

Maine Conservation Connection

Maine Conservation Corps



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Recognition Day

Both the MCC Fall Field Team and Environmental Educators recognized their service and celebrated their accomplishments at the MCC's 2011 Fall Recognition Day on November 10 in Augusta. MCC Partners, Host Sites, and members had the opportunity to reflect on the successes and adventures of the past year. And, of course, there was cake!

MCC Director Retiring

Linda Shapleigh has been the director of the MCC since 2005 and will be retiring in early January. She has been an integral part of the MCC staff from greeting Team Members on their first day of service to lauding members' accomplishments on Recognition Days. Linda has guided the MCC through many challenges, changes and improvements over the years. She will be greatly missed and we wish her the best of luck in her upcoming retirement!

Team Leaders Complete Service

The following Team Leaders served with the MCC for the 2011 fall season.

Michelle DiMeglio of Morton, PA is a 2010 graduate of the MCC's Trail Training Academy (TTA) and served as a Team Leader during the 2010 season and a Senior Team Leader during the 2011 summer season. Her crew served on projects in Lubec and Portland and at Dodge Point Public Reserved Land.

“We are not Team Butter Crock, no! You can call us Team Blank. Thoughts of the Morong Trail and Cobscook Bay give us a warm, fuzzy feeling. We enjoyed pie, soup, and jam sessions with miscellaneous objects. We hauled lumber in pouring rain and constructed 92 bog bridges. Lauren’s boots made her very sad. We hung out under the woodshed with Team Crooked and endured a long and bitter war of misunderstandings.



We cut over 2 miles of new trail and got lost between orange and blue flags. We lost Sonic for a while too. On to Dodge Point, the strange land that swallows vehicles into mud pits, and where trail structures are affectionately dubbed ‘tripping hazards’ by hikers. Our stay there was redeemed in the final

week when we rocked out with an epic dance party in the first snow of the year, including a limbo contest and Bohemian Rhapsody. Then we got the heck out of Dodge, leaving behind many bog bridges, 3 lovely timber benches, many stepping stones, and some waterbars and drainage ditches. Onward to Portland Trails...golf course to the left, highway to the right. Oh, indoor housing you say? No thanks, we’ll camp in the snow. Candy, our trusty CanyCom, with her sweet purr, helped us move loads of gravel at the speed of molasses. We led hoards of volunteers and attacked invasives like it was our job. We built 4 bridges too. Team Blank proved once and for all that with some team work and a little bit of hope, miracles can happen.”

After the fall season, DiMeglio will be hanging out on Scott Pfeiffer’s farm in Troy for a couple months, and visiting home in Philadelphia for the holidays. She plans to travel in late winter/spring, locations to be determined.

Dustin Geurts of Orlando, FL previously served with the MCC as a Team Member in 2009 and 2010 and as an Assistant Team Leader during the 2011 summer season. His crew served at Cutler Coast and Scraggly Lake Public Reserved Lands.



Elise Giasson of Auburn, ME is a 2011 graduate of the MCC's TTA. She also served with the MCC as a Team Member in 2009, as a Team Member and Assistant Team Leader in 2010, and as a Team Leader during the 2011 summer season. Her crew served at Grafton Notch State Park and Tunk Mountain.

"I can't believe the fall is almost over! It seems like just yesterday that our team was at Grafton Notch, wondering how we were ever going to build a staircase onto a steep rock ledge, and now, almost 3 months later, we have become professionals at this task! Seriously, I'm not sure I even know how to build stairs in regular soil anymore... Anyway, the past 3 months have been amazing! We've gotten to work in 3 really beautiful areas doing challenging but rewarding projects. We sharpened our hiking skills and got super buff from spending days on end scoring and splitting rocks. We met some



real characters throughout the season, including our first sponsor who was previously mentioned for his love of giving us treats, as well as the grumpiest grocery store worker in all of the East Coast. We became comfortable dealing with animal carcasses and mouse poop at the dinner table. But most of all, we played lots of games. I know I've had tons of fun, and I'll be sad to see the season come to an end,

especially when it's time to say goodbye to my teammates, who were really what made this season so enjoyable. You guys are great!!

After the season ends, Giasson hopes to spend her days sleeping in, showering regularly, and eating lots of Taco Bell. Oh, and hopefully she will find a job as well. Happy Trails!

Lindsey May of Waukesha, WI is a 2011 graduate of the MCC's TTA. She previously served with the MCC as a Team Member in 2006 and as a Team Leader during the 2011 summer season. Her crew served at Baxter State Park, Kingsley Pines Camp, Waterboro, Stockton Springs, and Dresden.

