

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: 17-DEC-10	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:
2b. APPLICATION ID: 11AC123594	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 09ACHVV0010003
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION		
LEGAL NAME: Appalachian Forest Heritage Area DUNS NUMBER: 809166262 ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): PO Box 1206 Elkins WV 26241 - 1206 County: Randolph	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Phyllis Baxter TELEPHONE NUMBER: (304) 636-2467 FAX NUMBER: (304) 636-6432 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: phyllisb@appalachianforest.us	
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 200815517	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b. Community-Based Organization	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input 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	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: AFHA - Enhancing Assets to Benefit Communities	
10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State	11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Randolph, Pocahontas, Nicholas, Greenbrier, Webster, Upshur, Tucker, Preston, Pendleton, Barbour, Braxton, Grant, Hardy, Hampshire, Mineral, Morgan Counties,		
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/12/11 END DATE: 09/11/12	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <u>WV 002</u> b.Program <u>WV 002</u>	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <u>1</u>		16. IS A APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?
a. FEDERAL	\$ 260,000.00	<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	\$ 134,729.00	
c. STATE	\$ 0.00	
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00	
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00	
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	
g. TOTAL	\$ 394,729.00	
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/PREAAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.		
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Phyllis Baxter	b. TITLE: Program Director	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (304) 636-2467
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 11/19/10

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Executive Summary

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area AmeriCorps: Enhancing Assets to Benefit Communities, works in a 16 county region of West Virginia on conservation, historic preservation, and heritage development projects. Our talented members work with agencies and non-profit groups to enhance environmental and community assets, improve public lands, weatherize historic buildings, build community pride and encourage community economic development through place-based tourism.

Rationale and Approach

1. Program Design:

a) Problem

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) has been working for nine years to develop a regional asset-based cooperative strategy to raise awareness, conserve, and enhance our forest heritage while encouraging heritage tourism as economic development. Our area is rich in assets, but our forests and communities face serious challenges ranging from environmental threats to pervasive poverty. AFHA AmeriCorps program is focusing on three problem areas of unmet community need:

- 1) environmental damage to the forest landscape, watersheds, wildlife habitat, and ecosystems;
- 2) deterioration of the built environment, with loss of community and wasted resources,
- 3) distressed rural communities with high poverty rates, limited economic opportunity, and deteriorating community pride and cohesion.

Our region's assets include Appalachian forest history, culture, natural resources, and sustainable forest management. Forest heritage encompasses both the natural resources of the forest, and the people and communities who live within the forest. The health and sustainability of the forest environment and of forest communities are interdependent. The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area focuses on a key section of the central Appalachian highlands that host a unique biodiversity of plant

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and animal species. Lessons learned here contributed significantly to the conservation movement, the formation of eastern national forests, and the rise of modern scientific forestry.

1) Recreational use and human abuse cause environmental damage. From trash to erosion, environmental degradation impacts quality of life and threatens the ecosystem of the forests. According to the National Forest Foundation "The increase in visitor usage and encroaching development result in increased human impacts to ecosystems. Maintaining the integrity of these forest resources is vital for both ecosystem viability and quality recreational experiences." Lack of understanding by recreational users causes damage that could be prevented with improved public education. Understanding forest change and restoration of ecosystems is a priority for public lands managers.

Environmental damage to the landscape includes non-native invasive species that are encroaching and degrading the health and bio-diversity of our forests. These harmful species adversely affect native plants and animals, change how ecosystems work, carry diseases to wildlife, plants, or people, and cause other damage.

Special use management areas such as Wilderness Areas are designed to protect unique ecologies, yet because they are non-motorized areas, they require large amounts of manpower for conservation and management. Proper stewardship of these areas is essential to protect these unique forest ecosystems. The U.S. Forest Service Stewardship Challenge calls for all Wilderness Areas to meet management standards by 2014. The Monongahela National Forest has 115,956 acres of Wilderness Areas, including 37,741 acres of new Wilderness designated in 2009. Managing this vast area, all on foot, is beyond the capacity of Forest Service staff.

2) Deterioration of historic buildings -- the built environment of our communities -- degrades our

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communities and wastes energy. Conserving the built environment of our communities is a badly needed strategy to improve energy-efficiency and reduce carbon waste, and for community revitalization. The small rural communities in our area have many historic buildings that are essential to the unique character of each community, yet they are often neglected and deteriorating due to lack of knowledge and manpower to rehabilitate them.

Historic preservation preserves the environment and reduces energy use through the principle that the greenest building is the one already built. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation declared "Preservation saves energy by taking advantage of the non-recoverable energy embodied in an existing building and extending the use of it." The preservation and improvement of our existing built resources, including re-use of historic buildings, greening the existing building stock, and reinvestment in older and historic communities, is crucial to combating climate change. Buildings are vast repositories of energy. It takes energy to manufacture building materials, to transport them to a construction site, and to assemble them into a building. All of that energy is embodied in the finished structure. If the structure is demolished and placed in a landfill, the energy locked up in it is totally wasted. Demolition, hauling debris, and landfill management, then the construction of a new building in its place, all use energy. A recent study found that it takes 35 to 50 years for an energy-efficient new home to recover the carbon expended in constructing it. Rehabilitation activities require more man-hours but fewer material resources than new construction.

