

Conservation Corps & The Great Outdoors

Enhancing America's Recreation Experience | July 2018



**The
CorpsNetwork**

Strengthening America through
service and conservation



AmeriCorps members from **Southeast Conservation Corps** (based in Chattanooga, TN) build a boardwalk.



COVER IMAGES:

Front:
[L] American Conservation Experience
[R] Heart of Oregon Corps

Back:
[L] Wyoming Conservation Corps,
University of Wyoming
[R] Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa

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About Service & Conservation Corps

Service and Conservation Corps (Corps) provide young adults (ages 16 – 30) and veterans (up to age 35) the opportunity to serve our country, advance their education and obtain in-demand skills. Serving in crews or individual placements, Corpsmembers perform important conservation, recreation, infrastructure, wildfire and disaster response, and community development projects on public lands and in rural and urban communities. The nation's 130 Corps annually enroll over 25,000 youth and veterans across all 50 states, DC, and the US territories.

About The Corps Network

Established in 1985, The Corps Network is the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. Our 130 Corps provide young adults and veterans the opportunity to serve our country through projects on public lands and in rural and urban communities. The Corps Network supports Corps by advocating on their behalf, providing access to funding and project opportunities, and by offering expertise in Corps operations and programming.



AmeriCorps member from **Northwest Youth Corps** (based in Eugene, OR).

Executive Summary: Conservation Corps and the Great Outdoors

The outdoor recreation economy continues to grow, with economic benefits for both rural and urban communities. Millions of Americans explore the Great Outdoors each year, visiting local, state, and federal lands to recreate, relax, and further their understanding of our nation's heritage. Many communities, businesses and non-profits realize they need to engage the next generation to ensure continued investment in these outdoor resources. Through expanded public-private partnerships between land management agencies, Corps, and other recreation groups, America can increase outdoor recreation opportunities and the associated economic benefits.

Modern Corps descend from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a Great Depression-era program that developed much of the recreation and public lands infrastructure still in use today. Unlike the CCC – which was a large, federal program, most of today's Corps are non-profits. The majority of the [more than 130 organizations](#) that are part of The Corps Network – the national association of Service and Conservation Corps – receive AmeriCorps funding – allowing them to enroll participants and leverage additional funding to complete projects on public lands.

Conservation Corps support activities like hiking, biking, camping, hunting, and fishing by partnering with land management agencies to put young adult and veteran Corpsmembers to work conserving, developing, and maintaining the great outdoors. Corps are cost-effective partners, helping resource managers extend limited funding through joint-fundraising and matching resources.

In addition to engaging young adult and veteran Corpsmembers, Corps partner with sportsmen and women groups and recreation-focused organizations to engage volunteers in projects that maintain our lands and waters, ensure productive fish and wildlife habitat, and promote continued access to outdoor recreation. By giving young people and the public the opportunity to serve on public lands, Corps help develop the next generation of outdoor stewards, recreationists, and entrepreneurs. In fact, a study found that, following their service, Corpsmembers planned to engage in twelve additional recreation activities per year than a comparison group. Corpsmembers also reported being more likely to purchase outdoor gear or apparel and spend more money on outdoor activities.

As policymakers at the local, state, and federal level focus on building the outdoor economy, Corps will be an essential partner in helping conserve and maintain outdoor spaces and access to recreation opportunities. This report makes the case that policymakers at all levels of government should focus on the recreation economy and increase the amount of recreation-focused partnerships and projects on public lands. Such partnerships will help expand access and visitation to the Great Outdoors and develop the next generation of outdoor leaders.

Record Visitation and Interest in Outdoor Recreation

A sizeable portion of the American population, as well as international visitors to our country, partake in outdoor recreation activities. Year after year of increasing visitation to our public lands and waters, coupled with the expansion of an outdoor industry that rivals that of any other country, suggests outdoor recreation is a growing staple of the American experience.

During this year's National Park Week, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke announced that 2017's record visitation of 331 million visitors at America's 417 National Park Service sites contributed \$35.8 billion to the U.S. economy – a nearly \$1 billion increase from 2016. In addition, 84 million people annually use the more than 158,000 miles of U.S. Forest Service-managed trails in 45 states and Puerto Rico, including 31,900 miles in designated wilderness areas and 10,000 miles of national scenic, historic, and recreation trails. This trail use contributes more than \$9 billion in annual visitor spending and supports 143,000 jobs.

