

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)		
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):	3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 20-JAN-15	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER: N/A
2b. APPLICATION ID: 15AC202855	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION		
LEGAL NAME: Partners for a Greener Future, Inc. DUNS NUMBER: 185524044	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Bilbo Baggins TELEPHONE NUMBER: (408) 222-0334 FAX NUMBER: 222-0334 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: bbaggins@yahoo.com	
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 855 West Pine Lane Trimble SX 85544 - 0334 County: Barten	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b. Community-Based Organization	
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 885214002	9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: Corporation for National and Community Service	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Green Mountains Corps 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant SX09 b.Program	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Barten, Gottleburg, Jaspen, Stauton and Wilcox Counties	16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR R <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> V <input type="checkbox"/>	
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 07/01/14 END DATE: 06/30/15	17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. X NO	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: 1	18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 459,405	
b. APPLICANT	\$ 287,595	
c. STATE	\$ 0.00	
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00	
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	
g. TOTAL	\$ 747,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Bilbo Baggins	b. TITLE: AmeriCorps Program Director	c. TELEPHONE
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED

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Executive Summary

Partners for a Greener Future (PGF), a nonprofit organization that serves the rural, 5-county mountain region in State X, proposes to have 36 AmeriCorps members in the 5 county, rural mountain region of State X. These members will build on a highly successful 6th year of the Green Mountains Corps (GMC) to restore and improve public lands and watersheds, provide environmental education service learning projects for economically disadvantaged youth, and build the volunteer management capacity of smaller nonprofits that access our services. At the end of the 1st program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for protecting, restoring and enhancing natural sites on public and private lands, and leading environmental service learning activities which improve student academic achievement in science and successfully connect students and communities to their surroundings. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage 1225 volunteers, who will contribute approximately 4375 hours of volunteer service. This program will focus on Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$459,405 will be matched with \$287,595 which includes local, state and federal funds.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. Problem/Need

Our program addresses two connected needs in the 5 county region of State X: environmental restoration and improved academic performance in science for economically disadvantaged youth. Our 5 county region is characterized by a distressed economy, polluted and unmaintained natural lands, and low academic achievement. The distressed economy has led to a reduction of the amount of funds that support and maintain public lands, resulting in closed trails, polluted rivers, unmaintained access roads, and the spread of invasive species. As a result, fewer local residents and fewer visitors use these natural spaces. Academic achievement in the 5 county region also lags behind state and national averages, particularly in science. Through our program, AmeriCorps members will engage in direct service in environmental restoration for 80% of their time, improving forests, streams, and riverbanks. Members will spend approximately 20% of their time developing and leading environmental service learning projects in local schools. By collaborating with school science teachers to integrate the service learning projects with the science curriculum, and using field trips and immersive outdoor experiences, we will increase academic achievement in science, and introduce students to the wonderful parks and wilderness areas in our region. By engaging students and community members in environmental service learning projects, students will be prepared to become future stewards of our natural resources, lands and waterways will be restored, and more people will be able to use and enjoy them.

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The five county region is largely mountainous, and contains several public parklands, recreational wilderness areas, lakes and streams. A great threat to the ecosystems in this areas are invasive plants, which can alter ecosystem functions, reduce biodiversity, and have considerable economic impacts. According to the seminal report 'Quantifying Threats to Ecosystems in the United States' (Martin 2008), invasive plants rapidly displace vegetation and create monocultures in formerly healthy ecosystems: our 5 county region is cited in this report as an area under “severe threat” (Martin 2008, pp. 87). The State X Department of Natural Resources’ (XDNR) 2010 survey of invasive species throughout the state reports that invasive species are a particular threat in our region. Since 2011, however, the State has consistently reduced the amount of funds supporting XDNR, severely limiting XDNR’s ability to address the invasive species threat.

This region, once a thriving coal mining center, has also suffered from increasing environmental challenges since the closure of the mines. Improperly built runoff corridors, the degradation of containment structures at mine sites, and large tracts of land that were not reforested, have increased the amount of run-off entering the water system, allowed invasive species to establish themselves, led to the erosion of stream banks, and increased the amount of chemicals in the water system, according to a XDNR study conducted between 2008-2010. The public and private parks and environmental nonprofit organizations in the 5 state region, faced with declining monetary contributions and a lack of knowledge of how to increase and maintain volunteers, have been unable to fill the gap in needed services. To protect and preserve the health and sustainability of the forests, trails, and waterways in State X, it is imperative that people using these areas are responsible stewards of the land.

In 2013, the 5 country mountain region of State X had a three-year average unemployment rate of 6.4%, compared with 7.7% statewide and 6.9% nationwide. In 2013, the 5 county region had a per capita market income of \$24,501, compared with \$30,783 statewide and \$34,004 nationwide and a poverty rate of 16%, compared to 13.1% statewide and 13.5% nationwide (County Economic Status Fiscal Year 2013: State X, December 2014). This is an increase from the 2012 poverty rate of 14%, and a decrease in the 2012 per capita market income of \$24,799. The State Regional Commission (SRC) gives counties designations of distressed, at risk, or stable. Five counties in the central mountain region of State X--Barten, Gottleburg, Jaspen, Staunton and Wilcox--were designated as "distressed" by the Regional Commission. These five distressed counties are the focus of this program. To give you a sense of how these 5 counties compare to the other counties in State X: 8 other counties were rated “at risk” and 10 others were rated “stable”.

