
ANNUAL REPORT 2024

CONSERVATION
LEGACY

conservationlegacy.org

Engaging future leaders who protect, restore, and enhance our nation's lands through community-based service.

Reflecting on a Year of Connection and Conservation

Dear Supporters of Conservation Legacy,

This past year, we were called to show up in ways that mattered—deeply, urgently, and with purpose—with over 2,500 young people answering the call to serve. Across communities and landscapes, our work was guided by a clear and steady mission to engage young people who protect, restore, and enhance our nation's land through community-based service.

Resilience, grit, and community carry us forward. This year, we witnessed firsthand the power of individuals stepping up to serve, lead, and rebuild—whether on fire-scarred trails, in rural towns seeking economic revitalization, or in communities grappling with change and challenge. Their stories are the heartbeat of this report.

This annual report is not just a reflection on what we've accomplished—it's a testament to what is possible when service meets opportunity. With every hour served and every project completed, we generated real economic impact: putting people to work, supporting local economies, restoring public lands, and equipping the next generation with skills and purpose.

We invite you to explore these pages as a celebration of what we've achieved—together. Thank you for standing with us, investing in this mission, and believing in the transformational power of service and community.

With gratitude and hope,

Amy Sovocool
President, Conservation Legacy







SNAP SHOT | 2024

2,524 PARTICIPANTS

Including crew members, crew leaders, leadership development participants, field staff, individual placements, youth participants, and AmeriCorps VISTA placements.

EIGHT LOCAL/NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Over **35,395** applications were received for **1,099** position postings—crew and individual placement service opportunities across Conservation Legacy. Many crew postings, such as those for crew leaders and members, were filled by multiple participants.



OVER \$30 MILLION

in AmeriCorps Education Awards earned by participants



1+ MILLION
SERVICE
HOURS

2024 FINANCIALS

TOTAL REVENUE: \$57,508,063

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$53,559,755

**total
revenue
by
program**

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---------|
| ■ | Stewards Individual Placements | \$18.3M |
| ■ | Southwest Conservation Corps | \$9.9M |
| ■ | Arizona Conservation Corps | \$6.7M |
| ■ | Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps | \$8.6M |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------|
| ■ | Appalachian Conservation Corps | \$4.7M |
| ■ | Conservation Corps New Mexico | \$3.5M |
| ■ | Southeast Conservation Corps | \$2.3M |
| ■ | Conservation Corps North Carolina | \$2.4M |

COMMUNITY-BASED LOCAL PROGRAMS





Answering the Call

Conservation Corps North Carolina Responds to Hurricane Helene

WHEN HURRICANE HELENE TORE THROUGH communities in North Carolina and across the eastern United States, it left behind more than downed trees and damaged homes—it left families and neighborhoods in need of care, resilience, and dedicated support. In the face of that devastation, thousands of AmeriCorps members, including a crew from Conservation Corps North Carolina (CCNC), mobilized to meet the moment.

Disaster Relief

CCNC stepped up to help North Carolinians begin the long process of recovery—removing debris, managing logistics, distributing essential supplies, and supporting families who had been displaced. In the wake of the devastation, AmeriCorps CEO Michael D. Smith visited the CCNC office in Bahama, North Carolina, where he learned firsthand about their ongoing recovery efforts.

“The AmeriCorps NCCC and AmeriCorps NCCC FEMA Corps teams I met with exemplify the courage and devotion of their peers across the country who help families recover and rebuild in the wake of devastation,” Smith said. “We see from the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene how vital it is that we have trained, compassionate,

service-minded members and volunteers ready to mobilize when our nation needs these skills the most.”

For the AmeriCorps members on the ground, this work is deeply personal.

Giving Back

“Being able to serve Western North Carolina has meant everything to me,” said William Nguyen. “Giving back to my home state has been a very powerful and impactful experience.”

Crew member Rachel, originally from Pennsylvania, shared: “It means a lot to do something good, and to learn skills not just for my own benefit. I’ve spent the longest time away from home, and learned so much about community and friendship from the people of North Carolina.”

As an Appalachian, Oli Wood described what it meant to serve in their home region: “It was beautiful seeing so many different corps from all around the country come together to serve my home. I’ve always known Appalachia to be strong and I’m so happy to have gotten to share that with so many people.”

