

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: 18-JAN-11	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:														
2b. APPLICATION ID: 11AC123022	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 09ACHMD0010002														
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION																
LEGAL NAME: Department of Natural Resources - Maryland Conservation Corps DUNS NUMBER: 033425385	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Marti Woodfield TELEPHONE NUMBER: (410) 260-8165 FAX NUMBER: INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: mwoodfield@dnr.state.md.us															
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): Tawes State Office Bldg. E-3 580 Taylor Avenue Annapolis MD 21401 - 2352 County: Anne Arundel																
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 526002033	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. State Government 7b.															
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: Maryland Conservation Corps															
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Statewide in Maryland	11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):															
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 10/01/11 END DATE: 09/30/12	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <u>MD 003</u> b.Program <u>MD 003</u>															
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <u>3</u>	16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <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															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: small;"> <tr><td style="width: 20%;">a. FEDERAL</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 686,222.00</td></tr> <tr><td>b. APPLICANT</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 955,652.00</td></tr> <tr><td>c. STATE</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td></tr> <tr><td>d. LOCAL</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td></tr> <tr><td>e. OTHER</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td></tr> <tr><td>f. PROGRAM INCOME</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td></tr> <tr><td>g. TOTAL</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 1,641,874.00</td></tr> </table>	a. FEDERAL	\$ 686,222.00	b. APPLICANT	\$ 955,652.00	c. STATE	\$ 0.00	d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00	e. OTHER	\$ 0.00	f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	g. TOTAL	\$ 1,641,874.00	17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 686,222.00															
b. APPLICANT	\$ 955,652.00															
c. STATE	\$ 0.00															
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f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00															
g. TOTAL	\$ 1,641,874.00															
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: Marti Woodfield	b. TITLE: Program Director	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (410) 260-8165														
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 06/10/11														

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Executive Summary

The Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC), now beginning its 27th year, is committed to serving the three compelling community needs of a cleaner Chesapeake Bay, improved public lands, and bringing disadvantaged youth closer to nature. As part of its close partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), MCC works with the Maryland Civic Justice Corps to provide life and job skills, as well as developing a sense of environmental stewardship in disadvantaged youth age 14 - 17.

Rationale and Approach

1. Rationale and Approach

a) Compelling Community Need

The Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) was established in 1984 by the Maryland State Legislature, as one of 14 initiatives to engage youth in efforts to restore the nation's largest and most productive estuary, the Chesapeake Bay. In 2009 the MCC celebrated its 25th anniversary of successfully serving that mission as a program supported and managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through the Maryland Park Service (MPS). All MCC crews are based in Maryland State Parks located throughout Maryland.

In 2008, the MCC added an exciting new dimension to its program when MCC members were called on to serve as adult mentors and project supervisors for disadvantaged, mostly minority youth in the newly formed Maryland Civic Justice Corps (CJC). This new youth conservation corps, a special initiative of Governor Martin O'Malley, provided 200 disadvantaged youth from Baltimore City with an opportunity to form connections to the natural world through outdoor recreation, learn life and job skills, gain understanding of environmental stewardship principles, and perform conservation service in Maryland State Parks.

MCC members were integral to the success of this effort, and will continue to play a role in nurturing the new CJC program as it moves toward self-sufficiency. To help meet the needs of the fledgling CJC, the MCC will add two new crews in 2009.

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Compelling community needs for programs and projects such as the MCC provides have been described in numerous reports and research:

Chesapeake Bay Restoration

MCC is a vital component of the State's efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay, bringing youth together with volunteers, children and communities to accomplish action strategies defined by Chesapeake Bay community stakeholders. The MCC program goals are designed to initiate, improve and build capacity of organizations and communities to address local environmental and educational needs, as well as provide direct service activities and support of MCC members.

In 2000, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency renewed a 1983 commitment to restoring the Chesapeake Bay by signing the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. The 2000 Agreement includes goals for increasing Chesapeake Bay grasses, reducing nutrient pollution, restoring wildlife habitat, monitoring waterfowl species, planting of streamside forest buffers, establishing best management practices on public lands, and educating and engaging youth and adults in stewardship actions. By implementing many initiatives of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement, Marylanders have made great strides toward restoring the Bay.

Still, environmental quality remains a compelling community concern in the Chesapeake Bay region. Climate change, for instance, is a particular threat. "Due to its geography and geology, the Chesapeake Bay region is ranked the third most vulnerable to sea level rise, behind Louisiana and Southern Florida. Historic tide records show that sea level increased approximately one foot in the Chesapeake Bay over the last one hundred years. As a consequence of climate change, sea level is likely to rise at least twice as fast as it did during the 20th century, resulting in potentially 1-foot rise by 2050 and between 2-3 feet of rise by 2100."

DNR is currently coordinating the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Maryland's Vulnerability to Climate Change, which is part of the State's ambitious, multi-

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agency Climate Action Plan released in August 2008. According to the Comprehensive Strategy, "Maryland's people, wildlife, land and public investments are at risk due to the consequences of climate change including sea level rise, increased storm intensity, extreme drought and heat waves, and intensified wind and rainfall events."

The Comprehensive Strategy calls for Marylanders to work together to "protect and restore Maryland's natural shoreline and its resources," and to "create greater public awareness of the integral relationship between Chesapeake Bay restoration actions and climate change and sea level rise adaptation and response activities." The report states that, "adaptation and response planning is crucial to Maryland's ability to achieve sustainability," and warns that, "a 'do-nothing' approach will lead to unwise decisions and increased risk over time." The report encourages a community-based response to achieve sustainability.

To this end, MCC seeks out projects that reduce carbon emissions, such as tree-plantings, recycling initiatives or energy-efficiency efforts in State Park facilities. MCC partners with Gunpowder Falls State Park and North Point State Park in their annual Polar Fair, a public special event that provides outreach and education to the general public about global warming.

Serving Disadvantaged Youth

Restoring the environment is important work, but it does not occur in a vacuum. The human condition is tied to that of the environment in many ways. With this in mind the Maryland Civic Justice Corps was created in 2008, and the MCC accepted the challenge to help facilitate this program serving Maryland's disadvantaged youth.

The restorative powers of nature have long been known, but in recent years children are losing the benefits of this experience that previous generations took for granted. The CJC motto, "Conservation service, reconnecting youth and nature," succinctly captures the intent of the program: to promote the well-being of disadvantaged, or "at-risk" youth by engaging them in conservation service in Maryland

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State Parks, and using this service learning opportunity to instill a sense of environmental stewardship. In addition to performing conservation service, 14- 17 year-old CJC youth build personal connections to nature through outdoor recreation activities, and learn life skills and job skills that will help ensure brighter, more successful futures for these underserved populations. Spending time outdoors is an important foundation on which to build an environmental ethic. It has also been shown through research to be an important factor in the healthy development and well-being of children. However, over the past few decades this nation's children have gone indoors, a trend perhaps most severely affecting disadvantaged urban youth. In 2005, Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, brought widespread attention to this issue. Louv successfully engaged natural resource professionals, parents, medical professionals, educators, and other community partners in a national conversation about how to reverse this alarming trend. The pressing public health issues of childhood obesity, attention deficit disorder, asthma and even depression have been linked to the amount of time children spend engaged in sedentary indoor activity such as playing video games versus being engaged in outdoor physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has linked the lack of physical activity in youth to obesity, and recommends access to appropriate environments for outdoor recreation as one measure that should be taken at the community level. "Research," says the CDC, "increasingly suggests that children benefit from the opportunity to play outdoors, where they can explore and enjoy natural environments."

For ethnic minorities, especially in urban areas, connections to the natural world are even harder to come by. Research has shown that minority children spend more time watching television than Caucasian children, which may exacerbate health risks to these communities. According to the CDC 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 59.5% of Baltimore City youth said they watched three or more hours of television each day, nearly twice the national average. Baltimore teens are also at a greater risk for obesity.

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Baltimore City youth were also nearly twice as likely as the national average to stay home from school because they felt unsafe at school, or on their way to or from school. Knowing this, it is difficult to imagine youth freely enjoying open space without assistance from programs like MCC and CJC. In 2008, MCC and CJC provided 200 youth with the necessary resources (transportation to parks, access to outdoor recreation equipment, etc.) to begin to address this problem.

