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Executive Summary

The requested funds for the Student Conservation Association (SCA) AmeriCorps Education Award Program will engage 1505 AmeriCorps members in critical service on public lands. At the end of the three-year project period beginning June, 2013 members will have improved protection of natural and cultural resources, ensured future sustainability of those resources by educating visitors to minimize impact, and gained the training and practical experience to become the next generation of conservation leaders. This project will concentrate on the CNCS focus area of Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$409,386 will be matched with \$12 million in partner funding.

Rationale and Approach

a. Need

American public lands play critical roles in the sustainability of our nation in terms of both economics and health. A 2010 Report on the Economic Benefits to Local Communities from National Park Visitation found that the National Park System alone contributed \$12.13 billion to local gateway regions through visitor spending. The contribution of this spending to the national economy totaled \$16.6 billion in value added benefit.

(<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/NPSSystemEstimates2010.pdf>) The most recent figures available, for 2009, estimate the economic contribution of national parks, refuges, and other public lands at close to \$55 billion annually. Public lands also support the economy indirectly by providing habitat and protection for beneficial species such as bats, which a recent collaboration between the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and academic researchers valued at between \$3.7 and \$53 billion annually in pest-control benefit to the agriculture industry.

(<http://www.fort.usgs.gov/Products/Publications/23069a/23069a.pdf>)

As our nation's economy expands and diversifies, public lands also have a role to play in mitigating the effects of a growing population. The Department of the Interior recently released a study of the carbon storage of ecosystems in the western United States. The study found that the area extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, which includes forests, grasslands, and shrublands, stores nearly 100 million tons of carbon annually, equivalent to the emission of 83 million passenger cars a year. The report, part of a congressionally mandated national assessment of carbon storage and sequestration capacities, estimates that changes in land-use, climate and wildfires in the region could reduce the benefits of carbon storage in future years.

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(<http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/interior-releases-study-of-carbon-storage-and-sequestration-in-western-ecosystems-as-part-of-national-assessment.cfm>)

In recent years, however, drought, wildfire, and tropical storms have presented natural resource managers with challenges they must address with increasing urgency. A recent report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s National Climatic Data Center marked 2012 as the warmest year on record in the lower 48 states. Dry conditions through the Rockies and the Great Plains brought the driest years on record for Nebraska and Wyoming. The number of acres burned by wildfire was the third most in history, and the size of those fires was approximately 1.5 times larger than the average size over the last decade.

(<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/fire/2012/13>) In 2012 the number of tropical storms was high due to warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures across a large area of the North Atlantic, with 19 named storms compared with an average of 11. (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/tropical-cyclones/2012/13>)

In the aftermath of these events, natural resource agencies have critical needs to restore visitor use structures such as trails or wetland boardwalks, remove hazardous debris, and complete multi-stage re-vegetation projects. These same agencies also need vital data collection and monitoring performed to assess the success of natural and cultural resource projects and plan for implementing new projects and developing future land management strategies. Additionally, they need to educate visitors about unique and often fragile areas to minimize degradation to resources and encourage stewardship.

In a recent survey of SCA's AmeriCorps Education Award Program partners, 76% of AmeriCorps member projects were identified as critical under their agency's land management plan. The remaining 25% allowed the partner to expand their reach, for example by providing educational programs to more visitors, or address other needs, such as engaging youth from diverse backgrounds in conservation projects. Partner data showed that 90% of projects would not have happened without the SCA AmeriCorps member's service:

"[The member's service included] directly conducting research and monitoring on endangered/threatened sea turtles. Her work directly benefited species survival."

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"[The members completed] a task that is necessary to complete inventory and mapping of ecological vegetative communities but that was beyond the ability of NPS to complete with current travel restrictions and man-power."

"Due to staffing difficulties, remoteness of the work, and the time commitment involved, the [SCA AmeriCorps members] are a crucial element to a well-working and safe backcountry. The SCA program is well known and the work provided has always been beneficial to any area fortunate enough to have them. Backcountry interns are an irreplaceable asset and any time dedicated to our park is extremely beneficial."

