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KANSAS OFFICE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

P.O. Box 889 - Topeka, KS 66601 - Phone (913) 234-1423 Fax (913) 234-1429

Send to: Attention Joel Berg

Company USDA, AmeriCorps Staff

City Washington State DC

Number of Pages 1 (w/cover sheet)

Fax Number 202-720-4614 202-690-1131

Date 4/25/96

Sent by:

☒ Pat Kells

☐ Gail Huesmann

☐ Zona Clennan

☐ Neet Pabst

☐ Jim Gaschen

☐ Hilary Peguero

Message: Joel: I do NOT have a proposal, per se. My offer was to ask the KS Commission to support Jim Meisenheimer in his position IF the USDA thought this would be helpful and not interfere in the Kansas AmeriCorps/USDA relationship. In our meeting yesterday, the KS Commission agreed to award up to \$25,000 to support (obviously, only partially) Jim's position IF the USDA so desires. This would have to be a grant from us to a fgs. agency. The big potential problem (which I have explained to Gary Miles and Jim) is that the Corporation would not award both you & us funds toward the Kansas USDA AmeriCorps program. We would have to decide how to accommodate BOTH the local program needs & the Corporation!

c Jim Meisenheimer

Pat Kells
4/25/96

(Smile)

Please check the mailing address information for any corrections, and contact Beverly Pritts if there are any changes needed.

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LFiler
Facilitator

USDA/AmeriCorps

Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
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(913) 823-4500
FAX (913) 823-4540

March 20, 1995

Mr. Joel Berg
USDA/Office of Communications
Nat'l Service Division
14th & Independence SW
Room 540-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Berg:

I am sending you a news story about our team at Kanopolis Reservoir. At my request, I did receive a news story from the team. I refined the story and sent it to several newspapers on March 15. On March 17 I received a phone call from a David Clouston saying that he was going out to Kanopolis to do an interview with the team. In my remarks to him, I stressed that the members were providing community service by helping restore damage caused by the 1993 flood at the park.

The article of March 18 is the first story of any length that we have received from a major Kansas newspaper.

I was glad that I was able to participate in the phone conference of March 17. At 12:15 p.m. I received a phone call from Washington, DC asking if I knew if the call was to be held. The person making the call then put me on hold and later came back saying the conference call had been cancelled. He then suggested that I call Charles' office to find out why the conference call had been cancelled. I called only out of curiosity.

Do you have any other work that I can help AmeriCorps with in other states? I too live and sleep AmeriCorps. When is our detail to the AmeriCorps to end? I need to be looking for a place to live when and if I have to move back to work in Osborne County as county executive director for CFSA. The lease on my apartment in Salina ends in May. I do have an option to get monthly extensions on the lease after May.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jim Meisenheimer".

Jim Meisenheimer
Kansas AmeriCorps/USDA Regional Facilitator

News Release

AmeriCorps - Kanopolis State Park

AmeriCorps - Getting Things Done!

Article
received

During February, AmeriCorps have gotten things accomplished at Kanopolis Reservoir, State Park, and Wildlife area. The four member team, Chris Newton, Scott Morris, Troy Hurlbut and Kurt Grimm, have developed fish habitat, built and installed waterfowl nesting structures, fixed water crossings on trails, constructed public information shelters, maintained park buildings and picnic tables.

Little fish need habitat that supplies food and escape cover to survive. Brush and weeds along the shore offer this needed habitat. But in Kansas, our lakes drop due to our summer droughts. This forces little fish into deeper water, where they become easy prey. By placing recycled Christmas trees, Eastern Red Cedar trees eliminated from rangeland, and old tires wired together, into deeper areas of the lake, we are supplying that habitat. The benefits for fishermen is greater survival of little fish, allowing them to grow into larger fish and the concentration of prey draws larger predators to that habitat. Fisherman pursuing these predators will find them around this habitat due to the presents of their food source, little fish. Six new brush piles now exist in Kanopolis Reservoir. This habitat should allow more fish to reach catchable size.

One of the limiting factors for waterfowl reproduction is nesting habitat. Wood Ducks require a tree cavity near water. Constructing and placement of Wood Duck nesting boxes reduces that limiting factor by increasing the number of young born. Sixteen Wood Duck nesting boxes were built by Kanopolis AmeriCorps team. Seven are installed at Kanopolis State Park Wildlife Viewing Area, with the other ten to be placed at other wildlife areas. Geese also benefit from safe nesting structures. Five such structures are now in place ready for use at Kanopolis Reservoir.

The increase in the population of beaver in Kansas has caused tree damage and flooding in unwanted areas. The increase in the water level at water crossing on Kanopolis trail system gets hikers wet and causes horses to

(over)

spook, increasing the chance of injury to riders and hikers. Our team has installed drain pipes through the beaver dams to lower the water level. These extend far enough past the dam on both sides to discourage the beaver from plugging the ends of the pipe.

It is necessary to provide the public with information about the Parks and user rules. Our team constructed two information shelters for this purpose. Facility maintenance is an ongoing service for people to use and enjoy our State Parks.

AmeriCorps is about getting things done! As our tour of service continues we at Kanopolis look forward to completing other tasks that benefits the community.

If there are any comments or questions please call me, Chris Newton, at Kanopolis State Park, 316-546-2565.



Article
sent

USDA/AmeriCorps

Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, KS 67401-4642
(913) 823-4500
FAX (913) 823-4540

Contact: Jim Meisenheimer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 15, 1995

AMERICORPS MEMBERS AT KANOPOLIS WILDLIFE AND PARKS RESERVOIR
ARE "GETTING THINGS DONE"
BY
AMERICORPS MEMBER CHRIS NEWTON

"Getting things done" is the slogan of the national service program, according to Jim Meisenheimer Kansas AmeriCorps/USDA Regional Facilitator. During February the four members of the AmeriCorps/USDA Kanopolis Reservoir, State Park and Wildlife area team, Chris Newton, Kurt Grimm, Troy Hurlburt, and Scott Morris, developed fish habitat, built and installed waterfowl nesting structures, fixed water crossings on trails, constructed public information shelters, and maintained park buildings and picnic tables.

Little fish need habitat that supplies food and escape cover to survive. The members placed Eastern Cedar trees eliminated from rangeland, recycled Christmas trees, and old tires wired together, into the lake supplying habitat. The benefits to fishermen are greater survival of little fish which attract larger predator fish to the habitat. The habitat will allow more fish to reach a catchable size. AmeriCorps Members have created six new brush piles in Kanopolis Reservoir.

Members have also built sixteen wood duck nesting boxes. Seven have been installed at the Kanopolis State Park Wildlife Viewing Area and the others will be placed at wildlife areas. The construction and placement of nests will enhance the reproduction of waterfowl in the area.

An increase of beavers at the lake has caused the water level to rise at crossings on the Kanopolis trail system causing hikers to get wet and horses to spook, increasing the chance of injury to riders. AmeriCorps Members have installed drain pipes through the beaver dams in order to lower the water level.

Two information shelters have been constructed by Members in order to provide the public with information about the Park and user rules. Facility maintenance is an ongoing service for people to use and enjoy our State Park. As our tour of service continues we look forward to completing other tasks that benefit the community and to demonstrate what AmeriCorps is about, GETTING THINGS DONE.

Questions concerning the AmeriCorps Members' work at Kanopolis State Park can be answered by calling Chris Newton at 913 546 2565.

For additional information about AmeriCorps/USDA contact the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) at 760 South Broadway, Salina, Kansas 67401.

-END-

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(File)

Facilitator

December 28, 1994

Joel Berg
USDA/Office of Communications
Natl' Service Division
14th & Independence SW
Room 540-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Berg:

It was good hearing from you on December 27th. I hope that you received the requested Fax. If the Member can't get the Corporation to pay off his college loan upon completion of his service, he will probably go to Senator Kassebaum for help.

I sent our latest TV video from station WIBW to Beverly Pritts and she has been asked to give it to you.

During our conservation of the 27th you asked about the statement in my December 22 report that I had gotten the impression that some team leaders view community service as a nuisance aspect of AmeriCorps. The team leader will say that my impression is incorrect. The Area Conservationist, whom you met in Topeka, has been very cooperative with all aspects of AmeriCorps since that meeting. The Members of the Topeka team have confided in me that their line of communication with their team leader is not good. The team leader is not the Area Conservationist. I hope to have a good discussion with the team leader at our scheduled January 11 meeting.

The reason this letter is being mailed with my own stamp and stationary is to ask a personal favor. I have told Kansas SED Adrian Polansky and his Program Specialists Roger Lemmons and Dennis Gashler that they made a mistake when they asked me to take the AmeriCorps assignment. The work with you and AmeriCorps has been the most invigorating thing that I have done since I left the Omaha Public Schools as a secondary instructor in the spring of 1980. They understand that it will be very difficult for me to go back to my county Consolidated Farm Administration office as a county executive director. They periodically tell me that they are glad that I have the AmeriCorps position. It has also been suggested, off the record, that I ask you about possible future employment with AmeriCorps or the Corporation for National and Community Service when my current tour is finished this spring.

I am cognizant that the handbook states that Regional Facilitators are not to become full time AmeriCorps personnel. Are there or will there be any positions open with the Corporation? If there is no possibility of joining the Corporation permanently, are there any other similar jobs available? I would be very interested in the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) or other USDA positions other than those in a county office. What can you tell me about FEMA and its hiring practices? Would it be wise for me to contact Dan Glickman about future employment, assuming he becomes Secretary of Agriculture?

Any suggestions and or help with future employment will be greatly appreciated. It is acknowledged that the Republican control of congress may put in question the future of AmeriCorps and other agencies. We look forward to your scheduled return to Kansas in February.

Sincerely,



Jim Meisenheimer

Kansas AmeriCorps Regional Facilitator

760 South Broadway
Salina, Kansas 67401

Home address:
815 E. Wayne Apt. 5
Salina, Kansas 67401



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

(File)
facilitators

Draft

November 23, 1994

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service

To: AmeriCorps/USDA Working Group

From: Joel Berg

Subject: Clarifying Roles for Regional Facilitators

Attached are two draft memorandums for project managers and regional facilitators. One specifies weekly tasks for the facilitators and the other suggests ways to build the AmeriCorps spirit.

Please read this carefully, since they address topics that have raised a fair amount of internal controversy. After I received agency comments, I will revise both memos for immediate distribution to the field.

DRAFT

November 23, 1994

To: **USDA/AmeriCorps Project Managers and Regional Facilitators**
From: **Joel Berg, Director of National Service**
Subject: **A Dozen Things You Can Do To Build the "AmeriCorps Spirit"**

As you know, one of your most important tasks in helping run AmeriCorps is to build a special spirit for AmeriCorps that:

- * Imbues all our AmeriCorps Members with a special ethic of service and citizenship;
- * Creates a unique public identity for the program that is different from either a jobs program or a volunteer program;
- * Assures that Members understand that they are all part of a larger program with other projects both within and outside of USDA;
- * Guarantees that all Members understand not only the responsibilities, duties, and requirements which they must meet, but also the rights and benefits to which they are legally entitled.
- * Provides Members with enough understanding of the program that they can effectively communicate that understanding to the media, policy makers, and the general public;
- * Fosters an "Esprit de corps" that motivates all our Members to give an 100% effort every day;
- * Ensures that all Members work on a regular basis side-by-side with other Members of different education levels, races, genders, economic backgrounds, etc.; and
- * Allows the Members to have structured time for critical reflection and discussion to enable them to put their service activities in perspective;

To meet those goals, we suggest you regularly take some or all of the steps listed below.

1) Set-up weekly meetings in which all Members in each Anti-Hunger Team, Public Lands and Environment Team, and Rural Development Cluster physically get-together for training, project planning, and critical reflection. Each cluster should alternate leading the meeting and making presentations about their service projects. If weather emergencies or other rare circumstances occur that prevent such a weekly meeting in person, you should overcompensate by having two conference calls between the AmeriCorps members that week.

2) Establish a schedule in which your Members meet with USDA AmeriCorps Members in other projects, clusters, or issue areas. Members in all our projects have a deep desire to meet their peers and learn about our other projects, no matter the sponsoring USDA agency. If these Members can not physically meet, they should talk on telephone conference calls.

3) Arrange for your Members to meet with Members of other, non-USDA, AmeriCorps projects. Remember that USDA's 1,200 members comprise only 6% of the 20,000 Members in the overall AmeriCorps program. It is likely that there are non-USDA AmeriCorps Members serving in or nearby your project. Our Members very much want to learn about such programs. If these Members can not physically meet, they should talk on telephone conference calls.

4) Organize "signature service projects" for Members. Members from your project can work alongside Members from other USDA AmeriCorps projects, Members from non-USDA projects, local FFA chapters, local 4-H groups, other local youth groups. Your Members can also implement projects on certain weekend days to coordinate community volunteer days in which ordinary local citizens are mobilized for certain large projects that can be completed in one day. Such signature projects -- typically requiring strenuous physical labor -- help the Members bond. The idea is to challenge teams to complete tasks that individuals can't. Such projects could be particularly helpful for Rural Development Team members, many of whom will not often perform physical labor or work alongside each other. Such projects can also generate enormous public support. Some suggestions:

- Tree planting in urban and rural areas
- Stream or park clean-ups
- Painting or repairing playgrounds
- Community nutrition/anti-hunger festivals
- Renovating, repairing, or painting low-income houses
- Children immunization events
- Distributing flyers on USDA hunger programs
- Serving holiday meals to homeless citizens
- Making local facilities handicapped accessible
- Renovating or repairing Forest Service visitor centers

5) Arrange recreational activities for Members for their personal time or as part of their 20% of time in training. Recreational activities, either within a project or cluster or with other projects or clusters, is a great way to build team work, without the pressure and anxiety that often accompanies more formal "team building" exercises. Members could hike, visit an amusement park, go rafting, play frisbee football, hold a scavenger hunt, etc. You should strongly consider opportunities to camp out on a National Forest or National Service.

6) Organize training programs and other events on a regional basis. The USDA Rural Development team, in particular, was designed to operate on a regional basis in order to be able to tackle problems that are common throughout each region. All Rural Development Team Members in a region should meet together physically at least four times a year. All Rural Development Team Members in a region should also take to each other on conference calls at least once every other month.

7) Working with other regional facilitators and with my office, organize issue-based conference calls for Members. Most of our service projects in one region has a similar counterpart in at least one other region. All Members working on rural fire protection throughout the country should talk to each other. Likewise for those working on housing, water quality, economic planning, recycling, tourism development, flood relief, etc.

8) Arrange outsiders to speak and/or meet with the Members. Some suggestions: experts on issues, former Peace Corps or Vista volunteers, executive directors from state commissions on national service, state staff of the Corporation for National and Community Service, elected officials, staff from other AmeriCorps projects, etc.

