

Winter 2016 Newsletter

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Inside this issue:

Page 1: National Public Lands Day service project

Page 2: AmeriCorps launch and SerVermont conference

Page 3: Regional Gatherings

Page 4: Vermont Monitoring Cooperative conference

Page 5: Member Highlights

Page 10: Host Site Highlights

Page 12: Members in Action

Page 14: ECO Bulletin Board

ECO AmeriCorps

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ECO AmeriCorps starts year with service project



Fresh from their orientation, ECO AmeriCorps members celebrated the 23rd National Public Lands Day by helping the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation in its ongoing efforts to remove

invasive plants from Lake St. Catherine State Park in Poultney.

With loppers and hand saws in hand, ECO members and program staffed helped remove thick infestations of buckthorn, honeysuckle, and amur maple.

National Public Lands Day is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer event for public lands, bringing together hundreds, if not thousands, of individual and organizational volunteers to help restore the nation's public lands. This is a call that ECO members were happy to answer and come together in order to get things done.



AmeriCorps welcomes one millionth member



On Friday, October 7th, AmeriCorps members from around the country gathered for the 2016 Corporation for National & Community Service's (CNCS) AmeriCorps swearing-in ceremony.

This is an annual event where serving AmeriCorps members are officially sworn in. The launch was an historic day for AmeriCorps as it welcomed its one millionth member since its inception in 1993.

To mark this special occasion, CNCS collaborated with NASA for the launch ceremony and to administer the first AmeriCorps pledge from space.

ECO AmeriCorps members met at the Statehouse in Montpelier with other AmeriCorps members serving in Vermont to watch a live streaming of the national launch being held at NASA's headquarters in Washington D.C.

The national launch consisted of former and current AmeriCorps members sharing emotional stories from their service as well as speeches from prominent figures in government and the non-profit world.

The live feed concluded by transferring up to the International Space Station where Dr. Kathleen Rubins administered the AmeriCorps pledge while floating in air.

SerVermont Hosts Annual Fall Conference

In November, SerVermont hosted its annual AmeriCorps Fall Professional Development Conference at the [Stoweflake Resort](#) in Stowe, Vermont. This annual two-day conference serves as a gathering point for members serving with various AmeriCorps programs throughout the State of Vermont.

The conference included opportunities for AmeriCorps members to network, attend workshops, receive American Red Cross Training in emergency shelter management, and attend sessions with guest speakers. This year's conference had over ninety AmeriCorps members in attendance.

ECO Members all reported that through attending the conference they felt better connected with their fellow members and that they had acquired additional tools to make the remainder of their service successful.

ECO AmeriCorps Holds Fall Regional Gatherings

In late October, the ECO AmeriCorps Program held its first regional gatherings. These gatherings are an opportunity to bring members together to reflect on their year of service thus far.

The Central/Southern Region brought together members serving in Brattleboro, Ascutney, Middlebury, Waitsfield, and Montpelier. Members gathered in the City of Montpelier's picturesque [Hubbard Park](#) for a challenging team building exercise to and compete in a friendly pumpkin carving contest.

The winners of the carving contest were Marissa Ng and Emily Markstein, who were awarded AmeriCorps styled buffs for their creativity.

The following week, the ECO Members serving in the Northern Region gathered at the [Lake Champlain Basin Program's](#) office in Grand Isle. Members in the Northern Region came from East Charleston, Newport, Morristown, Franklin, St. Albans and Burlington.

These members also spent their day putting their teamwork to the test. Members were then taken on a tour around Isle LaMotte and South Hero to learn about Vermont's exciting geological past firsthand.

Members from both regions were excited to reconnect with one another and share stories of their initial months of service.



ECO Members in the Central Region work together to overcome a challenging teambuilding exercise.



Program Director, Carey Hengstenberg, explains the geology of Lessor's Quarry to ECO Members Shannon Choquette, Lindsay Cotnoir and ECO Program Coordinator, Reuben Allen.

ECO members attend Vermont Monitoring Cooperative conference

Friday, December 2nd, marked the 26th annual [Vermont Monitoring Cooperative](#) (VMC) Conference. The theme for this year's conference was Healthy Forests, Healthy Watersheds.

Held at the University of Vermont's Davis Center, the conference is to facilitate opportunities to exchange ideas, and to expand collaboration with regards to forest ecosystem management and monitoring throughout New England.

Thanks to UVM's VMC Program Coordinator, Jim Duncan, ECO members were given the opportunity to attend this year's conference at no charge. Sixteen of our members eagerly took advantage of this opportunity.

