

US Fish and Wildlife Service DOI/VISTA

FY 2016 Quarter Three: April 1 - June 30, 2016



DOI/VISTA ORLANDO MEDINA DURING A WORKSHOP ON SINGING ENDEMIC BIRDS

3 DOI/VISTAs

80 Youth served in an educational setting

235 Community Members Attending Events

45 People receiving environmental training

The United States Department of the Interior Volunteers in Service to America (DOI/VISTA) initiative supports underserved communities in using public lands for employment opportunities, health, and education.

Julia Whitten - Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) - Denver, CO



An ELK community gardening training event.

In her first quarter, Julia Whitten began some large-scale planning and project development at both ELK and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Julia facilitated an event in conjunction with the Montbello Youth Council that highlighted plans for community engagement in the outdoors developed by area youth. At this event, youth leaders were able to network with elected officials and community leaders from various organizations and nonprofits.

- ◆ **190 COMMUNITY RESIDENTS ATTENDING EVENTS**
- ◆ **80 YOUTH SERVED IN AN EDUCATION SETTING**
- ◆ **190 DISADVANTAGED YOUTH RECEIVING SERVICES**

Julia has begun to familiarize herself with the community, with ELK, and with ELK's relationships to other organizations in the region.

Moving into the future, Julia will focus on developing stronger bonds between the community and ELK. She will also grow and develop the friends group for Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

Antonio Valdes-Dapena - Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge - Albuquerque, NM

In his first quarter, Antonio has been forming a group to work on a Logic Model for the refuge. The Logic Model will outline the refuge's visitor service goals. These goals include fostering a conservation ethic in the local community, proliferating environmental literacy, and generating environmental justice in the South Valley of Bernalillo County.

The logic model will be paired with a 'decision tool', which will evaluate the success of programs at the refuge as they are conducted. Antonio's biggest achievement this quarter has been facilitating progress on the Logic Model by forming a core group of authors to help write the remainder of the document.

Antonio is also initiating a database, using Microsoft Access, which will track the refuge's partners, their programs, agreements, and contacts. Using this tool the refuge can organize its partners, compare programs efficacy, and better access partner organizations' contacts. This creates a degree of organizational sustainability for the refuge's community outreach projects.

Orlando Medina—Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge—Boquerón, PR

Orlando is serving a second year with the Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge VISTA Project. The project has resulted in the development of community lead home garden workshops at the refuge. Orlando started giving home garden workshops after work hours this quarter, which has had positive results with **30 community members** now volunteering and assisting with the talks and workshops. The Facebook group 'Mi Huerto Rico' already has **130 members** all from communities adjacent to the Refuge.

- ◆ **45 INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING AGRICULTURAL TRAINING**
- ◆ **190 COMMUNITY RESIDENTS ATTENDING EVENTS**

In the first workshop of the season, the refuge distributed mixed-seed bags so community member could add more variety to their home gardens, or even start brand new gardens. The bags were called 'Yo Siembro' (I Plant). During the second workshop community members had the opportunity to learn transplantation techniques, and participants received lettuce sprouts which they could transplant to their home gardens. During the third workshop, Fransisco Orsini (VISTA Summer Associate) did a demonstration of how to build a cheap earthworm composter. The Salt Flats greenhouse at the refuge is also expanding with the addition of a butterfly garden. The infrastructure for the project is complete, and now butterfly-attracting plant varieties are being introduced. A group of Girl Scouts have been helping with the development of the greenhouse every Saturday in June. The Scouts are learning the skills needed for planting and maintaining a greenhouse. Orlando has also been contacting volunteers to keep working on the web page project associated with the greenhouse. He also gave two talks at the Cabo Rojo Lighthouse Festival, one about home gardens and another about recent studies with an endemic bird, the Adelaide's warbler.

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