



Effective Strategies for Engaging Rural Volunteers in AML Reclamation



The Appalachian Coal Country Team (ACCT)
An OSM/VISTA Initiative
www.coalcountryteam.org



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Appalachian Coal Country Team ACCT

PA, OH, MD, WV, VA, KY, TN, AL

- Founded in 2002



- Partnership between the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and AmeriCorps*VISTA (**V**olunteers In **S**ervice **T**o **A**merica)
- Assist rural communities impoverished by environmental degradation and its consequences in making their watersheds healthier places to live and work

Western Hardrock Watershed Team WHWT

CO and NM

- Founded in 2006



- Place college-educated and trained OSM/VISTA Volunteers with community/watershed organizations



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“Volunteers for Rural Watersheds” Research Project Background

- 3-year research project
 - Seeks to develop tools and resources to make volunteerism work better for rural community/watershed groups
- Started in Summer 2008
- Funding from EPA’s OWOW to explore:
 - Who are volunteers and what services do they provide?
 - What are the most effective ways to manage volunteers?
 - Why and where are these strategies successful?
 - How can we get these findings and effective strategies into the hands of as many people as possible?



Project Overview

- **Phase 1:** Collected and analyzed survey data from volunteer base of 16 organizations.
- **Phase 2:** Identified 25 volunteer management practices being done successfully by rural groups; transplanted and monitored trial practices.
- **Phase 3:** Outreach and dissemination of information through workshops, booklets, workbooks, websites, webinars, etc.



Phase 1: Volunteer Surveys

Survey instrument was constructed for volunteers with watershed groups.



It asked:

- How did these rural watershed volunteers get involved with their organizations?
- What are some of their personal characteristics?
- What capacity do they serve for their respective organizations and communities?
- How might they be further engaged in volunteer activities in the future?
- Practical issues such as volunteer availability and provision for follow-up interviews.





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	In PA	Overall
Average age (years)	52	50
Average residence in watershed	27	25
<i>Got involved in organization (%):</i>		
Through a friend	46	36
Through employer	24	14
At event	21	10
Family	16	18
<i>Most concerned about (%):</i>		
AMD	88	44
Agricultural pollution, pollution from wastewater, deforestation, illegal trash dumps		

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	In PA	Overall
<i>Participation in activities (%):</i>		
Show up at events and do what is needed	78	59
Read the newsletter	75	66
Gave money to org, including membership dues	63	52
Participate in decisions about the org's future	54	35
Made in-kind donations	46	44
Conduct environmental education	45	22
Represent the org when meeting with other groups	34	22

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	In PA	Overall
<i>Believe that watershed organization (%):</i>		
Improves local environment (strongly agree)	78	71
Produces on-the-ground results	62	46
Meetings are conducted in efficient and productive manner	49	62
Brings financial benefits to community	48	29

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- Are highly involved in local organizations, most commonly: a conservation organization (48%); a church-affiliated group (46%); a civic or political organization (44%).
- Report high civic engagement:
 - 90% voted in the 2008 presidential election
 - 82% voted in a local election in 2006 or 2007
 - 79% voted in the primary election
 - 63% contacted a member of Congress or state legislature for any reason
 - 51% contacted a local government official about a policy issue



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Phase 2: Testing Volunteer Management Practices

- Designed to identify successful volunteer management practices then monitor application by other organizations
 - Found practices or strategies being used with success by other organizations within the ACCT/WHWT
 - Transplanted 25 successful practices to the participating organizations that need them
 - Documented successes and challenges





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25 Volunteer Management Trial Practices

- Skills/needs spreadsheet for board recruitment
- Partnership with ATV groups
- Church partnerships
- Business partnerships
- Mandatory service volunteers
- Community service volunteers
- Student athlete volunteers
- Bi-monthly outreach meetings
- One-hour board meetings
- Volunteer contributions to newsletter
- Development of youth advisory board
- Formation of youth helper organization
- Wild and Scenic Film Festival
- Service learning projects
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
- Providing transportation
- Water monitoring through partnerships
- Water monitoring with individuals
- Volunteer appreciation picnic
- Constructing a rain garden
- Constructing wetlands
- Duck race
- 5k race
- Adopt-a-stream
- Fish fry





Water monitoring through partnerships



Water monitoring through individuals



Partnerships with ATV groups



Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)



Using student athlete volunteers





Church partnerships





Mandatory/community service volunteers



5k race

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Phase 3: Creation of rural volunteer management resources



- Analysis of survey data
- Compilation of 48 trial practice case studies plus original best practices
- Outreach and dissemination of information through:
 - Workshops
 - Workbook
 - Website
 - Webinar
 - And more!



Questions?



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