

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 conform to the Corporation's eGrants System)			
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):		3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 11-JAN-11	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:
2b. APPLICATION ID: 11AC123001		4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 09ACHMT0010001
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION			
LEGAL NAME: Montana Conservation Corps, Inc. DUNS NUMBER: 961126844 - 3506		NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Jonathan Mckinney TELEPHONE NUMBER: (406) 587-4475 107 FAX NUMBER: (406) 587-2606 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: jono@mtcorps.org	
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): Montana Conservation Corps 206 N. Grand Ave. Bozeman MT 59715 - 3506 County: Gallatin			
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 810467431		7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b. Community-Based Organization	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):		9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: Corporation for National and Community Service	
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State		11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Montana Conservation Corps	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Montana Conservation Corps serves communities and public lands throughout Montana, and in neighboring communities of the Northern Rocky Mountains and Plains region, including in Idaho, Wyoming, and North Dakota.		11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 01/01/12 END DATE: 12/31/12		14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="MT 001"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="MT 001"/>	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="3"/>		16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 1,872,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372	
b. APPLICANT	\$ 3,073,892.00		
c. STATE	\$ 0.00		
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00		
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00		
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00		
g. TOTAL	\$ 4,945,892.00		
17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO			
18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION 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. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Jonathan Mckinney		b. TITLE: President and CEO	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (406) 587-4475 107
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 04/29/11	

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Executive Summary

Here in Montana where our sense of community extends far beyond Main Street to encompass the public lands that surround our towns, Montana Conservation Corps delivers a program to meet needs in environmental stewardship, clean energy, youth engagement, veterans, and volunteers. Members serve on crews to complete projects with community nonprofits and local, state, and federal public agencies, and gain skills and values to succeed as leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens.

Rationale and Approach

In his work, "Democracy in America," Alexis de Tocqueville observed: "the health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens." By this measure, democracy is thriving in Montana, and the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) remains a leader in fostering a robust civic life in the Last Best Place.

Consider the unique situation in Montana that puts a premium on land stewardship and conservation service. After the 2007 Ahorn wildfire burned 53,000 acres on the Rocky Mountain Front, one of Montana's iconic landscapes, the U.S. Forest Service called upon Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) to help reopen popular hiking trails, remove hazardous trees and repair stream crossings where soil erosion was impairing the fisherie. In Yellowstone National Park, when a visitor stumbled on a rough trail and was burned from a fall into a thermal pool, the Park Service invited MCC to construct a new boardwalk and provide safer access for the park's three million visitors.

MCC remains a resource far beyond the needs of our public lands. In 2005, even as MCC members were serving in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, we responded to Governor Schweitzer's call to implement an emergency weatherization effort in Montana. Again in 2008, with families besieged by soaring energy prices, the Governor doubled his commitment to energy assistance. Once more, MCC stepped forward, providing weatherization assistance in 1517 homes in 123 communities.

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This is the Montana Conservation Corps -- versatile, responsive, and productive. With a mission to equip young people with the skills and values to be engaged citizens who improve their communities and environment, MCC uses the power of the crew dynamic and of service to develop citizen leaders.

Montana is an exceptional place to practice this mission. Montanans identify with the idea that hard work builds character and that neighbors help each other. That's how we built our communities on the frontier. This is why Montana is ranked #1 on the CNCS Index of Civic Life.

COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED

The circumstances of Montana's citizens and lands underscore the need for a productive conservation corps. Here, where our sense of community extends far beyond Main Street to encompass the vast public lands that surround our towns, the environment is the foundation of our quality of life and economy. This relationship is no better reflected than in our State Constitution which affirms the inalienable right to "a clean and healthful environment."

The Outdoor Industry Association reports that 81% of Montanans regularly use public lands for "human powered" recreation like hiking, fishing, and biking. Figures from the Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks show that hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers spend over \$1 billion annually. Recent economic studies show that communities in the West with access to protected public lands are the fastest growing with the most diversified economies. The Center for Disease Control ranks Montana among the states with the highest rate of physical activity -- a reflection of our "outdoorsy" lifestyles.

In the report, "World-Class Assets," the National Parks Conservation Association explains that "in Montana's emerging economy... parks are important anchors in the state's most vibrant economies."

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Glacier and Yellowstone attract more than 60% of visitors to Montana.

These uses, however, place a heavy burden on our lands and trails. The backlog of deferred maintenance far outstrips the resources of managing agencies. The Congressional Research Service estimates between \$4.5 and \$9.7 billion in backlogged maintenance and construction in Glacier and Yellowstone national parks alone. It is a matter of economic survival for Montana to protect these lands.

Tackling pressing human needs in our communities remains a priority for MCC. Even as our public lands stimulate prosperity in parts of the state, the average wage remains among the lowest in the country. There is a great need for quality, affordable housing in many communities and our elderly population, projected to be the 3rd highest of any state by 2025, often lives in poorly weatherized homes.

Montana's youth too are at risk. Despite our abundant public lands and being ranked among the fittest populations, our youth are increasingly inactive. Obesity rates have increased from 17% to 23% in the last eight years. The Dept. of Health and Human Services estimates that 50% of Montana kids don't get enough physical activity, with 22% of high school students spending up to 6 hours a day in front of screen media. High teen suicide and pregnancy rates (ranked 49 and 46 of 50) underscore the need for positive ways for youth to engage with their community.

Montana's geography compounds the needs of our public lands and people. Montana stretches 650 miles east to west. Our population of 958,000 is often isolated. 52 of 56 counties are classified rural, many characterized as "frontier" by the Census Bureau. Montana ranks 49th in access to philanthropy -- even when considered per capita. These circumstances stretch the capacity of energetic but under-funded nonprofits and public agencies.

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To cover the expanse of this vast state and to address the needs of our citizens, communities, and treasured public lands, MCC has evolved a regional structure and program model that use the power of the crew dynamic to complete conservation and community projects, engage youth in service, mobilize volunteers, and foster civic responsibility.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND MEMBER ROLES

MCC 175 members serve from one of our five regional bases in Billings, Bozeman, Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula. From each of these offices, members are deployed in crews to serve on projects that address needs identified by our 150+ nonprofit and public agency partners. Projects occur in every corner of the state -- from weatherizing homes of low income families in Wibaux in southeastern Montana with the local community action agency, to restoring historic structures at Big Hole National Battlefield in the south, to enhancing the safety of trails for hikers and horse packers in the Kootenai National Forest in the northwest. MCC members complete over 250 projects each year, benefiting resident of 100+ communities -- from Absarokee to Wyola -- including Montana's seven Indian reservations.

Our program year capitalizes on Montana's climate. In preparation for the May to October project season, MCC enrolls 73 members in February to train as crew leaders -- 46 for field crews, 20 for youth crews, and 7 as roving leaders. Orientation to national service and training in all facets of team leadership are addressed while much of the state is buried under snow. The youth crew leaders follow a similar training track except that they focus more on teen culture and youth management. Between training sessions, members serve on short community projects or work with youth groups and teachers. As spring conditions allow, the leaders are trained in technical skills (trails, chainsaw, outdoor living). By mid-April, with improving weather in Montana, the leaders start in earnest on projects.

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In late May, 102 half-time members join on 23 field crews. Each crew is composed of two crew leaders and four or five corps members. After 2 weeks of orientation to national service, including a review of MCC policies and AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and basic skills training for the new members, the field crews are dispatched to their first of 20 weeks of projects. The members complete their terms of service by November. Some members serve on extended backcountry projects, spending multiple weeks in wilderness settings, while others work primarily in communities and front-country settings. Members spend their last two weeks weatherizing homes of low income families.

Each field crew is fully self-contained with its own vehicle, tools, camping equipment and food, ensuring that MCC teams are able to respond to varied project requirements. For example, a crew might clear wildfire hazards from a Girls Scouts lodge in Livingston one week, travel to Yellowstone National Park next for a 10-day backcountry hitch building a fish barrier to protect native trout, and then spend a week surveying for invasive weeds at a Forest Service campground. Project partners provide training and technical support while also helping members understand the management priorities behind each project. The crew leaders facilitate weekly education from MCC's PLACE (Public Lands and Citizenship Education) curriculum.

MCC's MontanaYES (Youth Engaged in Service) program adopts the best of our field crew model to mobilize teenagers as a community resource. First developed in 2002, this summertime service program for 14-18 year olds builds values and skills for volunteerism, land stewardship, work, and leadership. AmeriCorps crew leaders lead twenty 5-week sessions for 120 youth in 10 communities. MontanaYES was recognized in 2005 as one of the nation's most innovative AmeriCorps programs in the report, "Transforming Communities through Service," published by Innovations in Civic Participation.