State X test scores in science have declined yearly between 2009 and 2012, and the scores for

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economically disadvantaged students have declined at a greater rate than for non-economically disadvantaged students. Based on the 2012 National Educational Statistics report, 34% of all State X sixth and seventh graders scored below the “basic” knowledge level in science, while 79% of economically disadvantaged State X sixth and seventh graders scored below the “basic” knowledge level. While a host of interrelated factors contribute to the racial and socioeconomic disparities in student achievement, it is well documented that children and youth living in poverty and low-income communities perform far below their counterparts in middle- and upper-class communities. According to a 2010 report by Cartell & Branson (The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in Rural America), impoverished students (defined as those receiving federally subsidized lunches) lag academically behind their more affluent counterparts by roughly two years. As the income gap has widened, so has the achievement gap in science, which has grown 40% over the past three decades (National Educational Statistics, 2012). In the schools with which we will partner, 84% of the students receive federally subsidized lunches.

In 2013, the State X Department of Education revised the science curricula, creating 10 standards which schools must address, in an effort to address the declining science scores throughout the state. PGF met with school principals, science teachers and parents to discuss incorporating environment focused service learning projects into the science curriculum: after significant conversation, 5 schools agreed to pilot a service learning program designed to educate students about the environment with PGF. This environmental service learning component is a new effort for PGF, based on the requests of local schools. We see this as a logical extension of our original AmeriCorps grant: growing from a purely environmental restoration program to a more holistic program which combines restoration with environmental focused service learning, deliberately engaging students and community members in improving the land in which they live. Our program will improve students' academic performance in science by engaging students in high-quality environmental service learning projects which are integrated with the schools' science curricula.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model

Partners for a Greener Future has worked since 2000 for sustainable communities, partnering with state and federal agencies, local government, nonprofits, and our members to build programs and projects from the region's many natural assets. The main outcome sought in this proposal is to use AmeriCorps members' enthusiasm, knowledge, and commitment to service to assist the people of the 5 county region to restore and protect the area's natural assets by educating and involving students in environmental service learning projects, mobilizing community volunteers in restoration efforts, and building the volunteer capacity of local environmental nonprofits to meet increased environmental project needs.

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In our region, environmental restoration is not sustainable without increased community involvement in restoration efforts and a better understanding of the impact of industrial and personal behavior on the environment. In the PGF theory of change, environmental education and community engagement are the drivers of this change, allowing communities to gain awareness of their assets. As these assets are understood and as students and community members are actively engaged in restoring them, the local nonprofits will gain experience in recruiting and managing volunteers, developing a sustainable, trained volunteer base of which will support future restoration projects. By restoring and improving access to public and private lands and waterways, more people will be able to enjoy these natural resources. Given our experience and that of our partner sites, Partners for a Greener Future sees a clear link between sustainable environmental restoration led by local nonprofits and powered by local communities and students, and greater environmental stewardship.

PGF's main outputs and outcomes in year 1 are:

- * 350 miles of trails and streams restored, 300 square miles of forest restored and improved, and 15 stream miles
- * 250 economically disadvantaged sixth and seventh grade students will increase their academic achievement by 1 grade level, as measured by pre and post tests;
- * 875 volunteers will each contribute at least 5 hours of service in restoration projects

To accomplish these outcomes, 35 members will be deployed at 5 sites within the 5 counties. This represents an increase from 21 members in our current AmeriCorps grant. Activities take place on public and private lands in Barten, Gottleburg, Jaspen, Staunton and Wilcox counties, which make up the 5 county region described in this proposal. This expansion is possible because of the very strong partnerships Partners for a Greener Future has developed over its 14 year history of forest and watershed restoration. All of the partners we have selected to work with are either (a) environmental focused or (b) local schools:

**Existing PGF partners that will be leveraged for this proposal include the: Bear Mountain State Park, Blue Creek Wilderness Area, and the Skytop State Park, and Columbia Land Preservation Society;

**New partners developed for this proposal include the: TriCounty Heritage Center, Barten Middle School, Gottleburg Middle School, Jaspen Consolidated Junior High, Staunton Middle School, and Wilcox Middle School.

Members will be placed in teams of 7 at these 5 partner sites: Bear Mountain State Park, Blue Creek Wilderness Area, Skytop State Park, the Columbia Land Preservation Society, and the TriCounty Heritage Center. These 5 locations will serve as the members' primary site, and will provide a supervisor to oversee

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the members. Working out of these organizations, AmeriCorps members will remove invasive species, monitor and improve waterways, improve natural assets through trail, stream and park clean ups and restoration activities, and provide environmental education service learning projects for sixth and seventh grade students.

The organizations which are our partner sites are fairly small organizations with limited financial resources and small volunteer bases. By serving as the intermediary organization for an AmeriCorps grant, PGF makes it possible for these small, community based organizations to access AmeriCorps resources. As part of our program activities, our AmeriCorps members will also build the capacity of our partner sites by recruiting, mobilizing, and training volunteers to assist with the restoration and service learning projects. Our partner sites have requested help expanding their volunteer base to meet growing needs for bigger and better projects.

Members will work as a team, under the direction of a supervisor, to plan and conduct environmental restoration projects; exact projects will vary from location to location, depending on the specific needs of that partner; we expect members will engage in environmental restoration activities for 80% of their time. The remainder of their time (20%) will be spent developing and conducting environmental education service learning projects for sixth and seventh grade students and mobilizing volunteers. Each team of members will be “partnered” with one middle school/junior high: each team will coordinate closely with the school science teachers and assistant principals to develop and deliver environmental service learning projects to sixth and seventh grade students at a dosage of 4 hours per student per week for a minimum of 24 weeks during the school year, and will ensure the projects are integrated with, and supportive of, each school’s existing curricula. The project begins August 01, 2015, and continues for one year. We hope that program will be funded again by CNCS in years 2 and 3.

Specific activities include: removing invasive species, improving natural assets through trail, stream and park clean ups and restoration activities, monitoring and tracking water quality and conditions; mitigating soil and streambank erosion, engaging volunteers in all aspects of the PGF strategy; developing and conducting service learning projects in schools in conjunction with science teachers; creating resources and tools which our nonprofit partners can use to develop sustainable volunteer management infrastructure; facilitating networking and training among PGF partners and local communities to share resources and information in support of PGF activities.

