



Winter Summary 2011

Appalachian Coal Country Team

An OSM/VISTA Initiative

First Quarter

Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 2010

The mission of The **Appalachian Coal Country Team** is to assist rural communities impoverished by environmental degradation and its consequences in making their home-place-watersheds healthier places to live and work.

The ACCT is supported by an innovative partnership among the Office of Surface Mining, AmeriCorps VISTA and local community groups serving the 3 million living within a mile of an Abandoned Mine Land.

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Office of Surface Mining hires OSM/VISTA Alum

Former OSM/VISTA and Summer Associate Stefanie Chitester was hired by the Office of Surface Mining's Pittsburgh Field Division this quarter. This makes Chitester the first OSM/VISTA to be hired by the Office of Surface Mining. She owes the new job in part to her experience with the OSM/VISTA Teams, she said.

"Having been an OSM/VISTA and having [Team Coordinator] Allan Comp as a reference seemed to help a lot," Chitester said. "I gained a lot of confidence as an OSM/VISTA. I had to do a lot of things, like public speaking, that took me out of my comfort zone."

Now as Surface Mining Reclamation Specialist, Chitester is training to inspect surface coal mines under the Title V regulatory program, to inspect coal refuse disposal areas and the surface areas of underground mines. After two years with the ACCT, which Chitester spent with the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation and the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corporation, she sees a lot of similarity in her OSM/VISTA service and her current OSM projects. "I think I am really going to like it," she said of her new job. The Appalachian Coal Country Team congratulates Chitester on her new job.



Above: Former OSM/VISTA Stefanie Chitester (second from right) stood with Team Coordinator Allan Comp, Deputy Director April Trent and other Friends in 2007.

Below: Chitester collects water samples for the OSM.

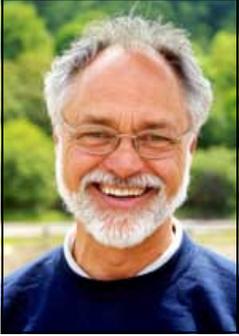


OSM Regulatory Trainee Julie Helfrich tours Canepatch Creek Surface Mine.

OSM Trainee Hired

The OSM Trainee Program applauded when Trainee Julie Helfrich was hired by her State Regulatory Agency, Virginia's Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy. Helfrich, who will assume the title Hydrogeologist/Mineral Specialist I, appreciates her time as a Trainee. "I know that my skills and experiences over the past few months were invaluable and am very grateful to the [OSM/AmeriCorps] Trainee Program for providing these opportunities to me," she said.

Teams Coordinator's Message



I just spent three days in a retreat with the staff of the Southwest Conservation Corps, the non-profit sponsor of the Western Hardrock Watershed Team and also the sponsor of the OSM/AmeriCorps Regulatory Trainee Program. The latter placed twenty AmeriCorps Members with state regulatory programs in 10 states, enhancing those programs and giving twenty recent college graduates a remarkable entry opportunity. As if to prove that contention, one of those trainees is already a full-time staff hire in Virginia. Even better for me, my hope that the OSM/VISTA Teams would become a useful avenue for OSM to recruit good young people with useful field experience already under their belt, the Pennsylvania office of OSM just hired our own Stephanie Chitester, formerly an OSM/VISTA with the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corporation and WPCAMR. Thanks to the hard work done by every OSM/VISTA and the increased attention the two teams are getting from the Director of OSM, our OSM/VISTAs are being increasingly recognized as a valuable resource for OSM and for state programs as well.

This retreat also reminded me of the remarkable service being done by every OSM/VISTA in the field -- and the good work done by the two Support Offices in making that service possible. As you will see throughout this summary, we are serving in many ways in many places, all united by our determination to place some of America's best college graduates in some of America's most challenging environments, places where determined community improvement groups are sponsoring their OSM/VISTA and accomplishing great things. As you read these pages, please take a minute to recognize the value of national service and the OSM/VISTAs that do that service -- they are truly an asset to their communities, to OSM, to VISTA and to the nation.

- T Allan Comp, January 2011

Team Resource Generation: A Continuing ACCT Goal

The ACCT partners with watershed groups to build capacity and develop holistic solutions to environmental and economic issues. The OSM/VISTAs serving in Appalachia commit themselves to furthering sustainability in their community groups and aiding efforts to combat environmental and social problems.

	This Quarter October 1- December 31, 2010	In the Last Fiscal Year October 1, 2009- September 30, 2010
Hours logged by volunteers	4,838	325,866
In-kind resources	\$327,491	\$1,468,022
Grants secured	\$323,287	\$502,830
Public lands improved (ac)	250	1,091
Rivers/trails improved (mi)	111	295

EPA Volunteerism Research Project Moves Into Final Phase



Alternative spring break volunteers help clear brush in Mullens, WV.

The second phase of research for the "Volunteers for Rural Watersheds" research project has come to a close. Twenty-five volunteer practices were tested for 1 year by 1-2 different rural watershed groups. Forty-eight case studies emerged, brimming with successes, challenges and ideas for other rural groups to utilize. Among them there were several overarching trends. The need for a lead person or committee to drive planning was a key factor in the success or failure of many trial practices and broad appeals for help with tasks and events often went unheeded. Practices that employed targeted recruitment of individuals and groups with skills for specific tasks had the best results. For example, Roaring Run Watershed Association's (PA) volunteer appreciation picnic took off once a committee was formed to lead and focus planning efforts. For tasks requiring large groups or crews of volunteers, rural organizations often succeeded by bringing in outside groups, such as alternative spring break crews and mission teams. Friends of the Russell Fork (VA) has been laying the groundwork for a visit from a faith-based mission team by locating volunteer housing and identifying homes in need of repair. These lessons and many more will be presented as a suite of volunteer management options in the final project phase, which involves the transformation of research into useable rural volunteer management resources.

Successful ACCT Training Conference held in October

On October 19, 2010 the Appalachian Coal Country Team held its annual Clean Streams Conference at Twin Falls Resort State Park in Mullens, WV. More than 100 participants traveled to Twin Falls to attend two days of workshops designed to help them network and gain skills to reforest mountains degraded by prereregulatory mining, improve water quality and engage the community to become better stewards of the environment. All participants work in Appalachia and share a common interest in protecting their environments and improving their local economies.

The ACCT designed the conference to give a space for Appalachian non-profits to work together and to provide their OSM/VISTA Volunteers with the training and resources they need to succeed. "The session on public speaking was a great window into what it takes to speak clearly, smartly, and in an engaging manner," said OSM/VISTA Adam Plourde who is serving with the George's Creek Watershed Association (MD). "Public speaking and communication in general, are the most integral functions of working for a non-profit," Plourde said.

Special lecturers included Office of Surface Mining employees Nancy Roberts and Patrick Angel, who discussed how they work with citizen groups to repair past coal mining damage; Herb Petitjean, Brownfield Coordinator for KY, who discussed the Appalachian Brownfields Initiative; and Wendy Willis, Deputy Director of the Policy Consensus Institute, who ran a workshop on civic engagement.

During the training, all Coal Country Team sites received data discs. These discs, compiled by Allan Comp's D.C. interns, contain resources for the Team. Resources include a guide to using the ACCT's Curriki environmental education site, a guide to greening small offices, a guide to engaging alternative spring break crews and more capacity building reports and tools.

Through ongoing trainings like this, the Team seeks to inspire our groups to work together to protect the environment and create economic opportunities for families and future generations.



OSM/VISTA Leader Shannon Philbin sits in a training session on public speaking during the ACCT Fall training.



OSM employee Al Whitehouse works with Kettering-OSM/VISTA Public Administration Fellow Monica Freeland during the ACCT Fall training.



OSM/VISTAs and supervisors network during the ACCT Fall training.