"We spent seven weeks at Baxter State Park, and it seemed as though it rained at least half the time. On the Marston Trail, we caught "Marston Madness." How does one catch this? Well, when you work in the rain, cook in the rain and sleep on waterbeds, you tend to go a little insane. It wasn't all that bad. Miri sang Christmas songs to keep us jolly, and Lindsey learned to whistle to boost our pal morale. We met a few awesome Park Rangers along the way. Bill from Roaring Brook, taught us our favorite stretch called

Morning Stars. We'd experienced so much, and seen so many beautiful things, that we were sad when it finally came time to say goodbye.



Our next adventure took place in Waterboro. Our awesome project supervisor, Tammy, spoiled us out of our minds. She treated us to bountiful meals and warm cozy campers. From Waterboro, we moved on to Kingsley pines where got to play with the club car everyday at work. We are finishing our season at Stockton springs, the home to MCC legend,

Carl Keicher. We hope he will be impressed by the work we do here.”

After the end of the season, May plans to go back to Wisconsin to spend time with her family for the holidays.

Matthew Spinner of Waterville, ME previously served with the MCC as a Team Member in 2006-2009, as an Assistant Team Leader and Team Leader in 2010, and a Team Leader during the 2011 summer season. His crew served in Dover-Foxcroft, Lubec, Bath, and Lake St. George State Park.

“This first fall season for me has been an exceptional one, the number of projects was just right, our sponsors were all awesome in their own ways, and I had two great team members to top it off! We blazed a path of toil and trail-working glory from Bath to Lubec, and points between, sometimes running down to the wire on our deadlines, but always coming out on time in the end. I must say that I am proud to have been able to work with Joe and Cole, although they already know that, of course! I think the team's real defining moment was down at Pike Lands in Lubec, for our one-week foray into Maine's downeast. We had a tall order of work to complete there, and despite facing our first taste of Maine's chilly



autumn temperatures, and wet start to the week, we pulled through admirably, and I don't think a smile left my face as we drove home after only three full work days.

Personally, I can say in closing that my first experience of autumn with the Maine Conservation Corps has been a lively and pleasant one, and that probably would not have been possible without the two great guys I got to work with! As we begin our last week of work at Bath, I can only look back in disbelief on how fast this fall session has gone past! It only seemed like yesterday that we were starting orientation at Mechuwana! This season was a great one, probably one of my best with the Maine Conservation Corps, and if it is my last season with the Corps, it will be one that I will always look fondly upon.”

Spinner's future plans are up in the air, but he would love to work for the National Park Service, specifically at a National Historic Site; in the meantime, he's looking into the NCCC for next fall and applying for a few jobs this winter ranging from working in a bakery to substitute teaching.

Neal Watercutter of Maitland, FL previously served with the MCC as an Assistant Team Leader and Team Leader in 2010 and as a Team Leader this summer. His crew served in Newry and at Mt. Blue and Bradbury Mountain State Parks.



“Six people went into the woods... Four came out. We played with stones. We played with wood. We hiked a lot. Everything was covered in hot sauce. Kristy killed Big Daddy Jake at Orono, but made up for it with a giant whoopie pie. We lost Cara to an exploding thumb. Tyler left early to attend wood-working school. Bradbury finishes our season.”

According to Watercutter, “he is leaving for Australia. Cara is going to Costa Rica. Tyler is at school. Allegra and Jake will be on the Appalachian Trail in the spring. Chris is working at L.L. Bean and spending time with his wife. Heather is... well, we don't know what the future holds. Team Hot Sauce away!!!!”

Environmental Educators Complete Service

Jessica Balukas of Brentwood, NH served 1700 hours at the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Biological Monitoring program in Augusta.

“My time at the DEP has been excellent. I can't believe how quickly the 1700 hours passed! I've definitely learned a lot during my term with the Biomonitoring Unit, in both the office and field settings. In the office, I learned database management skills, delineated watersheds in ArcGIS, organized data collected during field season, and worked on the 2010 and 2011 Surface Water Ambient Toxics Monitoring Program Final Reports. This has been my first experience working in an office setting, and I didn't mind it at all. I met many amazing people who truly care about the environment and believe their work is important, and that is wonderful to see. I have also had opportunities to volunteer at nature camps, attend some great training workshops, and educate children about macroinvertebrates at several environmental education events.



The best part of my term has definitely been the field portion. We sampled the Penobscot and Downeast region of Maine this year, and I was able to see many of Maine's gorgeous wetlands, streams, and rivers (and some that

weren't so gorgeous). I even saw a moose wading in the water during wetland sampling! I gained valuable hands-on-experience and learned a lot about the Biological Monitoring Program during field season. This term has definitely shown me that I would like a job with a substantial field research component.”

After this term ends, Balukas will be picking bugs from the macroinvertebrate samples collected during field season (separating bugs from the leaves, sand, etc. so they can be sent to a taxonomist) until her second term starts January 10, 2012. She'll be serving a second term with the Biomonitoring Unit, alternating her time between Portland and Augusta.

