

# VOLUNTEERS



helping people help the land

## Earth Team Volunteer Path Led to NRCS Employment

It may have taken 19 years for Loren Muldowney to become a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee, but in her mind it was worth the wait! Muldowney became employed by NRCS Marshall, Minnesota Area Office in 2011 as a Water Quality Specialist. A career with NRCS is something she had long desired and finally her dream came true!

Back in 1992 while Muldowney was attending Graduate School at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, an NRCS staffer at a career event encouraged her to make certain that she included enough soil course work to qualify as a Soil Scientist for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Muldowney followed this advice and took the necessary course work, becoming increasingly interested the more she learned.

To further explore career work as a Soil Scientist, Muldowney became an Earth Team Volunteer (ETV). She worked approximately 1 day/ week for a summer in the New Jersey State Office under the supervision of former NJ State Soil Scientist Ron Taylor. Her work duties consisted of doing manual digitizing of soils information and various other tasks in the state office.

Looking back on her experience as an ETV Muldowney credits her supervisor for making a positive impression of the agency, SCS. "Everyone there treated me like a potential colleague, taking time to answer my questions thoroughly and exposing me to as many interesting experiences as possible," Muldowney reports. It was at that time she fell in love with the Soil Survey, a relationship which continues to this day.

Over many years following, Muldowney worked as a soil and environmental scientist for a civil engineering firm, as a private consultant, and most recently for the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station.



*Earth Team volunteer, Loren Muldowney was recently hired as a NRCS Water Quality Specialist in Minnesota.*

In 2010, she became a once per week ETV again and worked for a year out of the Freehold, New Jersey Field Office, this time as a conservationist in training. This experience proved to be a useful gateway to Minnesota NRCS.

For now, Muldowney has settled down in Minnesota and is enjoying her new job as Water Quality Specialist! Looking to the future, she envisions taking a role in encouraging others to become Earth Team Volunteers. "For somebody who has time to invest, it can lead to training and career opportunity. It's a chance to work on real problems, do some real good, interact with dedicated, smart people, and become knowledgeable about natural resource issues of national scope," Muldowney states. "Who wouldn't want to do that?"

The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact the National Earth Team office at (888) 526-3227 or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/volunteers](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/volunteers).