AmeriCorps members responded not only across North Carolina—in places

like Raleigh, Whiteville, Hendersonville, and Clyde—but also in South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Washington, DC. Teams tackled everything from warehouse operations to disaster survivor assistance, diaper distribution to donations management, gutting water-damaged homes to providing crisis support at FEMA headquarters.

A Commitment to Community

Executive Director of CCNC, Jessie Birkhead, echoed the gravity and pride in this moment: “Conservation Corps NC is committed to developing the next generation of conservation leaders for North Carolina, and our partnership with AmeriCorps is critical to that mission. In the coming weeks and months, our staff and members will support recovery efforts and help impacted communities begin to rebuild.” Through it all, one thing became clear: national service is not only a response to disaster—it’s a commitment to community, to each other, and to the belief that we are stronger when we stand together. “This deployment created a whole new environment filled with new challenges that allowed myself and my crew to grow our skills in ways we never expected,” said Oli. “We are all stronger in a new way.”

SOURCE

- [AmeriCorps Supports Disaster Recovery in North Carolina, Continues to Support States Impacted by Hurricane Helene | AmeriCorps](#)



Quotes from CCNC Crew

"I feel a lot more connected to North Carolina. A lot easier to say NC is my home due to the emotional connection. Hard to say if I'm from Louisiana or NC due to all the time I've spent here. Felt the community of the Conservation Corps very deeply, realized there are so many like minded people. Deeper appreciation for AmeriCorps as a whole." – Stewart

"Being able to serve Western North Carolina has meant everything to me. Being able to get back to my home state has been a very powerful and impactful experience, that I am glad I got the opportunity to do." – William

"My service has meant for me to use all the skills I have to contribute to the communities of Western North Carolina. Doing this in a meaningful, long lasting way that will make sure people get the resources they need to be okay. It's been a great opportunity to learn what disaster relief work looks like, become a better leader, and use teamwork to get the job done." – Rese

"As an Appalachian, it was an honor to serve Western North Carolina on this deployment. I was able help my home with my friends by side. This deployment created a whole new environment filled with new challenges that allowed myself and my crew to grow our skills in ways we never expected. From organizing diapers to collaboration to warehouse operations, we are all stronger in a new way. It was beautiful seeing so many different corps from all around the country come together to serve my home. I've always known Appalachia to be strong and I'm so happy to have gotten to share that with so many people." – Oli

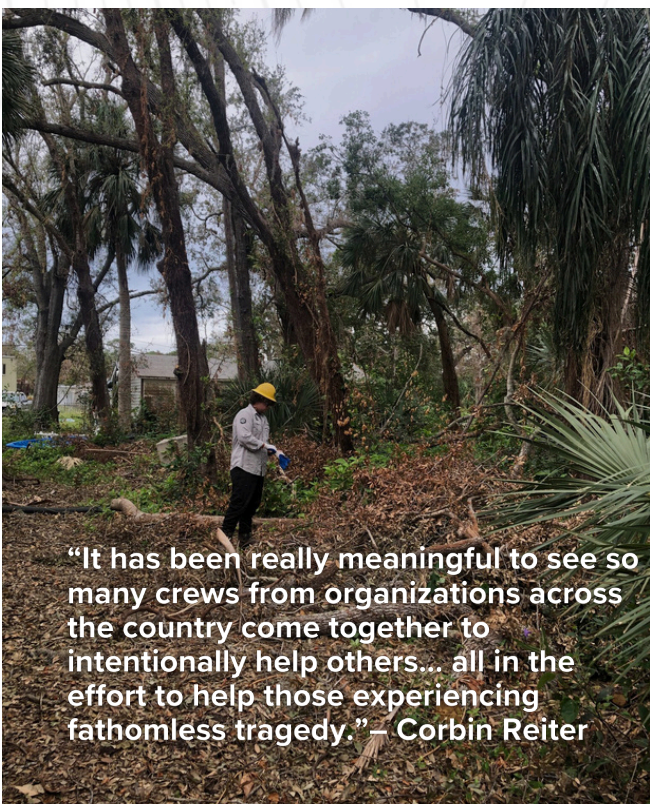


Rebuilding Hope

Southwest Conservation Corps Responds to Florida's Hurricane Recovery



"The compassion they showed not just to me but to each other... was nothing short of inspiring. Their hard work has not only helped us move forward to potentially restore our family home—it has also provided a sense of hope." – Homeowner in Florida



"It has been really meaningful to see so many crews from organizations across the country come together to intentionally help others... all in the effort to help those experiencing fathomless tragedy." – Corbin Reiter

IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANES Helene and Milton, communities across Florida's Gulf Coast were left reeling from back-to-back devastation. Homes were flooded, entire neighborhoods displaced, and thousands were left without the means to rebuild. Stepping in to meet this urgent need were AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams, including crews from Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC), who deployed to Florida as part of a nationwide recovery effort.