Dee Clark of Orono, ME served 1500 hours with the Newforest Institute in Brooks.

“During my term of service I did quite a variety of things from administrative work, program planning, and publicity to teaching on-site and at a public school, trail-building, and farm work. I lived on-site which added some unique challenges and benefits to the experience. I feel very fortunate to have been part of the community at Newforest with

the farm manager, apprentices, volunteers, and visitors. My favorite moments have been shared meals, work projects, and team work to pull off some really great events like a visit from an entire elementary school for a full day at Newforest! When you have trusting, respectful relationships, it's amazing what can be accomplished."

Clark moved to Orono at the end of August to begin a three-year Intermedia Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Maine focusing on ecopeace arts and education.

Timothy Duclos of Benson, VT served 1700 hours with the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Wells.

"Over the last eleven months my first reaction when folks ask me what I do for MCC and Rachel Carson NWR is to state that I do everything. Of course this is a serious overstatement, however in essence I will leave Rachel Carson NWR and the MCC program feeling that I was able to successfully participate in nearly the full spectrum of conservation and wildlife management efforts. From participating in prescribed burns to leading the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program, my range of experience and skills now span from biological to educational.



During my term of service I found myself conducting various habitat and biological monitoring and management activities, aiding in planting over 4000 New England cottontail (NEC) shrubs in NEC management areas, collecting and preparing native seeds that resulted in sowing nearly 340 seed flats, exclosing and monitoring nesting piping plover and least terns, pulling mountains of invasive species, coordinating and assisting with a wide variety of volunteer events, coordinating and leading the YCC program, representing the Refuge and MCC at various events, and conducting a wide variety of maintenance tasks from construction to mowing and cleaning. The training, level of responsibility, and experience afforded me during my term with MCC and Rachel Carson leaves me with a level of confidence that is invaluable in my attempts at a



establishing a career in the field of wildlife conservation.”

Duclos is currently in the process of applying to graduate positions in hopes of gaining a Masters in Wildlife Management or the like. Until he is accepted, he intends to continue to acquire experience in the field of conservation through seasonal biological work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service or a similar conservation agency/organization.

Emily Ellingson of North Mankato, MN served 1700 hours at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens (CMBG) in Boothbay. She previously served 1700 hours with CMBG in 2010.

“My second term as an Environmental Educator at CMBG was another great learning experience. My responsibilities grew as I took on a larger role with the youth and family programming and in the Children's Garden. My primary goals were to provide quality, informal education programs to young people and families in Maine and to enrich their Children's Garden experience through education, interpretation, and general maintenance of the garden. I began by developing

youth programs that I implemented throughout the year. I worked with local teachers during the school year and led a youth gardening program in the summer. I made it through yet another ‘Grand Opening’, this time for the new net-zero energy Education Center. As the manager of the Children's Garden, I developed, scheduled, and led informal education activities, trained and managed volunteers, and coordinated events. I also expanded my knowledge of farm animals by piloting a new "Animal-in-Residence" program where I built a place for local animals to stay for a brief time. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to work on such a plethora of projects with a great crew of coworkers. This end of term summary is dedicated to the chickens we lost in June due to the wily CMBG weasel - you are missed.”



After her term of service, Ellingson plans to move to Boston to see what the big city has in store for her. She would like to continue to work in the field of environmental education.

Ben Godsoe of Farmington, ME served 1700 hours with the Sandy River Land Trust & High Peaks Alliance in Phillips. He served 1700 hours in the same position in 2010.

“My second 1700 hour term as a Maine Environmental Educator with the High Peaks Alliance and Sandy River Land Trust was full of new challenges and rewards. I had the opportunity to plan a public land dedication, complete 20 miles of an exciting new trail in Franklin County called the Fly Rod Crosby Trail, coordinate an Emergency Services Back Country Rescue Planning map and plan many community events, activities and meetings. I lived and worked in the beautiful western Maine mountains and was able to hike, paddle, fish, hunt, camp, rock climb and ski during my time off.

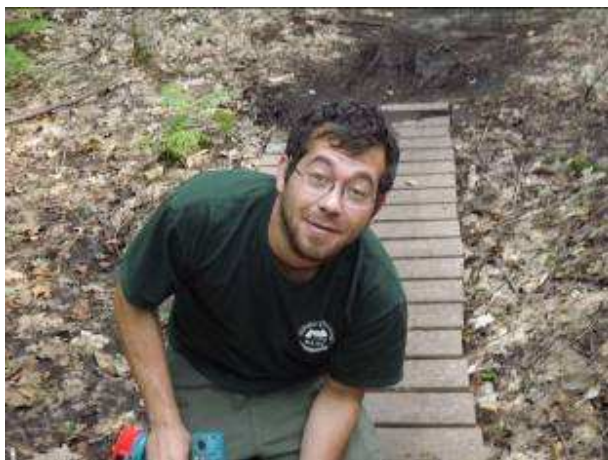


This summer I planned a public dedication of a new state land on Saddleback mountain. The dedication featured Maine Senator Susan Collins and Department of Conservation Commissioner Beardsley. The new public land is a multi-use trail that crosses the Appalachian Trail. Last year I spent much of my term supporting the

