meet what I call the "Jesse Test; that is, they are performing service that would be supported by everyone from Jesse Jackson to Jesse Helms. For example, as documented in our first quarter report, in the first two months of full operation, USDA AmeriCorps projects maintained 61.3 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails, cooked and prepared meals for over 6,000 people at soup kitchens and sorted over 93,000 pounds of commodities at food banks, repaired and restored dozens of flood-damaged areas, helped farmers and ranchers in six different states find economical ways to decrease their groundwater pollution, saved a company with 600 employees from having to re-locate to Mexico, and helped communities in three different states improve their efforts to prevent and combat fires. No one can seriously characterize many Federally-run projects as left-wing advocacy work.

2) Many Federal programs specifically help middle class families. Most USDA programs are fully diverse --- including a large representation of Members from solidly middle class families. In addition, many USDA programs also perform service in middle class and suburban areas.

3) Key Republican Members of Congress already support specific USDA projects in their states. Republican Senators Jeffords and Hatfield (the Senate Appropriations Committee Chair) and Congressman Bereuter have already praised specific USDA projects.

4) Many USDA projects are in rural and suburban Districts represented by Members of Congress who may hold the swing votes on re-funding and re-authorizing AmeriCorps. Conservative rhetoric aside, it is a given of Congressional politics that members will be more likely to support projects in their districts. For instance, Congressman Sonny Bono just told a newspaper in his district that he does not currently know enough about AmeriCorps to decide yet whether or not to support it. USDA happens to have an excellently-running National Forest project in Bono's District that --- once we educate the Congressman about --- may help him decide in our favor. Additionally, USDA runs the only AmeriCorps programs I know of in Gingrich's and Jerry Lewis' Districts. In contrast, most non-Federal AmeriCorps projects tend to be placed in urban Districts represented by liberal Democrats who already support AmeriCorps -- such projects do not win us many votes in Congress we do not already have.

5) Federal programs are partnered with many different community-based organizations, some of whom have many conservative supporters. One of our California projects is managed in partnership with a local Soil and Water Conservation District which is headed by a person who serves on the State Republican Party Central Committee. One of our projects in Oregon, which has repaired public buildings in surrounding communities, is supported by a local Republican County Commissioner who describes himself as conservative. Throughout the nation, our projects are partnered-up with community colleges, non-profit organizations, youth corps, soil conservation districts, county governments, school districts, etc.

6) The best way to defend and expand AmeriCorps is for us to define our programs ourselves, rather than let our opponents define our programs for us. If we don't define our programs, the opposition will. The opposition will continue to harp on Federal programs, and, if we concede the field of debate to them, they will succeed in defining the programs as wasteful and expensive additions to the Federal bureaucracy. If, however, we aggressively define these programs on our own terms, we can succeed in communicating their immense benefits. We have a very powerful message to deliver: Federally-run AmeriCorps projects are incredibly cost-effective models of reinventing government that are based on mainstream values and "get things done" throughout the country in grass-roots partnerships with community-based organizations.

7) The Administration should stand behind the significant commitment of resources and prestige that it has already committed to Federally-run AmeriCorps projects. If we back away from programs in which the Administration has already provided so many resources, that would be viewed by the public as a reversal. In my judgement, the American people are anxious to see the Administration stand up and fight for programs in which we really believe.

8) Federally-run projects will help AmeriCorps win the "outside" game. The attacks against Federal agencies will not resonate well beyond the Beltway if we focus on our specific projects. Americans are not opposed to the mere existence of Federal agencies -- they are opposed to fat and bloated Federal bureaucracies that do not respond to their needs. However, in hundreds of counties across the country in which USDA has projects, local residents have expressed their pleasure that their government is finally doing something they like. As demonstrated by the 60 different press clips from around the country contained in the USDA first quarter report --- including some glowing articles and editorials from politically conservative newspapers --- our AmeriCorps projects across America are widely popular and non-controversial. Even Trent Lott told one of our Members (it is unclear whether he knew she was an AmeriCorps Member) that he supported her work in Mississippi fighting against teen-age pregnancies. The attacks against Federal agency programs are being orchestrated by a small band of libertarian extremists who do not believe many of our agencies should exist at all. Just because the attacks against agency programs are among their most frequent attacks doesn't mean they are among the most effective attacks.

9) A strong defense of Federal AmeriCorps projects would bolster the President's general defense of reinvented programs that are working. The President and Vice-President have themselves focused on cutting programs that are outdated while expanding and reinventing programs that do work, such as AmeriCorps. Said Clinton about our project in San Bernardino, California: "If you look at what this national service project does --- they're working in the San Bernardino National Forest; people who are helping to clean-up the forest, maintain it, strengthen it, keep it there for our children and our grandchildren, make sure it's an important resource... These are the kinds of things that are going on all over America, and I think it emphasizes what I'm saying. For a small amount of Federal money we have increased opportunity with no bureaucracy. This is all done at the grass roots level." If however, if we ask the President to change his tack and agree to eliminate Federally-run AmeriCorps projects, we would only bolster the Republican argument that the Federal government can not do anything right.

10) Federally-run programs have the clearest AmeriCorps identity and give the most

direct credit to President Clinton.

Unlike many sub-grantees, the Federal programs clearly and consistently identify themselves as AmeriCorps. Furthermore, unlike programs which are funded through state commissions and therefore can be credited to Governors, President Clinton receives full and unfiltered credit for all Federally-run AmeriCorps projects.

Policy Reasons

1) If CNCS does suffer through recisions, and if agency AmeriCorps programs can somehow escape major recisions, then our programs provide the best hope for continued expansion. Federal agencies still provide some of the greatest resources and infrastructure for the long-term expansion of AmeriCorps.

2) Federal AmeriCorps programs are real models of reinventing government. The AmeriCorps programs provide daily lessons to all our Departments about how we can find new ways to better and more cheaply deliver our services.

3) Many AmeriCorps projects run by Federal agencies exemplify the proper role of the Federal government. Who else should run projects on Federal lands --- such as Forest Service lands --- other than Federal agencies?

4) Federal AmeriCorps programs provide taxpayers with double the "bang for the buck." Most Federal programs are simply utilizing funds that would already be spent by the agency. For instance, USDA Forest Service projects are using some funding from existing trail repair budgets. Not only are the AmeriCorps Members repairing more trails than would be repaired by private contractors, they are also bring communities together, promoting personal responsibilities, and helping earn their own way through college --- all for the same budget that normally would just fund the trail repair.

How to Fight Back

My sense is that CNCS is now ambivalent about the future of Federally-run programs, appreciating their policy successes but worrying that, in the end, they may be political albatrosses that will sink the entire AmeriCorps program.

