

SCA Public Safety Management Intern Training Teleconference Report

5 Nov 09, 1200-1330 Eastern Time

Introduction: This teleconference was held to update those interested in the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Public Safety Intern training initiative. Rachel Garren, Assistant Manager of the National Water Safety Program is leading this particular effort for HQUSACE. Steve Austin is the HQUSACE proponent for SCA in general. Ray Auger is the primary SCA liaison to the Corps and he encourages those who have specific SCA questions to contact him at 603/543-1700 ext. 144 rauger@thesca.org..

HQUSACE Overview of Student Conservation Association (SCA) Partnership:

- Steve Austin explained that we have an agreement with the US Army at Fort Detrick, Maryland that allows us to use SCA under their contract. WRDA 2000 authorized us to do this. It took 18 years for SCA to get this agreement with DOD. Everything you need to know about working with SCA is available for review on the NRM Gateway at <http://www.corpslakes.usace.army.mil> . The SCA Public Safety Intern training program is being led by Rachel Garren, Assistant Manager of the National Water Safety Team.
- A map showing locations of USACE partnership efforts with **SCA from 2003-2009** was provided along with highlights of some of the SCA accomplishments with the Corps.
- Steve explained that SCA interns are considered contractors and hosted workers/volunteers are not authorized to wear the Corps NRM park ranger **uniform**. They are provided with SCA uniform polo shirts, t-shirts and name tags. Some projects have opted to put them in volunteer uniforms as show in the uniform catalog to better identify them as Corps volunteers.
- A question came up about whether or not SCA intern employees can **drive government vehicles** and the answer is yes. However, for some types of SCA employees like the 15-18 year olds students, only their SCA crew leaders are allowed to drive.

Testimonials from those who have used SCA Water Safety Interns:

- Dorie Murphy explained their experience in **Ft. Worth District, Trinity Lakes** with hiring 3 Water Safety SCA Intern in 2009. Interns worked 40 hrs/wk. and made over 17,000 interpretive contacts in 3 months. Their SCA's wore a volunteer uniform with their SCA name badge. Dorie clarified post-call that their total cost for these 3 interns was \$8,582. The training the Corps provided these interns was spread throughout their term, but it included First Aid/CPR, USCG Boating Safety Course, and their 5 key messages for water safety. Most of their efforts focused on leased areas since that is where most of their drowning occur. Their interns did not conduct campground interpretive programs and only performed informal interpretation. Housing was provided in a nearby college dorm. Because their interns were college aged it was felt that they were better able to reach that young adult target demographic with safety messages. They plan on hiring 4 SCA's in 2010.

- Carolyn Bauer explained that **Nashville District** has projects that have successfully used SCA interns for water safety in the past, but have opted to use STEPs in 2010 so they can have more people in a ranger uniform. For their training, they provided water safety program outlines that are on the NRM Gateway and Bobber the water safety dog information.

HQUSACE Coordinator for SCA Public Safety Intern Training: Rachel Garren

- **Cost Comparisons (STEP, SCEP employees to SCA interns)-** Rachel explained a spreadsheet she provided everyone that estimates the lowest grade STEP employee costs of a GS-01/step 1 at \$10,014.05 for 3 months, when you include the FY 2009 13.86% Rest of US pay and the 2.18 burden rate. Burden rates vary with each district. This compares to the 2010 estimated costs of an SCA intern for the same 3-month time frame at a base rate of \$3,975 (see recruiting description below for more information on conservation intern terms and costs). SCA recruiting cost is included in that base rate, but housing costs are not. There may be additional costs such as mileage fees or training that would increase costs from the base rate. However, SCA intern costs can decrease from the base rate if recruiting is done locally by the Corps. Also, local recruitment usually means the additional housing cost is eliminated.
- **Draft SCA Public Safety Intern Job Description-** Jean Nauss suggested that the desired experience section be further clarified by stating that it is not mandatory. Pam Doty suggested the ability to swim be moved to the desired section. Rachel made those changes in the attached draft and she requested everyone review the job description and let her know if there are further additions or suggestions.

