



## National Civilian Community Corps "Revitalizing Appalachia" Spring 2012 Report

### ACCT Secures Two NCCC Teams to Revitalize Appalachia

The Appalachian Coal Country Team, co-sponsoring with the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI), applied for and received two AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) Teams.

After receiving the NCCC Teams, the ACCT re-granted the Teams to our partner sites to inspire partnership and build capacity. The Atlantic

Region Team, Moose 1, served in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The Southern Region Team, River 7, served in Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, and Tennessee.

This report details the overall process and impact of each NCCC Team in each community.



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 people living within a mile of an Abandoned Mine Land.

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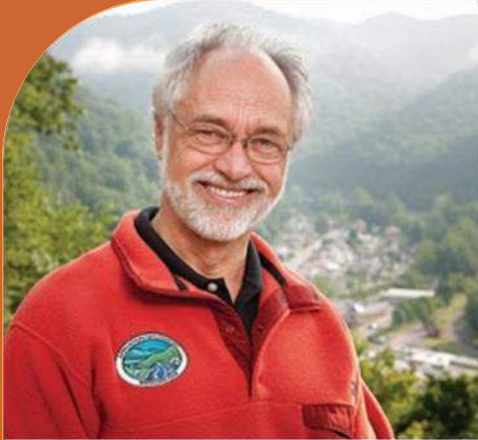
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## Team Coordinator's Message



When you consider the many challenges faced by the rural mining communities of the Appalachian coal country, simply finding enough strong bodies to do the work to carry projects forward is among the biggest of those challenges.

The ACCT had worked with the NCCC in the past in small ways, but we realized that our sites did not have the capacity to deal with a complex application and planning process required for a significant NCCC commitment. We also realized that our Support Office could –and should – mount such an effort and this report is the result of that effort.

Two NCCC Teams each worked 6 weeks full-time in communities that deeply needed – and appreciated – their help. By combining the organizing skills of our OSM/VISTAs in communities across Appalachia and the capacity of the ACCT Support Office, particularly OSM/VISTA Reforestation Coordinator Alaina Asbury, we were able to bring critical support to rural communities that would never have been able to do this on their own. This also opened new doors for NCCC in small rural places where their services are deeply needed. I think these many projects demonstrate the capacity of the ACCT Support Office, the local organizing skills of our OSM/VISTAs and the remarkable hard work of the NCCC – great work by all.



Yours in Service,

Allan

T Allan Comp, Ph. D.  
Coordinator: OSM/VISTA Teams

## Serving Appalachia's Future


Since 2009, ACCT has worked to develop a strong program to utilize the dedicated direct service of the NCCC Team members. In partnership with the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative, the focus of the Team's work in the past has been reforestation in Appalachia on legacy mine land.


This year, we engaged rural communities throughout Appalachia by having our partners apply to host an NCCC Team sponsored by ACCT. Each hosting organization was asked to define their region's need. The

NCCC Teams worked on projects such as trail building, street clean-ups, tree plantings, riparian buffer restoration, invasive plant removal, flood clean-up, building revitalization and more.

Each hosting organization received tools to aid them in planning and hosting as well as the continued assistance of the OSM/VISTA Reforestation Coordinator before, during, and after their time with an NCCC Team. Surveys were gathered from both the NCCC Team members and the hosting sites (see p.9).



 **Team: Moose 1**  
NCCC Atlantic Region

 **Team: River 7**  
NCCC Southern Region



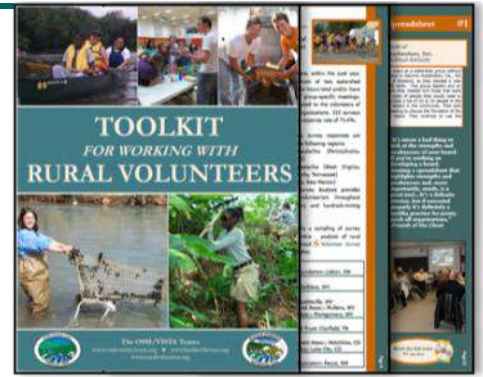
## Site Preparation

In order to assist our partners in developing a meaningful and beneficial experience for themselves and the NCCC Team members, each organization attended a Volunteer Management Consultation. Volunteerism Coordinator Jenna Fehr and OSM/VISTA Reforestation Coordinator Alaina Asbury traveled throughout Appalachia conducting these consultations.

