



January 28, 2008

To: SNAP Site Supervisors & SNAP Host Site Organizational Staff

From: Do Lee
SNAP Program Director
Sierra Nevada Alliance

Re: What is SNAP and AmeriCorps?

Dear SNAP Site Supervisors, Host-Site Staff, and Partner Agencies,

The purpose of this memo is to explain to all staff of organizations hosting Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP) Members about the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of the SNAP Member. As you read this memo, we ask you to keep in mind the words of the SNAP AmeriCorps Members and Site Supervisors who collectively described SNAP Members as “Human beings who care about the future and give time to create positive change in our communities through national service.”

What is AmeriCorps? Since 1994, more than 250,000 people have served in AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connect more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country’s critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. AmeriCorps Members serve with more than 2,000 nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based and community organizations. AmeriCorps has been described by many as the “domestic Peace Corps.”

What is SNAP? SNAP supports 27 SNAP AmeriCorps Members throughout the Sierra Nevada with the mission to develop the capacity of community-based organizations to play a leading role in the protection, restoration, and stewardship of public lands, local waterways, and working landscapes of the Sierra Nevada region. In 2008, SNAP Members are serving with 19 community non-profit groups and natural resource agencies to conduct local habitat restoration, ecological monitoring, watershed education, and volunteer recruitment in the Sierra Nevada to implement the program’s mission.

In 2006, the Sierra Nevada Alliance received a 3-year AmeriCorps grant to create and coordinate the SNAP Program from CaliforniaVolunteers, the California State Agency responsible for managing and distributing funding for state-level AmeriCorps programs in California. CaliforniaVolunteers receives its funding from the national level AmeriCorps agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service in Washington, DC.

Who Are SNAP Members? The 2008 SNAP Members were selected from an extremely talented and competitive pool of applicants. For the 27 SNAP positions, the SNAP program received over 110 applications. Nearly all of our SNAP members hold a Bachelor’s degree in rigorous fields of study ranging from natural resources sciences & policy to zoology. Additionally, a couple of SNAP Members hold Master’s degrees in fields related to the environment. Not only do 2008 SNAP members come from California, but from all over the U.S. including Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Indiana, Wisconsin, and other states. SNAP Members bring intelligence, motivation, willingness to learn, a passion for the natural world, and unique skill sets and perspectives.

Why Do SNAP Members Choose Service? There are many reasons specific to each individual, but we do find that applicants generally choose the SNAP program for the following reasons:

- Career and job opportunities in the conservation field;
- Meaningful service and to make a difference;
- Joining the environmental movement;
- Opportunity to live, work, and play in the beautiful Sierra Nevada; and
- On-the-job experience and training.

What do SNAP Members do? SNAP members serve on community-based environmental service projects to restore Sierra habitats, monitor ecosystems, teach citizens about environmental topics and issues, and recruit and support volunteerism from Sierra citizens. The projects at a given site depend on the skill sets and abilities of the SNAP member and the host organization and community needs. SNAP service begins on January 7, 2008 and concludes on December 23, 2008. A few examples of SNAP service projects in 2007 have included:

- Managing volunteer water quality monitoring programs or conducting water monitoring;
- Organizing, implementing and leading restoration projects with volunteers;
- Making educational presentations to school classes, general public, and resources managers about environmental topics in the Sierra;
- Conducting ecological assessments of land easements;
- Organizing educational events such as workshops and symposiums;
- Creating citizen's guides to different environmental topics, such as the *Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden*.

What are SNAP Members NOT allowed to do? As the SNAP member service is funded through an AmeriCorps grant, the SNAP program is given provisions for restricted Member activities. Amongst the restricted activities, the following are key activities that the SNAP members ARE NOT allowed to do while on service time with your organization:

- SNAP members are **not** expected to do general office work or support beyond what is normal for other programmatic staff at your organizations. SNAP activities should relate to habitat restoration, ecological monitoring, environmental education, volunteer support, or Member training;
- Efforts to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protest petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting or deterring union organizing;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation or elected officials (including school levies);
- Engaging in religious instruction;
- Providing a direct benefit to a for-profit entity, a labor union, a partisan political organization, an organization engaged in religious activities, or a non-profit entity without 501C(3) status;
- Organizing voter registration drives; and
- Preparing any part of a grant proposal or performing fundraising functions to help the sponsor achieve matching requirements, or to fund general operating expenses, or providing fundraising assistance to other community-based organizations.

What is the Sierra Nevada Alliance? We at the Sierra Nevada Alliance are proud to manage the second year of the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP) in 2008. Since 1993, the Sierra Nevada Alliance based in South Lake Tahoe, CA has been protecting and restoring Sierra lands, water, wildlife and communities. Our mission is to protect and restore the natural resources of the Sierra Nevada for future

generations while promoting sustainable communities. The organization is an Alliance of conservation groups that are based or work in the Sierra Nevada region. There are over ninety member groups that span the entire 400 mile mountain range.

Who Manages SNAP Members? As mentioned previously, the SNAP program staff maintains overall oversight of the program and Members to accomplish the program goals. To this end, each host site organization has an at-site supervisor who manages the SNAP Member projects, tasks, and time. The site supervisor has the direct responsibility to ensure that the SNAP member serves on meaningful service projects, receives appropriate training and mentorship, and meets the goals and requirements of the SNAP program. If you are another member of the host-site staff or an organizational partner who wants to utilize the expertise and skills of the SNAP member for your projects, these requests must be **first** approved and cleared by the SNAP member's site supervisor. During service, SNAP Members are expected to be treated as the same as other staff.

SNAP members have made a commitment to serve the Sierra in 2008 and as an AmeriCorps member they demonstrate what it means to be an active citizen. We hope that you will enjoy your experience working with a SNAP member in 2008!

For more information, please contact:

Do Lee

Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership Program Director

Sierra Nevada Alliance

Tel: 530-542-4546; Fax: 530-542-4570

Email: do@sierranevadaalliance.org