

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Twenty Rural Alaska Village Environmental Network (RAVEN) AmeriCorps members will leverage 750 volunteers per year to improve solid waste management systems in 20 rural Alaskan communities. At the end of the three year period, at risk-ecosystems in 28 rural communities will be improved and protected. These ecosystems support valuable subsistence resources that community members rely on for food, cultural traditions, and good health. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$266,000 per year will be matched with \$160,546.

## Rationale and Approach

### NEED

For thousands of years, Alaska Natives have relied on hunting, fishing, and gathering as the primary source of food. Even today the diet of many Alaska Native people is 80% subsistence foods (Alaska Community Action on Toxins, [www.akaction.org](http://www.akaction.org)). This traditional way of living, called subsistence, provides not only basic survival and health, but also connections to culture, community, and family. In the past few decades, however, valuable acres of ecosystems that support Alaska Native people have been polluted due to inadequate solid waste management (SWM) systems. According to a U.S. governmental study of pollution, "...human exposure to pollutants occurs primarily through eating subsistence foods" ("Contaminants in Alaska: Is America's Arctic at Risk?" Interagency Collaborative Paper, U.S. Department of the Interior et al, 2000). As the health of the land and its natural resources are critical to surviving a traditional lifestyle, ensuring protection of these ecosystems is at the heart of Alaska Native cultural values. The move from traditional hunter-gather/nomadic lifestyles toward modern conveniences has brought major solid waste challenges (appliances, e-waste, vehicles, equipment, fuel, oil, chemicals, hazardous substances, food packaging, etc.). The resources, knowledge and infrastructure needed to adequately care for this solid waste has not kept pace with the amount of materials being transported into remote, tribal communities that proper disposal. Thus, protection of subsistence lands has consistently been identified by the Alaska Federation of Natives as a top priority (Alaska Federation of Natives, "Federal Legislative Priorities," FY 2007-12).

Since 1965, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) has empowered rural Alaskans through a range of culturally resonant programs and services. For 18 years, RurAL CAP's Rural Alaska Village Environmental Network (RAVEN) AmeriCorps Program has provided 20

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(out of 229) rural, primarily Alaska Native tribal communities (also called "villages") each year with the support they need to assess, plan, and administer environmental projects that improve polluted lands and protect the natural resources of local ecosystems.

According to a University of Alaska policy analysis, "SWM is severely deficient in rural Alaska" (The Management of Open Dumps in Rural Alaska - the Continuing Need for Public Health Action: A Policy Analysis, Jacqueline D. Shirley, M.P.H., UAA, 2011). Even where landfills exist, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) states they are insufficient; "With limited resources, many landfills [in rural Alaska] are not operated in a way that is protective of human health or the environment." (DEC, Solid Waste Procedures Manual for Municipal Class III Solid Waste Landfills).

Alaska's urban centers have fee-based solid waste disposal and refuse collection services. These services do not exist in rural Alaska. According to the State of Alaska, there are currently 127 unpermitted landfills in rural Alaska (DEC email Update, December 5, 2012, sent by Rebecca A Colvin, Program Coordinator, Division of Environmental Health and Solid Waste, DEC). Waste is left unsorted, untreated, unmanaged, and is disposed of in unlined, leaking dump sites, sewage lagoons, yards, and other community lands. Unregulated dumps and sewage lagoons leach contaminants into the water table, which then serves as a vector for the spread of toxins and disease as watersheds, floods, high winds, humans, and animals spread waste through communities and subsistence lands.

To accommodate the 40% of Alaska's population that lives in remote areas, the State of Alaska created an official Landfill Class (Class III). However, Class III landfills are insufficient to protect the environment. They are unlined, and lack treatment, consolidation, separation, compaction, and management. According to the DEC, in 51 rural villages, half of the households have no indoor plumbing (Anchorage Daily News, 8/27/09). Many residents use a "honey bucket" haul-and-dump system for disposing human waste and dump contents in rivers, woods, or backyards. Given the number of unpermitted and leaking landfills in rural Alaska, disposing of human waste in landfills is a serious health hazard. When floodwaters rise each spring, raw sewage and trash from inadequate SWM systems flood neighborhoods and homes and flow into river systems. Communities rely on these water sources for drinking water and subsistence fishing.

The risks of inadequate SWM systems are many. For example, the common practice of combining sewage and solid waste in rural Alaska is associated with high pediatric lower respiratory tract infection incidence ("Lack of Piped Water and Sewage Services is Associated with Pediatric Lower Respiratory Tract Infection in Alaska," Bradford D. Gessner, MD, MPH, The Journal of Pediatrics,

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May 2008). Alaska Native children suffer some of the highest rates of invasive pneumococcal disease in the world; and rates are associated with a lack of in-home piped water ("Invasive Pneumococcal Disease in Alaskan Children: Impact of the Seven-Valent Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine and the Role of Water Supply, Jay D. Wenger, MD, Tammy Zulz, MPH, Dana Bruden, MS, et al).

The SWM need in rural Alaska is complex. There are 229 rural, predominantly Alaska Native, villages throughout the state. While Alaska is over twice the size of Texas, it has only 13 state roads. The majority of these villages are only accessible by small aircraft or skiff boat. These communities also tend to be low-income with an extremely high cost of living. The poverty rate in rural Alaska ranges from 10% to 19.2%; significantly higher than the state rate of 6.0% (State of Alaska, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis, <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/labforce>). The cost of living in Alaska is also significantly higher than the national rate; as high as 39% above the U.S. average.

The average demographics for a rural community served by RAVEN from 2009-2012 were as follows: population 689; 70% of population all or part Alaska Native; 50% of workers not in the labor force or unemployed; 22% of population lives in poverty, compared with 15% nationally (Current Population Survey, 2012 Annual Social and Economic Supplement); 78% of villages off the road system; 70% of villages economically "distressed," as defined by the Denali Commission, an independent federal agency serving rural Alaska (Denali Commission, Distressed Community Criteria 2012 Update, June 2012). Local infrastructure is limited to a tribal and city council office, post office, one school and possibly a few local businesses.

This population was selected because, as demonstrated, the need for environmentally safe SWM in rural Alaska is high. Environmental issues and health risks in these communities are significantly higher than in the rest of the state and nation. As the population in these communities is small and employment opportunities scarce, there is very little funding for or in these communities. As stated in the EPA's annual report for 2012, "At the same time that funding has decreased significantly, the costs to address critical rural Alaskan sanitation needs have increased dramatically. Given the limited cash economy of [Alaska Native villages], these increased costs are extremely difficult to absorb" (EPA, Annual Report 2012: Alaska Native Villages Program).

### AMERICORPS MEMBERS: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

In 1994, the EPA began the Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP), granting funds to federally-recognized tribes to build capacity to improve environmental conditions in rural Alaska

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through the planning and policy-making work of locally-hired IGAP coordinators. IGAP develops tribal government land management improvement plans, or Integrated Solid Waste Management Plans, approved by the tribe, to guide SWM priorities. RAVEN was concurrently developed by the EPA in 1994 (partnering with RurAL CAP as the lead administrator in 1995), to complement IGAP with hands-on, 'getting things done' AmeriCorps members, providing the critical service of community engagement and education alongside SWM planning. Each year, twenty full-time, locally-recruited RAVEN members assist IGAP coordinators (who typically supervise members), dump managers, and other leaders in 20 communities to implement tribal government SWM plans that protect at-risk ecosystems from contaminants.

In 2009, RurAL CAP and SWM experts from the EPA and DEC developed the Solid Waste Management Assessment Matrix tool to measure progress made on SWM plans. The Solid Waste matrices offer empirical snapshots of solid waste analysis, which RAVEN implements three times per year. The tool was developed to aid environmental workers and RurAL CAP to score solid waste conditions in four different categories, with each those categories broken down into sub categories that measure absolutes such as distance between the community and its landfill, whether household hazardous waste separation and storage is occurring. Using the tool throughout the year allows RAVEN Members, their site supervisors and other professionals to assess current practices, set goals in improving various aspects of management, then conduct a final assessment to discern where improvements have been made. RAVEN activities include:

- \* Minimizing the quantity of landfill waste by developing recycling and composting programs, educating on reducing waste and reuse of materials, facilitating separation at disposal site, organizing backhaul (removal of waste from community by barge or plane) of recyclables, batteries and scrap metals;
- \* Initiating/supporting household hazardous waste collection of paints, solvents, lead acid batteries (all-terrain vehicle, snow-machine, boat, car/truck batteries, etc.) and green-cleaning programs to prevent toxic chemicals from contaminating land/water resources;
- \* Providing education and guidance on effective waste collection and transport programs; and
- \* Assisting environmental workers with proper landfill management (fencing, signage, community education) and organizing community clean-up events.

To protect ecosystems, RAVENs also engage community members, including many youth, in a variety of volunteer opportunities, conduct environmental education in the schools, leverage resources and build partnerships with local, regional and statewide businesses and non-profit organizations.

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This AmeriCorps role strengthens the capacity of the tribal council and other local organizations to better accomplish SWM goals protecting subsistence lands. Rural communities have very few people or infrastructures working on this need. IGAP coordinators are primarily focused on developing SWM plans, policies, regulations and resources needed to support the plan, and landfill managers, where they exist, are often part-time, seasonal or intermittent. RAVEN offers communities a valuable resource to assess needs, educate community members, mobilize hundreds of volunteers and implement practical solutions to SWM challenges that otherwise would not be accomplished. With their one year, 1,700 hour commitment, RAVENs have the opportunity to engage ALL community residents, especially targeting youth, and involve local organizations in activities that have lasting SWM improvements. In this way, AmeriCorps expands and strengthens SWM services.

Twenty, full-time slots are requested under this proposal to serve 20 communities in rural Alaska. The type and number of member positions are based on RurAL CAP's experience with RAVEN and correspond to community goals, desired program outcomes and design, member service responsibilities and level of partner financial support. Priority will be given to communities that commit to two or more years with RAVEN, further contributing to ensuring SWM improvements are fully incorporated and sustained.

### **EVIDENCE-BASED/INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The RAVEN model utilizes several best practice models, including the EPA's Theory of Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's (ANTHC) Solid Waste Solutions in Rural Alaska. RAVEN activities also follow environmental best practices of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). RAVEN also uses evidence from evaluations to guide program changes and enhancements.

RAVEN has performance data providing evidence that the methodologies used by RAVEN AmeriCorps members are effective in improving solid waste management systems in rural Alaskan communities. An evaluation by outside evaluator Brian Saylor and Associates using data from the Matrix assessment tool and administrative records found that the RAVEN program has a significant, positive impact on SWM in 2011-12. For example, the management (proper collection, separation, and disposal) of household hazardous waste and the burning of community waste saw over 75% improvements in management practices compared to initial assessments of community waste disposal activity. Waste management activities improved by almost 20%. Backhauling activities showed modest improvement in impact scores.

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RAVEN's community engagement model and Solid Waste Management (SWM) Matrix measurement tool are based on best practices from the EPA's Theory of Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) (<http://epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/waste/downloads/overview.pdf>). ISWM combines waste prevention, recycling and composting, and disposal of waste. RAVEN staff and members use this comprehensive practice to plan for the prevention, reuse, and management of solid waste in ways that most effectively protect the environment and human health by evaluating local needs and conditions and subsequently selecting and combining the most appropriate waste management activities for those needs and conditions. Per ISWM best practices, RAVEN utilizes the EPA's circular list of tasks: identify needs; review existing system; review existing regulation; organize decision making framework; establish objective; identify potential components; compare options; develop the ISWM plan; implement the plan; and evaluate the waste management system. Also per ISWM best practices, RAVEN considers education, public participation, and outreach during each step, incorporating all three as appropriate (<http://epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/waste/downloads/overview.pdf>). As discussed, RAVEN members coordinate with IGAP coordinators to develop and administer ISWM plans.

As the nation's largest, tribal, self-governance organization, ANTHC manages statewide health services for Alaska Natives. ANTHC's "Solid Waste Solutions in Rural Alaska" (2007, <http://www.anthc.org/cs/dehe/sustops/swm/upload/SW-Solutions-in-Rural-Alaska-07.pdf>) identifies culturally resonant practices specific to improving SWM in rural Alaska. These best practices are not only used to guide and evaluate RAVEN, but are at its foundation. RAVEN involves local residents in the solution process, helping them understand the impact of their habits in order to create economical and sustainable change. RAVEN enables residents to take ownership of the problem and begin to change the habits and systems from within the community structure.

USAID best practices for environmentally sound SWM also include several specific activities, all four of which, in addition to local SWM plans, guide RAVEN activities: 1) Minimize the quantity of landfill waste through elimination, recovery, reuse, recycling, remanufacturing, composting, and similar methods; 2) Manage non-hazardous wastes and special or hazardous wastes separately; 3) Collect and transport all waste effectively and efficiently; and 4) Design sanitary landfills and ensure appropriate siting, operation, monitoring, and closure.

The impact of the AmeriCorps investment, or return on investment (ROI), of using the RAVEN model to address SWM in rural Alaska is evident in comparison to large infrastructure development projects in rural Alaska. For example, Chuathbaluk, an isolated community of about 135

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residents, received a sanitation system, costing \$15M (October 2012, AlaskaDispatch.com). In Kwigillingok, a 2012 RAVEN site, the price tag of a new landfill was estimated at over \$2M (ANTHC, Solid Waste Solutions in Rural Alaska). Alaska is unlikely to see \$2M in government funds for the 181 communities lacking SWM systems. Instead, with \$13,300 in CNCS funds invested per member, 20 communities benefit from SWM improvements alongside local engagement and behavior change each year. According to the Solid Waste Association of North America, with proper SWM, a landfill's life can be extended from 20 years to up to 50, providing an enormous savings in state and federal dollars (<http://swana.org/Home/UpcomingEvents>).

RurAL CAP expects the outcome at the end of the three year grant cycle to be 28 RAVEN communities will have at risk ecosystems improved and protected. These ecosystems support valuable subsistence resources that community members rely on for food, cultural traditions and good health. By working with an independent evaluator, this outcome of sustained SWM improvements and the impact they have to improve ecosystems will be assessed. As an intermediate outcome, 28 communities will show a 25% improvement in SWM systems, using the Matrix to assess these systems at the start, mid-point, and end of each year. Members will work with volunteers and local leaders to improve 13,440 acres of tribal government and public land, as measured by land surveys conducted at the start and end of the service year. At least 150 tons of solid waste will be backhauled or diverted from the waste stream into proper management systems, significantly reducing the amount of waste that pollutes the ecosystem. This impact will be measured through pounds of waste backhauled or diverted and recorded in weekly member activity logs and monthly reports. Information from all member and supervisor reports will be collected and reported quarterly to CNCS by the RurAL CAP program coordinator.

Performance measure goals were determined by estimating that there would be 40 communities served by RAVEN over the three-year period (considering many communities will participate for more than one year). Of those 40 communities, 28 (or 70%) are estimated to successfully meet program goals based on previous RAVEN outcomes. Improvement in SWM systems is based on previous Matrix results. The 13,440 acres to be improved is estimated at 320 acres (or ½ mile square) per community x 14 communities per year x 3 years. Estimated tons of solid waste backhauled or diverted is based on previous RAVEN outputs.

In the last full year of program operation, RAVEN exceeded all output and intermediate outcome performance measure targets; providing 20 communities with SWM assistance and environmental education, and the outcome of diverting 90 tons of solid waste from local dump sites

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(far exceeding the target of 50 tons). The end outcome of 70% of communities reporting improvement in SWM systems at the end of one year was nearly met at 65%, due to a dip in our average member attrition rate (plan for improvement detailed under "Grantee Demonstrated Compliance" below). Yet, even those who ended their service early reported increases in improved SWM systems. In addition, using the SWM Matrix, RAVEN members reported increasing their awareness, technical skills, and ability to manage SWM by 36% and RAVEN communities demonstrated a 20% improvement in SWM systems.

### **MEMBER RECRUITMENT**

RAVEN members are recruited from and serve in their own communities. Recruitment packets that include applications, position descriptions, supervisor roles, and posters for advertising are sent to all 229 rural tribal and city offices statewide. Recruitment information is also posted on RurAL CAP's website and social media networks. Recruitment materials are designed to be appropriate and accessible for the target population, including people experiencing a disability. A community applies to host a member by selecting a host organization, generally the tribal council. The host organization selects a staff member to serve as the supervisor for the future member and submits an application describing need, commitment to supporting the program, and the qualifications of the proposed supervisor and member applicant.

To recruit and engage traditionally underrepresented populations, RAVEN recruitment is open exclusively to remote, rural communities across Alaska. RurAL CAP's mission respects the unique values of Alaska's small and primarily Alaska Native communities and its programs are designed for optimum engagement, including rural representatives on agency staff, the board of directors and advisory committees. RAVEN teams reflect the diversity of Alaska's population in gender, ethnicity, culture, income, and education. The vast majority of members are Alaska Native and many are veterans, Elders (or seniors), and disadvantaged young adults.

### **MEMBER TRAINING**

Members receive coaching to acclimate to their new community role through an orientation and two in-service trainings in Anchorage. Member training is designed with input from host organizations, project partners, and current and former members with a goal to orient members to AmeriCorps' national service model, compliance with all RurAL CAP and AmeriCorps rules regulations, and prohibited activities, and ensure necessary competencies for meeting performance

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measures. A four-day orientation training (at the start of the service year in January) and three-day in-service trainings (April and August) cover a comprehensive variety of topics and build skills in all service activities, including: assessing community needs through the Matrix; methods for preventing solid waste, recycling and backhauling; properly managing different kinds of solid waste; conducting environmental education; coordinating volunteers; project planning, reporting and evaluation; and building the sustainability of projects through best practices. Additional training specific to local needs will be facilitated on site by supervisors and other professionals and remotely by the program coordinator. Staff improves and updates these events through continuous member/community feedback and member performance and program evaluations.

Ongoing training is provided through weekly team teleconferences, on-line opportunities for self-paced skill building, one-on-one training with staff and technical support partners, and site visits. RurAL CAP educates members and site supervisors on rules and regulations during recruitment and trainings to ensure members and their volunteers are aware of and adhere to the rules regarding prohibited activities. Members and supervisors receive a RAVEN program manual and have access to the RurAL CAP policies and procedures manual. Project plans from members, weekly activity logs, monthly reports, regular communication with each member/supervisor, and staff site visits are used to screen member and volunteers activities for prohibited activities and ensure any questionable activities are prevented or addressed.

### **MEMBER SUPERVISION**

Over the past 18 years, RurAL CAP has developed and refined a successful distance-delivery system to provide strong supervision and support to 20 remotely located RAVEN sites. The host-agency supervisor, typically the EPA IGAP coordinators or tribal administrator, participates in the recruitment process and is interviewed and approved by RurAL CAP staff. Through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with host agencies and supervisors, the supervisor commits to participating in training, conducting weekly (if not daily) meetings with the member, completing reporting requirements (including member mid-service and end of service evaluations) and communicating biweekly with the program coordinator. RurAL CAP provides training to all new site supervisors at the beginning of the service year in-person at a training event or remotely through a PowerPoint module and accompanying teleconference. A post-test must be submitted to the program coordinator and passed to ensure retention of key program information, rules and regulations.

Key to supporting members and supervisors is a full-time RAVEN AmeriCorps Program

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Coordinator located in the central office in Anchorage. The coordinator supports supervisors in ensuring members are following program rules and regulations, are not participating in prohibited activities, and have adequate support to successfully complete their service. The coordinator supports both members and supervisors by: reviewing and providing feedback on community assessments, project plans and reports; discussing needs, concerns, ideas and progress; providing mentorship and assistance in planning and accessing needed resources; conducting site visits; and convening weekly teleconferences and check-ins with members and biweekly check-ins with supervisors. In addition, members benefit from training/consultation with a full-time, EPA SWM Liaison based at RurAL CAP, one of Alaska's foremost experts in rural SWM.

### MEMBER EXPERIENCE

As RAVEN members are recruited locally, they are people who have personally experienced the impact of poor SWM systems and pollution. Respect and stewardship of the land and its vital resources is at the core of Alaska Native values. Local residents taking ownership of local issues also raises the level of meaning of AmeriCorps service. With the isolation and scarce training/employment opportunities in participating communities, the opportunity RAVEN offers for training, professional development and connection to other members are valued components often cited as reasons rural Alaskans join the program. RurAL CAP connects members to service providers including ADEC, EPA, tribal consortia, and regional and state nonprofits to build a broader support network for members, leading to continued civic participation and grooming for opportunities for future employment. Opportunities to reflect on and learn from service are maintained during the year through weekly teleconferences with other members and the coordinator, three trainings per year, regular support from both the local supervisor and program coordinator, and weekly reports and reflection logs. Success stories are shared through newsletters and social media. These components create a powerful service experience that will contribute to member retention and increase community impact.

To ensure that members are aware of their role and represent themselves as AmeriCorps members, RurAL CAP begins the service year with orientation training on the AmeriCorps model and guidance on how to introduce their new role as members to the community. Members are equipped with AmeriCorps gear (sweatshirts, posters to identify workspace as 'AmeriCorps' sponsored). To connect members with each other, participation on weekly group teleconferences is required, collaboration is encouraged, and 1st year members are paired with 2nd year members as mentors. RurAL CAP's BIRCH AmeriCorps program (Building Initiatives in Rural Community Health) joins

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RAVEN for orientation and collaboration is encouraged between RAVEN, BIRCH and VISTA members serving in rural Alaska. RAVENs are also required to plan and participate in three national days of service events, to reinforce a sense of connection to the AmeriCorps identity.

### **VOLUNTEER GENERATION**

Building on the traditional Alaska Native value of community involvement, RAVEN has a successful history of utilizing volunteer engagement as a key component to expanding program impact, reach, and sustainability. Volunteers are recruited through partnerships, word of mouth, local radio, flyers, and announcements at community gatherings. They assist in many stages of SWM system improvements. Local volunteers represent the community ownership that the RAVEN members look for when developing sustainable change in addressing needs. Volunteers assist the member with project research, planning, implementation, management, and evaluation of activities. For example, a volunteer may assist with planning a community education event on safe disposal of lead acid batteries by securing a venue, distributing flyers, and manning a registration booth. RAVEN members are responsible for recruiting, managing, and supporting volunteers. They receive training on how to generate, coordinate, and recognize volunteers. The coordinator ensures that supervisors/members follow CNCS rules and regulations regarding prohibited and unallowable activities with volunteers by monitoring activity through reviewing plans and reports, teleconference and individual check-ins, and site visits. Any questionable activities will be discussed and rectified immediately, as has been the successful practice of the program.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION**

AmeriCorps signage is displayed at RurAL CAP's main office. The AmeriCorps logo and name is used on recruitment and application materials, websites, press releases, training materials and other publications and materials. The AmeriCorps banner is used at training and oath of service ceremonies. Through host agency MOAs and member service agreements, members and sites agree to follow similar representation strategies, and are monitored for compliance through site visits and review of program materials. Members receive AmeriCorps sweatshirts to wear during service and display the AmeriCorps signage for their work space and use the logo on letters, memo's, business cards and appropriate community events. In accordance with prohibited/unallowable activities, staff addresses the limits and restrictions of wearing and using AmeriCorps gear.

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### SERVE ALASKA REQUIREMENTS

RAVEN will fulfill Serve Alaska's requirement of a Volunteer Generation Plan Performance Measure by incorporating volunteer generation and management in member training, support and reporting. RAVENs will create 100 volunteer opportunities in the program year, engaging a total of 750 volunteers in providing 8,000 hours of volunteer time. These measures will be collected through sign-in sheets that record the start and stop time of volunteers. Members organize service projects for/participate in Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Global Youth Service Day, and 9/11 Day of Remembrance.

### Organizational Capability

#### ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

RurAL CAP is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, established in 1965 "to empower low-income Alaskans through advocacy, education, affordable housing and direct services that respect our unique values and cultures." RurAL CAP builds capacity in partnership with local communities through distance-delivery of quality services and program management with the vision "Healthy People, Sustainable Communities, Vibrant Cultures". In FY 2012, RurAL CAP employed 1,000+ Alaskans and served 25,000+ low-income individuals in 81 communities. One in four Alaskans in poverty participates in a RurAL CAP program.

RAVEN benefits from five staff members at RurAL CAP. There are no vacant positions.

- \*Community Development Director Cathie Clements (supervised by Executive Director) will be responsible for RAVEN oversight: partnership building, monitoring compliance, accountability, reporting, and evaluation. She brings 20+ years of cross cultural community development experience in rural Alaska and Africa to the program, including 11 years administering AmeriCorps programs.
- \*Environmental Program Manager Jolene John (supervised by Director) will be responsible for project management: planning, staff supervision, fiscal management, monitoring compliance, and reporting. Ms. John is a Yup'ik Alaska Native, member of the Nunakauyarmiut Tribe, and has 18+ years of experience administering community development programs for tribes.
- \*AmeriCorps Coordinator Charlie Ess (supervised by Manager) will coordinate day-to-day RAVEN activities. Mr. Ess provides recruitment, enrollment, training, member and supervisor support, tracking outputs/outcomes, and completing reports. Mr. Ess has coordinated the RAVEN Program since 2007.
- \*For the 7th year, EPA Solid Waste Tribal Liaison Ted Jacobson is based at RurAL CAP's central office, providing hands-on technical assistance and training on solid waste systems to RAVEN. He has 20+

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years of experience managing solid waste systems in Alaska and providing training to SWM operators, and is president of Solid Waste Association of North America.

\*Budget Coordinator Gloria Kelly (Accounting) has provided fiscal oversight and reporting for AmeriCorps programs since 2008. She has 10 years of grant administration experience.

Financial and programmatic orientation is provided to staff through training at the start of employment by the HR department and direct supervisor. Training and technical assistance is on-going during employment and is part of weekly staff/supervisor meetings and individual staff annual evaluations. Training is based on RurAL CAP's policies and procedures manual which aligns with Office of Management and Budget circulars and other federal/state funding regulations. Staff working with AmeriCorps also uses the AmeriCorps Coordinator Handbook, created by staff, reviewed and approved by the state commission. Additionally, staff attends local, regional, and national conferences, trainings, webinars, and meetings relevant to their work.

A leader in rural programming and distance-delivery of training and technical assistance, RurAL CAP is known in Alaska for tremendous capacity to provide quality training and professional skill development to local hires, service members and other Alaskans -- with many federal and state agencies contracting with RurAL CAP to provide these services. RurAL CAP has designed and implemented training for AmeriCorps and VISTA programs since 1994, and provided skill development for service members through individual coaching, site visits and teleconferences.

RurAL CAP uses a nationally recognized internal evaluation system to ensure projects are on target- Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA). ROMA aligns outcome measures with the agency's Applied Strategic Plan; results are reviewed quarterly. RurAL CAP also contracts with an independent evaluator to conduct program evaluations and comply with CNCS evaluation criteria. The RAVEN evaluation for the last grant cycle has been completed and submitted by the evaluator and staff.

RurAL CAP manages an annual budget of over \$38 million, demonstrating sound programmatic and fiscal oversight. In FY12, RurAL CAP had 107 active federal, state, and private grants, including grants from dozens of federal agencies and departments. RurAL CAP has administered seven AmeriCorps and VISTA programs since 1994, and currently operates three. RurAL CAP is governed by a 24-member Board of Directors who support RAVEN by advertising positions, recognizing accomplishments, and building partnerships. The Executive Director provides networking support and the whole agency helps with program recruitment. RurAL CAP's eight FTE Accounting Department monitors funding and completes financial reports. The Development Dept. secures

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program funds and processes grant awards.

Through 18 years of AmeriCorps administration, RurAL CAP has integrated AmeriCorps support into the entire agency. Other departments assist with recruitment (staffing booths at conferences), promotion (communications materials), networking (partnership building), and securing resources (grant writing). RAVEN performed satisfactorily on its last audit and has a history of taking corrective action immediately upon notification of a concern from Serve Alaska and CNCS. Each year, many positive evaluations are received from the program's community participants. RAVEN positions are in high demand with by rural communities -- with two to three applications received for every position available. Follow-up evaluations and contact with members have demonstrated that RAVEN service leads to new professional development opportunities.

### SUSTAINABILITY

The goal of the RAVEN program is to engage AmeriCorps members, community participants and program resources to identify and implement sustainable improvements to SWM systems during the 1-3 years that communities host the program. These long-term improvements to SWM systems engage community members in embracing SWM system advances through systemic behavior change and creating new social norms in the community with the end result of protecting at-risk ecosystems that provide subsistence foods. While the AmeriCorps program is a temporary, 1-3 year resource for a community to use to launch needed SWM improvements, the improvements are designed to last. Countless communities that have hosted the RAVEN program continue the improvements under the direction of the IGAP coordinator, local volunteers, and community members including recycling and backhaul activities, sorting garbage for most effective and safe disposal, separating and backhauling e-waste and household hazardous waste, and a reduction in unregulated trash burning. For example, Member Kaci Fullwood of Nome (1996) started a regional backhaul and recycling program that continues today. The program backhauls thousands of pounds of lead acid batteries, electronic waste, aluminum and other commodities to Anchorage and Seattle each year. Connie Ferguson (2006) created the "Great Aluminum Can Roundup" for Kenai Peninsula which continues to engage five communities and their schools in recycling. Ben Johnson (2007) established Petersburg's recycling and backhaul, then won a \$40,000 business grant for the development of a press that turns waste cardboard into pellets that are sold and used across the region to heat low-income houses. Jennifer Hanlon (2008) of Yakutat pursued an environmental law degree following her service, and is presently helping monitor the impact of cruise ships on the resident seal population at nearby

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Disenchantment Bay. Genevieve Sheldon (04) of Ouzinkie established a household hazardous waste collection program managed by her tribe which continues to this day. Jonathan Titus (2006) of Minto obtained financing for permanent on-site, dump maintenance, including fencing, staging areas and signage.

The RAVEN model includes five key components that contribute to sustained change; 1) Members are locals. By starting with local support and investing resources into training/mentoring a local person, sites retain expertise after the program year. 2) Members receive training from SWM, community engagement, and behavior change experts on how to sustain projects post-service by establishing project succession plans. 3) Members focus on volunteer generation and community/youth engagement to foster local engagement and ownership and build an ingrained sense of community service and civic engagement. 4) The recruitment process prioritizes communities based on those willing to commit to multiple years (2+) of participation, allowing for more extensive initiatives and subsequent impact. 5) The RAVEN program partners closely with the EPA GAP program to jump-start substantial improvements to SWM systems that local GAP coordinators can maintain after the changes are implemented, accepted, ingrained in the daily habits of community members.

Community stakeholders and partners are tribal/city councils, schools, youth, Elders, health aides, public safety officers, local leaders, and environmental service providers e.g. EPA. These groups provide training assistance, member support, or resource development, contributing to long term sustainability beyond the presence of AmeriCorps by creating a large network of entities dedicated to the environmental stewardship of SWM in rural communities.

### COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

RurAL CAP's comprehensive system for monitoring compliance and accountability internally and at service locations has been refined since 1994 with input from Serve Alaska, CNCS, independent auditors, and outside reviewers. AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and prohibited activities are reviewed during orientation, described in the RAVEN program manual, and reviewed on an on-going basis through teleconferences, reports, and individual check-ins with the coordinator. Compliance and accountability are ensured through staff review, training, site visits, and monitoring of activities and reports. Programs must comply with Board-approved policy and procedures (designed to ensure compliance with federal OMB regulations). AmeriCorps programs are governed by the annually updated AmeriCorps Coordinator Handbook and RAVEN Manual. Members and site supervisors are

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required to participate in trainings with RAVEN staff, where they review prohibited activities and sign a contract agreement outlining duties, expectations, infraction consequences, and policies, and complete a prohibited activities test. Host organizations complete a Memorandum of Agreement with the site supervisor, member, and RurAL CAP, which outlines the same details.

Infractions are prevented and detected (and therefore compliance ensured) by the coordinator and site supervisor review and approval of proposed member activities during group teleconferences, individual check-ins, weekly and monthly reports, and timesheets. Questionable activities are flagged and resolved immediately by program staff, site supervisors, and members. Rules and regulations of RurAL CAP and AmeriCorps are again reviewed, with extra attention given to the area of the prevented or detected infraction. If members/sites are out of compliance, service is suspended until corrective action/compliance is confirmed. Internally, program staff meets weekly to discuss progress and identify problems and solutions, immediately responding to compliance concerns and conveying policy updates to sites promptly through teleconferences, memos, reports, updated manuals, and site visits. Program files are maintained at the central office.

### **CURRENT GRANTEE DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE**

During the last full program year of RAVEN there was 100% enrollment and 65% retention -- a low retention year (compared to other years, where 80% retention is more typical) due to compelling personal circumstances or offers of employment, as members cope with a challenging economy. Attrition is often due to the challenging socio-economic conditions in rural Alaska, including high rates of poverty, substance abuse, domestic abuse and suicide (Status of Alaska Natives 2004, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska, Anchorage). Despite this, RAVEN has succeeded in bringing AmeriCorps to some of the most remote and underserved communities in the nation, while consistently meeting performance measures. To increase retention, staff are enhancing member recruitment (to further increase the applicant pool), strengthening supervisor selection and support systems (recruitment and training/technical assistance), referring members to RurAL CAP's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for counseling services and resources, as needed, and exploring options for increasing the member stipend through increased partner support. In addition, the program has contracted with an independent evaluator to better determine member/supervisor/community risk factors for member attrition, which will further guide retention improvement strategies.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

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### COST EFFECTIVENESS

RurAL CAP had a FY12 operating budget of \$38M primarily from state and federal grants and private foundations; 1.7% of total funding was CNCS. Over the past 5 years, support from CNCS is; BIRCH - \$239,948, \$239,948, \$238,797, \$234,401, \$234,401; RAVEN - \$279,264, \$306,730, \$311,465, \$311,465, \$313,642; Students in Service - \$12,000, \$12,000, \$12,000, \$13,760, \$7,408; Middle School Partnership Program - \$124,238, \$101,453; BIRCH ARRA - \$226,660; VISTA ARRA - \$32,500; VISTA \$75,000, \$77,000, \$85,000, \$31,000, \$31,000. This proposal represents 00.6% of the operating budget.

RAVEN match and leveraging of additional resources has always been achieved; in addition to CNCS funds, the program needs an additional \$160,546 in match and other operating costs. Non-CNCS resources obtained for the 2013-14 program year include: 1) RurAL CAP's Community Service Block Grant funding from the State of Alaska (\$100,000 for RAVEN); 2) Since 2010, the USDA has provided \$260,325 in match funding for staff support and in-service training (\$135,000 is requested for 2013-14); 3) Communities are cash-poor but dedicate substantial in-kind contributions (supervisor time, member office space/supplies, and access to phone, fax, internet); 4) EPA provides a full-time SWM Tribal Liaison who provides technical assistance and training; and 5) RurAL CAP covers \$15,000+ in unmet indirect.

CNCS's cost per MSY is \$13,300. RAVEN addresses a multi-million dollar environmental issue (see Section 1. C. Evidence) in 20 communities a year for a program total of \$426,546/year (CNCS \$266,000 and \$160,546 match). If, instead, standard SWM management systems and infrastructure were to be funded, the cost of implementing would be upwards of \$2 million for one community's lined and managed landfill in, for example, Kwillingok (2012 RAVEN community). Instead, RAVEN members collaborate with their tribal and city councils to implement this proven, cost-effective program and deliver results for pennies on the dollar.

### \*SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR COST EFFECTIVENESS

RurAL CAP does not request a waiver on match or an exception on cost per MSY. The justification for requesting the maximum cost per member is based on the reality of maintaining an effective program in resource-poor, high-cost, economically-distressed communities. RAVEN serves a difficult to reach, underserved, primarily Alaska Native population. The expense and difficulty of travel contributes to the high cost of supporting rural members. RAVENs receive a living allowance of \$1,200 per month in communities where the cost of living is up to 39% above the U.S. average. (State

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of Alaska, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis, Alaska Economic Trends, The Cost of Living in Alaska: Energy Prices a Large Part of 2011's Rise in Inflation, July 2012).

### CURRENT GRANTEE SHARE OF COSTS

For the past three years, \$15,682/MSY has been awarded to RAVEN due to the high cost of living and operating rural Alaska programs. However, to align with CNCS funding limits, the CNCS cost/MSY is decreasing by 15% to \$13,300/MSY, while the amount of other funding support provided by RurAL CAP to support RAVEN is increasing.

### BUDGET ADEQUACY

There are three types of funds that support the RAVEN program; 1) CNCS covers primarily staff support, a portion of member stipends and fringe, orientation training, and site visits at \$266,000. 2) RurAL CAP will leverage \$160,546 in match, also listed in the budget, which covers a portion of member stipends and fringe. 3) The third type of support (not listed in the budget or tracked as official match) includes in-kind contributions or funds that covers local site supervision, office space, office supplies, \$20,000 towards the orientation training, two in-service trainings, staff site visits for each member, and required background and FBI checks (additional CSBG funds are set aside for this cost). This additional support will also complete the needed staff support (27.3%) for one FTE program coordinator and provide for a manager and director's time to support the program. A very similar budget was used to successfully operate RAVEN and meet outputs/outcomes over the past grant cycle, providing evidence the budget is adequate.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

As a past recipient, a completed evaluation of the past year will satisfy this portion of the proposal. A copy of an evaluation of the RAVEN program as completed by an independent consultant has been emailed to CNCS for review.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

N/A

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## Continuation Changes

N/A