negotiations that led to the formation of this new trail and this year I was had the opportunity to plan the celebration. I learned a ton about event planning and community organizing. Every organizer has a certain style and this summer I finally managed to create my own quiet effective style. I know I will use the skills I acquired this summer in the future.”

Godsoe plans to apply for graduate study in Community Planning and Development this spring. He hopes to stay in Maine but is open to all possibilities!

David Hammes of Port St. Lucie, FL served 1700 hours with the Bureau of Parks & Lands (BPL) at Bradbury Mountain State Park & Mackworth Island State Park in southern Maine. He previously served with the MCC as a Field Team Member in 2005, an Assistant Team Leader in 2007, and a Team Leader in 2008 & 2009.



“My service began in January of 2011 cold and snowy, I quickly sharpened my snowmobile riding skills through trial and error. I spent many hours grooming trail and posting signs to establish the

proper route for snowmobiles. I lived in the campground all season, survived an exploding propane stove that our neighbors camping nearby blew up at 5:00 am. Overall my experiences this term were great with the exception of finding over 30 ticks crawling up my legs one day, and picking up stinky dog poop bags at Mackworth Island. I will miss the close interaction with the community, and staff here at BMSP. Many park users take ownership to Bradbury and visit the park ritually.”

Hammes is now heading down to S.E. Florida for the winter months to work as a stage hand/ Spot light Operator at the Sunrise Theatre, and for Rebekkah's Dreams Show Production LLC. “I'll miss the woods,” Hammes says, “I always do.” :)

Ruth Indrick of LaFayette, NY served 1700 hours at the Department of Marine Resources in Boothbay.

“Stomping through mud, scooping up samples, making maps, and teaching kids: what more could you want? Spending a year working with the DMR shellfish growing area classification program, I was able to do all this and more! With projects primarily focused on the Kennebec and Medomak Estuaries, I worked to identify sources of bacterial pollution and monitor water quality to work toward opening shellfish flats for



harvesting. In the field, I surveyed farms in Waldoboro, collected water samples along the coast, measured streamflow, and helped sniff out septic system failures. Working with nearby AmeriCorps volunteers from the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust and the Medomak Valley Land Trust on clean water projects led to fun opportunities like clam dissection with 6th graders, introductions to the livestock of Waldoboro, and marching in a parade while wearing waders and yelling ‘huzza!’ This has also been a rewarding position. After a

summer of sampling, fieldwork, and working with both the town shellfish committee and volunteers in Brookings Bay, Woolwich, shellfish flats that had been closed since 2009 were opened. In my year with MCC, I have learned a great deal and had the chance to explore and experience the coast of Maine.”

Indrick’s post-MCC plans are still somewhat fluid. She is looking forward to enjoying a few more weeks in Damariscotta before moving on to the unknown. She is also looking forward to winter and currently applying to environmental conservation positions, hoping to stay in Maine, or at least the northeast. Her ideal position would be doing something that includes education and outreach, as well as science.

Rebecca Kolak of Des Plaines, IL served 1700 hours with the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust in Bath. She served 1700 hours as an MCC Environmental Educator at the Pemaquid Watershed Association in 2010.

“I have spent the last 10.5 months serving with KELT focusing on Clean Water for Clams! I provided education and outreach to students, educators, community members, towns, and visitors in the Kennebec Estuary on the importance of clean water for clam harvesting. I also helped facilitate meetings between players in the shellfish industry to improve and to research water quality to reopen priority clam flats. The project near and dear to my heart was partnering with MCC EE Ruth Indrick to reopen a flat in Woolwich.

My favorite moments? Working with kids is in the top slot. Students were not only excited to learn about clams (clam dissections being a consistent hit in the classroom...elementary through college grades), but many students had family and friend connections to the clam industry. Providing a ‘close to home’ example of how water pollution can affect our environment and our livelihoods was powerful. Besides, students kept me and their peers laughing through the learning process with amusing quips, stories, questions, and comments. My wackiest project, and one I don’t think I’ll ever really live down, was performing as the Clam Ham in a variety show and in the Bath Heritage Days Independence Day Parade. These ‘performances’ were not only fun, but made the ‘Clean Water for Clams!’ a recognizable program.”



