



**SUNY ROCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Suffern, New York**  
**Wildlife Habitat Restoration**

**SCHOOL**

SUNY Rockland Community College  
Two year college  
145 College Road  
Suffern, NY 10901

**ABSTRACT**

SUNY Rockland Community College partnered with AmeriCorps and United Water Company to restore a wildlife habitat as an ecological and educational resource. This ongoing project was started in the summer of 2008 and continued in 2009 and 2010. The cost to the College was \$3,390.00 partial support for eight AmeriCorps student workers. The College also provided \$1200.00 to purchase plants and other supplies. A natural resources inventory was performed and appropriate plants were selected to enhance the habitat. A trail through the habitat was laid out with rocks and mulch, and a trail guide was developed to emphasize diversity, sustainability, food webs, watershed protection, prevention of pollution, and growth of invasive plants.

**GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

**Goals**

The goals of the project were to:

- inventory plants and animals in the habitat
- enrich the habitat with plants that would provide food and shelter
- identify polluted areas and remediate, if possible
- identify and remove invasive plants
- establish a safe trail through the habitat
- compete National Wildlife Habitat certification
- develop trail guides appropriate for spring, summer and fall
- encourage professors to bring classes through the trail

The future expectations for the habitat will be maintenance of the trail and educational signs.

**Accomplishments and Outcomes**

The goals were achieved. A Trail Guide for spring has been developed, guides for summer and fall are in the planning stage. The Wildlife Habitat Trail has been used for about 400 local elementary school children, pre-school children and the college ecology class. Many of the plantings have flourished and provide more food and the bluebird house has a nest. It is very difficult to itemize how many more animals utilize the habitat as a result of the restoration.

A policy developed in conjunction with this project is prohibition of pesticides.

## **Challenges and Responses**

The major challenge encountered in this project is the vast amount of poison ivy in the habitat. The educational material emphasizes the positive role of poison ivy in the food web of the habitat, but keeping it off the trail has been accomplished by hand removal. Chemicals are not allowed for weed control. There is so much poison ivy beyond the trail that the entire habitat cannot be used by students, they must stay on the trail.

## **Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint**

This project does not address climate change. RCC is actively involved in reducing the carbon footprint in other projects.

## **Commentary and Reflection**

This project had a great deal of support from the community (AmeriCorps and United Water Company) and from the administration of the College. We had a great deal of moral support and enthusiasm from the faculty, students and staff of RCC. Every time we take students and professors it is amazing how much they learn from the habitat! This has been an enjoyable and rewarding project for all involved.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

#### Organizations and Committees

- Rockland County AmeriCorps
- United Water Company of Rockland County
- Rockland Community College Institutional Ecology Committee
- Rockland Community College Faculty Senate Inter-disciplinary Environmental Education Committee
- Rockland Community College Grounds Department

#### Individuals

- The President of RCC, Dr. Cliff Wood is instrumental in the success of the Wildlife Habitat by providing financial support and enthusiastic encouragement.
- Lorinda Hill, Assistant to the Director of Plant Facilities, is the primary administrator of the Wildlife Habitat Project. She recruits, trains and supervises the AmeriCorps student workers and coordinates their activities with the Grounds Department that provides support services. Ms. Hill works with the professors who provide the educational component of the trail guide.
- Kathy Galione, Director of Rockland County AmeriCorps works with Lorinda Hill to provide AmeriCorps student workers.
- Susan Brydon Golz, Ph.D., Professor of Science supervised the natural inventory and guided the student workers in choosing plants for habitat restoration. She wrote the Trail Guide and leads groups through the trail. Dr. Golz also trains other teachers to lead students through the habitat.
- Pete Enea Head Grounds Keeper 2008 - 2009
- Kenny Bachert, Head Grounds Keeper 2010

## **Funding and Resources**

RCC provided \$3,390 for Americorps workers and \$1,200 for supplies. United Water Company donated \$1250 the first year for Americorps workers.

## **Education and Community Outreach**

Local public schools have been very interested in the Wild Life Habitat. Approximately 400 students have taken the tour. The after school day care class of the RCC day care center took the tour. The Ecology Class took the tour and the professor now has the information to do the tour herself. Faculty from the education program were taken on the tour so they can bring their classes in the future.

## **National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program**

The Campus Ecology program was very instrumental in providing motivation and guidance for the wildlife habitat. Earning the NWF Wildlife Habitat Certification and posting the signs gave significant recognition to the project.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **Case study submitted by:**

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## **MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL**

### **Campus Sustainability History**

RCC President Dr. Cliff Wood signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment to reduce the carbon footprint. The RCC Institutional Ecology Committee was formed to calculate the carbon footprint (completed in 2009) and develop a plan to reduce this footprint (ongoing). The RCC Faculty Senate Inter-Disciplinary Environment Education Committee promotes the incorporation of environmental issues in all academic programs.