I believe such ambivalence is the worst possible option, and will inevitably lead to the slow death of such programs. Simply not talking much about the Federally-run projects in public will not make the political opposition to them go away. In the last year, we were able to create large 'stealth programs' in Federal agencies without much Congressional scrutiny. Now that the "lid is off" on our work, we can either defend the projects or let them be terminated.

I believe a firm decision must be made to either fully fight for or to agree to "bargain away" Federally-run programs. Or perhaps there is some way we could transfer funding and management to the state commissions rather than just eliminate all our projects.

Yet if the President and yourself come to the ultimate conclusion that Federally-run programs are ultimately a political detriment to all of AmeriCorps and thus must be sacrificed in order to save the rest of the program, I will support that decision fully, even if it means the end of the entire USDA program. However, this decision should be made quickly and should be communicated firmly, yet compassionately, to the agencies.

If, however, the President and yourself agree with the arguments made above and thus agree we should fight to maintain federally-run programs, I believe we should give such a fight every bit of our energy. I understand that neither your staff nor the White House have the resources for such a fight, and that is why I recommend that you empower the agencies with such programs to save their programs themselves.

I volunteer to work closely with Rick Allen, Susan Stroud, Gene Sofer, Jay Toscano, and Steve Selby to immediately set-up a "war room" or task force on Federal agency programs. While we certainly would not violate any legal restrictions against lobbying, we can play an energetic role in better informing the Congress, the media, and the public about our programs.

Such a "war room" or task force should be comprised of staff from various agencies within the agency offices of Congressional affairs, communications, intergovernmental affairs, and public liaison.

I would greatly appreciate any feedback you have on my suggestions, as well as specific guidance about how you would like me to proceed.

Thank you for your consideration.

June 22, 1995

To: Meg Maguire, Steve Selby

From: Joel Berg, USDA

Subject: How the USDA Rural Development Team (RDT) is Rescuing Rural Communities While Advancing the AmeriCorps Vision

Rural America Has Unique --- and Urgent --- Needs

Although both the media and policy makers often advance the stereotype that America's worst problems occur only in inner cities, many poor rural counties are ravaged by high rates of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, environmental degradation, illiteracy, and -- increasingly --- crime.

In truth, rural communities face some of the nation's gravest problems, yet often receive less help from government agencies and private charities.

While 21% Americans live in rural America, fully 25% of all Americans in poverty live in rural areas. In every year since 1960, 535 rural counties have had poverty in excess of 20%. In 1990, poverty rates in these rural counties ranged from 20% to a shocking 63%; these rural counties had average poverty rates of 29%, compared to 18.3% in non-rural counties.

Full-time, year-round workers in rural areas are more likely to be poor than full-time, year-round workers in non-rural areas. As a result, **30% of all "working poor" American families live in rural areas.**

Even as we near the 21st century, one out of every fifty rural homes still lacks running water. While even inner city home ownership is now increasing, rural home ownership decreasing.

Rural youth are more likely than non-rural youth to drop out of high school. In addition, while 23% of non-rural youth complete college, only 13% of rural youth complete college.

Now wonder why --- at a time when most non-rural communities are gaining population --- most rural communities are losing population. Especially troubling is the fact that, out of the relatively few rural Americans who do obtain college educations, even fewer return home, thus fueling a "rural brain drain."

Most Rural Problems Stem from the Lack of High-wage Jobs

In last four decades --- as countless small family farmers were forced out of agriculture --- the number of rural residents employed in farming dropped from eight to three million. Decreases in mining and timber harvesting also cost jobs throughout rural America. Real earnings per job remain consistently lower in rural areas than in non-rural areas. From 1979 to 1989, these earnings declined by 6.5 percent in rural areas. Today, non-rural residents earn about \$25,000 per job compared to about \$30,000 per job in non-rural areas.

Thus, rural America's great single need is economic development.

The RDT Design is Uniquely Suited to Filling the Needs of Rural Communities

All USDA RDT project proposals are created at the lowest possible level --- usually at the county or town level --- and then are subject to a vigorous national competition process before being included in the USDA proposal to CNCS. Many of the proposals were submitted directly by the non-profit organizations who applied for and/or received empowerment zone and enterprise communities designations. The process is so competitive that USDA submitted only about one third of its original proposals to CNCS.

While crew-based physical work projects are highly suitable to urban areas, they are generally not the ideal service mechanism for rural areas. Work crews of five or ten in rural areas would be too difficult to recruit and too large for most managers to ensure that they had a continuous supply of useful work projects. As demonstrated by the long-standing Delta Service Corps, rural areas most benefit from a model that combines individual placements with frequent joint activities. Such hybrid "team/individual placement" models are best able to "get things done" in rural areas while still advancing the total vision of national service.

Furthermore, rural areas often need technical assistance more so than they need pure physical labor. While many rural areas lack modern "physical infrastructure," they also lack the "human infrastructure" --- highly educated and trained individuals --- who can help solve their most vexing problems. The RDT provides precisely that kind of human infrastructure.

In addition, the RDT provides direct, hands-on supervision for each Member, usually by an expert professional in the service field in which the Member is working. This approach results in concrete, measurable achievements that really matter to the host communities.

The RDT combines the best of the youth corps, individual placement, and professional corps models in order to best meet local needs.

RDT Projects Are Precisely Filling Each Community's Greatest Needs

USDA has fully embraced the ideal that AmeriCorps be community-based, community-designed, and community-run. The RDT has different community service objectives for each and every individual site, based on the needs of each local community. Consequently, the RDT Members are providing a wide variety of services in each of the following areas: running water and indoor plumbing, rural economic development, emergency response and prevention, fisheries restoration, alternative uses of natural resources, environmental education facilities, community facilities improvement, personal responsibility development, tree planting, windbreak restoration, riparian improvement, tourism to boost local economies, community crime prevention, land use planning, recycling promotion, American Indian tribal empowerment, woodland management, water quality protection, rural housing improvement, and cultural resource preservation.

Most of the Members who are working on economic development issues are based in communities that applied for and/or received designation for rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise communities; they are working on economic development because the communities themselves --- through an extensive public involvement processes mandated by the EZ/EC application --- identified economic development as their greatest need.

In the relatively small number of RDT sites where Members are working on protecting natural resources and preserving and promoting cultural landmarks in order to increase tourism, they are doing so because the communities themselves identified increased tourism as their greatest goal. Tourism is currently the nation's top growing industry --- and it is the industry that is most likely to maintain "sustainable communities" because it has a minimal negative impact upon the local environment while it has the greatest potential to utilize the local workforce.

