

Maine Conservation Connection

Maine Conservation Corps



February 2012



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Environmental Educators Start Service

Earlier this winter, the MCC welcomed 15 MCC Environmental Educators. Environmental Educators are AmeriCorps volunteers serving 900 or 1700 hour terms at non-profit and state organizations across the state.

Jessica Balukas of Brentwood, NH is serving 1700 hours at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's Biomonitoring program in Portland. She served 1700 hours as an MCC Environmental Educator in the same position in Augusta in 2011. Balukas is a 2010 graduate of Colby College where she studied biology and Japanese.

Amelia Fogg of Pittsford, NY is serving 1700 hours at the Pemaquid Watershed Association in Damariscotta. Fogg is a 2011 graduate of Colby College where she studied Latin American studies and environmental studies.

Ryan Gerbehy of Califon, NJ is serving 1700 hours at the Maine Energy Education Program in Augusta. Gerbehy previously served as an AmeriCorps volunteer with the Student Conservation Association as an Interpretive Ranger in 2008 and as an Environmental Educator in 2009. He is a 2007 graduate of Montclair State University where he studied history.

Pamela Davis Green is serving 1700 hours at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's Streams & Bacteria program in Augusta. Green previously served with the MCC as a Field Team Member in 2008. She is a 2011 graduate of the University of Maine – Farmington where she studied environmental science and biology.

Lindsay Kelly of Rochester, NY is serving 1700 hours at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Wells. Kelly previously served as an MCC Environmental Educator in 2011 at Vaughan Woods State Park in South Berwick. She also previously served as an AmeriCorps volunteer as a Data Collection Intern with the Student Conservation Association. Kelly is a 2011 graduate of the University of New England where she studied environmental science.

Leo Maheu of Berkeley, CA is serving 1700 hours with Portland Trails in Portland. He previously served as an MCC Environmental Educator at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Wells in 2011 and Merryspring Nature Center in Camden in 2010. Maheu is a 2008 graduate of Chico State University where he studied theatre arts design.



MCC Environmental Educator Orientation

Molly Miller of Medford, MA is serving 900 hours at the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory in Salisbury Cove. Miller previously served as an MCC Environmental Educator in the same position in 2011. She is a 2010 graduate of Vassar College where she studied biology and French.

Eric O'Keefe of Rockville, MD is serving 1700 hours at Waban Projects in Sanford. O'Keefe is a 2010 graduate of the University of New Hampshire where he studied environmental conservation.

Kathleen Poole of Shapleigh, ME is serving 1700 hours at Maine Partners for Cool Communities based in Portland. Poole is a 2010 graduate of the University of Maine where she studied wildlife ecology.

Casey Schott of Hoboken, NJ is serving 1700 hours at the Maine State Aquarium in Boothbay. Schott is a 2010 graduate of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey Cook College, where he studied ecology and natural resources.

Frank Sokol of Van Meter, PA is serving 1700 hours at the Maine Center for Disease Control's Drinking Water program in Augusta. This is Sokol's 4th consecutive term in this position with the MCC. Sokol is a 1976 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh where he studied chemical engineering and chemistry.

Charlotte Thurston of Searsmont, ME is serving 1700 hours at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Wells. Thurston is a 2011 graduate of Cornell University where she studied plant science.

Jake Van Gorder of Tremont, ME is serving 1700 hours at the Maine Department of Marine Resources in Boothbay. Van Gorder is a 2010 graduate of Sterling College where he studied conservation ecology.

Chris Veazie of Hiram, ME is serving 1700 hours at Bradbury Mountain State Park in Pownal and Mackworth Island State Park in Falmouth. Veazie previously served with the MCC as a Field Team Member in 2011. He is a 2011 graduate of Bridgewater State University where he studied earth sciences.

Brett Willard of Burnt Hills, NY is serving 1700 hours at Merryspring Nature Center in Camden. Willard previously served as an AmeriCorps volunteer as a Residential Assistant with the Community School at Opportunity Farm. He is a 2009 graduate of the State University of New York College of Environmental Sciences and Forestry where he studied environmental studies.

MLK Day

In celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, the MCC's Environmental Educators took some time during their first day of orientation to participate in an MLK Day service project at Camp Mechuwana in Winthrop, where orientation was held. The 16 Environmental Educators sorted and labeled two separate bulk mailings of 1400 informational flyers for one of Mechuwana's mailings. It would have taken several days for one person to complete this project. Many hands certainly make for light work!

MCC Welcomes New Trail Training Instructor

The MCC recently welcomed **Alice Webber** as the 2012 Trail Training Instructor. Here is a message from Alice:

I was born and raised in the hustle bustle of urban-suburbia New Jersey where I learned to appreciate the beauty in urban landscapes, and the importance of good bagels and great

pizza. I graduated from SUNY Purchase in 2008 where I studied Fine Art and played for the school's varsity soccer team for 4 years. I was enrolled in a field biology course in my final semester, and it became clear that pursuing a career in the outdoors and conservation work was undoubtedly the right step for me to take.

My start with conservation work began with the Student Conservation Association in the California Mojave desert in 2008. For 8 months, our team traveled the wildernesses completing widely various conservation projects from monitoring Golden Eagles, to repairing the Pacific Crest Trail in the Southern Sierras. Trail work quickly and clearly became the path I wished to focus my efforts towards. I continued serving with the SCA Trails Corps program for three years, both leading and participating on teams which worked with constructing and restoring trails from the east to the west coast. This past year was full of a different set of adventures; a winter spent illustrating a Trails Rigging manual, a summer assessing the conditions of hiking trails throughout the White Mountain National Forest, NH, and an autumn building residential stone walls. There are a few other things in life I love as much as I love moving rocks: cereal, soccer, baking cookies, hiking with my dog, and singing too loud when I'm alone in the car.



