

STEWARDS AMERICORPS VISTA PROGRAM

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING,
RECLAMATION, & ENFORCEMENT



Stewards VISTA Nicole Karem, serving with Continental Divide Trail Coalition, reviews a topographical map of the region with a local community member.

Progress Report Summary

In 2018, Stewards Individual Placement Program, a program of Conservation Legacy and the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement's (OSMRE) Division of Reclamation Support continued their long standing partnership in supporting AmeriCorps VISTAs serving communities impacted by legacy mining. Placing its first VISTAs with communities in southern West Virginia in 2001, Stewards and OSMRE continue to collaborate on projects with over 100 organizations across the country, with new projects in development for 2020.

The 2018 - 2019 cohort of OSMRE Stewards' VISTAs recently completed their year of collective impact.

This reporting summary takes a moment to reflect on the successes, challenges, and sustaining impact these service members, communities, and organizations have created.

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Program Mission

OSMRE recognizes the need to strengthen involvement in communities that face reclamation challenges, to engage youth in conservation, and to address many related issues. It is the intent of this collaboration to provide funding assistance to help provide the needed administrative support to place, support, train, and track all participants of the OSMRE VISTA program.

The OSMRE VISTA Team supports non-profit, community associations, and other agencies that work with state programs, federal agencies and other entities to engage their communities in identifying reclamation challenges, develop partnerships to implement solutions, directly engage youth in the environment, and address related watershed/community reclamation projects.

Program Background

The legacy of underground and surface mining have created miles of abandoned mine lands and polluted waters across the United States. Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) and other associated impacts of legacy mining has resulted in long-term pollution, environmental degradation, and social impacts in the Appalachian coal country and in the Western mining communities. The coal and metal extraction industries that fueled the nation's industrial growth created problems such as acid mine drainage (AMD), unreclaimed mines, coal waste stockpiles, mine subsidence, and high walls. Despite the significant progress over the years to address these environmental impacts, abandoned mine lands and polluted waters continue to have adverse socio-economic effects on coal communities, watersheds, and hard rock mining regions. Voluntary watershed and other community improvement organizations help develop and implement environmental resource conservation and important community reclamation strategies throughout rural coal country and mining communities. Strategies for developing alternative economic revenue include diversifying local economies (e.g. eco-tourism, recreational centers), working with other State and Federal agencies on job training, increasing access to affordable internet and energy, and developing projects to address environmental and water degradation. Focus is given to states with an approved AML program, with the OSMRE/VISTA Team serving at sites approved through OSMRE. States may include but are not limited to the Appalachian states of Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, and in communities in the Western coal and hardrock mining states such as Colorado and New Mexico as well as in the mid-continent region including, but not limited to Illinois, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Alabama.



Stewards VISTA, Lindsey Johnson (far left) with members of the Montezuma Land Conservancy attended a land trust summit with Colorado West Land Trust, Crested Butte Land Trust, and La Plata Open Space Conservancy. Together they shared successes and explored other opportunities to partner together in the future.



Stewards VISTA Support & Training Opportunities

Stewards Individual Placement Program provides direct support for each AmeriCorps VISTA service member and their organizational supervisor. The Stewards VISTA support staff team includes VISTA Leaders who are experienced national service members trained to provide support to a cluster of approximately 30 active VISTA members. This support team also includes VISTA Program Coordinators who focus specifically on supporting organizational supervisors.

Each support team, comprised of a VISTA, site supervisor, VISTA Leader, and Program Coordinator, works together to ensure greatest impact for communities, organization, and the VISTA member themselves.



Stewards VISTA, Rachel Head (third from the left), with the Tennessee Aquarium, as the Chattanooga Zoo brought two animal ambassadors to a River Teachers event to showcase the effect of using animals as a learning tool for students.



VISTA member Jack Meyer leads a discussion during the Energy Democracy Tour presented by his service site, Appalachian Voices in Virginia.

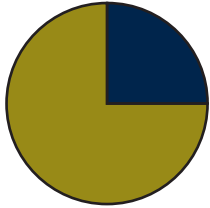
In addition to supporting legacy mining communities and the organizations working to generate economic and environmental impact, Stewards VISTA program is built to provide support, training, and application-based experience to ensure VISTA members are civic and professional leaders in the future. Stewards VISTA members receive professional development in non-profit fundraising, public speaking, public engagement, and project management and implementation during a week long, in-person training as well as through web-based sessions and resource materials.

Stewards continues to develop professional development and non-profit based training opportunities to enhance the National Service experience for all of it's VISTAs. This tradition continues as we enter 2020, and we continue to review and improve these opportunities for our members in the future.

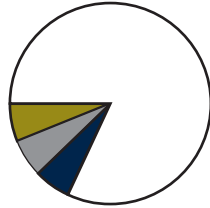


Demographic Information

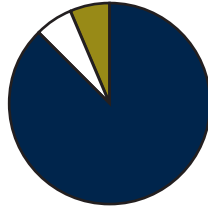
The provided demographic information is self-reported by current Stewards / OSMRE VISTA service members through standardized reporting processes established by Stewards IPP on behalf of partner organizations and grant reporting requirements. This data reflects initiative specific service members from September 2018 - September 2019.



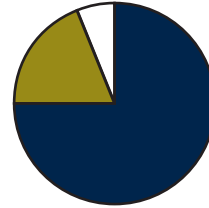
Gender:
25% Male
75% Female



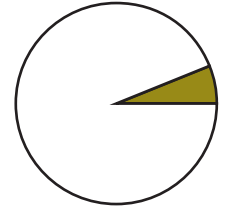
Racial Origin:
82% White
6% Black/African American
6% Other
6% American Indian or Alaskan Native



Highest Level of Educational:
87.5% Bachelor
6.25% Master
6.25% Prof. Degree



Professional Status Prior to Service:
75% Employed or in Ed. Program
19% Unemployed
6% No Response



Interest in Federal NCE* Status:
94% Yes
6% No Response
**Non-Compete Eligibility*

Institutions of Higher Learning Reported

| COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY | STATE | DEGREE/MAJOR |
|---|------------|---|
| Sarah Lawrence College | New York | Liberal Arts |
| University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (<i>2 members</i>) | Tennessee | Environmental Science |
| SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry | New York | Environmental Studies - Communication & Society |
| University of Kentucky | Kentucky | Anthropology, Spanish |
| Colorado State University | Colorado | Sociology |
| Indiana University | Indiana | Biochemistry |
| University of Virginia | Virginia | Anthropology, Bioethics |
| Arizona State University | Arizona | Master of Arts - Science |
| Pacific Lutheran University | Washington | Kinesiology |
| University of Virginia | Virginia | Environmental Science |



Institutions of Higher Learning Reported continued

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|--|
| Northern Arizona University | Arizona | Environmental Science |
| JD - Ohio State University | Ohio | Law; Dispute Resolution, Public Service Fellow |

List of Project Sites & VISTA Service Members

| PROJECT SITE | AMERICORPS VISTA | SITE SUPERVISOR | SERVICE TERM DATES | Service Location |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Caribbean SEA - TennaSEA Program | Lillian Moore | Marybeth Sutton 423-413-0471 | June 2019 - June 2020 Project Year 1 | Chattanooga, TN |
| Elsewhere Studios & Learning Council | Galen Marshall-Clark | Carolina Porras 970-527-3249 | July 2019 - July 2020 Project Year 2 | Paonia, CO |
| Western Slope Conservation Center | Karley O'Connor | Patrick Dooling 970-527-5307 | June 2019 - June 2020 Project Year 1 | Paonia, CO |
| Continental Divide Trail Coalition | Nicole Karem | Amanda Wheelock 720-924-1616 | June 2019 - June 2020 Project Year 3 | Silver City, NM |
| Appalachian Voices Southwest VA | Austin Counts | Chelsea Barnes | May 2019 - May 2020 Project Year 3 | Norton, VA |
| Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute | Rachel Head | Anna George 423-785-4177 | June 2019 - June 2020 Project Year 3 | Chattanooga, TN |
| Marys River Watershed Council | Nicole Hobbs | Holly Purpura 541-758-7597 | Aug 2019 - Aug 2020 Project Year 1 | Corvallis, OR |
| Mountain Roots Food Project | Kaelyn Shultz | Holly Conn 970-417-7848 | July 2019 - July 2020 Project Year 3 | Gunnison, CO |
| Graduate Medical Education Consortium | Iris Costello | Wendy Welch 276-523-5097 | June 2019 - June 2020 Project Year 2 | Big Stone Gap, VA |
| Montezuma School to Farm | Hayley Kwasniewski | Gretchen Rank 970-533-7317 | July 2019 - July 2020 Project Year 2 | Mancos, CO |
| Appalachia Voices : Energy Savings for Appalachia | Jack Meyer | Brianna Knisley 937-725-0645 | Aug 2019 - Aug 2020 Project Year 3 | Knoxville, TN |
| San Juan Conservation District | Karyn Denny | Melissa May 505-334-3090 x5 | July 2019 - July 2020 Project Year 4 | Aztec, NM |
| Montezuma Land Conservancy | Lindsey Johnson | Travis Custer 970-565-1664 | Aug 2019 - Aug 2020 Project Year 2 | Cortez, CO |
| LEAD Agency, Inc. | Martin Lively | Rebecca Jim 912-542-9399 | Nov 2019 - Nov 2020 Project Year 2 | Miami, OK |
| Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails | Currently Recruiting | Joe Yannuzzi 570-455-1509 x110 | Dec 2019 - Dec 2020 Project Year 2 | Hazleton, PA |



Service Project Site Location Map



- CaribbeanSEA - TennaSEA, TN
- Elsewhere Studios & Learning Council, CO
- Western Slope Conservation Center, CO
- Continental Divide Trail Coalition, NM
- Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails, PA
- Appalachian Voices Southwest, VA
- Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute, TN
- Marys River Watershed Council, OR

- Mountain Roots Food Project, CO
- Graduate Medical Education Consortium, VA
- Montezuma School to Farm, CO
- Appalachian Voices - Energy Savings, TN
- San Juan Conservation District, NM
- Montezuma Land Conservancy, CO
- LEAD Agency, Inc., OK

Project & Member Highlights

Western Slope Conservation Center, Colorado - Karley O'Connor

Karley O'Connor has been active in a number of fundraising events for the Western Slope Conservation Center, including the RiverFest Silent Auction, Raft Raffle fundraiser, Stewardship Happy Hour (which to raised awareness for Solitude Monitoring & Trail Days with the Forest Service), and MountainFilm (a Film Festival and fundraiser). To keep track of her various activities, Karley created an Events Plan Template worksheet to guide planning of single and ongoing events. The Events Plan is used in planning all events for Western Slope.

Karley has also strategized plans and content for strategic communications to build capacity in the way the organization generates content. She revisited the social media strategy, redesigning with basic guidelines, goals, and a more focused approach. She also supported a "Summer Membership Appeal", consisting of writing letters and creating a new Facebook cover photo for the organization. Karley also brainstormed new ways to engage volunteers in the Watershed and Outreach committee of Western Slope Conservation Center, including potentially reshaping committee functions.



Kaelyn Schultz attends the 2nd annual Harvest Hoe-down, hosted by her project site, Mountain Roots Food Project.

Mountain Roots Food Project, Colorado - Kaelyn Schultz

In only a few months at Mountain Roots Food Project, Kaelyn Schultz, has already successfully planned, marketed, and started a Cooking Matters class at Western Colorado University. In this class, the focus is on teaching low-income students to shop and cook healthy meals. She is also planning an introductory class with local nonprofit, CAFE, to see if Cooking Matters will be a good fit for their programs for English as a second language learners.

Kaelyn has also effectively coordinated a silent auction for the annual Harvest Hoedown community event and implemented a new food delivery plan for the Backyard Harvest program to make it more time efficient. She has also met with videographer multiple times to go over her vision and plan for a video project entitled "Photovoice" to address food insecurity. The first filming session has been completed, with more to come!



Nicole Hobbs, Stewards VISTA, smiles alongside staff from Marys River Watershed Council and the Institute of Applied Ecology, after the first day of the peer mentoring project.

Marys River Watershed Council, Oregon - Nicole Hobbs

Nicole Hobbs in her role at Marys River Watershed Council has been instrumental in a three-day peer mentor workshop where bi-lingual high school students learn environmental lessons and practice teaching it to dual immersion (Spanish-English) 3rd grade students. She also has helped coordinate her organization's annual member meeting and celebration. She advertised for the event on social media, managed correspondence with guests, and assisted with registration.

Nicole also led lessons about watersheds to groups of campers at local community summer camp and has visited ten sites in the Marys River watershed to inspect for knotweed and communicate with local

landowners about invasive plant concerns. She also directed twelve university student volunteers in planting 355 live stakes of native plants, while clearing out invasive species.



Between May and September 2019:

15 MEMBERS

SERVED **15**

Organizations in

7 STATES & TERRITORIES

THOSE 15 MEMBERS SECURED

\$208,739

IN GRANT FUNDS WITH AN ADDITIONAL

\$530 OF IN-KIND DONATIONS

RECRUITED, SUPPORTED AND COORDINATED MORE THAN **438**

VOLUNTEERS, WHO SERVED NEARLY

1,650

HOURS IN SERVICE TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

71 YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN COMMUNITY GARDENING PROGRAMS

and **97**

PEOPLE ARE TRAINED IN WATER QUALITY TRAINING



Stewards Individual Placement Program hosts an annual training for all of its VISTA's. The training provides professional development opportunities for each member, and this year special cohort sessions allowed VISTA's under certain parameters, such as OSMRE sponsored VISTA's, to come together and share their projects, stories, and experiences.



Upcoming Project Highlights

Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails - Pennsylvania

With the decline of Anthracite mining, prosperity within the Greater Hazleton Area has also declined. The AmeriCorps VISTA with Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails (GHRT) will be primarily involved with the expansion of the GHRT under the new AML Pilot program. This includes turning the GHRT into an economic generator thru ecotourism. The AmeriCorps VISTA member will assist with the expansion through further grant writing, Master Site Plan development, social media, trail construction, elimination of abandoned mine land hazards, construction management, local outreach, and building local partnerships. The VISTA will increase ecotourism in the community by promoting GHRT beyond the immediate area to draw them into local businesses and encourage the community to get more exercise and in turn be more productive and promote the Rails to Trails in the local community so the Greater Hazleton Area appreciates the outdoor beauties of the area and is more inclined to stay in the area.



Stewards Individual Placement Program is proud to partner with the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, & Enforcement in creating capacity for local communities and providing professional development for National Service members across the country in the quest of community and environmental impact where legacy mining has occurred.