AmeriCorps members are uniquely positioned to work with communities at the grassroots level and support PGF's integrated approach by working as cross-program teams and offering fresh perspectives on old problems. Members can bring partners to the table and support collaboration. Members educating children and residents help them become more knowledgeable about their environmental

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assets while exemplifying expertise and service. The members' role recruiting and supporting volunteers in local communities are integral to the sustainability of the program.

3. Evidence Base

A review of our performance measure data showed that: (1) of the 6,811 acres of land we treated and restored in 2012 (the target for 2012 was 6,750 acres), over 6,692 acres were rated “improved” according to the State X Department of Natural Resources’ definition of improvement (see performance measures for the definition); and (2) of the 94 miles of trails and waterways treated in 2012 (the target for 2012 was 90 miles), 89 miles were rated “improved” according to the State X Department of Natural Resources’ definition of improvement (see performance measures for the definition). Furthermore, 57% of the community volunteers are members recruited for environmental projects came back to volunteer again on 3 or more projects in the following 6 month period. “Repeat” volunteers bring their previous volunteer experience and knowledge with them and often step into leadership roles in their volunteer groups. Our alumni data shows that our program is effective in preparing the next generation of natural resource professionals: 68% of our former members have secured a job, taken another service opportunity, or pursued further education - all in the environmental field - after completing their terms.

PGF’s approach to service learning is founded on the belief that only structured, curriculum-based environmental service learning projects which are integrated into the school science curriculum and which connect students and communities to the region's natural assets through field-based (outdoor) components can affect student achievement scores in science. The following framework explains the approach PGF takes. Place Based Education: Connecting Classrooms with Nature, by David Sobel (2012), published by the Halpert Society, compiles existing research with commentary by the author. Citing a nationwide study by the State Environment and Education Roundtable (Woodward and Stahl, 2009), Sobel references Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC) learning: "EIC-based learning is not primarily focused on learning about the environment nor is it limited to developing environmental awareness. It is about using a school's surroundings and community as a framework within which students can construct their own learning, guided by teachers and administrators using proven educational practices..." This assertion is supported by recent research from the Schubert Foundation: Service Learning and Science (McCaffery et al., 2011). McCaffery conducted a non-experimental study with 220 economically disadvantaged sixth grade students in Spokane, WA. For 4 hours a week over a 24 week period, these students participated in high quality service learning programs which were integrated into the existing sixth grade science curriculum and which involved field-based (outdoor) components. All of the students in the study were performing 1 or 2

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levels below grade level at the start of the study, as documented through a pre-test. By the end of the 24 week period, 60% of the participating students had increased their academic performance by one grade level as documented in a post test. The study revealed that in order to have a positive impact on academic performance, effective service learning programs must have the following components: meaningful service and academic rigor. Students must be actively engaged in community service that has a significant impact on everyone who is involved – the student, the instructor, the community service provider, and people in the community. The student must meet and exceed academic objectives stated by the instructor and course syllabus, and must be evaluated on the course work and knowledge gained and NOT on the service performed. Our program is doing all these things. The main difference between the study and our proposed program is our inclusion of 7th grade students: we included seventh grade students at the specific request of our partner schools. The schools feel that academic achievement in science will be enhanced if students receive this intervention for two years in a row (6th and 7th grades), and have worked with us to structure the service learning projects so that the projects build on each other over a 2 year period.

In our theory of change, restoration and conservation must be community-based, well-structured, and connected to the real needs of rural communities in order to be sustained. Research and documentation from many sources like the Petrossian Institute, the Broday Research and Education Center, and the Center for Rural Growth show that community involvement and participation are critically in order to succeed in working with rural communities.

4. Notice Priority

PGF has been a 21CSC member organization since January 2013. Our program focuses on environmental restoration: all our AmeriCorps members' service activities involve protecting, restoring and enhancing public and private lands. Members will receive technical training that prepares them for careers in the environmental sector. Through our environmental focused service learning programs, students will not only improve their academic performance in science, but learn to be stewards of natural resources.

5. Member Training

GMC provides a robust training program to prepare members to effectively implement their service projects and to promote the future employability of members in the environmental area. Members complete a three day orientation with PGF, including an overview of program goals, performance

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measures, a overview of national service and AmeriCorps, the member service agreement and position description, program rules and regulations, prohibited activities, compliance issues and benefits and a community tour. Then members participate in 1 day host site orientation at their assigned sites. Members then return to PGF for a final day of training, during which we provide an overview of local culture and history, OnCorps training, administrative procedures, conduct a professional development goals assessment, and have the swearing-in ceremony.

PGF members follow a set training curriculum of in-house sessions during their service year to ensure continuous learning and skill-building with the goal of building their personal portfolio for employment. All members get hands-on training in invasive species identification, invasive species mitigation, trail building, trail maintenance, chainsaw safety, water quality monitoring, stream restoration, erosion prevention and mitigation, environmental education, developing service learning projects, effective community involvement, and volunteer recruitment and management. GMC draws on the expertise of professionals from the State College Environmental Sciences Center, the State X Department of Natural Resources, Project Wilderness, the National Volunteer Centers of America, and the science teachers of our 5 partner schools in providing much of the skill training for members. For personal development, PGF offers training in public speaking, diversity, project management, managing change, resume building, and Life After AmeriCorps. These sessions have been selected to increase the knowledge and skills of members with the goal of increasing their employability.

Members will be trained in Project Wilderness, is one of the most widely-used and highly-respected environmental education programs among educators of students in kindergarten through high school. The program emphasizes forests and waterways, and engages students with service learning as a hands-on way of teaching how ecosystems operate and learning about environmental issues. It is based on the premise that young people and educators have a vital interest in learning about our natural world. The activities found in Project WILDERNESS instructional materials are intended for use in both classroom and informal settings, and are designed to support state and national academic standards appropriate for grades K-12. In selecting Project Wilderness as the curricula for our environmental education activities, we shared the curriculum with the staff of our partner schools to ensure it aligned with the State X science curricula. We then worked closely with the science teachers to select and modify specific Project Wilderness learning modules and integrate them with school science curriculum.

