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Executive Summary

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program will provide 129 members the opportunity to assist communities affected by natural disasters and leverage volunteers in conserving and enhancing natural resources throughout the State of Iowa. At the end of the 2013-2014 grant year, citizens and communities will be assisted with disaster services and over 5,000 acres of public lands will have been reconstructed or restored. This project will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Disaster Services and Environmental Stewardship. The Corporation for National and Community Service investment of \$790,035 will be matched with \$814,557.

Rationale and Approach

a. NEED (Persuasive Evidence) - The community problems the DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program will address are: 1) the need for disaster assistance due to the increase in natural disasters both locally in Iowa and across the United States, and 2) the need for healthier ecosystems across Iowa.

Disaster Assistance: Natural disasters continue to be on the rise in the State of Iowa and throughout the United States. Since 2006, all 99 counties in Iowa have been affected by a natural disaster. Some counties have had at least 7 natural disasters during that time according to Environmental Iowa.

The recent hurricanes are indicative of other significant weather and climate events. This past year, the United States has seen major flooding, wildfires, droughts, and tornados. Along with the disasters, come increased recovery costs, negative impact on the environment, and the toll on humans (physically and emotionally). Resources are spread thin with the increase in disasters.

The size and financial impact of disasters has increased drastically. Even before Hurricane Sandy, billion-dollar weather disasters in the U.S. have tripled since the 1980s. According to Face the Facts USA (project of The George Washington University, October 2012), 2011 broke records with 14 separate billion-dollar events. The annual number of billion-dollar disasters in the United States -- earthquakes, floods, fires, hurricanes and more -- has tripled since the 1980s, from two to about six per year. In 2011, there were 14 separate \$1 billion-plus weather events. That's the equivalent of buying 4,500 new homes at the median price for every major hurricane, tornado outburst, flood and drought. Losses from U.S. natural disasters in 2011 topped \$60 billion.

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According to the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center, the U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook for 2013 predicts a much drier pattern is expected resulting in the drought to persist or intensify over much of the United States. As was encountered in 2012, the drought brought on an increase in wildfires across the country.

When natural disasters hit, key emergency managers and responders become displaced themselves. Agencies that would provide response and recovery assets are significantly disrupted by the emergency event. More recent disasters have resulted in widespread impacts affecting multiple communities or states. Communities have a need for supplemental and augmented assistance for preparation for a disaster or the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

Healthier Ecosystems: Iowa currently ranks nearly last in the nation in public land ownerships (49/50). The state is dominated by corn and soybean production, publicly owned land that is essential to providing habitat and food for wildlife, among other ecosystem services. Choices of past generations have continued to alter Iowa's landscape which negatively impacts the future for generations to come.

Iowa is known as the most biologically altered state in the nation; 64 percent of Iowa's 36 million acres are covered in only two species (corn and beans); 93 percent of the land is used for agriculture; less than one tenth of one percent of Iowa's original prairie remains, and none of the original forests have survived. These changes impact water quality, wildlife habitat, and fish population. Wildlife management is important to Iowa economically. Hunting in the state provides \$443 million in economic benefits each year and wildlife watching provides \$342 million in economic benefits each year.

Due to these choices, Iowa's land and waterways are negatively impacted. This translates into an unhealthy and unattractive environment for individuals to work and play. In addition, the invasion of non-native species, negative impact on sustaining viable fish and wildlife populations, and the impact on water quality for Iowan's and those downstream to the Gulf of Mexico.

The primary target community to address the needs of disaster assistance and unhealthy ecosystems is

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across the State of Iowa in rural and urban communities. The community needs ties into the DNR mission statement: "To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organization to improve the quality of life in Iowa and ensure a legacy for future generations." Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members have the passion to assist and play a major role in disaster assistance and healthier ecosystem initiatives.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS - The DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program is requesting 129 members (39 FT, 31 HT, 29 QT and 25 education only MT) to serve in approximately 70 locations. The majority of members will serve in DNR offices; however, some members will be co-located in Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) offices as part of a partnership or within other natural resource organizations (non-profits and county conservation offices). All Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members will be addressing issues related to creating healthier ecosystems and providing disaster assistance.

