

ECO AmeriCorps Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

June 2016



WHAT WE HAVE BEEN UP TO

May has been a busy month for Environmental Careers and Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps members!

Kicking off this busy spring month was Green Up Day on May 7. Members aided in conservation efforts in towns where they live and serve. This was a great opportunity for these young professionals to engage with their community and represent the next generation of environmental stewards.

Twelve of our members participated in the Vermont Corporate Cup Challenge 5k on Thursday May 12. Although we did not set any records, enthusiasm and team spirit ran high.

Two regional get together events were hosted in the month of May. These events were opportunities to bring together members who serve near each other. Stronger networks not only result in more supported and motivated members but also create open dialog and foster collaboration for the upcoming field season. Members serving in the more northern part of the state gathered at North Beach on Friday, May 13. Those serving in the more southern part of the state enjoyed a round of disc golf at the Wrightsville Dam Friday, May 29.

Between those events there was an End of Year Service Conference hosted by SerVermont May 17-18. SerVermont is the Vermont Commission on National and Community Service. This event was both a thank you for AmeriCorps volunteers around the state and a professional development opportunity for members. It took place at the Common Ground Center in Starksboro. Members participated in forums, discussions, games, and a camp fire meet and greet.

ECO AmeriCorps members also participated in field studies, service projects and community education events throughout the spring and summer for their service sites. Be sure to thank these busy bees as you see them dedicating their time to restoring and protecting the water and land we love.

MEMBER SUCCESSES AROUND THE STATE

Protecting and restoring Vermont's water is quite an endeavor for a group of young professionals. This ECO AmeriCorps team has accepted this challenge with unrelenting ambition. Members have been serving at sites across the state with a focus on water quality. The program entered its inaugural year with modest, attainable goals most of which have already been achieved. See page 2 for programmatic accomplishments to date and pages 4 and 5 for individual stories of success.

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Life After AmeriCorps
- AmeriCorps trivia!





NEW WEBSITE PLATFORM

The new Environmental Careers and Opportunities [\(ECO\) AmeriCorps website](#) is now fully operational.

There are 5 ECO AmeriCorps pages nestled in the Administration and Innovation tab on the left hand navigation menu of the new Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) website.

Our website provides information about the program as a whole such as what we do, why we chose water quality and a general overview of member projects. Members have an individual profile outlining their positions and daily tasks at their site. Members also share their educational

background, personal hobbies and their professional goals.

With an entire page dedicated to prospective members, college students and young professionals can learn even more about the program. This page offers specific information about what it means to be an ECO AmeriCorps member, the benefits of choosing a year of service and specific application instructions.

Member applications for the 2016-2017 service year closed April 18. The program received more than 60 applicants for 20 open positions.

“The ECO AmeriCorps members have made important strides towards achieving our water quality goals. I thank them for their hard work, and look forward to recruiting a new class to build upon their accomplishments.” - DEC Commissioner Alyssa Schuren

LIFE AFTER AMERICORPS

As the inaugural ECO AmeriCorps year comes to a close, members have their sight set on what is next.

In March members were provided with a professional development training. Throughout the morning members created and updated LinkedIn profiles, resumes and discussed successful interview tactics. The afternoon was spent rotating through panels consisting of various professionals in the environmental conservation field.

Some members have decided to dedicate a second year of service to ECO AmeriCorps and applied for the 2016-17 year. Others have been accepted to graduate school programs to begin this fall. The rest are searching for the next step in their professional careers. Reach out to ECO AmeriCorps staff if you have an employment opportunity to share with our members.

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

We are now more than halfway through our inaugural year and our members are shining bright throughout the state.

Our grant from the Commission for National and Community Service (CNCS) requires that key performance measures are met. Our members blew almost all of them out of the water by the end of the first quarter.