9) Set aside a public space at each worksite to display information. Create a bulletin board or kiosk on which to place positive newsclips, thank you letters, photos of service projects, information about other AmeriCorps projects, etc.

10) Create "United Way"-type thermometers and place them in either in a public place or at your office to track progress of your service projects service. Let all the members graphically see evidence of how they are "getting things done."

11) Set-aside time for Members to keep a journal of their experiences. Journal writing is a great way to both document our program and allow members to critically reflect on their service.

12) Match all our members up with USDA employees, who are not directly involved in managing AmeriCorps, to serve as one-on-one mentors. This mentoring opportunity should be open to all local USDA employees, not just those from sponsoring agencies.

DRAFT

November 23, 1994

To: USDA/AmeriCorps Project Managers and Regional Facilitators

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service

Subject: Weekly Duties for AmeriCorps Regional Facilitators

Many project managers and facilitators have asked for clarification of the specific duties of facilitators. While the responsibilities are listed on page 31 of the USDA/AmeriCorps Operations Manual, this memorandum specifies concrete tasks that the facilitators should complete each week:

1) Help plan and execute a day in which all Members of each Rural Development Team Cluster physically get-together for training, project planning, and critical reflection. If weather emergencies or other rare circumstances occur that prevent such a weekly meeting in person, you should overcompensate by having two conference calls between the AmeriCorps members that week.

2) Implement at least one "spirit building" activity --- in addition to the cluster meeting --- at least one site in the region. Some suggested activities are provided in the attached memorandum "A Dozen Things You Can Do To Build the 'AmeriCorps Spirit'."

3) Working with all the agency project managers, prepare a weekly report for the region that is shared with all the agencies and with myself. The reports should include:

- A) Progress towards meeting community service objectives
- B) Any major staff, structural, or service changes made
- C) List of any new members joining or quitting
- D) Primary accomplishments of our projects
- E) Primary challenges or problems at our sites
- F) Primary training, technical assistance, and equipment needs
- G) Copies of media coverage
- H) Other documentation such as photos or thank-you letters
- I) Other data occasionally requested -- such as computer inventory
- F) Plans for future team building activities
- G) Recommendations for improving our programs
- H) Feedback from AmeriCorps Members

Co B

Thurston

4) Visit with staff, Members, and project sponsors at service sites. Each state facilitator should generally visit one site each week, and every site at least once a month. Every regional facilitator should generally visit at least two states a month, and visit every site in the region at least four times in the year. Facilitators should spend significant blocks of time working side-by-side on the field with AmeriCorps Members, not just meeting with them in offices.

5) Work with agency public affairs personnel to set-up media events and site visits by elected officials. However, no USDA staff should speak with any members of the media before they are thoroughly trained on the philosophy and details of all our programs.

6) After consulting with agencies about their prior contacts, the facilitators should serve as the principal contacts with both the executive directors of state commissions on national service and the state staff of the Corporation for National and Community Service. It is critical that we keep both entities in each state apprised of our activities. (Contact names will be provided on request.)

7) Once computer needs are clarified in the next two weeks, facilitators will help implement our Internet communications. (Details will be provided soon).

Please also note that we want to continue building trust, respect, and cooperation between project managers and facilitators. Thus, no project manager or facilitator should exclude the other from any AmeriCorps meetings. Additionally, any reports prepared for Washington offices should be made available to all USDA agencies involved.

Members

Members are responsible to:

- completion of assigned work plan and tasks
- coordinating with designated community leaders and
- attending training and AmeriCorps meetings as scheduled

Regional Facilitators

Facilitators are responsible for

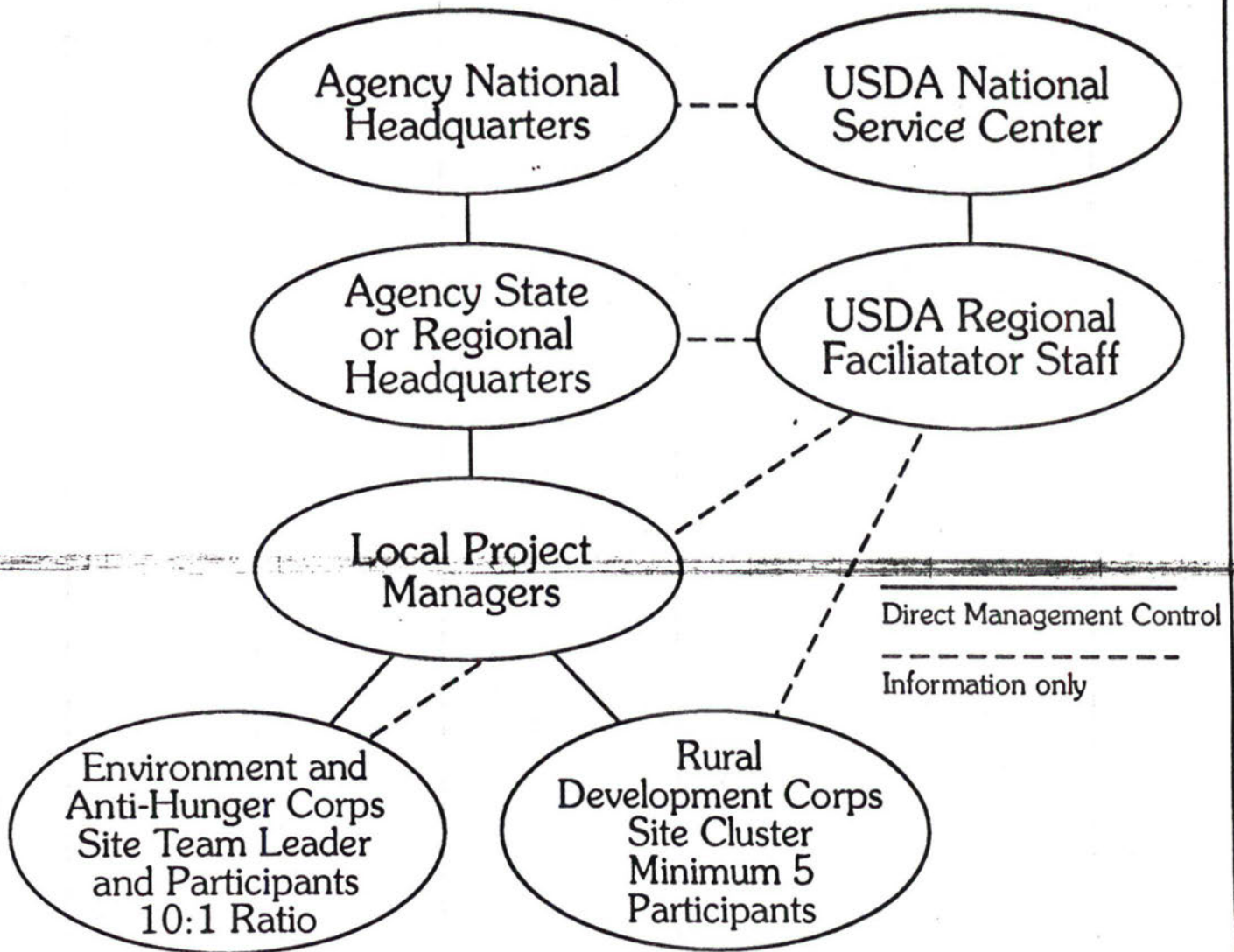
- planning and managing regional training and orientation programs,
- planning and developing regional communications activities,
- helping to ensure USDA/AmeriCorps members establish a national identity,
- providing coordination with Anti-Hunger and Public Lands and Environment Corps where appropriate,
- providing leadership in developing Internet capabilities,
- participating in identifying and recommending methods and criteria to improve USDA/AmeriCorps procedures,
- participating in planning for future USDA/AmeriCorps activities and projects, and
- consulting with state and/or regional offices and facilitating cluster meetings.

Members

Members are responsible for

- completion of assigned work plan and tasks;
- coordinating with designated community leaders; and
- attending training and AmeriCorps meetings as scheduled.

Team USDA AmeriCorps—Management Structure Public Lands and Environment Corps Rural Development Corps Anti-Hunger Corps



(File)
Facilitators

USDA AMERICORPS FACILITATORS

CONFERENCE CALL

DECEMBER 8, 1994, 12:30 - 1:00 P.M.2

AGENDA

- 1) Clarification of Duties for Facilitators
- 2) Facilitators Do's and Don'ts
- 3) Methods for Identity Building
- 4) Uniforms and Equipment
- 5) Training
- 6) Quarterly Reports
- 7) Facilitating Problem-Solving
- 8) January Training
- 9) Other Issues

(File) Facilitator

Questions From AmeriCorps State Facilitators

1. Has, or will the national office or the Corporation, design letterhead and envelopes, etc. for our use? If not, should we use State Office envelopes?
 2. Should we keep track of how much postage we use?
 3. Will the Department approve the cost of calls used for official business when made on my personal cellular phone?
 4. Will we get pagers?
 5. Re training modules and/or materials -- when will these be available? Do we need to request training materials, or will they automatically be sent to us?
 6. Can a camera be purchased with STO or CO funds?
 7. Are we required to make weekly physical site visits?
 8. For sites that are a great distance (7 hour drive, 5 hour drive), could we do a weekly conference call and only go to site once a month and/if there are problems?
 9. Will we be getting a more detailed job description, or do we work with what we have?
 10. We will be doing AmeriCorps work full time--until things pick up should we keep track of our time spent doing regular "ASCS work" vs AmeriCorps work?
 11. When site visits start, will a report be required on each project and if so, what should be included in this report?
 12. What should we be looking for on our site visits?
 13. What is meant by a "part-time" regional facilitator? Do I work part-time for ASCS and part-time for AmeriCorps, or do I work full-time for AmeriCorps for this 9-12 month period?
 14. Will there be a Midwest Area Training for Regional Facilitators?
 15. What is the National AmeriCorps oath and how can we obtain a copy?
 16. When will we receive information about the National Launch activities and what do we need to do in our State? There are other projects in the State other than USDA's--should launch activities be coordinated with them?
- 

17. Local resources that would be available for training activities and workshops might charge a nominal fee for mileage and/or meal--if these resources are needed, is it permissible to use their services? Is prior approval required, and if so, by whom? Who pays these expenses?
18. How soon will we be receiving: camera ready logo? Launch kits? Signs for Sites? Videos & other Training Materials? Letterhead? AmeriCorps Uniforms for Members?
19. Sept. 12 kickoff--how important is this date, and our participation?
20. Handbook for members--will WDC supply or are we to develop?
21. Equipment--Equipment is needed now (Bev's note: Rod, Ill., what specific equipment?)
22. Comment re Lack of authority--facilitators are responsible for making sure projects run smoothly & on schedule. Lack of authority is going to make this very hard to do.
23. Re Drug Free Workplace Act requirements, sexual harassment and other nondiscrimination issues--when will we or our project manager receive these training items? Will they be text or text/audio combination?
24. If a member does not have a high school diploma, are we responsible for setting up GED certification?
25. Are we responsible for developing a training plan for each member based on their individual training needs?
26. Are we to be involved in the September 12 kickoff? If so, are we to attempt to be at more than one site that day?
27. Oath for members--where is this written? Whom should administer?
28. Will uniforms, etc. be ready for the kickoff?
29. Will regional facilitators, project managers, etc. be given AmeriCorps pins, T-Shirts, etc?
30. If not given, can we purchase these items on our own?
31. When will equipment arrive? (Camera and film, overhead projector and transparencies)
32. Who pays for film and processing, transparencies, etc?

33. Should we attend workshops sponsored by local community service offices (e.g., Kansas Office for Community Service AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America 1994 Director Orientation/Workshops)
34. Who is the program officer at the Corporation that has ice-breaker and team activities materials? Request name phone # and address.
35. Are funds available for purchasing a home computer w/fax line?
36. Will a Govt. car be available for site visits and meetings?
37. Will we be getting FAX machines?
38. Can an additional phone line be installed at my home to enable me to receive E-mail @ home?

Please check the mailing address information for any corrections, and contact Beverly Pritts if there are any changes needed.

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Cliff Sapolt
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FAX 304 291 4097

-3-

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**USDA/AmeriCorps**

Natural Resources Conservation Service
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FAX (913) 823-4540

September 13, 1995

Mr. Joel Berg
USDA/Office of Communications
Natl' Service Division
14th & Independence SW
Room 540-A
Washington, D.C. 20250

FAX: (202) 720 4614

Dear Joel:

What is the current status of AmeriCorps with Congress? I received a report yesterday that National Public Radio was reporting:

- * both the Senate and House had voted to gut the budget for the Corporation for National and Community Service
- * a final vote would be taken next week
- * AmeriCorps members would be terminated as of October 1.

How correct is the afore? If the report is basically correct, is it tied to another bill that the President is likely to veto?

We are in the final stages of recruiting. We are also preparing to bring in team leaders, from across the state, for a meeting this Friday. If the report is correct should we not have the meeting, stop recruiting, etc.?

Respectfully,


Jim Meisenheimer
Kansas AmeriCorps/USDA

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

**USDA/AmeriCorps**

Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, KS 67401-4642

OPTIONAL FORM 99 (7-90)

FAX TRANSMITTAL

of pages 3

To: <u>Joel Berg</u>	From: <u>Jim Meisenheimer</u>
Dept./Agency: <u>USDA AmeriCorps/Univ.</u>	Phone #
Fax # <u>202 720 4614</u>	Fax #
NRN 7540-01-317-7388 5098-101 GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	

er 13, 1995

Mr. James N. H.
Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 S. Broadway
Salina, Kansas 67401

Mr. Adrian Polansky, Acting State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency
3600 Anderson Avenue
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

Gentlemen:

The enclosed fax was sent to Joel Berg, National Director USDA/AmeriCorps. He telephoned me at 10:00 a.m. central standard time and said, "don't panic! Our 1996 program is funded with money from the 1995 budget." He told me to go ahead with recruiting and training.

Joel said he had met with Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman this week and Glickman was pleased with the meeting of USDA/AmeriCorps members Ryan Webster and Kurt Grimm, and Kansas Health Safety and Extension College members Melina Owen and Scott Koelling, September 9, at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson. Dr. Richard Wootton, Associate Director of Extension, and Dr. Marc A. Johnson, Dean of Agriculture, Director of Agriculture Extension, Kansas State University and myself were also present. Joel wants copies of the photographs that I and the Kansas State University Extension took of the meeting. Selected photographs will be sent to the major newspapers across the state.

Sincerely,

Jim Meisenheimer
Jim Meisenheimer
Kansas USDA/AmeriCorps

Enclosure

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

cc:

Joel Berg, AmeriCorps National Director, USDA, Washington, D.C.