New for this grant, six FT members will be dedicated to disaster response. They will be available to travel on 24 hour notice to anywhere in the United States. These members will be available to assist with debris removal/mucking/gutting, volunteer management, volunteer reception centers, levee patrol, firefighting and any other needs that arise related to the disaster assistance. Disaster response members will be crossed trained in ecosystem management. When they are not deployed on a disaster mission, they will assist other bureaus within the DNR partnering to address immediate needs under our ecosystems program design.

The remaining members will address building a healthier ecosystem across Iowa. The Wildlife members (17 FT, 6 HT, and 1 QT) will engage in various activities related to providing healthier ecosystems through land management, creating diverse habitats for wildlife populations, removal of invasive species, and permanently protecting, restoring, reconstructing, and enhancing large areas of wildlife habitat. Parks members (4 FT and 8 HT) will engage in activities related to native prairie restoration through increasing the amount of native prairie, decreasing the amount of park area that requires mowing and ongoing maintenance, attracting wildlife habitat, and assisting with water runoff. The trail crew (4 FT, 1 HT, and 16 QT) will address needs in state parks and forests, specifically restoration of original CCC structures and trails. Trail reconstruction and construction utilizes new

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protocols than trails of yesteryear. Safe and accessible trails will be constructed that are ADA compliant, providing a safe usable outdoor recreation facilities. This project ties into the State of Iowa Healthy Initiative. Forestry (6 FT and 4 HT) will concentrate on activities related to conservation, education, soil protection, and improving wildlife habitat. Fisheries (2 FT, 8 HT, 6 QT and 9 MT) will engage in collecting and assimilating creel survey information from anglers, sample fish in lakes, watershed restoration work, collecting monthly water quality samples, and environmental education (Decorah Fish Hatchery during Eagle viewing season). The environmental education (2FT) will work directly with more than 7,500 students, grades 4 - 6 on a wide variety of stewardship and conservation issues with a focus on ecosystems. Eight members (6 QT and 2 HT) will serve as park interpreters. Interpretative efforts connect visitors/communities to Iowa's natural resources through programming efforts focusing on healthy living connecting with thousands of visitors each year. Members will assist with public outreach, recycling and communication initiatives to support healthier ecosystems (2 HT and 15 MT).

The type of member slots are chosen to maximize resources, align with the needs of program design and best support successful goal achievement. AmeriCorps members benefit the ecosystems of Iowa, organization and the State of Iowa which in turn passes down to the citizens and visitors that come to enjoy our natural resources. Members provide capacity building that wouldn't be able to be achieved through existing staff or volunteers. An example, if AmeriCorps members did not serve as educators at Springbrook Conservation Educational Center, more than 7,500 kids would not be able to experience and learn about environmental stewardship. There would be thousands less acres of wildlife habitat restored and hundreds of miles of trails would not be available for public use. AmeriCorps members provide a capacity building opportunities for our organization and our state. The impact of the AmeriCorps members on the State of Iowa reaches beyond our state borders. Ecosystem management benefits residents downstream through the Gulf of Mexico. Improvements made in Iowa to land and water impacts water quality for others down the watershed.

The DNR ensures that all members are addressing urgent needs that are distinct from that of volunteers and staff, and that our program does not violate non-duplications, non-displacement and non-supplementation requirements. AmeriCorps members will be provided with the necessary skill training to deliver the solution and provide anticipated outcomes addressing the community needs.

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c. EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT - Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members will have an impact on the community serving the focus areas of Disaster Services and Environment Stewardship. Since 2008, the DNR AmeriCorps members have been assisting with disaster services within the State of Iowa. The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program is part of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service Disaster Cadre and we have the only commission in the nation who has a direct link to the Corporation for National and Community Service for disaster deployment. Disaster mission assignments continue to become more prevalent as natural disasters continue to rise across the United States. Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members are trained in disaster response and requested due to their expertise, professionalism, and ability to "Get Things Done" on mission assignments. Our program has gained the respect of our state Homeland Security. In the summer of 2011, levee patrol in Hamburg, Iowa was turned over to our AmeriCorps program from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Iowa National Guard.

The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program was 1 of 20 AmeriCorps State programs deployed in 2012 through the Corporation for National and Community Service as of October 22, 2012. A dedicated disaster team will allow our program to participate at a greater level not only within the State of Iowa, but across the United States. These dedicated individuals will be able to deploy within 24 hours. They will be trained in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery to address any natural disaster emergency that arises. The investment to deploy an AmeriCorps team to a natural disaster is very minimal compared to the impact they have on the community.

The AmeriCorps program affords the Department of Natural Resources the unique ability to continue to broaden educational programming and ecosystem land management efforts to enhance Iowa's natural resources. Without these resources, the department would not be able to provide Iowa citizens and visitors the recreation and environmental opportunities, protect and preserve lakes and acres of land for fish and wildlife populations, and improve water quality for those within the state and downstream. AmeriCorps members are a highly effective means of solving the identified community problems of disaster assistance and healthier ecosystems.

This past grant year, our program far exceeded our performance measure goals. More than 13,000 acres of habitat was restored or reconstructed, 285 miles of trails were constructed or repaired, 816

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volunteers were recruited representing 2,691 volunteer hours.

During the summer of 2011, Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members provided more than 8,500 hours of disaster services through four different mission assignments. Members assisted in Sioux City, Iowa for 10 days setting up a Volunteer Reception Center and managing sandbagging sites, a weekend in Council Bluffs canvassing neighborhoods educating residents of flood evacuation plans, two months in Hamburg, Iowa patrolling the levee, and four days in Tama County removing debris from a wind storm. Our program was the first AmeriCorps program in the nation to take over levee patrol. The summer of 2011 continued our program's tradition of responding to disasters within the State of Iowa.

New for our program in the fall of 2012, the Keepers of the Land program deployed out of state. In October, members and staff deployed to Louisiana for 30 days to assist with Hurricane Isaac recovery efforts and deployed for 30+ days to New York in response to Hurricane Sandy. Tasks during these deployments include setting up and managing a volunteer reception center, homeowner intakes, volunteer management, and shelter operations. More members will be deploying to New York in January and February 2013.

The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program is part of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service Disaster Cadre. The program embraces the additional disaster mission assignments. One of the challenges has been the time required for preparing, deploying and post deployment reporting responsibilities. In order to respond to these additional challenges, the program is adding an additional staff person to lead and coordinate the disaster response initiatives. Additionally, adding a group of members fully dedicated to disaster response will not impact the environmental performance measures.

Going forward, the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program will focus on the following performance measures: 1) the DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members will support, provide direct services, and leadership to communities, citizens, and volunteers during disaster preparedness, response, and recovery mission assignments. Members will collaborate with multiple agencies. Activities may include debris removal, levee patrol, volunteer and donation coordination, operations center support, and any other tasks associated with preparedness, response, and recovery. And 2) the DNR Keepers of

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the Land AmeriCorps members will engage in various activities for healthier ecosystems through permanently protecting, restoring, reconstructing, and enhancing large areas of parks and public lands including wildlife habitat, impacts on Iowa's streams, rivers, and lakes, forests, and state parks across the state.

The output goal for disaster services is to provide support to 500 individuals affected by natural disasters. The outcome goal for disaster services is to enhance community capacity to respond to and/or recover from natural disasters. The output goal for environmental stewardship is to restore or reconstruct 10,000 acres of habitat. The outcome for environmental stewardship is to provide safer trails for individuals to enjoy. Over the course of a three year grant, the program strives to assist more than 1,500 individuals through disaster response and restore over 30,000 acres of habitat. Performance measures will be tracked monthly through a survey tool. Members will utilize Global Positioning System (GPS), Geographic Information System (GIS) and survey tools to collect data for reporting our program performance measures.

d. MEMBER RECRUITMENT - Recruitment for the DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program is a partnership between the site supervisors and program staff. Program staff lead the recruitment efforts by attending college and university career and volunteer fairs, advertising on college and university job boards (in state and out of state), social media, My.AmeriCorps.gov website, and a variety of other resources. Site supervisors will work with local professors other area resources to recruit locally in their region. Many of our members serve in their local communities. This assists in building a close relationship with community partners.

The DNR has a deep tradition of working with underrepresented populations, particularly low-income individuals, rural residents, older Americans, veterans, and people with disabilities. The program has a unique relationship with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation in partnering to place people with disabilities in our AmeriCorps positions. Individuals who have come through this partnership have successfully completed their term of service and as a result of their service, assisted them in preparation for a career after AmeriCorps.

This past grant year, the DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program had 3 members who were 55 or older (the oldest was 79), 31 members who were either a Veteran or a family member of a Veteran,

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3 members who self identified they had a disability, and 63 members who were unemployed or financially disadvantaged prior to enrolling. The enrollment rate for the 2011 -- 2012 grant year was 104%.

e. MEMBER TRAINING - Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members receive training throughout their term of service. Members start their enrollment attending an enrollment/orientation session in Des Moines on their first day of service. During this session, members complete paperwork, review prohibited activities, learn about AmeriCorps, and cover all other topics needed to get them started with their term of service.

Twice a year, AmeriCamp is held at Springbrook Education Center. All members that are in service during each AmeriCamp are required to attend the four day trainings. During AmeriCamp, training encompasses a wide range of topics which include: civic engagement, customer service, disaster response, disability inclusion, all about AmeriCorps, Life after AmeriCorps (mock interviews and resume writing), volunteer management, skill building sessions (ex: chain sawing, chronic waste disease testing, tree identification, bird banding). AmeriCamp not only gives members a chance to learn new skills, but a great opportunity to network with other members within the program.

New this year, all full-time members will receive CPR training and certification. All other members will receive basic first aid training. Onsite, the members receive site specific training for their specific service activities which includes safety requirements.

The disaster team members will receive additional more in-depth training to prepare them for disaster response. Trainings will include topics such as volunteer reception center, fire fighting, and mold remediation just to mention a few. This specialized training will assist them in any type of deployment that may be assigned.

Prohibited activities is outlined in the member handbook that every AmeriCorps member receives. This written material is reinforced during the enrollment session, "AmeriCamp," and throughout the member's term of service. At the end of enrollment session, the member signs a prohibited activities form and their member service agreement acknowledging their intention to abide by these prohibitions. Ongoing site visits ensures compliance with AmeriCorps regulations.

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f. MEMBER SUPERVISION - The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program has established bureau representatives for each bureau within the DNR. Program staff coordinates with bureau representatives to identify service sites, site supervisors, and ensure AmeriCorps rules and regulations are being enforced. Careful consideration is given when selecting sites and supervisors to ensure accountability to the integrity of the AmeriCorps program and its rules and regulations.

Each DNR AmeriCorps member has a site supervisor assigned to them at their service location. Site supervisors attend annual training and receive ongoing support throughout their member's term of service. Communication is critical for ensuring a successful partnership between the member and the Department of Natural Resources.

Site supervisors are selected in cooperation with our Bureau Representatives and are experienced managers and renowned experts in their specialty fields. The majority of site supervisors are DNR staff members. If members are serving with an outside organization (County Conservation Board or non-profit), the member is assigned a site supervisor from the partnering organization as well as a main contact person within the DNR. All non DNR site supervisors attend site supervisor training and are held to the same expectations as a staff member of the DNR.

Bureau representatives are out and about in the field across the state interacting with site supervisors and members throughout the grant year providing another set of eyes for program staff. Formal quarterly bureau representative meetings take place along with constant informal communication. Bureau representatives receive training on AmeriCorps rules and regulations including prohibited activities.

Service sites are evaluated and monitored throughout the year. This occurs through site visits, program evaluations, and monthly surveys of both the members and site supervisors. Program staff is in contact with site supervisors and members through email, text messaging and phone calls throughout a member's term of service. Site visits occur during the grant year to all sites. Visits may take place at the beginning of a member's term of service or any point throughout their term.

Site supervisors receive in-depth training annually covering topics which include: "What is

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AmeriCorps", term information and benefits, selecting a member, starting a member, supervisory during the term including conflict resolution and disciplinary information, end of term paperwork and requirements, and prohibited activities.

TUTORING PROGRAMS ONLY - NA

g. MEMBER EXPERIENCE - Civic participation and connectivity in the community where Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members serve is essential. The program is geared to provide a powerful service experience to members. Members will serve in communities across the state, interacting with residents, visitors, and other organizations during their term of service.

Throughout their service, members will partner with other members within the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program to organize and manage a volunteer project partnering with local community non-profits. Members will participate quarterly in local community volunteer opportunities outside of our organization. During each AmeriCamp, all members will participate in service projects outside of our organization at Whiterock Conservancy. In honor of MLK Day of Service or AmeriCorps week, all members come together for a day of civic engagement and service project. Prior projects have included packing meals for Meals from the Heartland and serving lunch at a shelter.

The tie to civic engagement and national service theme is one that our program continues to expand on. National service is why our members are here first and foremost and our program wants to provide AmeriCorps members with a powerful service experience. During their term of service, members interact with citizens and visitors within their local communities. Many members encounter individuals who are not familiar with AmeriCorps. Members educate them on AmeriCorps ("the domestic Peace Corps") and the importance of national service. Feedback we have received from members is these interactions give them a great sense of pride in verbalizing what they are doing and how they are contributing to their community, state, and nation.

One of the most memorable ways for our members to experience the impact of national service is through disaster response. The gratitude that comes from helping was recently quoted from a member who deployed to Louisiana and New York last fall and just returned to New York City for a second deployment; "It is overwhelming to me what the victims must be feeling right now. It feels good and

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right to be able to make their suffering ease a little. We have seen in Louisiana how hopeless something like this can seem, but a kind word or a helping hand from a stranger can make a dark day brighten." - Billy Hinton. Current members and alums continue to pass on their experiences to highlight how important national service is to our country, state and local communities. Ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things.

h. VOLUNTEER GENERATION - Volunteer generation is an important component of the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program. Volunteers will engage and have a measurable impact on the identified community problems. The program initiatives tie into the State of Iowa initiatives. Iowa currently ranks 3rd in the nation for volunteer rate. Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds recently announced an initiative titled "Volunteer Iowa: A Call to Service." The goal of the "Call to Service" initiative is to make Iowa the national leader in service and volunteerism by 2015.

Volunteer generating projects have been engrained in the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program design for years. In order to rise to the Governor's challenge and develop higher quality projects, beginning with the 2012 -- 2013 grant year, the design for volunteer projects has changed. All members will partner with other DNR AmeriCorps members to plan, organize, recruit and manage a volunteer project in their community related to natural resources. Additionally, members will partner with a non-profit organization for the event to connect with residents in the community. Members will be required to submit a project plan for approval to ensure volunteers will not be recruited for or engaged in prohibited or unallowable activities.

Not only will members plan, organize, and manage a volunteer project, members are required to volunteer in their community once a quarter. Volunteering is one small way people show their citizenship. "Volunteerism is an integral part to the state's future and well-being," said Branstad. "Our objective for the 'Call to Service' is to increase the number of Iowans who are volunteering as well as the number of hours that they serve." The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program embraces the statewide initiative and promotes members to get involved. All members receive volunteer management training.

i. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION - The DNR takes AmeriCorps branding very seriously. All service sites receive AmeriCorps signs to post prominently.

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Members are issued clothing, winter hats, pins, and name tags with the AmeriCorps logo and are required to have something "AmeriCorps" on and visible at all times while serving. Marketing materials, social media sites, websites, enrollment materials, and AmeriCamp information contains the AmeriCorps logo and our program name. Members and site supervisors receive communication training on the proper ways to communicate the DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program name.

Recently, our program has re-designed our t-shirts and sweatshirts for our members. Not only is the AmeriCorps logo on the front chest of the clothing, AmeriCorps logos have been added to the sleeve and the back of the shirt to make it stand out even more.

Organizational Capability

a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING - The DNR is a complex state agency, established in its earliest form in 1917, which successfully manages over 900 employees. The agency has a long history of mentoring opportunities and programs that benefit the State of Iowa as well as the participants of those programs. Its vision is to lead Iowans in caring for our natural resources and environmental awareness. With this mission directing DNR work, Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program is a key component to address pressing environmental needs throughout the state. For over 14 years, DNR has provided AmeriCorps members with a variety of professional development opportunities to serve Iowa communities.

The DNR has the management capability and structure to handle a diverse and varied workforce. The management philosophy is based on participative team management with the agency organized into three divisions: Environmental Services, Conservation and Recreation, and Management Services.

The AmeriCorps program falls within the Management Services Division, which delivers services to all bureaus in the agency. The DNR is capable of ensuring adequate staffing for recruitment, program oversight and member supervision. The AmeriCorps program has the full support of our Director, Deputy Director, Division Administrators and Bureau Chiefs. Under the Management Services Division falls the Office of Volunteer Services which manages the DNR AmeriCorps program. Key program and fiscal positions include one AmeriCorps program director, one new disaster team lead, one program assistant, and one budget analyst all dedicated to ensuring adequate program oversight and member supervision occurs.

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The DNR has the experience, staffing, structure to plan, implement and evaluate the continuation program and we are extremely fortunate to have an experienced and skilled AmeriCorps program staff. This begins with the Program Director, Dawn Stohs. Dawn has been the Program Director for four years and brings training and marketing background to the position. Additionally, she has a unique understanding of AmeriCorps because her husband is an AmeriCorps alum having served with Habitat for Humanity and he is employed with that organization. Dawn has a passion for volunteer involvement. The majority of her free time is dedicated to volunteer with various organizations outside of her work.

Our Administrative Assistant, Elizabeth Rohret, holds a natural science education degree, has been with the program for more than six years. Elizabeth ensures all enrollments and exiting paperwork is completed and that the member files are updated and comprehensive. Ronnie Cyrus-Jackson is the Budget Analyst for the Department of Natural Resources AmeriCorps program. Ronnie plays an active role in AmeriCorps, including participating in service projects, Martin Luther King Day projects and assisting with member development and job preparedness.

New with this grant is the addition of a disaster team lead. Disaster mission assignments are becoming more frequent and expanding outside of our state. A dedicated staff member to organize and lead AmeriCorps members on mission assignments will benefit the program. Qualifications for this new position will include experience in conflict resolution and project management. The individual must have excellent organization skills, positive attitude, and flexibility for ever changing tasks. Disaster training will be provided to the staff member in the areas of volunteer reception center management, first aid training, FEMA documentation, and other disaster related preparations just to mention a few.

The program staff has a commitment to continued improvement and education of the AmeriCorps program. Staff actively participates in Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, Corporation for National and Community Service, and other AmeriCorps volunteer events and training. Through this commitment, program staff will continue to expand, broaden, and enhance the DNR AmeriCorps programs to stay on top of any programming changes.

Program staff continues to build capacity within the Department. Program staff have been crossed

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trained which strengthens the entire program and will lead to better overall support for the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members. All of the staff, from the supervisor to the administrative assistant, have multiple years experience in managing past AmeriCorps grants. Overall, the staff involved in the management of this AmeriCorps grant has more than 15 years of experience in successful grant, fiscal and program management. Combined, these talents, skills and experiences will ensure continued success for this grant.

The organization has a capacity to continually evaluate the program and program staff. Members complete monthly reports via Survey Monkey. In the monthly reports, members are asked to provide feedback on the program and program staff. These reports provide staff with up to date information to assist with the administration of the program. Members complete evaluations after each AmeriCamp throughout the year. Feedback provided assists program staff in developing and administering future AmeriCamps.

New in 2012, the program began utilizing a program assessment tool through the Executive Service Corps to obtain information and feedback from the program's site supervisors, bureau representatives and upper management within the Department of Natural Resources. This evaluation assists program staff in understanding weaknesses and successes with the internal stakeholders of our organization. Annual assessments will continue to evaluate the success of changes. The DNR has prior experience administering federal funds which includes 14 years experience with AmeriCorps. The department has more than 300 funding sources, including grants, federal funds, and private donations, totaling more than \$121.6 million (excluding capitals).

b. SUSTAINABILITY - The Keepers of the Land program has been developed to impact communities for years to come. The DNR is committed to the AmeriCorps program through financial commitment dropping the cost per MSY by \$251 and increasing the department's match to 51% well above the 42% required grantee share. All of this while increasing the number of positions requested by 42. AmeriCorps funding amounts to .05% of the department's total budget.

Stakeholder support within the DNR and throughout the communities we are serving continues to grow. Partnering with our stakeholders, our AmeriCorps program receives financial, volunteer, and community support to achieve our program initiatives of improving Iowa's natural resources.

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The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program strives for community involvement. Throughout their term of service, members interact with residents and visitors in the community where they are serving. Our members have a passion for the environment. While serving with our program, the members educate and engage citizens on environmental stewardship. The relationships they build leads to increased financial support and ongoing community volunteer involvement addressing the environmental challenges that face our state. Additional environmental organizations within Iowa have requested the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program member support. Partnering with other organizations will increase funding to the program outside of the DNR funding.

The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program has a very high reputation throughout the state and within our organization. The department is committed to the AmeriCorps program as indicated in this new grant proposal. Additional positions are being requested to assist with making an even greater impact on our environmental needs with increased capacity building.

As a result of the community support, additional AmeriCorps positions are being requested to serve in areas not previously served by AmeriCorps members with our program. Partnerships across the state include Friends Groups, County Conservation Boards, Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever, and other non-profit environmental and natural resource organizations. Through these partnerships, all parties will serve together to achieve the results outlined in the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program design.

c. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY - The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program has established bureau representatives representing each area within the DNR. Program staff coordinates with bureau representatives to identify service sites, site supervisors, and ensure AmeriCorps rules and regulations are being enforced. Careful consideration is given when selecting sites and supervisors to ensure accountability to the integrity of the AmeriCorps program and its rules and regulations.

Bureau representatives are out and about in the field across the state interacting with site supervisors and members throughout the grant year providing another set of eyes for program staff. Formal quarterly bureau representative meetings take place along with constant informal communication. Bureau representatives receive training on AmeriCorps rules and regulations including prohibited

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Service sites are evaluated and monitored throughout the year. This occurs through site visits, program evaluations, and monthly surveys of both the members and site supervisors. Program staff is in contact with site supervisors and members through email, text messaging and phone calls throughout a member's term of service. Site visits occur during the grant year to all sites. Visits may take place at the beginning of a member's term of service or any point throughout their term.

Site supervisors receive in-depth training annually covering topics which include: "What is AmeriCorps", term information and benefits, selecting a member, starting a member, supervisory during the term including conflict resolution and disciplinary information, end of term paperwork and requirements, and prohibited activities.

Members receive training at their enrollment session and during AmeriCamp on prohibited activities. They receive detailed information on the importance of their actions while representing AmeriCorps and the DNR and the impact to the program both locally and nationally.

Program staff has stressed with bureau representatives, site supervisors, and members to inquire first if they have any questions about an activity and how it relates specifically to prohibited activities or compliance issues. This takes more program staff time, but opens up the dialog between program staff and the field to ensure we are compliant at all times.

DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE: - A weakness with the program relates to the time commitment with disaster responses. The amount of time to coordinate, manage, implement, and closeout (FEMA paperwork) for disaster mission assignments has impacted the day to day operations of our program. Disaster response continues to be a very important part of our program design. In order to address these concerns, an additional staff person is being added to support the disaster response initiatives alleviating these day to day responsibilities from the program director.

ENROLLMENT: - The enrollment rate for the 2011 -- 2012 grant year was 104%. Our program is on track for 100% enrollment in the 2012 -- 2013 grant year.

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RETENTION: - The retention rate for the 2011 -- 2012 grant year was 84.8%. During this grant year, we had 12 out of 16 members leave the program early for full time permanent employment. Most of these members were part of the Wildlife bureau and natural resource jobs became available in other organizations. This is something that has not occurred for several years in the region. Their experience within our program assisted them in obtaining permanent employment. Due to this occurrence, the position types have been modified for Wildlife positions offering more HT positions than in the past vs. FT positions. Additional training for prospective members and site supervisors has been done to promote the importance of members committing to their AmeriCorps term as a national service program. Currently our 2012 -- 2013 program retention rates is 97.2% with only one member leaving early due to family members being impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

OPERATING SITES AND MEMBER SERVICE SITES: - Service Sites are selected working in conjunction with our bureau representatives. The review process looks at the management at the location, critical needs of the site and community, and matching with the program design of the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program. This process undergoes a tight review to ensure our organization is placing members in the best possible situation to create a successful environment for all involved. Our proposal includes more than 70 sites across the State of Iowa. All of the service sites are either part of our organization or our organization has a partnership already formed with the site.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS - Program budget is based on the DNR's experience with previous AmeriCorps grants and forecasted supply needs to complete deeper impact and broader reaching projects. The corporation cost per MSY is \$10,755 which is a decrease of \$251 per MSY from the previous grant all while increasing members and staff. The CNCS share of the grant is 49% compared to 51% for the grantee, well above the required amount of 42% grantee share. The grantee share is an increase of 2% from the previous grant.

The DNR remains committed to the AmeriCorps program as it has for over 14 years. To support the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program, the DNR has secured support, cash, and in-kind contributions for the grantee share of the financial obligations. AmeriCorps members provide a cost effective option for making a large impact on the environment across the state in rural and urban populations.

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b. BUDGET ADEQUACY - The DNR has shown a strong history of commitment to the AmeriCorps program and has obtained diverse, non-federal resources to continue, expand, and improve our program. Those sources highlighted throughout this section and the previous sections above are indicative of the increasing support and wider range of resources, both cash and in-kind, we have assembled to solidly support for our program as it continues to grow and we continue forward toward our ultimate goal of non-federally funded sustainability.

The DNR has a seasoned Program Director that has the capacity to manage multiple grants at the same time. During the 2009--2010 grant year, three AmeriCorps grants were administered by DNR. Due to the program director's capacity and DNR's compliance track record with AmeriCorps programs, funding for a Disaster Team Lead is being requested.

The DNR has the capacity to track AmeriCorps funds, as required by both Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service and Corporation for National and Community Service, and meet additional reporting requirements. It has the capability and structure to manage a diverse and varied workforce. All divisions using AmeriCorps members have worked extensively and successfully with grants, volunteers, and interns, and have vast experience with grant administration. The DNR conducts ongoing internal assessments of its management capabilities. All financial transactions, related to AmeriCorps members and specific projects, are pre-approved by site supervisors and AmeriCorps program staff, and monitored by department financial system to ensure that every financial transaction meets standards.

Annually, the Iowa State Auditor completes an in-depth audit of the DNR and to date has found no notable infractions. Independent audits of existing DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program led by the Corporation for National and Community Service were completed in 2004 and 2005, and in 2010 the GAO conducted an audit of AmeriCorps Recovery funds received by the DNR. In all cases results indicated appropriate adherence to program requirements.

The DNR has more than 300 funding sources, including grants, federal funds, and private donations, totaling more than \$121.6 million (excluding capitals). Current funding from CNCS and ICVS equals 0.5% of the DNR's total budget. The sources of funding that are pertinent to this grant are listed in the budget narrative. For an exact breakdown of DNR funding more information can be found at

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<http://www.iowadnr.gov/files/annual2010.pdf>.

AmeriCorps provides a cost effective approach to addressing the community needs of our program through both intangible and tangible benefits and costs. The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program budget reflects a statewide program where members serve in more than 60 out of 99 counties. Our model with direct supervision and bureau representatives provides excellent member supervision while minimizing the costs for managing those members. The program provides a cost effective, hands-on conservation efforts, and community service activities while addressing environmental needs of the communities.

Modifications to the budget from past grant years includes the removal of funding for trail restoration supplies. The trails program has obtained supplemental funding to support the purchase of these supplies for the AmeriCorps trail program. Program staff salaries are increased to reflect current payroll amounts throughout the duration of a grant cycle. In the previous budget, salaries and benefits were calculated based on amounts five years ago which were outdated due to cost of living increases. The Keepers of the Land budget is based on years of experience in running high quality AmeriCorps programs. Every detail has been considered in developing the budget to accommodate increasing interest from partners and expansion of our positions. The DNR believes the budget is adequate and appropriate to support our program design.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program have a diverse and committed evaluation process in place. Evaluation takes place internally and externally. Internally, Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program ensures ongoing evaluation through both formal and informal methods. Formal methods include: member monthly evaluations, formal mid-term and end-of-term service site supervisor evaluations. Informal methods include program director site visits, orientation and service project evaluations. Through this feedback, the program is quickly able to collect, analyze, and address questions and needs. The results are used continuously to improve the program specifically through; streamlined administrative procedures; enhanced member training and development opportunities; along with personal assistance to individual members.

Externally, the Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps program ensure evaluation through partnership with independent evaluators. Currently, the program is participating in the program assessment through

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the Executive Service Corps. This will be an annual evaluation that is conducted of the program reviewing the impact on participation, AmeriCorps members, education, life skills, civic engagement, and overall program evaluation. Upper management, Bureau Chiefs, district supervisors, site supervisors, and members participated in the benchmark evaluation. Results from this evaluation provide program staff valuable information to focus on creating better connection with the community, enhance recruitment efforts, and improve member retention. Summary comments stated: "customer service from program staff has increased tremendously over the past couple years -- thank you for everything you are doing to support site supervisors", "AmeriCorps provides life changing experiences for individuals and we are blessed as an organization to be a part of this not only assisting the individual but addressing the community needs and environmental initiatives the program touches".

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

NA

Continuation Changes

NA