The 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation found that 101.6 million Americans 16 years and older – 40 percent of the U.S. Population – enjoyed some form of fishing, hunting, or wildlife-associated recreation in 2016.

Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation, Hunting and Fishing Activities

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the economic impact of outdoor recreation activities:

Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA)

The Bureau of Economic Analysis within the U.S. Department of Commerce measures the size of outdoor recreation economy and its relationship to the broader U.S. economy. According to data covering 2012-2016, the outdoor recreation economy [accounted for 2 percent](#), or \$373.7 billion, of current-dollar GDP in 2016.

The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA)

OIA, the leading trade association of the Outdoor Industry, released its third [Outdoor Recreation Economy Report](#) in 2017, concluding outdoor recreation generates \$887 billion in consumer spending, 7.6 million jobs, \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue, and \$59.2 billion in state tax revenue.

Hunters, Anglers, and Wildlife Watchers

[Expenditures](#) by hunters, anglers, and wildlife-watchers topped \$157 billion dollars in 2016. This equates to one percent of Gross Domestic Product. One dollar out of every \$100 of all goods and services produced in the U.S. is due to wildlife-related recreation.



A New Outdoor Recreation Agenda

Leaders at all levels of government and non-governmental organizations have embraced these new economics and are working to implement policies that not only support, but also promote the importance of outdoor recreation to the economy. Several examples of this new emphasis on the outdoors include:

Department of the Interior

National Advisor for Recreation Position

In April 2018, Sec. Zinke issued [Secretarial Order \(SO\) 3365](#), creating the position of Senior National Advisor to the Secretary for Recreation. Responsibilities of this new position include identifying regulatory barriers; promoting responsible development of recreation opportunities on public lands; exploring new streams of revenue generation for recreation; and promoting public-private partnerships where feasible.

Sportsmen, Access, and Conservation

Through various Secretarial Orders, DOI has further demonstrated its commitment to outdoor recreation. These orders have included measures aimed at [increasing access to recreation](#) on public lands and waters, [boating](#), and [hunting and shooting sports](#).

“Made in America” Recreation Advisory Committee

This Committee is tasked with [providing the Secretary of the Interior with recommendations](#) for policies and programs that expand and improve visitor infrastructure developed through public-private partnerships; implement sustainable operations embracing fair, efficient and convenient fee collection and strategic use of the collected fees; improve interpretation using technology; and create better tools and/or opportunities for Americans to discover their lands and waters.

Habitat Improvements for Big Game Migration Corridors

[Secretarial Order \(SO\) 3362](#) directs DOI bureaus to collaborate with a number of Western states in support of the enhancement of big-game winter range and migration corridor habitat on public lands. With the migration routes intersecting federal, state, tribal, and private land, the order prioritizes collaboration to restore, conserve, and research these corridors.

U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Forest Service Strategic Priorities

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages approximately 25 percent of America's federal land. USFS [priorities](#) align closely with DOI priorities, as demonstrated through the agency's commitment to: promote shared stewardship by increasing partnerships and volunteerism; improve the condition of forests and grasslands; and enhance recreation opportunities, improve access to forests, and sustain infrastructure.

National Forest System Trails National Strategy

The USFS has been working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop a new [National Strategy](#) for a Sustainable Trail System. The National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System establishes a set of core values that will guide the behaviors and efforts of the agency and its partners. It also commits the Forest Service to take action in six different areas to meet the challenges of achieving a sustainable trail system – including expanding partnerships with Corps.

National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act

The National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act was passed in late 2016 to help the Forest Service address deferred maintenance. It also directed USFS to identify [15 priority areas](#) to target for increased maintenance, and develop plans to increase engagement with partners and volunteers in trail maintenance.

State Outdoor Recreation Industry Offices

Several states have formed their own Outdoor Recreation offices. These states include California, Colorado, Maryland, Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. These offices provide a central hub for communities, businesses, individuals, and other constituencies that recognize the value of outdoor recreation. Additionally, they help coordinate and develop policies and programs to promote the Great Outdoors and related industries.