Given that a top goal of AmeriCorps is to directly fill the most urgent local needs identified by area residents, neither CNCS nor USDA should ignore communities when they tell us clearly that their greatest need is economic development or tourism promotion.

Few AmeriCorps Programs --- Other Than the RDT -- Are in Rural Areas

While 21% of all Americans live in rural areas, far fewer than 21% of the 20,000 Members of AmeriCorps are serving in rural areas.

RDT Members are concentrated in the rural regions that have suffered from persistent and widespread poverty over the past decades, such as Appalachia, the Texas/Mexico border, Mississippi Delta, and the Four Corners (New Mexico, Utah,

Colorado, Arizona). Few large AmeriCorps projects --- other than those of USDA --- exist in most of these areas.

It is important to also note that, while most AmeriCorps projects are located in urban districts represented in Congress by liberals who already support AmeriCorps, many RDT projects are in districts represented by moderates and conservatives who hold "swing" votes vital to survival of AmeriCorps.

RDT Projects Team Are Meeting CNCS Priority Areas

It is obvious to everyone that RDT environmental education projects relate to "school success," that RDT pre-school literacy projects relate to "School readiness," that RDT block crime watch projects relate to "Crime prevention," that RDT housing projects relate to "Home," that RDT land use planning projects related to "Community neighborhood environment," and that RDT watershed protection projects relate to "Natural environment." Yet it requires a detailed explanation to communicate how RDT economic development projects and tourism promotion projects meet CNCS priority areas; however, the explanation is compelling.

RDT economic development projects relate to "Home" by "rebuilding neighborhoods." These projects also relate to "Home" by creating jobs, thereby reducing poverty, which reduces the number of people who are hungry. Economic development is a far more effective long-term approach towards fighting hunger than is simply continuing to support soup kitchens and food pantries. These economic development projects also directly relate to the new priority area of creating "sustainable communities."

RDT tourism development projects are focused on renovating local historic sites, thereby focusing on "Neighborhood environment," and/or on protecting local scenic attractions, thereby focusing on "Natural environment." By focusing on long-term methods to boost local economies in ways that protect the environment, these tourism development projects are also directly focused on the new priority area of "sustainable communities."

Tourism and Economic Development Projects Have Multiple Benefits

When RDT Members are working on economic development projects, they generally are not aiding large corporations nor are they helping with "smokestack chasing" to lure large factories to their area. Rather, they are helping area residents leave welfare by starting their own small businesses, creating local bartering programs for goods and services, matching up local craftspeople with markets, or working to restore historic downtown areas. Thus, even if a few projects do not create as many jobs as we hope, they still empower individuals and communities. Welfare recipients

begin to learn alternatives to dependence, local craft traditions are preserved, and communities enjoy renewed pride and public safety in their downtown areas.

When RDT Members are working on tourism promotion projects, they are generally not aiding tourism commissions or government or private tourism entities. Rather, they are usually preserving local scenic attractions, creating new museums, mapping historic trails, preserving American Indian ruins, creating historic tours, building nature trails, etc. Thus, even if the projects do not increase tourism and create as many local jobs as we would like, they still protect the environment, preserve cultural resources, enhance educational activities, and build community pride.

For example, a RDT member based in Winnfield, Louisiana (the hometown of both Huey and Earl Long) is helping create the Louisiana Museum of Political History, along with a plan to attract new tourists to the area to visit the museum. Even if no new tourists visit Winnfield, the entire county will be greatly enriched by allowing county residents to learn more about their history.

All RDT Projects Are Legal

No RDT project is designed to directly aid any individual for-profit entities. As explained in part of the revised USDA operations manual --- 1,500 of which are about to be distributed to all our AmeriCorps Members and staff --- the Department has adopted strict guidelines to prevent RDT members from engaging in activities that solely aid individual for-profit entities (pages attached). All RDT economic development projects are focused on general community development and advancement, not on increasing profits for single corporations.

USDA will continue to work with Terry Russell to further refine these guidelines. Furthermore, Terry has agreed to individually review the community service objectives and workplans for any USDA project related to economic development. If Terry objects to any single project, we will either immediately revise that project to his satisfaction or we will drop that project.

The RDT Is Tackling Problems Similar to Other, Non-USDA, AmeriCorps Projects

Other, non-USDA AmeriCorps projects, are performing economic development activities similar to some of those in the RDT.

For instance, according to the briefing book for the most recent CNCS board meeting, Hope VI sites --- in partnership with the National Council of Churches of Christ, the Columbia School of Business, and the Kauffman Foundation --- are

providing "Loans and technical assistance to public housing residents and their neighbors interested in starting businesses."

I also understand that a legal team in Los Angeles is helping community residents start new businesses.

The RDT Program Gives CNCS Impressive Reporting Numbers

While crew-based work has many advantages, the logistical difficulties of such work (daily central meeting site, transportation to service site, tool distribution, etc.) often reduce the amount of actual service that can be directly performed.

RDT Members, who are quasi-professionals working on their own or in very small groups, avoid many of the logistical problems of crews and thus spend a large percentage of their time in direct service than most AmeriCorps members.

Furthermore, because many RDT members are using the "volunteer leveraging model," they are able to get more service performed for their areas than AmeriCorps projects in which Members physically do all the service themselves.

For instance, while many AmeriCorps members work for community organizations, certain RDT Members have been able to create new community organization themselves.

This advantage gives the RDT very impressive numbers to report each quarter, helping CNCS bolster its overall reporting numbers.

In other words, individual RDT Members are often able to report quarterly results as impressive as those achieved by much larger crew-based projects. Some examples:

- * In Brinkly, Arkansas, one Member provided to an EZ/EC community on locating resources for asbestos removal affecting 2,200 residents, organized the provision of natural gas to 25 people, and helped locate funds for new sewer waste pumps affecting 2,300 people.

- * One Member in New Mexico worked with the Carson National Forest and the village of Vallecitos to help locate fresh water and develop a fresh water delivery system that will provide 98 people with safe drinking water.

- * In Machias, Maine, one Member implemented a series of environmental conservation workshops which benefited 98 blueberry farmers.

* In McDowell County, West Virginia, two Members are providing technical assistance, tools, equipment, and general encouragement to sustainable agriculture gardening project involving 1,300 local residents.

* In Barbourville, Kentucky, one Member developed a series of lifeskill classes for 15 low-income families; demand was so great that she added two more classes, thereby serving a total of 45 low-income families.

* In Madison County, North Carolina, one Member organized the opening --- attended by over 150 people --- of a family resource center to provide information on social assistance and human services in the area, and to connect families, schools, churches, government agencies, and businesses. She also organized 15 volunteers to assemble furniture, set up the computer, and clean the facility housing the center.