Larry D. Miles, AmeriCorps Project Director, NRCS, Salina, KS

Roger Lemmons, State Program Specialist, FSA, Manhattan, KS

Paula Cole Jones, Program Manager, AmeriCorps, PRG-CAR, NRCS,
Washington, D.C.

Kenneth W. Hoffman, Area Conservationist, FSA, Topeka, KS

Thomas W. Badger, Area Conservationist, FSA, Manhattan, KS

Daniel H. Meyerhoff, Area Conservationist, FSA, Hays, KS

PHOTOCOPY/
PRESERVATION



December 19, 1994

421 Jersey
Quincy, Illinois 62301
(217) 222-4996

Dear Mr. McCartney:

The YWCA of Quincy would like to thank you so very much for your Ameri Corps program and all the fine work they have done for us.

Your crew of workers has been very busy scraping and painting the inside of the YWCA. They have painted the gymnasium, stairway leading up to the gym, the hallway, garden room and wall-papered the main-floor bathroom. Excellent work by very nice people.

We have also scheduled them to finish painting the downstairs weight room, men's locker room and small dining room.

This Spring, we have alot of outside work that needs to be done, also.

Again, thank you and Uptown Quincy for having this program. Without you, we would have been hard pressed to get these projects done, both physically and financially.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Donna Mayenzet'.

Donna Mayenzet, President
Board of Directors
YWCA of Quincy

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

AMERICORPS/ASCS USDA *****

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Joel Berg

Illinois Americorps Report week 12/19/94

The 2 Rivers project Public Lands/Environmental team has removed 15 tons of debris (tires, appliances, autos) from Rushville City Park Ravine. The city was mandated by IEPA to complete this. Another crew restored a historic brick alley in Quincy.

The main problems associated with this project has been weather related.

A recommendation for improving the program would be for higher authorities to take a more personnel interest in the projects.

Americorps members of this project are enthusiastic and proud of the service they are performing. They are frustrated with government policy and regulations (how slow the government works).

Attached is a thank you letter from Quincy YMCA.

PHOTOCOPY
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Provide any needed corrections to Charles Sims.

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February 12, 1996

Dear Project Director:

For the 1995-96 year, USDA AmeriCorps has instituted a new state management structure. The new structure abolishes the facilitator position and in its place provides for a joint management team concept involving all USDA agencies with AmeriCorps projects. In Illinois this will involve NRCS and FSA.

The following Personnel have accepted the positions:

Rod Atterberry, FSA, Project Management Liaison

This person will serve as the prime contact with CNS, 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 CNS 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.

James Johnson, NRCS STG, Data Reporting Liaison

The Data Reporting Liaison will be responsible for distributing, explaining, and collecting all forms and reports required by CNS and USDA for both Members and operating sites. This Liaison will compile all quarterly reports in the state.

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Due A. Walters, Assistant State Conservationist Special Projects, 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.

Paige Mitchell, NRCS Public Affairs, 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.

Sincerely,



Rod Atterberry,
County Executive Director

RA/PO

Enc.

PHOTOCOPIED
PRESERVATION

(File | Facilitators



February 24, 1995

AmeriCorps National Service

CORPORATION

FOR NATIONAL

SERVICE

To: USDA AmeriCorps Regional Facilitators
CNS State Directors

From: Meg Maguire, Senior Program Officer, National Directs, CNS
Joel Berg, Director of National Service, USDA

JB

Subject: Partnership to Strengthen USDA Rural Program

This memorandum is to establish a working relationship between USDA AmeriCorps Rural Programs and the Corporation for National Service (CNS) state offices in 35 states. We have worked closely with Mal Coles to insure that this partnership builds on the needs and strengths of both USDA and CNS.

The USDA AmeriCorps Rural Program, representing 1200 AmeriCorps Members serving in over 200 sites in 38 states and the District of Columbia, is the largest joint effort involving CNS and another federal agency. The Program has three components -- Anti-Hunger and Empowerment, Public Lands and Environment, and Rural Development.

Anti-Hunger and Public Lands/Environment Members typically operate in teams of ten or more; Rural Development AmeriCorps Members meet regularly in clusters of at least five, but on a daily basis they often serve alone in remote areas. Rural Development Program activities include boosting local economies by developing economic development plans, finding alternative uses for resource products, improving rural housing, protecting watersheds, promoting heritage tourism, preserving cultural and historic resources, and advancing sustainable agriculture.

Given the capacity of Corporation State Offices to support development and enhancement of service programs, we believe that a partnership between the USDA Rural Development and CNS field staff will strengthen the entire AmeriCorps Program. Attached please find:

- 1) Roster of 25 USDA regional facilitators for 30 states (sent only to CNS)
- 2) Roster of the Directors of the CNS State Offices (sent only to USDA)
- 3) List and map of counties in which USDA AmeriCorps Members from all 3 programs are located

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
Telephone 202-606-5000

Getting Things Done.
AmeriCorps, National Service
Learn and Serve America
National Senior Service Corps

We strongly encourage you to contact each other, but we have no specific formula for action. Activities might include:

- An initial meeting to discuss USDA Rural Development program needs and to explore opportunities to link with other CNS-sponsored efforts, including AmeriCorps* VISTA and National Senior Service Corps projects;
- A limited number of site visits to provide technical assistance or to familiarize CNS State staff with USDA programs, especially where these visits dovetail with other CNS in-state travel;
- Joint training and technical assistance;
- Peer exchange between AmeriCorps* VISTA and USDA AmeriCorps* Members; and
- Review and refinement of field program design incorporating both the Principles of High Quality Programs (previously distributed to all CNS offices) and previous experience with VISTA rural programming.

As we capitalize on the tremendous knowledge and resources of our field offices, we welcome your observations about the results of the new partnership. In late June, we will assess this joint effort. We will also keep you posted about particularly effective strategies as they develop.

You do not need to report to us on all that you are doing, but feel free to call us with any questions or comments.

Meg Maguire - (202) 606-5000 - x441
Joel Berg - (202) 720-6350

We look forward to working with you to realize the full potential of the USDA AmeriCorps program for rural America.

cc. Shirley Sagawa
Diana R. Algra
Mal Coles
Hank Oltmann



(file)
Facilitators

USDA/AmeriCorps

Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, KS 67401-4642
(913) 823-4500
FAX (913) 823-4540

March 10, 1995

Mr. Joel Berg
USDA/Office of Communications
Nat'l Service Service Division
14th & Independence SW
Room 540-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Berg:

I am sending you a copy of a letter that I received from Rick Martin, Kanopolis Wildlife and Parks Manager about three of his AmeriCorps members. Also included is a copy of a letter from the Occupational Center of Central Kansas, Inc. about the other AmeriCorps Member of the Kanopolis team, Scott Morris. We will meet with Mr. Martin next week and discuss Scott's evaluation.

I soon expect to receive notice of another resignation from an environmental team member. It is expected that Monte Manbeck who is on the Milford team will resign by the end of the month to take a job with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, if his interview was successful. I mentioned Monte's situation in a recent report. Resignations should be expected, but they still hurt.

We have given those Members a lot of our time and effort.

Several Vacancy Announcements for the Corporation For National Service have been received from either yourself or Mr. James M. Byrnes, Region VI State Program Director. As you know, I do not want to go back to my position as County CFSA Executive Director for Osborne County, Kansas. My experience as an educator and with AmeriCorps makes me think that I am qualified for one or all of the positions. Therefore, I have applied for the following jobs:

- * State Program Director, GS-301-13, Announcement Number 95-23
- * State Program Manager, GS-301-14, Announcement Number 95-24
- * State Program Specialist, GS-301-9/11/12, Announcement Number 95-25
- * Program and Training Specialist, GS-301-9/11/12, Announcement Number 95-26

Today a letter will be sent to the Personnel Office of the Corporation stating that they may contact you, Jim Byrnes or Pat Kells of the Kansas Commission on National and Community Service about my qualifications for any of those positions. I will appreciate your candor about my qualifications to hold any of the applied for positions and of my work with AmeriCorps.

Sincerely,



Jim Meisenheimer
Kansas AmeriCorps/USDA Regional Facilitator



April 13, 1995

To AmeriCorps/USDA RDT Facilitators:

I am now officially detailed to Joel's staff and will be the contact person for communications between you and USDA National Service Office. My new phone number is (202) 720-2829 and my new fax number is (202) 720-4614.

Please continue to fax all weekly reports directly to Joel Berg and I will get a copy of these reports. We will only need your itineraries and expense report fax directly to me on a monthly rather than weekly basis.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you.

Sincerely,

Charles Sims
Liaison to AmeriCorps RDT

AMERICORPS/CFSA USDA *****

ROD ATTERBERRY
ILLINOIS AMERICORPS FACILITATOR
P. O. BOX 107
HAVANA, IL 62644-0107

OFFICE PHONE: 309-543-2582
FAX NO. 309-543-3154

Joel Berg

Rod Atterberry

Panel Outline National Training

Jim Meisenheimer, Robert Eaddy, & I developed the following outline for the panel at Houston. It is being sent for your review and input.

Rod

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PRESERVATION

FACILITATOR PANEL OUTLINE

- A. Ego's
 - 1. Relationships between different agencies
 - 2. Relationships between same agencies
 - 3. Project managers
- B. Possible Pitfalls
 - 1. Be flexible
- C. Training (my topics attached)
 - 1. Topics to offer
 - 2. Where to obtain
 - 3. Materials
 - 4. When to offer
 - 5. Team building
- D. Supplies & Vehicles
 - 1. Where to get & how
- E. Relationship with members
 - 1. Management
- F. Budget
 - 1. Items to include
 - 2. Where to get cost
 - 3. ST0 A.O. working with
 - 4. NRCS 1995 records
- G. Alternative Assignments
 - 1. Adverse weather
 - 2. Scheduled project not ready on assigned date
 - 3. Work hours (flexibility)
 - 4. Community service projects
 - 5. Slack vs. busy times
- H. Outside Help
 - 1. Advisory committee
 - a. Other USDA agencies, organizations
 - b. Help evaluate and pick projects
 - c. Screening and interviewing applications
 - 2. Sponsors
 - a. Help supervise work
- I. Clustering
 - 1. Within project
 - a. Outline future work and equipment
 - b. Record previous weeks accomplishments
 - 2. With other projects
 - a. USDA
 - b. State

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Communications

Washington, D.C.
20250-1300

Facilitators

SEP 18 1994

TO : Jimmie Lucas, Tim Carter, Alan Durick, Elnora Dooms,
and Richard Newman

FROM : Charles W. Sims, Agency Liaison to the AmeriCorps/USDA Rural
Development Team (RDT)

SUBJECT: Overview of Agency Involvement With AmeriCorps/USDA Program

I would like to personally thank you, your staffs, and the SED's for helping us select individuals to serve as AmeriCorps/USDA RDT facilitators. While this may have put strain on the Agency's available resources, I would again emphasize the *importance* of this initiative to President Clinton and this Administration.

This memorandum reiterates the Americorps/USDA program goals and objectives and clarifies some administrative issues that have come up with regard to RDT facilitators' activities.

The mission of the AmeriCorps program is to engage a diverse group of Americans in working partnerships with communities to provide real and measurable service to meet environmental and human needs, while earning education benefits and building an ethic of service, responsibility, and citizenship.

The AmeriCorps/USDA Rural Development Team (RDT) is one of the three AmeriCorps programs that USDA began at pilot sites across the country in September 1994--the other two programs are Anti-Hunger and Public Lands and Environment. The RDT will place a socio-economic mix of college graduates and professional school graduates in 10 pilot regions in rural areas throughout America (California, Mississippi Delta, South Carolina, the Appalachia Region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia, the Four Corners Region of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, the Great Lakes Region of Michigan and Ohio, the New England region of Maine and Vermont, the Texas Colonias, the Pacific Northwest Region of Oregon and Washington, and the Midwest States affected by the 1993 flood--Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The AmeriCorps/USDA RDT team members will help communities protect watersheds, improve housing, promote economic development, boost sustainable agriculture, respond to disasters, and aid the Clinton Administration's Empowerment Zone Initiative.

During FY 1995, FNS, FmHA, FS, RDA, and SCS will run projects in one or more of the above regions. Each of the 10 AmeriCorps RDT regions will have a regional facilitator. Our Agency employees will serve as RDT Regional/State facilitators in 8 of the 10 regions: Appalachia, California, Four Corners, Great Lakes, New England, Pacific Northwest, South Carolina and the Midwest Flood States. RDT facilitators will be the main AmeriCorps communication link between USDA offices and the AmeriCorps members throughout the applicable region.

The USDA National Service Division is responsible for administering the AmeriCorps/USDA program. Our agency facilitators will not receive detailed written instructions or procedures regarding their activities; however, there are some administrative issues that need clarification. The RDT facilitator:

- will serve independently in his/her assigned region/state to facilitate the AmeriCorps RDT projects in partnership with other USDA agencies and the National Service Division. AmeriCorps/USDA assignments and activities will be coordinated by the Agency Facilitators' AmeriCorps Liaison.

Note: A copy of the AmeriCorps Regional Facilitator job description is enclosed.

- will **continue** to be paid and supervised by their official duty station ("home") State or county office. **All administrative expenses for travel, equipment needs, etc., will be paid from State or county budgets as applicable.** If administrative funds become depleted, the State/county office should request additional administrative funds in the normal manner.
- shall not earn overtime hours or compensatory time unless **expressly approved** in advance by their **immediate** supervisor. Only those instances where the RDT facilitator needs to attend evening or weekend sessions should be approved.
- will use their own private vehicle for necessary travel and be reimbursed according to Federal government standards. It may be possible in certain instances to use SCS or FS vehicles; however, this must be negotiated between the SED and SCS or FS representatives. The RDT facilitator will also be required to provide a copy of their monthly travel expenses to **Beverly**, WDC AmeriCorps staff.

- will keep a daily record of their AmeriCorps/USDA-related activities and prepare a weekly activity report for submission to **Beverly Pritts, FAX # 202-720-4614 by COB Tuesday of the following week.** These reports help WDC AmeriCorps/USDA staff account for the facilitator's activities and keep the National Service Division and the various USDA agencies informed about how projects are progressing. This includes potential problems as well as positive feedback. In addition, the RDT facilitator is required to provide copies of weekly reports and planned itinerary to the State office; and to personally meet with the SED at least once a month to provide an update of AmeriCorps/USDA activities.

Note: Weekly itineraries shall also be faxed to **Beverly.**

- will participate in periodic conference calls with the WDC/AmeriCorp staff; and have direct access to WDC/AmeriCorp staff at all times.
- Fax copies of all local news articles about AmeriCorps to **Beverly** at the above fax number.