In addition to serving these critical land management and visitor education priorities, the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program (EAP) also addresses our nation's ongoing conservation challenges in other ways. In 2010 President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, with the premise that our nation's citizens hold the solutions to our conservation challenges. Two primary goals of the AGO Initiative are to develop career pathways and service opportunities that protect and restore America's natural and cultural resources and to build the stewardship values of America's young people and engage them in conservation and recreation in the great outdoors. As a program in service of SCA's mission to build the next generation of conservation leaders by engaging young people in hands on service to the land, the SCA AmeriCorps EAP also meets these needs identified by the AGO, setting the foundation for future conservation stewardship by training and engaging young people as members.

b. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems.

The SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program proposes to continue programming with 1505 members and 511.7 MSY. The program will field 100 full-time (1700-hr) members, 215 half-time (900-hr) members, 990 quarter-time (450-hr) members, and 200 minimum-time (300-hr) members. The requested MSY represents an average of program fill rates (in MSY) over the last three full years of operation. Our 2012 program year is still in progress, but for 2011 we filled 1,559 slots and 515 MSY.

The SCA AmeriCorps EAP will place members directly with national, state, and local parks, coastal and marine areas, and other public land management service partners in rural areas and urban green

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spaces in all fifty states. The majority of members will serve rural areas, addressing needs in locations where other AmeriCorps programs cannot reach. The program provides access to a national pool of committed, highly trained members who are available and deployable for the type of short-term projects that partners need completed.

Members will serve in a full-time capacity during their service terms, with the shortest 300-hr terms lasting 8 weeks and the longest 52 weeks. Two-thirds of members will serve during the summer months when conditions are optimal for outdoor service projects in most locations. The majority of members will arrive at their service sites in May and June and complete their 300-hr or 450-hr service terms in August. All other members will start on a rolling basis throughout the program year, based on the need outlined by the host site partner in the project request.

Host site partners will be land management professionals who provide on-site skills-based training, day-to-day supervision, and mentorship as part of each SCA AmeriCorps EAP position. Members will receive training, education, and practical experience and accomplish the critical conservation service projects based on the specific host site's land management plan and other identified needs.

Members are vital in helping to implement agency management plans, primarily in the areas of wilderness management and restoration, riparian restoration, youth initiatives, education and interpretation, and trails management. SCA AmeriCorps EAP member activities will include:

Restoration and protection--

Example projects: removal of invasive species, delineation of visitor use areas such as campgrounds and trails from restoration areas, preservation of historic structures.

Resource assessments, mapping and monitoring--

Example projects: establishing long-term vegetation, invasive species, climate and bird monitoring programs; wildlife surveys; monitoring weather stations and wildlife cameras; exotic plant early detection transects.

Visitor education, Interpretation, environmental education--

Example projects: on-site interpretation to visitors about natural history of the area, resource

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protection efforts, and research findings; children's Junior Ranger program development; and backcountry education about safety and Leave No Trace principles.

All members will complete one outreach project, such as a community presentation, school visit, or service day to benefit the community surrounding their service site. Known as "gateway communities", rural towns close to national parks and other public lands often face economic disadvantages and have diverse populations that see immense change throughout the seasons. SCA AmeriCorps members will provide a direct benefit to these communities by sharing information about their natural and cultural resource projects, encouraging volunteer efforts, and educating individuals about the value of AmeriCorps service..

AmeriCorps members are uniquely suited as a resource to address these environmental stewardship challenges with our community partners because the members, many of whom are college students, recent graduates, or students in professional programs, bring with them cutting-edge skills in natural resource methodology. Over the past decade SCA's partnership with CNCS has meant that the program has a deeper pool of qualified candidates to place in these positions, which allows more projects to get done with higher quality outcomes, and a greater benefit to the land management agencies. Members also gain relevant experience necessary to "transition up" to employment in the conservation field. These members will be the next generation of conservation leaders and professionals and will have the skills and service ethic to continue to address environmental stewardship needs in the long-term.

c. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact

SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program members perform evidence-based service with SCA's service partners, primarily federal land management agencies such as the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Bureau of Land Management. Projects carried out by SCA AmeriCorps members follow site management plans, implementing interventions developed by natural resource professionals with oversight for the project. Service partners such as fisheries and wildlife biologists, refuge managers, research ecologists, archaeologists, scientists, and other land management professionals identify the environmental stewardship and conservation need and follow proven scientific methods and field protocols under their site management plans.