The downtowns and core areas of our communities are mostly made up of historic buildings, which due to chronically depressed economies are in serious need of rehabilitation. In Elkins alone, seven public or non-profit owned major buildings are currently in various stages of rehabilitation. Throughout Randolph County, much of the existing housing stock is old and in need of repair and weatherization upgrades. Over half of all homes in the county were built prior to 1940, and at least 13% of all housing in the county is considered "substandard." According to HUD, a large number of

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residents -- particularly low-income residents -- are burdened with disproportionately high housing and utility costs. Smaller communities in our area have corresponding needs. These projects are challenged by scarce resources, but often even more by lack of knowledge of preservation trades skills. Much of the work in building rehabilitation requires skilled craftsmanship.

3) The rural Appalachian communities in the AFHA have struggled for years with economic downturns due to changes in extractive industries and relative lack of industrial jobs. Outmigration, especially of young people, is common, and many residents feel they are losing their communities. With the downturn in the economy, the forest industry and other major employers are cutting jobs. Seven of our counties, including Randolph, have a poverty rate over 17%, and the remaining counties all have rates over the 13.2% national average. Communities are struggling to retain their character and find ways to diversify their economy. Agencies and grassroots organizations struggle in a difficult economy to find resources to address conservation and community needs.

Place-based tourism, focusing on the heritage, culture, and natural areas of a region, is an important and growing opportunity for economic diversification of rural communities. Heritage tourism is growing at twice the rate of general tourism, and heritage travelers spend an average of \$615 per trip versus \$435 for all travelers. Heritage travelers want to see sites and communities that are authentic and unique, and they have expectations that sites be accessible, interpreted, and attractively presented.

Enhancing community heritage and cultural assets help save distressed rural communities by providing economic benefits from increased tourism, and community benefits of enhanced pride and sense of place. While our area is rich in heritage and culture, local communities lack capacity to sustain, interpret, and present that heritage for appreciation by visitors or residents. Small rural communities need professional guidance, and assistance with planning, capacity building, and

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carrying out projects. In talking with 36 historical societies and sites in our area, only 5 had any paid staff. These hardy organizations are made up of hard-working and mostly self-taught volunteers struggling to develop and present their heritage in a meaningful way.

AFHA works in a large region, with many similar issues in different communities. Community efforts to address these needs often flounder due to lack of resources and manpower. Agencies and non-profits struggle with tight budgets, limited staff, and reduced resources even while needs and mandates are increasing. Communities throughout our area share similar needs for conservation and place-based tourism development, and need for focused assistance to get things done that they lack the resources to do alone.

AFHA has worked with partners and stakeholders to identify needs within our area and prioritize our role in meeting these needs. Needs identified in the AFHA strategic plan led to the following objectives that can be addressed by AFHA AmeriCorps:

- Accomplish hands-on conservation projects to enhance our natural and built environment.
- Help develop community-based heritage development projects including tourism attractions and services.
- Develop interpretation and thematic tours of forest heritage sites and experiences.
- Encourage volunteerism for conservation and heritage projects.

b) Solution: AmeriCorps Member Roles and Responsibilities:

The AFHA AmeriCorps team works with communities to create on-the-ground results for projects that conserve, develop and enhance our natural, heritage, and community assets in order to meet environmental stewardship needs and to increase economic development based on place-based tourism. They strengthen communities by the direct work they accomplish, by the partnerships

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brought together, and by the volunteer involvement leveraged as more people get involved. Members get things done that would not happen without their involvement.

Twenty-three full-time members for 2011-2012 service year will be recruited and trained in three different service areas. Members are assigned primarily to one of the service areas based upon their experience, skills, and interests. Activities will accomplish two related program goals to meet needs and enhance assets:

Goal 1: Environmental stewardship to conserve our environmental assets through training, awareness, and restoration projects of our natural and built environment.

Goal 2: Community economic development to enhance communities and diversify economic opportunity through development of cultural heritage products and education and place-based tourism.

Our conservation team implements the environmental stewardship focus of our program, under Goal 1, addressing compelling unmet environmental stewardship needs.

Members work on the Monongahela National Forest and other public and non-profit lands, as well as helping to coordinate multi-party conservation projects. Projects address forest management for recreational use, which includes monitoring of recreational sites, clean-up and restoration of sites negatively impacted by excess visitation, and sustainable trail building and restoration. This also includes public ecological awareness such as developing interpretive trails and Leave No Trace training. Members have expanded forest restoration efforts such as red spruce and other tree planting, watershed and habitat restoration, and wilderness monitoring and stewardship.

Another major issue is non-native invasive species control, which includes identification, control, and education elements. We have members sponsored by several different agencies working on

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invasives issues with projects including identification, location, and research about problem issues, public educational programs about controlling invasives, coordinating with multiple landowners for cooperative weed management areas to reduce spread within the area, recruiting volunteers for weed pulls, and training in and implementation of control measures.

Other conservation projects have included interpretive development of forest sites, support for an urban tree program, and developing native pollinator gardens. These projects focus on environmental improvement and conservation in our forest, enhance natural heritage sites that attract heritage tourists to our small communities, and raise environmental awareness for communities and visitors.

The historic preservation team also contributes to environmental stewardship Goal 1 by rehabilitating historic buildings that preserve the built environment and enhance energy efficiency. Preserving and adaptively reusing historic public buildings and housing contributes to the sustainability of communities, promoting community revitalization, the sense of place, and heritage tourism appeal, while reducing carbon waste and energy use. AmeriCorps team members receive specialized training in historic preservation and weatherization skills and then provide hands-on work on historic homes and buildings. Historic preservation team members will train with and work with YouthBuild teams to conduct energy audits and accomplish energy efficient rehabilitation, and to broaden the preservation skill base. Direct service projects for historic preservation members may include carpentry, weatherization, window restoration, plaster repair, and structural stabilization. Members learn and implement state of the art weatherization and energy efficiency strategies appropriate for historic buildings, resulting in energy savings. Service sites are publicly owned historic buildings used for community benefits and privately owned low-income residences sponsored as Youthbuild projects. Previous years have included substantive rehabilitation work on over eight community buildings. This year will expand to include low-income housing as well.