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Building on the success of MontanaYES, MCC is launching partnerships with schools, after-school programs, and local youth groups, to provide year-round, conservation-based service learning for middle and high school students. This expanded program harnesses teens' passion to protect the environment and make a difference in their community. The youth crew leaders also will assist teachers implement Project Citizen, a service-based curriculum. These efforts link MCC's expertise in hands-on service to the land with school initiatives to connect kids with their community and promote active lifestyles.

The MCC program provides members with an exceptional experience. Year after year, better than 9 in 10 report a positive service experience. The key ingredients for our success include challenging and meaningful service projects, comprehensive weekly education that puts the work into context, and a dynamic crew-structure that demands the best of every member.

MEASURABLE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Since 1991, MCC members have improved over 7,500 miles of trails. MCC will continue improving 600+ miles of trail each year to ensure safe access for the public. Members also will conserve 1500 acres of wildlife habitat each year by treating for invasive weeds (1000 acres), protecting forests from catastrophic wildfires (250 acres), planting trees (50,000), fencing (50 miles), conducting ecological monitoring (250 acres), restoring streams (8 miles), and more.

Members will invest in communities by improving 1000 homes of low income families and 100 structures of community organizations. They will mobilize over 600 volunteers, including 400 youth, for 20,000 hours of service.

The result of these experiences, members will demonstrate measurable increases in leadership and

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teamwork competencies, and improved knowledge, skills, and attitudes of civic engagement.

Project partners and community stakeholders will commend our members' service. "I don't know how they could have been better," said a partner with the Girl Scouts. "They worked like they loved it -- very respectful and courteous and accomplished more than I had hoped for."

PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

MCC continuously tracks results toward our output and outcome measures. Data on crew performance and project accomplishments is collected weekly using project evaluations completed by partners. Biweekly crew journals completed by members and regular field visits help staff monitor crew performance and respond to member concerns. Two cycles of member evaluations and end-of-season program evaluations provide timely feedback. All results are databased at the headquarters and reviewed each year for grant reporting and program development.

The Board of Directors also ensures MCC is guided by forward looking strategic plans that respond to evolving needs, opportunities, and challenges. Plans were completed in 2002 and 2005, and a new planning process is underway for completion in March, 2009.

In 2007, MCC was one of 21 youth and conservation corps selected to participate in the National Evaluation of Youth Corps. In 2003, and again in 2008, MCC participated in the Excellence in Corps Operations (ECO) peer review process facilitated by The Corps Network, the national association of corps. See "Plan for Evaluation" section for details.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Capitalizing on our regional structure, MCC is able to complete projects in every corner of the state, and

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in connected ecosystems of Idaho, Wyoming, and North Dakota. MCC cultivates symbiotic member-development-for-service relationships. To identify challenging and meaningful projects, our staff network tirelessly with nonprofit organizations and public agencies to identify needs that may be addressed by our crews. Projects must have undergone a public review process or been identified as a priority by nonprofit leaders. Many agencies, especially those that have used MCC in the past, annually contact MCC to propose projects. While many projects are scheduled in advance, MCC is often able to respond on short notice to a request for assistance. MCC gets union authorization for every service project. Every year, MCC partners with new organizations, even as we deepen relationship with existing partners. Events like Make-a-Difference-Day provide opportunities to involve other stakeholders in planning and hosting service activities for community volunteers.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

As Montana's largest AmeriCorps*State program, MCC takes a leading role in the national service community. Our program is unique in its crew-based approach and focus on hands-on conservation service. MCC actively supports the priorities of the State Commission, advocates at the local and national level for issues of concern to Montana's national service community, and provides training and guidance to other programs. MCC members routinely assume leadership roles with the AmeriCorps Members Advisory Committee (ACMAC). Recently, MCC spearheaded efforts to incorporate the "Meaning of Service" civic reflection program as a regular component of cross-stream events with other AmeriCorps programs.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

Since 1991, MCC has replicated and expanded our program model to engage more young people in service and provide more benefits to our communities. This grant encompasses continued growth of our Field Crew program and substantive broadening of the youth program. Community action agencies,

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schools, and even energy utilities are seeking new partnerships to capitalize on MCC's crew-based model of youth development and service.

MCC's AmeriCorps leader development model has been replicated by corps in Utah, Maine, and Alaska, and a corps in Colorado has adopted our MontanaYES model for a community program.

Organizational Capability

1) SOUND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ABILITY TO PROVIDE SOUND PROGRAMMATIC AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT

Founded in 1991, MCC received its first AmeriCorps grant in 1993. Since then, MCC has consistently expanded the scope and reach of our program -- adding to the number of crews responding to local needs; developing initiatives like CorpsLINK in the 1990's to engage adjudicated youth in crew-based community service; morphing that program into MontanaYES in 2002 to engage a broader cross-section of teenagers; and most recently, evolving the summer MontanaYES program into a year-round community youth corps through emerging partnerships with schools, after-school programs, and other youth organizations.

The AmeriCorps goals have always melded well with the agency's mission, and MCC prides itself on being a sustainable, efficient, fully-dedicated national service program -- all members, except the teen participants, are AmeriCorps members receiving a living allowance. Service and civic leadership are fundamental values of the MCC mission, and the national service orientation of our program nourishes the conservation and community projects undertaken by our members.

With eighteen years experience as a conservation corps program, MCC prides itself on its annual accomplishments and the visible and lasting impact of our service on the lands, communities, and

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people of Montana. Likewise, and closer to the heart of our mission, the MCC experience has profoundly impacts the lives of our members, youth corps participants, and volunteers. A former member who recently graduated from college reflected in an email: "I made the focus of my program Environmental History, thanks to the amazing outdoor opportunities MCC provided me. I was always a lover of wilderness before my time with MCC, but the two summers I spent working in the backcountry with groups of other dedicated young conservationists crystallized my desire to make a career out of conservation work. I just wanted to say thanks again for giving me the opportunity to experience MCC, and gain an education award in order to return to school and further my ambitions. I really don't think it would have been possible without the MCC experience."

Over the sixteen year period since MCC first received CNCS funding, we have proven our capacity for sound programmatic and fiscal oversight of a large program spread across a vast state. Members are assigned to one of MCC's five regions and remain under the direct supervision of a regional supervisor (RS) and regional program coordinator. The RS's also cultivate projects and work with partners to assure each project is well planned and suited to our members' abilities. RS's brief the partners to ensure they understand MCC and AmeriCorps policies. These partnerships are formalized in a signed Cooperative Agreement.

We have institutionalized procedures to monitor crew and partner performance, and these have supported continuous improvements in our partner relationships. Project evaluations completed by the partners after each project allow us to closely track crew performance. Year to year, over 90% of partners highly rate crew performance, and 100% indicate their interest in partnering again with MCC. Our staff also seeks feedback from members regarding the partners. These inform our sponsor briefing procedures. For major partners, MCC prepares detailed partnership reports. These steps have helped MCC enjoy excellent relationships with 150 to 200 partners each year.

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The agency utilizes a fund accounting program, Management Information Products (MIP), to record accounting entries and produce management reports. These reports detail expenditures by expense category, funding source and functional categories allowing up-to-date analysis of grant and match requirements and tracking of the project agreements or grants we negotiate with contributing project sponsors. A system of internal checks and balances is maintained through the separation of duties between the President/CEO, Director of Operations, Program Director, and the Board of Directors.

MCC has effectively administered the AmeriCorps grant since 1993. MCC also administered for four years a federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program grant issued through the Montana Board of Crime Control. The Director of Operations has previously performed A-133 governmental audits for municipalities, universities, and large nonprofits, and prior to her 13 years with MCC, she worked for six years with an agency that received funding from over 20 federal sources.

An annual audit is conducted by an independent auditor, and for the last eleven years, the auditors have issued an unqualified opinion of the financial statements of the MCC. In April of 1996, the Office of the Inspector General contracted for a review and test of the MCC. During this review, the contractor indicated that they were pleased with the "exceptional degree of professionalism and thoroughness exercised" in the performance of our annual audits. In 2007, as part of an OIG audit of the State Commission, the MCC records and procedures were reviewed. The final report included a limited number of simple recommendations regarding member records. These recommendations have already been implemented. Over two years of audited program expenditures, there was only one questioned cost for \$406 for additional guests at a member recognition event. The results of this audit again confirmed MCC's comprehensive and effective management practices.

