



Keepers of the Land

AmeriCorps



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Continuing the Legacy

AmeriCorps is commonly called the “Peace Corps in the United States”. AmeriCorps is focused on solving locally identified community needs in critical areas of public safety, education, social support, and the environment. Nationally over 200,000 men and women have enlisted in the last seven years – more than the total of Peace Corps volunteers in 40 years.

AmeriCorps is modeled upon the 1930’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which strongly defined public areas across the state and the country. Thousands of young men served in 46 CCC camps in Iowa of which 41 were in or around state parks. “All the state parks built between 1933 and 1942 and many city parks, too, were built by the CC Corps,” states Martin Fritz, who was a CCC member. Indeed, the stone lodges and beach houses, gates, bridges and even the trails were the work of the “CCC boys” like Martin.

Today’s successful collaboration between the AmeriCorps program and the DNR seems appropriate considering Iowa’s historical past. Of the 378 AmeriCorps members working in Iowa this year, forty-four are assisting the DNR. They are focused on water quality, waste management, trail construction, environmental education, and habitat improvement such as prairie restoration.

For example, last year six members provided interpretation programs to 5,925 people in state parks. Fifteen other members repaired over 14 miles of highly damaged, unsafe trails, worked on restoring forty acres of native prairie and collected thousands of dollars worth of seed. In addition these twenty-one members recruited 414 people as volunteers who donated over a thousand hours to improving our natural resources. Beyond the dollars saved, the work accomplished and the members’ development, lies the true benefit of AmeriCorps – developing a sense of community, and connecting people to the land that supports us all.

Mark Edwards, AmeriCorps Program Director



Keepers of the Land

We all touch the earth, whether we’re farmers who work the soil on hundreds of acres or citizens who take care of our own back yards. Our identity as Iowans comes, in part, from running our fingers and our lives through this bountiful, beautiful land between two rivers. All of us share the responsibility to conserve, protect and enhance our natural resources, because Iowa’s future lies in our hands.

Keepers of the Land volunteer program was established to make it easier for Iowans to become involved with our natural resources. The program is housed in the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and its purpose is to work with partners to help build a strong volunteer corps across the state. The program also provides support for staff who work with volunteers. The mission of Keepers of the Land compliments the mission of the DNR: protect, preserve and enhance our natural resources.

AmeriCorps is an important component of Keepers of the Land. Our 22 full-time, 2 part-time and 20 seasonal AmeriCorps members are spread across the state and across the divisions in the DNR, working closely with partner organizations. A part of AmeriCorps service is to organize and strengthen local community service projects, and to help generate volunteers. Last year’s AmeriCorps summer crew were able to work with 414 volunteers on trail work, prairie management and natural history programs. We look for even more growth in volunteer involvement, as our Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps force grows.

Diane Ford-Shivers, Volunteer Coordinator

Co-Editors: Erika McCroskey and Kathy Belden

Parks, Recreation and Preserves Division

Welcomes **Meggan Daniels** and **Abby Harkrader**...

Meggan and Abby serve with the Parks, Recreation and Preserves Division as Regional Naturalists. They will work with parks staff throughout the state to develop and lead environmental education programs. They will also work closely with the AmeriCorps members working in the parks this summer as seasonal naturalists.

Meggan is a native of Bellevue and graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a degree in Biology. She currently lives in Lakeview and is in charge of working with the parks in the western half of the state. She enjoys hiking, butterflies, and plants.

Abby graduated from Upper Iowa University with a degree in Conservation Management. She will work with the eastern half of the state and lives in Garnavillo. Her hobbies include spending time on the river and in the state parks of northeast Iowa.

...and **Todd Fritz**, **Andrew Orlovski**, and **Kyle Ehlers**!!

Todd Fritz---

Todd Fritz is a Resource Management Crew Supervisor working out of Des Moines until the season hits. Around May, he'll start travelling all over the state with the crew. His job consists of preparing for and overseeing the program this summer in Iowa. He is a 1996 graduate of Iowa Wesleyan College with a B.S. in Biology and a B.S. in Environmental Health. Todd enjoys most outdoor activities and travelling with his wife, Jennifer, and their ferret, Sable. He also spends his time working for a camp for persons with disabilities and is currently the President of the Board of Directors for Camp Reece.

Andrew Orlovski---

Andrew Orlovski is a Resource Management Crew Supervisor and is spending his time designing and implementing service projects that need to be done in state parks. He will be working with AmeriCorps members and involving communities in these projects. Andrew is attending the University of Northern Iowa and is finishing his degree in Biology with an environmental emphasis. His free time is spent with his many interests including photography, hiking, mountain biking, guitar, bass, drums, and computers.