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Members benefit the community directly by the work they accomplish on rehabilitation projects, and also recruit volunteers and share the skills they learn with the community, thus building capacity and awareness to encourage future projects. The green footprint is further expanded as preservation volunteers take the skill they learn home with them and apply their new found knowledge to their own properties, thus preserving more of the built environment, and passing its embodied energy to the next generation. Through the work of our historic preservation team, culturally significant buildings previously seen as run-down eyesores are rehabilitated to become key economic assets to enhance their community and contribute to community revitalization.

Goal 2 is addressed by the heritage development team with the primary responsibility of developing placed-based tourism as community economic development, while enhancing heritage education and community pride. Members are mostly individually placed with sub-sponsor partner organizations in participating communities, bringing professional expertise, fresh enthusiasm, and dedicated service to the community efforts. Our heritage development projects meet needs of communities seeking to preserve their culture and community stories, while revitalizing their community and attracting heritage tourists. More than ¼ of the historic organizations identified in our region have received assistance from AFHA AmeriCorps to accomplish projects they could not do alone.

Direct service projects for heritage development members include developing heritage attractions and interpretation, with examples such as a historic walking tour brochure, archive development for a historical society, exhibits development for a historical museum, and development of cultural programs and demonstrating heritage artists. Heritage tourism and community revitalization projects include improving tourist information about heritage sites, helping with "Main Street" type coordination between downtown businesses, and developing signage, information, walking and

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driving tours to encourage heritage tourism. Educational projects include thematic interpretive tours and developing children's heritage activities. An additional impact is encouraging community volunteers as a tool of community capacity building. Many of the AmeriCorps projects include helping to recruit, train, manage, and show appreciation for community volunteers.

The members' assistance contributes to community pride and awareness, while improving tourism experience and visitation. Member projects expand the tourism activities offered by partner sites and communities, with visitor surveys showing increased visitation and participation in member-developed products. Improved cultural heritage and natural attractions will bring more visitors, encourage them to stay longer and spend more, and in the long run help support economic diversification and community economic development.

The AmeriCorps team is primarily based in Randolph County -- the AFHA hub and one of our initial pilot communities -- with project assignments in Randolph, Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Preston, Tucker, Nicholas, Upshur, Webster, Pendleton, Grant, Hardy, and possibly additional WV counties. Members work both individually and in teams on specific projects in the communities, with local non-profit and agency sub-sponsors providing direct supervision and support for the members while in that community.

AFHA AmeriCorps sub-sponsors are chosen from proposals solicited from all AFHA stakeholders and partner groups. Sub-sponsors may sponsor a full-time member assigned to their site for the service year, or may sponsor a short-term specific project for an AmeriCorps member or team. Our sub-sponsors have included governmental agencies such as WV Division of Forestry, USDA Forest Service, and City of Elkins, and non-profit organizations such as museums, historical and cultural sites, watershed groups, and friends groups. Sub-sponsors are responsible for their sponsorship share of cost, plus providing site supervision and materials for their project.

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Our system for project assignments is designed to provide strong supervision for the members, while remaining flexible to meet the needs of sub-sponsors and giving the members the opportunity to participate in a variety of experiences. Many of the members are assigned full-time to one sub-sponsor site who supervise their work. Members perform a variety of duties for the site while also developing their primary project that they design and implement themselves. An example was a member assigned to the Monongahela National Forest, who assisted with a wide variety of recreation and wilderness stewardship tasks, but for her primary project planned, designed, and planted a native plants garden at the Ranger Station. Another example was a member assigned to Historic Beverly, who helped with a variety of tasks for the historic site, and for her project developed children's activities to engage younger visitors with the new museum exhibits.

Some members work on assignments for more than one sub-sponsor, when a site only has need for a portion of a member's time. These "multiple projects" assignments in the same community are combined for a full-time member who works with two or three sites, with overall supervision from a program supervisor. An example of a multiple projects member this year is in Tucker County, where the county Historical Society and a local preservation group are combining to sponsor one member. Neither organization alone had the resources to sponsor a full-time member, but working together they both get their projects completed. The member's schedule is arranged with the two organizations, and the AFHA program supervisor stays in close touch with the member and site supervisors to help coordinate and provide support.

The historic preservation members usually work as a team, generally completing one project, then moving on to another site. Each project is supervised by a site representative for that project. Their projects have included rehabilitating the Darden Mill for an artisan center, stabilizing and weatherizing a 1790 log house, and saving abandoned school buildings for community reuse. This program year they will also assist with weatherization of low-income older homes. Each member of

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the team takes coordination of one project site as a primary project, while all of the members work together to complete the work.

c) AmeriCorps Member Selection, Training, and Supervision

Member Recruitment and Support:

Twenty-three full-time AmeriCorps members will be recruited for a full year's service. We actively recruit members of diverse backgrounds and abilities. We use the national AmeriCorps portal for much of our recruiting, which gives us access to a wide pool of applicants from diverse backgrounds. In addition we use local ads, news stories, email lists, and employment bulletin boards. We look for people with some training or skills in one of our service areas, such as forestry, wildlife biology, or environmental studies, or history, anthropology, or historic preservation degrees. Many have intern or work experience in the field or construction experience. Because members need to work independently, we prefer members with a college degree, or who have substantial life experience. We seek members with a strong work ethic, self-directed, personable and able to work well in a team and with community volunteers, and interested in expanding their skills. In practice, this gives us a diverse well-rounded team, which generally includes higher diversity of ethnic backgrounds than the local population. We select members from a variety of locations and backgrounds, mixing local residents with new recruits from other states, and with the youthful enthusiasm of recent college graduates balanced with experienced older members. We recruit from mid-spring until the team is complete, with the team start date in mid-September.