Please share these guidelines with your staff and the respective State SED. If you or your State Office personnel have **any** questions about the AmeriCorps/USDA program or administrative issues, please contact **Beverly Pritts @ 202-690-3507** or **Charles Sims @ 202-720-6643.**

Enclosure

cc: DASCO
JBerg, Office of National Service
BPritts, AmeriCorps Staff
Jimmie Lucas
Tim Carter
Alan Durick
Elnora Dooms
Richard Newman

Rural Development Team Regional Facilitator
Job Description

I. INTRODUCTION

This position is physically located within in one of the ¹⁰~~11~~ Rural Development Team Regions of the AmeriCorps/USDA program. The incumbent works to facilitate the activities of the USDA/AmeriCorps projects in each region in partnership with USDA agencies and the USDA Director of National Service. The incumbent works to ensure goals, objectives, and spirit of the USDA/AmeriCorps program are met and to promote teamwork and cooperation among officials of other USDA agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, Farmers Home Administration, and the Rural Development Administration. In addition, the incumbent coordinates with representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, state and local governments, and relevant USDA agencies to ensure that USDA/AmeriCorps Team participants are engaged in the most critically-needed rural development work.

II. MAJOR DUTIES

Develop and implement regional recruitment plan for AmeriCorps members.

Plan and manage a regional orientation program for all Team members.

Plan and manage ongoing training programs related specifically to the AmeriCorps program design in which all AmeriCorps members may spend up to 20% of their program time.

Plan and develop USDA/AmeriCorps communication activities to increase understanding and awareness of the program policies, objectives. Participate in the development and implementation of more effective communications between the related USDA agencies offices and staff and USDA/AmeriCorps participants. Attend periodic USDA/AmeriCorps planning and training sessions to ensure communications and oversight links between site clusters and with other regions in the program.

Ensure distribution of identity building materials developed at the national and regional level, such as uniforms, hats, patches, newsletters, talking points, etc.

Ensure that all participants in each cluster will meet together in person physically once a week and that they also participate in conference calls at least one other time each week.

Ensure that, in areas where the Rural Development Team will operate nearby USDA Anti-Hunger Teams or Public Lands and Environment Teams, members of both teams will work together on a service project when appropriate.

When appropriate, provide ongoing AmeriCorps program support and identity-building activities to Anti-Hunger Team projects and/or Public Lands and Environment Team projects that may be in the region.

Provide leadership in developing Internet capabilities for all Rural Development Team members to help Team members communicate by computer with each other and with other state, and private sources of assistance.

With work/agencies to provide information and assistance concerning the status and progress of USDA/AmeriCorps project activities to the Director of National Service, USDA/AmeriCorps site supervisors and, as appropriate, representatives of USDA agencies. Participate in local meetings, conferences, and community events to accurately inform the public about the USDA/AmeriCorps program.

Participate in identifying and recommending methods and criteria to improve USDA/AmeriCorps procedures, including helping agencies refine and update the workplans for the region. Participate in the planning for future AmeriCorps activities and projects including coordinating team building activities, encouraging team spirit, and responsible citizenship. Solicit and receive local and regional input, suggestions, comments, complaints, etc., concerning the USDA/AmeriCorps program.

Provide staff support for local ~~advisory~~ AmeriCorps advisory committees to be comprised of all local USDA agencies, other relevant Federal agencies, and relevant state, local, and non-profit agencies.

Perform other relevant duties as assigned.

III. LIMITS OF DUTIES

While the incumbent shall have the authority to advise and consult with all agency local, state, or regional offices or employees, the incumbent will have no direct supervisory authority over those offices or employees.

While the incumbent is expected to be in frequent consultation with the AmeriCorps members in that region, each agency's local project manager will have the prime responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of AmeriCorps members.

The incumbent shall make significant scheduling, workplan, recruitment, training, evaluation, or other decisions only in conjunction with the relevant USDA agency local, state, and/or regional office designated to manage each AmeriCorps project, and, when appropriate, with the USDA Director of National Service.

IV. EEO RESPONSIBILITIES

The incumbent is responsible for knowing and supporting equal opportunity and civil rights policies; performing assigned duties in full compliance with the letter and spirit of equal opportunity and civil rights laws and regulations; assuring bias-free written and oral communications; respecting and valuing differences of other employees and clients; and, as appropriate, preparing for career advancement opportunities.

V. SUPERVISION AND GUIDANCE RECEIVED

The incumbent functions under the general technical supervision of the USDA Director of National Service, who outlines work assignments and objectives. Within this framework, the incumbent independently plans and carries out work. As necessary, the incumbent receives assistance in interpreting and adapting guidelines to specific situations. Completed work products are reviewed for technical adequacy, acceptability, and completeness and in terms of the incumbent's role in assisting in providing effective communications of the USDA/AmeriCorps program.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Soil
Conservation
Service

Castleland RC&D
P.O. Box 141
Price, Utah 84501

October 16, 1995

Mr. Larry Burnett
Acting State Executive Director
New Mexico State CSFA
6200 Jefferson NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Dear Mr. Burnett,

The purpose of this letter is to express appreciation for the efforts of Lloyd Wilhelm during his term as facilitator for the 1995 Four Corners USDA AmeriCorps program. Lloyd joined the AmeriCorps effort as a latecomer and had to play catch up for the first few weeks he was on the job. At the time Lloyd joined the program, I sincerely wondered if he would ever find his way through the maze of AmeriCorps process, procedure and policy in order to assist those of us who were trying to make the program work at the ground level.

Fortunately for us, Lloyd caught on quickly and was very soon lending valuable assistance to the program. Lloyd often had to "take the heat" from all directions (members, project directors, the Corporation, etc.) as he tried to find answers to questions and frustrations that affected us all. Lloyd not only retained his patience in dealing with extremely trying situations, but was able to exert a calming influence on many other people (including me).

Lloyd conducted himself in a very professional, positive manner during this challenging experience. He was consistently willing to go the extra mile to provide assistance. Despite continuing frustrations, he remained positive and influenced others to do so as well. In my professional experience, it is rare to find a person with the degree of professionalism as that exhibited by Lloyd.

We greatly appreciated Lloyd's efforts during 1995 and hope that he will serve as facilitator for the 1996 Four Corners AmeriCorps program. Thank you for sharing Lloyd's time with us.

Sincerely,

Kresha Eastman
Project Director
Utah USDA AmeriCorps
Castleland RC&D

cc: Joel Berg
Paula Cole-Jones
Lloyd Wilhelm



The Soil Conservation Service
is an agency of the
United States Department of Agriculture





DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

November 29, 1994

To: USDA/AmeriCorps Project Managers and Regional Facilitators

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

Subject: Weekly Duties for AmeriCorps Regional Facilitators

Many project managers and facilitators have asked for clarification of the specific duties of facilitators. While the responsibilities are listed on page 31 of the USDA/AmeriCorps Operations Manual, this memorandum specifies concrete tasks that the facilitators should complete each week:

- 1) Help plan and execute the equivalent of a day a week in which all Members of each Rural Development Team Cluster physically get-together for training, project planning, critical reflection, or a joint service project. If once per week is too rigid, perhaps every other week they can get together for two days in a row. If weather emergencies or other rare circumstances occur that prevent a weekly meeting in person, you should schedule a conference call between the members.
- 2) Implement at least one "spirit building" activity --- in addition to the cluster meeting --- in at least one site weekly in the region. Some suggested activities are provided in the attached memorandum "A Dozen Things You Can Do To Build the 'AmeriCorps Spirit'."
- 3) Prepare a weekly report for the region that is shared with all the agencies and with myself. These reports should be prepared in consultation with all the agencies involved. The reports will be due to my office, at fax # (202) 720-4614, by COB each Thursday. These regional reports will be then compiled by my office into a weekly national newsletter sent to the Secretary's office, other key USDA policy-makers, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. This newsletter report will be made available each Friday to Members and staff via USDA computer bulletin board, Internet, and in paper copies. The reports should be general summaries of weekly highlights in each region and do not need to include every single item from every single site. In most cases, the information can be communicated from the project managers to the facilitators in brief phone conversations and should require little or no weekly paperwork. The reports should relate major developments, if they occur that week, in any of these areas:

- A) Progress towards meeting community service objectives
- B) Any major staff, structural, or service changes made
- C) List of any new members joining or quitting
- D) Primary accomplishments of our projects
- E) Primary challenges or problems at our sites
- F) Primary training, technical assistance, and equipment needs
- G) Copies of media coverage
- H) Other documentation such as photos or thank-you letters
- I) Other data occasionally requested -- such as computer inventory
- F) Plans for future team-building activities
- G) Recommendations for improving our programs
- H) Feedback from AmeriCorps Members

Again, I stress that every report does not need to have every one of the above items from any or all sites. Most reports should be, at most, two or three pages long for the entire region.

4) Visit with staff, Members, and project sponsors at service sites. Each state facilitator should generally visit one site each week, and every site at least once a month. Every regional facilitator should generally visit at least two states a month, and visit every site in the region at least four times in the year. Facilitators should spend significant blocks of time working side-by-side on the field with AmeriCorps Members, not just meeting with them in offices.

5) Work with agency public affairs personnel to set-up media events and site visits by elected officials. However, no USDA staff should speak with any members of the media before they are thoroughly trained on the philosophy and details of all our programs.

6) After consulting with agencies about their prior contacts, the facilitators should serve as the principle contacts with both the executive directors of state commissions on national service and the state staff of the Corporation for National and Community Service. It is critical that we keep both entities in each state apprised of our activities. (Contact names will be provided on request.)

7) Once computer needs are clarified in the next two weeks, facilitators will help implement our Internet communications. (Details will be provided soon).

Please also note that we want to continue building trust, respect, and cooperation between project managers and facilitators. Thus, no project manager or facilitator should exclude the other from any AmeriCorps meetings. Additionally, any reports prepared for Washington offices should be made available to all USDA agencies involved.

07/10/97

15:12

605 352 1195

SD STATE ASCS

+++ USDA NAT SER OFF

002



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Dear AmeriCorps Project Leaders

Thirty minutes ago I received the AmeriCorps project invitation notice from your office

Needless to say, I was a little disappointed. Lower Brule Reservation needs it and wanted our assistance

I will FAX a copy of the memo to Rick Weiland, Senator Frank's State Director. Mr. Weiland was very supportive of the project and had told me of the problems on the Lower Brule Reservation. I just want him to know where we stand.

AmeriCorps has accomplished some very wonderful projects and I hope it continues to grow. I will always be proud to have been a part of AmeriCorps (even at a minimal level).

Thank you for your consideration of the Lower Brule Reservation Project

Diane Clayton
South Dakota
AmeriCorps Facilitator

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AMERICORPS

I have been on an extended vacation during the past few weeks, so have missed submitting the weekly reports. Please accept apologies.

The AmeriCorps members are winding down during their last few weeks. There have been no outdoor projects going on for several days.

The graduation is scheduled for August 2, 1995. It will be a tri-state graduation, involving South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota.

Diane Clayton
South Dakota



PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency
Lane County Office
55 C Oakway Center
Eugene OR 97401-5618
503-465-6442

December 8, 1994

TO: USDA/AMERICORPS PROJECT MANAGERS IN OREGON
FROM: RICK BLOCK, OREGON USDA/AMERICORPS FACILITATOR
RE: MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION REGARDING AMERICORPS

Enclosed please find the following: the latest proposed schedule for Joel Berg, a listing of USDA AmeriCorps projects in Oregon and a copy of my weekly duties.

Please let me know if there are any problems with the schedule. This is a change from the last schedule sent to you.

The listing of USDA AmeriCorps projects may have errors. If so, please let me know. Also let me know if you are aware of any other USDA AmeriCorps projects in Oregon not listed.

As I shared with some of you, I will not be able to perform all of the weekly duties assigned to me. I am a full time County Director for the Lane County Farm Service Agency. I am looking into ways of meeting some of the assignments. Item 1 concerns me due to the extent of travel and I will recommend attempting to attend one to two cluster meetings a month to join in the existing meetings set up by the project managers. Item 2 is already being done through some of the existing cluster meetings that I have attended. I ask that a time be added for "spirit-building" during cluster meetings when appropriate. Item 3 is going to require some networking with you regarding any developments. Some project managers have already given backgrounders of their programs. I need this to help me provide some continuity and intelligence to the report. Item 4 concerns me as I can't visit each site once a month, let alone quarterly. This is unfortunate as I enjoy visiting people. I will attempt to visit as many sites as my time allows. Item 5 will hopefully be coordinated with the Oregon Community Services Commission. Item 6 has not proven to be a problem. I enjoy working with the State Commission. Item 7 is yet to happen.

Questions? Please let me know if you have any ideas or concerns. I'm open to any recommendations. Thank you.

OPTIONAL FORM 89 (7-90)		# of pages 6	
FAX TRANSMITTAL			
To	San Stewart	From	Rick Block
Dept./Agency	NWSA	Phone #	
Fax #	695-2296	Fax #	465-6483
NSN 7540-01-317-7368		5099-101 GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	

Monthly Expenditures
for
Robert J. Eaddy
AmeriCorps Regional Facilitator
South Carolina
MAY 1995

Total Milage and Subsistence

\$0.00

Weekly AmeriCorps Activities
for
Robert J. Eaddy
Regional Facilitator
South Carolina

May 29 (Monday) (0 hours)

Holiday

May 30 (Tuesday) (8 hours)

I worked in the CFSA State Office. Spent most of this day writing and rewriting my community service objectives in the AmeriCorps Application Process.

May 31 (Wednesday) (8 hours)

Finished my 96 CFSA AmeriCorps Application and Faxed them to Washington and Federal Expressed the floppy disk. I am now beginning to look for available office space and office equipment for the 96 CFSA AmeriCorps proposed project if approved.

June 1 (Thursday) (5 hours)

Worked in the CFSA State Office, contacted Tina Swinson, AmeriCorps cluster leader with RECD to check on results of last cluster meeting with RECD and USFS in Kingstree, S. C. These two clusters are meeting jointly and regularly. They are bringing in outside sources to provide needed training in many areas. They are very pleased and are learning much from their cluster meeting. I am now working with the South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service. The Governor has declared June 24, 1995, "AmeriCorps Day-South Carolina". This will be on a Saturday and the activity will be held at the State Fair Grounds in Columbia, S. C. I will attend and so will representation from the USDA AmeriCorps Teams.

June 2 (Friday) (0 hours)

OFF DAY

Weekly AmeriCorps Activities
for
Robert J. Eaddy
Regional Facilitator
South Carolina

May 22 (Monday) (0 hours)

I worked in the CFSA State Office on CFSA programs.

May 23 (Tuesday) (0 hours)

Traveled to Walterboro, S. C. and taught EEO/CR to county office program assistants.

May 24 (Wednesday) (8 hours)

I visited with USFS Program Directors concerning weekly reports from AmeriCorps members. I began to work on the CFSA/AmeriCorps proposed project.