By November, 183 AmeriCorps members and program staff were on the ground in Florida, working alongside partners like the American Red Cross, FEMA, and Hernando County Emergency Management. SCC crews joined this response under a FEMA mission assignment, offering critical services like mucking and gutting, debris removal, and shelter support in areas hardest hit by the storms.

AmeriCorps CEO Michael D. Smith once again visited the region, meeting with AmeriCorps members, touring recovery sites, and hearing directly from impacted homeowners. One such homeowner, whose family home was nearly destroyed by the storms, shared a letter of deep gratitude following two full days of support from SCC members.

"Their actions have set a truly powerful example of what it means to come together in the face of adversity."

For the SCC members themselves, the experience was both humbling and transformative. "It's been heartwarming and humbling to assist folks in returning to some semblance of normalcy," said Carson Miller. "Expanding our community to those in need has been immensely impactful and fulfilling."

From mucking out homes to moving heavy debris under the Florida sun, the work hasn't been easy—but SCC members have shown up with purpose and heart.

This united effort is part of a broader deployment involving over 480 AmeriCorps members across six states and the District of Columbia. SCC, alongside conservation corps from around the country, helped form a full incident command team in Florida, demonstrating the strength of coordinated, boots-on-the-ground national service. "This work doesn't just impact people's property but strengthens people's spirits," said CEO Michael D. Smith. "It's good to know that people have your back."

For SCC, being part of this mission was a natural extension of their commitment to service, community, and resilience. What began as a disaster response has grown into something deeper—a reminder that when people show up for one another, rebuilding becomes possible.

SOURCE

- [AmeriCorps Members on the Frontline in Florida Aid Hurricane Recovery Efforts on the Gulf Coast | AmeriCorps](#)



Quotes from SCC Crew

"Equally challenging mentally and physically as it is rewarding to impact and directly help those in need. Being able to connect with folks who I normally would never interact with, and have meaningful conversations with them has led to a lot of introspection of my ways of life and what my needs and wants mean in the grand scheme of disasters, materials possessions and relationships".
-Spud

"It's been an empowering and rewarding opportunity to work with different conservation corps and volunteers to help those impacted by the hurricanes. It's also been wild to see how much communities unite during these times of crisis. Removing damaged belongings from disaster impacted homes puts how I view my own life and problems into perspective."
-Anonymous member quote

"It's been heartwarming and humbling to assist folks in returning to some semblance of normalcy. Expanding our community to those in need have been immensely impactful and fulfilling." -Carson

"It has been really meaningful to see so many crews from organizations across the country all come together to intentionally help others. So many folks not only set aside their personal lives but stepped up in their roles to go beyond what was previously expected of them, all in the effort to help those experiencing fathomless tragedy." -Corbin



Community and Economic Impact

Conservation Corps New Mexico Crews are reviving local trades and inspiring youth in Dry Stone Masonry, Carlsbad Caverns National Park

From February 26, 2024, to August 16, 2024, Conservation Corps New Mexico (CCNM) contributed to the preservation of historic infrastructure at Carlsbad Caverns National Park through the Dry Stone Masonry project. A 7-person crew, primarily from New Mexico, took part in this vital restoration project funded by the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF). The crew's mission was to restore a historic drystone fixture, originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1934. As part of the GAOA Maintenance Action Team (MAT) program, the crew skillfully repaired 600 linear feet of the stone guardrail and parts of the batflight amphitheater, mixing mortar and carefully installing new limestone capstones to preserve the historic integrity of the site.

Historic and Cultural Preservation

This project not only showcased the dedication of the AmeriCorps members but also provided them with hands-on experience in an ancient craft. Master stonemason Bruce Wright trained the crew, offering them valuable trade skills that are essential for preserving historical structures like those found at Carlsbad Caverns. Six of the seven crew members were from New Mexico, with the majority hailing from Las Cruces, creating a strong sense of community pride and connection to the preservation of the state's history and heritage.