SCA Overview: Ray Auger

- **Grants to cover Training Costs** - Ray explained that there are some USCG boating safety and other grants that SCA could apply for to cover the costs of a USACE/SCA public safety intern training. However, the USCG deadline is the end of Jan and the review process takes about 120 days so it usually isn't awarded until mid-May so it may be difficult to accomplish that for 2010. He mentioned Jennifer Austin is the one who handles SCA's grant applications.
- **SCA Hiring Process** - Ray explained that generally all a project needs to do to initiate the process of hiring an SCA is to fill out a SCA conservation intern employee request form. The sooner this form is submitted, the better people can be found. Further details on this process can be found on the NRM Gateway or at their <http://www.thesca.org> web site. For SCA Public Safety Interns we already have a job description developed, therefore SCA will load this core information into the online request form system and create a password/login so individual projects can easily complete the few remaining request form questions as appropriate to their site. Certain required information will be unique for each project – site contacts, housing description, site description, if local only applicants, etc.)
- **SCA Payment Process** SCA interns are eligible for an AmeriCorps educational voucher that reimburses them for a portion of their tuition. SCA covers a small stipend, interns living allowance, round-trip transportation to their work site, and liability

insurance. All the Corps' needs to do to cover their portion of SCA Intern cost is send a MIPR to Millington Finance Center to cover our costs. This process is explained in detail on the NRM Gateway.

- **Housing requirement** - Housing must be provided if SCA handles the recruiting of your SCA employees. Some USACE offices have used dormitories, ski condos (off season), GSA trailers, pop-up trailers, FEMA trailers, or rented housing locally to minimize costs. The local project does not have to deal with landlords, rental payments etc. The Corps simply covers the cost of housing in the MIPR and SCA handles payments etc. Housing costs can be avoided if the Corps local office does their own recruitment.
- **Recruiting options** (SCA or local): SCA includes the cost for recruiting and hiring SCA Conservation Intern employees for us in the base amount provided in cost comparison (see above). When SCA handles recruiting they provide each project with a pool of applicants to choose from. They find that many of their applicants like the idea of going somewhere away from their home base. However, Corps projects now have the option to handle recruiting locally so they don't have to provide housing and that reduces Corps costs. The Corps can name select/suggest local individuals for SCA consideration under this and other SCA programs, however, the SCA is unable to cover the costs of advertisements in local papers if USACE recruits. Posters, news releases, etc. for local distribution by the Corps may be provided by SCA upon request. Ray also mentioned how Corps managers have used the SCA program to recruit locally when they had difficulty with the Federal hiring process.

SCA interns can serve in positions ranging from 12-weeks to 52-weeks. Interns serving over 16-weeks move into a higher cost category as their weekly living allowance raises from \$75/week to \$160/week plus their other benefits increase such as full health insurance. A site can elect to have the intern receive a higher weekly living allowance. The cost will be adjusted accordingly.
- **NPS PRM Intern Pilot Program-** Rita Corliss and Emily Poore described the National Park Service (NPS) Public Risk Management Intern Pilot program. Their training was funded by the NPS Washington Office and the total cost for travel, food etc. was \$28,000. It was held in mid-June 2009 for a week at Mt. Rainier National Park. These SCAs worked at 14 different National Parks. They plan on training 15 in 2010. Their training only covers informal interpretation and it includes several other safety-related types of work that wouldn't be applicable to the Corps training.

USACE/SCA Public Safety Intern Training: Rachel Garren

- **Training date/timeframe** – Possible training dates and time frames were discussed including the last week in May and first and second week in June. The consensus was that it should be early in the recreation season, but conflicts with school graduations, the busy Memorial Day weekend, and other training (i.e. visitor assistance) held at that same time frame would make it impossible to please everyone. Several suggested that providing CPR/First Aid locally or requiring employees to have that in advance would reduce the need for a five-day training program. Most preferred a 3-day training if it was held nationally.

- **Training location** – Rachel explained that most of those who initially responded to the June 2009 inquiry about using SCA Public Safety Interns in 2010 were in the mid-west. Therefore, a training location that most could drive to near a major airport hub city i.e. St. Louis would minimize training costs. Those outside of the Midwest said that sending interns to a centralized training would be cost prohibitive. Regionalized or project training for interns would be preferred.
- **Training curriculum** – The types of topics that were initially planned for this training include interpretive services and outreach, search and rescue, boat handling, event coordination, and all aspects of land and water-based recreation safety to include water, bicycling, hiking, camping, and hunting safety. It was suggested that curriculum be developed and provided to districts for local or regional training of SCA interns. Another suggestion was to hold a “Train-the-Trainer” (T3) session to develop a cadre of permanent staff who would use the curriculum. Steve Austin said that curriculum would benefit our own people as well as any SCA interns because currently the training for water safety “is all over the board.” Lynda Nutt, National Water Safety Program Manager, suggested that T3 could happen at the National NRM conference coming up in March or at regional ranger conferences. Rachel requested volunteers to assist her in developing curriculum. Dorie Murphy, Charlie Fenwick, Pam Doty, and Rick Magee volunteered to assist.

Field Feedback/Comments on SCA Public Safety Interns in 2010 –

- LRD, Huntington District, Paint Creek Lake OH, Patricia Hixon – Like the concept of a national training, but would prefer having curriculum to be used locally. Estimate 2 SCA interns in 2010.
- LRD Nashville District, Carolyn Bauer – Would prefer a shorter 3-day training by taking off the 1st Aid/CPR. No SCA interns in 2010.
- MVD, St. Paul District, Rick Magee, Brian Turner – Would prefer local training but unsure if using any SCAs Public Safety Interns in 2010. They do plan on hiring other types of SCA interns in 2010.
- MVD, St. Louis District, Wappapello Lake, Andrew Jefferson – They are interested in hiring 2 interns. Training in June may be difficult because they have special events most weekends. They had initially responded that housing would not be available, but they have a few options i.e. Boy Scout lodge, FEMA trailer, and Forestry Camp that they are looking into.
- MVD, St. Louis District, Lake Shelbyville, Pam Doty – Interested in 2 interns. Suggested the week of 7-11 June for a 3-day training.
- NWD, Kansas City District, Bunnie Watkins – Listening in for Gary Foster so she would have to check with him to see if there is any interest.
- NWD, Omaha District, Jean Nauss – Prefer that training be developed that could be handled locally.

- NWD, Portland District, Scott Moore – No known interest in SCAs for 2010. Prefers the idea of no centralized national training location.
- SAD, Jacksonville District, Heather Burke, Robert Schnell – Anticipate 1 SCA and would prefer training be developed that they could provide locally.
- SPD, Sacramento District, Jonathan Friedman – Very interested but they don't have funds for SCA interns in 2010 or 2011. Jonathan suggested that HQ budget to fund training nationally and that challenge handshake funds be considered to cover these costs.
- SPD, San Francisco District, Nancy Rogers – Nancy said they plan for 2-3 interns in 2010 and they prefer the localized training and Train-the-Trainer suggestions. They are considering having housing provided by a fire station. Nancy also shared during the call that she started as an SCA employee.
- SWD, Fort Worth District Dorie Murphy, Mike Stegall – Dorie said her SCA interns come on board the next to the last week in May and she needs them on board before Memorial Weekend. Dorie plans for 4 interns in 2010 and she has concerns about the costs of a National training. Mike said they are interested at Sam Rayburn but they are looking into the housing problem.
- SWD, Little Rock District, Jon Hiser, Roger Howell – Mt. Home Project Office Bull Shoals & Norfolk Lakes are interested in 1 intern, but they would prefer handling training locally.

Teleconference Summary:

SCA Public Safety Interns cost considerably less than STEP/SCEP employees and can assist our rangers at the project level in educating our visitors and promoting the safe use of our lands and waters. Generally speaking we can hire at least two SCA conservation interns for the same cost as one STEP employee. At the time of this call, Corps projects plan to hire a total of 12 SCA Public Safety Interns in 2010. A centralized training time and location was determined to not be the most cost-effective approach to training SCA Public Safety Interns at this time. However, if funds can be obtained through grants to SCA, HQUSACE funding, or challenge handshake partnership funding everyone agreed that an organized effort to train interns has many benefits. A team has volunteered to assist Rachel in developing SCA Public Safety Intern training curriculum to be shared with the field. It is well known that SCA has a reputation for recruiting outstanding interns, many who have become some of our best USACE employees. It is hoped that this effort to develop USACE training for SCA Public Safety Interns will lead to a continuation of that tradition.