The performance measures are goals expected to be met by the end of ECO AmeriCorps' service year. The performance measures laid out by the CNCS grant are as follows:

- 2 miles of river treated or improved
- 10 acres of public land treated or improved
- 25 members initiated projects to improve water quality
- 5 members placed into green jobs after service

After the first 2 quarters of our service year, September 15 to March 31, the team of 20 members completed the following:

- **2.5** miles of treated or improved river
- **198.57** acres of treated or improved public land
- **175** community members educated, and indicating behavior change or intention to change
- **261** volunteers hosted

Quarter 3 ends June 30. We expect these numbers to continue to soar now that our members are fully immersed in field season.

We are very proud of our members and what they have accomplished. Not only do they have a passion for water quality and environmental conservation, but they also pride themselves on being national service volunteers, engaging in communities—several members have been coaching sports at local high schools. For example, Jimmy Young has been coaching Winooski High School Varsity Track and Katy Gimma has been coaching Champlain Valley Union Varsity Ultimate Frisbee.





Congressman Peter Welch, USDA staff, ECO AmeriCorps members and community members celebrate Getting Things Done after removing dozens of tires from a small tributary of the Winooski River.

GETTING THINGS DONE: EARTH DAY

Earth Day service events were hosted by members around the state.

Educational displays were set up at the Maple Festival in St. Albans, led by Chelsea Roston and Jimmy Young and at the ECHO Leahy Center For Lake Champlain, led by Brittain Faville and Grant Taylor. Each event helped community members gain an awareness of their local watersheds, the importance of conservation, and how to get involved in their area.

The displays were interactive and provided information that kept the attention of children and adults alike. Members at ECHO also facilitated exercises on the movement of rivers and building infrastructure near bodies of water.

Other members facilitated conservation efforts in Montpelier, Williamstown and South Royalton. Zack Simpson let community members in Montpelier through an invasive plant removal to make way for the planting of native hardwood trees throughout the spring and summer.

Jim Armbruster led a community clean up through his service site, the White River Partnership.

Julia Gulka, serving with the Vermont Land Trust, and Julianne Lovergine, serving with NRCS, facilitated tree plantings throughout the weekend.

Congressman Peter Welch, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) staff, USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Lisa Mensah, and ECO AmeriCorps members Diana Jaramillo, Elizabeth Gribkoff, Katy Gimma, Madeline Cotter, and Skylar Francis joined federal, state and local officials to celebrate the town's efforts to upgrade a 47-year-old waste water system.

Following the event members joined Welch and community members clearing tires and other litter from a small tributary of the Winooski River.



ECO AmeriCorps members Brittain and Grant showcased a model water table for youngsters at ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain

AMERICORPS TRIVIA!

AmeriCorps is a national service organization. The program provides entry level professionals with an opportunity to gain skills as well as provide services to communities in need.

Think you know all about AmeriCorps? Test your knowledge with the following trivia questions! Answers can be found on page 6.

How many hours have been served by Vermont AmeriCorps members since its inaugural year in 1994?

- A) 10.3 million hours
- B) 194 thousand hours
- C) 1.9 million hours
- D) 7.3 million hours

How many AmeriCorps members are serving in the 2015-16 service year statewide?

- A) 369
- B) 825
- C) 461
- D) 293





ELIZABETH GRIBKOFF

Since last November, I have been collaborating with Friends of Waterbury Reservoir (FWR), a Watersheds United Vermont member group, on organizational development.

Invasive species management is one of the Friends' priority areas, so when I learned that the State was offering an Aquatic Nuisance Species small grant program, I thought that we had to put together an application. Along with FWR board mem-

bers, I wrote the grant application to receive funding this March to set up a Boat Access Greeter program at the Waterbury Reservoir. The greeter will educate visitors about the dangers posed by invasive species and to remove any invasive species found on boats at the reservoir.

Currently, we are reviewing applications for the Greeter position and are looking forward to running the program this summer!

CHRIS YUREK

The project from which my service will have the most impact likely pertains to the relicensing of three large hydroelectric dams along the Connecticut River. TransCanada, the current owner of all three facilities is adhering to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) as set forth by Title 18 of the US Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Part 5 throughout the relicensing process.

