



ECO AmeriCorps Newsletter

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SUCCESSFUL INAUGURAL YEAR

The Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps program has successfully completed its inaugural year of service. Members spent the last twelve months serving at host sites throughout the State of Vermont in their mission to protect and enhance Vermont’s waters. Service sites ranged from local and regional non-profit organizations, municipalities, as well as state and national government agencies.

Members led volunteers through tree plantings, invasive plant removal both on land and in waterways, community events, and annual events such as Green Up Day and Earth Day. They also accumulated thousands of service hours directly impacting the land within their communities. Downspout studies, the creation of Best Management Practices for farmers and homeowners, and watershed education events were among a few of the projects completed by these young professionals.

Of the eighteen members that completed the program, seven have signed back on for a second year of service with ECO AmeriCorps. Andrew Nguyen, Chris Yurek, Jimmy Young, Madeline Cotter, Michelle Graziosi, and Zack have committed another year of service to Vermont’s environment. Their individual accomplishments can be found on pages three and four.

Our other members have also taken impressive steps toward their future careers. Some are attending graduate schools while others have gone on to become teachers, find new AmeriCorps programs across the country, or work for local watershed organizations.

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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A LETTER FROM SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS

Senator Bernie Sanders exhibited his pride and gratitude for this inaugural Environmental Career Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps cohort by sending personalized letters to each member to acknowledge them for their service from the both the State of Vermont and the National government. The letters read as follows:

“I would like to extend my warmest congratulations on your participation in the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation’s Environmental Careers and Opportunities AmeriCorps program.

Your service with AmeriCorps is a testament to your outstanding commitment to community service and environmental stewardship. To my mind, we have a moral responsibility to do everything

possible to ensure our kids, grandchildren and great-grandchildren inherit a planet every bit as habitable as the one we now enjoy. Vermont is truly fortunate to have individuals such as you are dedicated to promoting that goal.

I have no doubt that your work to protect and improve Vermont’s water quality has had a significant and positive impact on communities throughout our state, and for that you have my sincere thanks.

I join with your friends, family, and community in congratulating you on this achievement and wishing you the best in all your future endeavors.”

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

2015-16 PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The 2015-16 ECO AmeriCorps team served more than 32,000 hours in the past year with the mission of improving and protecting and restoring the waters of Vermont. Their accomplishments have brought together community members, government agencies, municipalities, and non-profit organizations around the state.

Member accomplishments from our inaugural year include:

- * **32, 702.25** total hours served
- * **29,146.5** hours of direct service. Service that directly effects Vermont water bodies, landscapes, or citizens
- * **6.06** miles of rivers and streams improved
- * **417.1** acres of public land improved
- * **1,546** Vermonters educated
- * **85** Vermonters reporting an intention to change their behavior as a result of ECO AmeriCorps programming
- * **699** community volunteers organized
- * **5,840** community volunteer hours logged



2016 -2017 Members at orientation

OUR PROGRAM IS GROWING

Last year, our ECO members demonstrated such enthusiasm and dedication in taking up the issue of water quality that ECO AmeriCorps was able to expand its program after just one year of service!

Why Water Quality?

Since the passage of the [Vermont Clean Water Act](#), water quality remains the focus of many of our members. The new guidelines around excessive phosphorus and other nutrients in the Lake Champlain Basin and other bodies of water mean careful vigilance and the employment of best practices to reduce nutrient pollution at the source. Heightening awareness of the effects of pollution and concentrating efforts across the state to mitigate the run off will meet the ultimate goal of improving and maintaining water quality in Vermont waters.

Why Universal Recycling?

It is estimated that more than half of the materials we throw away have the potential be recycled or composted. Newly implemented guidelines require recycling and ban disposal of leaf and yard debris, clean wood, and food scraps by 2020. To aid in this new initiative, the ECO AmeriCorps program has created four new positions focused on [Universal Recycling](#). These new members will be assisting local partners to help Vermont take vital steps toward successful implementation of Universal Recycling in

STAY CONNECTED WITH US!



We can also be followed on [our website!](#)

Returning Members

ANDREW NGUYEN



Andrew is the Stewardship Coordinator with the Friends of the Mad River in Waitsfield.