This project had a lasting impact on both the participants and the community at large. With the guidance of a master stonemason, the crew learned valuable stone masonry techniques, a trade that has been losing traction among younger generations. By recruiting local New Mexico residents for the project, CCNM not only fostered a sense of local pride but also contributed to workforce development. The experience inspired crew members to pursue future careers in historic preservation and outdoor conservation, reigniting an interest in working with their hands while preserving New Mexico's rich cultural legacy.

Workforce Development

The skills learned on the project contribute directly to workforce development, creating a pathway for participants to seek employment with the National Park Service or other conservation agencies. Malcolm Begay, a CCNM crew member, expressed his enthusiasm for the work: "When I got here (Carlsbad Caverns National Park), it really motivated me to go out, go beyond my limits, and learn something new."

This project made an economic impact by providing employment and trade skills that will contribute to the long-term preservation of historic infrastructure. Crew members left the project with valuable restoration experience, qualifying them for future work in conservation and historic maintenance, particularly with the National Park Service.

From an inclusion perspective, the project organically reflected the demographics of Las Cruces and southern New Mexico. The crew's composition—representing a blend of Hispanic, American Indian, and White participants—mirrored the local population and ensured that community voices were central to the preservation of local heritage.





Strengthening Ties to Ancestral Land

Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps Launches New Partnership with Colorado's National Forests

IN THE HIGH COUNTRY of Colorado's Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG), six Native American young adults took on more than just trail and restoration work. They became part of something bigger—a foundational effort to reshape the relationship between tribal communities and federal land management.

Community Engagement

Launched in the summer of 2024, the GMUG's first all-Native American field crew was made possible through a partnership with Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC) and funding from the Greater Rocky Mountain Resource Advisory Committee. Hosted by the Rio Grande National Forest in collaboration with GMUG, the crew was part of a bold initiative to give Native youth hands-on experience in public lands work—and to help agencies like the Forest Service take concrete steps toward meaningful tribal engagement.

Under the leadership of Amanda Sanchez, GMUG's Tribal Relations Specialist and an alum of a similar youth corps program, the project offered more than just job experience. It created a pathway for Native youth to return to and reconnect with ancestral landscapes, all while learning

vital land management skills and envisioning future careers in conservation. "Through projects like this, we give youth and young adults on-the-ground opportunities to work with us and expose them to careers in public service," Sanchez said. "This crew assisted us with restoring and improving land health and water quality—critical priorities for both tribes and the Forest Service."

On the ground, the crew cleared vegetation to prepare for the Horsefly prescribed burn—using chainsaws and hand tools to build critical fire line and gain valuable cross-training and safety certifications. They camped, traveled, learned wilderness first aid, and built a deep camaraderie.

Skill Building

Alex Otero, a crew member from the Navajo Nation, discovered new strengths in adaptability and was impressed by how much their small crew could accomplish.

Santiago Toya, from the Zia Pueblo, found a sense of flow and focus working with a chainsaw. "I loved how the hours flew by," he said. "You just get lost in the saw." These young people showed up to gain skills—and walked away with a sense of direction. When asked if this experience

inspired them to pursue careers with the Forest Service or other public land agencies, the answer was unanimous: "Yes."

"I was surprised by how far we could go," he reflected. "I came back a stronger person."

This pilot crew marks a key step in the Forest Service's broader commitment to tribal self-determination, as outlined in its 2023 Tribal Action Plan. That plan lays out ambitious goals for consultation, inclusion, and partnership—but as Sanchez noted, "a plan is only as good as the individual actions that implement its intentions."

Thanks to ALCC's trusted model and a strong partnership with the Rio Grande National Forest, this project did just that—transforming intention into action and opening the door for future collaboration. Plans are already underway to welcome another ALCC crew in 2025.

Transforming Trails

How Southeast Conservation Corps Revitalized the Bartram Trail

If you live in the mountain range of Georgia or North Carolina, you may have noticed a substantial amount of fresh trail work on the Blue Ridge Bartram Trail. In summer of 2024, Southeast Conservation Corps (SECC) partnered with the Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy to complete five weeks of trail work along the Bartram Trail and Blue Ridge Connector Trail project.

The SECC is a program of Conservation Legacy based in Chattanooga, TN that engages in a broad range of conservation service projects and recreation opportunities. They focus on employing a diverse group of people aged 19-30 that are interested in doing physical work outdoors and in beautiful places.

