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Series/Staff Member: General Files

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OA/ID Number: 24236

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Folder Title:

USDA [Department of Agriculture]/AmeriCorps-New York

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Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. list	[Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (1 page)	11/00/1995	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
AmeriCorps
General Files
OA/Box Number: 24236

FOLDER TITLE:

USDA [Department of Agriculture]/AmeriCorps New York

2013-0661-F
rs3791

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

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PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

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EA AmeriCorp loses funding

Erie County has lost the East Aurora unit of AmeriCorps program.

The local chapter was shut down when Congress failed to approve funding for a five-member team. The team was assigned to work under John R. Whitney, the area conservationist for the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"Sen. Christopher Bond of Missouri has held up approval

of AmeriCorps teams that work under other federal agencies," said Whitney.

AmeriCorp members are assigned one-year appointments. In the past two, one-year appointments members of two prior teams computerized soil maps of certain Erie and Niagara County communities. This project has helped to make information easier for local planners and developers.

"We had hoped that a third

team could carry on the work, but so far Congress has not acted," said Whitney.

Members of AmeriCorp work 1,700 hours during a year of service. They are paid \$7,500 plus a \$4,725 educational tuition credit. This credit can be used as a payment of their college loans or used towards future college classes.

The AmeriCorp group in the West Seneca Youth Bureau is still receiving funding.

Note: This article was based on a brief conversation with Buffalo News reporter, Bob Buyer. It appeared in a similar format in the Buffalo News and was then picked up by the Bee (and maybe other weekly papers).

Quoted and implied references to "congress" were invented by Mr. Buyer. He did not take notes and must have decided this was the easiest way to explain the problem, even if it was not accurate.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation
Service

The Galleries of Syracuse
441 S. Salina St., Suite 354
Syracuse, NY 13202-2450
(315) 477-6504
(315) 477-6550 fax

Date: December 23, 1996

File: *am1296a.doc*

To: Joel Berg FAX 202-720-4614
Katherine Gibney
Dee DeFiore

From: John Whitney

Subject: AmeriCorps in East Aurora, Etc.

Bob Buyer, the *Buffalo News* reporter who has done most of the major press coverage for the East Aurora USDA AmeriCorps project, asked the other day how things are going with AmeriCorps. I said, the 2nd year team completed their term of service in September but we haven't yet received clearance to start up the third year team. He asked, "Why's that?" I said that, while the national AmeriCorps program has been approved for a third year, renewal of federally operated projects like the East Aurora GIS & Conservation Technology Team has been held up by Senator Bond of Missouri and a few other influential Senators and Congressman. I carefully avoided partisan references.

That brief discussion turned into the accompanying article. I have no idea where the quotation marks. The implication that "congress" is holding up the approval is not correct but that may have been Bob's way of simplifying the issue.

From the headquarters perspective, is there anything I should do as follow-up to the article (copies & explanation letters to WNY congressional delegation, formal press release with more accurate description of the present circumstances, a note to Bob Buyer with a copy of the status report you sent us all a while back, etc.)?

Here's hoping the new year brings some good news concerning USDA AmeriCorps!

Happy New Year!

cc: Richard Swenson, State Conservationist
Robert Hartrick, Area Conservationist

P.S. A couple of supporting letters are also enclosed.



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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources
Conservation Service
(formerly the Soil Conservation Service)

50 Commerce Way
East Aurora, New York 14052-2185
(716) 652-8480
(716) 652-8506 *fax*
nrcsea@localnet.com *e-mail*

October 3, 1996

Joel Berg
United States Department of Agriculture
Ag. Box 1301
Washington, D.C. 20251
Rm. 536-A

Dear Joel:

Thanks for the "Fact Sheet on Status of USDA AmeriCorps Projects." I have shared it with Senators Moynihan and D'Amato and Congressmen Quinn, LaFalce and Paxon along with a brief version of our 4th quarter project report. Copies of the cover letters for my transmissions are enclosed.

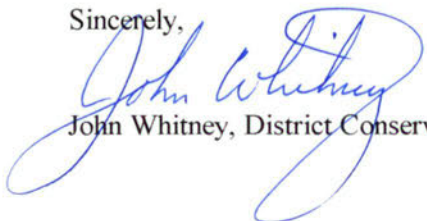
The budget impacts of AmeriCorps are of particular concern to our State Conservationist, Richard Swenson. In the past we have been told that AmeriCorps funds, were "added to State appropriations" on top of base allocations. This may or may not have been the case. Mr. Swenson insists the AmeriCorps money comes out of his state allocation and no additional funds are added to compensate for the expense. He has shared this opinion widely, along with the opinion that AmeriCorps members count against the state FTE limit.

