Gouveia, Susan

From: Lashway, Lisa
Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2014 3:00 PM
To: Canning, Sean; Gouveia, Susan
Subject: FW: NJDEP Press Release - 2015 Americorps Watershed Ambassadors
Attachments: Watershed Ambassadors-- P66.pdf

Lisa Lashway
Mt. Olive Twp. Clerk
973-691-0900 Ext. 7291
FAX 973-691-2080
PO Box 450
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

From: Randazzo, Cindy [mailto:Cindy.Randazzo@dep.nj.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2014 1:30 PM
To: Randazzo, Cindy
Cc: Rogers, Joseph
Subject: NJDEP Press Release - 2015 Americorps Watershed Ambassadors

Dear Municipal Clerk:

Please see the attached NJDEP Press Release concerning the 2015 Americorps Watershed Ambassadors Program.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly,

Sincerely,

Cindy W. Randazzo
Director
Office of Local Government Assistance
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
401 E. State Street
P.O. Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Office: 609-633-7700
Cell – 609-575-3806
email: cindy.randazzo@dep.state.nj.us

www.nj.gov/dep/

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NEWS

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
P. O. Box 402, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0402
www.state.nj.us/dep

Bob Martin, Commissioner

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 25, 2014

Contact: Lawrence Ragonese (609) 292-2994
Bob Considine (609) 984-1795
Kathy Giordano or Kim Cenno (609) 633-1441

CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION SEEKS 2015 AMERICORPS WATERSHED AMBASSADORS

Future New Jersey Environmental Leaders Cultivated in this Program

(14/P66) TRENTON -- New Jersey is seeking its next generation of environmental leaders, young people with a hands-on desire to improve our state and the quality of life for our residents. Some of those potential leaders are likely to come from the Department of Environmental Protection's AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program, which is seeking twenty recruits for its 2015 class.

"This is an excellent program that develops environmental stewardship in our young people, who are the leaders of tomorrow,'' said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "They will be entrusted with the task of protecting New Jersey's environment, its air and water, natural and historic resources, long after we have departed. It is great to know such talented young people will be in charge of New Jersey's future.''

Program coordinators are accepting applications through Aug. 29 for the next group of AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassadors for the 2015 class. There are 20 watershed management areas across the state where an ambassador can be placed. These host agencies include watershed associations, soil conservation districts, sewerage authorities and county agencies.

Ambassadors work with all sectors of the public to improve the quality of New Jersey's waterways, fostering community-based environmental activities, and empowering state residents to make responsible and informed decisions regarding their watersheds.

"What has struck me about the young people who participate in the AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program is their willingness to pitch in and motivate the public to get involved in cleaning up their local waters,'' said Pat Gardner, Director of the DEP's Division of Water Monitoring and Standards, which oversees the program. "The efforts of these young watershed ambassadors helps make the public more aware of how everyday actions impact clean water."

Watershed Ambassadors say the program has made a marked difference on their lives and increased their respect for the environment.

"It feels like I have been living in a whirlwind of activity. It has been exciting," said Will York, a Rhode Island transplant and seasoned teacher with a graduate degree in education, who is a Watershed Ambassador at the Sussex County Utilities Authority under the supervision of program alumni and host agency supervisor Nathaniel Sajdak. "Ultimately, I want to create a more sustainable planet and better life for people through stewardship and education,'' he added.

"It's impossible to put into words how the program can shape and expand your horizons,'' said Joanna Marino, who has a Master's Degree in Environmental Science from Rutgers University and is assigned to the Barnegat Bay Partnership. "You are able to explore your interests further, and perhaps more importantly, you invariably discover a whole new set of interests that excite you. All of this comes packaged with 19 other like-minded people who become fast friends and who share a sense of responsibility and pride in New Jersey's incredible aquatic resources.''

The DEP began hosting the federal AmeriCorps program in 2000. AmeriCorps is a national service initiative that began in 1993 and is also known as the domestic Peace Corps.

September 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the national program. Since its inception, more than 820,000 men and women have taken the AmeriCorps pledge, serving more than 1 billion hours and improving the lives of countless Americans. The organization recently announced grants for programs, nationwide. New Jersey's Watershed Ambassadors Program was a recipient and will receive $260,000 in federal funding for 2015.

Ambassadors are required to complete 1,700 hours of service in a 10 to 11 month period. Compensation for their service includes a living stipend of up to $12,100 over the course of the term; eligibility for health benefits during this period; deferment of public student loans during their term of service and extensive training throughout the program year. In addition, members are eligible to receive an education award of $5,550 upon their successful completion of the program. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, have a bachelor's degree, and must have a valid driver's license and reliable transportation to get to and from field sites.

Members of the current term are busy conducting their final stream assessments, watershed presentations and local stewardship projects in anticipation of their July 11th graduation ceremony at the Assunpink Wildlife Management Area. Current accomplishments to date include:

- More than 1,200 educational watershed demonstrations and public presentations;
- 400 visual and biological assessments completed;
- 2,000 volunteers trained in the DEP's visual and biological assessment protocols;
- Engaged in 90 community watershed projects generating 9,000 stewardship hours;
- 5 miles of rivers and stream improved through community cleanups;
- 5 acres of parks and public lands improved;
- Constructed 50 rain barrel through 5 workshops preventing 70,000 gallons of rain water from entering NJ's stormwater systems;
- Served as captains for Governor Christie's Barnegat Bay Blitz initiative; and

Watershed Ambassadors also play a key role in the Department's ongoing "Don't Waste Our Open Space" campaign to cut down on illegal dumping on state open lands. Working with park superintendents, AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassadors engaged hundreds of community volunteers, municipal employees and students from one end of the state to the other to remove some 200 cubic yards of trash from state parks and forests.

Matt Barr, who has a degree in environmental science and serves as a Watershed Ambassador with the Musconetcong Watershed Association, said, "I have become a better environmental

educator because of this program. In the end, what began as a very challenging experience is concluding with a copacetic feeling of accomplishment".

Through their partnerships, field work and thousands of presentations Watershed Ambassadors have promoted environmental stewardship through increased public awareness of pollution caused by litter and nonpoint source pollution, while concurrently reducing nutrient sources from reaching local waters in collaboration with the Department to improve New Jersey's environment.

Interested applicants for the 2014-2015 program year should submit their application with references, resume and cover letter by August 29th online at http://goo.gl/LtTwJ3 or visit our home page at http://www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bear/americorps.htm

For additional information, please contact Kathy Giordano, Program Manager or Kimberly Cenno, Supervisor at (609) 633-1441.

NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program
Division of Water Monitoring and Standards
Bureau of Environmental Analysis, Restoration and Standards
Mail Code: 401-03
401 E. State Street, PO Box 420
Trenton, NJ 08625-0420
Phone: 609-633-1441 Fax: 609-984-6505
NJWAP@dep.state.nj.us

For more information on the NJDEP's AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program, visit: http://www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bear/americorps.htm

For more information on the AmeriCorps National Service Initiative, visit: www.americorps.gov

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