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Each SCA AmeriCorps EAP position begins with a position request submitted by the service partner, which outlines the compelling need based on their agency work plans or organizational priorities, and the activities that the SCA AmeriCorps member will perform to meet the need. Positions go through an internal review process, with final approval granted by the Operations Director after the Partner Services Coordinator works with partner to revise the position if necessary. The community-based partner has a leadership role in planning the project to training, supervising, and mentoring the member to maintaining the project after the member's term of service. This model allows the program to field a large number of members to meet a wide range of needs in diverse geographic areas, particularly in rural areas, with a demonstrated need in each community. Every position is initiated, planned, executed by the community stakeholders, and reflects the needs of constituents.

Often SCA works with a partner for a series of years on a single initiative, with SCA AmeriCorps members helping partners each year to implement the next stage of the project. For example, a partner determines that river habitat has been damaged by flooding and requests the service of a member to assess and map river damage. The partner then uses the member's research to develop a habitat restoration plan to plant native trees along the eroded river bank, a plan which is implemented by an AmeriCorps member in the subsequent year.

With CNCS support, the SCA AmeriCorps EAP has developed and improved, and has proven a highly successful, outcome-focused model. The proposed program will address the Environmental Stewardship focus area with a primary objective to improve at-risk ecosystems. Interventions will include improvement of public land, improvement of waterways, plant establishment, plant removal, debris (not trash) removal, improvement of trail and creation of trail. At the end of the project period partner agencies will report improved protection of natural resources as a result of member interventions.

The program will report on two agency-wide priority (output) measures: 1) EN4: Number of acres of national parks, state parks, city parks, county parks, or other public and tribal lands that are improved; and 2) EN5: Number of miles of trails or waterways (owned/maintained by national, state, county, city or tribal governments) that are improved, and/or created. The aligned, measurable outcomes will be the improved protection of natural, cultural or recreational resources as a result of

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member improvements:

SCA AmeriCorps EAP members will improve 50,000 acres of parks or public land, resulting in 45,000 acres (90%) with improved protection as a result of member interventions. This target is an aggressive 150% increase over previous target for this measure, based on recent significant success in this measure.

Members will also improve and/or create 4,500 miles of trails or rivers, resulting in 3,600 miles (80%) with improved protection as a result of member interventions. This target "right sizes" the former target to more accurately match recent work accomplishments and projected projects.

During the most recent reporting period SCA AmeriCorps member projects far exceeded (by 100%) the target for acres of parks improved but fell slightly short (80%) of the target for the miles of rivers or trail improved. Over the last three years of the program SCA has found that partner needs lean more heavily toward projects that fall under the acreage-based improvement measure (EN4). The performance measures in this proposal take into account this shift from trail and river projects to land-based projects with improved targets to more accurately project member outputs.

The SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program has seen significant community impact over the history of the program. During the last full year of program operation members completed conservation and restoration projects on over 80,000 acres. Overall 88% of the land where SCA AmeriCorps members completed conservation and restoration activities was considered by host site partners to be improved to a level of quality required for restoration of the ecosystem under the agency's restoration plan. During the last program year members also completed critical projects to maintain trail and waterways on over 4,500 miles, primarily focused on maintaining backcountry trails. In final assessments partners reported a high level of ecosystem restoration across the area where members completed improvement activities.

In addition to the impact in the area of restoration and protection described above, the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program will also accomplish the following:

In the area of resource assessments, mapping and monitoring, members will complete 1,000 projects, completing resource assessments and inventories on 500,000 acres and conducting 50,000 sampling efforts, including water quality tests. Inventory projects will result in 1 million acres of cultural and natural resources mapped.

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In the area of visitor education, interpretation and environmental education, members will educate 15,000 students visiting parks and wildlands, plan and conduct 10,000 tours and educational programs for visitors of all ages, and provide informal education and interpretation to 100,000 visitors.