Additional individualized training is provided on a one-on-one basis as needed or requested. Each team meets weekly at their site to plan projects and priorities for the coming weeks, troubleshoot any problems, discuss best practices, and, if needed, receive training on relevant topics. Once a month, we

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gather everyone together for a 4 hour GMC Corps meeting. All 5 teams participate in this meeting, with each team making a brief presentation on completed and upcoming projects. During this meeting teams we provide training on relevant topics and teams share best practices.

Partners for a Greener Future ensures that members and recruited volunteers are aware of and adhere to the rules regarding prohibited activities: members and site supervisors review a comprehensive memo of understanding that specifically states prohibited activities at orientation, site supervisors are trained to review timesheets for prohibited activities, and prohibited activities are discussed during monthly member meetings. The Program Director and site coordinator double check member timesheets for prohibited activities before they are processed for payment. A volunteer agreement also makes the prohibitions clear and training is done at events where volunteers participate. Members and supervisors are instructed to consult the program director if clarification is needed regarding activities. When needed, State Commission X will be consulted.

6. Member Supervision

Part of PGF's success is its high member-to-supervisor ratio, which ensures support, on the job training, and continuous feedback by highly trained program personnel at partner sites. Site supervisors and science teachers receive training before the member term begins on national service and AmeriCorps in particular, the GMC program, and prohibited activities. These are also clearly listed in the Memorandum of Understanding in place with each partner site and thoroughly discussed with each site supervisor. We have a conference call with site supervisors every two weeks, and an in-person meeting with the supervisors quarterly. Ongoing training will occur as prohibitions and provisions are changed throughout the year during the supervisor calls and monthly meetings. If immediate action is required, supervisors will be notified via email.

Each site supervisor works closely with members on the design, implementation and evaluation of specified activities across targeted areas meeting with members weekly if not daily. Supervisors provide oversight on timesheets, monthly reports and quarterly reports. If problems arise between members or staff, members follow a chain of command to ensure their issues are heard and dealt with. Site supervisors are the initial contact to assist members in resolving issues. If further action is needed, the program director is available to discuss and address issues. Members complete a self-appraisal in the 8th week, which they discuss with their supervisor. This is followed by a mid-term check in and evaluation with supervisors, and an end of term evaluation. Support for AmeriCorps supervisors is the responsibility of the program director and assistant coordinator, and is provided one on one and at quarterly supervisor meetings where strategy, goals, issues and concerns are discussed. Supervisors

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work as a team, coordinating with each other's programs to meet overall outcomes. Members are also encouraged to work across team to support each other, something made easier where supervisors collaborate and share responsibility for the success of all members. The program director performs three site visits per year per site, interviewing the site supervisors and members, and reviewing member activities, hours served, training accomplished, goal setting, and member satisfaction. Host sites complete a mid-term and end of term site satisfaction survey. Final decision-making on supervisory issues is the responsibility of the PGF Director. The AmeriCorps members do not replace any existing employees at PGF or at partner sites.

7. Member Experience

As stated above, the State College Environmental Sciences Center's 2013 study of our program showed that our program is effective in preparing the next generation of natural resource professionals: 68% of our former members have secured a job, taken another service opportunity, or pursued further education - all in the environmental field - after completing their terms. We feel this is due in large part to the technical, skill-based training we provide members, which prepares them for careers in the environmental sector. PGF has been a 21CSC member organization since January 2013, and all our AmeriCorps members' service activities involve protecting, restoring and enhancing public and private lands while teaching them to be stewards of natural resources. We recruit our members primarily from the local communities in which we work, publicizing our AmeriCorps positions through our partner organizations, the State College, and local media, as well as using the AmeriCorps recruitment system. Over the last 3 years, 80% of our members have come from within our region.

As part of our monthly GMC meeting for all members, we build an ethic of service and civic responsibility by using modules from the Civic Reflection curriculum, excerpts from the "Talking Service" pamphlet, and selected readings from The Civically Engaged Reader. To complement this effort and make it more "real" for members, we invite alumni to come back and either lead a discussion about one of the readings, or talk about the impact their service experience had on their future lifepath: during the last year, we had 3 alumni participate in this way. We also build in an opportunity for teams and members to reflect on their service during our monthly meetings. The program assistant facilitates the first two months of reflection activities, then each team takes a turn facilitating the reflection activity in subsequent months. To help members develop a sense of the larger national service movement, we identify other AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs in the region, and reach out to them to find ones which are willing to collaborate with us on national days of service. A small group of members (representing the larger group) then plan and implement a joint service project with the other

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national service program. During the last year, we collaborated with a Senior Corps program on a Martin Luther King Day of Service activity, and with another AmeriCorps program on a 9/11 service activity.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

PGF works to build strong group cohesion by reinforcing an identity with AmeriCorps at several levels. First, PGF members are introduced to the mission of national service, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and AmeriCorps at orientation by discussing the history and legacy of national service, the streams of service, and specifically AmeriCorps. This is followed by a discussion about our program's desired outcomes and how members' activities contribute to those outcomes, after which we tie our outcomes back to the larger CNCS Environmental Stewardship focus area.