We've finally convinced him that AmeriCorps members are clearly NOT FTEs. I have expressed my understanding that agency funds were taken "off the top" of USDA agency budgets at the National Headquarters level and redirected to States with AmeriCorps projects (ie. the total State allocation would have been lower without AmeriCorps.) I don't know for sure that this was true in the past and the issue may be even more significant this year since AmeriCorps will not get off to an early start in the new fiscal year. It will be easy for the Rick and his budget staff to forget that funds are "earmarked" for AmeriCorps if they have already gone into the budget but we don't start using them right away.

This may not be a problem in other states (though I've heard rumors it is). Perhaps some clear Departmental guidance to agency budget officers and state agency directors would be in order. Rick may also be completely correct in how NRCS is handling the budgeting for AmeriCorps, in which case I certainly don't want to argue with the State Conservationist anymore!

I'm sure the highest priority issue at the moment is getting the USDA project cleared for another year. However, as this issue is resolved, the budget issue is sure to come up again, at least in New York. Any clarification you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



John Whitney, District Conservationist



AMERICORPS™/USDA
Natural Resources Conservation Service
50 Commerce Way
East Aurora, NY 14052
(716) 652-8480
Fax (716) 652-8506



GIS and CONSERVATION TEAM

Scott Barnwell
Chris Castiglione
Joseph Ghosen
Gayla Gross
Lisa Matthies

John R. Whitney
DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

August 26, 1996

Richard D. Swenson, State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
The Galleries of Syracuse
441 South Salina Street, Suite 354
Syracuse, NY 13202-2450

Subject: AmeriCorps Issues

Dear Rick:

1. Enclosed is a copy of a flyer that arrived the other day. It describes a "signature project" that was apparently undertaken by AmeriCorps and Earth Team volunteers across the country earlier this year. For some reason, we never heard about it in East Aurora. We did a number of school presentations and distributed press releases as part of the "Harmony" campaign. We certainly could have contributed numbers to the data table so that New York did not look so bad. I expect other offices could also have reported activity that would have helped New York's numbers. Probably this is something that slipped through the communication cracks between headquarters and field offices.

2. Bob Hartrick said I should be sure to let you know that I have spoken with Larry Holmes, Acting National AmeriCorps Coordinator, a few times over the last couple of weeks concerning AmeriCorps funding and FTE issues. Larry reconfirmed that funds received by states with USDA AmeriCorps projects come "off the top" of the national agency budget and are then *added to state appropriations* based on the number of approved AmeriCorps slots. These funds would not have been received had AmeriCorps not been part of the state's overall set of programs, projects and activities.

Larry also reconfirmed that *AmeriCorps members are not employees and do not count against State FTE caps*. Apparently, this was a rumor that began circulating this spring. Larry spoke again with NE Regional Office personnel staff and they said they are fully aware that AmeriCorps members are not employees and shouldn't be counted as FTEs since they are not employees nor are they full-time. Diane Gelburd may have had some role in spreading this rumor. Larry said he

F.Y.I

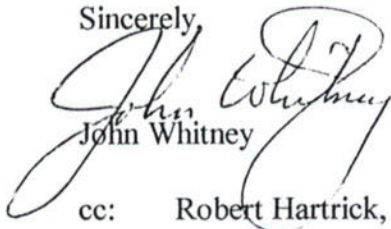
is sure that Diane now understands that AmeriCorps members are not FTEs (if this was true it would be devastating for a few NE states and many mid-west states with much larger projects than we have in New York). If you would like to speak directly with Larry about this issue he can be reached at (202) 720-1853.

3. We have not been formally notified that we can begin recruiting for next year's AmeriCorps team. Larry said to feel free to begin "soft recruiting" but not make any formal commitments. We hope to get clearance soon to begin recruiting in anticipation of a mid-October start.

4. The AmeriCorps members were very pleased with their end of service letters. Please express my thanks to Patty Hammer for her help in preparing the letters for your signature and to Bob Hartrick for coming to the August 12th "Open House" to present end of service awards to this year's team members.

Please give me a call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Whitney". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name "John Whitney".

John Whitney

cc: Robert Hartrick, Area Conservationist

encl.

**United States
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Agriculture**

Natural Resources
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50 Commerce Way
East Aurora, New York 14052-2185
(716) 652-8480
(716) 652-8506 (fax)
nrcsea@local.net

November 17, 1995

Dee DeFiore
USDA Office of Communications
Box 541A
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

Dear Dee:

As I mentioned during our phone conversation on November 13, AmeriCorps member, Henry C. Faith, resigned from service after working 124 hours. He left a message on the answering machine sometime over the weekend of November 4 & 5 saying that due to economic considerations, he will not be able to complete his commitment to 1700 hours of community service. He did not elaborate and has not yet return my phone calls.