Through FERC's ILP, TransCanada is required to carry out a number of studies pertaining to water quality, erosion, aquatic organism population abundance and distribution, passage, and spawning suitability, and recreational, historic, and aesthetic impacts

which are a direct result of dam operations.

State agencies as well as nonprofits and other stakeholder groups are given an opportunity to review and subsequently comment on these studies to ensure that they following the FERC approved process and that the studies draw valid conclusions. The results of these studies will dictate the terms of the new licenses for all three facilities, which will govern the operation of each facility for the next 30-50 years.

Effectively commenting on these studies can help guide the terms of the licenses toward protecting the best interest of the Connecticut River from an ecological and social perspective for as much as the next half century.

JULIA GULKA

I just completed a riparian buffer tree planting on a local farm. With the help of volunteers from a variety of local organizations, we were able to plant over 1,200 trees on about three acres along the Dog River.

This project has multiple benefits in helping establish a wooded riparian buffer by helping to improve water quality, to provide wildlife habitat and connectivity, and to

stabilize the banks and prevent erosion while also helping to combat the invasive knotweed issue that plagues so many of Vermont's rivers.

This tree planting is part of a larger river corridor easement, which will allow the river freedom to move naturally over time and reestablish a healthy equilibrium.

JIMMY YOUNG

Whether it be tree planting along an impaired waterway or developing a water sampling program for the Missisquoi River system, all aspects of my service this year have directly benefited local municipalities and more importantly, our environment.

My “Managing Runoff on Your Property: DIY Site Assessment” workshop for homeowners in the City & Town of St. Albans was definitely my most rewarding project I have done so far. This workshop gave local homeowners the opportunity to learn more about the impact that stormwater has on our local water bodies, various best management practices, and even gave them the chance to learn more about stormwater runoff on their own property.

Each workshop attendee received a map of

their property that was used in various exercises to help them estimate the amount of impervious surface on their property, determine types of property features (i.e. landscaped or natural vegetation) and areas that might pond water, and finally, estimate the amount of stormwater generated on their property from a 1-inch rain storm.

This workshop was extremely eye opening to all homeowners and almost all of them said they planned on changing their current practices to benefit their property and the health of local water bodies.

I truly believe this project satisfied the AmeriCorp mission of “getting things done” and “making an impact in local communities”.



“[Tree planting] has multiple benefits in helping establish a wooded riparian buffer by helping to improve water quality” - Julia Gulka

CHELSEA ROSTON

I have had the opportunity to do so much during my service. All of my projects, involving Lake Carmi tributaries, collaborating with professionals in the field, and educating the general public, make me proud to be an AmeriCorps member. We really do “get things done”!

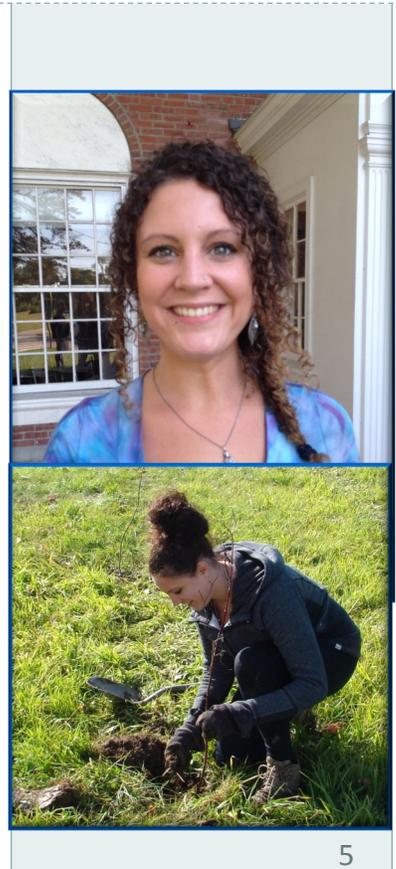
Currently I am the head of the Phosphorus Reduction Subcommittee. We have begun creating a plan of action to reduce and measure the incoming phosphorus on Lake Carmi.