Commitment to AmeriCorps identification is reinforced through wearing of AmeriCorps gear (logo tshirts for restoration projects, logo dress shirts and lapel pins for service learning projects). Members are expected to identify themselves as AmeriCorps members at all times; during the host site orientation period, all members prepare "elevator speeches" describing their service as GMC AmeriCorps members, which allows them to be ready to answer questions from students and community members. Partner sites and schools receive AmeriCorps window placards identifying them as AmeriCorps sites and name tags are distributed to members identifying them as AmeriCorps assigned to that site. Supervisors and members receive training on communication guidelines, and all media, website and other communications will contain the appropriate logos as required. To reinforce team cohesion and esprit d'corps, an inter-team advisory council (1 member from each team) will identify topics and best practices to include in the monthly GMC all-team training meeting.

Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staffing

Partners for a Greener Future has a longstanding relationship with CNCS including administration of the Green Mountains Corps program since 2009. State X Commission conducts yearly onsite monitoring of our program, and their monitoring has not identified any major compliance issues. Experience with other federally funded grants includes 3 years of funding through AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates and 3 years of NCCC funding. PGF also have federal grant management experience with two EPA grants and three Forest Service grants during our 14 year history: all of these grants received clean audits and met or exceeded project objectives.

Partners for a Greener Future and PGF partners have worked for the last year to grow the

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partnerships and capacity needed to implement the PGF strategy on a larger scale which means reaching more communities and individuals and creating a larger overall impact. This proposal is a substantial increase from the current 21 members to 35. Partners for a Greener Future believes this is possible because the expansion is occurring through partners with the capacity to participate in PGF and to provide some match and administrative support to GMC and PGF.

Given our proposed expansion, partnership management is important to PGF, requiring new organizational capacity which will occur as certain program director responsibilities are devolved to a new Program Assistant. The Program Assistant will train and be the 1st line of contact for members and sites, assist the Program Director with monitoring duties, ensure MOAs are reviewed and formalized with each site, build a strong corps identity through team building, and help manage key program relationships and partnerships.

The Program Director provides strategic planning and management support, oversees and monitors sites, identifies new potential partners, collects performance data, and coordinates with the Leadership Team (site supervisors) regularly to review program outcomes, accomplishments and issues. Cross-team collaborations are encouraged between all Partners for a Greener Future AmeriCorps site supervisors. The Program Director is the point of contact for grant communications with State X commission. The PGF Chief Financial Officer provides budget support using QuickBooks.

PGF engaged stakeholders and community members in our program design process in several ways. First, we conducted focus groups with our existing sites to review the scope, activities and desired outcomes in the current grant, and identify any changes or corrections needed. We based on that initial work, we got input from the State X Department of Natural Resources, the State College Environmental Services Center, key school staff, and other stakeholders on the program and facilitated conversations with them to garner input on new directions: the service learning component was the result of those conversations. Then we conducted outreach activities to other potential partner sites and educated them on AmeriCorps, our proposed program, and the time commitment, match and reporting requirements for potential sites. We signed MOAs with the partners listed earlier in the application. The program director gathers information via quarterly reports on challenges and successes throughout the year from members, site supervisors, teachers, and other stakeholders, and uses this information to make modifications, if needed.

2. Compliance and Accountability

Compliance and accountability is enforced by setting expectations early on and maintaining close contact with members and site supervisors. Partners for a Greener Future has experienced very few

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compliance issues as a result. Compliance monitoring is led by the program director with an annual project kickoff event attended by all host site supervisors and leading project partners, where program guidelines and prohibited activities are reviewed. The Program Director conducts two on site monitoring visits to each site each year. If a compliance issue is noted, it is dealt with immediately with both the member and supervisor and, if necessary, the State X Commission is notified. A corrective action plan is developed and implemented with the member(s) and/or supervisor to ensure actions are taken to bring the matter into compliance. If compliance issues remain, both will be subject to a detailed review process and disciplinary action taken.

3. Past Performance For Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only

Green Mountains Corps conducted an external process evaluation covering the time period of 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. This examined the perspectives and satisfaction levels of all parties involved in the PGF program -- members, alumni, project partners, and staff. It documented what has worked well and identified opportunities for improving program processes in recruitment, retention, member training, site supervisor training, and data collection. Improvements needed in more accurate data collection, better member reporting systems to eliminate redundancy, and better training scheduling where revealed. The 2013-14 program incorporated the necessary adjustments to systems prior to start of the year.

The GMC has consistently met or exceeded performance measure targets during the 1st five years of the grant. Since the GMC started operations in 2010, 126 MCC members (21 per year during the first 5 years of the grant) have restored over 34,059 acres of forest (aggregate goal was 34,000 acres during the 1st five years of the grant), planted 578 trees (aggregate goal was 550 trees during the 1st five years of the grant), restored over 472 miles of trails and waterways (aggregate target was 465 miles during the 1st five years of the grant) and mobilized over 3,098 episodic volunteers (aggregate goal was 2,100 volunteers during the 1st five years of the grant). We are not including data from the 6th year of our program because we are only 5 months into the program year.

GMC has successfully increased its member retention rate during the last 3 years. The retention rate for 2012-13 was 76.2% (16/21 retained), 2013-14 was 85.7% (18/21 retained), 2014-15 currently stands at 100% (at the time of submitting this application). An analysis of the reasons why the three 2013-14 members left revealed that 1 was offered a full-time job and 2 left because of dissatisfaction with the program. We examined and revised our program recruitment materials to address the concerns expressed by the dissatisfied members, and feel that our 100% retention rate to date this program year is proof that we have addressed this problem. GMC's enrollment rate has

Narratives

been, and continues to remain, at 100% every year since its inception.

Continuous improvement is addressed in several ways. Both members and host site partners complete quarterly surveys to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the program, program communication, cooperation and program satisfaction. During the last two years, we our biggest compliance problem centered around our member service contracts and timesheets. When we started GMC 5 years ago, we let each partner modify our template timesheet and service contract to reflect their specific site activities. This resulted in a huge burden for the PGF program director, who had to review each site's documents to ensure they were compliant with rules and regulations. When we started our 2nd three-year grant, we made the decision to require all our sites to use template timesheets, service contracts, and other standard forms that we created: this has resulted in a huge time saving for the program director during site visits. During the last program year, one of our long-time site supervisors was replaced with a new person, who found electronic copies of the old, non-template timesheet and member contract and started to use them. We were able to catch that during the 1st month of service and make the appropriate corrections. Data in the form of surveys, feedback reported on timesheets and quarterly reports, plus results from internal and/or external evaluations, are analyzed and used to make improvements to future programming. If something is not working throughout the program year, steps are taken to make changes to improve it as soon as possible to ensure the program is meeting requirements and reflecting the high standards encouraged by AmeriCorps.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost Effectiveness

PGF's cost per MSY for this application is \$13,125. This represents a reduced cost/MSY from our previous year's cost/MSY of \$13,225. Although we tried to reduce it further, we were unable to secure additional resources in our resource-poor region. However, we feel that our reduction is significant given that we expanded the programmatic scope of our program and added 14 new MSY.

Procuring private funds in rural State X can be difficult, but we have been able to secure the required cash and in-kind match. PGF has gotten additional resources from existing partners and cultivated a few new partners. The State College for Natural Resources has increased its support for the program, based on the tremendous impact the college feels we are having on restoration of regional resources. Our new service learning component has opened up new sources of match to us - the Rural Action Environmental Education Program, the National Association of Rural Educators, and the Project Wilderness education grant program. The State College was particularly helpful in assisting us in identifying and approaching these new funders, who made the expansion of this project possible.

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The match we receive from these organizations will support both the service learning and restoration activities of our program. Our 5 partner sites (Bear Mountain State Park, Blue Creek Wilderness Area, Skytop State Park, the Columbia Land Preservation Society, and the TriCounty Heritage Center) are small nonprofit organizations with limited staff and limited financial resources. As such, we are unable to secure significant amounts of match from them. PGF does believe, however, that some amount of financial contribution from partner sites is necessary, because it helps ensure that partners are fully “invested” in the program and its success. Our partner sites contribute in-kind contributions in the form of site supervisor time and office space for members, as well as a modest cash amount. PGF has secured grants from 2 foundations (National Watershed Preservation Trust and Appalachia Region Conservancy) and has submitted proposals to two other foundations (Conservation Foundation and Forests First Alliance) to support the program in 2014.

This program is very cost-effective. Partners for a Greener Future and all of the partners in this proposal serve low-wealth/low-income communities in very rural areas of State X with poverty rates exceeding state and national levels. It would be almost impossible to hire fulltime staff to do the work the AmeriCorps members are doing, not only because of the limited financial resources of our partners but also because staff tied to organizations and not to a united identity like AmeriCorps would respond mainly to the needs of their own organizations. AmeriCorps members’ face-to-face contact with communities is critical to foster community engagement. The equivalent cost of having 35 community organizers employed by PGF at \$15/hour (\$31,200 per year) is \$1,092,000, giving a 3.45 return per member.

In small towns, collaboration is essential to build community investment and provide program sustainability once federal money is gone. Most of our sites are nonprofits governed by community boards who actively build relationships with other community members, ensuring that youth needs are prioritized and addressed. Our community board members helped us secure new match resources from our local Kiwanis, Rotary Club, and PTA, as well as from the Five County Heritage Association. Community organizations provide volunteers and program resources; youth and adults serve on advisory boards; businesses donate; and schools and towns provide space and funding. Members strategically build volunteer resources and foster meaningful opportunities for citizens to contribute. Members partner with local faith groups and community organizations, individuals, businesses, schools, town departments, libraries, service agencies, and others. Members develop databases and management systems and train staff and volunteers how to use them. With more non-federal cash coming in, the in-kind support from businesses, and ongoing dedication of volunteers, sustainability is assured.

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We have commitments from all partners to secure the match funds of \$287,595 to meet the 38% match requirement for year 7.

2. Budget Adequacy - is reflected in eGrants

With the addition of 14, and paying all required AmeriCorps member expenses, this budget allows for a new program coordinator position to assist the program director, which increases Partners for a Greener Future's capacity to administer the program. The fixed amount for administrative costs allows for financial management and CEO oversight of the program.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Partners for a Greener Future completed an external evaluation in 2012-2013, which is attached to this application. Given the program's expansion, process and outcome evaluations are critical parts of Partners for a Greener Future's overall program management and will be used to inform program changes, reinforce areas of success, and celebrate success to partners, funders, and CNCS. Partners for a Greener Future will collect routine data to generate an internal evaluation referencing the 2012-2013 external evaluation and focusing on member support, supervision and satisfaction; partners satisfaction; progress toward identified goals, overall management, reporting and data collection validity; community involvement, member connections to AmeriCorps, and post-service employability.

Partners for a Greener Future will engage an external evaluator who will look at whether the PGF strategy was successful achieving its outcomes: improved waterways and better managed public and private natural resources; increasing the science scores of economically disadvantaged youth through highly structured, immersive service learning programs. This external evaluation will measure achievement in its mid-term outcomes: miles of trail and acres of forest improved; miles of streams and waterways improved; and academic achievement in science among participating 6th and 7th grade students. Program evaluation design will include data tracking and collection by members and supervisors, collation of data by the program director, feedback and evaluation by site supervisors and key partners. Internal and external evaluation data collection measures include: watershed data collection sheets for sampling and monitoring activities; volunteer and participant sign-in sheets; pre and post- testing of environmental education activities; OnCorps volunteer reporting; and member observations collected in monthly reports.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Narratives