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The Montana Office of Community Service conducts site reviews based on an annual risk assessment. The Office has consistently found that MCC maintains thorough and accurate member records and remains in compliance with AmeriCorps policies. In recognition of MCC's excellent ability to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, the Commission has periodically referred other Montana grantees to the MCC for technical support. The MCC senior staff is also commonly called upon by our national association, The Corps Network, to advise on policy matters or provide technical support to other corps programs.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STAFF:

We have an experienced staff in our five regional offices, and a talented headquarters staff. When positions open up, MCC attracts high quality applicants with previous corps and national service experience. MCC also benefits from excellent staff retention. The staff embraces the philosophy of national service and understands how AmeriCorps fits into a crew-based program.

The President/CEO, in his seventh year with MCC, has twenty-one years experience in nonprofit organizations and a Masters degree in environmental studies and nonprofit administration. The Director of Operations is a CPA with a background in public auditing, including single audits in accordance with OMB circulars, and twenty years experience in managing federal grants. The Program Director has dual Masters degrees in philosophy of education and counseling, and over twenty-six years experience in experiential education. He oversees all aspects of our member development program and supervises the Regional Supervisors and Program Manager. The Program Manager supervises member trainings and develops high quality education resources for the members. This manager also supervises the Youth Coordinator and Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator. The five Regional Supervisors have previous natural resource and corps experience. They are responsible for project development in their region, and make hiring and disciplinary decisions for the members they supervise. Regional Program

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Coordinators work under the Regional Supervisors in each region and provide the direct support and field supervision for members. Other administrative positions include an accountant, bookkeeper, I.T. specialist, and administrative assistant.

MCC is strongly committed to professional development for its staff. Annual performance reviews are completed with great care for all staff. The reviews outline yearly goals and areas for growth and training. MCC allocates an average of \$1800 per employee for professional development and networking at local and national conferences and trainings. The MCC senior staff members are regular contributors to The Corps Network's Excellence in Corps Operations peer review process. This has helped MCC share its strengths with others, and bring home new practices from other corps. MCC also promotes intra-region visits between regional supervisors and coordinators to learn from each other.

MCC is governed by an outstanding and diverse board of directors. MCC board members hail from eight different Montana communities, including towns with regional offices. These directors bring diverse assets to our governance with professional connections to universities, community action agencies, conservation organizations, state government, national service programs, and youth development. Two board directors are former MCC AmeriCorps members. Board members make individual contributions and deepen community relationships by directing potential project partners to the MCC.

The board meets 6 to 7 times each year to review the financial position of the organization and ensure the program is accomplishing the mission. Board subcommittees (Audit and Finance, Fundraising, Governance and Nominating, Strategic Planning) meet in between regularly scheduled board meetings. The Board of Directors most recently approved strategic plans in 2002 and 2005. Each of these plans guided important organizational developments, including changes in our staffing structure, increasing efforts with youth, and enhancements to our program design and resource development functions.

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During the winter of 2008-2009, the Board is shepherding a new, comprehensive strategic process to effectively position the organization in light of new partnerships and the emerging opportunities in energy conservation and national service.

PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT OR IMPROVEMENT:

With crews spanning the breadth of Montana, and into neighboring communities in Idaho, Wyoming, and North Dakota, we maintain comprehensive evaluation systems and databases to track results from 250+ projects, manage our participants' performance, and track progress toward the performance measures. Quarterly reports provide management information to the headquarters and regional staff, and form the base for entries into the AmeriCorps reporting system. We review and revise all project and member data forms each year to ensure they capture the necessary information for our evolving needs.

Quality of service is measured three ways. Partners complete a crew performance evaluation after every project. Results are promptly reviewed by regional supervisors and management and entered into our database. The crew leaders complete biweekly journals which document daily activities and issues with the project, partner or crew. These are reviewed by the Regional Supervisors and Program Manager. Regional staff debriefs crews every few weeks to monitor partner performance, and they visit with partners in person or by phone to sustain productive relationships. These practices allow staff to continuously monitor and address crew performance and partner relationships.

Member tracking tools include individual evaluations and self-evaluations, and periodic reviews of each member's Individual Action Plan (IAP). Leaders are evaluated by their supervisor early in April, during the mid-season break in August, and at the end. This allows us to quantify and measure their progress across the range of leadership competencies. The corps members receive written feedback twice during

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their term -- at mid-season and at the end of the term -- regarding their progress on the MCC citizen-leader competencies and their IAP's. The members also have the chance to provide written feedback for their supervisors. Members submit biweekly timesheets documenting all projects, training, and other program activities. The biweekly journals maintained by crew leaders also provide documentation of any member issues.

At the end of their term of service, members complete a comprehensive program evaluation. This is done using an online survey tool. With results immediately available in November, MCC is able to effectively integrate this feedback into our planning for the following season.

Written feedback is solicited from the MontanaYES youth program participants and their parents or guardians. MCC also asks youth families to complete an anonymous household survey that allows us to track socio-economic, demographic, and other characteristics of our youth participants.

Because of the vast distances that separate our regional offices, we invest in communication technologies. A networked computer system permits easy electronic communication and access to organizational materials held on a server. Biweekly conference calls or webinars between the regional and state office staff enhance teamwork and consistent, high quality practices among regions. We also ensure that crews are always able to communicate from the field via radios or phones.

The executive leadership (President, Program Director, and Director of Operations) meets weekly as a team. A collaborative leadership approach provides balanced and attentive management of the organization. When MCC has a special topic to consider, we routinely utilize self-directed work teams with 3 to 5 staff members to develop recommendations for the organization. A standing risk management committee ensures best practices in member safety and program operations.

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MCC communicates externally through a variety of media. An MCC blog for members, alumni, and others recently replaced the "Krew News." CorpsWorks is a twice a year printed newsletter directed at project partners, alumni, and other stakeholder. MCC also sends out a monthly 1-page electronic newsletter. MCC publishes a formal bi-annual report. Other publications include recruitment posters and AmeriCorps position description brochures. MCC also cultivates media interest, with 60 to 100 news reports, including front page stories, being published or broadcast every year. This effort helps build public awareness about MCC and AmeriCorps.

A culture of continuous improvement is institutionalized at the MCC as evidenced in annual refinements to almost every facet of our program -- from forms to training activities to curriculum to partnerships. Each year, MCC seems to surpass itself as reflected in the performance measures, partner evaluations, and member experiences.

MCC is among the 21 corps selected to participate in the 2007 CNCS-funded National Evaluation of Youth Corps conducted by Abt Associates. This is the largest experimental design evaluation ever conducted of national service programs. Results are anticipated in 2009.

MCC's track record for addressing our AmeriCorps issue areas is outstanding. We consistently meet or exceed performance measures and members reflect positively about their AmeriCorps experience with MCC. A validation of our record is found in the nearly 200 agencies and community organizations that annually sponsor projects.

PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

With deep experience managing the AmeriCorps grant and implementing a statewide program, MCC is a

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valued resource for technical assistance. In recent years, the Director of Operations has been called upon to train financial managers at other AmeriCorps programs in Montana. The Program Director is shepherding a statewide "Meaning of Service" civic reflection activity involving different AmeriCorps streams of service in Montana. Every year, the MCC President and CEO, and senior staff are called upon to lead technical assistance teams visiting other corps as part of The Corps Networks' Excellence in Corps Operations peer review program. MCC is a mature organization. As such, our staff are called upon to serve on diverse nonprofit boards -- including United Way, Bob Marshall Foundation, Bozeman Children's Museum, Montana Nonprofit Association, and The Corps Network.

2) SOUND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

VOLUNTEER GENERATION AND SUPPORT:

What distinguishes the MCC volunteer experience is the opportunity to work with hand tools under the guidance of trained members, and to get tangible things done. These hands-on activities result in rewarding service experiences. And what better place to work outside!

MCC annually recruits hundreds of volunteers (846 in '08) who serve thousands of hours (22,545 this year) on dozens of projects (43). MCC is particularly interested in engaging youth, and over two-thirds of volunteers are 18 years or younger. The MontanaYES program offers an incomparable summer service experience for teens.

This year, 96% of volunteers reported a positive experience and that they felt they made a meaningful contribution in the community. In 2007, it was 99.5%. 94% said they'd join MCC again for a volunteer activity. By capitalizing on such experiences, especially during national events like National Trails Day or Make a Difference Day, and by collaborating with partner agencies and other AmeriCorps programs in

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our communities, MCC increases community awareness about national service. When asked if as a result of volunteering, they would be more actively engaged in the community, 95% responded yes -- 32% strongly agreed.