Kolak will be staying on with KELT as an education and events coordinator continuing work with ‘Clean Water for Clams’ and other conservation initiatives. She is also making the move to the big city...Portland! and is excited about the prospects of becoming a city gal once again.

Sarah Lambson of Columbia, MO served 1700 hours with Merryspring Nature Center in Camden.

“My time at Merryspring Nature Center has been a tremendous learning experience. I’ve done the Environmental Educator thing before-but never like this. Working for a non-profit has its ups and downs. There is this charming, personal feel to everything-like

you're part of a family. But then there's the fact that you **DEPEND** on volunteers and generous donations and sometimes, those things aren't there. But through it all, I have learned SO much about myself as a professional and as a person.



I discovered a love of gardening and working the earth through the creation of a children's garden. I have felt the joy that comes with educating others. I've learned the challenges and rewards of managing all the educational programming of this organization. I've felt happiness and contentment working with children and spending my days outdoors. And I've come to understand the frustrations that come with the territory. In the end,

every day, every **SECOND** was worth it because I made a difference in the lives of other people and grew as an individual.”

Post-MCC, Lambson is going home for the holidays and to “get my life organized before I plunge back into my next, unknown adventure-whatever it may be.”

Leo Maheu of Berkeley, CA served 1700 hours at the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Wells. In 2010, he served 1700 hours as an MCC Environmental Educator with Merryspring Nature Center.

“My term at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was better than I ever could have imagined. I was given many opportunities for growth throughout the year, including the chance to gain Wildland Firefighter and Chainsaw operator certifications! More importantly, I was able to utilize those certifications throughout the year in management and conservation projects. On



top of those certifications, I gained valuable experience in many new fields that I had not

previously worked in. All in all, it was a fantastic year, and I owe it all to the staff at the Refuge. I am forever grateful for the support, opportunities, guidance and mentorship that I received from my supervisors. I was a part of a dedicated team of conservation minded individuals, and have developed long lasting relationships with each person I worked with. I also want to thank the MCC for everything they have offered me these past two years. Without their support, I would not be where I am today. My two term service with the MCC, including my most recent time at Rachel Carson NWR, has prepared me for what I foresee as a long career in conservation. Here's to the future!"

Maheu is applying to various jobs in the conservation field, and is working at RCNWR as an intern in the meantime.

Aaron Mathias of New Riegel, OH served both with the Maine Department of Conservation's Outdoor Recreation Program in Augusta and as a Team Leader in 2011. He previously served with the MCC as a Field Team Member during the 2009 summer and fall seasons and a Team Leader during the 2010 summer and fall seasons.



"I worked with the Outdoor Recreation Department and my supervisors were Mick Rogers and Rex Turner. I worked the first four months of my term on Maine Trail Finder.com; that is writing rough drafts about state parks and public lands. I also worked a little bit on Land and Water Conservation Fund and completed a few site inspections. I also worked on Recreational Trails Program Grants paper work and attended all the meetings. In

addition to subtraction, I took on a few fun side projects; the most memorable was making plaster of paris molds of animal tracks. Good times, great oldies.

Then I transitioned into trail crew to be a crew leader once again. I heard the mountains calling my name and I felt compelled to answer that call. (After all, how could I let the mountains down??) The season consisted of two great fellows and me. We traveled all across this great state dabbling in a variety of work and completing it in style. The summer season out on the trail kicked my tail, so I decided to hop back behind the desk. There in my final twelve weeks of service, I made a few sweet hiking trail signs for Tunk Mountain!! Then a few finishing touches on a few state parks that were to be put on Maine Trail Finder.com. And finally an LWCF site inspection here and there and like sands through the hour glass that was the end of my term of service."

Well it's crazy for me to think about, but this is my third term of service with the MCC. I have gained so much through my experiences here and I will really miss coming to this old plantation looking building. In fact it will feel down right wrong not to be driving up that hill from downtown Hallowell in the weeks proceeding my last day."

Mathias plans on moving back to his home land in Ohio, where he plans on starting to grow a garden full of fresh veggies and raising animals for home grown meat. "I will probably get some laying hens and of course will have at least 2 beehives this up coming spring. In terms of employment, I am thinking of applying to landscape companies in towns near by for the time being. I hope to eventually create a CSA or start a farm stand. I will miss my days with the MCC dearly, but I cannot thank this organization enough for what it has done for me and how it has helped shape my future. Thank you," says Mathias.

Cynthia Montanez of Peterborough, NH served 1700 hours with the DEP Stream Team in Portland. She served 1700 hours in the same position with the DEP in 2010.

"A second year as an MCC/AmeriCorps member has come and gone, and I have enjoyed and loved every moment of it; from the smiling staff at Portland DEP, to the sounds of laughing children as they have good times learning about the environment! Every single day I have been inspired by so many people that I had the opportunity to work with; especially from the number one person that I have learned so much from, my supervisor Don Kale. He has given me the knowledge and tools to move forward with my career, and the skills to become more focused with work, without 'life' getting in the way. Thanks Don for everything, you will surely be missed!