During his first year of service, Andrew was the Project Coordinator and Assistant with the Windham Regional Commission and Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District in Brattleboro.

One of Andrew's outstanding accomplishments in his first year was a Small Farm Certification Public Discussion that he facilitated for 32 participants. He used this platform to inform local farmers about Vermont's new Required Agricultural Practices and discuss how the Small Farm Certification would affect each individual.

JIMMY YOUNG



Jimmy is serving with the United States Department of Agriculture National Resources Conservation Service office in Williston as the Conservation Program Assistant.

Last year Jimmy served in St. Albans as the Outreach and Project Coordinator for the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and the Missisquoi River Basin Association.

Field season was filled with projects between his two sites such as road erosion inventories, water samplings, and tree plantings. His biggest project was the 2016 Missisquoi River Basin Association Surface Water Monitoring Program. Jimmy was the point person from beginning to end on this project. He applied for a grant in November 2015, and got outside in early April finalizing 28 sampling sites, training volunteers, and physically collecting data.

CHRIS YUREK



Chris is returning for a second year of service in Ascutney as the Water Quality Monitoring Assistant with the Connecticut River Watershed Council and Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission.

In his first year of service, Chris was involved in the studies related to three large hydroelectric dams along the Connecticut River. Additionally, he also took part in the removal of the Mill Brook historic dam and a small berm in Reading Township. The removal of these structures helped to reduce upstream flooding and downstream erosion and associated sedimentation and nutrient loading. Chris also spent time during his service performing a series of culvert/road assessments and inventories within the towns of Reading and Springfield.

ZACK SIMPSON

Zack is the ECO AmeriCorps Team Leader. He spent his first year of service with the City of Montpelier Parks as the Parks Capitol Watershed Steward.

As a watershed steward, he partnered with the USGS on a project that began in the 1950s in Danville. The USGS gathers data on local snow and frost patterns as well as stream velocity, turbidity, dissolved O₂, etc. This information is then sent to the National Weather service to be used in studies and added to databases. He was able to accompany on a day where their employees placed and programmed various data collectors as well as recorded data held on instruments already in the field.

JOE BONDI

Joe is serving as a Wetland Easement & GIS Assistant with the USDA NRCS office in Colchester.

During his first year of service, Joe quickly became an invaluable asset for the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain as their Outreach Coordinator.

Joe has performed soil assessments, tile drainage sampling, and has helped plant over 700 trees along an impaired waterway. As he has learned more about Act 64 and spoken with local farmers he has learned that everyone is on the same side of the fight for clean water, but changing practices can be hard when it is not cost effective and there are mouths to be fed.

MADELINE COTTER

Madeline is serving with the Intervale Conservation Nursery in Burlington as the Conservation Nursery Field and Watershed Steward Assistant

In her first year of service, Madeline was the Communications Coordinator for the VT DEC Watershed Management Division.

One of her major accomplishments is a program that was so successful it is set to continue for the coming year in her absence. Maddie networked for, created, and publicized for a brownbag lunch series that spanned much of her service year.

MICHELLE GRAZIOSI

Michelle is serving with the Biomonitoring and Aquatic Studies (BASS) Lab in Montpelier and the White River Partnership in South Royalton.

In her first year, she served with the University of Vermont and the Vermont Department of Health as the Water Quality Educator.

An impressive accomplishment from her first year in the program was the completion of a comprehensive map of current Department of Health data on recreational water sites, drinking water intakes, combined sewer overflow sites and wastewater locations for future implementation into an online user interface. Through this project she created a sampling protocol for combined sewer overflow events.



First Year Members



ANDREW DONAHUE

Andrew comes to us from Lowell, MA, where he just completed his studies at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. He is serving with the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District in Montpelier. In his year of service, Andrew looks forward to developing his communication skills and leadership abilities.



ANNIE SCHATZ

A graduate from Pitzer College in Claremont, CA, where she earned a degree in Biology, Annie is serving this year with the Lake Champlain Sea Grant in Burlington. In her year of service, Annie will be learn how different disciplines work together to solve important environmental issues.



BILLY ERNEST

A recent graduate from SUNY Oswego with a degree in zoology, Billy is serving this year in collaboration with the Windham Solid Waste Management District, Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, and the Londonderry Group in southern Vermont. In his service, Billy looks forward to developing his abilities in public outreach, education, and program development.



BONNIE WOODFORD

Bonnie Woodford is serving with the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation's Urban and Community Forestry Program in Montpelier. A graduate from Paul Smith's College, Bonnie is excited to expand her capabilities in GIS and serve with other members in the environmental field.



BRODIE HAENKE

Hailing from Eagan, MN, where he studied Geology at the University of Wisconsin, Brodie is serving with the Franklin Watershed Committee and the Missisquoi River Basin Association. In his year of service, Brodie is excited to be living outside of the Midwest for the first time and learning more about water usage/quality issues from a boots-on-the-ground perspective.



CARLIE WRIGHT

With a Bachelors of Science in Conservation Biology from St. Lawrence University, Carlie is serving this year with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District in Middlebury. In her time of service, Carlie looks forward to interacting with the people in her service community and building interest in conservation.



CLARICE CUTLER

A graduate of Reed College with a focus in Political Science, Clarice is spending her service year with the Vermont Land Trust in Richmond. A Vermont native, Clarice hopes to fully utilize her experience this year so as to apply it towards her future experiences working with land trusts.



DOMINIC BRENNAN

Dom comes to us having completed a term of service with another AmeriCorps program in Tennessee. A graduate in Environmental Studies from St. Lawrence University, Dom is serving with the Lake Champlain Committee in Burlington. He looks forward to improving upon his public speaking and building upon his event planning and management skills.



EMILY MARKSTEIN

Having just completed her Masters Degree in Medieval Studies from St. Andrews University in St. Andrews, Scotland, Emily is serving this year with the Montpelier Parks Department. In her year of service, Emily looks forward to immersing herself in environmental conservation and learning to serve along others in order to make a positive impact on the environment.



JOSHUA KLAVENS

A Montpelier native and recent graduate from Green Mountain College, Joshua is serving with the Lake Champlain Basin Program in Grand Isle. Joshua is eager to learn more about ecological planning and community organization while helping to make a lasting difference for Lake Champlain's water.



LINDSAY COTNOIR

After successfully completing her B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Vermont, Lindsay is excited to be serve his year with the Orleans County Natural Resource Conservation District in Newport. As a Vermont native, Lindsay hopes to spend this year of service developing her professional skills so that she can give back to her community.



MARISSA NG

Fresh from completing her degree in Biology from the University of Vermont, Marissa is serving this year with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife in Montpelier. Through her service with the ECO AmeriCorps program, Marissa hopes to further her understanding of watershed processes and learn how to further connect with local communities.



RACHEL ROSS

A graduate from Union College in Schenectady, NY, with a B.S. in Environmental Science, Rachel is a native of Wallingford, Vermont. Rachel is serving with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Watershed Management Division in Montpelier. She hopes to learn about the reactions to the new water quality legislation and hold constructive dialogues with community representatives.



SHANNON CHOQUETTE

Shannon is a graduate from Clark University in Potsdam, NY, with a B.A. in Environmental Science and Conservation Biology. From New Bedford, MA, she is serving with the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District in Lyndonville and the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District in Morrisville. She hopes to learn progressive waste management techniques and explore Vermont.



STEPHI DRAGO

A graduate of Augustana College in Rock Island, IL, with degrees in Environmental Studies and Geography, Stephi is excited to expand upon her field-data collection abilities and further developing her GIS skills. She is serving with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service in Colchester.



THOMAS BRYCE

Fresh from completing his M.S. degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Vermont, Thomas is spending his year of service with the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain in St. Albans. Thomas is looking forward to gaining extensive knowledge in watershed protection and wetland and ecosystem restoration.



TREVOR BANISTER

With a degree in Environmental Science from Lyndon State College, Trevor is serving this year with the NorthWoods Stewardship Center in East Charleston. Trevor is looking forward to applying his degree while serving on watershed related projects and engaging with members of the environmental community.

The AmeriCorps Pledge

**I will get things done for America –
To make our people safer, smarter & healthier.**

**I will bring Americans together
to strengthen our communities.**

Faced with apathy, I will take action.

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

**I will carry this commitment with me
this year and beyond.**

**I am an AmeriCorps member,
and I will get things done.**



VERMONT

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ECO AmeriCorps**