Recreation Access

During the summer, the crew was composed of 6 members Clay, Mike, Hope, Gretchen, Layla, and Mbogo, some who were experienced with trail work and others for whom it was their first time. Despite the difference in background and experience, Everyone was enthusiastic about the work ahead and getting to spend time in this part of the Blue Ridge. During this type of work, the crew camps out near the trail for the duration of the 'hitch', or week long period that they will be doing trail work on a particular section. During their first hitch in June, the crew worked on a section of the Blue Ridge Connector Trail, which incorporates a spur trail to Glen Falls, near Highlands, NC that needed a lot of work to mitigate erosion problems.

Improving Public Safety on the Trail

Following that, the crew moved south to the Georgia - North Carolina border for another hitch on the Bartram Trail by Hale Ridge Road. This section needed a substantial amount of re-benching, cribbing, and brush cutting, and now is looking great.

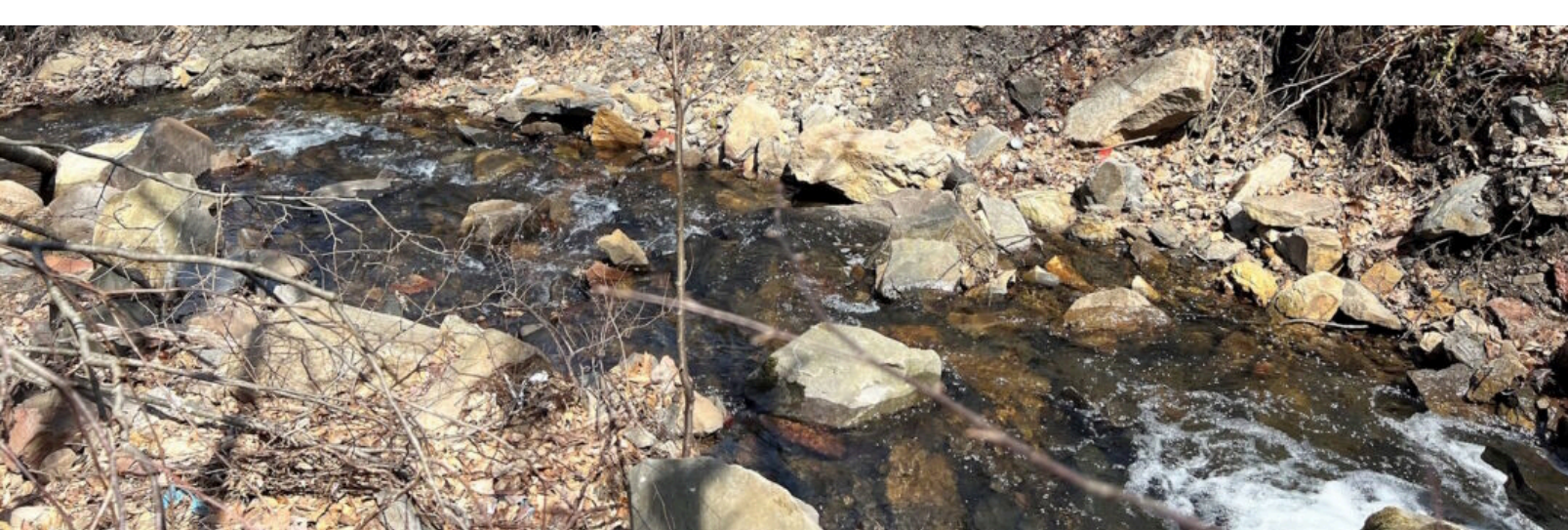
This crew wrapped up their summer season at Wallace Branch doing a tremendous amount of work to improve the steep, heavily used trail to Williams Pulpit. For the last two hitches of this summer, we had a mostly new crew of 5 members- Aidan, Ashley, Reece, Marianne, and Hope, who joined in again from earlier in the Summer. They worked two hitches on the Bartram Trail in the month of September, including doing some much needed improvements to the trail at Wallace Branch, and a remote section of the trail by Wilson Gap.

Community Connections

This program has been a great way to accomplish large amounts of tough trail work while also enabling young people to work outdoors and in new locations on our cherished public lands. We are also very appreciative to all of the volunteers and community members that have supported and befriended the trail crews while they have been here in Macon and Rabun County. This kind of effort is what makes the Bartram trail more than a path that connects beautiful places, but also connects us with people and our passions.