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A

Narratives

Grant Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - Communities of Color
- x** AmeriCorps Member Population - Low -income Individuals AmeriCorps Member Population - Native Americans
- AmeriCorps Member Population - New Americans AmeriCorps Member Population - Older Americans
- AmeriCorps Member Population - People with Disabilities
- x** AmeriCorps Member Population - Rural Residents
- AmeriCorps Member Population - Veterans, Active Military, or their Families
- x** AmeriCorps Member Population - economically disadvantaged young adults/opportunity youth AmeriCorps
- Member Population - None of the above
- x** Geographic Focus - Rural
- Geographic Focus - Urban Encore Program
- x**Community Based Organizations Geographic Focus - Rural and Urban Faith Based Organizations
- 21st CSC
- Professional Corps Governor/Mayor Initiative SIG/Priority School
- Other Initiative
-
-

Demographics

Local, State, and Federal Government Match	135,684
Private Match	151,911
Total Match Dollars	287,595
Other Revenue	0
Number of Episodic Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members	225
Number of Ongoing Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members	1000
AmeriCorps members will wear AmeriCorps logo every day.	1
AmeriCorps members will create and deliver elevator speeches	1
The AmeriCorps logo will be proudly displayed on the front page of the organization's website.	1
Percentage of MSY who are opportunity youth	0
Number reported in O15 who are opportunity youth	0
Number reported in O17 who are opportunity youth	0

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Sent

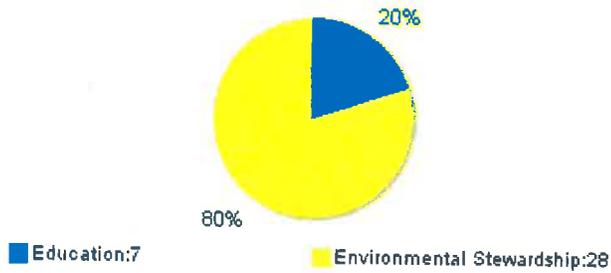
Labor Union Concurrence

Not applicable

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Performance Measures

MSYs by Focus Area



MSYs by Objective

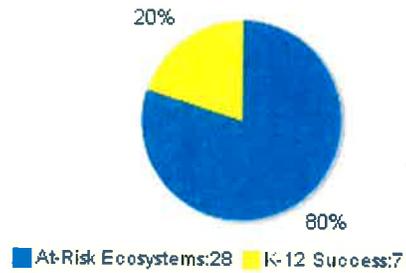


Table1: MSYs by Focus Areas

Focus Area	% MSYs
Education	20%
Environmental Stewardship	80%

Table2: MSYs by Objectives

Objectives	%MSYs
At-Risk Ecosystems	80%
K-12 Success	20%

% of MSY NPM VS Applicant VS Not in ANY

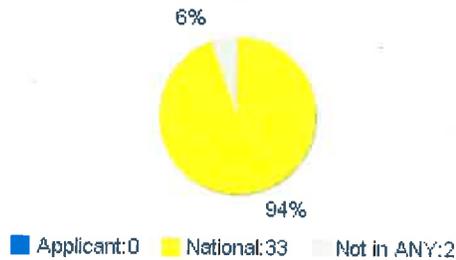


Table3: %MSYs by NPM vs.Applicant vs. Not in ANY

% MSYs	NPM	Applicant	Not in ANY
	94%	0%	6%

Table4: No of MSY and Members by Objective

Objectives	No of MSYs	No of Members
At-Risk Ecosystems	28.00	35
K-12 Success	7.00	35
Total	35.00	70

Primary Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship

Primary Intervention: Improvement of Trail

Secondary Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship

Secondary Intervention: Improvement of Waterways

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Performance Measure: Environmental Restoration

Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship	Objective: At-Risk Ecosystems	No of MSY's: 13.00	No of Members: 35
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Problem Statement:

The central mountain region of State X is home to over a thousand stream miles of dead and damaged waterways due to pre-1977 unregulated coal mining. This degradation is severe in many places, leaving creeks and streams effectively dead and unusable. Members will remove invasive water species, implement erosion control activities, build riparian buffers, and clear natural and unnatural debris from waterways. Members will monitor water quality data to determine whether the waterways have been restored to fishable and swimmable status. Improvements made by PGF include improved water quality standards as outlined by State X EPA and the State X Department of Natural Resources, new fish species in streams where they were not found previously and improved pH readings in streams.

Selected Interventions:

Improvement of Waterways

Describe Interventions:

35 AmeriCorps members will monitor and track water quality conditions and provide data to be used to determine the need for installation of treatment systems to improve water quality. Activities are focused on gathering critical monitoring data needed to develop and implement treatment systems that will restore streams. All members will recruit, train and engage volunteers to assist with activities provided by the program to build greater local ownership and future capacity of the work. Members will provide interventions on a daily basis as scheduled through the 12 months of the term.

EN5 Output:

(PRIORITY) EN5: Miles of trails or rivers treated.

Target: 50 Miles

Measured By: Activity Logs

Described Instrument: Rationale for the target number comes from the total streams miles of all project watersheds impacted by acid mine drainage as reported in the NonPoint Source Monitoring Report prepared by State X Department of Natural Resources. Activities are recorded on data sheets provided by the State X Department of Natural Resources, which measure activities involving water quality sampling both biological and chemical. Data is collected every two weeks.

EN5.1 Outcome:

EN5.1: Miles of trails or rivers improved

Target: 45 Miles

Measured By: Tracking document

Described Instrument: Rationale for the target number of stream miles improved or restored was determined by the total number of available stream miles in all watersheds with the potential to be improved during the course of the project. Improved is defined by State X Department of Natural Resources as typical assemblage of fish and invertebrates and a reduction of pounds phosphorous, nitrogen and sediment as demonstrated through water quality monitoring. Activities are recorded on data sheets provided by the State X Department of Natural Resources and compared against baseline measures. Data is reviewed and compared between members and supervisors to ensure accuracy and that no duplication is present.