In 2007, Maryland's Task Force on Minority Participation in the Environmental Community submitted a report which describes a need to engage minority communities more effectively in environmental advocacy and stewardship. The task force presented strategies to bridge this gap, including providing "meaningful environmental experiences" for minority youth who lack ready access to natural resources. The Chesapeake 2000 Agreement also stresses the need for meaningful experiences in nature, setting objectives to provide every school student in the Chesapeake Bay watershed with a "meaningful watershed educational experience" before graduation from high school. However, a report prepared by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center states that Baltimore City youth are unlikely to stay in school long enough to graduate. From this we can infer that Baltimore City youth may be missing out on meaningful watershed educational experiences through the school systems in similar proportions. In the 2003-2004 school year, Baltimore City had the fourth lowest graduation rate (34.6%) of the nation's fifty largest cities. Baltimore also had the widest gap in graduation rates between its urban school districts and surrounding suburban districts, with suburban youth graduating at a rate of 81.5%. This disparity in how needs are met (or not met) for suburban versus urban youth is illustrative of the additional barriers urban youth face in terms of spending time in the outdoors. It is ironic that Baltimore youth live on the shores of one of the world's richest estuarine systems, yet these and other indicators tell us that they do not share equal access with their suburban peers.

In August 2008, responding to the Maryland community's compelling need to reconnect our youth with the natural world, Governor O'Malley issued Executive Order 01.01.2008.10, establishing the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature. As per the executive order, the Civic Justice Corps was created to

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address the needs of "at-risk" youth, who experience many challenges and barriers that make it difficult for them to have meaningful interactions with nature.

In 2008, 200 Baltimore City youth were recruited into the "charter class" of the CJC. Approximately 100 of the youth were court-involved, recruited with assistance from the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. The remaining 100 youth were recruited from the Baltimore City Public School System and the Parks and People Foundation. Approximately 99% of the youth were minorities. CJC Youth, 60% of whom said that they had never participated in an outdoor activity before joining the CJC, were paid a stipend and received bus transportation from Baltimore City to one of two nearby State Parks, Patapsco Valley State Park and Gunpowder Falls State Park. Youth were provided with uniforms, as well as meals for each day of the six-week program.

MCC members spent a great deal of time planning meaningful restoration and other service learning projects for the CJC to complete. MCC members participated in the design of rain gardens, native plantings, the repurposing of a shuttered old camp store as a nature center for small children, and many more projects.

MCC members supervised CJC youth and crew chiefs in project execution and facilitated enrichment activities for CJC youth. In a pre-survey of CJC youth, only 26% said they could see themselves finishing college, as compared to 54% in the post-survey. Ninety-six percent of CJC youth who graduated from the program said they were glad they participated. These statistics support the observed success that MCC members experienced as mentors. MCC members reported a rewarding experience working with CJC youth.

The CJC effort was funded by the Maryland Park Service with a \$1,000,000 budget. The MPS also entered into several community partnerships which helped ensure the success of the program. For instance, the Parks and People Foundation provided critical administrative and field support, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services provided key services in identifying and contracting with court-involved youth.

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In August 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.B. 3036, the No Child Left Inside Act, sponsored by Rep. John P. Sarbanes of Maryland. The Act aims to provide support to states to help young people become more engaged in the natural world, and is a potential source of future funding for Children in Nature initiatives. Among the groups supporting the No Child Left Inside Act are: Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, National Education Association, National Wildlife Federation, and YMCA USA. The No Child Left Inside Coalition is comprised of over 745 organizations in all fifty states.

State Park Restoration

In 2000, the Governor's Special Commission on Maryland State Parks described compelling need for increased outreach, mobilization of volunteers and restoration needs in Maryland State Parks. MCC builds the capacity of volunteer organizations and communities to address local environmental and educational needs, as well as provide direct service activities.

The Commission's report was developed after a year-long public involvement process, and described the state's need to do more to involve and support state park volunteers and to "capitalize on the educational power of the State Parks." The report cited the "extremely important role" that volunteers now play in conserving state parks and serving visitors. The report emphasized the need to increase outreach programs so that state park volunteers could better "participate in state-wide initiatives and local projects."

The report also cited the need to expose more K-12 youth to the education and interpretive service learning programs offered in state parks. The report cited research, which demonstrates that students learning within an environmentally-based context show improved performance on standardized measures of reading, writing, math, science and social studies. Critical thinking skills and improved discipline have also been associated with environmentally-based learning.

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Summary of Compelling Community Need

The report by the Commission on Maryland State Parks, the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement, the Climate Action Plan and the Executive Order establishing the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature provide the foundation and direction for identifying the community needs to be addressed by MCC's conservation service activities. In the pending grant period, project areas of focus will include: supporting and mobilizing disadvantaged and minority youth in conservation service through the CJC; supporting and mobilizing volunteers and youth to support conservation service projects; and leading conservation and recreation projects with volunteers on public lands. The ultimate goal of these projects is to ensure that the next generation enjoys the benefits and inspirations of a cleaner, healthier and more productive environment and Chesapeake Bay.

b) Description of Activities & Member Roles

During the 2009-2012 grant period, MCC members will provide direct service activities and participate in mobilizing and supporting volunteers in undertaking Watershed Restoration Action Strategies as part of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. Ten MCC crews will be based at public land locations throughout the State, working in partnership with six Chesapeake Bay restoration organizations. The organizations include: The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The National Aquarium in Baltimore, Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment, Wildlife and Fisheries. Crew members will increase the capacity of these restoration groups and mobilize volunteers, allowing implementation of projects which will enhance the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay. These organizations will be a focus of MCC service, including training, assisting and educating the volunteers to help restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

MCC members will work with Chesapeake Bay restoration groups to write grants, mobilize volunteers from local communities, and conduct projects such as: stream and wetland water quality and habitat data collection, restoration of shorelines from bulkheads to natural habitats, planting native wetland

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shrubs, trees and bay grasses; monitoring fish populations, mapping endangered species habitats and creating interpretive signage and brochures. MCC members will train community volunteers how to maintain restoration areas and monitor and measure results. These efforts will ensure the long-term sustainability of projects by a community after their completion.

The Children in Nature and No Child Left Inside initiatives will also be supported by the MCC Environmental Education Program curriculum. Each year, MCC members will be trained and supervised in delivering environmental curricula, including nationally recognized experiential learning modules for K-12 youth, such as: Project Wet, Project Wild and Project Learning Tree, as well as, Maryland's Scales and Tales wildlife program. In addition, MCC members will have the opportunity to design and write curricula that is used in school classrooms and field trips to reflect new knowledge and updates in teaching methods. These education programs will incorporate other disciplines such as math, English, art and critical thinking, in order to support State education standards. During the summer months, MCC members will offer interpretive naturalist programs, including campfire programs, summer camps and interpretive hiking and canoe trips in State Parks, as well as nonprofit conservation centers, such as the Salisbury Zoo and the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center. These programs bring positive results in standardized school testing and promise to change the lives of youth by engaging them in conservation service projects and allowing them the opportunity to appreciate nature.

In support of the recommendations of the Governor's Special Commission on Maryland State Parks and the Chesapeake 2000 report's emphasis on public lands as role models for restoration, MCC members will play a leadership and collaborative role in supporting State Park Volunteer Friends groups. The Maryland Park Service has benefited from a dedicated corps of park volunteers who provide a wealth of talent, experience and knowledge. From retired carpenters and engineers to volunteer school teachers and farmers, park volunteers are eager to support community access to healthy and safe outdoor recreation. MCC members will recruit, train and organize park volunteers to accomplish their defined needs and activities, helping to increase the capacity and sustainability of these volunteer groups.

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Projects and trainings will include: writing grant applications to support park improvement projects, providing trail maintenance training, developing and providing interpretive park programs for youth and adults and restoring wildlife and aquatic habitats.