Source: Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy



Improving Coal Communities

EPCAMR Welcomes and Hosts AmeriCorps State & National Member Volunteer Morgan Romanowski For A Year of Coalfield Community Service

Starting Sept 10, 2024, The Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR) has started sponsoring AmeriCorps State and National Member Volunteer, Morgan Romanowski through a partnership between the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement (OSMRE), AmeriCorps, and the Stewards Individual Placement Program (SIPP), a Program of Conservation Legacy. EPCAMR is a national non-profit partner in Pennsylvania.



Morgan Romanowski

“We’re very humbled to have been chosen once again for this position after speaking with a colleague of ours, April Elkins-Badtke, Executive Director for Stewards Individual Placements-East, in Beckley, West Virginia.” Bobby Hughes, EPCAMR Executive Director and Morgan’s Supervisor, stated.

“Back in June 2024, I had discussed with April our desire to host and sponsor a position or two if funding was available and Northeastern PA would be considered as a part of the larger Energy Community Areas in Pennsylvania” Hughes said. EPCAMR had worked with previously to support and host two other Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement (OSMRE) AmeriCorps volunteers and an 8-week summer internship position that turned into a year-long AmeriCorps Volunteer In Service to America (VISTA) position in 2020, funded through the Foundation for PA Watersheds and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Yolande Norman, Division Chief at OSMRE,

has approved the placement of two national service members at EPCAMR. “We are excited to be a part of the Coal Community Fellows program this fall to provide capacity to communities that are working hard every day like us to make our communities more resilient and able to enjoy a much better quality of life. EPCAMR is currently recruiting for the second Community Development Coordinator VISTA position that can be found at MyAmeriCorps,” Bobby passionately stated.

As an OSMRE AmeriCorps Fellow, Morgan will follow the similar paths of many previous seasonal internships, except instead of 12 weeks, it will be for 52 weeks! She has the flexibility to perform any tasks that pertain to abandoned mine land (AML) mapping, water quality monitoring, environmental education, outreach, and storytelling. EPCAMR will be creating some story maps on the work that is happening around AMLER and more that we are working on for the OSMRE. This position can

(continued on pg. 14)

be in the field, in AMD, in streams, in the woods, on public lands, or gathering data, creating geographic information system (GIS) maps, assisting community watershed groups, conservation groups, Conservation Districts, and EPCAMR regional partners to advance our mission, as well as abandoned mine lands and restoring watersheds impacted by legacy abandoned mine drainage (AMD) pollution,” Bobby explained.

Morgan graduated from Wilkes University on May 18th 2024, with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science and a minor in Geology. She is from Scott Township, Lackawanna County, just outside the Northern Anthracite Coalfields, in the Lackawanna Valley. During her time at Wilkes, she worked on a research project with her friend Hope Mullins and senior partner, and Dr. Karimi, PhD, that involved tracking the disappearing waters on the Nanticoke creek into mine pools below the surface, titled, “Feasibility Study Using Saline Tracers And Electrical Surveying To Track Disappearing Stream Waters In Luzerne County, PA.” EPCAMR and the Earth Conservancy had provided her Professor, Dr. Boback Karimi, PhD, with some surface and underground mine maps that were useful to their project. She also interned with the Department of Environmental Protection’s Clean Water Program from summer of 2023 up until she graduated in 2024. She has plenty of experience with some of the typical field monitoring equipment that EPCAMR uses already.

The SIPP program is a part of Conservation Legacy, a nonprofit that is dedicated to funding environmental stewardship throughout America. EPCAMR is looking forward to

working with Patricia “Trish” Urquiza Silva, Program Manager for SIPP.

EPCAMR has developed a 1-year Project Plan outlining the volunteer project goals to be worked towards during Morgan’s time of service. Some of these projects include assisting in fundraising efforts, developing various resource maps using GIS, scanning and cataloging underground mine maps, watershed assessment work, monitoring water quality within the EPCAMR region, and providing educational experiences to underserved youth, camps, and school districts in the region as funding allows.

“I am excited about working on this particular project because it is a continuation of the research work I completed for my senior project at Wilkes University. I have seen firsthand how the flow loss affects the Creek and how the water is negatively impacted from its journey through the mine pools until it eventually resurfaces through the Askam Borehole where abandoned mine drainage (AMD) impacts the lower reaches of the Nanticoke Creek and where an existing AMD Maelstrom Oxidizer Treatment System is in place operated and maintained by the Earth Conservancy and monitored by EPCAMR.

“I am looking forward to working with EPCAMR to help provide solutions to communities within the eastern Pennsylvania region impacted by abandoned mine lands, whether it be through environmental education and outreach, creating GIS maps, conducting field assessments, or writing grant proposals” - Morgan Romanowski

One project she looks forward to is assisting EPCAMR with the monitoring of water quality, AMD, mine pool elevations, flow loss points, and stream flows within the Nanticoke Creek watershed in partnership with the Earth Conservancy. The Nanticoke Creek experiences flow loss from water flowing into mine pools beneath the surface. EPCAMR and Earth Conservancy will be continuing to conduct monitoring of the Creek and the local mine pool to help with their \$17.5 million dollar Nanticoke Creek Watershed Restoration funded by the Inflation Reduction Act and other funding sources.

Morgan also looks forward to participating in the various education and outreach programs that EPCAMR provides which includes, but is not limited to, tabling at community environmental events, water camps, and AMD tie-dye workshops with the trout puppets.

“I cannot stress enough the importance of environmental outreach and education within a community. By providing educational outreach programs, EPCAMR is filling a gap that most elementary schools and high schools have in their education programs when it comes to the environmental sciences.”

2024 Alumni Awardee

Kristian's Story of Building Belonging at the C&O Canal

EACH YEAR, SERVICE YEAR ALLIANCE honors a select group of outstanding alumni whose service has left a lasting mark on their communities. In 2024, Kristian, an AmeriCorps alum with Appalachian Conservation Corps, was named one of the Alums Awardees for his inspiring work connecting diverse communities to the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

For Kristian, a first-generation Latino American, service wasn't just about protecting public lands—it was about making sure those lands felt welcoming and meaningful to everyone.

His journey began at the C&O Canal, a landscape rich with layered histories but often underutilized by the communities living around it. Kristian brought lived experience and cultural fluency to his role, using both to create programming that reflected the identities and stories of the people the park hoped to serve.

"I understand firsthand the challenges newcomers can face in feeling a sense of belonging in a new place," Kristian said. "My goal was to help others feel welcome, seen, and part of something bigger."

One of his first major initiatives came during Latino/Hispanic Heritage Month, when Kristian partnered with Park Rangers to connect with local Latino-owned businesses and invite more families to the park. His bilingual outreach helped spark a shift: more Latino families began visiting, exploring, and claiming the park as their own.

To deepen that connection, Kristian launched bilingual boat tours, working with local community leaders to tailor the experience to their interests. One grandmother's hug at the end of a tour said more than words could: "She thanked me just for being there," Kristian recalled. That moment became a touchstone—proof that visibility and cultural fluency matter.

But Kristian didn't stop there.

He brought community and joy together through a creative program based on Lotería, a traditional Mexican game similar to bingo. Hosted at the Williamsport Visitor Center, these Lotería events combined fun, cultural exchange, and language learning. Spanish-speaking visitors found something familiar; others learned something new. "It wasn't just about entertainment—it was about sparking interest through something people already loved," Kristian said.



To support the park community from within, Kristian hosted staff events and potlucks that fostered cross-cultural dialogue. By sharing dishes from Honduras, Cuba, and other cultures, Kristian created new space for storytelling and connection. "Sharing my heritage through food created a sense of unity," he said. He also organized volunteer days that welcomed diverse participants to care for and learn about the park. "When people see themselves reflected in a place, they're more likely to care for it," Kristian explained. "It deepens their connection and expands who sees this park as theirs to protect."

Throughout his service, Kristian built bridges between cultures, between communities, and between the past and the present. His work laid the foundation for future engagement efforts and proved what's possible when inclusion and conservation go hand in hand.

"My service year taught me the profound power of bridging divides through language, cultural understanding, and creative outreach," Kristian shared. "The C&O Canal became common ground where diverse communities could come together, learn from one another, and celebrate their shared heritage." Kristian's story is a powerful reminder: when we welcome more voices into the work of public land stewardship, we not only protect the past we build a stronger future.

CONSERVATION LEGACY

701 Camino del Rio, Suite 101
Durango, Colorado 81301
(970) 403-1149
www.conservationlegacy.org



CONSERVATION
LEGACY