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Volunteer Monitoring Program Coordinator

National Water Quality Monitoring Conference
Denver, CO
Overview

• NJ Volunteer Monitoring Program
  – Resources
  – Training

• NJ Watershed Ambassador Program
  – Term of Service agreement
  – Training
  – Volunteer Assistance

• Symbiotic Relationship

• Data Mgt & Data Uses
What Exit are You From?
Great Bay, Tuckerton, NJ
Oswego River, Pine Barrens, N J
The Great Falls are the second-highest on the east coast (second only to Niagara).
Scott’s Landing Creek, Leeds Point, NJ
• Population NJ 8.7 million people
• 7,505 square miles

18,126 miles of rivers & streams

DEP’s latest evaluation 18% of the State’s Waters are fully assessed
NJ Watershed Watch Network

• The “Network”
  – Volunteers, watershed associations
  – Schools, environmental organizations
  – Parks, aquariums, nature centers
  – Universities, government agencies

• Community Based Programs
  – In class room, after school programs, weekends, evenings, spring and fall events
NJ Watershed Ambassador AmeriCorps Program

• Community Orientated Program
  – Hosted in local watershed partner offices

• Term of Service
  – 50 river assessments
  – 5 watershed monitoring training events
  – 1 partnership project
  – 30 watershed education programs
  – 400 volunteer hours
Recruiting Ambassadors

• 400+ applicants per year (hire 20)
  – Must have college degree
  – Must agree to term of service

• Term of Service
  – Approximately $12,500
  – Education award approximately $5000
  – Health benefits
  – Travel and expense reimbursement
Planning for Members

– 12 months of planning for logistical planning like overnight facilities, host agencies

– 4-6 months of planning for assessment assignments
  • TMDL, Water Monitoring and Assessment

– 5-6 months of planning for 3 week training

– Equipment maintenance, ordering, calibration

– Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork
Training for AmeriCorps

• 3 week orientation training
  – 40 trainers, 8am-9pm, 2 eco-regions
    • Adult learning, interested based negotiation, gis, gps, habitat & bio training, invasive species, stormwater, groundwater, elementary education, septic and sewer management, map reading, volunteer recruitment, press writing & more
Training for AmeriCorps
Training for AmeriCorps
MORE w/ LESS

• Assign members a HUC14 or segment associated w/:
  – 319 h or 604 b grant
  – TMDL
  – Segment of concern
  – As needed assignments

• Clear QA requirements, scopes of work, methodologies
1000 assessments
Per year
Quality Assurance

• QA plan, scope of works and methodologies approved annually
  – Trainers
  – Water resource managers
  – Program coordinators

• Water Monitoring, Assessments & Standards coordinates functions and servers as QA officer
What are the benefits?

• In 9 years
  – roughly 23,000 volunteers have been trained
    • 20 trainers per year instead of just 1
  – An estimated 6750 watershed presentations
    • 20 presenters per year instead of 0
  – 80,000 volunteer hours have been donated by the public
    • 20 volunteer assistants instead of 0
AmeriCorps Training for Public

For every 10 people trained, 1 will become an active volunteer
Annually

• 50 assessment per member = 1000 per year
  – According to EPA on average it costs an agency $3000 per assessment. *AmeriCorps is providing $3 million in assessment data.*
Data Management

- Online data entry forms, or batch upload
- Defines quality of the data
- Geo-spatial data
- Data flows to DEP to EPA through Water Quality Data Exchange
Considerations for hosting an AmeriCorps Program
Lessons Learned

• Expect the unexpected
• Not the easiest program to administer
  – Federal grant program
  – Thru Federal & State Dept of Treasury
  – Thru the NJ Dept of Education
  – Thru NJDEP Budget & Management
• Paperwork
Lessons Learned

• Recruit early & often
• Double your program staff & resources
• Review evaluations of publics' view on program, member evaluations of program staff
• Be the example
  – Explain guidelines
  – Expect professionalism
Lessons Learned

• Constant job coaching
• Check in with your members
  – Don’t let them burn out
  – Audit their presentations & attend their events
• Publicize events & good press
  – Use social media outlets