Throughout my term I have really learned a lot about myself. I've learned the types of jobs that I'm better suited for by being in this program. Being in AmeriCorps, you gain the knowledge, skills and 'hands on' experience that you don't always get from college alone. I see it as being a unique opportunity to explore and figure out who you are and what you like before you enter into a professional career. What I have found out about myself, is how much I really enjoy working with kids and working with the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA) in Bridgton, Maine. They have treated me as one of them, and I will never forget that. I will definitely miss going out in the canoe to the prettiest lakes and ponds to do water quality sampling

with the most awesome and experienced bunch of people. Thanks to Peter Lowell and Colin Holmes for everything!”

Montanez is continuing to look for work and hopes something will come up, which she is sure it will, because she feels it in her heart! But for now, she will catch up on her Zzzzzzz’s and reflect on her 2 years experience as an MCC/AmeriCorps member.

Kerri Oddenino of Arlington, VA served 1700 hours with the DEP Biological Monitoring program in Portland.

“My volunteer term of service involved collecting data from rivers, streams and freshwater wetlands for the Clean Water Act and the Maine Water Classification Program, organizing and managing data for analysis, preparing GIS maps, assisting in the production of reports, graphics, and other materials, assisting with interpretation of data, as well as conducting education and outreach activities. The Biological Monitoring Program works on a rotating basin schedule, and this year we were working in the Penobscot and Downeast basin. I got to do a lot of canoeing on lakes and ponds and wading in streams and rivers in the unorganized territories and also had the opportunity to walk across the border to Canada with Jessica Balukas during an overnight algae sampling trip in Calais. Additionally, I was able to volunteer at a number of other Maine Conservation Corps Environmental Educator host sites and travel throughout the state.”



In terms of what’s next, Oddenino says, “I’ve met a lot of great people and plan to stick around Maine for a little while, although I’m not quite sure what I’ll be doing yet.”

Susan Pienta of Valatie, NY served 1700 hours at the DEP Watershed program in Portland.

“Working at the Portland DEP has been as close to living in an episode of The Office as one could hope. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with so many amazing people here at the DEP and throughout Southern Maine as I traveled in search of erosion problems occurring within lake-scale watersheds. I have learned more than I have ever wanted to know about certain people working within earshot of my cubicle. There are also the characters who I feel like I interact with daily and yet have only scratched the



surface of who they really are. I came to Maine from an amazing term of service with the California Conservation Corps; my expectations were high when I arrived. MCC did not disappoint. I have had an incredible time with a phenomenal supervisor and am sad to see this chapter of my life come to a close.”

After MCC, Pienta will be working at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland and volunteering with some of her favorite project partners while gearing up to go back to school next fall to get certified to teach science to 5th-12th graders.

Frank Sokol of Camden, ME served 1700 hours with the Maine Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Drinking Water program in Augusta. This was Sokol’s

third term of service with the MCC & CDC. He served 900 hours in 2009 and 1700 hours in 2010 in the same position.

“As I reach the end of my third term of service, I cannot believe how fast time has gone by. I guess that is due to my age... 65 and going strong. I really love what I do. I serve with a very strong State agency known as the Maine Drinking Water Program. The agency regulates all public water supplies in the state of Maine. The people at the agency are like my brothers and sisters, and we all function as a team. My primary service centered around collecting GPS Points for public water supplies and their drinking water treatment plants. I also performed source water assessments to determine if any potential source contamination could affect the drinking water quality. I also participated in attempting to initiate the community outreach program that would have small community water systems such as mobile home parks sit at the same table with the water district, town office, and Maine Drinking Water Program staff so that all could agree on common goals of protecting the wellhead area from any potential source contamination, develop and



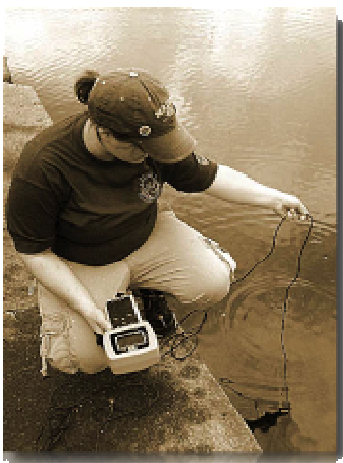
implement an emergency planning/emergency response plan, and increase the capacity of the water system, with all of these goals needed to sustain a very healthy public water supply system. This effort is on-going. But the most important part of my service was continuing to connect with the people of Maine who either owned the public water supply, worked for the public water supply, or cared about the public water supply. Maine residents truly care about their state, and are very proud to be called 'Mainers'."

