

ECO AMERICORPS NEWSLETTER

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A note from ECO Director and Coordinator:

It is hard to believe that six months have already passed since we welcomed our newest cohort of exceptional individuals ready to get things done for Vermont! ECO AmeriCorps is in its fourth year of operation and we are very proud of how much we've accomplished. It has been such a pleasure getting to know all of the ECO members and witness them grow professionally while making meaningful change happen in their communities. ECO's are driven by their passion to serve and their curiosity to find new solutions to solve old problems.

It's true, sometimes the Administrative team may be a bit jealous when we hear the extraordinary projects the ECO's are embarking on. However, we feel a deep responsibility to support these talented people with as many personal and professional growth opportunities as we can and be there with words of encouragement and guidance whenever needed.

Aside from improving Vermont's water quality, ECO has grown to focus on waste reduction and environmental education as we hope to further address some of our state's most pressing challenges. We offer enriching and immersive service opportunities for the next generation of environmental leaders. By collaborating with our community partners, we will continue to add vital capacity and strengthen local communities through stewardship of our shared natural resources.

Thank you all for being champions of service!

Carey & Dustin



ECOAmeriCorps.org

 **VERMONT**
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ECO AmeriCorps

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

After three and a half years of operation the ECO program can report accomplishments that we are all proud of.

120,000+ Hours served by members

8,989 Individuals educated on environmental stewardship



438 Recurring volunteers

1,981 First Time volunteers

11,392 Volunteer hours supported



826 Acres of public land improved

41.5 Miles of streams/rivers improved



53 Members have completed service

21 Members are currently serving

STORIES

JESS RICHTER, ECO ALUMNI 2017-2018



“My name is Jess and I am an alumni of the 2017-2018 ECO team! I joined ECO AmeriCorps to expand my environmental skill-set and gain valuable experience in the field of natural resource protection. I had the great opportunity of serving with two organizations during my term: the Two Rivers – Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC). During my service, I gained experience in water quality project management, coordinated water quality monitoring efforts for the Ottauquechee River Group, learned how to conduct road erosions inventories to assess hydrologically-connected road segments, created GIS maps for various watershed-based projects, conducted watershed outreach to the community and learned how to successfully write a water quality related grant application!

As my AmeriCorps term was coming to a close, I was offered the opportunity to stay on at TRORC full-time as a Planner following my service term! The skills and connections I gained during my service made the transition from ECO-member to Planner much smoother and helped me hit the ground running in my new position. Today, much of my work at TRORC is focused on water quality. I manage various water quality and stormwater mitigation projects, collaborate with state and local partners on watershed basin planning, and manage TRORC’s Clean Water Advisory Committee. The ECO AmeriCorps program put me in the best position possible to succeed and I encourage anyone looking to further their skills in the environmental field to apply to the ECO AmeriCorps program!”

STORIES

ELLY VENTURA, ECO HOST SITE SUPERVISOR



“The Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District has the distinct honor of hosting Sujata Gautam for the second year in a row! We were so pleased when Sujata announced that she would like to return and even happier when ECO AmeriCorps granted her the request. We knew that having Sujata back as second year was going to be amazing but we really underestimated the immediate impact she would make.

Much ‘orientating’ is required before members can really start reaching out in the community at the start of their service. This year however, Sujata was able to get things done as soon as she returned to the office. She bounced around to Farmers’ Markets spreading the word about recycling and composting and how we do it right in Vermont. She motivated her Waste Warriors to help snip over 10 cubic yards of maple tubing into pieces small enough to be recycled. She presented to Northern Vermont University students about AmeriCorps, waste minimization & the importance of composting, started working on renovation plans for our Stowe transfer station and hosted an ECO AmeriCorps info table at the Youth Environmental Summit. This was all within her first month and a half!!!

If you know Sujata at all, this list of accomplishments may not surprise you. The positive impact and the lasting impression that she has made in our LRSWMD communities is greatly appreciated. We are so lucky to have her share her talents, passion and energy with us. While we will be reluctant to let her go in August, we know she will take what she has learned with us and apply it to do more incredible things to better the world on her next adventure.”

