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Environmental News

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Hundreds of Volunteers Join Forces Today to Educate Public on Woonasquatucket River

BOSTON - EPA-New England and the R.I. Commission For National & Community Service announced that more than 300 AmeriCorps members from 13 AmeriCorps programs will be joining forces today to participate in this year's National Day of Service. Volunteers will devote the day to providing education and outreach materials on the Woonasquatucket River to thousands of residents along the river in Smithfield, Johnston, North Providence and Providence.

"This day of service brings together tremendous resources that will educate and directly involve the community," said John P. DeVillars, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's New England Office. "The combined efforts of Americorps, Save the Bay, the Providence Plan, and the many organizations and agencies involved on the Urban Rivers Team and EPA will go a great distance to ensure that people are well informed about appropriate and safe uses of the Woonasquatucket River."

The day begins with a kick-off event at 8:30 a.m. at the Roger Williams Park Casino in Providence. North Providence Mayor A. Ralph Mollis, State Senator John Celona and Kristi Rea of EPA's Urban Environmental Initiative will speak to the volunteers before they fan out into the communities to conduct the service projects.

Volunteers will be active throughout the day along the river from Smithfield to the City of Providence. They will conduct a variety of outreach activities designed to inform the public about the public health and dioxin issues surrounding the Woonasquatucket River including:

- Door-to-door distribution of "*Do's & Don't's for the Woonasquatucket River*" educational and outreach materials to thousands of households along the Woonasquatucket River.
- Distribution of outreach material to community centers, churches, day care centers and local businesses.
- Hanging "*Do's & Don't's for the Woonasquatucket River*" posters in high-visibility locations and local businesses.

In addition to outreach surrounding the Woonasquatucket River, other service activities scheduled for this year's National Day of Service include cleaning up an historic cemetery; inter-generational activities at Steere House in Providence; and brush-clearing, painting, and planting at Roger Williams Park and the Davey Lopes Community Center.

EPA-New England's Urban Environmental Initiative is a pilot program launched in 1995 to address environmental and public health problems in urban cities. The Urban Environmental Initiative program in Providence takes an active role in listening to community needs and concerns, identifying projects, and providing resources to implement projects that make measurable improvements in public health and the quality of the urban environment.

The R.I. Commission for National and Community Service is an independent, nonprofit organization whose mission is to administer and promote exemplary national and community service programs throughout the state. Founded in 1994, the Commission has enabled countless individuals to apply their talents, dedication and hard work to making significant contributions in their communities.

AmeriCorps is the national service program that engages thousands of dedicated Americans in meeting critical needs of communities. In exchange for one or two years of service, AmeriCorps Members receive educational awards to help finance their college education or pay back students loans. The thirteen AmeriCorps programs that will be participating in the National Service Day are:

AmeriCorps VISTA
The Big Picture Company
CCRI AmeriCorps
CityYear Rhode Island
Community HealthCorps
The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
The National Civilian Conservation Corps (NCCC)
Parents Making a Difference
Partners in Learning, City of Pawtucket
Providence Children's Museum
Providence Summerbridge
Rhode Island Children's Crusade
Youth Build Providence

For health related questions and information, please contact the Family Health Information Line at the Rhode Island Department of Health at: 1-800-942-7434. The Family Information Line, operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. On evenings and weekends, callers may leave a name and telephone number. Hotline staff will return the call on the next business day.

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