* Five Members in Oregon organized, coordinated, and implemented a riparian enhancement demonstration involving the recruitment of 70 volunteers who planted 4,000 native trees and shrubs along 1,400 feet of streambank.

* In Hancock County, Tennessee, 6,700 residents will soon have an approved collection site to take their recyclables to as a result of just a few AmeriCorps working through the state red-tape to permit a convenience center collection site. These Members also helped create a process to 111,000 residents in 5 counties to have a way to safely dispose of toxic household hazardous waste and crafted a unique and innovative program to help residents offset expensive and valuable landfill space by teaching consumers not to buy products with excessive packaging.

* In Maine, a few Members trained students in ten high schools and citizens in eleven community groups in water quality monitoring and data management.

* In Blytheville, Arkansas, one Member conducted low-income home buyers workshops, assisted in developing a housing preservation pre-application, and approximately 2000 families in completing applications for home buyer and utility assistance.

* In Barbourville, Kentucky, one Member is assisting in the completion of an emergency shelter to serve 225 people by recruiting various civic, religious, and volunteer groups to contribute supplies and support, and develop a schedule of needed resources.

* In Sumorset, Kentucky, a member has taken 11 applications for home repairs, worked on a project with the local sewer commission to install sewer lines for 300 families, and assisted a widow and an elderly home-bound man to find money for home repairs through a non-profit organization.

* In Aztec, New Mexico, one Member has assisted applications for single family housing loans for the elderly and disabled, completed a housing preservation grant for the Upper Fruitland Chapter of the Navajo Nation, organized and implemented a home buyers education workshop for 150 loan applicants and community members, conducted three other education workshops at senior citizen centers for 88 seniors, completed a business assistance and retention survey for the NW New Mexico Council of Governments, and gave presentations to three realty companies on the RECD Guaranteed Loan Program which were attended by 28 people.

RDT Projects Will Have Longer-Term Impacts Than Most AmeriCorps Projects

While activities such as renovating a neighborhood park, repairing homes in low-income neighborhoods, or building a trail on a national forest are noble and important, most of these projects will have limited-long term impacts. Furthermore, many of these types of projects could theoretically be completed by volunteers with little training or even by a prison work-crew.

In contrast, RDT projects usually provide long-term help that will systematically improve the "structure" of communities. By creating jobs, we will decrease hunger for years to come. By improving watersheds, we will protect water quality potentially for decades.

Rather than just provide remedial "band-aids" for problems, the RDT systematically empowers communities to work with AmeriCorps to solve their own problems.

In my view, one of CNCS' greatest accomplishments is your focus not only on short-term "Community service" objectives, but also on long-term "Community-building objectives." The RDT supports that focus by so seriously concentrating community-building.

The RDT is Vital to the Rural Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Community Initiative

This year, most rural communities that applied for and/or received EZ/EC designations have RDT Members placed in them. We are proposing that next year we also give RDT members to all the remaining applicant communities that desire them.

Unlike other AmeriCorps Members who just coincidentally are placed in EZ or EC communities to perform service only slightly related to the EZ/EC program, RDT Members are specifically implementing the strategic plan of that EZ or EC.

While the Administration's EZ/EC initiative in rural areas has taken a while to

fully get off the ground, RDT Members serving in those communities have provided tangible, immediate help to those communities. These Members are particularly critical in communities that we euphemistically call "champion communities;" i.e., communities that applied for but were denied EZ/or EC designation.

Many of these communities have told USDA that receiving the placement of a RDT Member has been their single most valuable benefit --- and in some instances, the only benefit they credit --- received from the Clinton Administration.

Incredibly enough, one community leader told me personally that receiving an RDT AmeriCorps Member was even more valuable to his community than winning a designation would have been.

CNCS has continually highlighted the ties of AmeriCorps to the EZ/EC initiative. The RDT is the strongest of all such ties. Given the vast resources the Administration has devoted in other areas to EZ/EC, it makes sense to bolster the commitment of AmeriCorps to this initiative.

Independent Sources Continually Verify the Success of the RDT

The RDT has garnered countless letters of support from community leaders, environmental organizations, county governments, housing groups, etc. Furthermore, Out of the literally hundreds of newspaper clips about the RDT from every region of the country --- not one has been negative. **These independent observers in the press have continually made it clear that RDT members are not office-based bureaucrats, but are directly serving their communities filling critical needs.**

Furthermore, in states where the state national service commissions have reacted favorably to our overtures to provide information about, and site visits to, our RDT projects, their reaction has generally been favorable.

The RDT Helps Stem the Rural Brain Drain

By helping well-educated and highly-motivated young people return to live and serve in the communities in which they grew up, the Rural Development Team is one way to slow the tide of the rural "brain drain."

Given the wide gap between rural and non-rural college completion, this impact is vital to both the communities and to the Members.

All RDT Members Do Work in Teams

While some at CNCS believe that the RDT is purely an individual placement model, in reality it is a hybrid team/individual placement/professional corps approach.

All RDT Members work out of "clusters" that are within a fifty mile radius or one hour drive of a central meeting point.

The Members general meet together physically --- or by conference call --- once a week.

The RDT project design is similar to the project design of many non-USDA AmeriCorps projects described as "team" models. For instance, the BAYAC AmeriCorps projects in San Francisco --- which I recently visited along with the board of CNCS --- work in separate agencies four days a week and meet together by crews one day a week; in fact, given that some BAYAC service sites might be two hours away from each other in traffic, those service sites are, in practice, more distant from each other than most RDT sites are from each other.

Additionally, all RDT Members in a state gather regularly for meetings and/or signature service projects, including for the Launch, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Earth Day, National Day of Service, and graduation.

All RDT Members engaged in economic planning and rural housing work met together for a week-long training in Memphis that focused on the AmeriCorps vision and community-building techniques. Next year, we will have even more focus on national and regional trainings for all RDT Members.

RDT Projects "Look and Feel" Like AmeriCorps Projects

While RDT projects generally do not fit the AmeriCorps stereotypes of just 18-24 year-olds repairing a park or immunizing children, the all RDT projects do meet the greater AmeriCorps vision of "getting things done" while strengthening communities, expanding educational opportunity, and encouraging personal responsibility.

Furthermore, RDT projects all are designed to perform direct service, not just build capacity. Each of the first two USDA quarterly reports detail a combined total of 27 pages of such direct service achieving concrete, measurable, immediate results. Next year, USDA will pay even greater attention to this focus on direct service.