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable

Officially formed in early 2018, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR), the new voice for outdoor recreation across America is a combination of the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable, a coalition of America's leading outdoor recreation trade associations, (formed in 2017) and the American Recreation Coalition (ARC), an organization of recreation interests who have advocated for outdoor recreation issues for more than three decades. The new entity will advocate on behalf of a multi-billion-dollar industry sector with a focus on growing the outdoor industry; increasing access to public lands and waters; promotion of public-private partnerships; addressing backlog maintenance on our public lands; and encourage the next generation to get outdoors. The Corps Network is a proud member of the Roundtable and will work to promote recreation infrastructure enhancement and engagement with the next generation of recreationists.



Outdoor Stewardship Week & Great Outdoors Month™

What started as Great Outdoors Week under President Clinton in 1998 has grown significantly under the Trump, Obama and Bush Administrations into a month-long celebration (in June) of the outdoors and all the associated health, social and economic benefits. Throughout the month, a diverse group of organizations across the country offer a range of organized recreation activities to #EscapetheIndoors and connect with nature.

The Corps Network hosts [Outdoor Stewardship Week](#) (#ServeOutdoors) as part of Great Outdoors Month. The week serves to raise awareness of the role we can all play in helping maintain the places and habitats that support our favorite outdoor pastimes. Many of the activities promoted during Great Outdoors Month – including trail use, camping, boating, and fishing – would not be possible without proper stewardship of our outdoor infrastructure and resources. The message of Outdoor Stewardship Week is one that Corps exemplify every day in the field.

Outdoor Stewardship Week culminates with The Corps Network's Great Outdoors National Day of Service. This day aims to engage people in the preservation of America's natural spaces, and seeks to raise awareness about the role of service and stewardship in protecting and improving public lands and waters.

Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service has prioritized investments in infrastructure improvements as part of its 2018 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition. The funds will support improvement of recreational assets, including inland waterways, public parks, levees, and infrastructure associated with solid waste transit and wastewater management. Performance outcomes for projects supported by these funds include measures like “miles of trails or waterways improved.”

PHOTO: AmeriCorps members from **Southwest Conservation Corps** (based in Durango, CO) prepare to hike to a project site, where they will live and work for several days

Partners in Outdoor Stewardship & Engaging the Next Generation

Increasing Focus on Public Private Partnerships for Stewardship

Central to an expanded recreation agenda is the expanded role of partnerships between resource managers and Conservation Corps, volunteers, partner organizations, and “friends” groups. With shrinking budgets and the expansion of maintenance needs for assets directly tied to visitor experience, land managers increasingly turn toward public-private partnerships (PPPs) with community and user-based organizations to accomplish priority projects.

These groups bring significant resources through match-funding and the donation of in-kind resources in the form of the materials and labor. For example, in addition to their own \$50 million a year in outdoor stewardship projects, Corps develop and manage opportunities for volunteers to serve on public lands through activities like volunteer events. In 2017, Corps helped generate 513,707 volunteer hours, valued at over \$12.6 million ([\\$24.69/hr](#)).

When Americans visit the public lands and forests their tax dollars support, they expect them to be in good shape. Secretary Zinke and Secretary Perdue have been vocal about the need to address the maintenance backlog on our public lands. Currently, the National Park Service alone has a deferred maintenance backlog calculated at more than \$11 billion.

If repairs are left unchecked, they could create impediments to continued visitation and recreation, and serve as another deterrent to the roughly half of the American public that stays inside. Surrounding communities whose economies depend on parks would also feel the impact of decreased park visitation.

Engaging the Next Generation of Outdoor Leaders

While our country’s park visitation and recreational statistics are impressive, a 2017 [report](#) by the Outdoor Foundation found that only 48.6 percent of Americans reported participating in at least one outdoor activity in the preceding year. That means half the population does not participate. One way to encourage more Americans to get outdoors is through Corps and expanded recreation-focused project partnerships between Corps, land management agencies, and recreation groups. Through service, Corps help young people, veterans, and community volunteers experience public lands. The work Corpsmembers and volunteers accomplish – including building trails, restoring habitats, and installing park infrastructure – helps expand access and opportunities for others to experience the Great Outdoors.

By restoring public lands through engaging the energy, talent, and commitment of young adult and veteran Corpsmembers, we are fostering future stewards and champions of the Great Outdoors. Corps help create future recreationists, sportsmen and sportswomen who will drive purchases of outdoor equipment and supplies and further strengthen the outdoor recreation economy. A recent Texas A&M study gauging the impact of a Corps experience found Corpsmembers are likely to participate in more outdoor recreation activities in the future and more likely to spend money on outdoor recreation gear than a control group.



A 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Movement to Enhance the Great Outdoors

One effort to keep up with the demand for public lands maintenance is the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Initiative (21CSC). The 21CSC is a national initiative to, through public-private partnerships, annually engage 100,000 young adults and veterans in service to strengthen our outdoor infrastructure and public lands.

There are currently more than 220 official 21CSC member organizations across the country that collectively engage tens of thousands of young people every year in completing quality, cost-effective maintenance and improvement projects on public and tribal lands and waters. The programs of the 21CSC help address the backlogged maintenance needs of land and water management agencies; enhance outdoor recreation opportunities; improve the accessibility of public lands; and respond to wildfires and other natural disasters.

PHOTOS: [Left] **Citizens Conservation Corps** (WV) performs maintenance on a historic horse stable at Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. [Right] **Montana Conservation Corps** partners with agencies on fencing projects to assist with wildlife management.



#CorpsWork for the Great Outdoors

Corps are tailored to the needs of their community and partners. Corps utilize a strategy of “putting service to work” to ensure meaningful projects are accomplished while the Corpsmembers develop in-demand career skills and gain on-the-job training. In partnership with recreation and sportsmen groups, Corps complete a wide variety of projects. Examples include:

- Multi-use trail development and maintenance;
- Recreation access improvements;
- Campground enhancements;
- Fish and wildlife habitat improvements;
- Dock and water access development;
- Habitat and water quality monitoring;
- Invasive species remediation;
- GIS mapping;
- Wildlife inventories;
- Wildfire remediation;
- Restoring infrastructure, including signs, fences, cabins, and housing; and
- Preserving historic structures, monuments, and housing

PHOTOS: [Left] **American Conservation Experience** engages Corpsmembers in trail maintenance at iconic national parks throughout the American West. [Right] Through a partnership with NOAA and state agencies, **California Conservation Corps** engages post-9/11 veterans in restoring and maintaining habitats for salmon and steelhead.

Why Partner with Corps?

There are numerous benefits to partnering with Corps, including engaging the next generation of diverse conservation leaders. Corps also offer project cost-savings that allow federal land management agencies to accomplish more work with limited budgets.

Corps are embedded in their communities

Around half of Corpsmembers are female and over half identify as racial or ethnic minorities. Corps offer an opportunity for diverse young people and veterans to, through service, learn about resource management careers and gain hands-on work experience. Serving in a Corps could qualify Corpsmembers for federal non-competitive hiring eligibility.

Corps are cost-effective and show up ready to work

By bringing matching funds and community support to projects, Corps are cost-effective partners for land and water agencies. Additionally, Corps are insured, manage their own recruitment, and provide crew supervision. Engaging Corps can help increase the capacity of land management staff, allowing them to complete projects sooner and focus on other priority areas.

For example, one land management agency found that using Corps saved, on average, 65 percent over using their own crews, and 83 percent over contractor crews. In one study, ninety percent of 1,500 Corps project partners evaluated the work of Corps as “good or outstanding,” while virtually all federal project partners (99.6 percent) said they would work with Corps again.

Corps typically complete around \$50 million worth of projects for federal land management agencies each year. In 2017, Corps across the country had the following project outcomes:

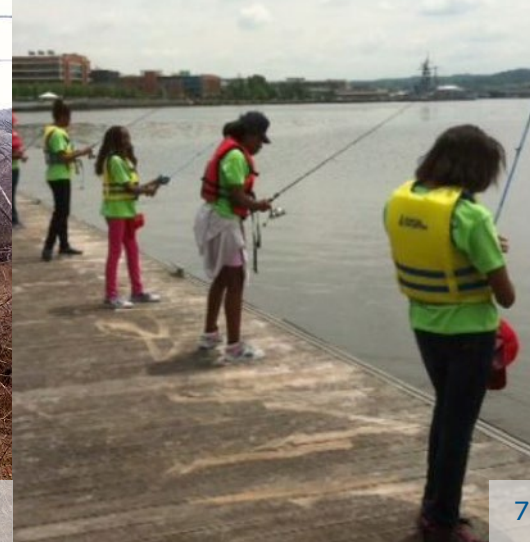
- **1.6 million** acres of wildlife habitat improved and made accessible;
- **1.5 million** trees planted;
- **365,000** acres of invasive species removed;
- **32,000** acres of fire fuel reduced;
- **22,000** miles of multi-use trails constructed and improved;
- **16,000** recreation facilities improved;
- **8,200** acres of erosion, landslide, and flood prevention;
- **2,600** miles of fish and waterway habitat restored;
- **500** wildfires and disasters responded to; and
- **190** historic structures preserved.



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Project Examples

#CorpsWork to Enhance the Great Outdoors

ALASKA

- Partner:** Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage (NSAA)
Corps: Anchorage Park Foundation
Location: Anchorage Alaska

The Anchorage Park Foundation worked with the Municipality of Anchorage and the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage to create sign standards and begin phase-one of an Anchorage Park Foundation Challenge Grant Campaign for a system-wide sign upgrade. This included installation of signs, maps and kiosks. Challenge Grant funds were used to install new signs in Kincaid Park. The NSAA is in the process of updating the ski trail map, including purchasing satellite aerial imagery from the Alaska Center for the Environment GIS Service. NSAA designed kiosk graphics to, along with trail information, incorporate a wildlife education theme into the panels.

CALIFORNIA

- Partner:** Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCCMB)
Corps: California Conservation Corps
Location: San Luis Obispo, CA

In partnership with California Conservation Corps and the Forest Trails Alliance (a non-profit mountain bike trail advocacy group), CCCMB is working on an extensive trail project at Montana de Oro State Park. The project includes rerouting the four-mile Oats Peak with seven miles of sustainably constructed trail, as well as the construction of several miles of new trail. Partners performed all of the mechanized construction on the project utilizing a mini-excavator and a skid steer.



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- 3** **Partners:** California Deer Association, Mule Deer Foundation
Corps: California Conservation Corps
Location: Plumas National Forest - Quincy, CA

According to the U.S. Forest Service, the Basin Aspen Habitat Enhancement project is an ongoing partnership between California Conservation Corps (CCC), California Deer Association, Mule Deer Foundation and the Feather Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest. Due to its condition at the time, and the importance to Mule Deer and other wildlife, conservation groups have teamed up with CCC and the Feather River Ranger District to treat and enhance 40 acres of aspen habitat within the Basin project area. The CCC removed encroaching small diameter conifers that were competing with young aspen sprouts and affecting the health and vigor of larger aspen trees. Approximately 64 acres of the 185 acres have been treated and enhanced.

COLORADO

- 4** **Partner:** National Wild Turkey Federation
Corps: Southwest Conservation Corps & Western Colorado Conservation Corps
Location: Dolores River North - Naturita, CO

For the past seven years, Corps have worked on collaborative restoration along the Dolores River, supporting the Dolores River Restoration Partnership's ecological and stewardship goals. In this partnership project, Corps worked to increase the number of acres of sustainable, healthy riparian and floodplain plant communities in the watershed while reducing those dominated by tamarisk and other invasive plant species. Riparian restoration work benefits aquatic species such as the Roundtail Chub and Flannelmouth Sucker. It also helps with the control of tamarisk (which have invaded vast stretches of the Dolores River); reduces fuel loads and associated wildlife threats; and improves access for wildlife and hunters. Turkey hunters will especially benefit from the greater access and higher-quality habitat, where native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees are beginning to replace formerly dense stands of tamarisk and Russian knapweed. A diverse plant community in the historic floodplain will provide better groundcover for small mammals; forage for mule deer, black bear, and other large game; and nesting habitat for multiple bird species.