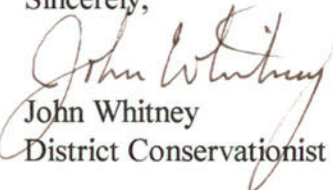
This came as a complete surprise to everyone. He had given no indication that he was dissatisfied in any way (other than he had not found affordable housing in the area and was still traveling to his home on weekends). His work was superior. He lead the team through completion of a major project working in cooperation with a nearby AmeriCorps crew. While his case may need headquarters review, I expect the review panel will concur with my recommendation to terminate his membership for cause. He will not be eligible for any portion of the educational award since he did not work the minimum number of hours.

Mr. Faith has been replaced by another applicant who had been on "standby" in the event anyone left service within the first few weeks.

An updated roster is enclosed along with the completed member enrollment form for Christian Castiglione. Henry Faith's end of service forms have been forwarded to him for signature along with an envelope addressed to you. I've kept copies in case you do not receive them from Henry. When you get a chance, please send me a few extra sets of both end of service forms and membership agreements (just in case).

Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,


John Whitney
District Conservationist

encl.

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

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001. list	[Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (1 page)	11/00/1995	b(6)

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**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
GIS & Conservation Technology Team
East Aurora, New York**

1995 Updated AmeriCorps Roster

Applicant Name	Age	Race	Gender	Education	Other Factors
Lisa A. Matthies 12556 Lori Drive Alden, NY 14004 SSN (b)(6)	24	White	female	B.A.	2nd year in AmeriCorps, local
Henry C. Faith P.O. Box E. Aurora, NY 14052 SSN	45	White	male	B.S.	retired USAF, 3 children, from Albany area
<i>left program after completing 124 hours of service</i>					
Gayla D. Gross 3580 Sowles Road Apt. 213 Hamburg, NY 14075 SSN	32	White	female	M.S.	hydrogeologist
Joseph Ghosen 411 Covin Avenue Buffalo, NY 14216 SSN	33	Native American	male	M.S.	Seneca Indian with ties to Cattaraugus Reservation
Scott A. Barnwell 247 Cardinal Drive Greenville, SC 29609 SSN	24	White	male	B.S. & one yr. grad. studies in Senegal	picked up AmeriCorps materials directly from Joel Berg
Christian M. Castiglione 40 Leonard Drive Depew, NY 14043 SSN	22	White	male	B.S.	environmental studies and GIS
<i>replaced Henry Faith</i>					

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East Aurora, New York 14052-2185
(716) 652-8480
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nrcsea@localnet.com

November 17, 1995

Henry C. Faith
99 Northern Pines Road, Apartment 8
Gansevoort, NY 12866

Dear Hank:

We were all surprised and disappointed to learn that you were not going to complete your AmeriCorps term of service. We hope your resignation was not the result of any team or supervisory problems or dissatisfaction with the work we were doing. Your telephone message on November 6th indicated that you would not be able to continue your AmeriCorps term of service due to economic considerations. I hope that means you found more permanent, higher paying employment in your career field.

Our Human Resources staff has processed your resignation effective November 6, 1995. I will provide you with additional information following confirmation that you are considered "released for cause" as described in your membership agreement.

Your three weeks of hard work, long days, and dedication to the West Seneca survey monument densification project and monument mapping effort were greatly appreciated. I hope you had an enjoyable experience with AmeriCorps and that you will continue to work toward the protection, preservation, and wise use of soil and water resources.

Because of a National Finance Center processing error, your living allowance payment has not yet arrived. We will continue to check your P.O. box and we will forward the payment as soon as possible. According to our State Office, a "quick pay claim" has been submitted to get the payment reprocessed (Lisa's electronic deposit did not go through either, everyone else got their living allowance on time). Please let me know if you would like us to close out your P.O. box in East Aurora once your check arrives. A letter to the East Aurora Postmaster might be necessary to arrange for forwarding of any mail that may have been directed to your new P.O. box.

Enclosed are two (2) forms you should complete and send to Washington, D.C. in the accompanying envelop. It is important that the forms get completed promptly. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please call or leave an e-mail message if you have any questions.

Best wishes,


John Whitney
District Conservationist

✓cc: Dee DeFiore, USDA Washington, D.C.



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GIS and CONSERVATION TEAM

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Chris Castiglione
Joseph Ghosen
Gayla Gross
Lisa Matthies

John R. Whitney
DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

Date: August 23, 1996
To: Dee DeFiore
From: John Whitney 
Subject: AmeriCorps End of Service Forms

Enclosed are the *original* the end of service forms for **Scott Barnwell, Christian Castiglione**, and **Joseph Ghosen**. I've sent the *copies* to the National Corporation office in hopes that they can begin processing the educational vouchers as soon a possible.

Gayla Gross expects to complete her term of service August 30th. I'll send her form in early September. Lisa Matthies had a serious biking accident earlier this year and missed a month of work. She's feeling much better now and expects to be through by the end of September.

Let me know if you have any problems with the forms.

Both Scott and Chris are starting graduate school in the next few days. They want to use the educational vouchers this semester so they are hopeful the forms will get processed quickly.

Thanks.