Member support is provided by in-person training, and continual personal contact and interaction with the members. Program director, program staff, and site supervisors are always available to the members for discussion or to address issues, in addition to the more structured team meetings and

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evaluations. The member evaluations that take place three times during the term are an interactive process between the member and supervisor to identify and address any issues and areas where the member needs more support. Members are also asked to evaluate the program, in order to help address concerns and improve program organization and activities. Member reflection is encouraged in team meetings throughout the year and in closing, as well as in member evaluations and informal discussions. Members' service is recognized and celebrated throughout the year through press releases, newsletters, and recognition at AFHA events including a closing volunteer recognition event.

Member Development, Training and Supervision:

The first full week of service is dedicated to general orientation, tours, and training about AmeriCorps service and civic responsibility. Agenda for this training includes orientation to AmeriCorps and to the program, including service roles, appropriate and prohibited activities, timesheet and reporting protocols, and expectations of service. The training also includes introductory training to the program service areas, orientation to the area and the forest, and initial skills training. The second week members receive orientation and training at their service sites.

Skills training opportunities are built into each of the service areas, with some training provided by our program, some by service sites or partners, and other opportunities for workshops and training provided by other organizations. Project specific training areas include interpretation workshops, conservation skills such as trail building, GPS, weed control, and historic rehabilitation and carpentry skills. As an example of a training partnership, YouthBuild has established a weatherization initiative and our historic preservation team will have the opportunity to participate in appropriate YouthBuild training programs in carpentry, energy audit, and weatherization skills. In return, AFHA offers historic preservation training opportunities for YouthBuild participants. Often community volunteers

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will be offered training opportunities alongside the AmeriCorps members, building capacity in the community both from their training and hands-on experience. Members can request additional training that is pertinent to their projects. Training is about 5% and 15% of the members' service time.

Members participate in Mountain State Leaders leadership training provided by Volunteer West Virginia, the State's Commission for National and Community Service. This outstanding leadership training opportunity gives them skills for working in communities, including planning and implementing a small-group service project utilizing their leadership skills.

Members assigned to a single site are supervised directly by a site supervisor for that sub-sponsor. In most cases members work closely with their supervisor on a day-to-day basis. Members working on multiple projects or on team work also work directly with a site supervisor for each project, but in addition are overseen by an AFHA program supervisor, who coordinates with project site supervisors. The AFHA program supervisor serves as their primary supervisor and coordinates the members' scheduling between multiple responsibilities, while the project site supervisor oversees the member or members while working on their project.

Site supervisors receive initial training about AFHA and the AmeriCorps program at the beginning of the service year. Site supervisors are trained in appropriate roles for AmeriCorps members including non-displacement of employees and prohibited activities, and to ensure that the AmeriCorps projects contribute new direct service activities for the partner sites. AFHA AmeriCorps program director follows up with each site supervisor with regular communications and periodic site visits.

Ethic of Service and Civic Responsibility:

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Introductory training includes expectations and responsibilities of AmeriCorps service, while the year-long experience of the AmeriCorps service reinforces these values. Mountain State Leaders training addresses leadership, volunteer recruitment, and community development training as well as volunteer values and civic responsibility.

Members also plan and participate in service projects throughout the year in addition to their primary assignments. Each year members participate in National Days of Service, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. day and Make a Difference Day. They also plan and carry out small group projects that are connected to their Mountain State Leaders leadership training. These projects have included reclamation tree planting, a community garden, a volunteer recruitment booth, and a healthy food fair. These projects give the members an opportunity to participate in a different type of community service activity, and to exercise their leadership skills as they plan and carry out the project from planning to finish. Service projects take an additional 5% to 15% of their service time.

d) Outcome: Performance Measures

Our program has tracked and exceeded targets for successful projects, volunteers, and leadership development each year. In our current year we are added public lands improved national performance measure, and in this proposal will add weatherization. Thus we measure the impact of AFHA AmeriCorps service by reporting on five performance measures.

National standard measure EN4 documents public lands improved, showing impact of environmental stewardship improvements in cleaning and improving public lands, including forest health restoration and reduced invasive species. A second national standard measure combining EN1, EN2, and EN7 will measure rehabilitation and weatherization of community historic structures and low income housing.

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Our member projects performance measure documents impact of member-designed projects in all our service areas. A community strengthening measure reports on volunteer recruitment, and a participant development measure reports on member training and leadership development.

Tracking of activities for performance measures is initially the responsibility of the members, overseen by their supervisors. Each member designs, implements and reports on their project, including identifying outcome measures appropriate to the project. They also collect data, surveys, or evaluations needed to track and assess outputs and outcomes. Site supervisors evaluate and approve the reports and tracking of their members' projects. The Program Director is responsible for collecting these reports into combined performance measure reporting.

e. Volunteer Generation

Recruitment and involvement of volunteers is a core component of this program and is one of our performance measures. AFHA volunteerism program helps increase project accomplishments for environmental and heritage projects. Projects often include recruiting, training, organizing, tracking and recognition for community volunteers who work alongside AmeriCorps members in implementing projects and service days. Volunteer projects include conservation field work days, planning and holding special events, research and documentation, giving tours, and on-going support for local organizations. For example, one member coordinated a "garlic mustard challenge" for volunteers to learn to identify and remove this invasive plant. The project in one spring documented 73 West Virginia volunteers who worked 420 hours to pull 241 bags of weeds. In another example, the member at a site is in charge of their volunteer program, coordinating more than 20 on-going volunteers as docents, for work days, and special events for the site. At least 125 volunteers from the project communities are expected to participate substantially in one or more of the projects, with an