Progress toward output goals will be measured in member service logs, which are reviewed and approved by the host site supervisor. The program will measure the achievement of outcomes with a peer-reviewed quantitative assessment completed by the host site agency. Quarterly the program will compile results from these instruments, review progress toward targets, and implement corrective actions if necessary. Twice annually the program will report on outputs and outcomes for the national measures in CNCS progress reports.

d. Member Recruitment

SCA recruits qualified applicants through direct contact with a network of over 40,000 faculty and advisors at accredited universities and colleges and over 60,000 alumni throughout the United States. Based in SCA Regional Offices, SCA Recruiters work full time to develop a candidate pool that focuses on national, regional and local priorities throughout the country. Recruiters attend college fairs and conferences and present information about SCA programs directly to students in classroom presentations at over two hundred campuses nationwide annually. In 2012 alone, Recruiters spoke with over 200,000 people.

SCA's substantial recruiting network includes increasing numbers of professors and contacts within Hispanic-serving institutions, historically black colleges and universities, and tribal colleges and universities. SCA's success in recruiting diverse applicants also stems from focused efforts at non-designated schools that have a high minority population and by visiting multicultural centers and similar resources to share information about our programs with diverse audiences. Over the past 3 years, the number of members who identify themselves as members of a minority cultural/ethnic group has risen from 14% of total placements to 20% of total placements.

SCA's on-line presence is an important and effective component of our successful recruiting strategy. Interested applicants access SCA's web-based searchable database to learn about available positions.

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SCA's online system allows positions to be posted quickly and on a rolling basis. SCA's Member Advisor Group is available to counsel applicants in finding and applying to a position that meets their needs, including guidance in a continuum of service and career-building experiences.

e. Member Training

Member training will be provided jointly by SCA and the host site partner. A two-part online orientation for SCA AmeriCorps members at the beginning of service is conducted by SCA staff via a live webinar platform. Training content includes AmeriCorps orientation requirements, national service history and identity, prohibited activities, timekeeping and progress reporting, safety, and conflict resolution. Based on the successful model of the AmeriCorps VISTA Campus, the interactive web-based training includes quizzes, polls, scenarios, and Q&A sessions to ensure that members understand the content. A program intranet provides materials about the requirements and expectations of serving as an SCA AmeriCorps member, and members are required to certify that they have reviewed and are familiar with this content before starting a position.

SCA host site partners provide position-specific training for their members. In each position request the partner provides a detailed training plan as well as a Job Hazard Assessment with details on the training that will be provided to mitigate potential hazards. In conjunction with SCA's Risk Management (safety) Team, the Operations Director for the program reviews these plans as part of the position approval process. With this position-specific training model, member training topics vary and members are trained by conservation professionals. Position-specific trainings and certifications may include plant identification, public speaking, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and mapping software such as ArcGIS, use of radio-transmitted signals to monitor animals, first aid and CPR, prescribed burns, and sawyer skills. Depending on the position, members have the opportunity to receive cross-training with other divisions within the agency or other extracurricular opportunities to learn more about other conservation fields. For example, a member in the natural resources division may help a fellow member with a survey of a cultural site.

All members also receive a Member Manual from SCA. This printable book serves as a guide to members throughout all stages of their SCA AmeriCorps experience -- from accepting a position to traveling to their service site to getting to work. The Member Manual is a resource for questions about logistics such as travel arrangements, living allowance schedules, prohibited activities, and timesheet

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FAQs, and it is also a resource that facilitates a strong SCA AmeriCorps experience by offering exercises that encourage members to think about their conservation ethic and their commitment to service, take leadership roles in their professional development, and reflect on their experience.

f. Member Supervision

Land management professionals provide on-site supervision for members. In the position request the partner identifies the member supervisor, who receives a Partner Manual and is required to participate in an annual live webinar presented by SCA staff. The Partner Manual guides them through all aspects of supervising an SCA AmeriCorps member, including the interview and selection process, oversight expectations, time log and evaluation processes, and other policies and protocols, while the webinar covers supervisor requirements and expectations, including AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and offers the opportunity for host site partners to ask questions about training content. Host site supervisors receive additional day-to-day oversight from their SCA Partner Services Coordinator who is located regionally to answer partner questions, communicate policy and process changes, and ensure that each host site supervisor has the necessary information to successfully oversee their SCA AmeriCorps member.