MCC's use of full-time member slots also enables the program to invest in comprehensive and advanced training and experience for its members so that they may effectively serve as volunteer trainers and leaders. The proposed 2009-2012 grant includes the establishment of two new MCC crews to be placed in Gunpowder Falls State Park outside of Baltimore and Pocomoke River State Park on the lower Eastern Shore. The additional MCC crews will allow for swift and additional response to disaster relief and public safety services. To provide communities and public lands across the state with disaster relief and public safety response services and support, MCC will provide members with extensive training and certification in the following areas: Emergency Medical First Responder, Introduction to National Certified Search and Rescue, Wildland Firefighting certification and a Chainsaw Use and Care class. Activities and member roles will be dictated by the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) as agencies serving on the State's Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Member roles historically have involved providing support for emergency services, such as search and rescue and wildland fire fighting, as well as disaster clean-up following tornadoes, floods and hurricanes that hit local communities and public lands.

MCC members will work with park staff to plan park restoration projects for CJC youth, and provide technical supervision to youth as project facilitators on those sites. MCC members will serve as role models and mentors for CJC youth ages 14-17, and assist park staff and others in facilitating enrichment activities. Department of Natural Resources professional staff will supervise MCC crews.

In 2010, MCC will introduce an opportunity for CJC corpsmembers ages 16 and 17 to serve as Education-Award Only members. The Education Award benefit will be used to recruit, retain and reward up to 60 youth who perform at the 300-hour level.

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c) Measurable Outputs and Outcomes

During the 2009-2012 grant period, MCC will mobilize 3,000 volunteers for 24,000 hours in support of outputs associated with conservation and public land projects. Specifically, members will work with volunteers from six Chesapeake Bay restoration organizations statewide and 12 state park volunteer groups, demonstrating intermediate outcomes associated with increased capacity to implement conservation projects and serve local communities. Members will provide direct service to environmental restoration projects to achieve the following outputs: living resource restoration and monitoring at 25 ecologically degraded Chesapeake Bay sites; maintenance of 300 miles of recreational trails; clearing of 100 hazardous trees and limbs from park areas; construction of 6 disabled recreation access park improvements; restoration of 400 acres of wildlife habitat; improvements to 75 recreation facilities; and planting or maintaining 100 acres of forest lands.

Members will provide environmental education and interpretation programs for 30,000 K-12 students, youth and state park visitors. Students participating in environmental education programs will demonstrate an 85% increase in knowledge of Chesapeake Bay ecology and stewardship.

Members will provide mentoring, conservation project planning and supervision, nature interpretation, outdoor recreation activities and environmental education programs for 600 disadvantaged youth in the Maryland Civic Justice Corps. Youth participating in the program will demonstrate 50% increased knowledge of environmental stewardship principles, and outdoor recreation skills through pre and post surveys. MCC members will provide technical supervision for CJC projects to include: improving 25 recreation facilities, removing 20 tons of debris from Chesapeake Bay tributaries and parks, and participating in 12 habitat restoration projects.

Member Development performance measures will include an Output of 50 MCC members receiving at

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least 100 hours of training in the following subject areas: 48-hour First Responder certification, 16-hour Introduction to Search and Rescue National certification, 40-hour Wildland Firefighting certification, and a 24-hour Chainsaw Use and Care training. An Intermediate Outcome will be the successful award of at least two professional training certifications to 95 percent of members. The performance measure End Outcome will be the enhanced sense of leadership and commitment to community service experienced by a minimum of 95% of MCC members. The End Outcome performance will be measured via member questionnaire at the beginning, middle and end of their service experience.

These performance measures will support Intermediate and End Outcomes critical to the conservation and restoration of public lands and the Chesapeake Bay. By providing direct service and empowering the capacity of volunteer organizations like Community Watershed groups, State Park Volunteer Friends groups and other non-profit conservation organizations, outputs associated with restoring and monitoring living resources will assist in directing thousands of dollars in future restoration initiatives, and connect communities to their natural environments.

d) Plan for Self Assessment and Improvement

MCC tracks and evaluates progress toward meeting and achieving performance measures through a weekly, monthly and quarterly reporting system. MCC supervisors submit weekly performance reports to headquarters and monthly calendar schedules. The data from weekly reports is entered into a web-based activity reporting system, an advanced evaluation model that captures quantitative data regarding program outcomes.

Regular monthly visits to MCC sites by the Program Manager, and bi-monthly staff meetings with the Executive Director are used to continually assess progress, resolve problems and gather feedback. Beginning in 2005, MCC members and staff started recording their hours on a federally approved timecard system, which provides real-time tracking of member hours by project. In this manner,

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program leadership is able to track time spent on priority projects and provide fee-for-service partners with documented project support hours.

In order to monitor project sponsor satisfaction with MCC projects, MCC headquarters staff administers and reviews Project Evaluation Surveys. The results of these surveys are shared with crew supervisors for performance feedback. Member satisfaction is formally surveyed at the beginning, mid-point and end of the service year. This enables program staff to understand member expectations, respond to arising issues or problems and make adjustments to the program.

e) Community Involvement

MCC staff work with a many stakeholder groups on an ongoing basis to continually identify needs. Planning efforts typically occur approximately six months to one year in advance of projected major service activities. Community partners and stakeholders include: Maryland Park Service Volunteer Program, National Aquarium in Baltimore, K-12 school teachers, Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, local governments, Maryland Forest Service, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Baltimore City Public School System, Parks and People Foundation, state park user groups, the Maryland Wildlife and Heritage Division, Prince Georges County teen employment program, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, YouthWorks, and Chesapeake Bay Trust.

The involvement of stakeholder groups typically entails staff level discussions within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) with MCC staff to outline the big picture planning process and areas of emphasis. At the field planning and implementation level, MCC members and supervisors work on an ongoing basis with community organizations and volunteers to identify specific projects, needs, goals, scheduling of activities, trainings and possible fee-for-service revenue opportunities. MCC's success in establishing ongoing partnerships with many community and agency stakeholders has resulted in excellent communication channels and organizational working relationships. These partnerships have reached a level of familiarity that enables MCC to continually respond and adjust its

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program to the changing needs expressed by the community of conservation stakeholders that it serves. For example, MCC's Environmental Education Program has access to 150 Maryland school teachers every year to plan and deliver experiential lessons that support current state educational standards. MCC staff work with the Maryland Park Service Volunteer Coordinator to develop big-picture plans, while MCC members collaborate daily with Volunteers at their project sites in State Parks. MCC's public safety and disaster response services are directed by MDNR's Park Service Training Division and Maryland Natural Resources Police. These agencies have worked with MCC to regularly review and identify priority skills training and certifications that will position MCC crews to best serve public safety and disaster response needs on public lands and within local communities.

f) Relationship to other National & Community Service Programs

Every year, MCC supports the involvement of its members as leaders and participants in the Maryland InterCorps Council. This council provides opportunities for AmeriCorps program members throughout the State to design and implement joint service projects. In 2005, the InterCorps Council was supported by 28 MCC members, who assisted in the organization and construction of a playground for an underserved community in Baltimore City.

MCC is also a member of the Corps Network, which provides opportunities for the program to monitor the activities and innovations of conservations corps programs nationwide. MCC leadership attends regular meetings with other Maryland Corps programs and works to strengthen the Maryland program.

g) Potential for Replication

The MCC organizational structure and mission provides a strong model for replication. AmeriCorps members are strongly attracted to the organization's mission of environmental conservation evidenced by its outstanding recruitment rate of 100 percent every year. The attractiveness of the program's environmental mission is also strengthened by its focus on a specific resource, the Chesapeake Bay,

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which is a nationally identified impaired waterway. Yet, this environmental mission is multi-faceted, providing ample opportunity for MCC members to support a wide array of projects and services, from education to restoration.

Member satisfaction is also enhanced by the program's crew-based format, which inspires an esprit de corps and sense of teamwork. In addition, the program emphasizes opportunities for training and project services that bring the crews together periodically, providing members with a higher degree of satisfaction.