Webber in New Hampshire's White Mountains

I am very excited with the opportunity to serve with the Maine Conservation Corps. This will be my first season with MCC as the Trail Training Instructor and I am grateful to be joining their team and their conservation efforts in the state that has been such an influential force throughout my life. Hope to see you all on the trail!



Veazie manning the snowshoe fitting station

Take It Outside: Mt. Blue State Park

The Maine Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks & Lands recently held an exciting Take It Outside event at Mt. Blue State Park in Weld, ME. The event drew over 500 participants who had the opportunity to ice skate, snowshoe, and cross country ski, among many other winter activities. Chris Veazie, the MCC's Environmental Educator serving at Bradbury Mountain State Park and Mackworth Island State Park, helped out during the event, primarily at the snowshoe fitting station.

According to Veazie, “the Take it Outside event at Mt. Blue couldn’t have been on a better day. The temperature was mild and sunny for February and everyone was in good spirits. A volunteer named Derek Pratt, my wife, and I sized up kids and adults for the proper size snow shoe and made sure that the shoes were nice and secure. There was a field behind us where people could demo their snow shoes and there were also snow shoe trails along with trail maps right there that people could venture onto if they pleased; some people were out on the shoes for a few minutes and others were gone for more than 90 minutes.”

Recruitment

The MCC is currently recruiting for the following AmeriCorps volunteer positions:

900 hour Environmental Educator positions which will start May 22, 2012. Host sites include Ferry Beach State Park, Georges River Land Trust, and the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences at Good Will Hinckley. For qualifications, benefits and position descriptions follow this link: http://www.maine.gov/doc/parks/mcc/EEO_000.htm. **The application deadline is February 25, 2012.**

The MCC Field Team is recruiting for several positions: Team Leaders, Team Members, and Assistant Team Leaders. To learn more about our Field Team positions, benefits, and qualifications, click here: <http://www.maine.gov/doc/parks/mcc/fieldteam.html>. **The application deadline for Team Leaders is February 24, 2012. The application deadline for Team Members and Assistant Team Leaders (for the summer season) is March 30, 2012.**

Application materials for all positions are available on the MCC website.

Alumni

Tess Fairbanks Woods

Tess Fairbanks Woods has always enjoyed taking the scenic route in life. Attending 7 high schools over the course of 4 years (including an inner city public school, a small Quaker boarding school, and a school in Oaxaca, Mexico), Tess took her time exploring educational styles and communities that best suited her philosophy on life and her personal pursuit of happiness. Once landing in Maine, Tess has yet to leave (other than on some great vacations) and her service in the MCC was clearly one of the experiences that helped her identify this State as home. Being provided with an opportunity to explore the natural wonders of Maine through the MCC with other like minded individuals gave Tess a great foundation for her life and her work here in Maine.

After leaving the MCC, Tess worked at Unity College for a bit and then became the first full-time staff person at Unity Barn Raisers (UBR), a multiple award-winning non-profit community betterment organization. And of course, her work at UBR includes trail

building! Currently Tess is coordinating the Waldo County Trails Coalition, a group consisting of partnership between 6 local non-profits and private landowners working to connect the Unity trail system, MOFGA trail system, Mt. View Regional School, and the Sheepscot Wellspring Land Alliance trail system in Montville and Knox and with trails in the Frye Mountain Wildlife Management Area managed by the Georges River Land Trust. The Coalition has received a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service and is working closely with Burnham Martin from NPS to realize its vision. MCC alumni in the Waldo County area are encouraged to contact Tess and get involved in this exciting project.

What initially drew you to the MCC?

Having graduated from Unity College, I knew a number of people who worked for MCC and was inspired by the work that they were doing. I had actually just loaded all my worldly possessions in my old Toyota truck and driven from Maine to Oregon to start life in the "real world" when I heard about the Community Emissary position opening at MCC. I applied and was accepted, so two weeks later I pulled a u-turn, reloaded the Toyota and headed back across the country.



What was your favorite part about serving with the MCC?

Definitely the dogs! I'm not sure how it is now, but back then all the team leaders - and some of the crew members - had field dogs. These were dogs with some serious personalities. They varied in size and shape, color and breed but each one had a personality that could fill a cargo van. Right behind the dogs would be the people that I served with - as varied as the dogs, followed by the Maine trails landscape.

What was your favorite project/favorite place you served?

My fondest MCC memories are of the time that I spent in the field with a crew at Nahmakanta working on the Turtle Ridge trail. I brought my pooch, Precious Sweet Pea (renamed Bubba on the trail) and he and the trail crew dog, Bryce, (a true Mutt and Jeff couple if ever one did exist) had a grand old time. The weather was perfect, the water was crystal clear, the trail food was gourmet and the views were exquisite!

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

Just after giving a presentation at Unity College on the MCC to the administration and some special guests, I was approached by UC's President Wilson Hess and asked if I

would consider a position in the Admissions Office at Unity College. From admissions, I moved into human resources at the College and then to a position with Unity Barn Raisers where I became their first paid Executive Director. I have been with Unity Barn Raisers building community (and some CommUnity Trails) for over 10 years...and it all began with a position as Community Emissary with the Maine Conservation Corps!

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

Network! MCC members have amazing opportunities to meet amazing people throughout the State. Take every chance you have to get to know these folks and to make yourself memorable to them. MCC service is a great first step on the trail to personal success and happiness.