The first project of the committee is install floating wetlands at the mouth of a Lake Carmi tributary. We will collect most of

our data from this site.

I have also been able to educate community members of all ages about water quality and the importance of conservation. Just in the last month I have facilitated multiple projects with the local girl scout troop. On Earth Day I used a kid friendly display to teach citizens about watersheds, pollution, and staying involved in conservation efforts around the state.

In my time as an AmeriCorps members I truly feel as though I have made a difference both in the beautiful landscape of Vermont and to those who call this place home!



ECO AMERICORPS MEMBERS, ARE YOU READY TO FINISH?



ECO AmeriCorps member Katy Gimma participating in a tree planting.

The end of service is fast approaching, but we are not there yet. There are still requirements that need to be completed .

Coming up first is the overnight training on June 20-21. The location will be in Southwestern Vermont. Members will partner with VT Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) staff to remove aquatic invasive zebra mussels, and receive training from FPR and DEC staff. We will camp overnight at Lake Bomoseen State Park. This is a mandatory training. Be sure to communicate this to your supervisors so they do not ask for a commitment from you on either of those days.

July 8th is the due date for the third quarterly report. This report covers anything that happened from April 1 to June 30. Keeping records as you go will minimize stress and hassle in the days leading up to the deadline.

The end of service celebration is July 29. This is your last mandatory ECO meeting. If you have not completed service by this date, you are required to attend. Please inform your supervisors early so they do not expect a commitment elsewhere from you.

Do you have a date in mind for your end of service? This needs to be communicated with your supervisor and ECO AmeriCorps Coordinator, Reuben Allen. Keep in mind that AmeriCorps is a commitment to August as well as a commitment of 1700 hours. Your supervisor and ECO AmeriCorps staff have the right to deny your request of finishing early. Please be sure to get all permission in writing. This will minimize the risk of miscommunication.

Lastly, before you complete your service you must submit your end of the year evaluation to Reuben. This is a strength based review that serves to facilitate a discussion between you and your supervisor about how the year went, tips on future jobs, etc.

ECO AMERICORPS PARTNERS



Member	Service Site	Location
Andrew Nguyen	Windham County Natural Resource Conservation District	Brattleboro
Beatrice Smith	USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service	Rutland
Brittain Faville	Vermont Association of Conservation Districts	Burlington
Chelsea Roston	Franklin Watershed Committee	Franklin
Chris Yurek	Connecticut River Watershed Council	Ascutney
Diana Jaramillo	DEC Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation	Montpelier
Elizabeth Gribkoff	Watersheds United Vermont/Vermont River Conservancy	Montpelier
Grant Taylor	Lake Champlain Sea Grant	Burlington
Jim Armbruster	White River Partnership/ Vermont Biomonitoring and Aquatic Studies Section Lab	South Royalton Montpelier
Jimmy Young	Northwest Regional Planning Commission/ Missisquoi River Basin	St. Albans
Joe Bondi	Friends of Northern Lake Champlain	St. Albans
Julia Gulka	Vermont Land Trust	Montpelier
Julianne Lovergine	Natural Resources Conservation Service	Williston
Katy Gimma	DEC Administration and Innovation Division	Montpelier
Madeline Cotter	DEC Watershed Management Program	Montpelier
Michelle Graziosi	UVM Cener for Sustainable Agriculture & Vermont Department of Health	Burlington
Skylar Francis	DEC Vermont fish and Wildlife Department	Montpelier
Zack Simpson	City of Montpelier Parks	Montpelier

ECO AmeriCorps

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ECO AmeriCorps is administered through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, in part through grant funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service



AMERICORPS TRIVIA ANSWERS

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D) 7.3 million hours

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