The RDT program is incredibly diverse by race, gender, physical ability, and age. The vast majority of RDT members will use their educational award to either re-pay students loans or pay for graduate school.

Unlike some AmeriCorps Members in non-USDA programs who may think they are in a "jobs" or "education" program, RDT Members have the "AmeriCorps" spirit and are seriously dedicated to community service.

All RDT Members Have National Identity

While many non-USDA AmeriCorps grantees almost hide their AmeriCorps identification under the identification of the youth corps or other sponsoring organization, all USDA sites --- including the RDT --- make national AmeriCorps identity a top priority. All USDA Members have received significant orientation in the AmeriCorps vision and are exposed to constant reinforcement of that vision.

All USDA AmeriCorps Members are required to wear one AmeriCorps article of clothing at all times --- either a tee-shirt, sweat-shirt, cap, or button.

All USDA AmeriCorps publicity and recruitment materials --- brochures, press releases, background papers, displays at county fairs, etc. --- are required to include the AmeriCorps USDA logo and two standard paragraphs explaining the entire AmeriCorps program.

USDA printed ---- and distributed to every site --- special AmeriCorps/USDA stationary to be used for all press releases and correspondence.

USDA printed --- and is in the process of distributing to every site --- over 1,000 permanent metal signs that will be placed at AmeriCorps service sites to identify them as such. Many of this signs will be installed as part of graduation ceremonies.

A few USDA Members have already met with the Presidnet and the Vice-President. Many have met with Secretary of Agriculture Glickman. Many other USDA Under and Assistant Secretaries and agency chiefs --- including former Peace Corps volunteer Paul Johnson --- have traveled to sites throughout the country to spread the AmeriCorps vision.

As you know, I am systematically travelling to each and every USDA site --- including RDT sites --- to spread the AmeriCorps message and help improve our projects.

Finally, each USDA AmeriCorps Member is now receiving a weekly AmeriCorps/USDA newsletter further promoting the vision of the program.

The RDT Magnifies the Impact of AmeriCorps

While the average citizen of Atlanta or Chicago might not be aware that hundreds of AmeriCorps Members are serving in their city, even the few RDT Members placed in a rural county have extremely high levels of public recognition in that county.

Through its highly productive service, the RDT program is selling the benefits of AmeriCorps each and every day in each and every region of the country.

USDA Is Serious About Continuous Improvement of the RDT

Through extensive site visits, thorough reviews of the quarterly reports, an extensive media monitoring operation, and continual conversations with project managers ---as well as comprehensive national, regional, and state staff training programs --- USDA is committed to continually improving all AmeriCorps programs in order to meet all the concerns on CNCS. Unlike some other grantees, USDA takes the input on CNCS and state commissions very seriously and acts on that input. With our recommendation to expand the RDT only slightly, USDA is planning to focus the entire next year on quality improvement.

AmeriCorps at USDA Will Thrive Long Beyond Changes in Leadership

While some may worry that the USDA program might lose its focus if Secretary Glickman or myself eventually leave the Department, the truth is that the USDA program offers far more stability and long-term quality control than AmeriCorps projects run by small non-profits led by dynamic leaders.

The USDA AmeriCorps program has been institutionalized at every level of the Department. Over 150 USDA employees from throughout the country attended a week-long training session at which Rick Allen, Meg Maguire, and many other CNCS leaders made extensive presentations. An over 200 page operations manual --- covering every topic from the AmeriCorps vision to payrolling to media policy to release for cause --- is being distributed to employees throughout the country. Literally thousands of USDA employees in 38 states have now had significant and sustained contact with the AmeriCorps program.

So many key USDA employees --- at both the national and county level --- understand both the vision and programmatic details of AmeriCorps, that the Department's program is sure to flourish no matter any future leadership changes.

May 13, 1995

To: Eli Segal
From: Joel Berg
Subject: Ideas To Ensure The Long-Term Expansion of AmeriCorps

Thank you for your generous note. I agree with you wholeheartedly that we are building a long-lasting legacy. Toward that end, I am writing to suggest a list of some potential ways we can raise additional funds to expand AmeriCorps even in today's difficult political climate.

As you are better aware than anyone, the current program --- while bigger than the Peace Corps at its peak --- engages only a small fraction of the Americans who want to serve. Thus, for AmeriCorps to continue to dramatically transform our entire society by eventually becoming a "right-of-passage" for all interested Americans, I believe we need to continue to work towards a program that engages a minimum of 100,000 citizens each year.

Yet even assuming that the President wins re-election and that the Democrats win back control of both houses of Congress in 1996 (which, of course, I do assume) --- the deficit makes it unlikely that an expansion to 100,000 Members yearly could be funded with mostly Federal money.

Consequently, even as we fight tooth and nail to maintain and expand Federal funding, I suggest that we give serious attention to bold new ways to develop significant new funding streams.

To date, CNCS has done a remarkable job leveraging private and non-profit resources. Thus, my suggestions would only expand upon your successful work to date. Some of these suggestions would require legislative changes, but others could be accomplished administratively by CNCS:

1) Propose a new budget arrangement in which every two dollars of private or non-profit money raised by CNCS would be matched by one dollar of Federal money. Perhaps the Administration could propose a compromise in which CNCS' base funding would be leveled out at the amount already appropriated for FY95, but that all additional funds --- up to \$1

billion --- would be contingent upon a 2/1 ratio of private funds to Federal funds.

2) Call Upon Universities and Corporations to Meet a "One Percent For Service Challenge."

I understand that some universities have already begun matching the educational award with their funds --- this could be encouraged and expanded. Perhaps the President could challenge all universities, colleges, and trade schools to reserve one percent of their incoming Freshman classes for AmeriCorps graduates --- and then give the graduates full scholarships, thereby saving the Federal government from having to pay for use of their educational awards. Perhaps the President could also challenge all corporations to reserve one percent of their new hires for AmeriCorps graduates --- and then repay their entire student loan debts, thereby also saving the Federal government from having to pay for use of their educational awards. If even a sizable minority of higher education institutions and corporations take up this challenge, they could pick up the full costs of tens of thousands of educational awards.

3) Current AmeriCorps Members could be asked to contribute a very small amount of money to fund future AmeriCorps Members. Perhaps Members could be given the option of having \$1 dollar taken out of their stipends every pay period to fund AmeriCorps in future years. Even though most Members can now barely survive on their current living allowance, I believe that many would nevertheless make a special effort to donate their own funds to help save the program. While this effort would be unlikely to earn significant new revenue, it could send an important symbolic message.