The consultations were centered around using the *Toolkit for Working*

*with Rural Volunteers* and the volunteer management practices in an applicable manner. Attendees worked through the Toolkit and determined which trial practices would assist them in their projects. In a number of consultations, the attendees discovered that the practices sparked new ideas for their organization overall.

Another set of tools was developed by OSM/VISTA Outreach Coordinator Rachel Yoke. She prepared template press releases, a sample outreach



plan, event flyer template, and a "Taking Good Photos" document.

For more information go to:

[www.ruralvolunteer.org](http://www.ruralvolunteer.org)

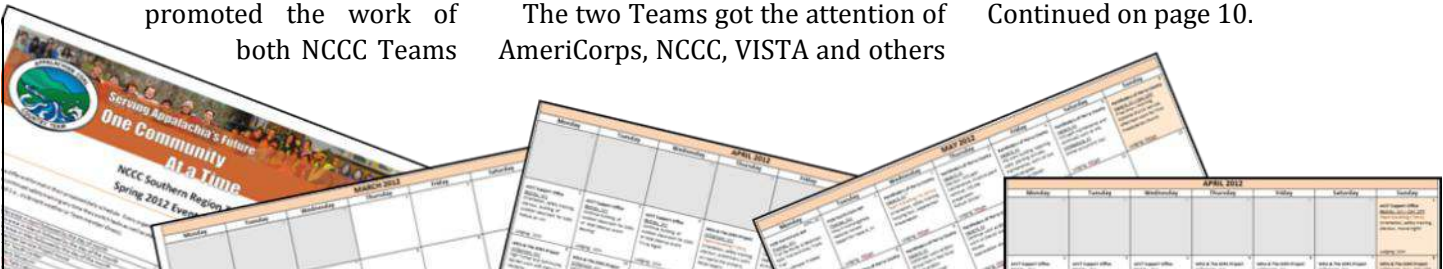
## Outreach and Social Media

Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter played a major role in the outreach conduction around the two NCCC Teams. OSM/VISTA Outreach Coordinator, Rachel Yoke, promoted the work of both NCCC Teams

throughout their service with ACCT partners. Updates from each site were posted on ACCT's Facebook, re-Tweeted, and the NCCC Teams were promoted on the ACCT website.

The two Teams got the attention of AmeriCorps, NCCC, VISTA and others

through the use of social media. This attention combined with television interviews brought much needed attention to the rural Appalachian communities in which they served. Continued on page 10.



Hosting Organization	Arrived	Departed	Location	NCCC Team
Susquehanna Greenway Partnership	March 10	April 4	<b>Pennsylvania</b> - Benton, Berwick, Bloomsburg, Shickshinny, Falls	<b>MOOSE 1</b>
Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation	April 5	April 8	<b>Ohio</b> - Lisbon	
Brownsville Area Revitalization Corp.	April 9	April 19	<b>Pennsylvania</b> - Brownsville	
Green Forests Work	March 29	March 31	<b>Kentucky</b> - Pikeville	<b>RIVER 7</b>
ACCT Support Office	April 1	April 4	<b>West Virginia</b> - Beaver, Beckley	
Williamson Redevelopment Authority	April 5	April 10	<b>West Virginia</b> - Williamson	
Upper Tennessee River Roundtable	April 11	April 17	<b>Virginia</b> - Abingdon, Coeburn, Jonesville	
Tennessee Valley Authority	April 18	April 24	<b>Tennessee</b> - Jonesborough, Johnson City, Greenville	
Friends of Blackwater	April 25	May 1	<b>West Virginia</b> - Thomas, Davis	
Pathfinders of Perry County	May 2	May 11	<b>Kentucky</b> - Hazard, Whitesburg	

## Developing a Calendar

ACCT worked with each of the sites selected to host an NCCC Team to develop a detailed work schedule.

This schedule was then worked into a larger calendar for both Teams. The calendar detailed where each Team was being lodged, the city they were working, their days off from work,

days they were traveling to their next site, community events, and a summary of that day's work tasks. This will continue to be a part of ACCT's NCCC projects.

# MOOSE 1



## Susquehanna Greenway Partnership—PA

ACCT's Atlantic Region Team Moose 1 arrived in Benton, PA on March 10th hosted by the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership (SGP). Moose 1, led by Team Leader Patrick Skovira, traveled to five towns while working with SGP and their partners. The project spanned nearly a month from March 10 to April 4 as the Team traveled to five Pennsylvania towns (Benton, Berwick, Bloomsburg, Shickshinny, and Falls).

"People were thanking the volunteers on the streets."

Moose 1 worked on a variety of projects with the focus of flood clean-up within each community. This involved debris removal from both streets and waterways. They also worked to build and restore one mile of local trails.

Team Leader Patrick Skovira commented that working in an area affected by flooding and hearing the outpouring of gratitude really made his Team feel like they made a lasting impact with their work.



## Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation—OH

The Team traveled to Lisbon, OH to experience reforestation in Appalachia between April 5-8. Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation (LBCLF) has developed many tree planting projects working with both ACCT and ARRI. Patrick Angel and Green Forests Work's Forrester Nathan Hall demonstrated proper planting technique at the event. Moose

1 worked side-by-side with other volunteers on the Scenic Vista Park legacy mine site.

Team Leader Patrick Skovira commented that LBCLF support was invaluable and, "Knowing that at the end of the day we assisted in planting just over 4,000 trees made me feel like I really contributed to improving our country."



## Brownsville Area Revitalization Corp.—PA

Moose 1 worked with the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corp (BARC) to help revitalize the downtown and surrounding community of Brownsville from April 9-19. Brownsville is in great need for large-scale impact in terms of community revitalization. Market Street runs through downtown Brownsville and is a heavy traffic area. Thus, having the NCCC Team work in this area allowed Brownsville and BARC to receive some much

**“Their presence breathed new life into our organization.”**

needed attention.

The Team worked to repaint fences, clean streets, rebuild walkways, improve landscaping and more throughout Brownsville. As it was understood that Moose 1 works very quickly, BARC had prepared a long list of tasks for the Team, the majority of which were completed. The Team also took part in BARC’s annual Spring Clean-up Event work-



ing with 16 community members which are hard to come by in Brownsville. OSM/VISTA Megan Sheesley commented, “It was great to combine forces with another branch of AmeriCorps and it really brought fantastic results to Brownsville!”



## ACCT Honors Moose 1 for Service in Appalachia

ACCT Support Office members Alaina Asbury (OSM/VISTA Reforestation Coordinator) and Rachel Yoke, (OSM/VISTA Outreach Coordinator) traveled to Brownsville, PA for a departing celebration for the NCCC Team on April 28. The event was attended by BARC board members, OSM/VISTA Megan Sheesley, the City of Brownsville’s Mayor Lester Ward and other community members.

Held at board member Connie Whiddon’s home, Mayor Ward spoke about the impact of the Team’s service in their community. He described that Brownsville has needed

a larger change for some time but they have never had the resources or the volunteers. Their work and positive attitudes shined and demonstrated to the community what can be done when people gather together with a common focus.

Moose 1 Team members were each given a personal letter from ACCT Team Director April Trent, certificates of appreciation and ACCT shirts to thank them for the service in our Appalachian communities.

### The Facts: Moose 1

- Planted **4,325 trees**
- Reforested **6.3 acres**
- Restored **2 miles** of waterway
- Beautified **148 acres** of land

- **95 volunteers** donated **1,741 hours of service** to their local community





# RIVER 7

## Green Forests Work—KY

NCCC Team River 7 was hosted in Pike Co., KY by the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) and Green Forests Work. Their project was to plant trees at the 15-year-old reclaimed mine site known as Fishtrap near Pikeville, KY.

From March 29-31, the Team planted 4,700 native hardwood tree seedlings. The Team planted 3.9 acres out of the 210 acre project. This was River 7's first experience on a mine site. The site had been ripped



according to ARRI's legacy mine research. The ripping helps speed up the natural reclamation process and also helps prevent flooding and erosion.

## ACCT Support Office and partners—WV

River 7 traveled to Beckley, WV where they were greeted by the ACCT Support Office and members of the Raleigh County Make-It-Shine Committee. From April 1-4, the Team worked with these groups as well as the School of Harmony and Shady Spring Elementary School in Beaver, WV. Upon arriving at each project, they received an orientation which introduced them to that group.

Working with the Make-It-Shine committee, the Team worked on the Tribute Triangle near the ACCT Support Office.

River 7 removed invasive and nuisance species through landscaping and developed an outdoor classroom for Shady Spring Elementary School.

The Team also divided a larger unused classroom in the School of Harmony into four private rooms. The



rooms are part of the String Wing section of the school to be used for one-on-one music lessons.

## Williamson Redevelopment Authority & The JOBS Project—WV

NCCC Team River 7 journeyed to Williamson, WV to be hosted by Williamson Redevelopment Authority and The JOBS Project April 5-10. These community organizations are dedicated to revitalizing Williamson economically, environmentally and socially.

Some of the many projects ongoing in Williamson like the community garden, orchard and farmers market.

River 7 worked to build 24 planting boxes at the community garden.

They were present for a ribbon cutting ceremony with Mayor McCormick and local community members. River 7's Joe McGrath commented, "The people we met in Williamson were amazing." OSM/VISTA Allison Carey, who was very involved in the project, led a nature hike so the Team could see the beauty of Appalachia.





## Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and Partners—VA

While working with the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable (UTRR) and partners in southwestern VA,



NCCC Team River 7 worked on both trail maintenance and riparian buffers. Between April 11-17, they developed the riparian buffers, which are forested areas consisting of native plants and trees that are planted between agricultural areas and streams.

The Team worked on a trail overseen by UTRR partner the Clinch Coalition. The trail runs through the Jefferson National Forest and has suffered storm damage over the past

few years. River 7 was able to clear debris from a section of the trail and construct log bridges.

The Team also helped construct a riparian buffer along a creek in the Tennessee River watershed. The buffer will help shade the stream, prevent runoff from the agricultural land from entering the stream, and slow stream bank erosion. This reduces the amount of harmful material that enters the stream making it healthier.

## Tennessee Valley Authority and Partners—TN

River 7 was able to assist the Tennessee Valley Authority and partners between April 18-24 by planting trees and conducting stream sampling while serving in the Smokey Mountains of TN. The Team participated in a tree planting and invasive species removal effort.

Another project that River 7 assisted was water sampling in Greeneville, TN. The Team helped the Mid-

dle Nolichucky Watershed Alliance collect samples to create a baseline analysis for further water quality monitoring. The Middle Nolichucky Watershed Alliance (MNWA) is working to improve the overall quality and health of the watershed to bring the watershed up to EPA standards. Measuring the level of diversity between species found and the overall amount of life on the riverbed



is a relatively simple and easy way to gauge the health of a stream.

### The Facts: River 7

- Planted **4,935 trees**
- Reforested **3.9 acres**
- Restored **920 feet** of waterway
- Beautified **33.5 acres** of land

- **158 volunteers** donated **1,649 hours of service** to their community



## Friends of Blackwater—WV

Working with the Friends of Blackwater (FOB) in Thomas, WV, the Team participated in many projects including trail building and renovation of an opera house. From April 25 to May 1, River 7 was able to blaze two miles of trails over a two-day period and also spent a day on general trail maintenance at Blackwater Falls State Park.

The Team had the opportunity to learn trail design to minimize erosion and how to bench trails on hills. A morning was also spent at the Historic Cottrill's Opera House in downtown Thomas.

The building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is under construction with the goal to eventually restore the building to its original condition. The Team concluded by cleaning debris from the construction project.



# RIVER 7



## Pathfinders of Perry County—KY

The last project for River 7 was located in Hazard, KY hosted by Pathfinders of Perry County (PPC) from May 2-11. The tasks for the Team included beautification and trail restoration for the International Peace Garden, Memorial Drive, Bobby Davis Park, Nature Trail and a Habitat for Humanity home. They also assisted PPC in creating a storage area for the community.

Dr. Cynthia Cole, PPC founder, commented about Team Leader Sam Gruber's leadership of River 7. She stated, "I was so impressed with how well he led and how well the group responded



to his leadership." River 7's Team members were named Dukes and Duchesses of Hazard and will also become Kentucky Colonels, the highest honor bestowed by the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



## ACCT Honors River 7 for Service in Appalachia

ACCT Support Office members OSM/VISTA Reforestation Coordinator Alaina Asbury, OSM/VISTA Outreach Coordinator Rachel Yoke, and OSM/VISTA Leader Spencer Moss traveled to Hazard, KY for a celebration to thank the Team for their hard work both with Pathfinders of Perry County and with the ACCT as a whole. The May 10th celebration also served as a farewell to OSM/VISTA Krystle Chipman and Pathfinders founder Dr. Cynthia M. Cole.

A potluck dinner was attended by Pathfinders' board members and other community members and was held at the Peace Garden in Hazard. A

farewell speech to Dr. Cole and Krystle was given, and board and community members took the time to thank River 7 for their service.

River 7 Team member Ana Rea described her experience with Pathfinders and the ACCT as inspiring, "It was very interesting to be in a part of the country I had never seen before. It was eye opening. The best part for me was experiencing a culture I knew nothing about."

River 7 Team members were each given a personal letter from ACCT Team Director April Trent, certificates of appreciation and ACCT shirts to thank them for their service.



## Spring 2012 NCCC Project Impact

At the end of each organization's time hosting one of the two NCCC Teams, they were surveyed on the overall experience both with the NCCC Team and the ACCT Support Office involvement. Each group also

gathered data on the outcomes of the NCCC Team's impact.

To determine the experience of the NCCC Team members, they were also surveyed. These topics included their overall opinion of each project, the

hosting organization, housing, meals provided and more. This information, combined with that from the hosting organizations, will be used to improve future endeavors with NCCC Teams.

	Moose 1	River 7	TOTALS
Total Hours Worked by All Volunteers	1741	1649	3390
Hours Contributed by Community Volunteers	615	742	1357
Total Number of Volunteers	95	158	253
Number of Trees Planted	4325	4935	9260
Number of Acres Reforested	6.3	3.9	10.2
Miles of Street Restored from Clean-up	2.7	1.538	4.238
Miles of Waterway Restored from Clean-up	2	0.193	2.193
Feet of Riparian Buffer Planted	-	870	870
Miles of Trails Constructed/ Repaired	1	2.5	3.5
Acres Removed of Invasive or Nuisance Species	2	17.5	19.5
Acres of Area Beautified from Clean-up	148	33.5	181.5



This chart (left) reflects the information gathered from each hosting organization for both the Northern Atlantic Region Team, Moose 1, and the Southern Region Team, River 7.

Information break-downs per group are available upon request.

## NCCC Team's Appalachian Experience

The purpose of the Volunteer Management Consultation was to aid sites in the development of a project that was not only good for the community but the NCCC Team members themselves and that is what was achieved. **100%** of the surveyed NCCC Team members felt that they **made an impact** in the community, that their work was valued and that they felt valued in return. Assistant Team Leader Joe McGrath remarked, "At the local Wal-Mart, while I was waiting outside sitting on a bench, a

local asked what I was doing and already knew of the area and what was going on and was really receptive to everything." **80%** of the Team said they gained an understanding of the Appalachian culture in their projects through service-learning.

Housing for both NCCC Teams changed throughout the project due to the many groups they were serving. **70%** of Team members rated the quality of the housing a **4-5 out of 5**. When asked if future NCCC Teams should be housed in the same loca-

tion, **83%** agreed that the housing and support from the hosting organization was perfect for their needs.

ACCT requested that hosting organizations provide at least one meal or potluck for the Team while they were at that site. In true Appalachian spirit, **every** organization provided multiple meals (if not all meals while the Team was with their group). **87%** of Team members rated the meal quality a **4-5 out of 5** and commented that meals accommodated for different dietary needs.

## Engaging in Volunteer Management

Of the fourteen responses collected from hosting sites, **92%** found the consultations helpful and beneficial to their time with an NCCC Team.

Many of the participants remarked that the meeting allowed them to focus on their NCCC project and make decisions.

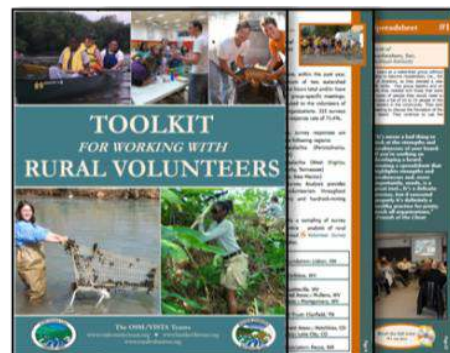
Nearly half of the participants used the *Toolkit for Working With Rural Volunteers* beyond the consultation. Pathfinders of Perry County board

member Jenny Williams, remarked that she planned to focus on a new trial practice in her meetings to help inspire new ideas.

**"That meeting helped me think about all the little details that could make the NCCC's time more enjoyable."**

Success of these consultations has made them a permanent

part of the ACCT's NCCC program. This is especially beneficial to groups who have never tackled this kind of project, hosting a group of people for



an extended period of time. All groups were given a copy of the *Toolkit* and now those resources are available at [www.ruralvolunteer.org](http://www.ruralvolunteer.org)

## Outreach and Social Media

Of the fourteen responses collected from hosting sites, **86%** found the Outreach Materials packet, prepared by OSM/VISTA Outreach Coordinator

Rachel Yoke, helpful and used all or part of the included documents such as the template press release. Almost **70%** of press releases submitted were printed by news outlets.

Many of the survey responses commented that they would like additional outreach assistance with future NCCC projects. **62%** of NCCC projects were covered by the local press and the groups would like to continue the media increase.

Social media was also a large player in the amount of media coverage for NCCC projects in Appalachia. AmeriCorps\*VISTA and NCCC reposted from ACCT's Facebook and Twitter pages. Social media outlets are a fast and easy way to spread news about events. Tumblr was used by River 7's Joe McGrath to journal their day-to-day experiences during their Appalachian tour.

"Your sites are too prepared!" laughed River 7 Team Leader Sam Gruber. Each NCCC Team has designated roles within the Team specializing in areas such as outreach. Due to the provided Outreach Materials packet and Volunteer Management Consultation, the hosting sites sent out numerous press releases to gain media attention prior to the arrival of their Team. Sam explained that his Team had very little to do in terms of outreach support as a result.

This event was not limited to River 7's Team but Moose 1 as well. Each NCCC Team is required a certain number of "media hits" which can be anything from a press release or television interview to a posting on Facebook. Moose 1 was required to only have a couple of media hits but thanks to support from the hosting sites they had more than twenty.



## ACCT Support Office Involvement

As ACCT was the sponsoring organization for both NCCC Teams, the ACCT Support Office played a critical role in the development of the spring 2012 project. OSM/VISTA Reforestation Coordinator Alaina Asbury organized each Team and provided assistance to groups throughout

their time with an NCCC Team.

Over half of the hosting sites surveyed said that the support given by the office members was more than adequate for their needs. Every group that hosted a Team stated that Alaina's support was helpful and greatly appreciated.







## ACCT's Future NCCC Teams

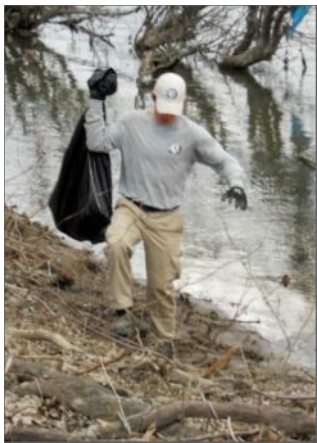
As 2013 approaches, ACCT plans to continue the successes of the spring 2012 NCCC projects by applying for future NCCC Teams to benefit our partners.

ACCT accepts project applications on a rolling basis. Applications should be continually updated as organizations make alterations in their proposed projects. Final application due dates will be announced in accordance with the NCCC schedule each year.

Our sister Team in the west, the Western Hardrock Watershed Team, has followed the ACCT NCCC program and will be pursuing their own NCCC Teams to benefit their sites. They will be using the same guidelines as established by ACCT's spring 2012 project as they develop their own program.

Interested? **Want to Apply?** Need more info?  
Email: [reforest@coalcountryteam.org](mailto:reforest@coalcountryteam.org)

## Leaving Your Legacy



### Southern Region River 7

Team Leader, Sam Gruber  
Joe McGrath  
Payten Wright  
Melissa Wilson  
Isaiah Boyd  
Brian MacDonald  
Kyle Prinkey  
Geena Trejo  
Ana Rea  
Yvette Clark  
Danielle Salvucci

### Atlantic Region Moose 1

Team Leader, Patrick Skovira  
Cody Hanke  
Ben Tripoli  
David Tillman  
Cassandra Lewis  
Ally Ramirez  
Tracy Tran  
Emily Goblirsch  
Victoria Mosher  
Chandler Ballentine

ACCT had the privilege of meeting two incredible NCCC Teams. Their dedication was only matched by their passion for service. Each member became a part of the National Civilian Community Corps with a different purpose or drive but all of them stood together as an impressive force creating a positive impact wherever they traveled. We have heard their stories, learned from their experiences and are saddened as they leave our sites for new adventures. ACCT would again like to thank each and every one of them for their service in helping to "Revitalize Appalachia".



# VISTA

Volunteers In Service To America



An OSM/VISTA Initiative

Spring 2012



## Appalachian Coal Country Team

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Beckley, WV 25801  
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We're on the web!  
**CoalCountryTeam.org**



We would like to acknowledge our partners who received a Spring 2012 NCCC Team and all of their hard work in creating a memorable experience for the NCCC Teams.

ACCT Support Office  
Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI)  
Brownsville Area Revitalization Corp.  
Friends of the Blackwater  
Green Forests Work  
Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation  
Pathfinders of Perry County  
Raleigh Co. Make-It-Shine Committee  
School of Harmony  
Shady Spring Elementary School

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Susquehanna Greenway Partnership  
Tennessee Valley Authority  
Williamson Redevelopment Authority &  
The JOBS Project  
Upper Tennessee River Roundtable  
And All of Their Partners