The MCC program's affiliation with a state natural resource agency also provides a strong model for replication. MCC members have convenient access and support from a diverse base of natural resource professionals, from wildlife and fisheries biologists to environmental educators and park rangers. This professional support enhances the ability of members to plan, design and implement projects successfully. The establishment of MCC crews at state parks also provides crews with office space, shop areas, vehicles and staff supervision to accomplish their goals. The agency affiliation also provides in-kind support for the program's grant administration and auditing at the highest level of federal compliance.

i. <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/dnrnews/infocus/climatechange.html>

ii. <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/dnrnews/infocus/climatechange.html>

iii. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidelines for school and community programs to promote lifelong physical activity among young people. *MMWR* 1997;46(No. RR-6):[p.15].

iv. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/children.htm>

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v. Dennison, BA, Television Viewing and Television in Bedroom Associated with Overweight Risk Among Low--Income Preschool Children, Pediatrics, June 2002

vi. Swanson, Christopher B. Cities in Crisis: A Special Analytic Report on High School Graduation. Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2008.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capability

1. Sound Organizational Structure

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR) Maryland Park Service has been responsible for managing the MCC program since 1984. In 1995, MCC received a Governor's Citation for establishing a successful AmeriCorps program. The program's affiliation with MDNR provides access to a Fiscal Services Administration that directs and oversees the program's fiscal, administrative and auditing procedures at the highest level of federal grant compliance.

Service sites are selected according to community need, sustainability and quality of projects. The newly proposed MCC crew sites are to be located in two completely different areas of Maryland. One site will serve a very remote rural area on Maryland's Eastern Shore in a resource poor community. The other crew site will serve an area which is close to Baltimore City and will prepare for and host CJC crews during the spring and summer months. These CJC crews are comprised mostly of youth from families with high poverty rates living in distressed communities and with limited access to parks and open spaces. In addition to supporting the CJC program, MCC crews based at Gunpowder Falls State Park will partner with the Friends of Jerusalem Mill, the Friends of North Point State Park, the North Central Railroad /Hereford Area volunteers, the Hunt Valley Rotary Club, Friends of Todds Inheritance, Gunpowder trail volunteers and several other volunteer and community organizations that currently

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partner with the park in providing educational and interpretive programs for the public, supporting park recreational facilities and restoring historic structures and restoring wildlife habitat. Gunpowder Falls State Park is over 18,000 acres in size and has over 100 miles of heavily used hiking trails, five distinct Wildlands areas, and a Special Trout Management Area on the Gunpowder River that is known as one of the top ten fly fishing destinations on the East Coast. Gunpowder Falls State Park offers opportunities to do habitat restoration in tidal and non-tidal locations in the river valleys of the Big and Little Gunpowder Falls, two major tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, as well as property on the Bay itself. Other Gunpowder facilities include a Revolutionary-era historic village, an equestrian center, a developed picnic area with swimming beach, a full-service marina offering Bay access, two youth group camping areas, the 20-mile TCB rail-trail (formerly known as the NCR trail), and two nature centers. Gunpowder also manages North Point State Park and Hart-Miller Island, both of which are situated on the Chesapeake Bay and have ample opportunities for restoration projects.

The new MCC crew based at Pocomoke River State Park will have opportunities to offer interpretive programs around the under served area, in the local schools, at the park's nature center and at nearby Janes Island State Park. Members will be able to offer DNR's Scales and Tales wildlife programs, lead canoe trips and develop new interpretive programs. MCC members will also be involved with maintaining the extensive water trails at Pocomoke River and Janes Island State Parks and hosting the numerous visitors which take advantage of the parks' cabins, camping facilities, fishing opportunities and hiking trails. There are many new partnerships which could be explored in the area such as Martin National Wildlife Refuge, Fairmount Wildlife Management Area and Deale Island Wildlife Management Area. There are also many opportunities in the area for Chesapeake Bay restoration, research and conservation projects.

MCC staff brings a combined 50 years of AmeriCorps managerial experience to the program. Each crew

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is assigned a site Crew Supervisor, who leads members in their daily team-based service experiences and training. They also plan projects, network with community stakeholders, counsel members, and monitor crew efforts and evaluate progress toward program objectives. Crew supervisors submit weekly reports, monthly calendars and quarterly performance data into an MCC reporting system.

A MDNR Administrator functions as the MCC Executive Director. Approximately 60 percent of this position's time is spent in the overall management of the program. The Executive Director oversees program implementation and compliance with AmeriCorps guidelines and State policies; establishes the vision and direction of the program; formulates improvement strategies and special initiatives; identifies and seeks operational resources; and advocates for the MCC AmeriCorps program. The current Executive Director has been with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for over 22 years and has 15 years of management experience in DNR. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resource Management and a Masters degree in Liberal Arts.

The MCC Program Manager reports to the Executive Director, functioning as the liaison to the MCC Crew Supervisors and other MDNR professionals, such as Park Managers, administrators, resource planners, foresters, engineers and biologists. This position also plans and facilitates numerous MCC projects and visits crews regularly in the field. This position is dedicated 100 percent to the program. The current Program Manager has 16 years of MCC program management experience and has helped implement the MCC AmeriCorps program since its inception in 1994.

The Program Manager also reports to the Executive Director and spends 100 percent of their time on the MCC program. This position conducts all of the program's procurement, billing, health insurance processing, time card processing and financial tracking, as well as performing quarterly AmeriCorps FSR reporting, grant closeout and member file management.

The Assistant Program Manager is responsible for recruiting MCC members, supporting the field staff and members, organizing trainings and projects and assisting with AmeriCorps reporting. The current Assistant Program Manager has 13 years of managerial experience with the AmeriCorps program.

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The MCC program has a strong advantage in financial management capacity due to the support of the parent agency, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). As a program of State government, MCC's fiscal accountability is supported administratively through the MDNR fiscal system and subject to regular auditing. MCC's Executive Director and Program Manager are designated by the State of Maryland to oversee the program's sound fiscal management. These administrative professionals work with State accountants and auditors to continue sound financial operations of the program. In addition, MDNR has a grant compliance unit that is responsible for monitoring all federal grants awarded to the agency. The agency's federal grants, including the MCC AmeriCorps grant program, is annually audited under the OMB A-133 requirements.

MCC Crews will be established at State Park service sites. In order to ensure the crews share a common sense of purpose with the AmeriCorps program, the MCC program will provide a number of common program elements that bring all members together, including: orientation, training, and group service projects. A program-wide orientation will be held at a central park location at the very beginning of the term. This orientation will be followed by a special, week-long service project designed to build a sense of esprit de corps as members camp and work together on special projects. This team-building exercise will solidify all members as part of the MCC AmeriCorps family. Throughout the year, members will have opportunities to travel to other host sites and join fellow MCC members to support major service projects and participate in trainings. The program will also involve crews in AmeriCorps-sponsored special events held by the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSV). Select members will represent MCC at the GOSV's InterCorps Council, helping plan and orchestrate combined service projects and AmeriCorps events. Administratively, a Program Manager will conduct site visits statewide to ensure program consistency. Crew Supervisor staff meetings will be held quarterly to discuss and plan combined efforts, projects and progress. The program places a high priority on establishing a sense of program unity and AmeriCorps esprit de corps, a vital component to the program and especially the

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members.

In order to monitor compliance with fiscal and programmatic requirements, the MCC program will use the following systems to identify issues, as well as, strengths and weaknesses: centralized administrative and fiscal grant compliance oversight; analysis of budget through quarterly financial reports; regular liaison communication between field and headquarters program staff; and, weekly field inputs to the program's web-based Activity Reporting System. The MCC Program Manager will maintain statewide program oversight in coordination with Regional Park Service Managers and individual Park Managers who supervise MCC Crew Supervisors. A Program Manager will assist the Director by conducting weekly site visits and meeting with Park Managers and Crew Supervisors to identify issues and provide problem-solving assistance.

The program's overall progress will be continually assessed through the MCC Activity Reporting System, which has been praised by Project Star and the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism. The System is an advanced evaluation model comprised of Weekly Activity Reports that capture quantitative data regarding program outcomes. In addition, data from Project Evaluation Surveys allow project sponsors to rate program quality. Data is entered quarterly into the AmeriCorps Web-Based Reporting System, which aggregates information from each crew. Member interviews are also conducted to enlist front-line input at the beginning, mid-point and end of the service year.