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Performance Measure: Improvement of Public and Private Lands

Focus Area: Environmental Stewardship	Objective: At-Risk Ecosystems	No of MSY's: 13.00	No of Members: 35
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Problem Statement:

The five county region contains several public parklands, recreational wilderness areas, lakes and streams. A great threat to the ecosystems in this area are invasive plants, which can alter ecosystem functions, reduce biodiversity, and have considerable economic impacts. The State X Department of Natural Resources' (XDNR) 2010 survey of invasive species throughout the state reports that invasive species are a particular threat to our region. Since 2011, however, the state has consistently reduced the amount of funds supporting XDNR, severely limiting XDNR's ability to address the invasive species threat as well as its abilities to maintain trails and clear natural and unnatural debris.

Selected Interventions:

- Creation of Trails
- Debris (NOT TRASH) removal (including hazardous fuels)
- Improvement of Trail
- Invasive species removal

Describe Interventions:

35 members will remove invasive species, remove natural and unnatural debris, improve trails and access to trails and outdoor sites through trail maintenance, corridor planning, and other improvements. All members will recruit, train and engage volunteers to assist with activities provided by the program to build greater local ownership and future capacity of the work. Members will provide interventions on a daily basis as scheduled throughout the 12 months of the term. The reduction of invasive species is defined by the State X Department of Natural Resources as the complete removal of non-native species from a defined area. Improved trails is defined by the National Park Service standards as trails cleared, blazed or marked, and well-maintained for use for hiking. Trail access is defined as trails improved to provide access to additional trail miles not before available for hiking.

EN4 Output:

(PRIORITY) EN4: Acres of parks or public land treated.

Target: 11500 Acres

Measured By: Activity Logs

Described Instrument: Activities are recorded on data sheets provided by the State X Department of Natural Resources. Data is collected every two weeks. The data sheets will capture the number of acres of land treated to remove invasive species and clear natural and unnatural debris.

EN4.1 Outcome:

EN4.1: Acres of parks or public land improved

Target: 11000 Acres

Measured By: Tracking document

Described Instrument: Rationale for the target number of acres improved or restored to use was determined in consultation with the State X Department of Natural Resources. Improved is defined by State X Department of Natural Resources as the number of acres of land with restored native plants and habitat, trails repaired to useable status, increased accessibility, protected flora and fauna. Activities are recorded on data tracking sheets provided by the State X Department of Natural Resources and compared against baseline measures. Data is reviewed and compared between members and supervisors to ensure accuracy and that no duplication is present.

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Performance Measure: Academic Success

Focus Area:	Education	Objective:	K-12 Success	No of MSY's:	7.00	No of Members:	35
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Problem Statement:

Economically disadvantaged sixth and seventh grade students in the five county region are performing 1 to 2 levels below grade level in science. In the schools with which we will partner, 84% of the students receive federally subsidized lunches.

Selected Interventions:

Service-Learning

Describe Interventions:

35 members will conduct environmental service-learning projects in sixth and seventh grade classrooms for 4 hours per week over a 24 week period. The service-learning projects will use the Project Wilderness curriculum; science teachers will work with the members to modify the Project Wilderness materials to fully integrate it with the existing science curriculum and meet State X Standards to aid in helping students improve test scores in science.

ED2 Output:

(PRIORITY) ED2: Number of students completing a CNCS-supported education program

Target: 250 Students

Measured By: Attendance Log

Described Instrument: Members will collect data through attendance logs. These reports will measure students enrolled in the program at the beginning of the program.

ED1 Output:

ED1: Number of students who start in a CNCS-supported education program.

Target: 250 Students

Measured By: Attendance Log

Described Instrument: Members will collect data through attendance logs. These reports will measure students enrolled in the program at the beginning of the program.

ED30 Outcome:

ED30: Number of students with improved academic performance in other core subjects.

Target: 150 Students

Measured By: Standardized PreWPost Test

Described Instrument: Economically disadvantaged students are performing 1 or 2 levels below grade level as compared to their non-disadvantaged peers on state tests. To demonstrate an increase in academic performance and knowledge gained, participating students will be given pre and post tests on core, grade level science knowledge. Pre tests are given at the beginning of the school year, and post tests at the end of the school year; only students who attend at least 20 of the 24 weeks of the service-learning program will be tested. 60% of students will improve by one or more grade level. Pre and post tests come from the Project Wilderness curriculum, have been validated externally on similar populations, and have been reviewed and approved by the schools in which we will work.

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
The community problem that the program activities (interventions) are designed to address.	Resources that are necessary to deliver the program activities (interventions), including the number of locations/sites and number/type of AmeriCorps members.	The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including duration, dosage and target population.	Direct products from program activities.	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions. These outcomes, if applicable to the program design, will almost always be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in behavior or action. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in condition or status in life. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year. Some programs, such as environmental or capacity-building programs, may measure changes in condition over a period as short as one year.
Decline of public land and water quality	35 members placed in 7 teams at 5 sites in Bartern, Gottfeburg, Jasper, Staunton & Wilcox Counties	Remove invasive species; Monitor and improve waterways; Trail, stream and park cleanup and restoration; Recruit, mobilize & train volunteers. Members will spend 80% of their time on these activities.	875 volunteers will complete at least 4,375 hours of service in restoration projects. 50 miles of trails or waterways treated. 11,500 acres of public and private parkland treated.	45 miles of trails or waterways improved. 11,000 acres of public and private parkland improved.	60% of new volunteers return to help with more projects. Volunteers increase their understanding of the importance of conservation.	Restoration and conservation remain sustainable.
Low academic achievement in science.		Environmental education service-learning projects for 6th and 7th graders. 4 hours per student x 24 weeks.	250 students engaged in service-learning projects.	150 students increase academic performance in science.		
People in our community need preparation for		Member training and support.	Members complete a personal portfolio	Members report satisfaction with their AmeriCorps		Members pursue additional service opportunities,

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
careers in environmental stewardship.			to showcase the experience gained as an AmeriCorps member.	service.		education or employment in an environmental field after leaving service.