- 5** **Partner:** Colorado OHV Programs
Corps: Southwest Conservation Corps
Location: Rio Grande, Saguache and Conejos Counties, CO

Southwest Conservation Corps worked to implement single-track trails in the Limekiln and Greenie Mountain systems through a combination of new construction, trail restoration, and conversion of two-track roads to single-track motorized. Additionally, kiosks will be installed at various locations throughout the San Luis Valley. The work was completed by Southwest Conservation Corps trail crews in conjunction with volunteer projects coordinated and led by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado.

- 6** **Partner:** Ducks Unlimited
Corps: Weld County Youth Corps
Location: South Platte River Basin, Colorado

The Weld County Youth Corps Association received a grant from Ducks Unlimited in 2014 to help mitigate invasive plant species along the area's rivers and protect the state's water resources. Water users in northeast Colorado's South Platte River Basin see invasive phreatophyte plants (deep-rooted plants that obtain water from permanent ground supplies or from the water table) as a major problem. A study conducted last year by the Colorado Water Institute showed that invasive phreatophyte plants continue to increase in the South Platte basin, resulting in large quantities of non-beneficial consumptive water use—perhaps as much as 250,000 acre feet per year, or 80 billion gallons. Weld County Youth Conservation Corps cleared woody vegetation from a sandbar in the South Platte River. Afterward, the sandbar was re-contoured to benefit the waterfowl and shorebird populations which have declined recently due to loss of habitat. Water level controls were also repaired or replaced.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- 7** **Partners:** Southeast Community Partners, Family of Ed Semans, Jr.
Corps: Earth Conservation Corps
Location: Anacostia River - Washington, DC

The Anacostia River was once among the most polluted rivers in the United States. Thanks to the efforts of many in the local community—including the Earth Conservation Corps (ECC)—fish and wildlife have returned to the area. "Friday Night Fishing" is a program designed to show families all that the Anacostia River now has to offer. During the summer, ECC holds an "introduction to fishing" event every Friday Night at Diamond Teague Park. ECC supplies the bait and rods to catch and release fish. It's a free event for parents and their children. Many of the attendees have never been fishing before or have never considered recreational activities on the Anacostia. The kids get plenty of help from staffers and volunteers. Professional bass fishermen work with the program as well.



IDAHO

- 8 **Partner:** Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
- Corps:** Great Basin Institute
- Location:** Challis, ID

The primary work of this project, originally known as the Bayhorse Trail Connector, consisted of converting a network of user-created motorcycle trails and Jeep roads into a designated ATV trail linking the town of Challis, ID to the Bayhorse Townsite, a mining ghost-town that has been converted into a “history park” and Off-Highway Vehicle trailhead by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The project was a cooperative effort among federal, state, and nonprofit entities. Interpretive material, trail layout and design, and trail construction were provided by the Bureau of Land Management. The grant for funding was written and administered by the Great Basin Institute, which also provided Conservation Corps Crews to rehabilitate the trailhead area and trails, and staff specialists to design the interpretive panels and oversee project implementation. The town of Challis is now seeing an economic boost from the project.

IOWA

- 9 **Partner:** Pheasants Forever
- Corps:** Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa
- Location:** Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge - Bancroft, IA

In the fall of 2014, Corps worked on the Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to chemically treat invasive trees and brush scattered throughout approximately 320 acres of the Maynard Reece Wilderness Protected Area (WPA) and 15 acres of the Bison WPA. The Corps assisted with prescribed burns on approximately 220 acres of prairie and wetland habitat on Union Slough NWR and 155 acres of the Prairie Smoke WPA. Corpsmembers also assisted with collecting native wet prairie seeds and wetland seeds for use in habitat restoration and improvement projects on Union Slough NWR and surrounding WPAs.

MAINE

- 10** **Partner:** Friends of Baxter State Park
Corps: Maine Conservation Corps
Location: Baxter State Park - Millinocket, ME

Since 2009, Friends has provided nearly \$250,000 in donated trail support to Baxter State Park through a partnership with the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC). With support from Maine's Recreational Trails Program, as well as L.L. Bean, Eaton Peabody, and the Davis Conservation Foundation, Friends hires MCC teams and donates their services to Baxter State Park. Teams have performed thousands of hours of maintenance work on popular trails like Saddle and Chimney Pond, and have carried out major relocations on Mount OJI and the Abol Trail.