The MCC program has the support of experienced, certified trainers and technical experts within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Trainings are led by MDNR staff, including: Certified Emergency Management Technicians, State Foresters, Stream Ecologists, Chesapeake Bay Biologists, Fisheries Scientists, and Park Rangers. These professionals also provide technical assistance and oversight for individual service projects. In addition, MCC conducts an annual staff conference at the beginning of each grant cycle. The conference enables Crew Supervisors to review operational issues and discuss member training, services and outcomes for the coming year. Crew Supervisors also

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participate in ongoing professional development trainings, such as certification in Interpretation, First Responder or Chain Saw Safety that benefit their ability to train and supervise MCC members.

2. Sound Record of Accomplishments as an Organization

The MCC Program recruits and supports a diverse group of volunteers to participate in service projects through daily communication with its network of community partners. For over a decade, the MCC program has fostered relationships with volunteer membership organizations throughout the State, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Audubon Naturalist Society, Maryland Park Service Volunteer Program, Historic St. Mary's City Commission, National Aquarium in Baltimore and the Coastal Bays Program, to recruit and mobilize local community volunteers for conservation projects. During the 2007-2008 grant period, MCC mobilized, trained and assisted approximately 1,543 volunteers, who provided 9,533 hours of service.

The MCC program has supported the conservation and restoration needs of communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed since 1984. MCC staff has amassed a combined 50 years of AmeriCorps service accomplishments and graduated 441 full-time AmeriCorps members. The program has received a Governor's Citation for Excellence, and numerous individual awards and certificates of appreciation from its State Commission and the Corps Network. To recognize the 20th Anniversary of the MCC program, the Secretary for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, presented MCC with a Secretary's Commendation. The Commendation cited the MCC program's accomplishments, including the: improvement of 105 recreation facilities on public lands since 2000; assessment of restoration needs on 1,070 miles of Maryland streams; planting of 150,000 wetland plants and submerged aquatic vegetation; planting of 25,000 trees, restoration of 110 acres of wildlife habitat; maintenance of 400 miles of forest roads and trails; removal of 2,800 hazardous trees on public lands; design and implementation of education programs for 30,000 students; support for fire fighting efforts to address

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66,000 acres of wildfire; and, the program's emergency service response, which provided aid to communities ravaged by a devastating tornado and also assisting with flood damage caused by Tropical Storm Isabel.

Over the years, the program's valuable contributions to the State of Maryland have been formally recognized with a Governor's Service Award, two Governor's Citations, a Maryland Park Service Superintendent's Commendation and a Maryland Forestry Director's Commendation. In addition, Certificates of Appreciation have been issued to the MCC from local stakeholders, such as Maryland counties, municipalities and nonprofit organizations. Under the training and direction of the Maryland DNR Watershed Services Division, the MCC received an Exemplary Conservation Project Award in 1996 for its Stream Corridor Assessment Monitoring services. In 2004, the Lower Eastern Shore MCC Crew Supervisor received a National Coastal America Award for her MCC team's accomplishments in growing and planting Submerged Aquatic Vegetation in partnership with local schools.

The MCC Program ended the fiscal year in 2008 with a balanced budget. This was achieved through the application of a fee-for-service program that enables MCC to seek reimbursement funds from conservation partners for performing service. MCC hours are tracked via a Federal Time Card system, which has been approved by MDNR's Fiscal Services Administration in cooperation with Federal auditors as the industry standard for real-time accounting. Fee-for-service partners have included: Historic St. Mary's City Commission, Chesapeake Bay Trust, MDNR Watershed Services, Maryland Park Service and MDNR Engineering and Construction. Each of these partners is able to support the MCC program annually through the application of grant funds and other State Capital resources that have been allocated for conservation projects. For example, the MCC program supports Living Shoreline projects that are funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT), a private non-profit grant-making organization, which receives donations for Chesapeake Bay conservation through a tax-check off and the sale of commemorative license plates. The partnership between MCC and CBT is a natural alliance that

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presents opportunities that will continue to be more fully explored. Through a diverse financial portfolio, the MCC program continues to exceed a 50% match, which is not required until 2016.

3. Success in Securing Community Support that Recurs, Expands in Scope, Increases in Amount and is More Diverse

The MCC program's conservation mission has historically benefited from long-time collaborations with key partners such as the Historic St. Mary's City Commission (HSMC), the Maryland Park Service, numerous Maryland State Park Volunteer Friends groups, the Maryland Biological Stream Survey, and the National Aquarium in Baltimore, which have recurred, and continued to expand and evolve into new more diverse collaborations over time to address current community needs. They also provide tremendous diversity of service opportunities, from historic renovations to Chesapeake Bay conservation and outdoor recreation.

MCC has also secured new community support through its involvement with the Civic Justice Corps. Partners such as the Parks and People Foundation, the Baltimore Safe and Sound Campaign, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Baltimore City Public School System and Baltimore City Recreation and Parks have joined with MCC and with the Maryland Park Service to ensure a successful Civic Justice Corps program, and are committed to expanding the scope of the program, and building recurring relationships.

In addition to support via the CJC, MCC has also broadened its base of diverse community support by partnering with the MDNR Office for a Sustainable Future and the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature to address the pressing community need of developing a sense of environmental stewardship in current and future generations. MCC has dedicated a full time member to working with MPS resource planning staff and with staff from the Office for a Sustainable Future to identify opportunities for MCC to engage in projects that promote energy efficiency, carbon reduction and other sustainable practices. MCC is partnering with the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature through its role in facilitating the CJC program, a Children in Nature initiative, as well as in its ongoing efforts to tailor environmental

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education efforts and infrastructure needs in state parks to meet the needs identified and supported by the Partnership.

The MCC collaboration with the Maryland Park Service has enabled the MCC program to work with hundreds of dedicated volunteers each year that comprise the 25 Friends of State Parks volunteer groups. These groups are dedicated to volunteering in State Parks, which represent some of Maryland's most scenic and enjoyable outdoor recreation destinations. The Maryland Park Service is also able to support a wide range of professional skill development opportunities for MCC members through in-kind contributions of training staff and resources.

MCC also anticipates recurring and expanding support from communities where new MCC crews will be sited in 2009, especially as a result of partnerships with State Park Friends groups, who have experience in successfully leveraging community resources in geographic regions that are new to the MCC.

The MDNR Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment and Maryland Biological Stream Survey units have also been recurring partners whose roles continue to expand and diversify. Through the Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment unit, MCC has partnered on the Bay Grasses in Classes initiative, an interactive program that is the result of a partnership between MDNR and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. In the Bay Grasses in Classes program, Maryland students have the opportunity to study bay grasses throughout the school year, using the classroom as a nursery for young grasses which are later transplanted into field locations by the students themselves. This innovative program not only teaches youth the importance of bay grasses, but gives them a chance to actively participate, fostering a sense of stewardship. MCC has assisted in these plantings and is hoping to expand this role, especially as it pertains to reaching disadvantaged youth with this opportunity.

Stream Waders is a volunteer stream monitoring program operated by the MDNR Maryland Biological Stream Survey division. MCC has continued to expand the scope of its involvement with the Stream Waders program, including using it as a means to engage disadvantaged youth. In April 2008, MCC kicked off this effort in partnership with the Parks and People Foundation by hosting third graders from

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Franklin Square Elementary School in an overnight camping adventure and Stream Wader activity in Patapsco Valley State Park. Governor O'Malley also joined the Baltimore City youth that day to help celebrate DNR's new commitment through the Maryland Conservation Corps to ensure a brighter future for Maryland's disadvantaged and minority youth.

The MCC program has enjoyed a 25 year partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as its managing agency and source of match funds and in-kind support. This partnership continues to strengthen each year through ongoing collaboration and creative strategic planning. MDNR staff understands the capabilities of the MCC program to mobilize local communities and volunteers, and provide talented, dedicated members in the field to complete conservation projects. While the MDNR is an important anchor to the MCC financial portfolio, the program has worked diligently to diversify its financial base. Additional resources have been identified as equally reliable and sustainable in the long-term as sources of financial support and conservation service. These partners currently include the Maryland State Highway Administration, which administers federal Recreation Trail grants, and the Maryland Park Foundation, which raises funds for trail improvements on public lands, the Baltimore Safe and Sound Campaign which has raised funds to support an after-school service-learning opportunity for CJC youth, and the Prince Georges County teen workforce development office, which will be assisting with funds for CJC stipends and transportation.

The MCC program is prepared to conduct grant-funded trail work that will return approximately \$25,500 to the MCC budget in the current grant period. These grants funds are available annually and have been authorized by Congress for the next five years, with an emphasis on funding AmeriCorps trail crews. In addition, the MCC program receives ongoing financial support from the Watershed Services Division of MDNR, which provides approximately \$12,000 each year to MCC for completing Bay restoration and Living Shoreline projects.

The MCC program is well-known throughout Maryland, from large federal and state government agencies, to small nonprofit organizations, institutions and volunteer groups. Its stakeholders are varied

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in their missions, purpose and partnerships with MCC, including municipalities, like Waldorf and Perryville, that have gratefully received aid from MCC following natural disasters, to private nonprofits like the Pickering Creek Environmental Center, Chesapeake Environmental Center, National Aquarium in Baltimore, Calvert Marine Museum, Summerseat Farm and the Salisbury Zoo, which rely on MCC to expand the capacity and sustainability of their environmental education programs. Each day, MCC members work with a wide range of community stakeholders to enrich their mission and dreams for a better quality of life.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost effectiveness

a) Corporation cost per member service year (MSY): \$10,874 per MSY

b) Diverse non-federal support:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has supported the full-time leadership and supervisory staff of the MCC program for 25 years. As a mandated program created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1984, the MCC is considered a high priority of the MDNR agency and continues to enjoy wide-spread support throughout the agency. Virtually every unit within the Department has recognized the value of MCC at enhancing the capacity of the Department to work with local communities, volunteers and nonprofit organizations to achieve Maryland's environmental goals.

The MCC program is supported by a diverse number of non-federal funding sources, which benefit directly from MCC program activities on a fee-for-service or grant basis. The Maryland Park Service has supported the classified staff costs associated with the MCC program for 25 years. The funding for these positions remains within the state's budget. These funding sources shall include: private conservation foundations, such as the Chesapeake Bay Trust and National Aquarium in Baltimore, which enlist MCC members to support volunteer organization of conservation projects throughout the Bay watershed; Maryland Parks Foundation, which supports trail maintenance by MCC members in state park and

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forest lands; and, the Governor's Office on Accessibility, which supports MCC work on recreational improvements for disabled visitors. In addition, the Maryland Park Service funds the Civic Justice Corps program with a \$1,000,000 budget, which in turn provides significant funding for projects planned and supervised by MCC crews mentoring CJC youth, as well as funding CJC staff, youth stipends and other programmatic needs such as meals, uniforms, transportation, etc. YouthWorks, a Baltimore City teen employment program also provides funding support for youth stipends. CJC is also pursuing its own alternative funding sources with the goal of achieving long-term sustainability for the program through diverse funding mechanisms.

Non-federal funds secured from outside organizations are administered through agency MOU Agreements approved by the Department's Procurement Office and administered by the Department's Fiscal Services Administration. Project partners reimburse MCC for service through the use of Federal Time Cards, which provide real-time accounting for hours worked on projects. This accounting method has been pre-approved with federal auditors.

The MCC program is able to achieve a high degree of efficiency through its focus on diversifying its program activities and incorporating a new Education Award only opportunity with the Maryland Civic Justice Corps. In addition, the diversity of member services enables the MCC program to seek funding support from a wide array of fee-for-service partners, from the Historic St. Mary's City Commission and Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment to the Chesapeake Bay Trust. In addition, nonprofit organizations, such as the National Recreation Trail (NRT) grants program are committing greater funding resources to supporting trail maintenance and construction on State Park and Forest lands in order to meet growing outdoor recreation demands.

The Congressional reauthorization of the National Recreation Trail grant program in 2005 specifically calls for greater use of grant funds to support AmeriCorps members in serving the nation's trail recreation needs. The NRT grants program has provided Maryland State Parks with an average of

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\$300,000 annually for trail construction, equipment and tools. These funds have afforded a reliable and consistent source of revenue since 1996, and have recently been reauthorized for the next five years. The reauthorization of NRT grants allows these federal funds to also be used as match against the AmeriCorps program. In the 2009-2012 grant period, NRT grants will reimburse MCC members for work on park trails and, thereby, help support general operating and member health care costs.

2. Budget Adequacy

The proposed budget reflects the experience of 14 years of AmeriCorps grant administration and program implementation, and 25 years of managing the MCC program since its inception. The program has continually reviewed its program accomplishments and areas of need in the communities that it serves. As a result, the program has moved its team-based crews to different locations nearly every year, and is expanding its program by two additional crews in 2009. These crews will be located in Worcester, Harford and Baltimore Counties in order to fill geographic voids where a growing demand for conservation and recreation services is currently unmet.

MCC has high expectations in terms of performance for its members. Because much is expected of MCC members, and because of the high cost of living in Maryland, MCC offers a higher than normal Member Living Allowance. Offering a higher Living Allowance has had the intended result: members have responded by performing to highly professional standards that have been recognized by many partners.

Operations funding is specifically targeted to support the program's most costly elements: member training, travel and vehicle maintenance. These operational expenses are critical to providing service learning opportunities that equip MCC members with the skills and knowledge to perform their service safely and effectively.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

The MCC program underwent a self-improvement assessment via the Corps Network's ECO Assessment

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program. The assessment was completed in 2007, and a certificate was issued in 2007. A copy of the ECO assessment is on file with CNCS.

Amendment Justification

Not applicable.

Clarification Summary

CNCS CLARIFICATION

Budget Clarification Items:

Please make the following changes directly in the application budget and budget narrative in eGrants:

1. Section I-C The mileage reimbursement rate should not exceed the current federal rate of \$.50 per mile. Please correct. CORRECTED
2. Section I-E Service gear without the AmeriCorps logo must be purchased with non-CNCS funds only. Please confirm. CONFIRMED
3. Section II-B Base calculation for the health and retirement benefits is incorrect. Please correct. CORRECTED

Programmatic Clarification Items:

Please make the following changes in the eGrants narrative filed labeled ?Clarification Summary.? (If the application requires extensive rewriting, then you should specifically tell the applicant which sections to rewrite, and remove the reference to the ?clarification summary? field.)

4. Please justify the increase in cost per MSY

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PROJECTED INCREASE IN HEALTH INSURANCE AND SUPPLY COSTS CHANGED THE COST PER MSY.

5. Performance Measurement:

a. Thank you for opting in to Environment/ Clean Energy Priority Area. For each Priority Area you select, you will have to complete an MSY chart indicating the proportion of AmeriCorps member's time they expect to be devoted to that Priority Area.

MSY CHART COMPLETED. THE TOTAL OF MSY'S IN THE "RURAL" PRIORITY AREA IS EQUAL TO OUR TOTAL BUDGETED MSY'S.

b. The application indicates that you have not chosen to Opt-In to the National Performance Measures Pilot. Your activities or current measures indicate that your program qualifies to Opt-In to the National Performance Measures Pilot. We encourage you to Opt-In although you are not required to do so.

PER CNCS RESPONSE TO 2010 NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES FAQ'S ~ MARYLAND CONSERVATION CORPS DECLINES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES PILOT BECAUSE WE ARE IN A CONTINUATION CYCLE AND BELIEVE IT TO BE BENEFICIAL TO KEEP OUR MEASURES CONSISTENT OVER THE LIFE OF OUR THREE-YEAR GRANT CYCLE SO THAT WE CAN MEASURE PROGRESS OVER TIME.

Continuation Changes

Continuation Changes

Year 3 Changes

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Executive Summary

The Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC), now beginning its 27th year, is committed to serving the three compelling community needs of a cleaner Chesapeake Bay, improved public lands, and bringing disadvantaged youth closer to nature. As part of its close partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), MCC works with the Maryland Civic Justice Corps to provide life and job skills, as well as developing a sense of environmental stewardship in disadvantaged youth age 14 - 17.

Budget Changes

The budget request has been reduced in two areas: In Budget Section 1, telephone and internet request is reduced by \$1,800, from \$3,000 to \$1,200, based on lower than anticipated actual costs. In Budget Section 3, health insurance budget request has been reduced from \$91,850 to \$79,750. This \$12,100 reduction is based on the cost per member being reduced from \$167 to \$145.

Corrected typo Sec. 1.B grantee share reduced to \$146,964. Included background check charges for 60 more members and staff. Adjusted fixed costs to match instructions.

1. Summary of Service Activities:

In 2011 - 2012, MCC will continue its focus on conservation service, emphasizing its commitment to restoring the Chesapeake Bay, restoring Maryland's public lands, and serving disadvantaged youth. Fifty members will serve in crews of five, assigned to ten different locations around the state of Maryland. We also have 60 Education Award slots. Full members will work in a close partnership with the Maryland Park Service and other units within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to accomplish program goals.

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Members will also work closely with other community partners such as the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the National Park Service, Parks and People Foundation in Baltimore City, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, numerous public school systems throughout the state, numerous "friends of" volunteer organizations in state parks, and others.

Projected outcomes include the fulfillment of program performance measures such as: increasing the capacity of Maryland State Park volunteer organizations, completing 300 miles of trail maintenance, planting and maintaining 100 acres of forest buffers, and so on.

Our 60 Education Award slot members are engaged in environmental and conservation restoration/maintenance projects. i.e. trail work, invasives removal, park improvements, recycling.

2. Program Strengths:

MCC has been in existence for over 26 years, and over the years has developed a reputation for excellence. Member slots in MCC are highly competitive, ensuring that this tradition continues. In the 2010-2011 program year, MCC received 436 applications for 50 full-time positions. The applications received surpassed positions available by 872%, the highest in MCC history. The three greatest strengths of the program are:

a. Member Development: The opportunity to receive quality training and certifications draws quality members to the program. Members may become certified to fight wildfires, conduct energy audits and work as First Responders. They are trained in search and rescue, how to do environmental education, and conduct stream quality surveys. Many become Certified Interpretive Guides through the National Association of Interpreters program. They become certified to lead canoe and kayak expeditions. Over

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55% of members identified training as one of the most rewarding or beneficial parts of their MCC experience.

b. Member Satisfaction: Working in crews of five, each member has excellent access to their crew supervisor for daily guidance and direction. This engenders esprit de corps, which MCC works hard to nurture in a collaborative and supportive environment. The program offers balance between opportunities to work as small teams on projects, and projects where the whole group is able to come together and achieve impressive results at the annual spring and fall projects.

Crew Supervisors are full-time employees of DNR, providing professional experience and knowledge that is greatly beneficial to members. Over 92% of members say they would recommend the MCC experience to others. Over 66% of members identified the quality of the service projects as one of the most rewarding or beneficial parts of their experience. 53% of members identified life skills and 61% identified job skills as one of the most rewarding or beneficial parts of their experience.

c. Partnership with Maryland Civic Justice Corps (CJC): CJC began in 2008, as a special initiative of Governor O'Malley to accomplish several goals: restore Maryland's parks and public lands, teach job and life skills to disadvantaged youth (age 14 - 17), and reconnect underserved youth with nature, especially urban youth who have the least access to natural places. From the outset, MCC was a key partner in the implementation of this program.

There are distinct differences in the two programs, which are mutually beneficial to one another. The MCC program is comprised of AmeriCorps members who are often highly educated young adults, and generally do not come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They often join MCC because of their own desire to contribute to a healthier planet in a meaningful way, either through the service and restoration

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projects they themselves will do, or through the mentoring they provide to CJC youth. They are generally able to undertake complex technical challenges in the work they do, and have the academic experience and acuity to excel in rigorous training sessions.

CJC, on the other hand, is an introductory experience. It offers a chance for disadvantaged youth age 14 - 17 to not only do meaningful service for the environment, but to begin the important personal journey of developing life and job skills through the process of interacting with others in a work environment. CJC youth frequently come to the program with little to no knowledge of the outdoors or environmental issues. CJC youth are often academically challenged, and need support from adults to overcome these and other issues.

CJC youth are unprepared to engage in conservation service without significant mentoring and guidance from qualified adults. MCC fulfills much of this need by supporting CJC crew chiefs, developing and supervising the technical aspects of service projects, and guiding CJC youth to a better understanding of workplace expectations.

MCC members assist CJC youth in adhering to CJC's "SPIRIT" principles, which are: Stewardship, Professionalism, Initiative, Respect, Integrity and Teamwork.

In 2008, 15 MCC members assisted in the mentoring of CJC youth and providing technical supervision on conservation service projects. In 2009, 30 MCC members participated, and in 2010, 35 members participated. Of this group, most listed their opportunity to work with CJC youth as one their most rewarding or beneficial experiences in MCC. Over 60% of all members identified the opportunity to work with youth generally as most rewarding or beneficial.

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MCC's partnership with CJC has strengthened the program in many ways. In addition to member satisfaction, it also provides funding support in the form of materials and supplies that allows MCC members to engage in more meaningful, ambitious and technically complex projects than might otherwise be possible. And the partnership with CJC significantly amplifies MCC's ability to restore public lands. In 2009 alone, DNR's Engineering and Construction unit estimated that, in six weeks of the summer employment program, CJC and MCC crews accomplished over \$872,000 worth of projects in state parks.

CJC has created opportunities to grow partnerships between MCC and many organizations in Baltimore City and around the state. Organizations and agencies who may never have heard of MCC or AmeriCorps became introduced to both, and were highly satisfied with the results, as evidenced by written and verbal feedback.

3. Program Challenges:

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by MCC now is to continue to strengthen the program's ability to serve disadvantaged youth in a meaningful and lasting way. While CJC's summer employment program has been a life-changing experience for many young people, MCC has also observed the tremendous need these young people face during the remainder of the year, and the support they need to succeed.

MCC and DNR are working to fulfill these other needs through two key strategies at this point. First, DNR has instituted a CJC Service Learning initiative, which provides CJC summer program graduates with an opportunity to stay involved in conservation service activities in a volunteer capacity during the school year.

The two MCC crews based closest to Baltimore City (at Gunpowder Falls and Patapsco Valley State

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Parks) schedule, plan and execute service days in Baltimore City with a group of CJC Service Learning participants. They travel into Baltimore and provide transportation for youth to project sites such as community gardens and city-based nature centers and parks, where they engage in greenhouse construction, tree plantings, park clean-ups, and so on.

The other strategy for long-term success is to utilize CJC and MCC as stepping-stones in building a career path for young people who may not ever have envisioned themselves in any professional capacity. DNR hopes to also use CJC and MCC as a means of diversifying its workforce. The challenge here is to adequately meet the transition needs of youth who graduate from CJC to MCC.

Thus far, two young people have made this journey, and one of them successfully completed his AmeriCorps service year. But both of these young people have had to overcome significant hurdles in order to succeed. Their struggles represent observed trends in other CJC youth who may later join MCC. MCC, CJC and DNR collaboratively must be ready to help them cope with financial hardship and academic difficulties they face during this transition. They must also be prepared to provide a greater level of support in helping these members develop life and job skills.

In the 2010-2011 program year, MCC has taken a more hands-on role in helping members navigate government assistance for things such as food stamps, and is working with crew supervisors to raise awareness of potential issues and give them some support in dealing with them. MCC is working to support these members in any way possible to help them be successful without negatively impacting the productivity and morale of the program as a whole.

Working with disadvantaged youth can seem daunting, especially as MCC members become more aware of the challenges and circumstances these young people must face every day in their lives. But the need

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to reach out to these children is critical, not only for the children, but for the future of society as a whole.

MCC's efforts in working with disadvantaged youth has resulted in a few bumps in the road that the program had not experienced before, but it is perhaps the most important work MCC has ever undertaken, and the program welcomes the challenge.