I am working with the S.C. Commission on National and Community Service. June 24, 1995 has been proclaimed "AmeriCorps Day in South Carolina". The S.C. Commission on Nat. & Community Service plans to bring representation from all AmeriCorps Agencies within the state to Columbia, S. C. on June 24, to celebrate this day. USDA/AmeriCorps will participate and so will I.

May 25 (Thursday) (8 hours)

I called Dr. Jerry Britton with Clemson University Extension Service and discussed the various aspects of the CFSA/AmeriCorps proposed project as to how we will begin to lay out the work plan for the 5 member team.

May 26 (Friday) (5 hours)

Worked in the CFSA State Office redeveloping the CFSA/AmeriCorps proposed project. I used 3 hours of annual leave that afternoon.

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Consolidated
Farm Service
Agency

Androscoggin/Sagadahoc CFSA
27 Westminster Street
Lewiston, Maine 04240-3531

May 31, 1995

TO: Charles Sims, Liaison to Americorps RDT

FROM: Mike Tardy, ^{Mike}Acting CED, Regional Americorps Facilitator

SUBJECT: Monthly Report of Americorps Related Expenses

May 2 - \$7.41 for film development - \$1.47 mail

May 16-19 - travel to Aroostook County, visited with the
three Americorps participants and the Cluster Leader -
\$222.00, mileage - \$115.00, motel - \$91.00, MI & E -
\$7.77, telephone - \$.35, toll

May 25 - attended Cluster Meeting held at Jordan Acres
Elementary School. This is the site where two other
Americorps groups joined the USDA group to develop an
outdoor environmental education center. \$10.80, mileage

May 30 - \$9.53, film developing - \$1.70, mail pictures

MONTHLY TOTAL - \$467.03

cc. Arnold Roach, Acting SED

OPTIONAL FORM 99 (7-90)

FAX TRANSMITTAL

of pages 1

Charles Sims		From	Mike Tardy
USDA/AMERICORPS		Phone #	207-783-9194
202-720-4614		Fax #	207-783-4101
NSN 7540-01-317-7368		5099-101 GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Stabilization and
Conservation Service

To: Beverly Pritts

Date: Jan. 3, 1995

From: Janice Syverson

In Reply Refer to: Fax #218-784-2328
Phone #218-784-4000

Subject: Dec. Monthly Expenses
NRCS Minnesota State Coordinator

Bev,

I am forwarding you a copy of the 7 page letter I received last week from Michael Price. Both this letter and the one from Glen Kajewski state I am not doing my job correctly. I have been taking my direction from FSA National Office as well as Joel Berg, yet I continue to receive these degrading letters. I would like to see a letter sent to Michael Price explaining each position he states which I am doing wrong. If you feel this should come from me I would like some direction and assistance to bring this situation to an end once and for all. It appears to me NRCS is making AmeriCorps more of a job in Minnesota rather than a service program.

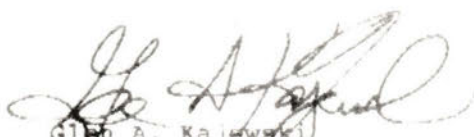
If I am wrong about how I am doing my job please let me know, otherwise, Mike needs to hear from National Office regarding the problem which seems to have developed in Minnesota.

Bruce Brainard
December 21, 1994

Bruce, ultimately NRCS is responsible for the NRCS AmeriCorps projects and their success, not Janice. You are correct, Janice is not an NRCS employee, thus she has no responsibility in telling the NRCS AmeriCorps members what changes are appropriate to carrying out the projects, directing activities, etc. We are administratively and technically responsible for the NRCS AmeriCorps project activities. Any guidance that Janice wants to provide related to that project activity must first be cleared through our NRCS State Coordinator, through the Area Conservationists who in turn supervise the AmeriCorps project directors who provide direct supervision of our AmeriCorps members.

Prior to the official start date of the AmeriCorps projects, Janice's input as a facilitator was quite helpful. Janice's activities since the projects began have not built upon the initial trust, respect and cooperation that had been developed. I'm sure that you will say that my E-mail messages have been just as damaging, but that was well after Janice refused to carry out her assigned duties as facilitator in a spirit of trust, respect and cooperation.

I question still whether Janice understands the line staff relationship of administration in NRCS; i.e. how we manage our agency personnel. That was explained thoroughly at the NRCS AmeriCorps Orientation Session during the first week of August which she attended. Mr. Price also explained that to her again in early November in a phone conversation with her. It is critical that she understand how our people work administratively within our agency - when she demonstrates that I trust we'll have a much improved working relationship with her.



Glen A. Kajewski
Area Conservationist

cc: Gary R. Nordstrom, State Conservationist, SCS, St. Paul, MN
Mike M. Price, FAS/State AmeriCorps Coordinator, SCS, St. Paul, MN
Wally Sparby, SED, PSA, St. Paul, MN
AmeriCorps Members
AmeriCorps Supervisors
AmeriCorps Project Directors

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Stabilization and
Conservation Service

To: Joel Berg, Director of National Service

Date Jan. 19, 1995

From: Janice Syverson, Regional Facilitator MD

In Reply Refer to: Fax 218-784-2328
Phone 218-784-4000

Subject: Weekly Report

cc: Wally Sparby State SED
Michael Price AmeriCorps State Coordinator
Glen Kajewski Project Director
Kevin Daw Project Director
Jon Nicholson Project Director

Joel,

The last three paragraphs of this report were written by Michael Price and not me. Michael insisted I include this in my report. I do not agree with these statements and have spoken with Beverly Prille about it. Michael yesterday.

EXACT COPY
PRESERVATION

Pages 7



01/04/95 11:28

-->12027204614

ECM Pg. 02/09



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Soil
Conservation
Service

FCS BLDG., SUITE 600
375 JACKSON STREET
ST. PAUL, MN 55101

December 20, 1994

Ms. Janice Syverson,
Regional AmeriCorps
Facilitator
Farm Services Agency
211 West Main Street
Ada, Minnesota 56510

Dear Janice:

SUBJECT: Minnesota NRCS AmeriCorps Interagency Cooperation

Thank you for sending your Dec. 9-15 and Nov. 28-Dec 7, 1994 AmeriCorps facilitator weekly reports to me. I also have a copy of your Nov. 21-26 weekly report, however, I did not receive that from you; staff in the NRCS National Office sent that to me.

I trust you'll recall a phone call between you and me in early November. In that conversation I surprised you with an inquiry about your preparing weekly reports about Minnesota's NRCS AmeriCorps projects and sending them to Joel Berg and your national office without any Minnesota NRCS employee's knowledge, review and or input.

If I recall, you told me you were told to prepare these reports (by whom, I don't remember); however I definitely remember asking you for copies of all your weekly reports on the NRCS AmeriCorps projects. During that conversation, you offered to send them to me, then moments later you stated that if I wanted any of your weekly reports that I would have to write and request them from your national office. At the time, nor now, did I understand what authority you had to make such a statement to me - particularly in the vein of USDA interagency cooperation.

Then, all of a sudden, with absolutely no written or verbal communication at all from you, to me or to any other Minnesota NRCS employee that I know about, within the last few weeks, you've started sending a copy of your weekly AmeriCorps report to me and to the three Minnesota NRCS Area Conservationists supervising our AmeriCorps projects. I/we appreciate the change, but I would like an explanation if you please for your change in operation procedure. Could it have been that you were told to do that, which I suspect is true. But gee, so many problems could have been totally eliminated had you discussed the request that you were to prepare weekly reports - in the first place - with NRCS personnel. Don't you agree?

Regarding your December 9-15 AmeriCorps Weekly Update, the first paragraph on page one of your report is quite upsetting. You state that "the project managers are still not contacting me with input for the weekly reports." Let's clear the air." I don't believe you yet fully understand our agency's line/staff working relationship, even though it was thoroughly explained, in your presence, at our MN USDA NRCS AmeriCorps Orientation session in St. Paul, by at least two NRCS Assistant State Conservationists. And, I also explained it to you orally, via phone in early November. The point is very simply: I'm the NRCS State Coordinator for AmeriCorps in Minnesota. You want our cooperation, as I do yours. However, please "ask us" - don't tell us what to do. Work with me and the NRCS Area Conservationists. I have not seen or heard - received any communication from you - ever- requesting NRCS input and/or asking us to review your weekly reports. Initially you prepared those reports without any NRCS knowledge, input and/or review. And, now you want our input. Why the change? Yes, we both know the answer to that: Joel Berg's two-page "Weekly Duties for AmeriCorps Regional Facilitators" report dated November 29, 1994. And yes, I received a copy of that report from our NRCS National Office prior to your sending a copy to me. However, I do appreciate your brief note asking me if I received a copy of Joel's report.

It appears to me that when you fully understand, respect and demonstrate how the NRCS line-staff relationship works, many of the problems you've caused can be fully resolved. Some I know are resolved. Unfortunately, I'm perceiving that you've been told to ignore our NRCS line staff relationship, you still don't know and understand how to work within our NRCS administration system, or you don't care about our NRCS line-staff relationship for getting things done in our agency and with a wide variety of our partners and clients we've served so well for nearly 60 years. If you still need help understanding that NRCS line-staff relationship and how to work with us, there is an extremely simple solution: Ask any of our NRCS employees. We'll gladly help you as much as we can - as we do with everyone else. We're here to help you be successful, just as we hope you're there to help us be successful.

Regarding NRCS AmeriCorps news releases needing national office approval, Joel Berg called me about that early last week. I told him I didn't agree that process was needed and that it would slow things down (he volunteered clearance within 24 hours). I told Joel that we don't send any NRCS news releases on any other NRCS program to NHQ or to the Department for approval prior to release to the media and that the only way we in Minnesota would do that now is if our NRCS National Office and our Minnesota NRCS State Conservationist tell me to do it that way.

I understand you recently told our AmeriCorps members what Joel Berg and/or your national office told you regarding clearance of NRCS AmeriCorps news releases. Again, you do not administer NRCS program policy to our agency and have no authority to tell our AmeriCorps members what to do with their NRCS news releases. That authority rests with NRCS personnel who manage and supervise AmeriCorps members. In the future, before you "tell" our AmeriCorps members to do anything, please review it with me and or a NRCS line manager - the three Area Conservationists who currently manage NRCS AmeriCorps projects - doing so will alleviate problems.

It disturbs me and our area conservationists that you have the audacity to say in your December 9-15 weekly report, page 1, paragraph 1, "To date, the project managers are still not contacting me with input for the weekly report." Since when did you communicate with me, the NRCS State AmeriCorps Coordinator, that you requested weekly report input from our area conservationists or project directors?

In your most recent weekly report you spoke of "since the upheaval." As far as all of us in NRCS in Minnesota who know about your reference to "upheaval," absolutely all of the upheaval should have never occurred, had you and or whomever you've been getting your direction from - to do what you've been told to do - been upfront with me/with our Area Conservationists and Project Directors - from the start. I've been upfront with you about AmeriCorps from the start; I'd think you'd want to do the same with me. I hope you will be from now on as I'm trying to be with you.

Consequently, once I learned that you were preparing weekly reports about our NRCS AmeriCorps projects, my reaction was "Well, why didn't someone tell me she was preparing these reports and submitting them to her national office without our knowledge? Sure, you could say our national office should have told me, but, even they didn't know until early November - about the time I discussed it with you via phone.

I trust you now understand how you also were in error by asking our NRCS employees to leave the room in cluster meetings so you could talk with AmeriCorps members alone. That was an unfortunate request/demand on your part. It created another problem - a problem that never had to be there in the first place. I received communication from some AmeriCorps members who were upset with you because you told our NRCS people to leave such cluster meetings. The upset AmeriCorps members finally told you that they didn't want the NRCS employees to leave. I don't know where you got the idea/guidance/direction that you could tell our NRCS people to leave any meeting involving our AmeriCorps people. That again, was a perfect example of ignoring or not understanding/supporting NRCS line management relationships.

You are not in any position to tell any of our NRCS employees or our AmeriCorps members what to do. That is the job of the NRCS personnel. We are their supervisors; not you. In the future, please review any weekly reports you prepare about NRCS's AmeriCorps projects with all NRCS project directors, Area Conservationists who supervise AmeriCorps Projects and me prior to submitting them to anyone. If you can't get that input and review, please state in your report who and when you asked for input and review. Incorrect statements, as best as I can determine, such as "to date the project managers are still not contacting me with input for the weekly report," do not help cement interagency relations. I'm the NRCS State Coordinator and I insist on knowing your requests of NRCS line/staff people. Please cooperate with us.

As I have told Joel Berg and NRCS people in our agency at the state and national levels, you're told one thing; we may not have been told about it at all. You've often refused to share what you're told to do (until after you're caught at it), yet you expect us, NRCS, to be happy about what you're doing! Is it any wonder that some people may see your efforts as simply spying on NRCS as opposed to helping NRCS? Before you get upset about that, let me suggest you sit back and reverse roles. Put yourself in the role of an AmeriCorps NRCS project director, Area Conservationist or me. Would you appreciate what has been going on through some of your actions? I'd be surprised if you said yes.

In the future, please involve me with whatever it is your expected to do with our NRCS AmeriCorps projects - before you do it!

You claim that you never get any response from email messages you send to our NRCS Area Conservationist, Kevin Daw, in Duluth. Are you aware that you're not using the correct email address to reach him and consequently he doesn't get your messages? In a November 18, 1994 email message, addressed to me and Kevin, from you, I learned that Kevin never received your message - or any other email messages from you. It's easy to see why: You're using "mn7ao!bkd" when you should be using "mn3ao!bkd." Kevin claims that he has never received an email message from you since you've been working with AmeriCorps. If you don't hear back from someone on email, pick up the phone and call them, but please don't chastise them for not responding when they never got your message(s) in the first place.

I want to stress to you, with full support of Kevin Daw the following points related to the Cloquet cluster:

- (a) Direct email communications related to that cluster to Kevin in Duluth (mn3ao!bkd) and to Jeff Stewart in Cloquet (cloqu!jfs), with cc: copies to the other. Please use your telephone with them also.

- b) Weekly reports about the Cloquet cluster are to only include highlights of activities discussed during the weekly teleconference. That report should not include any review of NRCS administrative concerns or personal critiques. NRCS is responsible for managing and administering the AmeriCorps programs and addresses such issues in the quarterly report. Send draft copies of the weekly report to Kevin and Jeff for review and comment before forwarding to Washington, D.C.
- (c) Involve the local NRCS Cloquet manager, Jeff, in all teleconferences and meetings with AmeriCorps members. All such contacts are to be arranged through and with the approval of Jeff.
- * (d) Any clustering activity outside of Cloquet (USFS or NRCS) will be arranged by the NRCS State Coordinator with concurrence of the appropriate NRCS Area conservationist and NRCS project manager(s). Please do not make these arrangements or comment on your concerns to others regarding this issue.
- * (e) The Cloquet cluster and NRCS manager, Jeff, will determine the nature and schedule for any local service projects. You may attend as your schedule allows but your participation will not dictate local scheduling. The cluster will be doing service projects that relate to the over project goals and may or may not be held monthly. The Area Conservationist expects that some projects will be more frequent during the warmer months. We consider this a local team decision and not to be criticized by you.
- (f) Any assistance NRCS needs from you will be communicated to you by NRCS through the weekly teleconference or through our line/staff procedures at other times. If we don't ask for your assistance, be assured that everything is fine.

I'm disappointed that I've not had a phone call or an email message from you since November 18. Not talking with one another does not solve problems; honest open communication can. And I'm very open and easy to talk with. Simply and fully understand that I have a program to implement and implement well and that will be done.

By the way, in your cover letter of December 15, 1994 to Joel Berg you added the following note: "Joel, please note copy of letter that was sent from our office to the TRF Area NRCS office. Just out of curiosity, is that letter something about our NRCS projects that should have been sent to the NRCS State AmeriCorps Coordinator, the MN NRCS line managers, and/or the MN NRCS AmeriCorps project directors? I'm just looking at efforts to build rapport/cooperation? I hope you are too."

We have 19 AmeriCorps members, who according to our Area Conservationists and AmeriCorps project directors are fully enjoying their AmeriCorps experiences, are succeeding at implementing their projects, are respected, helped, and well-liked by our NRCS personnel. I want that to continue. I'd like to believe you do too.

All you need to do is to be upfront, honest, cooperate and show respect for our responsibilities to implement and manage the NRCS AmeriCorps projects in Minnesota.

The NRCS State Conservationist in Minnesota has charged me with implementing AmeriCorps in Minnesota. Through three of our Area Conservationists and Project Directors we believe we're make great success with our efforts.

I've discussed your detrimental actions (and yes, I'm aware that some of them have been resolved) with NRCS top staff in our national office and with the Minnesota Deputy State Conservationist and the State Conservationist. Our State Conservationist has discussed your actions with Mr. Sparby, Minnesota's FSA State Executive Director. I could share some of the conversation between our state conservationists and Mr. Sparby, however, I believe it more appropriately that you obtain that information yourself from Mr. Sparby. I'll share this that from what I've been told, Mr. Sparby is not upset with anything NRCS in Minnesota is doing related to implementing the AmeriCorps program.

I've seen the recent letter your supervisor wrote to Glen Kajewski, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Thief River Falls, Minnesota. I've also reviewed and fully support Mr. Kajewski's response to your supervisor. Ironically, neither of those letters had to be written if you'll sit back and think about it. In the spirit of interagency cooperation lets get on with it - resolve the concerns effectively and efficiently - for the betterment of all concerned.

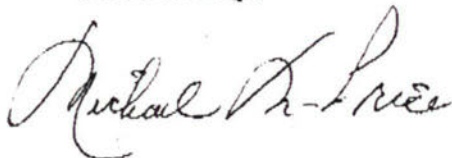
In closing, in early January 1995, I'll be contacting a day-long media relations training workshop with USDA NRCS AmeriCorps members in northwestern Minnesota. You're welcome to attend that training session. I don't have any further details but once they're finalized I'll get them to you. I think it would be a good idea if you and I spend a half day together or more if needed discussing AmeriCorps activities in the respective NRCS projects in Minnesota - to discuss progress, needs, concerns, issues, successes, etc. If you're open to that please contact me at your earliest convenience.

I've received the AmeriCorps application form for existing AmeriCorps project renewals and new projects. I've distributed that to our Minnesota NRCS Principal State Staff and to our Area Conservationists. They're to get their applications in to me by January 13; to NRCS NHQ by January 15.

I do not plan to discuss anything in this letter with anyone in NRCS in NHQ. I don't feel it's necessary any more - never should have had to in the first place! I am extremely busy with other NRCS responsibilities in addition to AmeriCorps. I'll be in my office the rest of this week and on Tuesday and Wed. of next week. Following those dates, I'll be here the week of January 8, 1995. Please give me a call and lets talk about getting together in mid-to-late January 1995.

Merry Christmas, Janice

Sincerely,



MICHAEL M. PRICE
Public Affairs Specialist
Minnesota NRCS AmeriCorps State Coordinator

cc:

David Benner, Deputy State Conservationist, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Gary Nordstrom, State Conservationist, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Wally Sparby, State Executive Director, FSA, St. Paul, MN
Glen Kajewski, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Thief River Falls, MN
Kevin Daw, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Duluth, MN
John Nicholson, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Rochester, MN



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Soil
Conservation
Service

FCS BLDG., SUITE 600
375 JACKSON STREET
ST. PAUL, MN 55101

Subject: USDA AmeriCorps Activities of
A FSA AmeriCorps Liaison

Date: December 1, 1994

To: Paula Jones
AmeriCorps Program Leader
NRCS, Washington, D.C.

It is with regret that we're having to deal with problems between our agency's AmeriCorps projects and Minnesota's USDA Farm Services Agency's AmeriCorps liaison, Janice Syverson.

From what I've learned about her actions, I do believe that Ms. Syverson, among other things, was put in an unfortunate position in working with the NRCS whose administrative management policies and procedures she did not understand; i.e., NRCS line-staff relationships. Within the past two weeks, I've explained how our agency operates administratively from a supervisory capacity, including the fact that she has no administrative authority over any NRCS employee or NRCS AmeriCorps member or our project management activities.

It was about a month ago that I learned that Ms. Syverson was submitting weekly reports about her visitations with and about Minnesota's NRCS AmeriCorps Projects/members to her FSA national office. When I asked her why she was doing that she told me that she was told to do that and received that instruction during the USDA AmeriCorps Training Session in Maryland last summer. However, she did not tell me that she was asked to do that, nor did anyone in USDA, while or since I was in Maryland, tell me that she was to submit weekly reports about Minnesota's NRCS AmeriCorps projects. When I asked her for copies of her reports she told me I would have to request them from the FSA National Office, who in turn would send me an abbreviated version of the reports. As of yet, she has not sent a copy of any of her weekly reports to me or to any NRCS line official in Minnesota. As a matter of fact, she told me that her national office told her not to send any of her reports to me or to any of our NRCS Area Conservationists associated with AmeriCorps program management in Minnesota.

We have three Area Conservationists who supervise five NRCS people who in turn manage six USDA NRCS AmeriCorps projects in Minnesota. Another AC has complained to me many times about some of her actions--that when she meets with NRCS employees and AmeriCorps members she asks our NRCS people to leave--that came to a head a couple of weeks ago when I told her under no circumstances did our agency staff have to leave any meeting she calls regarding AmeriCorps. Also, AmeriCorps members in one of our projects told her they didn't want our NRCS people to leave!

Twin Valley, Minnesota AmeriCorps members and NRCS personnel discussed this issue and resolved among themselves that if this problem happened again (being asked to leave) that the AmeriCorps members should talk to the people who can resolve that problem - their NRCS supervisors, AmeriCorps Project Directors or the Area Conservationist. It's been obvious, according to one AC and a Project Director, that when problems or perceived problems occur, Ms. Syverson has been unwilling to work toward a resolution.

I trusted Ms. Syverson to assist me, our Area Conservationists and our Project Directors with implementation of the USDA NRCS AmeriCorps program. Once learning that she had been selected by her agency to serve as a liaison (I don't know where the word "facilitator" came from as described in Lloyd Wright's 11/29/94 letter - first time I knew that FSA liaisons were AmeriCorps facilitators), I involved her - from the beginning. To begin with, I put her office (or closest facility to her office) email address into an email-group list of major NRCS people in Minnesota involved in AmeriCorps. She receives pertinent AmeriCorps information from me - just like the Area Conservationists and the AmeriCorps Project Directors do. The most recent example of that being a copy of a letter from me yesterday requesting first quarter AmeriCorps Project reports by December 14, 1994.

While planning our week-long October 1994 AmeriCorps Orientation Training Session, I invited Ms. Syverson to attend and serve as a chairperson for a one-half day training session. Her responsibility in doing that would have been to attend to each speaker's meeting needs and to introduce the speaker(s). She sent me an email message asking me not to have her do that - her reasoning being that it would make her nervous. I discussed her concern with her and agreed to take her off the agenda for that responsibility, but asked her to participate briefly during the first day to discuss her role as the FSA AmeriCorps liaison. At my initiative, I also invited Mr. Wally Sparby, State Executive Director of FSA in Minnesota, to that first day's AmeriCorps Orientation.

Even with the recent conversations I've had with Ms. Syverson about her role as FSA's liaison she continues to come across as if she has the authority to tell NRCS AmeriCorps Project Directors and their Area Conservationist supervisors "what to do," as is reflected in her November 21 through November 26, 1994 AmeriCorps Weekly Update, which again she did not send to me (I received a copy of that report today from Paula Jones' office). Also, during that same conversation, about three weeks ago, she stated that she, too, was also a USDA AmeriCorps coordinator. I said she wasn't; that NRCS received the funding and has the authority to implement the USDA NRCS AmeriCorps program in Minnesota.

As I look at that referenced weekly report and consider some of her statements such as "I told members" - she doesn't have the authority to tell our AmeriCorps members to do anything unless she is instructed to do so by an NRCS employee. Regarding the Cloquet cluster, she says in her report, "I'm not sure what to do next with this cluster!"

Ms. Syverson's Nov. 21-26 report is the first of her weekly reports I've ever seen. I find it very disappointing that her remarks are mainly negative! For example, "They say they are having no problems but this cluster just isn't going as well as the others in the state." Unfortunately, I do believe she is making some unwarranted judgements about the NRCS AmeriCorps projects in Minnesota. On more than one occasion, one of our Area Conservationists who supervises NRCS AmeriCorps Project Directors, told me that when she meets with NRCS AmeriCorps members, her main focus is to talk about problems; not about how well things are going or to discuss successful AmeriCorps member experiences. I assume she is getting her guidance from FSA in Washington, regarding such meetings and what to discuss. If that is the source of her guidance, it's too bad that source didn't share their requests with NRCS. She consistently puts her value judgements on whether our community service activities indeed are "community service" when we see otherwise and that her observations/judgements are completely out of her liaison role/authority. Her requests have and continue to upset our agency people and the AmeriCorps members. And, having to deal with these uncalled for problems wastes a lot of our NRCS employees and AmeriCorps members time.

I had plans to meet with AmeriCorps members in northwestern Minnesota earlier this week; however, because of a flight cancellation due to snow, I was not able to make that meeting. The Area Conservationist at Thief River Falls and I are considering accomplishing that previous meeting's plans with AmeriCorps members who will be attending the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, December 11-13, in Minneapolis.

I can only believe that some of the problems we're having stem from things that Ms. Syverson was/continues to be told by her agency - perhaps others in USDA - and which she and they are not sharing with me and our line-staff NRCS people in Minnesota. As long as she refuses to share with us what her national office instructs her to do regarding the NRCS AmeriCorps Projects in Minnesota, I foresee continued and regrettably more friction and wasted time. Perhaps it can all be solved very easily if the FSA folks are willing to "share" what they want Ms. Syverson to do with NRCS in Minnesota. It seems like a relatively simple solution to me.

We know we can tell our NRCS AmeriCorps Project Directors and AmeriCorps members to totally ignore any and all of Ms. Syverson's requests, but that is an alternative at this point that we have chosen not to act on. And, as far as I'm concerned, even that potential alternative should never have had to be considered if whomever Ms. Syverson is receiving her direction from had been open and honest with the NRCS.

In a teleconference call this afternoon with an Area Conservationist, one project director and an AmeriCorps member, regarding Joel Berg's letter of November 29, 1994, we (in regards to Paragraph 1) are wondering, who is or has made the judgement about what the clusters "seem to be doing?" Their (teleconference participants) guess is that Ms. Syverson has planted those questions and doubts. We don't believe Ms. Syverson has ever reviewed the project plans as she discussed activities with our AmeriCorps members. Based on the report Ms. Syverson writes we can understand why they (USDA) might question objectives. Her narrative report doesn't explain how the things the AmeriCorps members do help to achieve the project objectives.

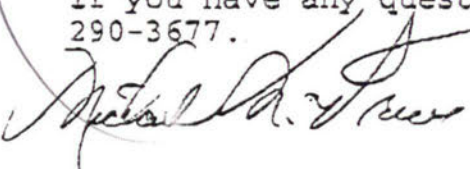
Regarding paragraph 2 of Joel's letter, we can send these news releases/articles as they're written/published if you prefer, otherwise they would be attached to the quarterly reports.

We find it ironic that Ms. Syverson, has never attended a cluster meeting when it was scheduled in Thief River Falls which is only 1 1/2 hours away from her work location. However, she seems to be able to find the time to travel to meet with AmeriCorps members in other clusters in distant parts of the state.

In Ms. Sysverson's report about Twin Valley activities, she gave AmeriCorps members the O.K. to pursue related activities, however, that is completely out of her authority as a USDA FSA liaison to NRCS AmeriCorps projects.

In closing with comments from the teleconference participants this afternoon, they stated that some of the weekly cluster meetings actually hinder project productivity to carry out the project objectives.

If you have any questions about anything here please call me at (612) 290-3677.



MICHAEL M. PRICE
Public Affairs Specialist
AmeriCorps Project Director

cc:
Gary Nordstrom, STC, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
David Benner, DSTC, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Glen Kajewski, AC, NRCS, Thief River Falls, MN
Kevin Daw, AC, NRCS, Duluth, MN
John Nicholson, AC, NRCS, Rochester, MN



February 2, 1995

SUBJECT: USDA Correspondence to NRCS Employee

TO: Tom Weber, Acting Deputy Chief for Programs

Attached is a letter that was sent from Joel Berg, Director of National Service USDA, to Michael Price, Public Affairs Specialists in Minnesota. Michael Price has been designated by the State Conservationist as the AmeriCorps Project Director for Minnesota. Each state has one person whose responsibilities are to coordinate the AmeriCorps projects and to be the contact for the national office.

I am calling this to your attention because this correspondence went from USDA directly to an employee without reviewing it with us.

The issue revolves around difficulties in the structure of the USDA AmeriCorps program. USDA has assigned facilitators to support the efforts at state or regional levels. In almost all cases, the facilitators are employees of the Consolidated Farm Services Agency formerly ASCS. In Minnesota, the facilitator/NRCS support has been riddled with problems. I have communicated with the State Conservationist (STC) and he has had discussions with the County Executive Director (CED) in Minnesota. We have agreed that this is an issue that should be solved between the STC and the CED.

An issue paper is being developed concerning the need for facilitators being assigned to AmeriCorps. A recommendation was initiated by Forest Service to establish self-directed teams of local USDA employees instead of assigning facilitators to this role. We do not feel that they are needed or that this is in line with the National Performance Review.

LLOYD E. WRIGHT, Director
Community Assistance
and Resource Development

cc:

Paul Johnson, Chief, NRCS, Washington, D.C.

Pearlie S. Reed, Associate Chief, NRCS, Washington, D.C.

Charles Whitmore, Regional Conservationist, Midwest, NRCS, Washington, D.C.

Stephen K. Chick Acting State Conservationist, NRCS, St. Paul, Minnesota

✓ Joel Berg, Director of National Service USDA, Washington, D.C.

Paula Cole Jones, Program Coordinator, NRCS, Washington, D.C.

Attachments



The Soil Conservation Service
is an agency of the
Department of Agriculture

January 27, 1995

To: LLOYD, Paula
From: Joel Berg 
Subject: Resolving Personnel Conflicts in Minnesota

Unfortunately, the personnel conflict in Minnesota has only escalated since our previous discussions. The facilitator has raised the possibility that she will file a grievance.

In an effort to stop this fighting between two USDA agencies from different mission areas, I have sent the following letter. I have made it clear that is was wrong to exclude NRCS staff from a meeting, but I have made it equally clear that is it wrong for one employee to wage what appears to be a continued personal campaign against the CFSA employee. Hopefully, this memorandum will put the matter to rest so all our projects in Minnesota can move forward.



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

January 27, 1995

To: Michael Price, NRCS Minnesota AmeriCorps State Coordinator

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

Subject: Your Interactions With the Minnesota State AmeriCorps Facilitator

I am very concerned that, although you have performed excellent work in planning and implementing highly innovative AmeriCorps projects throughout Minnesota, your apparent efforts to personally disparage your colleague serving as State AmeriCorps Facilitator are negatively affecting your projects.

The Regional and State AmeriCorps Facilitator positions throughout the nation, filled by USDA employees on details from various agencies, have greatly improved the quality of our USDA AmeriCorps projects by helping build "AmeriCorps identity," providing logistical support, and coordinating information between Washington and the field. In almost all cases, facilitators and agency project managers have worked extremely well together, and project managers have, in fact, praised those facilitators. Moreover, the facilitator role has been heavily praised by the Corporation for National and Community Service, multiple USDA agencies, at least one NRCS state conservationist, and myself. The Corporation for National and Community Service has recently requested that we increase the role for facilitators in coordinating our projects.

It also concerns me that your repeated personal criticisms of the Minnesota State Facilitator have harmed inter-agency cooperation. The energy being focused on personal attacks against the facilitator is taking energy away from addressing structural challenges in some of your state's projects.

It is imperative that all agencies involved with AmeriCorps accept that we are all part of "Team USDA" and, as such, have critical roles to play in ensuring that USDA runs the highest quality AmeriCorps program in the nation.

As I have expressed to you before, I am troubled that you seem to continue "blaming the messenger" instead of dealing with the "message" that your projects --- like all USDA AmeriCorps projects --- need to engage in a constant process of continuous improvement made possible by a free and open exchange of ideas.

Perhaps most troubling is that, immediately following our phone conversation in late December in which I thought you had assured me that you would cease your personal attacks against the Facilitator, Ms. Janice Syverson, you sent yet another lengthy letter that dealt largely with her alleged personal failings. While you may have written this letter in order to bolster your claim that she was to blame for all problems related to our Minnesota projects, your action only served to bolster the impression that your motivation was personal in nature.

As early as August of 1994 -- when the USDA AmeriCorps staff training was held and when the draft operations manual was distributed --- all USDA agencies involved in running AmeriCorps --- including NRCS --- agreed to the specific roles, duties, and job description of the facilitator. The operations manual, which was drafted and printed by NRCS' National Staff, included the following agreed upon duties:

- * "Planning and managing regional training and orientation programs"
- * "Helping ensure USDA/AmeriCorps members establish a national identity"
- * "Participating in identifying and recommending methods and criteria to improve USDA/AmeriCorps procedures"
- * "Participating in planning for future USDA/AmeriCorps activities and projects."

In meetings throughout the training session in which all USDA agencies involved were represented, I made it clear that one of the duties of the facilitator would be to provide me with regular written reports.

Additionally, the lengthy job description for the facilitator --- also distributed at the training session and also approved by all the agencies involved --- specified that facilitators would be providing information on project activities to me. Thus, your continuing claim that both the general facilitator duties and weekly report preparation were somehow secrets is unfounded.

The conflicts involving your projects arose because both the Corporation for National and Community Service and myself -- not Ms. Syverson -- first raised questions about the type of service performed in Minnesota. In a late November of 1994 report, Ms. Syverson --- in plain, non-judgmental, language --- described some of the activities being performed by AmeriCorps Members in Minnesota.

It was the Corporation for National and Community Service and myself --- not Ms. Syverson --- who came to the conclusion that some of the projects might not be specifically meeting the objectives of your original application and also might not be fully meeting the program design of AmeriCorps.

My concern --- as well as the concern of the Corporation for National Service - -- was so great over these issues that I suggested in a November 29, 1994 memorandum to the NRCS national office that I convene a conference call with all the parties involved in the Minnesota projects. However, at the request of that office, I postponed the conference call based on the understanding that the NRCS national office would act to redress the concerns about the projects.

I was thus very surprised to receive a copy of your December 1, 1994 memorandum (copy attached) to Paula Jones that did not answer the substantive issues I raised, but instead spent five pages basically questioning the competence of Ms. Syverson. Furthermore, the letter was widely distributed, giving the impression that you were seeking to embarrass Ms. Syverson. Additionally, at around the same time, I asked NRCS a series of substantive questions related to serious concerns about Minnesota's community service initiatives and one of the responses I received included the comment that my question "did not deserve an answer."

Although I was troubled by this seemingly hostile attitude towards your colleagues both in Minnesota and Washington, I decided not to take the traditional route of contacting your supervisors. Instead, treating you with the respect I accord to all fellow professionals in USDA, and expect to be treated with myself, I took time out of my schedule on a trip to Oregon so that I could speak with you at length by telephone on or about December 16, 1994.

As you may recall, most of the conversation centered around you relating "your side of the story." My response was that some of the issues that had caused friction -- meetings at which one agency excluded another, the confusion about the preparation of weekly reports, the lack of clarity to lines of authority -- had all been resolved by my November 29, 1994 memorandum, which was approved by all USDA agencies, and sent to facilitators and project managers.

I also made the following points in response to your December 1, 1994 memorandum:

1) The Department expects our requests for specific programmatic information to be met with such information --- not with unrelated commentary about another employee. I expressed great concern that instead of providing answers to my questions, you wrote a lengthy personal attack on the facilitator.

2) Your memorandum implied that the facilitator should have no real role in arranging cluster meetings, however, the operations manual details a very specific role for facilitators in arranging such meetings.

3) Your memorandum states, "We know we can tell our NRCS AmeriCorps project Directors and AmeriCorps members to totally ignore any and all of Ms. Syverson's requests." As I told you, this is certainly not an acceptable option.

4) In the memorandum you claimed the term "facilitator" is new, but as I pointed out, the term is used repeatedly in the operations manual that you received in August. You agreed with me on that point.

5) I mentioned that I had not seen press releases from your state prior to their distribution to the media and, that I was highly concerned that some that I had seen subsequently, contained inaccurate information and/or had generally not met the Department's professional standards. I also reminded you of the policy, explained repeatedly at the August training session, that since AmeriCorps is a Departmental initiative, it is the Department's policy that all press releases be approved, before release in the field, by the USDA Office of Communications, in this case through either myself or Ms. Katherine Gibney. In response, you requested that I reiterate this policy to state and national NRCS offices. I agreed to do so and also reminded you that, in my authority as an officer of the USDA Office of Communications, as the legally constituted AmeriCorps liaison for the Department under the authority of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, and as the designee of both the President of the United States and the Secretary of Agriculture to run the program at USDA, you are obligated to abide by my instructions on AmeriCorps media policy whether or not you received those identical directions from your agency.

6) I stated that it was absolutely inexcusable that someone in NRCS had issued an e-mail message giving the false impression that Ms. Syverson had been fired. I reminded you that, since Ms. Syverson had been, in effect, detailed to my office by CFSA, only her agency or myself had the authority to relieve her of her duties. Furthermore, even if she was relieved of her duties, it would be highly unprofessional to broadcast such an event on e-mail.

7) I then requested that if you had a problem with our national policies, you should take it up with NRCS, or with me directly, and not "blame the messenger" --- in this case, the facilitator.

Despite these frank topics of our discussion, I believed that the conversation was constructive and ended on a mutually agreeable note. I am comfortable that I went out of my way to be polite and collegial in our discussion, and that I listened carefully to your concerns.

As I stressed in our conversation, I was not then, nor am I now interested in assigning past blame. My interest lies in building a better program and, since the past confusion has been dispelled, I hope we all can agree to simply move forward. Our conversation ended with my praise of your work in Minnesota, and thinking that we had reached an understanding that made discussing the matter with your supervisors unnecessary.

I was extremely surprised to receive a copy of your December 20, 1994 letter to Ms. Syverson, (copy attached). Again, the letter was a lengthy discussion of Ms. Syverson's supposed negative previous actions. Again, the letter avoided discussion of substantive issues related to the AmeriCorps project work. Again, the letter was widely distributed --- giving an ever-increasing impression that you were attempting to aggravate Ms. Syverson.

This December 20, 1994 letter, contained many troubling statements:

- 1) You wrote that "All of a sudden, with absolutely no written or verbal communication at all," she shared the weekly reports with you. Yet both Lloyd Wright and myself had just sent memorandums to the field clarifying that all AmeriCorps memorandums should be shared among all the agencies. Your letter also demanded an explanation from her as to why she changed her procedure even though you should have known that the national policy had changed. In effect, you blamed her for following the new national policy.
- 2) In criticizing her new request for you to directly provide information for the weekly report, your letter seems to again berate her for simply following the new national policy.
- 3) Your continued insistence that Ms. Syverson does not understand the structure of NRCS is, in my view, patronizing in tone. Your implication that she does not have a right to communicate directly with our local project managers or our AmeriCorps Members is totally incorrect. As graphically demonstrated by the chart on page 32 of the operations manual, the facilitators have a duty to communicate directly with the state project directors, local project managers, and the AmeriCorps Members themselves. It is impossible for any one individual to single-handedly monitor all details of projects throughout a state as large as Minnesota. Open lines of communication and cooperation are critical among all levels of the projects.

4) You write that the authority to review press releases rests only with "NRCS personnel who manage and supervise AmeriCorps Members." Thus, despite our previous conversation, your letter again incorrectly disputes the authority of the Department to require prior approval of any AmeriCorps press release.

Your letter also criticizes Ms. Syverson for relating Departmental policy, although it is clearly the facilitators' duty to help ensure that all our projects comply with policies, regulations, and laws governing both USDA and AmeriCorps.

5) Your letter again refers to the unfortunate, yet isolated, incident in which Ms. Syverson asked NRCS personnel to leave a room during a meeting with AmeriCorps Members. She previously acknowledged her error in this one incident, as have CFSA and myself. We have clarified that no agency --- including either CFSA or NRCS --- are to take such actions in the future. There is no possible benefit for continued reference to this past incident.

6) You reiterate that Ms. Syverson "is not in a position to tell any of our NRCS employees what to do." While it is true that facilitators have no line authority over NRCS, they do have an important collaborative role to play in each and every aspect of AmeriCorps. Just as important as the fact that you do not work for Ms. Syverson, is the fact that she does not work for you. Under our new method of reinventing government, teams of employees from differing agencies are working together collaboratively on an equal basis to achieve a common goal.

7) You also wrote, "As I have told Joel Berg and NRCS people in our agency at the state and national levels, you've been told one thing; we may not have been told about it at all." This is incorrect. As I have personally told you, all written and verbal instructions are now shared fully by all agencies.

8) Your letter gives Ms. Syverson a series of instructions as if you are giving her orders, yet you have no authority to give her orders.

9) You wrote that her reports should "not include any review of NRCS administrative concerns or personal critiques." This is also incorrect. It is critical that we are made aware of both successes and problems in the field.

The fact that you do not seem to want program managers or policy makers in Washington to learn of any problems is disturbing and counters the spirit of AmeriCorps. This type thinking hinders the utilization of continuous and healthy self-assessments in order to ensure Total Quality Management, a top goal of your agency. Dealing with problems openly is always preferable to censoring them.

10) You tell Ms. Syverson not to "make these (clustering) arrangements or comment on your concerns regarding this issue." Not only are you asking her not to fulfill one of her main duties as outlined in the operations manual, but you are once again telling her she has no right to professionally express her views if they happen to differ from yours.

11) You write that Ms. Syverson has no real role in helping plan future service projects, although this is another key facilitator duty outlined in the manual. Once again, you tell her that your decisions are "not to be criticized."

12) You write "If we don't ask for your assistance, be assured everything is fine." This comment seems to express contempt for the facilitator role and gives the impression that you believe you could not benefit from any outside advice or assistance.

13) Although you heavily criticize Ms. Syverson for -- in your view --- going around proper NRCS channels, you freely described your second-hand understanding of the views of the Minnesota CFSA State Executive Director. This action seems inconsistent.

14) Your letter then assures her that you "do not plan to discuss anything in this letter with NRCS in NHQ." This sentence is also surprising, given that you have continuously claimed that most of the problems in Minnesota were caused by poor communication between Washington and the field; if that was indeed the case, wouldn't you want both your NHQ and myself to see the letter?

Following your letter of December 20, 1994, I understand that you asked Ms. Syverson to include in the January 19, 1995 weekly report three paragraphs that you wrote.

Your words in these three paragraphs again reiterated the incorrect claim that NRCS did not originally know the weekly reports were being created. You asked her to include the following line as if she had written it: "It is not my role to manage AmeriCorps projects in Minnesota," which again demonstrates a misunderstanding about the facilitator role. Moreover, I do not understand why such paragraphs were needed in a weekly report.

Taken together, the tone, substance, language, and length of your communications all give the impression that you are focused on personally disparaging Ms. Syverson. I hope that is not the case, and that positive change will be forthcoming.

AmeriCorps is a new program, and the Office of the Secretary, the agency national offices, the agency state and area offices, and the agency county offices each have critical roles to play in working closely together as respectful colleagues in order to build the best program possible. This structure is not haphazard -- it is spelled out concretely in our operations manual.

Once we move away from discussing personalities, and the needless "in-fighting" ceases, we can meet remaining goals for the Minnesota projects:

- 1) Ensuring that the members are performing concrete, measurable service that will directly benefit Minnesota in the first year of the program's operations. While I still have strong concerns that our Members may be spending a lot of time planning, surveying, sending out letters, holding public meetings, and engaging in public affairs activities, we need to assure that, at the end of your first year, we will be able to point to concrete changes in conservation practices that actually took place on the land as a result of AmeriCorps activities.
- 2) Ensuring that all AmeriCorps Members in Minnesota meet the requirement of regular meetings with at least four other Members.
- 3) Ensuring that we allow none of the Members to come even close to violating the provisions of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 that prohibits Members from duplicating work already performed by the Federal government. It is critical that we guarantee that no Member is performing work normally performed by NRCS.
- 4) Ensuring that all the members who, according to your original application, are supposed to be performing flood recovery work, are working specifically with landowners who were victims of the 1993 floods and/or are working specifically to take concrete actions that will help prevent future flooding. The Department and the Corporation for National and Community Service agreed to allow so many AmeriCorps Members in Minnesota for the express reason that many of them were supposed to be engaged in flood recovery work.

Based on your original application, we described some of the work in Minnesota as flood relief work in public materials released to Congress and the media. In a recent book about AmeriCorps, a *Newsweek* reporter described the USDA flood recovery work as some of the single most important work to be carried out by AmeriCorps. Yet none of Minnesota's first quarter reports describe any flood recovery work at all.

- 5) Ensuring that all media releases meet professional standards and are approved by my office before their issuance.

6) Ensuring that all sites have concrete, measurable community service objectives approved by NRCS, myself, and the Corporation for National and Community Service and that those objectives match the service actually being performed by our AmeriCorps Members. The service outlined in your first quarter reports does not match up in all cases with the latest objectives provided to me by the NRCS national office.

7) Ensuring that the following specific concerns, raised by your first quarter report, are addressed:

Twin Valley - Members seem to have spent most of their first quarter planning, training, and holding meetings, but have not yet actually started planting the living snowfence -- which was the focus of the original objectives. Recognizing the weather's impact, I still question how quickly this project will move from planning to implementation?

Cloquet - Members seem to have conducted inventories, prepared documents, produced maps, and attended meetings, but how will this directly impact upon actual conservation practices on the land? How is this different from regular NRCS work performed by Federal employees?

Rochester - The quarterly report does not indicate precisely how the pasture/grassland management plans to be produced by the Members will result in fulfilling objective #1 by improving conditions on 5,000 acres of land.

Lewiston - One of the newsclips attached to the quarterly report has the headline "AmeriCorps to clear brush, watch video." This gives the false --- and potentially damaging --- impression that AmeriCorps Members spend their time watching TV. Was this story based on a NRCS press release?

It is obvious that there are still critical issues regarding the Minnesota projects that need to be resolved. I must stress that these issues should not be taken lightly. Because of issues like these in many states, the Corporation for National Service almost did not approve our Rural Development Team in the first place. If these issues are not addressed successfully, our projects will not be re-funded.

I fully understand the great pressure that project managers like yourself have endured. You have spent almost a year now planning and implementing excellent AmeriCorps projects, meeting incredibly tight deadlines with often very little logistical support.

I further understand that you and your colleagues have accomplished these tasks even while carrying out all your other important, non-AmeriCorps, duties. I understand the great confusion and mistrust created on all sides originally by the creation of the AmeriCorps facilitator position. It is not surprising that all these pressures put together --- along with the general strain of USDA reorganization --- can lead to friction in the field. However, I am fully convinced, that, working together cooperatively on an inter-agency basis, we will accomplish all of our goals.

Now that we have all clarified our structures and processes, I am confident that we can move together productively to continue building the best AmeriCorps projects that exist. If you have any additional questions, concerns, or comments, please feel free to call me at work at (202) 720-6350 or at home at (202) 387-8221.

Attachments (2)

cc: Janice Syverson, Minnesota State AmeriCorps Facilitator, CFSA, Ada, MN
Steve Chick, Acting State Conservationist, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Wally Sparby, State Executive Director, CFSA, St. Paul, MN
David Benner, Deputy State Conservationist, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Glen Kajewski, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Thief River Falls, MN
John Nicholson, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Rochester, MN
Kevin Daw, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Duluth, MN
Lloyd Wright and Paula Jones, NRCS, Washington, DC
Beverly Pritts, AmeriCorps Facilitator Coordinator, CFSA, Washington, DC

FEB 1 1995

SUBJECT: Facilitator in Virginia

TO: Lloyd E. Wright

On January 25, I received a call from Pat Paul, Project Director in Virginia. The subject of her call was the facilitator in Virginia. The following is a synopsis of events:

The Virginia state facilitator is: Charles Ingram, Consolidated Farm Services Agency.

He reports to the Regional facilitator.

The Regional facilitator is: Virginia Short, Consolidated Farm Services Agency

She is located in Kentucky.

Pat Paul was contacted by Gary Boring, an NRCS employee and project manager in V.A.

Gary relayed to Pat that he had been contacted by Mr. Ingram. Mr. Ingram requested that

Gary submit to him weekly reports regarding progress, problems, and accomplishments.

This was the first time Pat had ever heard of the man.

Pat then contacted Mr. Ingram. She questioned why he had contacted Mr. Boring and expressed her concern with this. Mr. Ingram told her he had to have these weekly reports.

He also told her to submit copies of press releases to him to be cleared by the office of the regional facilitator. He promised 24 hour turn-around on approval of press releases. He

also instructed her to send copies of clippings to him and to Ms. Short in Kentucky. He

also informed her that he was to be present at all cluster meetings. He has also contacted AmeriCorps members to inquire about the amount of time they have spent in training,

how much training they have received, etc.

Pat also had a rather heated conversation with Ms. Short. Ms. Short stated that they were

there to solve problems.

He has succeeded in greatly disturbing everyone in Virginia with this redundant request for paperwork.



Dee DiFiore

FEB 1 1995

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Dee DiFiore



(File) | Facilitator
THE GEORGIA COMMISSION FOR
NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

PROPHET
2 MILES
PARKIN
COLLINS
3 Jim M.

2020 EQUITABLE BUILDING ★ 100 PEACHTREE STREET ★ ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303 ★ (404) 657-7827 ★ FAX: (404) 657-7835

Zell Miller
Governor

Lynn Thornton
Executive Director

March 10, 1995

Mr. Jim Meisenheimer
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Salina ASCS Office
760 Broadway
Salina, Kansas 67401

Dear Jim:

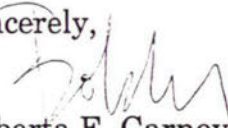
On behalf of the Georgia Commission for National and Community Service, and Lynn Thornton, Executive Director, I want to personally thank you for devoting two days to the review of Georgia's applications for AmeriCorps funds.

Eighteen applications were reviewed by you and your associates in Kansas on February 22 and 23. Each team conducted its review in a professional and thoughtful manner. Without exception, you identified strengths in good proposals and weaknesses in others. As a result of your review, we invited 16 applicants to participate in oral interviews. Almost without exception, the panel conducting the oral interviews came up with ratings similar to those which your teams gave to the applications, without their knowing how those proposals were rated by you.

Staff of the Commission is now preparing recommendations on which applications to include in the State's package to be forwarded to the Corporation for funding. We will likely include seven in our formula package, and six more in the package to enter into the national competition.

Thank you again for your assistance and your professional approach to reviewing Georgia's AmeriCorps grant applications.

Sincerely,


Roberta F. Carney
Assistant Director

RFC/hp
cc: Pat Kells, Executive Director
Kansas Commission for National
and Community Service



SPONSORING GEORGIA'S AMERICORPS PROGRAM



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USDA/AmeriCorps
Soil Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, KS 67401-4642
(913) 823-4500
FAX (913) 823-4540

October 20, 1994

Mr. James D. Meisenheimer
AmeriCorps Facilitator
Agricultural Stabilization and
Conservation Service
1117 1/2 West U.S. Highway 24
Osborne, Kansas 67473

Dear Jim:

Jim, I want to thank you for your special efforts in getting the Kansas/USDA AmeriCorps projects up and running. Stepping in at the last moment to serve as emcee at the Kanopolis Lake kickoff is only one example of the special effort and excellent manner of how you have assisted the USDA Team in implementing the AmeriCorps program in Kansas.

Your help in recruiting and arranging details for initial program implementation has been invaluable. In fact, we could not have done it without you.

We appreciate you very much, Jim. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James N. Habiger'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J'.

James N. Habiger
State Conservationist

cc:

Adrian Polansky, State Executive Director, ASCS, Manhattan, KS
Richard Herrman, District Director, ASCS, LaCrosse, KS
Paula Jones, AmeriCorps Program Manager, Community Assistance and Resource
Development Division, Washington, DC
Joel Berg, USDA, Washington, DC
Charles Simms, ASCS, Washington, DC



The Soil Conservation Service
is an agency of the
United States Department of Agriculture

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Soil
Conservation
Service

OPTIONAL FORM 99 (7-90)

FAX TRANSMITTAL

of pages 4

To: JOEL BERG	From: Paula Jones
Dept./Agency	Phone # 720-1853
Fax # 720-4614	Fax # 690-0639

NSN 7540-01-317-7368

5099-101

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR JAMES R. LYONS, UNDER SECRETARY NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

FROM: Paul W. Johnson
Chief
Natural Resources Conservation Service

MAR 20 1995

SUBJECT: AmeriCorps Program Delivery and Facilitator Positions

ISSUE:

The existing facilitator positions of the AmeriCorps projects of the NRCS are not needed and are not considered a wise use of existing resources.

DISCUSSION:

The existence of 25 USDA AmeriCorps facilitators has created both micromanagement of the program and conflict within USDA. On-site instructions are being provided from two directions: (1) through the facilitators and (2) through the NRCS line and staff structure.

In FY 94, NRCS prepared for full involvement in the USDA AmeriCorps program. We planned to implement AmeriCorps through a structure that utilizes the agency's existing delivery system. This delivery system was offered as one of the strengths of NRCS in carrying out community service work. We also expressed the importance of integrating AmeriCorps into the operations of USDA agencies as a means of institutionalizing this program.

Joel Berg, Director for National Service, USDA, proposed that facilitators be included in the structure for implementing AmeriCorps. This proposal was met with resistance from both NRCS and the Forest Service. We were concerned that we could not run a project with two people providing directions. Both agencies decided not to detail employees to this assignment. With reorganization and downsizing, we decided we had sufficient resources committed to AmeriCorps, and that the facilitators were not really needed. As this issue was discussed, it was unclear what the role of facilitators would be. It was also pointed out that the proposed role could result in conflicts, and that these positions should not be used to go around the chain of command of the agencies that had accepted the responsibility for funding and administering AmeriCorps members and project sites.



The Soil Conservation Service
is an agency of the
Department of Agriculture

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Decision Memorandum for James R. Lyons

2

The Corporation for National and Community Service approved 1200 slots for the proposed USDA AmeriCorps programs. The 1200 slots were allocated to agencies as follows:

571 NRCS
334 FS
66 RDA
66 FmHA
150 FNS
13 CFSA (CFSA did not host any of the 1200 slots.)

Each participating State Conservationist has designated an AmeriCorps project director to coordinate the activities in the State and to be the point of contact with the national NRCS office. Each project site has an AmeriCorps project manager. In most cases, they are District Conservationists or RC&D coordinators. NRCS also has facilitators trained in Total Quality Management, teambuilding and problem solving and the technical, administrative, and public information staff support.

FACILITATORS

In August 1994, a group of ten facilitators were assembled to provide support in the midwest flood States. This number has since increased to 25 facilitators nationwide. Twenty-three of the facilitators are CFSA employees. Only one State has expressed this arrangement as beneficial. We have received complaints from some States due to conflicts in perceived authorities. Although most States have established a working relationship, most of the NRCS employees have expressed a preference for eliminating the facilitator position.

If we look at it in terms of cost, on the conservative side, 25 facilitators at an average cost for GS-11 at \$50,000 each makes this an additional program cost of \$1,250,000. This is the equivalent of 78 AmeriCorps Rural Development members or 119 Public Lands and Environment Corps members. It has been stated that one objective of the AmeriCorps program is to avoid building another bureaucracy. The Corporation for National and Community Service has been given the flexibility to apply AmeriCorps to a wide range of organizational settings. This is a USDA choice, not a requirement of the program.

Micromanagement has been the result of this arrangement. We do not need an additional 25 people to manage the program. With the scrutiny this program is receiving and will continue to receive, we need to deliver AmeriCorps in a cost-effective manner. The presence of facilitators also creates a potential weakness in that agencies need to be fully capable of managing AmeriCorps, should the level of support change from the USDA office.

The network of facilitators became a serious issue around November 1994, when it was exposed that the facilitators had been asked to submit weekly reports to the USDA Director for National

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Service. These reports were being compiled without the input of NRCS and were not being shared with NRCS. It was assumed that the facilitators were being used as a parallel structure for the AmeriCorps program to be managed from the USDA office rather than managed fully through the agency's management system.

It is important to recognize where we are on the learning curve during this start up phase in the AmeriCorps program. In the first year, we have gone from a few people with little knowledge of AmeriCorps, to employees in 35 States and the national office with experience in designing and managing AmeriCorps projects. The needs in the second year of the program are not the same as they were for the first year. This capability needs to be factored into the decision about whether or not facilitators are needed. All agencies involved should be engaged in a process of evaluation and program improvement.

We are making the following improvements to strengthen the NRCS participation in AmeriCorps.

1. The NRCS Community Assistance and Resource Development Division will work with the Quality Management and Program Evaluation Division to develop a plan for the evaluation and improvement of NRCS AmeriCorps projects.
2. Applications from State offices to participate in AmeriCorps are to be submitted with proposed sites for teams of AmeriCorps members with no less than five members located together. This policy helps us to better meet the Corporation's requirement for AmeriCorps members support and national program identity.
3. Each AmeriCorps team, including the Public Lands and Environmental Corps and the Rural Development Corps, will have a team leader who is an AmeriCorps member. We are currently working with employees in State and field offices who are managing AmeriCorps projects to determine the skills needed for the team to be effective. The NRCS national Employee Development Staff is working with us to design leadership training. We will use distant learning to deliver some of this training to the States through satellite downlink.
4. Consistent with the six newly organized NRCS regions, we will work with our Regional Conservationists to have persons designated as Regional AmeriCorps Coordinators. They will have experience with AmeriCorps and will function to improve communication, coordination, and monitoring at the local level.

OPTIONS:

1. Eliminate all facilitators and allow agencies to be responsible for full implementation at the State and or local level. Self-directed teams can be established locally to facilitate interagency coordination and support for AmeriCorps projects or other methods as agreed to by the agencies involved.

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2. Make no changes to the current USDA structure for AmeriCorps.

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish self-directed teams during FY 95 and completely eliminate facilitators by the start up of FY 96 projects, which is scheduled for September 1995.

DECISION BY THE UNDER SECRETARY:

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Date _____

Reviewed by _____