Kyle Ehlers---

Kyle returns in the spring as a Resource Management Crew Supervisor. He will work at state parks on a variety of service projects. He has been with the program since 1996. Two years ago at Waubonsie State Park, he and his crew developed a plant list of over 400 species. His hobbies include working with cars/auto mechanics, plant identification, and working on trails.



Volunteer Program

Greets **Kathy Belden** and **Erika McCroskey**!!

Kathy and Erika will serve in Des Moines and out in the field with the Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program for the next year. They will recruit, train, and work with volunteers across the state, as well as implement new volunteer projects. They will also focus on the IOWATER program through various trainings and projects.

Erika is a graduate from Graceland University with a degree in Sociology-Human Services. She enjoys having fun with her family and volunteering her time to activities and various other organizations.

Kathy received her degree from the University of Dubuque in Environmental Science. Her favorite activities include backpacking, canoeing, and reading.

Fish and Wildlife Division

Welcomes **Kyle Ament, Kenny Bentsen, Ryan Harr, Anthony Hauptert, Helga McDonald, Corey Meyer, Joe Moore, Kelly Ramsey, Doug Sleep, and Karie Wiltshire!!**

Kyle Ament—

Kyle serves with the DNR, hosted by the NRCS and the Palo Alto County Conservation Board in Emmetsburg. Along with various service projects, he will contact landowners to discuss installing field windbreaks, work with easements in the Wetland Restoration Program, and in the spring he will participate in prescribed prairie burns. Kyle graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Animal Ecology/Fisheries. His extra time is spent fishing, hunting, and learning aquatic plants.

Kenny Bentsen---

An avid outdoorsman, Kenny serves with the DNR Fish and Wildlife and the NRCS office in Sac City. He is currently helping to implement water quality and habitat improvement projects. Along with this, he promotes continuous CRP buffer programs. Kenny is also a self-employed farmer working with livestock, crops, and conservation practices. A former president of Pheasants Forever, Kenny currently serves as Habitat Chairman. He is actively involved with his church and he enjoys assisting local sports programs with his wife and three children.



Ryan Harr---

Ryan is a Wildlife Habitat Specialist in Franklin and Butler counties. He cooperates with landowners to develop shallow water areas

and wetlands, filterstrips, riparian buffers, and other various wildlife habitat initiatives. Ryan attended Iowa State University and has a degree in Animal Ecology. His hobbies include hunting, canoeing/boating, reading, and playing basketball.

Anthony Hauptert---

Anthony is serving in Cedar County mainly with private landowners on controlled burns. His duties consist of visiting the landowners and writing burn plans with them in order to ensure that they burn safely and with the most benefit. He has his A.S. from Kirkwood Community College in Parks and Recreation and his B.S. from Upper Iowa University in Conservation Management and Life Sciences. He has worked for the Dubuque County Conservation Board and the DNR in the Maquoketa Wildlife Unit.

Helga McDaniel---

Helga is serving with the DNR, hosted by the Dallas County USDA Service Center in the NRCS field office in Adel. She promotes federal conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program and is currently working hard on getting wellhead protection areas enrolled. She will also be involved with various service projects. Helga studied Animal Ecology at ISU for 3 years and currently attends Upper Iowa University for Secondary Education. She enjoys gardening, refinishing furniture, and spending time with her family.

Corey Meyer---

Corey is serving with the Upper Wapsipinicon River Watershed and does most of his work in Buchanan, Bremer, and Black Hawk counties. His community outreach activities include helping landowners implement USDA programs, wetland enhancement and protection, identification and protection of fen and riparian wetlands, and much more. He is a graduate of Upper Iowa University where he received his degree in Conservation Management and Life Science. Corey enjoys the outdoors, including hunting, fishing, and lounging under shade trees.

Joe Moore---

Joe is a Wildlife Biologist with the Muscatine County Soil and Water Conservation District in Muscatine. He will work with landowners and the Conservation Reserve Plan, including seeding plans and wildlife habitat on CRP acres. Joe is a graduate of Northwestern Missouri State University and has his degree in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. His hobbies include bird watching, camping, hiking, watching tv, and reading.

Kelly Ramsey---

Kelly serves in the DNR, hosted by the NRCS office in Mills County and will be working primarily with landowners in the Missouri River bottom and with the Loess Hills. Her main emphasis is prairie and wetland restoration. A graduate of Northwest Missouri State University, Kelly has a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. Her interests include anything with nature. She particularly enjoys bird watching and playing sports.