4. Enrollment:

MCC enrollment is 100% and is highly competitive. The program had an astounding 436 applicants apply for 50 full-time member slots for the 2010-2011 program year. This was an increase in comparison to the 2009-2010 program year when 319 applications were received for 50 full-time member positions. And in the 2008-2009 program year just 112 applications were received for an available 40 positions. In a three year period, the percentage of applications received for available positions climbed from 280% in 2008-2009 to 872% in 2010-2011.

5. Retention:

MCC retention this program year was 95.5%. One of the members who did not complete was a CJC graduate, and ultimately was unable to successfully perform as an MCC member, due to a combination of factors such as those mentioned in the Program Challenges section. To reiterate, the challenge here is to adequately meet the transition needs of youth who graduate from CJC to MCC.

Thus far, two young people have made this journey, and one of them successfully completed his AmeriCorps service year. But both of these young people have had to overcome significant hurdles in order to succeed. Their struggles represent trends we have seen in other CJC youth who may later join MCC. MCC, CJC and DNR must be ready to work collaboratively to help them cope with financial

Narratives

hardship and academic difficulties they face during this transition. MCC must also be prepared to provide a greater level of support in helping these members develop life and job skills.

This year MCC has taken a more hands-on role in helping members navigate government assistance for things such as food stamps, and is working with crew supervisors to raise awareness of potential issues and give them some support in dealing with them. MCC is working to support these members in any way possible to help them be successful without negatively impacting the productivity and morale of the program as a whole.

Working with disadvantaged youth can seem daunting, especially as MCC members become more aware of the challenges and circumstances these young people must face every day in their lives. But the need to reach out to these children is critical, not only for the children, but for the future of society as a whole. MCC's efforts in working with disadvantaged youth has resulted in a few bumps in the road that the program had not experienced before, but it is perhaps the most important work undertaken by MCC, and the program welcomes the challenge.

6. Portal and Reporting Compliance:

98.2% of MCC members were enrolled within 30 days, and 97.3% of MCC members were exited within 30 days. In both cases, the reason for less than 100% performance was technical difficulties with the Portal that prevented timely entries, or erroneously caused later than actual dates to be assigned to a member's enrollment or exit. All members were actually enrolled and exited within the 30 day compliant period but the total days before approval for a few members changed on the Portal and caused our 100% compliance to decline. When program staff was trying to edit information on current members in the Portal, it was done incorrectly by clicking on the "correct" feature. It was later realized

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that the changes should have been made in the "edit" section and not the "correct" section. Each time the "correct" button was clicked on it automatically updated the date on the members' enrollment and/or exit form to reflect the current date the program staff member was correcting the information. Thus, this changed the members' enrollment or exit total days before approval to change beyond the 30 day limit even though they were initially enrolled or exited within the allotted 30 days. Unfortunately there was no way to correct the problem to reflect that they had been enrolled or exited within the 30 day period. Program staff learned a valuable Portal lesson and now know the proper procedures for editing members' information.

In examining how these mistakes occurred, staff have determined that these errors can be reduced at least somewhat from our end by continuing to become more familiar with the system and how it works. Other errors were beyond MCC control, but the program continues to strive for 100% compliance. To ensure this does not happen again all program staff members who use the Portal have been notified to never click on the "correct" link. Program staff will be more vigilant when using the Portal to update changes on members and editing information.

Regarding timely submission of program financial reports; Due to the State system that does not have budget reports ready for a week or two beyond our deadline we apply for and receive an extension.

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 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 62.7

Service Categories

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Environmental Awareness-building and Education | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| At-risk Ecosystems Improvement | Primary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |

Conservation and Public Lands

Service Category: At-risk Ecosystems Improvement

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

MCC members will work with MPS staff, CJC staff and CJC corpsmembers to plan park restoration projects for CJC youth, and will provide technical supervision to youth as project facilitators on those sites.

MCC members will serve as adult role models and mentors for CJC youth age 14 - 17, helping youth improve job and life skills through the application of "SPIRIT," the core values of CJC, which stands for Stewardship, Professionalism, Initiative, Respect, Integrity and Teamwork.

MCC members assist park staff and others with nature interpretation, outdoor recreation,

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

environmental stewardship, life skills, leadership training and other enrichment activities offered to CJC youth as part of an overall program designed to address the needs of disadvantaged youth through conservation service and building connections to nature. MCC members will also work on team-building activities with Park Service and CJC staff.

MCC will offer Education Awards for up to 60 CJC corpsmembers age 16-17 as incentive and reward for performing 300 hours of service.

MCC members will work with partners such as Baltimore City Recreation and Parks and Parks and People Foundation and others in helping to provide enrichment activities to CJC youth, such as after-school activities for CJC corpsmembers that allow them to stay engaged in resource-based activities after the completion of their 6-week summer program.

The CJC is a new program within the MCC. As such, there are no current evaluation tools or processes in place. The MCC staff used early (and informally tracked) program results to develop the PMs below; given the historical performance of the participants, MCC feels that the projected targets and target values are realistic and attainable. However, it is the program's goal to achieve a much higher impact (e.g. 100% of youth who complete CJC will show an increase of at least 25% in their skills and/or knowledge as a result of the program), and program staff are confident that their results will demonstrate this and allow them to establish more aggressive targets and target values in the next program year.

Results

Result: Output

Youth, aged 14 - 17, will begin the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC).

Indicator: Number of youth, aged 14 - 17, who begin the CJC program.

Target: 200 youth, aged 14 - 17, will begin the CJC program.

Target Value: 200

Instruments: CJC program roster

PM Statement: 200 youth, aged 14 - 17, will begin the CJC program as demonstrated by the CJC program roster.

Result: Output

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Output

Youth, aged 14 - 17, will complete the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) program.

Indicator: Number of youth, aged 14 - 17, who complete the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps

Target: 100 youth, aged 14 - 17, will complete the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) program.

Target Value: 100

Instruments: CJC graduation list

PM Statement: 100 youth, aged 14 - 17, will complete the CJC program as demonstrated by the program graduation list.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Output

(CJC) program.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Youth completing the CJC program will improve their job and life skills.

Indicator: Number of CJC youth who show a 25% improvement in job and life skills from pre-

Target: 65 of the youth who complete the CJC program will show a 25% improvement in job and life skills.

Target Value: 65

Instruments: Pre and post job/life skills assessment.

PM Statement: 65 of the youth who complete the CJC program will show a 25% improvement in job and life skills from pre and post job/life skills assessment.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

evaluation to final evaluation.

Coastal and Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration

Service Category: At-risk Ecosystems Improvement

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

During the 2009-2012 grant period, MCC members will provide direct service activities and participate in mobilizing and supporting volunteers in undertaking Watershed Restoration Action Strategies as part of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. Ten MCC crews will be based at public land locations throughout the State, working in partnership with volunteer groups such as local watershed community organizations, non-profit environmental groups and other Chesapeake Bay restoration agencies. MCC members will help increase the capacity of these local Bay restoration organizations and provide support to the volunteers associated with these organizations. Educating and engaging these volunteers will be a primary focus of MCC service, including training and assistance in developing and implementing service activities to support the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Projects will include: restoring and monitoring living resources at 15 ecologically degraded Bay locations, including living shoreline restoration projects, bay grass plantings, oyster habitat restoration and wetland and stream monitoring.

Results

Result: Output

Sites will receive assistance on improvement and monitoring projects affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Indicator: Number of sites who will receive assistance on improvement and monitoring projects

Target: 15 sites will receive assistance to carry out improvement and monitoring projects affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Target Value: 15

Instruments: Excel spreadsheet

PM Statement: 15 sites will receive assistance to carry out improvement and monitoring projects affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Output

affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Sites will demonstrate a 85% completion rate on planned projects affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Indicator: Number of sites demonstrating a 85% completion rate for all planned projects

Target: 15 sites will report a 85% completion rate for all planned projects affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Target Value: 15

Instruments: Survey recording site data.

PM Statement: 15 sites will report a 85% completion rate for all planned projects affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, as reported on the site data collection survey.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Already on File at CNCS

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable