

West Virginia Receives National Award on Capitol Hill



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Mr. Robert Martin, CCCWV Executive Director and Dr. T. Allan Comp, ACCWT Director, receive The Corps Network's *Strategic Partnership* Project of the Year Award on February 10, 2009 on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia and the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team honored for their partnership

The Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia (CCCWV), a Beckley based nonprofit organization with multiple offices throughout the state, was recently honored at an awards ceremony on Capitol Hill with the 2009 National Strategic Partnership Award for its exceptional collaboration with the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team (ACCWT).

The ACCWT, an innovative partnership between the Office of Surface Mining, concerned with environmental reclamation and safety, and AmeriCorps*VISTA, concerned with poverty, currently consists of 33 AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteers and was founded in response to requests from small, community volunteer-based watershed groups throughout coal country to

target problems associated with the legacy of pre-regulatory coal mining in Appalachian watersheds. CCCWV serves as the fiscal agent for the watershed program that spans eight states throughout Appalachia.

The CCCWV, established in 1992, is a revitalization of the original Civilian Conservation Corps created by President Franklin Delanor Roosevelt in the 1930s. CCCs were first designed to help relieve unemployment during the Great Depression and have gained renewed interest across the country due to the current economic crisis and challenges our country is facing and President Obama's recent national call to service and volunteerism.

About the Award

On February 10, 2009, The Corps Network honored four Service and Conservation Corps with the Project of the Year Award at an award ceremony on Capitol Hill. Project of the Year awardees exemplify Corps projects in two areas: strategic partnerships and high quality service projects. Winning Corps include Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia, Mile High Youth Corps (CO), Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (NM), and Southwest Conservation Corps (CO). CCCWV received the Strategic Partnership Award that recognizes exceptional partnerships with corporations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and other entities that provide value to the Corps and their partners.

The Project of the Year award was presented to the CCCWV for its strategic partnership with the ACCWT. The ACCWT, an OSM/VISTA effort, was created through the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS); in seven years of work the group has placed 135 OSM/VISTAs with independent nonprofit watershed groups throughout eight states in the Appalachian region (PA, OH, WV, MD, VA, KY, TN and AL), has logged 124,337 hours of community service from volunteers, and has secured nearly seven million dollars of in-kind contributions. The ACCWT, headquartered in West Virginia, is the only regional organization currently addressing the unique challenges of coal country in these states; their OSM/VISTAs live and serve in some of our nation's poorest urban and rural areas. With passion, commitment, and hard work, they create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of the poverty caused by environmental degradation.

The overall goals for OSM/VISTAs are: to transition from mining to a more sustainable

“Each of the Project of the Year awardees represent the best Corps have to offer. Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia’s collaborative efforts have allowed the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team to grow into a powerful force for local conservation and improvements to the quality of life for community members in the region. Projects like this are a model for Service and Conservation Corps across the country and we applaud their outstanding work.”

Sally Prouty, President of The Corps Network

economy, drive alternative energy development and reforestation on Abandoned Mine Lands, reconnect people to their rivers and their environment, to make sustainable change more possible by enabling local volunteers to build the capacity to make change happen. As a Team, the ACCWT focuses on five core goals: build local capacity, monitor waterway quality, enhance outreach and education, engage economic redevelopment and require professional development. In this way, OSM/VISTA Volunteers become a member of the rural Appalachian community in which they serve and help arm community organizations and watershed-based projects with the training, tools, and volunteer support necessary to help local citizens become effective environmental stewards, community leaders, and accelerators of change in places indelibly marked by the environmental legacy of pre-regulatory coal mining. Together, the Team and its local partners are propelling a new Appalachian economy based on conservation and development, strong partnerships, and new hope.