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estimated total of over 1000 hours. Of these, at least 50 will be continuing volunteers for a partner organization, with many others expressing willingness to be repeat volunteers.

f. Partnerships and Collaboration

AFHA has a broad coalition of partners from around our area who participate as stakeholders, including community groups, tourism organizations, historical and cultural groups, watershed and environmental groups, and forestry organizations. AFHA communities and partner organizations provided key input in the AFHA strategic planning process, and representatives of these communities are invited to participate in program review and strategic planning review each year. In addition to the direct sub-sponsor partners, we have assistance on projects and training from a variety of partner groups. We are collaborative partners in a number of larger efforts, such as a regional Weed & Pest Management Area. We work closely with conservation groups such as The Nature Conservancy and West Virginia Forestry Association, and heritage development groups such as Preservation Alliance of West Virginia and Main Street West Virginia, along with our many more local partners.

g. Sustainability

AFHA and our partner sites are working to assure long-term sustainability of program activities. AFHA organizational capacity is substantially increased by managing and implementing the AmeriCorps team and the grant requirements.

AmeriCorps team activities help build the capacity of each of the partner organizations and of AFHA through accomplishing on-the-ground projects, recruitment and training of additional volunteers, and building partnerships. The visible successes of the AFHA AmeriCorps program will significantly increase donations, and help build improved organizational partnerships. Involving community volunteers in the projects builds sustainability of effort on a local level. This increase in capacity helps

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support staff to sustain the projects beyond the AmeriCorps grant. The likelihood of long-term success of these efforts will be greatly increased by the record of success, visible accomplishments, and the opportunity for leveraging, offered by the AmeriCorps program, thus enabling AFHA and our partners to sustain and continue project growth beyond AmeriCorps assistance.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) has been working toward development of our heritage area for nine years. The effort started in 2001 as a grant-funded project through WVU Division of Forestry and Extension, but that funding ended in September 2006. From the beginning of the project, the stakeholders controlled the development and direction of the effort, and they established a grassroots independent non-profit organization that now represents the organization.

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area is an 18-county organization governed by a 9 member Board of Directors from throughout the area. The Board includes representatives from our diverse interest groups including forestry, public lands, university, historical, tourism, disability services, and business development backgrounds. A 30-member representative Council ensures that all counties and interest groups have input and engagement with the organization, and provides a resource for outreach and volunteer recruitment. Some of the Board and Council members actively volunteer with the AmeriCorps program and assist staff with supervision and outreach.

AFHA Board, Council and stakeholders have developed a strategic plan with corresponding work plan to identify needs, challenges, and opportunities, develop strategies to move forward with our mission, and prioritize objectives. The initial strategic plan involved a year-long facilitated process with input from a wide variety of community stakeholders and organizational partners. We conducted research

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and held public meetings to identify needs and issues, assigned task groups to work on issue areas of asset mapping, interpretation, business development, networking, marketing, and organization, and conducted extensive discussion and review by our stakeholders. It was then approved by our elected representative Council. Our AmeriCorps program design was developed in consultation with stakeholders and sub-sponsor partners, and in response to expressed needs within the communities. The strategic plan is periodically reviewed and updated, most recently by a planning retreat in November, 2009 that resulted in an updated strategic plan.

While the AFHA region includes two counties of western Maryland, because our AmeriCorps program is funded through West Virginia, our AmeriCorps members only serve in our 16 counties in West Virginia.

For the AFHA AmeriCorps program, AFHA Board members provide grant oversight and assistance. The Board oversees policies, and the Board President provides authority over the Executive Director for chain of command and grievance policy. The Finance Committee reviews the financial operations, with the Treasurer reconciling reports monthly, and local finance committee member providing second signature on checks. The Audit Committee arranges for annual audit, and reviews the financial statements quarterly.

AFHA is on sound standing and accountability with professional bookkeeping, accountable record keeping, Board oversight, and annual audit. Our financial administrator has extensive experience with business bookkeeping, accounting procedures and Quickbooks. Our capacity is increased by a strong working relationship with our partner organizations that sponsor AmeriCorps projects and share resources for mutual benefit. Executive Director Phyllis Baxter is Program Director and primary

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contact for the AFHA AmeriCorps Program. Financial Administrator Logan Smith provides financial administration and is secondary contact for the program.

Beyond the USDA start-up grant, and not counting the AmeriCorps program grants and program income, AFHA as an organization has so far received seven grants and private donations totaling more than \$180,000. We have an individual donor program that raises funds for unrestricted income and matching government grants. Grant funding has included National Forest Foundation, USDA Forest Service, and Preservation Alliance of West Virginia. Approximately 60% of our annual funding comes from CNCS.

In our four years of operation as an AmeriCorps State Formula program we have had 100% enrollment all four years, with 90% or better retention rate each year.

b) Staffing

Executive Director Phyllis Baxter has been working with AFHA since its inception in 2001. Over a 20 year career in historic preservation and non-profit management, she has extensive experience with grant writing, project direction and implementation, and grant administration, including multiple private foundation, state, and federal grants. Her experience has included administration, implementation, and evaluation of numerous grant projects including Benedum Foundation, WV Division of Culture and History, and WV Division of Tourism; as well as Federal grants including Housing and Urban Development, National Park Service, Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Ms. Baxter is the Program Director for the AFHA AmeriCorps program and is the primary supervisor for the AmeriCorps team, as well as supervisor for the heritage development members. She is responsible for implementation of the AFHA

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AmeriCorps program including recruitment, planning, and evaluation and overall member supervision; and coordinates with site supervisors in each community.