While attending the conference, members sat in on informative panel discussions, listened to stimulating presentations, and contributed in a variety of working group

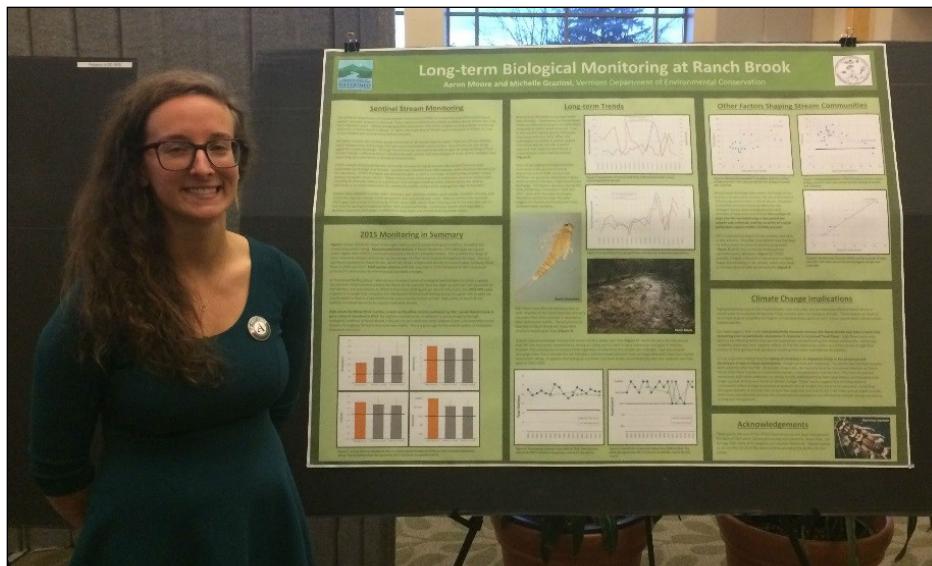
sessions. At the end of the day, members gathered to attend the closing poster session and social hour.

During this time ECO Member, Michelle Graziosi, presented her findings on "long-term biological monitoring of Ranch Brook, Stowe, Vermont" that she has conducted in her service with the [DEC Biomonitoring & Aquatic Studies Lab](#).



Left: ECO Members gather for the Vermont Monitoring Cooperative Conference. Pictured left-right: Andrew Nguyen, James Young, Andrew Donahue, Stephi Drago, Lindsay Cotnoir, Michelle Graziosi, Bonnie Woodford, Marissa Ng, Joe Bondi, Zack Simpson, Emily Markstein, Joshua Klavens, Annie Schatz, Trevor Banister, Brodie Haenke.

Below: Michelle Graziosi presents on her service with the Vermont Biomonitoring & Aquatic Studies Lab.



Did you know...

The State of Vermont is ranked 4th in the nation for producing AmeriCorps members per capita.

Member Highlight: Thomas Bryce



*Thomas Bryce
Outreach & Project Coordinator
Friends of Northern Lake
Champlain*

I knew I wanted to stay in -state after graduating from the University of Vermont, falling in love with the pristine Vermont landscape after spending countless hours in rivers and streams for my thesis work.

Eventually, I chose to serve a year with ECO AmeriCorps, as I thought it would be an incredible opportunity to meet people in the environmental sector, and more importantly with an end goal to acquire extensive knowledge in watershed protection and ecosystem restoration.

Through my service site in St. Albans, The Friends of Northern Lake Champlain (a nonprofit watershed management organization working towards cleaner water in the northern lake region), I've been fortunate from

the start to take a big role in some of the major projects ongoing in the organization, ranging from water sampling to tree plantings and river cleanups, education and outreach to the community, and green infrastructure projects.

First, I was acquainted with our water-sampling program, which is in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Watershed Mgt. Division (Lakes & Ponds Program). Much of my time sampling is along the Rock River in Highgate Center, adjacent to much of the farmland in the area.

This watershed is impaired with excess sediment and nutrients, and my role is to be out in the field to conduct bi-weekly sampling as well as to sample during high-flow storm events (which stir up pollutants and sediment on a higher scale). With these samples we test for Total Phosphorous, Total Filtered/Digested Phosphorous, and Total Suspended Solids, which all contribute to pollution and algal blooms in Lake Champlain.

This fieldwork has been incredibly fun and rewarding, and with all the rain we have received in the region this Fall, it has kept me busy.

Second, I've been spending much of my time trying to implement a rain garden project in St. Albans City. With

the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, we are proposing to install rain gardens within the city limits to mitigate nonpoint source pollution from stormwater.

The project will cover the siting, design, and installation of up to 4 rain gardens and will include a qualitative analysis of up to 4 different entrance design alternatives that could include: water bars, curb cuts, curb cuts with indentations, and pavement milling to direct water.

The most challenging parts in its initial phase are site selection (this includes determining problematic areas, estimating the amount of water that the rain garden would treat, i.e. maximizing the amount acres of treated runoff in the various locations) and especially achieving landowner willingness to host a rain garden in their front yard and the ability to help with maintenance.

I've been developing a 10 -year Operations & Maintenance plan to put landowners more at ease and understand what kind of responsibilities it takes to operate this type of green infrastructure, and hopefully to change their behavioral attitudes towards making positive efforts for the health of the Lake Champlain Basin.

It is hoped that these gardens will be in the ground as of early summer, of 2017.

Member Highlight: Bonnie Woodford

We are just about three months into this year's ECO service. There has been lots of learning and progress that has been made.

For me, serving with the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry (VT UCF) program has been busy learning about trees and their role in urban environments. I started off my service reviewing the program's website, reading every page while editing, making any updates I could, and building a document of changes that needed to be made. The review of the website gave me a great overview of the program and all that they do.

I assisted one of my colleagues in the program with public tree inventories in two towns. The tree inventories helped me start to learn tree identification and develop a deeper appreciation for town trees. After the tree inventories had been completed, the data was compiled into a spread sheet which was processed, where it can be used to look at tree species, size, health distributions, and more.

I've taken the lead revising an older inventory of Middlebury's public trees after new data had been collected. With the raw Middlebury data I then made four graphs showing; general, species, diameter at breast height, and tree condition. I also made several maps with the data, showing important information for the town to

utilize in the future, which included tree condition, trees that needed to be monitored, and ash trees for use in emerald ash borer preparation.

Now that the inventories are done I have started some new projects; one I am really excited about is revamping the Vermont Big Tree program. I am at the very beginning stages of the project and has put together questions, with the help of the VT UCF team, for other states'

Big Tree programs.

I am planning to remeasure the current champion trees in the spring and summer of 2017, which would also include getting photos of the trees. In the meantime, I am working on the background aspects including planning and figuring out coordination of running the program, and working on outreach material to spread the love and importance of Big Trees to Vermont communities.



*Bonnie Woodford
Education Outreach & Technical Assistance Coordinator
Urban Community Forestry Program*

Member Highlight: Billy Ernest



*Billy Ernest
Outreach Coordinator
Windham County Solid Waste
Management District*

Going into AmeriCorps I wanted to gain some semblance of educational experience. Serving at a Solid Waste Management Entity (SWME) I was a little skeptical about these opportunities. However, I never would have guessed that the world of waste included such a plethora of outreach avenues.

My principal effort focuses on decreasing the amount of food waste in Southern Vermont. This raises a need for education on the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148), food saving tips, composting methods and

services... the list continues. I have had the opportunity to relay these messages to multiple demographics of people.

In early November I was treated to the opportunity of facilitating a program for the Newbrook Elementary's annual Farm & Field day (see photo). Myself and the program coordinator for the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD) decided to run "recycling relay races." The students and I discussed which materials were compostable and recyclable. They were then put to showing their knowledge through a little activity I like to call the "running of the recyclabulls." Their energy was rejuvenating, and their understanding of the material was refreshing.

The next week I expanded these interests into an independent service project with the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center (BEEC) (see photo). During days that elementary/middle school students typically have time off BEEC holds nature days that allow the youth to explore their natural World. The free-form activity run day was different from the structure of the relay races, but it only supported the benefits of exploring a child's surrounding. Truly, children are the quickest to learn in many instances.

My most recent project

has included the development of a business outreach model to assist local restaurants with their recycling and composting endeavors. I have met with key stakeholders in the Southern Vermont food industry to construct a workshop on this subject. On-site visits have started to happen and we're in the process of developing technical assistance to make composting a reality for many local hotspots. When the project is complete we'll have assisted an upwards of 80 businesses through this outreach.

So, needless to continue saying, AmeriCorps is giving me opportunities I never would have dreamed possible until now. As a person looking to enter the field of non-formal outdoor education for adolescents, these experiences are continuing to mold and build upon my professional skills. For that, I am thankful.

Did you know...

Vermont was recently recognized by the Corporation for National and Community Service for the nation's 8th highest volunteer rate. 33.1% of Vermont residents volunteer.

Member Highlight: Madeline Cotter

My name is Madeline Cotter and this is my second year as an ECO AmeriCorps member. During my first service term, I served in the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Clean Water Initiative Program as a Communications Specialist.

For the 2016-2017 term, I am serving at the Intervale Conservation Nursery at the Intervale Center in Burlington as a Conservation Nursery Assistant and Watershed Steward.

The Intervale Conservation Nursery (ICN) grows over 40 species of native, locally sourced trees and shrubs for conservation projects throughout Vermont.

Since starting my service on September 19, 2016, the Intervale Conservation Nursery has become my second home. Each day is different, which keeps things interesting. During my first few weeks at the nursery I helped transplant 3,000 trees from tube stock into our production field. Transplanting trees is no small feat. Using a dibbler, a wooden stick that pokes holes in the ground, we line up three rows of transplants in one bed. You can fit anywhere from 800-1000 transplants in a bed. After transplanting trees there is still plenty of work to be done. Keeping weed pressure down is a constant battle in our field. We use a wheel hoe, circle hoe, stirrup hoe, and hand-weeding to keep our trees out of the weeds.

Besides transplanting baby trees and taking care of them, I spend a fair amount of time working with volunteers. Over the course of a year we'll have 15-20 corporate groups and many individual volunteers, help us in our fields or with planting projects. Spending

time with people who don't normally get their hands dirty is a great learning experience, for myself and for them. Building relationships with volunteers makes them want to come back and help again, and it makes the day enjoyable.

We recently completed a planting project in Stowe that combined planting trees and working with volunteers. After building 5000' of fascines (which are bundles of sticks used in strengthening the sides of embankments) over the course of a week, we planted them along the

West Branch of the Little River. We spent six days planting at the site digging trenches to install the fascines and digging holes to plant bareroot trees. On the final day of planting, a group from Dealer.Com helped us plant 100 bareroot trees and 50 treepots to complete the project.

I am lucky to be serving at such an amazing site. Every day, the Intervale Conservation Nursery makes a direct impact on the land, and I am thankful I get to be a part of that for the next year.



*Madeline Cotter
Conservation Nursery Assistant & Watershed Steward
Intervale Center*

Did You Know...

The State of Vermont was recently ranked by CNCS as the #1 state in the nation for producing the most Peace Corps volunteers.

Member Highlight: Shannon Choquette



So far during my service, I have had the fortune of focusing on community outreach and education throughout the Lamoille county.

I have interacted with over 300 students, community members and business owners/employees to increase awareness about Vermont's Universal Recycling and Composting Law.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to make progress towards my Master Composter certification, which requires the completion of an online course and 20 volunteer hours of education and outreach. Through my service, it has been

easy to find opportunities to get volunteer hours, so I hope to complete the certification by the end of the AmeriCorps year.

The photo on the left is of me teaching one of the Master Composter lessons to nine local Jeffersonville residents, two of which were students with many great questions.

Our waste audits focus on the importance of diverting recyclable and organic material from Vermont's one landfill. These students are motivated to make the right choices about recycling and composting, and they now have the knowledge to make the right choices.



Shannon Choquette, Solid Waste Implementation Plan Assistant with the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District, conducts a waste audit with Mountain River School students in Stowe.

Vermont volunteer stats in 2015...

- 160,020 residents volunteered
- 20.1 million volunteer hours served
- 37.1 volunteer hours served per capita
- \$451 million in services contributed

ECO AmeriCorps member helps LRSWMD achieve its goals



By: Elly Ventura, LRSWMD Outreach & Communications Coordinator

When the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District (LRSWMD) received word this summer that we had been approved to share an ECO AmeriCorps member with the Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste District – dancing ensued! When thinking about this opportunity during the application process, it was uncertain that there would be enough projects to fill 37 hours a week; because of that this position is unique in that it is shared between two solid waste management districts. Both Districts have a small number of employees so this opportunity expands the outreach potential and helps increase access of services to District members.

The Universal Recycling & Composting law unanimously passed the Vermont legislature in 2012 as an unfunded mandate. The goal of the law is to educate Vermonters about the value of resources and move away from the idea of “waste.” The first step to reduce what is currently being sent to the landfill and the success of it

hinges on the education of and outreach to the public. Anyone who does outreach knows that one-on-one interactions are the most effective way to engage and educate people, and anyone who manages a budget knows that this is a resource intensive task.