With expanding youth service activities in schools, MCC expects a steady increase in the number of volunteers and volunteer assisted projects.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP:

In 2008, MCC received a Project of the Year Award in Washington, DC, from The Corps Network, for our leadership in orchestrating the 551 mile Yellowstone River Clean-Up. Senator Jon Tester accepted the award with MCC at a ceremony in the U.S. Capitol.

The Montana Weed Control Association presented MCC the Outstanding Youth Award for 2007, and in 2005, our MontanaYES program was highlighted as one of the nation's most innovative AmeriCorps programs in the publication, "Transforming Communities through Service."

In 2004, MCC was awarded the prestigious National Wilderness Award from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture for our contribution to the Canyon Creek Dam restoration project on the Bitterroot National Forest. This award in the category of traditional skills and minimum tools highlighted our AmeriCorps members' capacity to undertake a challenging construction project with minimal impacts to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

These awards demonstrate MCC's leadership in service, conservation, and youth development. By actively engaging with diverse community stakeholders, from large federal land management agencies to small nonprofit organizations, MCC leverages the resources of AmeriCorps to benefit diverse local

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needs. Every project results from collaborations with community organizations and public agencies.

The Project of the Year Award previously described is a good example of MCC leadership. When stakeholders along the Yellowstone River decided the river needed to be cleaned up, the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council contacted MCC to spearhead the 551 mile long effort. Watershed groups, state agencies, private foundations, environmental groups, and local businesses participated and helped plan and raise funds for the effort. In one week, 24 MCC MontanaYES youth participants, joined by local volunteers, removed 18,000 pounds of trash, 5000 aluminum cans, and 90 tires from 64 fishing access sites.

Through service on nonprofit boards, MCC employees lend their leadership to our communities.

SUCCESS IN SECURING MATCH RESOURCES:

Since its inception, MCC's success as a corps has hinged on its ability to form partnerships and maintain a broad base of support in Montana communities. The 253 projects completed in 2008 with 166 agencies who contributed \$1.6 million are proof of our ability to secure a dependable match resource.

This match continues to increase every year as our regional supervisors and CEO continuously reach out to communities and partners across Montana to cultivate understanding of the resource provided by our AmeriCorps crews. This cultivation occurs through attendance at conferences, service on board of directors, participation in community events and meetings, and simply reading the paper to see where needs exist. Our staff negotiates with existing partners to deepen and diversify the roles that our members can play in helping them address agency priorities. For example, a partnership may grow from simply building a trail for a week one year, to members conducting resource inventories and treating for invasive weeds while restoring trails during a month long hitch the following year.

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Every year, MCC also establishes new relationships the result of seeking new communities and organizations where we can help, and by responding to inquiries from people who've learned about the reliable work ethic and positive attitude of MCC crews. For example, after the success of a 1-day river clean up event in 2006, the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council contracted with MCC to spearhead the 551 mile-long project on the Yellowstone River.

For the vast majority of MCC projects, the partner is able to provide a match contribution. This supports our grantee match. For others, especially smaller nonprofit organizations, MCC is able to donate, or provide at reduced cost, the services of a crew.

A growing source of match is grants. Each year, the regional supervisors develop Recreational Trails Program and Off Highway Vehicle Program grants from state agencies to enhance community and public lands trails. The RTP grants total nearly \$150,000 each year and may be leveraged against other funds, such as grants from the National Forest Foundation.

The President/CEO also develops funding from foundations, corporations, and donors. In recent years, MCC has been able to increase support from private donations and grants from \$40,000 in 2002 to \$115,000 in 2007. Particularly as our youth programs expand from summer-only services to year-round activities, MCC anticipates increases in grants and donations

MCC has increased the overall share of match with every grant cycle. For 2010, we anticipate a 59% grantee match with 41% of our funding from AmeriCorps. That's a match increase of 4% since 2007.

COLLABORATION:

Narratives

As stated above, MCC was born and grown of collaboration -- 166 partnerships in 2008 accomplished 253 separate projects. Our existence is dependent on our ability to develop partnerships with hundreds of community and faith-based organizations, local governmental entities, and state and federal land management agencies. Each project addresses a compelling need and ensures meaningful service for members and volunteers.

While the predictable performance of our AmeriCorps crews brings legitimacy to these relationships, it is the personal outreach of our regional supervisors that opens the doors to these collaborations. As MCC's primary project developers, the regional supervisors are consummate networkers. One instrument for developing collaborations has been the Recreational Trails Program administered in Montana by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. To develop high scoring proposals, MCC engages diverse stakeholders in support of the project. In addition to involving partners who can contribute matching resources and funding, each proposal includes support letters from ten or more direct stakeholders in the project -- groups like the Backcountry Horseman, Montana Wilderness Association, local outdoors equipment merchants, and off-highway vehicle clubs. Likewise, MCC is often included in RTP and OHV grants submitted by other organizations such as the Highland Cycling Club and Prickly Pear Land Trust. MCC is a valued partner in helping to realize so many projects -- the service of our members is invaluable to the success of these projects.

Essential to effective collaborations, is consistent and dependable performance. Project evaluations reflect a high level of satisfaction, with 91% of partners each year rating our crews as 4 or 5 on a five point scale. 100% of partners report they would partner again with MCC.

An interesting development in our collaborations is the increasing demand by the U.S. Forest Service for crews on extended wilderness hitches -- from 3 to 18 weeks in places like the Bob Marshall, Frank

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Church-River of No Return, and Washakie wilderness areas. Our program is unique in that many of our members are seeking a rugged, intensive conservation service experience in the backcountry. With diminished resources with which to manage public lands, these agencies are increasingly turning to MCC to help protect our nation's national parks, forests, and designated Wilderness Areas. Many of these agencies are also witnessing a workforce transition. With a high percentage of managers who started their natural resource careers in the 70's nearing retirement, America's public lands need new stewards. By partnering with MCC, a new generation of wilderness workers with traditional skills and a love of the land are being cultivated. This is a special niche for MCC.

LOCAL FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS:

The vast majority of MCC funding is developed through local partnerships -- either through direct sponsor match contributions or from grants from local entities. These financial contributions from public and private, nonprofit entities reflect the priorities of the community and their investment in the MCC. Our focus has been to develop our capacity to increase matching cash contributions, and thus we do not pursue significant in-kind contributions. Yet, community support may be invaluable in supporting volunteer events, or aspects of our program not funded through the AmeriCorps grant of project contributions -- items like the service awards for the MontanaYES participants. Local businesses may also support our volunteer efforts by donating food, space and advertising for our service day projects. Many vendors provide a 10% discount to the organization and our members as a way to support the work of the members.

Local financial contributions in the form of grants and donations are especially important to our youth corps program. MCC has succeeded at gaining repeat support from local businesses, major Montana corporations, and Montana-based foundations. Local contributions range from \$250 sponsorships for youth Service Awards to \$10,000 program grants.

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COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS:

MCC's 150 to 200 annual project partners represent a wide range of community stakeholders. In 2007, 45% of project partners were non-governmental community organizations (88) like the Asbestos Related Disease Network, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Habitat for Humanity, Nature Conservancy, Missoula Children's Theater, and many more that provided high quality projects. MCC also worked with city and county governmental agencies. State agencies that collaborated with the MCC include more than a dozen state parks, the Dept. of Environmental Quality, Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, and Dept. of Public Health and Human Services. Federal agencies include the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Reclamation. Each of these stakeholders has proven a reliable partner that is invested in our members' development.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

COST PER MEMBER SERVICE YEAR: MCC requests \$1,562,400 in federal funds to support 175 members (124 MSY) at a Corporation cost of \$12,600 per MSY. These positions include 73 full-time members and 102 part-time members receiving a living allowance. This request represents 41% of the total program budget. The 73 full-time positions support 46 field crew leaders, 7 senior crew leaders, and 20 MontanaYES youth corps leaders. These positions begin in February and end in mid-November for a full, 9-month term of service. The part-time positions support 102 crew members serving in a full-time capacity from May through October. These members will serve on 23 field crews with 6 or 7 AmeriCorps members per crew, and on 10, two-person youth corps teams that will lead 20 sessions of the summer MontanaYES program and also the community youth corps activities with teachers, after-school programs, and youth groups during the school year.