The AFHA financial administrator, Logan Smith is responsible for administration and bookkeeping for AFHA and for the AmeriCorps grant. He has extensive experience with business and non-profit bookkeeping and Quickbooks expertise. Mr. Smith is also AFHA AmeriCorps program supervisor for the historic preservation team and helps coordinate the hands-on projects. As a supervisor, he has many years experience supervising staff for a small business, as well as historic preservation expertise from restoration of his own historic home and as a member of the Elkins Historic Landmark Commission.

Aubrey Dickerson, a former AmeriCorps VISTA member, is conservation program associate with AFHA. He has a degree in geography from Marshall University, and VISTA experience working with mining reclamation, GIS and conservation projects. He also has extensive computer and technical experience, and serves as technology coordinator for AFHA. He helps coordinate the volunteer program and work days, and oversees development of conservation and education projects. For AFHA AmeriCorps program, he provides coordination and supervision for conservation team members, and assists the program director with tracking and management.

AmeriCorps program site supervisors from the sub-sponsor organizations oversee project assignments for their assigned member, site-specific training, timesheets, scheduling, and member evaluations. Program staff provide coordination and oversight supervision for the members and sites, and coordinate the member team activities. Program director receives and verifies timesheets and project reports.

Narratives

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

The budget for this project is for 23 full-time AmeriCorps members at a per member service year grant cost of \$13,300 per member.

Matching support for member costs will come from organizational sources from each sub-sponsor program partner, with site/project sponsor share budgeted at \$3,500 per member or \$80,500 total. Additional operating costs plus indirect costs will be provided by AFHA from private donations, operating funds, and in-kind donations such as personnel time, equipment and travel.

In our four years of experience as a State Formula program, we have successfully funded and carried out a robust AmeriCorps program, with increased members each successive year. We follow generally accepted accounting principles and have participated in extensive financial training and monitoring with Volunteer West Virginia. Using sub-sponsor program income combined with our own organizational funding and in-kind services, we have provided strong program support for our members and sub-sponsors, while exceeding required match in all categories.

The budget is adequate to implement the program due to the strong support of the partner organizations, and the commitment from the AFHA organization for overhead and staff support. Support for the members, and the operating support to supervise, train, evaluate, and provide them with tools and resources, is provided by the grant budget and match promised. Our match pledged, 32%, exceeds the required match amount in order to ensure the adequacy of the support available to the members.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

AFHA has a system in place for strategic planning and evaluation, including periodic updating of

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organizational plans and objectives and assessment of accomplishments. Self-assessment of the program design, activities and results is conducted specifically for the AmeriCorps program through yearly evaluations. Program director and staff, current members, sub-sponsor supervisors, AFHA board members, stakeholders, community members and independent reviewers provide input and review of outputs, outcomes, and project activities of each program year. This ongoing assessment includes community feedback on program design and accomplishments, and expanding project sponsors to new partner organizations through an application process.

Program staff also stay in close communication with Volunteer West Virginia commission staff, which provides program directors meetings, training opportunities, monitoring visits, and helpful response to questions. This interaction all contributes to our efforts to evaluate and improve our program. All input is compiled by staff and reviewed by the Board in light of the evaluation feedback and lessons learned. Revisions to program structure, supervision, communications, and performance measures for future years are implemented based on these recommendations. Our goal is for AFHA AmeriCorps program to continue to improve to meet the needs of our communities, our sub-sponsor partners, and our members.

Within the program, we continually assess and solicit feedback, and make adjustments to our schedule, activities, and supervision to address any issues as soon as they come up, and to aim for continual improvement. The AFHA AmeriCorps team members and program supervisors meet together regularly for planning and evaluation meetings, to coordinate, assess accomplishments, discuss challenges, and work together on solutions to improve the program and the members' service experience. Electronic communication tools supplement team meetings, and allow the team to interact and share ideas and challenges. Members who work together on hands-on teams usually meet weekly. Group and individual reflection activities are encouraged on an ongoing basis, and are

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included in team meeting activities. Each member submits weekly timesheets, quarterly reports on their tasks, accomplishments and on challenges and lessons learned, logs of output data and volunteers, and supplementary reports on extra training and service projects. Volunteer surveys and reviews of each member's individual project collect information from participants and reviewers for assessment of member performance and project accomplishments and outcomes. Members participate with their supervisors in member evaluation and self-assessment interviews three times during the year, which give them a chance to voice their needs and concerns, as well as evaluating their progress. With sharing of these lessons, the team members can adapt and adjust action plans to continually improve output and performance.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

Budget and performance measures have been changed to reflect 20 members instead of 23. This has not been changed throughout the narrative. Budget narrative questions were clarified as requested.

Performance measures comments were addressed in the performance measure section, except for one comment. We were requested to add an end outcome to the public lands national performance measure, however this was not allowed in the form. Further comments said this was not necessary. If we do need to add an end outcome for this measure, it would relate to our environmental stewardship goal thusly: "Project site reviewers give 90% favorable responses that public lands improvement activities resulted in end outcomes of increased environmental stewardship through improvements of environmental conditions or conservation of natural or built assets."

The Clarification questions are included here with bullet points, with answers following.

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* Please clarify the roles of the program director and associate supervisor (i.e. who has direct supervision responsibilities of the members, who the members report to, etc) and describe how the time allotted to the overall program management is sufficient.