STORIES

CHRISTOPHER GAYNOR, CURRENT ECO MEMBER



Planning for economic development, housing, infrastructure, and environmental health are fundamental responsibilities of Vermont's municipalities. At the Windham Regional Commission (WRC), where ECO member Chris Gaynor serves as a water quality planning associate, alternative wastewater technologies are being explored with the help of community partners to address these responsibilities. Gaynor has been collaborating with the Rich Earth Institute (REI, a new host site for the coming year!) in order to determine the feasibility of community-scale urine diversion and eco-sanitation technologies as an alternative to traditional wastewater treatment. These technologies provide a chance to promote village development, update infrastructure, and address nutrient loading concerns in the environment.

The WRC and REI are exploring the extent to which innovative sanitation technology can divert nitrogen-rich urine from the wastewater stream. REI is researching how human waste can be sanitized and transformed into natural, sustainably produced agricultural fertilizer at a community-scale and how eco-sanitation can prevent pollution. In contributing to this research, Gaynor has conducted a feasibility study interacting with participating homeowners and evaluating the septic systems in the villages of Westminster West and West Dummerston. These evaluations are designed to provide the project partners with enough information about the individual homes to create a comprehensive eco-sanitation strategy.

An extensive report is being finalized that identifies suitable sites for eco-sanitation technologies. These sites will facilitate the upgrade of infrastructure to these new technologies for different socio-economic and multi-generational populations which will mitigate the occurrence of excess nutrients in the surrounding ecological systems. Due to Gaynor's contributions to this project, the WRC and supporting organizations have the potential to improve the infrastructure of a village, support economic development, and positively impact human health all while helping the environment. Whether its planting a tree or rethinking wastewater infrastructure, expanding the capacity of Vermont's communities is at the forefront of ECO AmeriCorps' vision.

EVENTS



ECO member Nathaniel leading a workshop about how to participate in citizen science through apps like iNaturalist



ECO member Jenevra picking apples during our gleaning day at Hall's



ECO members Laura, Sujata, and Catie having fun at the SerVermont Conference



ECO member Jac during a training about personality and strengths



ECO members Elizabeth, Nathaniel, and Kristen during our MLK Day of service

We have had a blast so far at our ECO events! We started with orientation in Roxbury, Vermont for everyone to get to know each other, the program, and AmeriCorps. During our trainings we have learned about intergenerational differences, our personality types in the workplace, and using our strengths to our advantage. At the SerVermont Conference ECOs connected with other AmeriCorps members from around the state while attending professional development trainings. During a few of our service days so far ECOs have taken action and succeeded in removing three truckloads of tires from a wetland, lead workshops about citizen science, and gleaned over 1,000 pounds of apples! During the MLK weekend, five members served overnight shifts at the cold weather emergency shelter in Burlington. Our whole group served at Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity on MLK Day for a day on, not a day off. We have plenty more in store for this year's ECO members and it is exciting to continue to be a part of the professional and personal development of so many wonderful people.

MEMBER TRIUMPHS

ECO members have a wide variety of projects to be involved in.

Here are some examples of how ECOs get things done!

Developing a plant resource manual for rain garden and shoreline stability use

Organizing a 'Repair Fair' for people to bring in broken items to get fixed by volunteers



ECO member Cassie planting trees in a riparian buffer



ECO member Elizabeth presenting about recycling options for plastic films

Visiting high altitude acid sensitive lakes to take water samples for chemical analysis

Developing innovative solutions to the failing of statewide septic systems

Leading volunteers from True North Wilderness and Norwich University to pull invasive plants

Monitoring and collecting data from 15 vernal pools

Assisting with the construction an 800ft stream channel leading water from a culvert to a wetland for drainage



ECO members Nathaniel and Alex conducting a successful Wood Turtle Survey

Get Involved

AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ECO AmeriCorps aims to provide passionate people the opportunity to serve the environmental needs of Vermont communities.

WANT TO BE A PART OF ECO AMERICORPS?

We are currently accepting member applications for the 2019-2020 service year.

If someone you know may be interested in serving with us, please pass along this newsletter or direct them toward our website!

Please visit our website to apply:

EcoAmericorps.org



Contact Dustin Bowman for more information at anr.ecoamericorps@vermont.gov

Thank you to everyone who has participated in and helped out with our program this year! Windridge Tennis & Sports Camps, Shelburne Farms, Marshall Webb, the De Marais Family, Halls Orchard, Vermont Gleaning Collaborative, Greg Hessel, Regeneration Resources, Travis Hart, the Center for Achievement and Public Service, and of course all of the organizations hosting ECO members this year and years previous. We couldn't do it without you!