DIVERSE NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT: The MCC grantee share of \$2,285,000 (59%) for program year

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2010 is comprised of diverse revenue sources, including partner match contributions from federal, state, local, and nonprofit organizations, and other grants and donations in support of the program. Program income from partner match contributions remains the most significant and sustainable source of support for MCC. Of 253 projects completed in 2008, 157 (62 %) provided fee for service contributions totaling \$1.6 million. Revenue from partner contributions has increased yearly since 1994. By 2010, MCC expects to develop \$2.2 million from match contributions from partnerships with nonprofit organizations and local, state, and federal agencies. MCC anticipates that 16% of revenue (\$375,000) will come from state agencies like State Parks and the Dept. of Public Health and Human Services. MCC has had good success with developing grants funded through state administered recreational trails programs in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. These project grants contribute non-federal revenues, while enhancing collaborations with public agencies like the U.S. Forest Service or enabling new partnerships with community organizations like the Foy's to Blacktail Trail group in Kalispell or Highland Bicycling Club in Butte. Partnerships with local nonprofits like the Montana Weeds Association, Nature Conservancy, or Downtown Business Partnership will provide an additional \$119,000 (5%). The largest source of funds in the grantee share comes from project match contributions from federal agencies including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management. These sources will generate \$1.6 million of match revenue (71%). Considering that much of western Montana where a majority of our residents live is under federal jurisdiction, this share of public lands funding reflects our activities where there is the greatest need for the services of our corps. MCC has researched the use of federal funds as a portion of the "non-federal" grantee share. The enabling legislation for AmeriCorps, the National and Community Service Act of 1993, authorizes the use of such funds for the purpose of grantee "non-federal" match. U.S. Code Annotated, Title 42, section 12571, states: "In providing for the remaining share of the cost of carrying out a national service program, the program -- B) may provide for such share through State sources, local sources, or other Federal sources (other than the use of funds made available under the national service laws). MCC also

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has conscientiously reviewed the applicability of federal matching funds with each of our federal project sponsors. Contributing federal partners have determined and authorized that within their regulations, the AmeriCorps funds are allowable matching funds. MCC has records of these determinations on file. A smaller but essential piece of the grantee match that is primarily dedicated to our youth programs is the revenue from private grants, corporate donations, and individual contributions. MCC has budgeted conservatively for these funds at \$160,000 (7%). With proposed expansions of the youth programs beyond the highly successful summer MontanaYES program to include in-school and after-school conservation-service activities, MCC anticipates new sources of grant revenues, public funding, and private donations from community supporters. MCC is pursuing capacity building funds to hire a development director who will bring additional resources to our program activities. As this person will not be hired until funds are available, this position is not reflected in the budget.

DECREASED RELIANCE ON FEDERAL SHARE: MCC continues to decrease its reliance on the federal AmeriCorps share even as we grow the program. Since 1994, the grantee share has increased from 35% to 50% in 2005. By 2010, we project the AmeriCorps grant will comprise only 41% of the total budget. Throughout this period, MCC has continued to increase the scale and scope of the organization, accomplishing greater outputs and outcomes each year with a shrinking investment of CNCS dollars. Yet, throughout this period, MCC has maintained a strong identity with AmeriCorps. This decreasing reliance on federal share is the result of our expanding capacity to develop partner match contributions for service project work with diverse stakeholders across the region, and to raise additional support through trails grants and private grants and donations. Our five region structure gives MCC great capacity to expand an already reliable project base and capitalize on local funding sources. Five regional supervisors, plus the president/CEO participate in project development. To meet our revenue goals, MCC aims to schedule virtually every crew-week available between June and October. During this period, we are operating at full-capacity with 175 members on 23 field crews and 10 youth corps teams.

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Members have a short respite from project work in August. During the spring as we train our leaders, project opportunities are more limited due to snow cover and unreliable weather. This is an ideal time to provide low or no cost community services to local nonprofits. Starting in mid-April, we are able to develop fee for service projects. Spring projects typically revolve around watershed restoration which is best done before plants leaf out. In the fall, after corps members graduate, the crew leaders are able to participate in final week of service before the end of their term of service. In summary, MCC has a decreasing reliance on federal share the result of the increasing partner match contribution and additional grants and donations, even as we deepen and broaden the scope and impact of MCC activities. MCC has excellent -- and growing -- capacity to sustain and build its non-federal resources. It should be noted that MCC has succeeded at decreasing its federal share even when confronted with the challenges of serving one of the most rural states in the nation where 52 of 56 counties are classified as "rural" or "frontier." Current data from the Foundation Center ranks Montana 49th in the nation in philanthropic resources -- total and per capita. Despite these challenges, the Montana Conservation Corps continues to demonstrate the highest capacity to develop a sustainable match and leverage AmeriCorps funds efficiently to competently administer a program that is responsive to needs and opportunities in Montana.

BUDGET ADEQUACY: The budget reflects a statewide program that spans the vast and rugged Northern Rockies region where communities are separated by long distances, high mountain passes, and unpredictable weather. Our model with five regional offices maximizes our community presence throughout the state and provides for excellent, direct supervision of the members by our regional supervisors and regional program coordinators. This model also enables MCC to provide exceptional opportunities for youth and volunteers to participate in hands-on conservation and community service activities. Through this multi-region structure, we are able to maximize the share of dollars that goes into program implementation, rather than into the operations of the state office. MCC's overall

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administrative costs are very low. Member living allowances and support costs comprise 50% of the total budget, with program personnel and program operations representing an additional 41%. A hallmark of the MCC is the quality training we provide to develop crew leaders. This training includes advanced technical skills such as chainsaw operation and Wilderness First Aid, as well as development of leadership competencies. The crew members too participate in high quality education including the PLACE curriculum that is designed to enhance their crew experience, deepen understanding of local conservation issues, and foster positive citizenship values and habits. The value of this training is reflected in our project partners' high marks for crew leader competency and crew performance, and their commitment to contribute year after year to the cost of our crews. Our members also reflect on this training and citizenship-oriented education is a strength of the MCC program. MCC has allocated \$105,665 for this quality training. Likewise, maintaining motivated and high capacity employees is necessary to sustain a high quality program. \$28,835 is designated for training in supervision and management skills and to support them in comprehensive network building through national and regional conferences such as the National Conference on Volunteering and Service, Wilderness Risk Managers Conference, State Trails Conference, or Montana Conference on Children and Nature. With recent fluctuations in fuel prices, a significant operating expense (\$234,000 -- 6%) is the operation of the vehicles to transport the members to project sites. This cost includes the cost of gas, repairs, and insurance. MCC maintains a fleet of 36 Suburbans. The heavy wear and tear on vehicles and trailers creates a constant need to replace aging vehicles each year. \$25,000 is budgeted for vehicle replacement. The MCC budget is based on years of experience in running a high quality corps program. Every detail has been considered in developing the budget to accommodate increasing interest from partners and expansion of our youth corps activities. MCC believes the budget is adequate and appropriate to support our program design. Our fifteen year track record for administering the AmeriCorps grant in an efficient and predictable manner is excellent.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

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Montana Conservation Corps is one of the sites participating in the National Evaluation of Youth Corps, conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service in partnership with Abt Associates and The Corps Network. The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of participation in youth corps on corps members' employment, education, life skills, and civic engagement. The Corporation for National and Community Service has authorized this study for the independent evaluation under the AmeriCorps Rule. Results are expected in 2009.

In 2008, MCC participated in the Excellence in Corps Operations (ECO) peer review facilitated by The Corps Network, the national association of service and conservation corps. Summary comments stated: "Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) is an exemplary Corps program. It has matured into a highly effective conservation corps with a strong and deserved national reputation. It has outstanding leadership and a strong program model. Most importantly, MCC consistently provides outstanding life-changing experiences for corps members and high quality project work for public land management agencies and local communities."

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATION FOR 2011

BUDGET CLARIFICATION ITEMS:

Section C:

- * Staff travel is mileage reimbursed at \$0 .51/mile.
- * For the Member Travel line item titled Vehicle Fleet Expenses we added the clarification that this expense is "Actual Price of gasoline, repairs, and insurance for 41 MCC crew vehicles." This is not a

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mileage reimbursement expenditure. These vehicles are MCC vehicles that are used to transport the entire crew of members to project sites and to trainings.

Section G:

* In the budget narrative, we have indicated that costs for the Leadership Capstone and Corpsmember Regional Orientation line items are for "Meals".

Source of Funds:

* We have added in the budget narrative the sentence: "Contributing federal partners have affirmed that their federal funds may be used as matching funds." When working under partnership agreements with Federal agencies, MCC works with each agency to determine and ensure the ability of their funds to be used as match for AmeriCorps. This authority is clarified in the partnership agreement.

PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATION ITEMS:

* None

PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATION ITEMS:

* Mobilize Youth Volunteers: this measure has been removed. Volunteer data will be reported in eGrants.

* Develop Leaders: this measure has been removed.

* Foster Citizen Involvement: this measure has been removed.

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* Rehabilitate and Weatherize Homes and Structures: This measure has been redefined as "Retrofit Housing Units and Structures for Energy Conservation." The target for housing units and structures retrofitted was increased to 1000 in light of MCC's recent performance in this activity. The Dept. of Health and Human Services has indicated continuing support for this activity and MCC expects to continue with our current performance.

The Intermediate Outcome measure was revised to reflect evaluations by housing unit or structure occupants of the quality of retrofit measures and education provide by the members.

MCC is interested in using the EN1 and EN7 national performance measures in the future. MCC is currently able to comply with reporting requirements for EN1. However, MCC is unable to make a reasonable projection of the MMBTUs in energy conservation that would result from our current retrofit activities. This will require a sophisticated and comprehensive evaluation of the energy conservation values resulting from the retrofit measures that are included in the Governor's Warm Hearts Warm Homes program. Review of the resources found at the WAPTAC site do not allow us to easily convert our current data into projected energy savings. MCC will work with the Montana Weatherization Training Center and National Center for Appropriate Technologies (NCAT) to develop or adapt software to calculate projected energy savings.

CLARIFICATION ITEMS FOR 2010

MEMBER POSITIONS

MCC has reviewed in detail the information about member positions in the budget to verify that projections are accurate. These items are correct and reflect the specific positions, dates, and numbers of

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the members enrolled in our program.

In February, MCC will enroll 59 field crew leaders and 5 Senior Youth Crew Leaders into 64 FT AmeriCorps positions. These terms of service run into November. In addition, 20 PT Youth Crew Leaders will start in February, with terms ending in August.

Training activities for the field crew and youth crew leaders run on separate tracks. Thus some activities and trainings include just the 25 youth program leaders or 59 field program leaders, and some trainings may include all of them (84).

In May, MCC enrolls an additional 140 PT members into Corpsmember positions that end in November. These members participate in training activities with the 59 field crew leaders, for a total of 199 members in attendance for these activities.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE: MOBILIZE YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

All members participate in efforts to engage and mobilize volunteers. Members lead volunteers in events like National Trails Day and Make a Difference Day. Volunteer engagement is a special focus of the youth program, with the 25 youth crew leaders working during the spring in partnership with community organizations to create opportunities for hands-on service for youth. During the summer, these leaders supervise the month-long, Youth Service Expeditions for teens.

MCC was unable to revise the data in the performance measure which lists only 25 members for this activity. The correct number of members involved in this performance measure is 224.

CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECKS

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MCC has revised this line item to reflect costs for criminal background checks for all members and new employees through the approved state repositories. Background checks have already been completed for current employees and thus there is no additional cost. MCC has budgeted an average of \$25 per background check. To adjust for this increase in cost, MCC decreased funds requested for the "Safety and Injury Prevention" line item. (See budget clarification below for further details.)

NATIONAL STANDARD PERFORMANCE MEASURES

MCC has opted in for two of the pilot national performance measures: EN4 - acres of parks cleaned or improved; and EN5 - Miles of trails or rivers improved and/or created.

2010 BUDGET CLARIFICATION ITEMS

Section C (member travel): The cost for travel to trainings is included in the member travel Vehicle Fleet Expense line item. MCC added "and to Member Training Events" at the end of Vehicle Fleet Expenses.

Section E (supplies): MCC added "This shirt includes the AmeriCorps logo."

Section G (staff training): MCC moved this line item to Section C as directed.

Section H (evaluation): MCC added: "Consultant to help MCC research, design, and implement an external evaluation."

Section I (other): MCC amended the line item on criminal background checks as follows - "224 members and 10 new staff hires at \$25 per person for searching multiple statewide criminal history repositories. Costs vary by state. Montana is \$ 11.50 per individual." The increase in costs for this line item was

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deducted from the 'safety and work injury prevention' line item in order not to increase the overall \$ 4,477,898 budget and admin costs.

CLARIFICATION 2009

PLAN FOR INCREASING RETENTION

It is the goal of the Montana Conservation Corps for every member to succeed with their AmeriCorps term of service. The following plan describes our efforts to increase retention and reduce the causes that result in avoidable attrition.

1. Improve pre-enrollment education and screening: MCC continues to refine its recruitment materials and interview processes to provide applicants with a clear understanding of the nature of our program, including the rigors of the work, the remoteness of many projects and regular backcountry living conditions, the day-to-day character of life working in small crews, and the demanding nature of the climate in the Northern Rockies. MCC has recently revised our medical form to promote more effective self-screening and to help applicants better prepare for the program.
2. Work Hardening: MCC takes care to schedule early season projects to allow gradual work hardening and the development of healthy work habits. The goal is to limit injuries and to help members adjust to the nature of work and life.
3. Increased Staffing for Member Support: MCC recently has made staffing changes to provide enhanced member support in the field. In the last year, we have assigned a Regional Program Coordinator (RPC)

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in every MCC regional office. In addition to the Regional Supervisors, the RPC's provide enhanced direct supervision of the members in the field. They are trained to identify and address as early as possible concerns with individual members. Also this year, in regions with more than 4 field crews, MCC is assigning a new seasonal crew liaison position to provide technical and supervisory support in the field. These positions will significantly boost our supervision and member support capacity. MCC also utilizes AmeriCorps Senior Crew Leaders to help crews enjoy positive learning and service experiences. These Senior Crew Leaders are members with more advanced experience and training in conflict resolution and member management.

4. Building Strong Crew Structure: Fostering a positive crew culture is perhaps the single most effective approach to promoting retention. A strong crew culture fosters emotional support within the crew and helps the members work as a team to overcome interpersonal issues, it promotes a culture of safety and risk management that keeps people healthy, and it gives members a tangible sense of being part of something bigger than themselves. To promote the early development of a strong and sustained crew culture, MCC provides targeted training of our AmeriCorps crew leaders in team-building and facilitation, active listening and conflict resolution, effective debriefing, and providing constructive feedback. These skills promote a positive crew dynamic that helps every member grow in leadership, teamwork, and citizenship skills. A strong crew culture also promotes compliance with MCC and AmeriCorps policies and rules of conduct.

PLAN FOR INCREASING DIVERSITY

MCC believes that diverse and inclusive crews are integral to our mission to develop skills and values for citizenship, leadership, and stewardship. MCC aims to recruit members who represent -- and exceed -- the full social fabric of our communities in Montana. Montana cannot boast a racially or ethnically

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diverse population. Latest census statistics reveal that African Americans represent 0.6% of the population, Hispanic/Latino 2.8%, and American Indians as 6.3%.

MCC achieves good diversity in areas of gender, disabilities, geography, and socio-economics. Though the percentage of female members dropped to 38% in 2008, enrollment to date in 2009 is 30 females and 31 males for crew leader positions. MCC seeks fully gender balanced crews and continues to promote this by highlighting photos of women in our publications and with mixed gender leader teams. Historically, MCC has had a high percentage of members (21%) reporting a disability on the state commission's annual disability survey. This summer, MCC will be visiting with representatives of the Utah Conservation Corps to observe their "Inclusive Crew" model and consider its replication in Montana. Also, 25% of 2008 members reported they were low income, and 57% did not have a college degree. 50% of members are Montana residents, with the balance coming from across the country.

Achieving diversity in race and ethnicity has been more difficult in the context of Montana's population. Still, this must change as the demographics of our country become more diverse even as the need for conservation-minded citizens and for people trained in green jobs grows. MCC continues with efforts to increase diversity in our program.

1. Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator: For the first time, MCC recently hired a Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator. This position will enable MCC to develop more sustained approaches to recruit under-represented populations from the Indian community and Montana's growing Hispanic/Latino community. Outreach to Montana's seven tribal community colleges will increase access to the Corps for Indians confronted with high unemployment on the reservations. The Recruitment Coordinator will also consult with the University of Montana and Montana State University to seek guidance on recruitment and retention of people of color. Both campuses host strong Native American programs, as

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well as recruiting non-white students from other parts of the country. Strengthening relationships with local community action agencies in Montana will increase access to lower income and urban populations, including placement of WIA eligible youth on our crews.

2. Program and Board Development: In addition to targeting recruitment efforts with the goal of building diversity, MCC embraces organizational strategies. MCC's staff includes a Native American who is exploring partnerships with Indian communities. In recent years, MCC has had Native American leaders serve on our board of directors. Under the new strategic plan, the Board seeks "influencers" to expand our key relationships, and certainly Native American representation is an important step building board representation and functions. MCC is also exploring new programmatic models to increase diversity, including a Clean Energy Corps program that would target reservation communities, and a youth corps program done in partnership with Boys and Girls Clubs on reservations.