AFHA has three program staff members, who each have distinct responsibilities and who all help with coordinating and supporting members. We find this works well and is adequate to operate and oversee our program.

Program director Phyllis Baxter is responsible for overall program, oversight, evaluation, progress reporting, and top level approval of time sheets. She also helps support and supervise heritage team members. She spends at least 10 hours a week on AmeriCorps duties, with substantially more during some periods of the year.

Associate supervisor (conservation supervisor) Aubrey Dickerson assists with program support and supervision, volunteer coordination and tech support. He helps support and supervise conservation team members. He spends about 20 hours a week on AmeriCorps duties.

Financial administrator Logan Smith is responsible for bookkeeping and financial reporting, and is also supervisor for the historic preservation team. He spends about 20 hours a week on AmeriCorps duties.

Members report directly to their site supervisors for their project service, with the program level supervisors helping with coordination and support within their assigned focus area, especially for

Narratives

those members who may work under more than one site supervisor.

* Please clarify how many project sites are anticipated for the proposed program year and how many supervisors are at each site. Also, please explain how the site supervisors at the sites are chosen.

Finally, confirm the number of members to serve at each site.

For a 20 member program, AFHA anticipates about 20 distinct sites, but it is not always a one member to one site relationship. Of these 6 will have members assigned directly to them full time, with one to three members per site (representing 11 members total -- 8 conservation and 3 heritage). The other 9 members will work on more than one project, some individually, and some as part of the historic preservation team. We will have about 8 part time heritage project sites with 5 heritage members assigned part time to 2 or 3 projects each. There are also about 6 historic preservation or hands-on conservation sites that the 4 member historic preservation team will rotate work through different times during the year.

Each sub-sponsor site selects one site supervisor who is responsible for administering the AmeriCorps program at their site, including attending AFHA AmeriCorps program training, developing scope of work, assisting and supervising members as they perform their service, approving time sheets and reports for their members including those for performance measures, and conducting supervisor evaluation with their members.

* The personnel section of the budget reflects ten site supervisors, but the staff travel section reflects visits to six project sites. Please explain the discrepancy.

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The personnel budget has been modified to only count time match from the 6 site supervisors who will be responsible for one or more members full-time. We may start including and counting the supervisor time at the smaller sites in future years.

The staff travel to project sites is only counting official monitoring visits to the 6 anticipated sites that are located outside of our hub county. Visits to local sites are not included in the travel budget. In reality, staff travel to sites is likely to be much higher, but any additional cost will be covered by the program.

* Please provide information about the impact of your previous state formula-funded AmeriCorps program.

Cumulative accomplishments of our first three program years, plus partial reporting in this our fourth year, show we are on track to have member projects completed by each service member -- 58 projects in all. These have included a wide range of projects such as developing children's programming for historic sites, developing interpretive trail signage for natural sites, developing visitor center exhibits, organizing needed plans and drawings for rehab of a historic black school that will become an African-American heritage center, cultivating native milkweed plants to increase monarch butterfly populations, working with landowners to coordinate non-native invasive weed control efforts within a Weed and Pest Management Area, archiving collections for a local historical society and teaching their volunteers how to use the archive - to mention just a few. Project outcomes are enhanced heritage, natural and historic assets and improved visitor experience. Surveys of reviewers, visitors and users of the projects overwhelmingly agreed the projects result in these outcomes by improving assets, public education, public participation, and/or public access and that the reviewers learned something from

Narratives

the project, and/or felt that it helped raise heritage, environmental and historic preservation awareness. Through implementation of projects and community public relations resulting from the projects, the AmeriCorps members increase public awareness of heritage, environmental and historic preservation values for communities and visitors. Visitors to sites are able to see and understand more, thus improving the visitor experience and increasing tourism.

Our volunteer recruitment efforts have recruited over 600 volunteers, with over 90% of those who completed surveys reporting they learned or had raised awareness as a result of their volunteer experience and felt their volunteering benefited the site or project, and 85% reporting their intention to volunteer again. In one example, a member coordinated a "garlic mustard challenge" for volunteers to learn to identify and remove this invasive plant. The project in one spring documented 73 West Virginia volunteers who worked 420 hours to pull 241 bags of weeds. In another example, the member at a site is in charge of their volunteer program, coordinating more than 20 on-going volunteers as docents for work days and special events for the site. Volunteer outcomes result in increased community involvement and increased capacity for organizations with engaged volunteers who will continue to work in the community.

This current year for the first time we are tracking acres of public lands improved under the national performance measure and will meet our target goal. Conservation projects have included non-native invasive species removal, trash cleanup, trail improvements, tree planting, and native plant gardens. We have also conducted substantial rehabilitation on at least eight historic public buildings. These hands-on projects will have outcomes of helping meet stewardship goals for the public lands managers and organizations, with positive impact on forest conservation and health and on community assets.

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* Please describe the site monitoring process and frequency of site visits to ensure compliance with laws and regulation.

Program director and program staff stay in close communication with each site to ensure that the member's service is progressing successfully and that the site understands and is in compliance with AmeriCorps laws and regulations, including avoiding prohibited activities and not replacing staff members. This communication includes training with each site manager before the term starts, frequent email and phone communications with site managers, and monthly team meetings and quarterly reports from the members which report on their activities and any concerns or issues they may have. Each site manager also participates in member evaluations that include the opportunity for the member to voice any concerns or needs for improvement. Program staff make at least one formal monitoring visit to each site to monitor compliance, as well as additional informal visits to provide assistance and support.