Shannon Choquette has been serving with us for three months and we couldn't be happier. Shannon's willingness to learn the in's and out's of sustainable materials management has been most impressive. She has quickly absorbed the knowledge in a way to turn it back out as informative and effective communication with LRSWMD members. Having the ECO AmeriCorps position here has extended the resources of the LRSWMD allowing a more frequent and wide-spread educational campaign to occur while fitting into our existing budget.

There have been no shortage of opportunities for Shannon and 37 hours a week is never a challenge! The LRSWMD Outreach Team has doubled with an ECO AmeriCorps position and we have been busy - from compost to film plastics, medical waste to worms!

Outreach and education has touched on all of these and more. LRSWMD schools have enjoyed waste audits, composting presentations, upcycled crafts and recycling lessons. Hundreds of customers using the LRSWMD Transfer Stations have had the opportunity to engage in conversations about their materials management practices and have their recycling and Act 148 questions answered directly. This engagement at the transfer station is something that specifically would not be possible without an ECO AmeriCorps member serving with us.

There have been many benefits to the LRSWMD with the ECO AmeriCorps position provided in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Conservation. This position has increased the comprehensiveness of existing programs and has created new programs that were not possible before. We very much appreciate the contributions Shannon has already made to the LRSWMD and are anxious to see what she leaves behind for us to continue as her legacy.



ECO member Shannon Choquette and her site supervisor Elly Ventura, Outreach and Communications Coordinator for the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District prepare to do a Sustainable Solutions Business Program waste audit with Carolyn Grodinsky at Butler's Pantry in Stowe, VT.

ECO AmeriCorps expands Intervale Center's ability to 'get things done'



By: Mike Ingalls, Intervale Center Nursery Manager

The Intervale Center is a nonprofit organization in Burlington, Vermont. Our mission is to strengthen community food systems. Since 1988, we've been dedicated to improving farm viability, promoting sustainable land use and engaging our community in the food system. We are stewards of 350 acres of bottomland along the Winooski River.

The Intervale Conservation Nursery (ICN) was founded in 2002 and is dedicated to growing native, locally sourced trees and shrubs for conservation projects throughout Vermont. The 7-acre production field supports 40 different native Vermont tree species.

ICN provides bare root, tube stock and container trees and shrubs for conservation projects throughout Vermont. Our plants are grown in an ecologically sound manner without the use of synthetic herbicides or pesticides. ICN is

the only bare root nursery that offers plants, technical assistance and comprehensive planting services. The nursery has a full-time staff of two, with seasonal staff coming on during the spring and fall. The nursery is also supported by individual volunteers and volunteer groups that help throughout the year.

For the first time the Intervale Conservation Nursery has an ECO AmeriCorps member serving at the site. Madeline Cotter is serving as a Nursery Field Assistant and Watershed Steward.

Adding Maddie to the Conservation Nursery team increases the capacity of the nursery to get things done. Maddie helps with seed collection, harvest, planting projects, general field maintenance, equipment maintenance, and volunteer management. Since starting at the Nursery in September she has helped transplant 2,000 trees into the nursery field, as well as harvest and package 4,000 trees that were planted in different watersheds across Vermont this fall.

"The Intervale Nursery has been striving to become a valuable resource for our state in providing Native plants and planting services for water quality issues. We value our mission and try to work with anyone and everyone who is planting, restoring, enhancing or

establishing a riparian buffer. By adding more capacity to the nursery with an AmeriCorps member we will be able to supply more quality trees and services needed in the coming year," says Mike Ingalls the Nursery Manager.

"Maddie has immediately proved to be a huge addition to the Intervale Center's mission of organizing and educating volunteers about the connection between healthy farms, land and people. She has already added much needed capacity in terms of hosting additional volunteer groups at the nursery and at community tree plantings. Her calm, cheerful, and welcoming disposition are highly appreciated by staff and volunteers alike. We are beyond pleased that Maddie has been selected for a year of ECO AmeriCorps service at the Intervale Conservation Nursery," says Seth Gillim Assistant Nursery Manager.

"Before joining the Conservation Nursery I didn't have a lot of experience with trees, but after three months of service I have improved my tree identification a lot" says Maddie. "I had not realized the amount of work it takes to grow trees from seed to stem. Just two extra hands make a huge difference in how much gets done in a day."

ECO Members in action



ECO Member Annie Schatz researching the effectiveness of floating treatment wetland by collecting root samples for analysis.



ECO Member Carlie Wright presenting on Vermont's Universal Recycling Act to middle school students.



Tree Planting with Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA).

ECO AmeriCorps (left to right) – Lindsay Cotnoir, Josh Klavens, Shannon Choquette, Thomas Bryce, Brodie Haenke.



Team Leaders from Vermont's AmeriCorps programs meet to collaborate on upcoming events.



ECO AmeriCorps member, Brodie Haenke presents to middle school students at Troy School in Troy, Vermont.



ECO Members Dominic Brennan and Marissa Ng enjoy the view while out on Otter Creek with Vermont's Department of Fish and Wildlife.

ECO Members in action



ECO AmeriCorps Member Andrew Donahue helps residents in Barre, Vermont with their recycling.



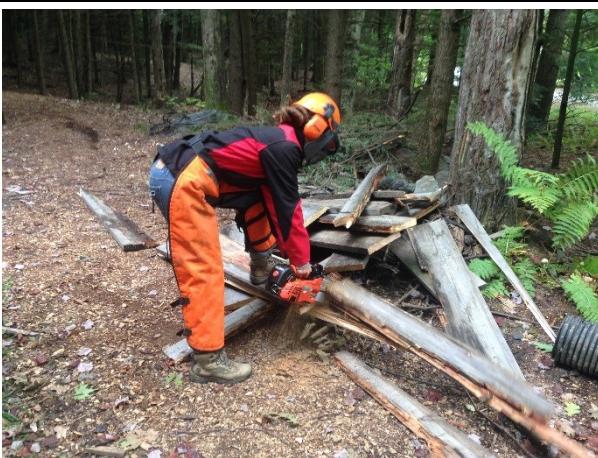
ECO Members Chris Yurek and Michelle Graziosi serving together down in the Connecticut River Watershed.



ECO Members (from left) Thomas Bryce, Brodie Haenke, Stephi Drago, and Dom Brennan play a game of Scrabble during a breakout session at the SerVermont Conference.



AmeriCorps Members give the AmeriCorps Pledge while being sworn-in during the National Launch event.



ECO Member Emily Markstein receives training to safely and proficiently use chainsaw equipment while serving at Hubbard Park in Montpelier.



Clarice Cutler poses with two curious cows while out visiting Bedrock Farm in Georgia, Vermont.

The ECO AmeriCorps Bulletin Board

Upcoming Important Dates

January 16th – MLK Day Service Project
January 27th – All-day ECO Training
February 24th – Winter Gathering
March 5th – 12th – AmeriCorps Week
March 10th – Central Region Gathering
March 17th – Northern Region Gathering
March 31st – All-Day ECO Training
*April 4th – Mayor's Day
April 22nd – Earth Day Service Project
April 23rd – 29th – Volunteer Appreciation week
April 28th – All-Day ECO Training
May 6th – Vermont Green Up Day
*May 16th/17th SerVermont Conference
June 3rd – National Trails Day
June 20th-21st – Overnight ECO Training
*July 28th – All-Day ECO Training
August 11th – End of year celebration

*denotes tentative dates

1st Quarter Accomplishments

10,868 Total hours served
8,266 Hours of direct service. Service that directly effects Vermont water bodies, landscapes, or citizens.
3,036 Miles of rivers and streams improved
4.5 Acres of public land improved*
976 Vermonters educated
64 Vermonters reporting an intention to change their behavior as a result of ECO AmeriCorps programming.
139 Community volunteers organized.
335 Community volunteer hours logged

* An additional 7.5 acres of private farmland located on bank of Connecticut River treated and improved.

Accepting 2017 Applications Soon!

The ECO AmeriCorps program will be starting its recruitment campaign for its 2017-2018 in late February. Application instructions are available on our website - www.ecoamericorps.org.

If you know of an individual who might be interested in serving and benefiting from our program, please reach out to them and direct them to our above-mentioned website. We are also happy to answer any questions that prospective members may have regarding our program and/or AmeriCorps in general.

We need your help!

Dear Reader,

Are you aware of an upcoming event, conference or training opportunity? Our members would love to know about it! Many of our members are newcomers to the State of Vermont and are excited to learn how they can further immerse themselves and experience what Vermont has to offer. If you know of an event you believe would benefit our members, please contact either Team Leader [Zack Simpson](#) or ECO AmeriCorps Program Coordinator [Reuben Allen](#).

Thank you!