Doug Sleep---

Doug serves in the DNR, hosted in the NRCS office located in Union County. Currently he is flagging buffer strips, reviewing CRP seeding, and writing burn plans. Helping landowners improve existing habitat has generated a lot of interest in his field. A graduate of Northwest Missouri State University, Doug earned his BS degree in Wildlife Ecology with a minor in Biology. In his spare time, Doug enjoys fishing, hunting, and sports. He is also interested in learning about prairie fauna.

Karie Wiltshire---

Karie is the Prairie Reconstruction Specialist with the Marion and Mahaska County NRCS offices and is cooperating with landowners to plan, seed, maintain, and enjoy their native prairie plantings. This responsibility starts with orienting landowners to understand warm-season species ecology – which is a fun task that requires connecting to tours of roadside remnants, workshops with County Conservation Boards, creating plant brochures, and Pheasants Forever workdays. Karie prepared for this “integrated approach” to conservation and natural resources with degrees in Environmental Studies and Anthropology from Grinnell College, accented by studying agroforestry in Central America. Beyond prairie, she enjoys gardening, cooking, and learning. She is

currently coordinating a Community Supported Agriculture program in Grinnell, which is a rewarding way to sustain healthy family farms and the care of our land.

Waste Management Assistance

Nicole Cannon-

Nicole is serving with the Waste Management Assistance Division in Des Moines. She is developing and organizing an organics recycling council for Iowa called PRO-Iowa (Promoting Recycled Organics). She also attends trade shows and conferences in order to promote these projects. Her work also involves community outreach and education. Nicole graduated from Iowa State with her degree in Animal Ecology and a minor in Environmental Studies. Nicole has many interests that include hiking, camping, softball, golf, and traveling.



Program Staff

Mark Edwards—

Mark is the DNR AmeriCorps Program Director. This is his 20th year as Trails Coordinator. Continuing his efforts to protect and preserve the environment, Mark begins his 3rd year as DNR AmeriCorps Coordinator. He is committed to fostering the growth of each individual member as they complete their service.

Linda Terry—

Linda is the newly hired Program Coordinator for the DNR AmeriCorps program. She has a background in organic farming and environmental and political activism. She will help members maximize their experience in order to have a meaningful and successful year.

Diane Ford-Shivvers—

Diane is the DNR Keepers of the Land Volunteer Coordinator. She has been active in Iowa environmental organizations for over 20 years and has served as chair for the Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board. She came to the DNR a year and a half ago to start the agency-wide volunteer program, Keepers of the Land.

Promise Fellows*: V Pierce and P.J.Veenstra

P.J. Veenstra—

P.J. is serving with the DNR Waste Management Assistance Division, hosted by the Iowa Recycling Association in Des Moines. He is the Education Coordinator for this organization. Currently, P.J. is working on the "Green Flag" project for schools, teaching kids about recycling and the environment. P.J. graduated from Northwest Missouri State University, and has experience in broadcasting and coaching. He likes to collect diecast racing cars and race IMCA

hobbystocks. P.J. just returned from a trip to Hawaii.

V. Pierce---

V serves as an Environmental Educator at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center in Guthrie Center. He received his degree from ISU in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. He then spent 2 years in the Peace Corps in Kazakhstan with the Environmental Education program. His hobbies vary according to the season, but he loves to be outdoors and his favorite activities are fishing and birdwatching.

* Promise Fellows are a leadership cadre of committed, talented individuals dedicated to building a better future for children and youth.

AmeriCorps Member Council Briefing

On Sunday, January 6, 2001, a group of AmeriCorps members from across the state met in Des Moines and this year's Iowa Member Council was formed. The group is still in the organizational stages, but eventually, its main purpose will be to connect the different AmeriCorps groups and members throughout the state. This will be helpful in order to plan statewide programs, to find out what is happening in other programs, and to give members a voice and a place to talk about any problems they may be having or any good things they want other members to be aware of. In addition, there will be a statewide newsletter for all members to see what other programs are doing.

The group will consist of 1 or 2 members from each program in the state and they will meet about once a month. Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members' representatives in the Member Council are Erika McCroskey and Todd Fritz. When the Member Corps is up and running, you will be able to contact them with anything that you feel the council should or would want to be aware of. This will help all members get the most out of their AmeriCorps experience. It is a step in the right direction for communication and awareness for all members in Iowa.

Dates to Remember

May 3, 2001	Youth Services Recognition Day
August 6, 2001	Peer Exchange and Recognition Ceremony
Fall 2001	Governor's Conference on Volunteer Service

If you know of any information that should be included in upcoming issues of this newsletter, please contact: Kathy.Belden@dnr.state.ia.us, or Erika.McCroskey@dnr.state.ia.us
If you have any AmeriCorps questions, please contact: Linda.Terry@dnr.state.ia.us



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