Continuation Changes

NA

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

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

Priority Areas

- Economic Opportunity
- Environmental Stewardship
- Selected for National Measure*
- Selected for National Measure*
- Education
- Healthy Futures
- Selected for National Measure*
- Selected for National Measure*
- Veterans and Military Families
- Other
- Selected for National Measure*
- Selected for National Measure*
- Disaster Services
- Selected for National Measure*

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 6

Service Categories

- At-risk Ecosystems Improvement Primary Secondary
- Other Community and Economic Development Primary Secondary

Enhancing community assets

Service Category: Other Community and Economic Development

Measure Category: Not Applicable

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

AmeriCorps members will complete at least 18 projects in fields of conservation, historic preservation, and heritage development. Each project will work towards environmental stewardship of a natural or built environment asset, and/or towards a community development goal of heritage site development, education, or enhancing tourism. The range of projects may include planning and implementation of projects to improve historic or natural assets; improving public availability and access to these assets; public education and interpretation about heritage or natural assets or conservation issues; research, survey, or organization of data or information to increase knowledge, improve public access to this knowledge, or increase effectiveness of conservation activities; and/or

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

increase place-based tourism or improve visitor experience of natural or heritage sites. Members will be responsible for planning and implementing these projects in cooperation with their service sites. These will be substantial projects reflecting significant activity over the year - in most cases about ¼ of the member's service time. In some cases a project may be related to public lands improvement activities, but the member project will provide significant additional planning, research, or education components separate from the on-the-ground work reported in the public lands performance measure. Each project will show benefits to environmental stewardship and/or community development. Outcomes will be evaluated by project reviewers qualified in categories of persons involved or familiar with project; client, participant or visitor to project; or persons familiar with goals but previously unfamiliar or uninvolved with project, with at least one or two reviewers from each category.

Results

Result: Output

AmeriCorps members will complete at least 18 projects in fields of conservation, historic preservation, or heritage development.

Indicator: projects completed and reported on

Target: AmeriCorps members will complete and report on their projects in fields of conservation, historic preservation, or heritage development.

Target Value: 18

Instruments: reports filed

PM Statement: AmeriCorps members will complete and report on at least 18 projects in fields of conservation, historic preservation, or heritage development.

Prev. Yrs. Data:

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Each project will accomplish one or more of the following results of enhanced heritage or natural assets:

- 1) planning and implementation of improvement to or conservation of a natural or historic site or area,
- 2) public education or interpretation about assets or issues;

Result: Intermediate Outcome

- 3) improved public availability, access, and/or participation for a site or activity;
- 4) research, survey, or organize data to increase knowledge, improve public access to this knowledge, or increase effectiveness of conservation activities;
- 5) increased tourism or improved tourist experience of natural or heritage sites or activities.

Indicator: 5 review ers per project agree project enhanced assets

Target: Using a 5 point scale (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, etc.) review er responses will be averaged resulting in at least 90% favorable report.

Target Value: 90%

Instruments: Survey of 5 project review ers per project.

PM Statement: 90% of responses from project review ers agree member projects resulted in enhanced assets such as site improvement, education, improved access or participation, research, or tourism improvements.

Prev. Yrs. Data:

Result: End Outcome

Project end outcomes show results of increased environmental stewardship through increased public awareness of issues or improved environmental conditions, and/or resulted in increased community economic development through increased tourism and visitor and community satisfaction, as observed and reported by project reviewers.

Indicator: 5 review ers each agree project increased stewardship or community development

Target: Using a 5 point scale (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, etc.) review ers responses will be averaged with at least 90% agreement that the projects increased stewardship and community development.

Target Value: 90%

Instruments: Survey of 5 project review ers per project.

PM Statement: 90% of responses from project review ers agree member projects resulted in end outcomes of increased stewardship through increased public awareness of issues or improved environmental conditions, and/or in increased community development through increased tourism and visitor or community satisfaction.

Prev. Yrs. Data:

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Environmental Stewardship

Performance Measure Title: Public lands improved

Service Category: At-risk Ecosystems Improvement

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Members will renew and rehabilitate public lands including planting trees and native plants, carrying out reforestation, carrying out forest health restoration measures including non-native invasive species control, carrying out erosion control measures, fire hazard reduction measures, safety improvements, providing trail enhancements, rehabilitation, and repairs, and/or rehabilitation and maintenance of historic sites and structures accomplished through parks cleaning and improving activities. (Time on this activity will be average about ½ time for 12 members, or 6 MSY. This includes activities by 4 members rehabilitating historic public buildings that will be substantial amount of time, although will only represent a small number of acres.)

Result: Output

Result.

1000 acres of national parks, state parks, city parks, county parks, or other

public lands will be cleaned or improved.

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

Target : acres of public land cleaned or improved

Target Value: 1000

Instruments: project logs certified by supervisors

PM Statement: 1000 acres of national parks, state parks, city parks, county parks, or other public lands will be cleaned or improved as reported on project logs.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Activities cleaning or improving public lands contribute towards meeting stewardship goals identified by lands managers of the public lands. These stewardship goals may include renewing and rehabilitating public lands, forest health restoration, erosion control, fire hazard reduction, safety improvements, improving recreation facilities, and maintenance of historic sites and structures.

Indicator: Stewardship improvements for public lands

Target : 90% of public lands projects reported in output will be certified as contributing towards meeting stewardship goals identified by appropriate public land managers overseeing the projects.

Target Value: 90

Instruments: Certification by manager on project log that project contributes to stewardship goals

PM Statement: 90% of member projects cleaning and improving public lands will result in stewardship improvements or progress towards stewardship goals for public lands as certified by managers of lands where

National Performance Measures

Result.

projects took place.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable