



VERMONT

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ECO AmeriCorps



2019-2020 Performance Goals

ECO AmeriCorps tracks three national performance measures established by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Accomplishments in these three areas are reported on a semi-annual basis to CNCS. The reporting guidance and record keeping described below is established by CNCS guidelines.

1. Water Quality Improvement

Performance measurement:

Number of miles of trails or waterways (owned/maintained by national, state, county, city or tribal governments; nonprofits when for public use or the public good; and public easements) that are treated and/or constructed, or number of miles that are improved and/or put into use.

Note: Accomplishments reported under this performance measure must be specified as either miles of trails or waterways treated/constructed or miles of trails or waterways improved/put into use. *See guidance below.*

Challenge:

Most streams in Vermont are not in an equilibrium condition because riverside development, channelization practices and other historic land uses have prevented the river from assuming its most stable natural shape. In addition, many rivers have lost access to their floodplains and lack adequate riparian buffers. These conditions contribute to active erosion of stream banks and increased sediment and nutrient loads. Restoration and protection of river corridors and special flood hazard areas is critical for attenuation of flows, stream bank stability, and pollutant reduction.

Desired Outcome:

ECO AmeriCorps members will treat and/or improve 10 miles of rivers to combat this issue.

CNCS Water Quality Improvement Reporting Guidance*

Definition of Key Terms:

Trails: For walking, running, biking, horses or other forms of recreation. **Waterways:** Includes rivers, lakes and other bodies of water on or abutting public land. **Treated:** Removed invasive species, planted native plants, built riparian buffers, improved tread/corridor of existing trail or made changes to increase the trail lifespan, removed unsafe trail structures, repaired damage caused by visitor use, made changes to increase accessibility, cleared of natural debris (such as fallen trees/limbs and hazardous fuel) and unnatural debris (such as disaster debris and improperly disposed waste). Treatments must go beyond basic trash removal. **Constructed:** Making new trails available by implementing safety measures, making handicapped accessible, or environmental protection measures such as boardwalks, grading, trail-blazing, converting a railroad bed to a trail, etc. that make trails newly available. **Improved:** Restored to reduce human impact, reduced the impact of natural disasters, removed invasive species, restored native plants and habitat, protected watersheds, created new trail, increased safe condition of useable trails, increased accessibility, protected flora and fauna. Improvement should be consistent with an accepted natural resource restoration, maintenance or improvement plan. **Put into use:** Established safe and useable trails or waterways.

How to Calculate/ Measure/ Collect Data for trails/waterways treated/constructed:

Sum of number of miles of trails and/or waterways that are treated, and/or constructed. **Count each mile only once during the program year.** Count the area treated on/in the trail/waterway and immediately next to the trail/waterway. It may be necessary to treat the same mile of trail/waterway more than once but include in count only once. If, for example, the program or project is to repair a trail, then the whole width of the trail that is being repaired can be counted, not just the width of the fencing. If the lack of a trail has led to damage in the area, then the area of that restoration/repair work would count too.

How to record accomplishments for trails/waterways treated/constructed:

Tracking document, survey or acknowledgement of receipt of services from entity that owns or administers the trail or waterways improved.

How to Calculate/ Measure/ Collect Data for trails/waterways improved/put into use:

Sum of number of miles of trails and/or waterways that are assessed by the managing entity/land manager as having been improved to an acceptable level as defined by the sponsoring agency or land manager in accordance with their natural resource plan. **Count each mile only once during the program year.** It is possible that the number of miles assessed by the land manager as having been improved in accordance with their natural resource plan is less than the total number of miles treated. The improvement should be the acceptable level of implementation of the prescribed intervention to address a certain deficiency or serious environmental risk that is well documented. The evidence-base could be a governmental land management improvement plan if it addresses the targeted problem, and it is preferable to describe how the proposed intervention will contribute to the return the targeted area to a quality environment.

How to record accomplishments for trails/waterways improved/put into use:

Tracking document, survey or acknowledgement of receipt of services from entity that owns or administers the trail or waterways improved. Distinction must be made between treated/constructed and improved/put into use.

Accomplishments reported under the Water Quality Improvement performance measure **cannot also be reported under the Ecosystem Enhancement performance measure.*

2. Ecosystem Enhancement

Performance Measurement:

Number of acres of national parks, state parks, city parks, county parks, or other public and tribal lands that are treated, and number of acres that are improved.

Note: Accomplishments reported under this performance measure must be specified as either acres of land treated or acres of land improved. *See guidance below.*

Challenge:

Impacts of development on public land require mitigation to reduce non-point source pollution by retrofit and enhancing sites to improve ecological and hydrological function.

Desired Outcome:

ECO AmeriCorps treat and/or improve 200 acres of public land to improve waterways. Each project will be validated by the service site supervisor. Before and after photos will be submitted and retained for each project.

Ecosystem Enhancement Reporting Guidance

Definition of Key Terms:

National parks, State parks, city parks, county parks: Park/recreation areas that are designated by national, state, city, or county governments (not trails or rivers) **Other public lands:** Other publicly owned lands; land owned by nonprofits for public use or the public good (such as land conservancies); and public easements. **Tribal lands:** Same meaning as imparted by the

definitions of “Indian Lands” and “Indian Tribes” provided in. SEC. 101. [42 U.S.C. 12511].

Treated: National service members and/or program volunteers removed invasive species, planted native plants, built riparian buffers, cleared of natural debris (such as fallen trees/limbs, hazardous fuel) and unnatural debris (such as disaster debris and improperly disposed waste).

Treatment must go beyond basic trash removal. **Improved:** Renovated to reduce human impact or the negative impact of natural disasters or invasive species, restored native plants and habitat, reduced erosion, protected watersheds, reduced wildfire risk, upgraded or repaired outdoor recreation facilities or signage, increased public safe access, protected flora and fauna. Improvement should be consistent with an accepted natural resource restoration, maintenance or improvement plan.

How to Calculate/ Measure/ Collect Ecosystem Enhancement Data:

Count of number of acres that are **treated** for the intent of improvement **or** that have been **improved** to an acceptable level as defined by the sponsoring agency or land manager in accordance with their natural resource plan. **Count each acre that is treated only once during the program year.** It may be necessary to treat an acre more than once, but it should be counted only once. Only count the acres that are actually treated or improved; do not count the entire park/land area unless your project treats or improves the entire area. It is possible that the number of acres assessed by the land manager as having been improved in accordance with their natural resource plan is less than the total number of acres treated.

Accomplishments reported under the Ecosystem Enhancement performance measure **cannot also be reported under the Water Quality Improvement performance measure.*

How to Record Ecosystem Enhancement Accomplishments:

Tracking document, survey or acknowledgement of receipt of services from entity that owns or administers the area improved. Tracking document or survey stating the number of acres actually improved and a statement that the impact of this intervention will contribute to the return of the targeted area to a quality environment from entity that owns or administers the area improved.

3. Agricultural Environmental Stewardship**Performance Measurement:**

Number of individuals receiving education or and/or environmentally-conscious practices, and Number of individuals reporting a change in behavior or the intent to change behavior within one year in order to better protect the environment and/or reduce energy consumption as a result of the educational event or training they received.

Challenge:

Nutrient export from agricultural operations impairs adjacent waterways and leads to eutrophication of lakes and ponds. Additional education and outreach to farmers is needed to increase implementation of best management practices, particularly on small farms which are not often targeted.

Desired Outcome:

ECO AmeriCorps members will provide educational resources and information to farmers regarding acceptable agricultural practices (AAP's). Members will provide environmental stewardship education and/or training to 1000 individuals. At least 200 individuals will report a change in behavior or an intent to change behavior as a result of this outreach. This will be tracked via follow-up surveys with individual trainees to determine if they have initiated a project, applied for funding and/or completed a project within 6 months of the training.

Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Reporting Guidance

Definition of Key Terms:

Education or Training: May be one-time or an on-going series; cannot just be distribution of pamphlets or information available on a web-site; should have learning objectives; may be in person or through a web-based interface. **Environmental Stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices:** Organized efforts to teach about how natural environments function and, particularly, how human beings can manage their behavior and ecosystems in order to live sustainably. Environmental topics should relate to real conditions in the community being served. **Change in behavior or Intent to change behavior:** Individuals state practices that they do now or plan to do that are encouraged or recommended by the training or educational event which are different than the practices they had prior to the training.

How to Calculate/ Measure/ Collect Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Data:

Count of each individual participating in the educational event or training. **Some individuals may attend multiple events or trainings but they should only be counted once.** If providing the training through classroom curriculum, count the individuals present not just those enrolled. If providing the training through a school assembly presentation, get the best estimate from school officials of the number in attendance. The educational events or training should be in response to a specifically identified need in the community to either increase knowledge or to change behavior.

How to Record Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Accomplishments:

Sign-in or attendance sheets from education/training sessions when possible. Tracking needs to enable unduplicated count when possible. Surveys should be utilized to assess a change in (or intent to change) behavior of the participants. It is preferable to assess an actual change in behavior at some point after the educational event or training to determine if the change has actually occurred. However, assessments are expected to occur within the service year.