In addition to the regular supervision that they receive on site, each member has an SCA Member Advisor who facilitates their service experience. SCA Member Advisors, assigned regionally, help members plan travel and complete enrollment paperwork, answer questions, set up pay schedules, check time logs, resolve site issues, and communicate internally with SCA logistics staff on a member's behalf. All members receive regular check-ins from their Advisors according to an established communication schedule. Member Advisors and Partner Services meet regularly as a team to ensure consistent application of policies and procedures and quality SCA experiences for both members and host site partners.

SCA's Risk Management team manages a 24-hr emergency hotline of program staff who complete ongoing training in conflict resolution and crisis response. This emergency hotline ensures an added layer of oversight for SCA members. In the event that an incident occurs, the staff member on call escalates the issue to a trained crisis response team that manages the incident to a resolution.

g. Member Experience

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In addition to the SCA-led member training, which includes a module on the meaning of service and integrating the ethic of service into everyday life, host site partners will provide members with an introduction to the community where they will serve, which may include a discussion of the natural environment where the member will be serving as well as local conservation priorities.

Initial training will connect members to their State Service Commission for inclusion in statewide trainings, member conferences, and service events. While members will be encouraged to directly connect with their State Service Commission through Facebook to learn about opportunities to serve and connect beyond their SCA position, SCA AmeriCorps staff will also support this integration by receiving State Commission emails and forwarding ongoing and one-time opportunities for members locally.

Throughout the position members will receive a regular e-newsletter on logistics, conservation and service topics to facilitate conversation and connection to the program, and will have the opportunity to submit content. Members will also connect with other SCA AmeriCorps members through SCA's online social network, jointhesca.org. Members create pages where they blog about their service, post photos and videos, and create and join groups, and reflect on their conservation and service experiences in a guided forum.

The SCA Member Advisor also serves a critical role in the experience of each SCA AmeriCorps member by building a one-on-one relationship that fosters the member's growth during their position and afterward. The Advisor will help members develop Life After Service plans and use their AmeriCorps service as a springboard to new opportunities in conservation through subsequent service experiences, professional employment, or education.

h. Volunteer Generation

The SCA AmeriCorps EAP has historically mobilized and supported a significant number of volunteers annually. Over the past five years, members have mobilized and led more than 60,000 volunteers, more than 10,000 per year on average. For each year of the renewed project period the SCA AmeriCorps EAP will commit to mobilizing 10,000 volunteers. Members will primarily manage volunteers engaged in hand-on service projects such as invasive plant removal, debris removal, seed collection and vegetation planting. AmeriCorps member training will include expectations about

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volunteer generation and management as well as training on identifying possible prohibited activities of volunteers. A volunteer management toolkit will serve as an on-demand resources to help members serve in leadership roles with these volunteers. Members will report on the number of volunteers, types of volunteer projects and project accomplishments by engaged volunteers and these logs will be reviewed and approved by supervisors to ensure that volunteers do not perform prohibited activities.

i. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

SCA is committed to recognizing AmeriCorps as a primary partner, both nationally and locally. The SCA website features the AmeriCorps logo and a banner highlighting the importance of SCA's partnership with AmeriCorps. Member uniforms include a nametag that features the SCA and AmeriCorps logos as well as stickers and an AmeriCorps patch for backpacks and other gear. Member uniforms will also include the AmeriCorps logo screen-printed on the sleeve of polypropylene work shirts and t-shirts. This increased AmeriCorps identification is a demonstration of the program's commitment to AmeriCorps. Materials for the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program will identify the program as the SCA AmeriCorps program and the members as SCA AmeriCorps members. The Program Manager will review materials to ensure the AmeriCorps name/logo is included.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background and Staffing

Founded in 1957, SCA is the largest and oldest conservation service organization in America and a leading provider of AmeriCorps service opportunities for young people. SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land. Over 60,000 alumni around the world continue to practice the ethics and values they cultivated over their time with SCA.

Today SCA is the nation's leading non-profit, non-advocacy provider of conservation service opportunities, outdoor skills and leadership training for young women and men. SCA has been publicly recognized by, among others, the White House, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and The Wilderness Society for its achievements in conservation and youth development. SCA is involved in the development of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) and is positioned to play an instrumental role in its implementation with two representatives from SCA

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servicing on the 21CSC National Council to expand conservation opportunities for youth and returning veterans.

SCA is governed by a 30-member Board of Directors, which manages, controls and administers the affairs of the organization. The Board operates under a committee structure; standing committees include: Executive, Audit, Board Governance, Finance and Administration, External Relations, Program Quality and Risk Management.

SCA coordinates and oversees member placements centrally from the SCA Center for Conservation Service program office in Charlestown, NH, which houses program management and administrative staff including the Program, Finance, Recruiting, Member Services, Human Resources, Risk Management (Safety), and Field Services departments. Specialists in these departments provide services and direct support to the EAP by administering paperwork, subsistence allowance payments to members, background checks, file maintenance, and member housing.

Regionally assigned Members Advisors and Partner Services Coordinators are the primary points of contact for members and for agency partners. The Partner Services Coordinator centrally approves and manages all changes to a member's position and facilitates communication with other program staff to ensure AmeriCorps compliance. Both Advisors and Partner Services Coordinators receive annual and ongoing trainings in AmeriCorps policies and procedures, including AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and work closely with the EAP to ensure that member service complies with AmeriCorps rules and regulations.

SCA's AmeriCorps Manager Kate Hagner has primary responsibility for compliance with AmeriCorps regulations, national service and AmeriCorps identity among members, and performance measurement and evaluation. Kate has seven years of experience with AmeriCorps programs, five with the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award program, and served as an AmeriCorps member with City Year New Hampshire. In addition, SCA's AmeriCorps Coordinator handles administration of the Education Award Program, enrolling and exiting members from the MyAmeriCorps portal, ensuring timely and accurate completion of time logs, evaluations and other paperwork requirements, and providing customer service to members about their AmeriCorps service. While many management, support, and administrative staff members are involved in placing a member in the field with a service

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partner, these two staff roles focus on the EAP.

SCA also successfully operates a National Direct AmeriCorps program and four residential programs funded through AmeriCorps*State partnerships. During nearly 20 years of experience managing AmeriCorps grants, SCA has continuously improved policies and practices to implement results-driven conservation service-learning programs and effectively monitor grant-related programmatic and financial systems. Tools are continually evaluated for effectiveness and evolve as regulations and policies change.

b. Sustainability

The service partner hosting the SCA AmeriCorps member funds the cost of the position. National agreements between SCA and dozens of federal, state, and non-governmental organizations ensure that necessary resources will be secured to support the program. SCA carries out its activities under the terms of cooperative agreements with the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), among other federal agencies, as well as with state and municipal partners and non-profit partners such as The Nature Conservancy. These comprehensive agreements cover all units, offices, facilities or installations of the agency. SCA is the largest youth programs partner of the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior bureaus and their only youth programs partner with a national scope. Under the cooperative agreement, each project has an individual task agreement, where project statements, project plans and budgets are developed cooperatively between the partner and SCA.

The program model invests community-based service partners in leadership roles identifying needs, developing and supervising projects. It allows for the greatest flexibility to meet diverse community needs, particularly in rural areas, because the program is not restricted by geography. Additionally, because the partner is directly involved in the development of the position description and the training plan, the selection of the member, and the day-to-day supervision of each AmeriCorps member project, these stakeholders are closely involved with and committed to the projects of their members. Service partners are committed to ensuring that program impact continues because the program efforts are critical to the implementation and success of their land management plans.

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c. Compliance and Accountability

SCA has had a strong record of compliance and accountability over its 18-year partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service. In 2011 SCA implemented a Corrective Action Plan to improve oversight and monitoring of prohibited activities, which further strengthened internal systems with additional staff training, enhanced criteria for position reviews, and improved monitoring tools and processes.

Members, supervisors, and SCA staff who support the SCA AmeriCorps program are required to complete a live in-person or web-based AmeriCorps training that includes thorough content on prohibited activities. All trainings are conducted by a certified SCA AmeriCorps trainer, a member of an internal team with the highest level of expertise in the area of AmeriCorps requirements. In order to become an SCA AmeriCorps certified trainer SCA staff must successfully complete additional training.

SCA has built stronger organization-wide AmeriCorps eligibility guidelines for position description reviews that define the requirements of an AmeriCorps position at SCA with specific measurable criteria. Under the new position review procedure, a cross functional team of SCA staff, including the Operations Director for the program, the AmeriCorps Manager, and SCA's Director of Compliance, has responsibility for determining the eligibility of SCA positions for AmeriCorps. Each quarter SCA conducts an internal audit sample of AmeriCorps positions to ensure that only compliant positions are approved.

SCA has developed a new site visit monitoring tool modeled on the CNCS subgrantee monitoring tool. The new tool provides staff conducting monitoring visits with questions that assess whether members and their supervisors are familiar with grievance procedure, can identify prohibited activities, and are knowledgeable of member time log and data reporting requirements, as well as many other policies and procedures. Program leadership staff must complete a training specific to the use of the SCA AmeriCorps site monitoring tool and conduct live and virtual site visits specifically for the goal of guaranteeing AmeriCorps compliance.

Enrollment:

For the 2011 program year, the last full year of program operation, the program filled 1559 slots out of

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1669 granted slots, for an average enrollment rate of 93.4%. While this rate is slightly lower than last year's 98% enrollment, the total number of filled slots increased by 230 members over the previous year (from 1,330 to 1,560) because of additional "no cost" slots (education award only slots without the \$800 per MSY administrative fee) the program received. For the current 2012 program year SCA has only 1,374 slots to fill, which is 200 slots fewer than we filled in 2011. With partnerships and funding projected to maintain level over the remainder of the grant year, the program is expected to easily meet this lower enrollment target by 100%.

Retention:

For the 2011 program year the program filled 1559 slots and exited 166 members early, for a retention rate of 89.4%. This is consistent with previous years and reflects the program's solid retention performance. The program continues to implement continuous improvement measures and press for the highest retention rate possible. SCA's recent re-organization looks to further increasing the rate of retention by strengthening support for members and partners with a regional structure and single points of contact with SCA Member Advisors and Partner Services Coordinators.

Consultation with State Commissions

During the program's last re-compete application process in 2010, SCA completed a comprehensive consultation process with all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Over the last three years the program has maintained relationships with State Commissions. Twice annually the program distributes information to State Commissions about where members serve locally. Throughout the program year SCA's AmeriCorps Manager receives all State Commission communications and shares information about state initiatives and events with members in the field. For this application the program completed an initial consultation with: AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, and WY. Based on the information gathered during the process, the program does not duplicate other programs and addresses otherwise unmet needs.

Operating Sites and Member Service Sites

Member service sites will be identified on a rolling basis throughout the program year as SCA receives position requests from host site partners for critical projects suited to the SCA AmeriCorps Education

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Award Program. Service partners will submit position request forms approximately three months before the requested position start date. The program Operations Director reviews and approves positions weekly. Approved positions have compelling need statements, meaningful service duties and clear work objectives, as well as thorough plans for member training and education, recreational and professional development opportunities, and well-articulated hazard assessments and mitigation plans. Once a position is approved, the SCA Agreements team begins working with the partner and the Contracting Officer to secure the Funding Agreement, while the Member Services team posts the position for candidates to review and begins forwarding member applications to the host site partner. Service partners must have a signed funding document in place before the SCA AmeriCorps position can begin.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

a. Cost Effectiveness

The total CNCS cost per MSY for the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program is \$800 per MSY to support 1505 AmeriCorps members: 100 full-time (1700-hr), 215 half-time (900-hr), 990 quarter-time (450-hr), and 200 minimum-time (300-hr). The total cost for the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program for the program year 2013-2014 will be \$12 million. The requested CNCS grant share is \$409,386. The SCA AmeriCorps EAP is a highly cost effective means to support critical environmental stewardship activities, particular in rural areas, because the program mobilizes a large number of AmeriCorps nationwide at minimal cost to CNCS.

A combination of fee-for-service revenue and philanthropic support will fund the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program's operating costs. Federal agency partners such as the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as state, local, and municipal governments, and NGOs will fund the cost of the program with position-specific Task Agreements authorized under cooperative agreements. SCA's national partnership team works closely with program staff to leverage new resource agency partnerships. For some agreements SCA's philanthropic development team secures additional funding from individual donors, corporations, and foundations to support the cost of the program.

SCA has also been successful competing with other youth development, educational, and conservation organizations for funding for a wide array of special initiatives, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Career Discovery Internship Program, which introduces ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically

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diverse college students to conservation careers through conservation service experiences and experiential education. In 2012 this partnership earned The Wildlife Society's Diversity Award, which recognizes outstanding efforts in promoting ethnic and gender diversity in the natural resource professions.

SCA maintains financial reserves necessary to successfully initiate, equip, manage and operate multiple grant programs within the standard funding and reimbursement cycles of publicly funded contracts, awards and programs. In the 2012 fiscal year, the most recent year for which complete data is available, program income accounted for 81.3%, foundation and corporate grants for 11%, and gifts from individuals for 7.7%. For expenses, 87.5% went to program expenses, 8.3% to general and administrative expenses, and 4.2% to fundraising.

In 2012 SCA received support from CNCS for two multi-state programs (Education Award and National Direct) and four single-state programs for a total of \$2,103,760 in CNCS funding. This represents 15.7% of SCA's operational budget.

SCA receives funding from many federal agency partners in addition to the Corporation for National and Community Service. SCA finances are audited annually, including an Independent Auditor's Report on Compliance with Requirements applicable to each major program and internal control over compliance in accordance with OMB Circular A-133. SCA's most recent completed A-133 audit covered the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 determined that SCA complied in all material respects with OMB A-133 requirements.

b. Budget Adequacy

SCA has full confidence in the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program budget. The SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program budget adequately supports the proposed program's design and its activities by providing strong central and local program direction, coordination, and support. SCA has a 55-year track record of implementing successful field programs that meet all project outcomes. The budget model has been tested by SCA on AmeriCorps programs of similar size, scope and duration, including the 15-year history of the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program.

Costs include: 1) Direct costs for member expenses: a) Living allowance of \$160/week for positions

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more than 16 weeks or \$75/week for positions 16 weeks or fewer, b) Health insurance to interns serving more than 16 weeks, c) Travel to and from the site, d) Housing during service, e) Uniform package, including shirts, water bottle, hat, nametag, and AmeriCorps identification; 2) Direct costs related to fielding and managing programs and SCA members; these are fixed costs based on audited, annualized costs for these service and cover: a) National and strategic recruitment of applicants to meet the needs of partners, b) Program staff and expenses to place, enroll, manage and assist members getting to their service sites safely and ensure all necessary documentation is complete, c) Direct support during service to members and partners to ensure successful outcomes, d) Program evaluations and follow-ups, in-person and virtual site visits, e) Criminal history checks, f) Risk (safety) management services through 24/7 emergency hotline, pre-project hazard assessments, post-project reviews, and incident management and debriefing, g) Proprietary data management systems to effectively manage programs and individuals members from initial interest through service completion, h) Unless provided by our partners, SCA provides Workers Compensation coverage; and 3) Necessary indirect costs are allocated equally across all SCA programs/members, provisionally 27.16% of all direct costs established per OMB protocols.

The SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program is supported by full-time Finance, Human Resources, Development, and Executive staff whose expertise and support will continue to ensure that the program is both programmatically successful and fiscally sound. SCA Finance and Human Resources staff will oversee all payments to interns as well as other costs and supports, such as liability, FICA, and Workers Compensation. These staff members ensure all records are maintained in accordance with federal standards.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Evaluation sent to americorpsgrants@cns.gov.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

NA

Continuation Changes

NA