MINNESOTA

- 11** **Partner:** Northern Pine Riders Snowmobile Club
Corps: Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa
Location: Willow River, MN

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa worked in partnership with Northern Pine Riders Snowmobile Club on various snowmobile trail locations along their 157-mile system in Willow River, MN. The purpose of the project was to clear trails of windfalls caused by three major storms in June and July 2016. In addition, Corpsmembers assisted with the repair of trail bridges damaged by flooding in July. Five Corpsmembers worked to accomplish a variety of tasks such as repairing fuel tanks, constructing shelving units and cleaning out culverts on a trail.

- 12** **Partner:** Minnesota Waterfowl Association
Corps: Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa
Location: Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge - Zimmerman, MN

For three years, Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa has assisted Refuge staff with prescribed burning and fuels projects, as well as other maintenance projects (such as fence installation) when weather does not permit prescribed fire. To date, crews have completed approximately 2,660 hours of work over 2,000 acres of prescribed fire; 1,000 hours of fire-line prep; 200 hours of trail work; 1,000 feet of fencing; and 50 hours of wildlife surveys. For birders, a major attraction at this refuge is the Sandhill Crane population. Corpsmembers help keep count of the cranes and improve their habitat. The prescribed burn projects in particular are intended to encourage the growth of native and more productive habitat for other waterfowl, small game, and deer, which can be hunted at the refuge.



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MONTANA

- 13** **Partner:** Cabinet Backcountry Horseman
Corps: Montana Conservation Corps
Location: Kootenai National Forest - Northwest Montana

In the fall of 2016, Cabinet Backcountry Horseman partnered with Montana Conservation Corps. For one week a MCC crew helped Cabinet Back Country Horsemen construct turnpikes and dig drainage ditches to improve a spring-laden section of the Midge Creek Trail in the far northwest corner of Montana. Over the course of just four days, nine individuals (three Cabinet Backcountry Horsemen and six MCC members) constructed three sections of turnpike totaling 144 feet, excavated 330 feet of drainage ditches, installed seven culverts and restored an additional 20 feet of existing turnpike. The Midge Creek trail provides access to the Northwest National Scenic Area and is part of the 1,200-mile Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail that connects the Continental Divide Trail to the Pacific Crest Trail. There were three areas between the 1.5 mile and 2 mile section of this trail that traversed through numerous springs, seeps and bogs. These areas desperately needed drainage and surfacing to maintain and improve the trail and protect the water and recreational resources.

OREGON

- 14** **Partners:** Deschutes Basin Native Plant Seedbank, Clearwater Native Plant Nursery, Winter Creek Restoration Nursery, Volunteer Connect, Central Oregon's volunteer center, SOLVE IT Central Oregon, BLM - Prineville District
Corps: Heart of Oregon Corps
Location: Steelhead Falls, OR

Steelhead Falls on the middle Deschutes River is one of the crown jewels of Central Oregon. Thousands of people find their way there to picnic, camp, hike, fish, kayak and bird watch. It is only a half mile from the trailhead to the falls, but the trail continues on for miles. As a result of increasing recreational use and winter storms, the Steelhead Falls Trail had deteriorated. Washouts caused by storms, together with informal trails created by hikers, kayakers, and fishermen, are a serious problem. Along with erosion, there has been a huge increase in invasive weeds at the trailhead and along the trail. Corps worked with partners to undertake a 10-month restoration project around the parking lot at the trailhead and along the trail to Steelhead Falls.

SOUTH CAROLINA

- 15** **Partner:** National Wild Turkey Federation
Corps: Greening Youth Foundation
Location: Edgefield, SC

Greening Youth Foundation partnered with the National Wild Turkey Federation with the goal of providing exposure and on-the-ground training to Corpsmembers in a diversity of natural resources conservation activities, including, but not limited to: habitat management; wildlife conservation and management; nuisance species management; and outreach and education of youth visiting the NWTF headquarters, surrounding public lands, and attending local events.

TENNESSEE

- 16** **Partners:** American Hiking Society, L.L. Bean
Corps: Southeast Conservation Corps
Location: Tennessee

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Sherman Reservation, the 30-acre adjacent undeveloped public land, and the urban Glass Street neighborhood worked in concert to allow residents access to outdoor space. The Corps constructed a new 2-foot-wide, 1.5-mile-long walking trail to use for both recreation and to increase access to Sherman Reservation. The resulting outdoor facility provides a much needed access point to the 50-acre Sherman Reservation from the community, and a usable, local, natural space for youth to discover hiking. The project was also completed in time to accommodate the surge in visitors expected for the National Park Service Centennial in 2016.