MCC remains committed to promoting diversity on our crews. Our approach is tailored to the demographics of our state and the needs of our communities.

PLAN FOR VOLUNTEER MOBILIZATION

MCC understands the volunteer mobilization is a high priority for the CNCS. In our proposal, MCC proposed a target of 600 volunteers. Of these, 400 are projected to be youth under the age of 18. 100 of these youth volunteers are participants in our MontanaYES youth corps program, and 300 are youth engaged through other activities. As our mission is focused on youth development, MCC's primary effort is to mobilize a new generation of youth volunteers.

With the proposed expansion of our youth programs, MCC believes this is a conservative estimate,

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primarily based on historic efforts. This proposal encompasses 20 FT youth crew leaders. In addition to running 20 sessions of the summer MontanaYES youth corps program with 120 youth, these leaders will serve in schools, with other youth-serving community organizations, with watershed groups, and others during the school-year to facilitate conservation-based service learning activities. MCC is piloting this model this spring with great success. With year-long placements with schools and community organizations, these members will provide opportunities in multiple communities for youthful volunteers to return for more than one activity.

In addition to youth-targeted efforts, MCC is a leading partner in organizing community service events around Earth Day and National Youth Service Week, AmeriCorps Week, National Trails Day, National Public Lands Day, and Make a Difference Day. Funding from a Recovery grant would allow MCC to have members serving during Martin Luther King Day. MCC also looks forward to building volunteer opportunities around the September 11 commemoration.

MCC has earned a reputation for facilitating engaging and productive volunteer activities. Increasingly, MCC is incorporating Meaning of Service readings and discussions into our service days. Surveys of our volunteers indicate that 96% report a positive experience, with 94% saying they'd join again for a similar event. Our approach has been to offer regular, engaging and rewarding volunteer experiences that encourage folks to serve repeatedly throughout the year -- with MCC or elsewhere.

Based on these activities, MCC proposes to increase the target for volunteers mobilized to 1000.

EXPANSION OF YOUTH CORPS

MCC proposes a modest expansion of our MontanaYES summer youth corps program to 20 sessions -- 5

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weeks each. Currently, MCC is hosting 16 sessions. Where significant growth is expected is in the level of engagement of our youth corps leaders. These positions will expand from 900 hour to 1700 hour positions. This change will enable the Youth Crew Leaders to promote conservation-based service and learning during the school-year. These leaders will be placed in schools and with community organizations to organize volunteer service activities and help young people make the connection between education, service, and citizenship. This change represents the bulk of increase in MSY's requested in our proposal.

MCC is piloting this model during the spring of 2009. 16 members are serving with groups like the Monforton School outside Bozeman, Montana Audubon in Billings, Partners for Alternative Learning School in Helena, and Center for Restorative Youth Justice in Kalispell. Youth are participating in diverse service activities including planting trees as part of a stream restoration project on Arbor Day, and constructing and installing raised garden beds for seniors and wheelchair-restricted people to tend to their own vegetable gardens.

Funding for this expansion will come from three sources. Currently, AmeriCorps funds support 67% of the total youth programs budget. MCC aims to reduce this share to below 50% within 3 years by continuing to develop support from project partners (from 23% current budget to 30%) and by seeking private funds through grants and donations to support a 20% share or greater of the program costs (currently 10%). MCC considers diversification of funding a top priority to ensure sustainability of the youth programs. Our strategic plan for 2009-2014 includes significant enhancement of our partnerships and fund development capacity to ensure financial resources, allow for increased community involvement, and provide for the highest quality service and learning experiences for members.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

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MCC completes national criminal background checks and National Sex Offender Public Registry checks on all members prior to enrollment.

BUDGET CLARIFICATIONS

Section G Member Training: All of the meals are for all-day trainings. In some cases, trainings are multi-day events. MCC will clarify this on each line item in the budget narrative.

Section I -- Safety Recognition and Moral Boosting: This item is budgeted at \$ 30 for 175 members. The health and safety of members and prevention of work site accidents are a major concern. It was suggested by our workers' compensation provider to implement a common industry practice to promote safe worksites. These are small things (such as ice cream or stickers) occurring several times throughout the year but for the benefit of all members. This is just one piece of a larger safety and risk management culture that we create through trainings, ongoing education, debriefing and moral boosting events.

Section II B - Calculation for Unemployment Insurance: This is an error and will be corrected. We will change the grantee match to reflect the correct amount of \$ 29,070 (versus \$ 29,082) and the total will then be corrected to be \$ 42,595.

Continuation Changes

CONTINUATION FOR 2012 PROGRAM YEAR

Montana Conservation Corps is not proposing any substantive changes in the program design for our 2012 project season. This continuation request for 144 MSY's (same as current) includes 234 slots for 54 FT crew leaders, 29 PT youth crew leaders, and 151 PT corps members.

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In 2010, our program continued to excel at meeting unmet needs with our 120+ project partners. MCC achieved outstanding results in environmental stewardship (854 miles of trails improved, 3764 acres of at-risk ecosystems protected, 83,306 trees planted), and clean energy (1500 homes weatherized). Over 92% of project partners rated our crews highly for their quality of work and productivity. This year, 1435 volunteers (944 under this grant plus 491 recorded under ARRA grant) -- a majority of them youth under age 18 - rolled up their sleeves for over 27,000 hours to work alongside our AmeriCorps members to improve Montana's communities and lands. 99% of volunteers reported a positive service experience with MCC, with 77% noting they would join MCC again to volunteer.

Our AmeriCorps members and youth corps participants reflect profound and positive experiences. In a blog posting, a Youth Service Expedition participant shared: "People talk about that one experience in life that changes them forever. My MCC experience would defiantly qualify as one of these life altering moments. At times I didn't know if I'd make it but I persevered and will never forget my experience. This program has given me so many life lessons that I can hopefully someday teach to future generations."

Yet, our program continues to evolve in response to emerging needs and opportunities. For example, in 2011, MCC is leveraging our crew model to help Veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars transition into civilian life and into green jobs through our program of conservation service. Working in close partnership with the group, Veterans Green Jobs and the U.S. Forest Service, MCC is mobilizing the skills and leadership training of veterans to meet resource conservation needs in the Rocky Mountains. These vets will be certified as sawyers and learn basic wildfire fighting skills while serving on projects to mitigate risks of wildfires in forests decimated by the Pine Bark Beetle infestation in the Rockies. Our partner, Veterans Green Jobs, will assist with recruitment and provide external support services for the veterans. This effort also is being coordinated with other conservation corps and National Forests to enable a pathway toward advanced careers in wildlands fire fighting and resource stewardship. Initial

Narratives

projects for 2011 have been secured on the Medicine Bow/Routt National Forest in Wyoming, and MCC is negotiating with U.S. Forest Service Region 1 to support projects in Montana. Our primary recruitment emphasis will be on veterans living in Montana, but any younger aged vets from the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts will be eligible to participate. MCC will enroll veterans using current slots with the intention to expand our program in future years under a recompetete grant.

MCC also continues to expand opportunities for Montana teens to become involved in service through conservation and community building. In 2012, MCC will field 24 month-long Youth Service Expeditions for 144 Montana teens ages 14-18 -- up from 116 in 2010. In addition, our partnerships with community organizations and local schools are helping students take their science, math, and humanities education outside. For example, last spring, under the guidance of MCC AmeriCorps Youth Crew Leaders, students at Jefferson County High School created a Lewis and Clark interpretive trail focusing on native plants and local history. Kids with the Center for Restorative Youth Justice in Kalispell connected with the local "Be Your Farmer" initiative and constructed special raised garden beds for senior citizens so they could access community gardens. Collaborations with watershed groups, the Girls Scouts, teachers, outdoor science centers, and other conservation and youth serving organizations are getting kids outdoors and active, engaged in their learning, and excited about service and environmental stewardship.

To ensure outstanding member support and risk management for these programs, MCC continues to strengthen our field supervision and program management capacity. The budget reflects additional positions for seasonal field coordinators, a youth programs coordinator based in the headquarters, and a partnership manager to assist with stewardship of expanding collaborations with community organizations. As MCC's program grows in scope, its staff is growing in depth and caliber to ensure the highest quality experiences for members and the most effective services for our community partners.