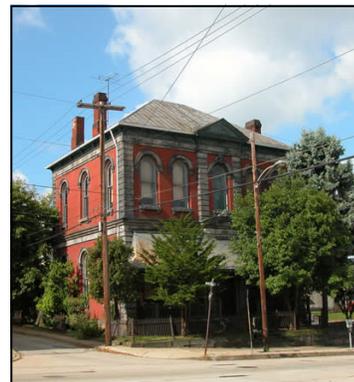
ACCT Core Goals Explained: How We Bring About Success

From the start of our relationship with a community/watershed group, the ACCT works to identify specific needs and to create a clear work plan for the OSM/VISTA Volunteer. All ACCT Volunteers serve under a broad set of five core goals that allow sovereignty for the community, with support and collaboration from the ACCT. These goals reflect a core belief about our work with rural mining communities: water quality issues only address a fraction of a community's needs. For this reason, we support work that connects water quality issues to those of economic redevelopment, education, and community outreach. We are multidisciplinary in our approach, broadening our audience and increasing our effectiveness in service to communities. Featured below are stories highlighting some of the many successes experienced this quarter:

Goal One: Build Local Capacity

Blake Fisher raises \$17,955 for the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corporation

OSM/VISTA Blake Fisher held a letter writing campaign and raised \$2,955 in unrestricted funding for the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corporation (PA). He also helped secure \$15,000 to fund a feasibility study on turning one of the Revitalization Corporation's properties, the Rose Property, into a bed and breakfast. The Rose Property is important to Brownsville simply because of its scale and extravagance. People often request tours of the building and are excited to see it rehabilitated.



BARC (PA) has secured funding to conduct a study on turning the former Rose House into a bed and breakfast.

Will Nissley secures funding for a half time staff position

OSM/VISTA Will Nissley secured a \$10,000 grant to pay the salary of a half time staff position for the Middle Nolichucky Watershed Alliance (TN). The new staff member will write watershed and forestry plans for Greene County. "Securing funding for another position will help the Watershed Alliance in its goals to create on the ground projects for years to come," said Nissley. The Middle Nolichucky Watershed Alliance also received a \$50,000 in-kind donation in the form of educational and consulting services after being selected as part of the Climate Solutions University Model Forestry Policy Program.



Athey Lutz leads volunteers in building a bridge in the Thomas City Park (WV).

Goal Two: Engage Economic Development

Athey Lutz helps build bridges and trails to increase tourism

In November, OSM/VISTA Athey Lutz organized a team of volunteers to build a bridge in the Thomas City Park along a trail that the North Fork Watershed Project is constructing. The bridge completes a 1.5 mile trail— part of a 5 mile trail system that is linked to downtown Thomas (WV). This should create new opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation and attract new visitors. Lutz designed the bridge using schematics from the US Forest Service and purchased the materials with a grant from the Oakland Foundation. "[The trail] mobilizes people to work together to turn vacant property into a great attraction for the City of Thomas," Lutz said. "It's not just for bikers. Everyone visiting Thomas can use it and enjoy the unique ecosystems along the trail."



Media covers the Open House on the Quilt Trail event that Leslie Hammond coordinated (TN).

Leslie Hammond draws attention and tourism through the Quilt Trail

OSM/VISTA Leslie Hammond and the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council (TN) are engaging residents and tourists in Appalachian culture by developing and promoting a Quilt Trail. The trail displays traditional quilt designs on the backdrop of historic barns and provides scenic routes in the six largest cities in six counties within Tennessee. A variety of historic sites, produce stands, shops and galleries can be found along the Trail. These sites were promoted through an open house in October. Hammond has also secured a \$5,000 grant from the East Tennessee Foundation/Harris Fund of Washington County to institute a walking tour that will feature the Quilt Trail.

Goal Three: Promote Environmental Stewardship

Jesse Daubert organizes stormwater tour for professionals

In November, the Friends of the Lower Muskingum River (OH) conducted a stormwater management tour to advertise examples of green stormwater systems in the area. Friends of the Lower Muskingum hopes to inspire the 18 local attendees, a group that included contractors and engineers, to consider adding green infrastructure to future building projects in the area. They visited the rain gardens, a wetland, a dry detention pond, pervious concrete and a LEED certified building. Jesse Daubert, OSM/VISTA for the Friends of the Lower Muskingum, organized the tour along with Kathy Davis of the Washington Soil and Water Office.

Erin Ouzts creates environmental stewards through volunteer days

OSM/VISTA Erin Ouzts with the North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy (TN) has been working to increase environmental stewardship with trail development and restoration projects. Ouzts organized volunteer work days on October 30, November 20 and December 15 and leveraged 494 hours of volunteer time donated by 150 volunteers who worked on 150 acres of public land and 18 miles of trails and rivers. Among the trails being restored is a section of the Cumberland Trail that was recently damaged by coal spoil fires. The Cumberland Trail is still under construction and once completed will extend 300 miles from Cumberland Gap National Park to the Chickamauga Chattanooga National Military Park. The North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy hopes to encourage active and positive use of trails with continued volunteer days.



Erin Ouzts works with volunteers to paint trail markers for the North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy (TN) during a volunteer day.

Goal Four: Enhance Outreach and Education

OSM/VISTAs across the region build websites this winter to better reach out

This quarter OSM/VISTAs throughout Appalachia built, designed and received funding for websites. Emily Perrotta with Save the Tygart, Andrew Miller with Friends of the Cheat, Clary Estes with Headwaters, Inc., Caitlin Coleman with the ACCT Support Office, Mike Bloom with Delaware and Lehigh, Leslie Hammond with the Appalachian RC&D and more are all designing and building new websites. Caroline Walz with Dix River and Athey Lutz with Friends of Blackwater have put together Google Earth Tours to make their sites more interactive. Other interesting web features include tourism brochures, project videos and interactive tours. Many are creating user-friendly interfaces and manuals so future staff can easily update them.



A Headwaters (KY) volunteer interviews a local Whitesburg resident as part of Headwaters' new media campaign.

New media campaign for Headwaters, Inc. thanks to Clary Estes

Headwaters, Inc. (KY) acquired new media capabilities including camcorders, web development and radio production training. These resources are being used in a youth video campaign led by OSM/VISTA Clary Estes, which will raise awareness about the organization and local water quality issues. Estes is working with local high school students and a local filmmaker to capture short videos which will be displayed on Headwaters' website and on YouTube.

Goal Five: Professional Development

Debby Ludwig forms new partnership while studying at the Tree Academy

OSM/VISTA Debby Ludwig with Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation (OH) acquired useful skills while attending the Ohio Division of Forestry Tree Commission Academy training. She is now helping develop an urban forestry Master Plan for the Village of Leetonia. While attending the Academy, Ludwig was asked to participate in the Middleton Township community revitalization meetings. "Over the course of our meetings we realized that it would be good to develop some sense of community spirit and pride," said Ludwig. "I look forward to working with this group on the first Middleton Township Community Festival this summer."



Debby Ludwig (OH) works with the Leetonia Shade Tree Commission.

OSM/VISTAs Samantha Lukasiewicz and Sarah Drakulich attend Virginia Environmental Education Conference

Sam Lukasiewicz and Sarah Drakulich sponsored by the South West Virginia Environmental Education Team and Upper Tennessee River Roundtable went to the Virginia Naturally Education Conference. They then presented their organizations with information on the sessions they attended, sharing information with community members who were unable to attend.



An OSM/VISTA Initiative

Fall 2010



The ACCT OSM/VISTA Volunteers at Fall Training 2010.

Appalachian Coal Country Team

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Without the generous support from our partners and funders, our work in coal country would not be possible. Thank you for believing in our work and sharing in our mission.

THANK YOU

Office of Surface Mining

Volunteers in Service to America

Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia

Appalachian Regional Commission

Academy of Careers and Technology in Beckley, WV

Beckley Area Foundation

EPA-Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

Kettering Foundation

Norcross Wildlife Foundation

Park Foundation

Patagonia



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