TEXAS

- 17** **Partner:** Rock-About
Corps: Texas Conservation Corps
Location: Austin, TX

Rock-About, Austin's premiere rock climbing and outdoor adventure company, partnered with Texas Conservation Corps. Rock-About pursued the relationship after committing to a zero waste goal. Since then, the company has implemented a "Leave No Trace" policy – tightening environmental practices and donating a percentage of sales directly to TxCC. The campaign supports TxCC's environmental projects, such as building sustainable hiking trails, improving public lands, and conducting habitat restoration.



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UTAH

- 18 Partners:** Common Ground Outdoor Adventures, Logan City, local Boy Scout members, U.S. Forest Service
Corps: Utah Conservation Corps
Location: Wasatch-Cache National Forest - Richmond, UT

Through the "Access to Service Project," Utah Conservation Corps developed service projects to include crew members with disabilities. Fifty percent of the eight-person crew self-identified as having a physical disability. Disabilities among members included quadriplegia, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury and cerebral palsy. In the first of their two main projects, the inclusive crew partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to conduct an accessibility evaluation of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest and create a transition plan to help them meet federal requirements. They developed a user-friendly accessibility survey form that has become the standard for the region. They completed accessibility surveys for eight campgrounds and two trails and developed 10 transition plans, immediately addressing the issues identified in one of the transition plans by constructing a fully accessible fishing pier at Second Dam picnic area in Logan Canyon. The second project involved developing an accessible greenhouse. Using adapted gardening tools, the crew grew tomatoes, peppers, onions, eggplant, squash and herbs in raised beds and tabletop planters.

- 19 Partner:** Trout Unlimited
Corps: Utah Conservation Corps
Location: Spanish Fork River - Utah

In 2018, the UCC will partner with Trout Unlimited to work on the Spanish Fork River to restore the highly altered stream channel for functional improvement while maintaining a local connection to the river and its opportunities for recreation. The UCC crew will remove invasive species and replace them with native vegetation, helping the floodplain's resiliency. Mapping will also aid in future planning efforts and engineering for further projects throughout the entire river corridor.

WASHINGTON

- 20** **Partner:** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Corps: Washington Conservation Corps
Location: Quinault, WA

For the past 10 years, WCC has been working in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. The partnership project is funded by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and has continued to expand over the years. Corpsmembers work with the U.S. Forest Service to clear, fell and thin overcrowded second growth timber stands. Roosevelt elk feed on herbaceous plants, such as grasses and sedges. The project promotes regeneration of understory vegetation and forage for Roosevelt elk.

WEST VIRGINIA

- 21** **Partner:** Burning Rock Adventure Park
Corps: Citizens Conservation Corps
Location: Sophia, WV

Located in Sophia, WV, Burning Rock Adventure Park offers over 100 miles of off-road trails for ATV and outdoor enthusiasts. Each trail is unique because the trails are designed for every skill level. Eighty miles of trail are for ATV riders, and the other 20 are for dirt bike riders. Citizens Conservation Corps serves as the conduit by which trail maintenance, building and development efforts occur. Burning Rock opened to the public in October of 2008. Since opening, it added a general store, zipline, cabins, platform tents, and ATV wash. There are plans for expansion, including a second trailhead allowing convenient access to the western trails.

WYOMING

- 22** **Partner:** Wyoming Pathways, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Corps: Wyoming Conservation Corps
Location: Pole Mountain Unit, Medicine Bow National Forest, Wyoming Forest Gateway Community Priority Area

This project is one of 15 priority sites designated by USFS to implement the Trail Stewardship Act of 2016 – a bill which called for volunteer labor as an answer to a growing maintenance backlog. Wyoming Pathways secured state funding for a multi-year trail maintenance project that began in 2017. Plans are underway to continue that work in 2018 with help from groups such as the University of Wyoming Outdoor Program and Wyoming Conservation Corps.



Photo at Right: Shannon Broderick, Boomerang Photography

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