Narratives

MCC retains a commitment to diversity to strengthen the crew experience and prepare 21st century stewards and leaders that reflect our nation's changing demographics. MCC members come from all walks of life and from diverse regions across our country. Yet, the Corps is under-represented in the rich ethnic and racial diversity of our country. Towards building a more diverse community at MCC, we are connecting with Native American communities on Reservations and in our urban centers. We are contacting the Tribal Community Colleges for recruitment and job training opportunities. MCC is connecting with Montana's growing Hispanic and Latino community and exploring recruitment and program strategies like Spanish-language posters to better engage these under-represented groups.

Even as MCC strives to deepen racial and ethnic diversity within the ranks of our staff and members, there still exists significant diversity within the corps. 22% of Youth Service Expedition participants are of non-white race or ethnicity. Women make up 43% of members and MCC strives to increase the number of qualified female applicants. MCC is a place where young people with disabilities thrive. In 2010, 30% of members self-reported a disability on the anonymous survey administered by the Governor's Office of Community Service. MCC also shows a rich mix of people from different socio-economic backgrounds and from different regions of the country, with applicants hailing from 46 different states.

BUDGET

To support these efforts, MCC continues to evolve the organizational structure. The 2012 budget includes additional seasonal Field Coordinators in all five regional offices. The youth programs have grown to scale to require a dedicated Youth Program Coordinator, and MCC will hire a Partnerships Manager to steward expanding collaborations with community organizations and local stakeholders. These positions reflect MCC's continuing attention to member supervision and deepening community

Narratives

collaborations.

Our proposed member configuration includes 54 FT positions for field crew leaders serving from February to November; 29 HT positions for Youth Crew leader serving from February through August; and 151 HT positions for crew members serving from May through October. These 234 positions total to 144 MSY, the same as in current year.

For 2012, despite increasing costs to deliver the program, MCC will retain the \$13,000 average cost per member as recommended by CNCS. To absorb the additional costs from the increased AmeriCorps member living allowance, new staff positions, and requirement for background checks, MCC will increase the grantee match by increasing funds developed through project revenues. MCC may increase our weekly cost-share rate, seek additional reimbursable projects, or adjust crew sizes to allow for additional crews in the field. The grantee share for this proposal is 62% of the total budget.

ENROLLMENT

MCC enrolled 101% of slots in the current year. Similarly, MCC filled 104% of slots in our AmeriCorps Recovery grant. During the past year, we received over 1000 applications for positions with the Corps. MCC projects continued excellent enrollment.

MCC has instituted practices to complete background checks in compliance with the CNCS regulations.

RETENTION

MCC's efforts to strengthen our recruitment, hiring, and orientation processes are paying off. For two years in a row, retention has exceeded 89% - the highest level in well over a decade. With recent recruitment and program enhancements, we project to exceed 90% retention in coming years.

Narratives

The Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator hired last year is providing focus and support to our recruitment practices. This fall, MCC launched a new, highly interactive website with more detailed information about projects and the demanding nature of the MCC experience. The website includes links to blog postings and videos from our members. MCC's Facebook page is an asset to recruitment and retention by building a sense of community and providing first hand information. Our interview and hiring process is tailored to educate applicants about the commitment required and to assess their readiness.

The core of MCC's retention success, however, rests in the quality of the program and the supportive environment for members. MCC's extensive crew leader training promotes a positive team atmosphere. Our unique civic engagement curriculum promotes reflection while challenging and rewarding service projects foster a sense of purpose. The attention to members needs provided by our field staff enables individualized member support. Our program remains intensely physical and emotionally demanding due to the nature of the work and the remote setting of many projects, but MCC is deeply committed to the success of our members and their completion of the program whenever possible.

EVALUATION

MCC participated in the 2008 National Evaluation of Youth Corps sponsored by the CNCS. This study was authorized for the evaluation under the AmeriCorps rule. Results are to be released in the fall of 2011. The CNCS has indicated this study may satisfy the requirement for an evaluation during the current grant cycle. In addition, MCC is preparing to engage an external evaluator to conduct an independent study of the impact on leadership, stewardship, and civic engagement from participation in the Montana Conservation Corps.

Narratives

CONCLUSION

The link between the CNCS's goals and strategic plan, and MCC's mission to "inspire young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities" grows stronger every year. Reflected a participant: "When I first started I didn't even think of doing volunteer work because I thought I am just one person. But now I realize that even if I do just a little I can contribute a lot." Montana Conservation Corps looks forward to "contributing a lot" to our members and in our communities, and to strengthening the spirit of service in Montana.

NOTE: There is no mechanism in eGrants to enter past year data in the Performance Measure section of this application. A report documenting MCC's past year results is available from the Montana Governor's Commission on Community Service.

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - None
- Geographic Focus - Rural
- Geographic Focus - Urban
- Encore Program

Priority Areas

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 144

Service Categories

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| At-risk Ecosystems Improvement | Primary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community-Based Volunteer Programs | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Housing Infrastructure | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Retrofit housing units and structures for energy conservation

Service Category: Housing Infrastructure

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Members will be trained and deployed to communities and Indian reservations across Montana to retrofit housing units of low income seniors and families and nonprofit or public community structures, with low cost energy conservation measures as part of the Warm Hearts Warm Homes project of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Community Service Winter Ready program. Members will educate homeowners regarding practices and resources to save energy and reduce heating costs.

Results

Result: Output

Housing units and structures will be retrofitted with low cost energy conservation measures to improve the thermal performance of buildings.

Indicator: Housing units and structures retrofitted with energy conservation measures.

Result: Output

Target: Number of housing units and structures retrofitted with energy conservation measures.

Target Value: 1000

Instruments: Energy Conservation Retrofit Tally Sheet

PM Statement: 1000 housing units and structures retrofitted with low cost energy conservation measures to improve thermal performance of buildings.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Occupants of housing units or of nonprofit/public structures will rate the quality of energy conservation retrofit measures installed and information provided by members.

Indicator: beneficiaries

Target: Percent of occupants of housing units and nonprofit or public structures that rate the quality of the energy conservation retrofit measures and information provided by members as a 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale.

Target Value: 80%

Instruments: Project Completion Questionnaire completed by housing unit or structure occupant.

PM Statement: 80% of occupants of housing units and nonprofit or public structures will rate the quality of the energy conservation retrofit measures installed and the information provided by members as a 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale.

Prev. Yrs. Data

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Environmental Stewardship

Performance Measure Title: Improve habitat in parks and public lands

Service Category: At-risk Ecosystems Improvement

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Members are trained in diverse conservation skills including tree planting, fencing, weed mapping and removal, wildfire fuels reduction. Working in small crews under the direction of project partner professionals, members complete projects to improve acres of habitat in parks and public lands.

Result: Output

Result.

National parks, state parks, city parks, or other public lands and tribal communities are cleaned or improved through a variety of conservation projects including landscaping, weed inventory and removal, removing hazard trees and thinning forests at risk of wildfire, planting of trees, shrubs and native grasses, debris removal, brushing, and wetlands enhancement.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) EN4: Acres of parks cleaned or improved.

Target : Number of acres cleaned or improved in parks and other public lands

Target Value: 1500

Instruments: Project Evaluation completed by project partners

PM Statement: Each year, members will clean or improve 1500 acres of habitat in parks and other public lands.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Parks and public lands are improved the result of high quality work performed by the members.

Indicator: Parks and public lands improved

Target : Projects are rated 4-5 on a 5-point scale for quality of work.

Target Value: 40

Instruments: Project Evaluation completed by project partners

PM Statement: 40 of 50 parks or public lands improvement projects (80%) are rated 4-5 on a 5-point scale for quality of work.

Priority Area: Environmental Stewardship

Performance Measure Title: Improve Trails

Service Category: At-risk Ecosystems Improvement

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Members will be trained in trail building and maintenance skills. Working in small crews, members will serve with federal, state, and local agencies and with community organizations to create new trails and improve access and safety of recreational trail.

Result: Output

Result.

National Performance Measures

Result.

Members will create and improve trails to increase public access and safety of trails on local, state and federal public lands.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) EN5: Miles of trails or rivers improved and/or created.

Target : Members will create or improve 600 miles of trails each year

Target Value: 600

Instruments: Project Task Results Tally sheet

PM Statement: Members will create or improve 600 miles of trails each year to increase public access and safety of trails on community open space lands and state and federal public lands.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Project partners will rate highly the quality of trail work performed.

Indicator: Quality of work performed.

Target : Trails project partners will rate the quality of trail work as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

Target Value: 40

Instruments: Project Evaluation completed by project partner

PM Statement: 40 of 50 individual trails projects (80%) will be rated as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale for the quality of trail work performed .

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Already on File at CNCS

Labor Union Concurrence

Sent