4) Create AmeriCorps Savings Accounts (ASAs) to allow families to save money now to ensure that their children would get a future spot in AmeriCorps. Perhaps we could ask for legislation that would allow families to have a tax-free way to save money for a special account for them to fund part of the AmeriCorps service year for their children. Their children would still have to apply for --- and get accepted by ---- individual AmeriCorps projects and would still have to successfully complete 1,700 hours of service to receive the educational award. Both working poor families obtaining Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs) and welfare families obtaining AFDC could agree voluntarily to save money for such an account by putting aside a small fraction of their yearly Federal payments; in order to increase their incentive, the Federal government could match the dollars they set-aside. These accounts would maintain the "no benefit without service ethic" of AmeriCorps while giving millions of families a direct stake in ensuring the long-term survival of the program.

5) Turn subsequent "National Days of Service" into Serve-A-Thons to raise money. If we engage only one in 200 Americans to perform a day of service sponsored by their friends and neighbors --- and if they raise only \$50 each --- then they would raise \$50 million for AmeriCorps while garnering tremendous public goodwill for the program.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance further in fleshing-out or implementing any of these ideas.

CC: Shirley Sagawa, Rick Allen, Larry Wilson, Susan Stroud

May 30, 1995

TO: Steve Selby

FROM: Joel Berg

Per your request, the top five ways that USDA brings "value-added" to AmeriCorps projects:

- 1) We serve rural and suburban areas virtually ignored by other grantees. These areas are represented by the swing Congresspeople critical to the future survival of AmeriCorps. For instance, only USDA has projects in Gingrich's and Lewis' Districts.
- 2) We serve areas with weak or non-existent state commissions, such North and South Dakota.
- 3) We enable AmeriCorps Members to perform tasks requiring technical expertise far beyond the capabilities of the vast majority of non-profit organizations. For instance, under direct and sustained supervision from experts in the field, USDA AmeriCorps Members are inspecting flood-damaged dams, implementing strategic plans to create local jobs, designing and implementing entire recycling plans for counties, helping farmers diversify their crops, bolstering the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise community initiative, designing timber bridges, and decreasing ground water pollution. If we want AmeriCorps Members to "Get things done" that require more than simple physical labor and that result in long-lasting improvements in communities, then Members need the kind of advanced technical training and supervision that can be best provided by Federal agencies.
- 4) We build new models for sophisticated service projects that meet complex needs. Programs such as the USDA Anti-Hunger Corps tackle complex social problems in a serious, comprehensive manner. Non-USDA programs might build a few shelves in a food pantry or cook a few meals in a soup kitchen, but only USDA programs focus on systematic ways to break the cycle of poverty and hunger.
- 5) Federal agencies have fewer money management problems. CNCS will never have to worry that USDA will miss a payroll, fail to meet a matching requirement, or use grant money on impermissible activities.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

*Memo
From
Joel*

May 9, 1995

To: USDA AmeriCorps Working Group
From: Joel Berg *JB*
Subject: Meetings of the Working Group

At our recent retreat, many of you impressed upon me the importance of team work. In addition, it was the consensus of the group that the working group meetings should be moved from Monday to Tuesday to better accommodate the needs of the group as a whole. I agreed to do so, even though Monday is a better day for me personally. I have even adjusted my travel schedule to be in Washington as often as possible for the Tuesday meetings.

Yet attendance at our meetings is still spotty, and many people leave in the middle of the meetings.

I urge you to make a special effort to block out Tuesday, from 10:00 a.m. - Noon, every week. While I, too, wish that the meetings took only a hour, the reality is that the highly detailed issues we need to discuss together rarely take less than two hours.

If you must be out of town on a Tuesday, please arrange with Denise to participate by conference call.

I reiterate that --- if you agency desires to have equal and democratic participation in the AmeriCorps decision-making process --- your agency needs to be "at the table" when the decisions are made.



UNITED
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OF AGRICULTURE

*Memo
From
Joel*

May 8, 1995

To: USDA/AmeriCorps Project Managers
From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*
Subject: Preparing The Third Quarter Reports

Thank you for your help in preparing your second quarter AmeriCorps site reports. We fully understand the great strain placed upon you to produce those documents at precisely the same time you were providing information for our renewal application.

Please remember that your third quarter reports for all your AmeriCorps sites are due --- in both paper and electronic (diskette or e-mail) versions --- to your agency Washington office by July 10, 1995.

Unfortunately, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) will likely change the site reporting format once again, so we are unable to provide you with an exact format right now. Be assured, however, that USDA will continue to forcefully push CNCS to provide revised formats as soon as possible.

In order to help you more easily produce paper and electronic copies of the reports in the exact formats that CNCS will be requesting, we will soon provide you with customized report templates compatible with whatever computer system is used by your office. However, we do already know that the next quarter reports will clarify how the data should be reported in the following three areas:

1) Number of Members Serving and Number of Hours Served --- Each third quarter site report must state the number of full-time Members allotted to the site, the number of full-time Members enrolled on the last day of the third quarter, the number of full-time Members who served the entire third quarter, the total of service hours performed in the second quarter by full-time Members, and the total of service hours performed to date (since the launch of the program) by full-time Members. If your site has part-time Members, all five of the above questions should be answered separately for your part-time Members. Hours no longer need to be divided between hours in training and hours in direct service; we are now only interested in the total number of hours that count towards receiving the education award. Please answer all the above questions about number of Members and hours served on each individual site report, but also please aggregate for your state this information for all the Members sponsored by your agency in the state.

2) Number of Non-AmeriCorps Volunteers and Number of Volunteer Hours --- Each third quarter site report must specify how many non-AmeriCorps unpaid volunteers were recruited in the quarter to serve alongside your AmeriCorps Members, as well as the total number of hours these volunteers served in the quarter. This information is absolutely critical, because it allows us to refute the false charge that AmeriCorps' existence decreases the number of people who volunteer in communities. All our experience proves that AmeriCorps in fact boosts community volunteerism --- that is why our reports need to document that.

3) Comparison of Community Service Objectives Planned With Community Service Objectives Achieved --- Each third quarter site report must re-state its complete set of existing community service objectives, before explaining precisely what progress has been made towards achieving those objectives. Your answers should be as concrete and measurable as possible. Your answers should not focus on "process" activities such as meetings held, surveys or inventories completed, citizens informed of programs, but rather should focus on direct benefits to the community, such as: number of trees planted, number of jobs or new businesses created, number of school children educated, number of homes built or repaired, number of (or acres of) conservation practices actually implemented, miles of trail built, percentage improvement in water quality, increase in recycling rate, etc.

If you have any additional questions about the type of information we are seeking, please not hesitate to contact either your agency AmeriCorps Coordinator, or me directly at (202) 720-6350.

Thanks again for your help.



UNITED
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OF AGRICULTURE

May 8, 1995

To: USDA/AmeriCorps Project Managers and Facilitators

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*

Subject: "Graduation" Activities for Each Site

If you have not done so already, please begin planning "graduation activities" for your Members. Since each USDA project started at a different date and has progressed at a different pace, the Department will not set a standard graduation date for the program. We will leave it up to your judgment to set a date for a ceremony when all or most of your Members have completed their 1,812 hours of service. However, whenever possible, all USDA agency projects in the same geographical area should have the same graduation ceremony. The Department is now working to create appropriate graduation certificates for all our Members.

In addition, by the end of June, each site will receive --- through your state or regional facilitator --- permanent metal signs with an AmeriCorps logo and the heading: "A project of AmeriCorps, United States Department of Agriculture." These signs are to be posted at physical worksites so that our AmeriCorps Members and staff can take lasting credit for the wonderful work they have performed throughout America --- just as alumni of the original CCC can now view plaques at the sites they constructed throughout the country. We strongly recommend incorporating the installation of these signs into your graduation ceremonies, particularly if your project has built, repaired, or renovated physical sites --- such as homes, trailheads, timber bridges, kiosks, soup kitchens, community gardens, public parks, environmental education centers, campgrounds, etc. We recommend that you sponsor a caravan or parade in your area in which the Members ride or walk from physical site to physical site, installing the permanent signs at each site. If you have such an event, you should invite media, elected officials, and other prominent community leaders.

As soon as you have finalized your plans for graduation, please fax us the attached form at (202) 720-4614, so that we will be able to invite top-ranking USDA officials to your events.

I hope all our graduations can be joyous ceremonies fully celebrating all the amazing achievements of the program. If you have any questions about your planned event, please contact your agency AmeriCorps coordinator or me directly at (202) 720-6350.

**USDA/AMERICORPS
RESPONSE FORM FOR SITE GRADUATION CEREMONIES**

Date, location, and state where graduation ceremonies will be held: _____

USDA agency or agencies from which AmeriCorps Members will be participating:

Number of USDA AmeriCorps Members expected to participate: _____

County or Counties of the duty station(s) of USDA AmeriCorps Members expected to participate: _____

Any local leaders confirmed to attend: _____

Brief description of any activities associated with the graduation:

Name and number of contact person for graduation: _____

Please fax to (202) 720-4614 when complete.

Call (202) 720-6350 with any questions.



UNITED
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OF AGRICULTURE

May 4, 1995

To: AmeriCorps/USDA Project Managers and Facilitators

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*

Subject: Upcoming Site Visits

I still intend to attempt to meet with AmeriCorps Members in all 38 states where USDA has projects this year. So far, I have visited sites in Arkansas, California, Georgia, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington state. These trips have allowed me not only to learn more about the successes of our individual projects, but to communicate to the Members how they are a critical part of a national movement.

Below are the dates I am tentatively scheduled to visit your area. Often due to forces beyond my control, my schedule changes rapidly. Thus, feel free to give my office feedback if the dates I have proposed for the visits are not optimal for your sites. I will be more than willing to change any of the dates I will visit your area if they are not good time to visit your projects. Also, please notify my office immediately if the dates I have proposed will be after many of your Members have completed their term of service.

Some suggested dates:

~~Monday, May 8 - Tappahannock, Virginia~~

Tuesday, May 9 - Beltsville, Maryland

Wednesday, May 10 - ~~Eastern Shore of Maryland~~

Thursday, May 11 - New Jersey

Friday, May 12 - New Jersey

Tappahannock, Virginia

Tuesday, May 16 (Leaving DC after 11:00 a.m.) - West Virginia

Wednesday, May 17 - West Virginia

Thursday, May 18 - Kentucky

Friday, May 19 - Kentucky

Monday, May 22 - Tennessee

Tuesday, May 23 - Tennessee

Wednesday, May 24 - North Carolina

Thursday, May 25 - Virginia

Tuesday, May 30 - Monday, June 6 - Washington, DC for CNCS grant negotiations

~~Tuesday, June 6 - Galveston Bay, Texas~~

Wednesday, June 7 - Rio Grande Valley, Texas

Thursday, June 8 - El Paso, Texas; Donna Ana County, New Mexico

Friday, June 9 - Cochise and Santa Cruz Counties, Arizona; National Forests in Arizona

Saturday, June 10 - Tuesday, June 13 - Four Corners Region

Wednesday, June 14 - ~~San Bernadino, California (National Forest Site)~~

Thursday, June 15 - ~~Morning at Los Angeles, California (Anti-Hunger site);~~
afternoon at CNCS Board meeting in San Francisco

Friday, June 16 - CNCS Board meeting in San Francisco

Monday, June 19 - NRCS sites in Northern and Central California

Tuesday, June 20 - Monday, June 26 - Washington, DC to finalize grant award from CNCS

Tuesday, June, 27 - Boston

Wednesday, June 28 - Maine

Thursday, June 29 - Maine

Friday, June 30 - Maine

Wednesday, July 5 - Vermont

Thursday, July 6 - Vermont

Friday, July 7 - New Hampshire

{Monday, July - 3rd Quarter reports due from all sites}

Monday July 10 - Friday, July 14 - Washington, DC to prepare materials for USDA AmeriCorps staff training

Monday, July 17 - Friday, July 21 -- ~~Sites to be announced in Midwest~~, USDA

AmeriCorps Staff Training (Some local site visits possible during training,

depending on location) *Houston, TX* *Visit site in Boat*

Monday, July 24 - Friday, July 28 - Midwest flood states and Oklahoma

Wednesday, August 2 - Friday, August 11 - Remaining Midwest flood states, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Western New York

At each site, I would like to visit an actual location of at least some of the work to be performed and work alongside the Members for at least half a day. I would also like to meet with all the members individually and/or as a group, hold a session on the philosophy of AmeriCorps, and if time permits, hold a workshop for the Members on working with the media.

4 Corners Graduation

*NRCS
in N. CA*

*LA
& San
Bernadino*

Drive to VT

5:45

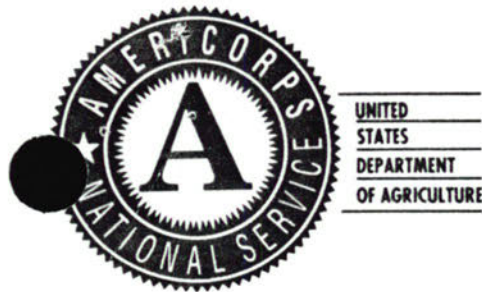
12:45

*Nancy Webb
(713) 383 4285*

At each site, I should also meet with project managers, state or regional agency leadership, crew leaders, recruitment coordinators, and leadership from any local organization that serves as a partner in the project or benefits from work performed by the Members. Please consult with Denise Bennett of my office, at (202) 690-3051, about travel logistics.

The media should be invited to visit the sites with me. Also, whenever possible, I would like to meet with local newspaper editorial boards. In small or medium-sized media markets, I often visit local television stations early in the morning or at night to give them live or taped interviews. Please consult with Katherine Ginbey of my office, at (202) 720-4369, about media contacts.

I thank you in advance for your help.



May 3, 1995

To: Applicants for Renewal or Start-Up of USDA AmeriCorps Projects

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service, USDA *JB*

Subject: Next Steps in AmeriCorps Application Process

Thank you for your tremendous help in providing preliminary proposals for FY96 AmeriCorps projects under extremely tight deadlines. Please carefully review the information below about the next steps in the process.

1) By June 1, all sites must revise their community service objectives to further clarify the actual service that will be performed by each AmeriCorps Member. Such refined objectives will be the greatest single determinant of whether your site obtains final approval.

Each Anti-Hunger and Environmental Team site must have at least five objectives, and each Rural Development Team Member performing an individual task must have an individual community service objective.

We fully realize that the community service objectives are most difficult to craft for Rural Development Team projects. These objectives must clarify precisely how community Members will directly benefit from the service of AmeriCorps Members --- not how many meetings will be held, how many research reports will be written, how many plans will be formulated, how much data will be collected, or how many people will learn about USDA programs. Additionally, your community service objectives should stay away from vague buzzwords such as "facilitating partnerships," "broadening public understanding," etc. Rather, the objectives should focus on how many trees will be planted, how many people will receive better housing, how much the recycling rate will be increased, how many new small-scale farms will be created, how many more people will receive running water, how many students will receive education presentations, how many new businesses and jobs will be created, how water quality will be improved, how many new tourists will be brought to an area, etc.

5) By July 1, the Department will conclude final grant negotiations with the Corporation for National Service and will inform all applicants of precisely how many Members will be allocated to each site.

No existing AmeriCorps Member should be promised renewal and no new applicant for the program should be promised a slot until this notification is made to your site. In addition, no press release or other information requesting applicants should be given to the media before such formal notification.

Upon notification, successful applicants will be provided with detailed guidelines for finalizing their recruitment plans and work plans.

6) From July 17-21, the Department will conduct a comprehensive training for all AmeriCorps project directors, site supervisors, and crew leaders.

The exact site of the training will not be known for another week, but it will likely take place in a "hub" city in the Midwest.

The training will function on two tracks --- one track for staff new to AmeriCorps and another track for experienced staff who are renewing projects. Most of the training will take place in small workshops to be run by staff from our most successful projects throughout the country.

If you have any questions about any of the steps listed above, please contact either your agency AmeriCorps coordinator or myself at (202) 720-7350.

Thank you once again for your support of AmeriCorps. With your help, we will continue "getting things done," while bringing communities together, expanding educational opportunity, and promoting personal responsibility.

The objectives must clarify how each AmeriCorps Member has a distinct service project with distinct goals that are different from the existing work of the sponsoring USDA agency, RC&D Council, county agency, or community action agency. Too many draft objectives gave the false impression that AmeriCorps Members will simply be supplementing the workforces of our agencies or partner organizations.

Each objective must realistically relate the service to be performed to the final goal. For instance, an objective can not simply state that a Member will create a tourism plan for the area, and that such a plan will create 1,000 new jobs. The objective needs to explain precisely how the Member will not just plan, but actually help implement, concrete activities that directly create 1,000 jobs.

Each objective must define an impartial way of assessing the quality of the service to be performed. It is unacceptable to use vague language indicating that, somehow, everyone served will be satisfied. Rather, if the objective relates to education, the objective should predict specific percentile increases in test scores on that topic. If the objective relates to recycling, the objective should predict the actual decrease in the number of tons of waste weighed-in annually at the county landfill.

Lastly, each objective must state exactly how many community residents will receive the direct benefits from the service performed by our AmeriCorps Members. It is unacceptable to simply make the claim that an AmeriCorps project will somehow benefit everyone in a town or in a county, and then list under the number of people served the total population of the town or county. Rather, this number should reflect a carefully thought out prediction of how many people will be concretely aided by the direct service of AmeriCorps.

2) By June 10, each agency needs to present the Department with revised proposals for site selection by state, indicating exactly how each Rural Development Team site will meet the "cluster" requirement in which all Rural Development Team Members serve in groups of no less than five Members who are within a fifty-mile or one hour drive of a central meeting point.

The cluster groupings allow the Department to meet the unique needs of scattered rural communities, while at the same time ensure that we meet the AmeriCorps vision by enabling all Members to meet together regularly, learn the benefits of working in a Team, and receive the constant reinforcement of being in a national program.

4) By June 20, each site should receive new recruitment brochures for next year.

Informal recruitment efforts --- including interviews --- may begin, although no Members should be formally renewed or selected.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

May 2, 1995

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*
Subject: Update on USDA's AmeriCorps National Service Program

The statements that you made in support of AmeriCorps at the Rural Conferences have been related to USDA AmeriCorps Members throughout the country, bolstering their morale during a time of great worry about the program's future existence.

For your information, attached is the second quarter report for USDA's program. As you will read, not only are USDA AmeriCorps Members performing critical service in a highly cost-effective manner in 38 states, but the USDA program has generated a great deal of positive media coverage and letters of support from local officials across the nation. Some highlights:

- * The Forest Service has calculated that its AmeriCorps Members serving on Public Lands Teams perform at least \$1.51 worth of service for each \$1.00 that the American taxpayer spends to support such service.

- * Ms. Joan Frey, a Republican County Commissioner in Klickitat County, Washington has given glowing support to our program, stating: "I'm a budget-cutting Republican rancher who doesn't support these types of programs generally, but this (AmeriCorps/USDA) is a program with winners for all."

- * Members of the USDA Anti-Hunger and Empowerment Team in Vermont helped more than 100 "working poor" families obtain over \$61,000 in tax refunds --- through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) --- allowing the families to continue supporting themselves through work instead of welfare.

- * Members of the Rural Development Team in Oregon successfully redesigned a Downtown Revitalization Loan funding program which involved a carry-over of unused existing funds into the new program, initiated the compilation of a local business directory, assisted the development of a Business Revitalization Committee which developed an action plan, and developed a Flexible Manufacturing Facility Grant which, if funded, will be used to acquire land and fund operating costs at the facility.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information.