After completing his third term of service, Sokol will take some time off, staying in Maine to help his fiancée with her rehab after total knee replacement surgery, and then prepare for a fourth term with the Maine Conservation Corps and the Maine Drinking Water Program. Happy Holidays!!

Heather Stukas of Lewiston, ME served 1700 hours with the DEP Streams & Bacteria program in Augusta. She served 900 hours with the MCC & DEP in the same position in 2010.

"Much gratitude and appreciation to my host site the Maine DEP. Your support and guidance in learning about environmental issues have been phenomenal. The skills, the knowledge and experience gained in both terms of service are invaluable. Thank You for giving me the opportunity for work with you. I would also like to thank the MCC for providing the opportunity. Serving as an AmeriCorps in your organization has allowed me to learn so much about-self. So, Thank You.

For this term of service there are two memorable moments. The first is the spring chloride sampling that done March/April. Since I got not one but two Ice Award Nominations; Ice Award is given to the person who gets best wet. The first was in the middle of March, I fell in but in the WRONG stream, a tributary not the stream itself; and the second one was when we were retrieving the sondes deployed and one went MIA so I fell when I was looking for it.



The second memorial moment is when I realized that I could delist Pottle Brook in Perry. Pottle Brook is the first stream that I delist because of my efforts. All the other streams I have delist, I didn't do anything they were already attaining. It was very fulfilling and rewarding for me that I was able to delist a stream directly because of my efforts.

My advice to future MCC members is to make the best of your service: attend the Celebration of Service, be proactive in your social life; help fellow members by volunteering. You will be surprised in what you will gain. Stukas' agenda for the time being is "looking for Bambi, being a 'nurse' to dad, and waiting for fluffy white stuff to be a snow-bum, teaching lessons at my local 'mountain'-bunny hill. And, in between all of this job hunting, who knows I might miss you guys too much

and come back for a third term.”

Megan Welch of Marcellus, NY served 1700 hours with the Pemaquid Watershed Association (PWA) in Damariscotta.

“What a year it has been at the PWA. Throughout my term I have had the pleasure of dabbling in all aspects of the nonprofit sector. As the Education Coordinator at the PWA my responsibilities included creating, organizing, publicizing, and facilitating educational outreach events for community members; planning and facilitating the Watershed Kids Nature Day Camp; working with school children on various projects; running the Beachcomber's Rest Nature Center; and fundraising. A few highlights from my term include being at the beach all summer, playing in the tide pool at the Rachel Carson Salt Pond Preserve during camp, and observing a baby bat feeding up close. I have learned a great deal from this position and now fully understand the inner workings of a nonprofit. As I look back on my experience as the AmeriCorps volunteer at the PWA I have many fond memories and much to take away from this experience, like my new found love of worms. This past year has truly been a lovely experience and I have enjoyed my time at PWA immensely.”



As far as future plans go, Welch says she “will be doing something, somewhere.”

Volunteers of the Month

October

Ed Kahora of Friendship, ME and **Colm O’Caoimh** of Bath, ME were both nominated by Team Leader Matt Spinner and his crew for their two days of hard work (through the rain) on the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust project in Bath.

November

Thomas Stewart of Camden was nominated by MCC EE Frank Sokol who served with the Maine Center for Disease Control’s Drinking Water Program. Stewart volunteered over 150 hours helping to locate GPS points.

Dan Wallach of Durham, ME and **Don Kennel** of Cape Elizabeth, ME were nominated by Team Leader Michelle DiMeglio and her crew. Wallach and Kennel were part of a large group of IDEXX Laboratories employees who volunteered on the crew's Portland Trails project for a day. They worked extremely hard and were particularly helpful in removing a large and challenging invasive honeysuckle!

Alumni

Evan Spark-DePass, Field Team

I was born in Mt. Kisco, New York to Richard and Andree Spark-DePass. My affinity for the outdoors developed after we moved to Red Hook, a small town between the Berkshire and Catskill mountains on the Hudson River. I attended Red Hook High School and then Lehigh University where I studied Philosophy and International Relations. After my freshman year of college I spent the summer as a Maine Conservation Corps field team member working on the Messalonskee Stream Trail in Oakland. After finishing my Bachelors degree I returned to Maine for the summer and fall seasons with MCC working mostly on the Appalachian Trail. Since then, I have been working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal doing health and environmental work in the far north of the country. My service with the Peace Corps will end in April of 2012 when I will return to America and pursue an interest in environmental policy.

What initially drew you to the MCC?

I've always loved being in the woods, but after a year of school I really felt a pull to get out and explore. MCC seemed like the perfect opportunity to test my wilderness savvy, indulge in that sense of wanderlust, and contribute to what I felt to be a very worthy cause.

What was your favorite part about serving with the MCC?

Living and working with 5-6 other people for months at a time was often difficult to say the least. Still, my favorite moments are always the stories shared, the jokes, the games you play to keep entertained or the songs you sing (in some cases the dances you do to Whitney Houston during morning stretches). These are the experiences that give color to an MCC season. They let you into parts of someone else's life that you would otherwise have no



right going. Adversity tends to bring people close together and quickly, and this bond shared in the middle of the wilderness, totally alone, is the most meaningful part of the program to me.

What was your favorite project/favorite place you served?

Baxter State Park is easily one of my favorite places in the world. Watching Autumn settle in Maine from the side of Katahdin or the shore of Kidney Pond or Roaring Brook was one of the most profound experiences I've ever had in nature.

How did your time with the MCC affect your career/life path?

My experiences with Maine Conservation Corps qualified me for the program that I'm currently a part of with the Peace Corps. More than that though, my time with MCC solidified my interest in working on environmental issues in some capacity, and allowed me to see beyond conventional career paths and ways of looking at the world.

If you could give any advice to current or future MCC members, what would it be?

1. Wear your Personal Protective Equipment! I've seen way too many barefoot 5 year olds wielding axes in the past year and a half to still believe that PPE isn't important.
2. Go to Big G's as much as possible.
3. Long hikes with heavy packs on are best enjoyed singing with friends.

Recruitment

The MCC's 2012 Trail Training Academy will start February 13, 2012. This year's 11-week Trail Training Academy will be taught by MCC Trail Training Instructor Kat Kelley, who has been with the MCC since 2008. The **deadline for applications is December 30, 2011** and more information can be found here: <http://www.maine.gov/doc/parks/mcc/fto.htm>.

The MCC is also recruiting for several 900 hour Environmental Educator positions to serve all over the state at places like the Bigelow Preserve, Georges River Land Trust, Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. These positions will run May 22—November 3, 2012 and the **application deadline is February 25, 2012**. More information and individual position descriptions can be found here: http://www.maine.gov/doc/parks/mcc/EEO_000.htm.

Volunteer Opportunities & Events

From the Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks & Lands

We hope you'll come out and celebrate Maine's State Parks and the outdoors with a 1st Day Hike or Winter Family Fun Day! For the latest event updates, visit www.parksandlands.com. To volunteer at any of the following events, please contact the park manager directly.

1st Day Hikes – A nationwide celebration of State Parks – January 1, 2012

The First Day Hikes program is historic since it is the first time that all 50 states have collaborated on a single, nationwide state parks event occurring on the same day. First Day Hikes represent opportunities for individuals and families to recreate close to home, as well as to foster our connection to healthy lifestyles, which continues to be an important focus for all of us.

First Day Hikes will be happening at Aroostook State Park, Cobscook Bay State Park, Popham Beach State Park & Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park.

Take it Outside - Winter Family Fun Days, 2012 - at Maine State Parks

Outdoor fun for everyone!

Feeling like a winter-sleepy Maine black bear? Here's the cure! Join us for the Maine State Park Winter Family Fun Days this January and February. Good cheer, great events, and beautiful outdoor locations beckon. Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, ice skating and sledding adventures await your entire family. Instruction and loaner equipment is available for those trying out a winter sport for the first time.

Nature hikes, winter camping demonstrations, ice fishing derbies for kids, hay rides or dog sled rides will be offered at some of the locations this year. Several of the locations include a cookout with the entry fee of \$1.50 for adults: 12 to 64, children and seniors free. These events are a great value and affordable for the entire family!

January 15 - Lake St. George State Park - Children's Ice Fishing Derby

- 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Activities include: ice fishing derby and dog sled rides
- Fee – adults: 12 to 64 \$1.50, children and seniors free, includes a cookout lunch.

January 21 - Cobscook Bay State Park

- 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Activities include: ice skating, sledding, cross-country skiing, tote sled rides and a nature walk.
- Fee - adults: 12 to 64 \$1.50, children and seniors free, includes a cookout lunch.

February 4 - Mount Blue State Park

- 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- Activities include: cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and ice skating & instruction, snowshoe nature walk, sledding, hay rides, winter camping demonstration, and a snowmobile trail grooming exhibit.
- Limited supplies of outdoor equipment will be available for loan
- Fee – adults: 12 to 64 \$1.50, children and seniors free, includes a cookout lunch.

February 18 - Range Ponds State Park - Kids' Ice Fishing Derby

- 8 a.m. - 12 noon
- Co-sponsored by the Kittery Trading Post and Windham Rotary
- Fee - adults: 12 to 64 \$1.50, children and seniors free.

February 25 - Aroostook State Park

- 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Activities include: ice skating, sledding, cross-country skiing, nature walks, snow shoeing, and dog sled rides.
- Fee - adults: 12 to 64 \$1.50, children and seniors free, includes a cookout lunch.