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Conservation Legacy operates and supports programs that provide service and work opportunities for a diverse group of individuals to complete important conservation and community projects for the public benefit. Founded in 1998 to continue the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Conservation Legacy programs include Arizona Conservation Corps, Stewards Individual Placements, Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps, Southeast Conservation Corps, Southwest Conservation Corps and Preserve America Youth Summit. In addition to these regional programs, Conservation Legacy manages unique program models such as Ancestral Lands, Corps River Restoration and the Veterans Fire Corps. The objective of this partnership is to complete important conservation projects while providing young adults with structured, safe and challenging work and educational opportunities through service that promotes personal growth, the development of life skills and an ethic of natural resource stewardship. We work toward making these opportunities available to a consistently diverse group of young people and veterans and to those who could most benefit from the experience. Conservation Legacy is dedicated to:

ENGAGING YOUNG AMERICANS AND VETERANS IN SERVICE: Conservation Legacy provides service, training, education and employment opportunities for community members, including low income and disadvantaged youth and veterans. Each of its programs engages a diverse set of participants, reflective of their community.

CONSERVING, PROTECTING AND PROMOTING EACH COMMUNITY’S GREATEST GIFTS: Conservation Legacy maintains, restores and enhances public and tribal lands and waters as well as natural, cultural, and historical resources and treasures that meet locally identified needs.

BUILDING AMERICA’S FUTURE: Conservation Legacy helps develop a generation of skilled workers, educated and active citizens, future leaders, and stewards of natural and cultural resources and communities.
Conservation Legacy, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), provides crew-based and individual placement opportunities for youth, young adults and veterans to serve and work on public lands. These opportunities foster an awareness of natural and cultural resources and develop skills in the stewardship and science of their management while actively contributing to the preservation of the public lands legacy.

In 2016, Conservation Legacy participants worked on projects in all U.S. Forest Service functional areas except law enforcement. Emphasis was placed on projects that engaged diverse participants in support of U.S. Forest Service cultural transformation goals to broaden inclusion and build capacity, as well as projects that contributed to restoration goals, enhanced recreation access, mitigated hazardous fuels and supported urban water projects.

Conservation Legacy programs provide opportunities for job training, personal development, conservation service and natural resource education while at the same time accomplishing needed work benefiting our public lands. Conservation Legacy provides high-quality, locally focused conservation service programs that are customized to meet the unique needs of participants, partners and communities. This approach allows for uniquely tailored programs that establish closer community bonds and leave deeper lasting impacts.

Through this partnership, Conservation Legacy crews constructed and maintained recreational trails, restored and maintained campgrounds, removed invasive species, restored wildlife and fisheries habitat, reduced wildfire fuel loads, installed erosion control features, preserved historic structures, constructed fences and barrier installations, and otherwise helped to support the management of our public lands. Individual Placement program participants engaged in field work, environmental sampling, site monitoring, GIS/GPS, data analysis, program development, archaeology, outreach, education, interpretation, visitor services and coordination of volunteer events. In all, 414 unique opportunities were provided for youth, young adults and veterans from a wealth of diverse backgrounds.
BY THE NUMBERS

414 TOTAL USFS OPPORTUNITIES

23 NATIONAL FORESTS
In 2016, Conservation Legacy provided 414 unique opportunities to work and serve on US Forest Service projects across the country.

Conservation Legacy emphasizes the recruitment and engagement of diverse teams and individuals who learn from each other and their projects in a supportive environment.

In selecting participants, Conservation Legacy encourages all types of diversity including, but not limited to; race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social-economic, and disability. Conservation Legacy also emphasizes the engagement of local individuals who represent the communities in which they serve. Conservation Legacy intentionally searches for funding sources and program options to support the goal of offering experiences to a wide range of participants.

**2016 Project Locations:**

**Region 2**
Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
Pike-San Isabel National Forest
Rio Grande National Forest
San Juan National Forest

**Region 3**
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest
Carson National Forest
Cibola National Forest
Coconino National Forest
Coronado National Forest
Gila National Forest
Kaibab National Forest
Lincoln National Forest
Prescott National Forest
Santa Fe National Forest
Tonto National Forest

**Region 8**
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest
Cherokee National Forest
Daniel Boone National Forest
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests
George Washington and Jefferson National Forest
Pisgah National Forest

**Region 9**
Mark Twain National Forest

**Region 10**
Alaska Regional Office

**Accomplishments:**

110,717 Total Hours of Project Work

40 Miles of Firebreak Maintained

1,099 Miles of Rivers and Trails Improved/Surveyed

14 Miles of Fence Built/Repaired

3,147 Acres of Land Improved/Restored

150 Miles of Trails Maintained
IN THE FALL OF 2016, ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS (AZCC) PARTNERED WITH THE TONTO NATIONAL FOREST TO FIELD A LOCAL ANCESTRAL LANDS CREW BASED OUT OF MESA, AZ. The crew, comprised of young adults from the Navajo, Hopi, Gila River, and Tohono O’odham Indian Communities, spent a total of ten weeks working around the Mazatzal Mountains wilderness near the Tonto Basin in central Arizona. In addition to the project work, the crew joined the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community for a service day in October, while also taking advantage of an opportunity to tour the nearby Tonto National Monument cliff dwellings.

In the Mazatzal Mountains, the crew focused their energy towards maintaining various system trails that access the remote and rugged backcountry wilderness. During a few project weeks on the ground, the crew found themselves working with the Arizona Trail Association to repair and improve segments of the 800 mile national scenic trail that runs through the state. During the cool fall months, the crew successfully completed ten miles of maintenance on sections of the Barnhardt, Y-Bar, Boulder, and 2-Bar trails, building impressive check steps and water bars for erosion control while also clearing away brush to reopen hiking corridors. The crew will be returning to work again with the Tonto National Forest in February of 2017 until the end of their season in March.

To have, see and feel the safety of the trail, to see it as heavily used and maintained, offers a sense of comfort and makes for an easier connection to nature. This is why I love this work.

-Beau Arthur, AZCC Ancestral Lands Crew 148
AZCC YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS

ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS’ YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS (YCC) PROGRAM IN FLAGSTAFF, AZ PARTNERED WITH ARIZONA TRAIL ASSOCIATION, REI, AND COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST to support two weeks of project work on the Sandy Seep section of Arizona Trail in Flagstaff, AZ. Two young adult mentors and seven Flagstaff area high school students worked to improve 1.5 miles of trail; they built trail re-routes, installed and maintained drainage and erosion control structures and built a wash crossing. Corpsmembers gained leadership and work skills, and were exposed to land management careers and conservation awareness.

Two crews from nearby communities joined the YCC crew on the Arizona Trail for an event on July 4th, engaging a total of 20 youth and young adults on the project. Additionally, the crew interacted daily with local trail users, which gave the Corpsmembers an opportunity to share their stories of conservation and service.

“My time with AZCC has prompted me to step out of my comfort zone—mentally, physically and socially,” said 17-year-old Brynn Bierer, a recent graduate of Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy, “I am incredibly proud to work for AZCC. This organization is extraordinary in so many ways! The attitude of integrity, investment in community and commitment to quality are downright palpable.”

“The crew exceeded expectations on every project and had the skill to work independently. The trail work they created was great. The gravel and landscaping was outstanding. I wasn’t expecting huge mileage to get done, but in July they exceeded expectations. They were punctual, respectful and always looked good. Things were well coordinated with corpsmembers and parents—seamless, as always. We plan to work with AZCC again,” said Coconino NF Recreation Officer Missy Robinson.
IN 2016, SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS WORKED WITH FORESTS IN REGION 2 AND 3, PROVIDING CRITICAL TRAIL MAINTENANCE ON THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL (CDNST).

The Cibola, Carson and Santa Fe National Forests collaborated, pooled regional funds and wrote a tri-forest partnership agreement with the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) to complete trail construction and maintenance on the CDNST. This partnership provided eight paid service opportunities for youth/young adults. A strong crew from SCC roved from Forest to Forest, site to site and at each site accomplished more than was expected, completing major reroutes and then moving on to several miles of general maintenance along the CDNST afterwards. The variety of work sites was good for the morale and productivity of the SCC crew and the collaborative approach on the agreement was very efficient and effective from the Forests. It’s not often that three forests collaborate to work together on a national resource while empowering and engaging youth and creating local economic development opportunities! SCC looks forward to continued partnership and collaborative agreements with these forests to continue efforts to maintain and sign the CDNST.

SCC also partnered with the San Juan National Forest’s Columbine Ranger District to implement two simultaneous phases of heavy reconstruction work on the CDNST in the La Vaca area within the Weminuche Wilderness. These projects provided 16 paid service positions, for a total of two crews, each crew working on a separate projects site. The project was a HUGE success! The crews accomplished much more than was expected and partner evaluations were very positive. The crews received close technical support from SCC field staff and pack support from local operator and long time USFS and SCC supporter Ann Rapp.

SCC is very excited to continue these partnerships into the future and to support the connection of participants and communities through the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

REGION 2 CDNST ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
Date Range of Project Work: July-September 2016
Miles of Trail Maintained: **5.39**
Feet of New Trail Constructed: **1,843**
Miles of Tread Maintained: **5.17**
Drainage Features Installed: **502**
Total Service Opportunities: **16**
Total Project Hours: **5,394**

REGION 3 CDNST ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
Date Range of Project Work: June-August, 2016
Miles of Trail Maintained: **40.24**
Miles of New Trail Constructed: **1.7**
Miles of Tread Maintained: **2.56**
Downed Trees Removed: **68**
Total Service Opportunities: **68**
Total Project Hours: **3,200**
SCC CREW LEADER REFLECTIONS ON THE CDNST:

Sarah Bailey, Michigan

My crew has spent the majority of the summer working in the Weminuche Wilderness on the Rincon La Vaca trail constructing switchbacks for a much needed reroute on a section of the CDT. We have our next fifteen day wilderness hitch coming up soon and then transitioning to work on the McPhee Overlook trail for the entire fall season.

My entire crew is not only new to this work but also new to small community living. The wilderness has a way of exposing the best and worst in all of us. My crew has learned to live and work with the each of the unique personalities on our crew but more importantly we have learned to celebrate our own personal strengths and work on our flaws.

The Sangre de Cristo Wilderness has stolen my heart. I spent the entirety of my first season with the conservation corps on a crew doing maintenance work in the Sangres and I’ve been forever changed by their beauty and power.

I plan to stay in the conservation corps world for as long as possible.

Allen Jircik, Texas

My crew worked on OHV trails the start of the season. We have been working in the Wilderness recently. We just finished our second 15 day hitch in the Weminuche doing an impressive reroute of the La Vaca trail.

None of the members of my crew have done this type of work before. The past two hitchs have been the longest time any of them have spent in the wilderness. That much time in the wilderness is enough time to test a persons resilience. All of us have passed with flying colors.

My favorite place is the Needle sub-range of the San Juan mountains. The peaks are dramatic and offer some fun, remote, and scenic summits.

I intend to continue serving our public lands by improving trails. I am not sure where I will work next, but I have no doubt it will be beautiful.

Everyone I see on trails thanks me and my crew for our work. In my opinion, the biggest thanks is seeing people enjoy their national forests.

“This was a technically complex project. The crew and field supervisor surpassed my expectations. The crew completed more work than was expected. The crew’s performance was outstanding.”

-Don Kelly, Trails Foreman
San Juan NF
BOOTS ON THE GROUND:

CHRISTY HARRINGTON, SCC CORPSMEMBER OF THE YEAR NOMINEE

CHRISTY WAS A MEMBER OF THE CREW LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM co-leading a crew that spent 45 days in the backcountry working on the CDNST, in addition to five other months of leading this same crew through many projects with the San Juan National Forest. She successfully led the crew to complete the highly technical work ahead of schedule and beyond expectations from the project partner.

Her background and enthusiasm through the year has motivated many of her members to be civicly engaged. Many of her members are interested in coming back as leaders to give back what she gave them. She pushes her members to work hard and do their best and has reminded many of us that what we do on public lands and the development we do with our members is important and will have a lasting impact.

“My time with Southwest Conservation Corps has been a defining experience in my life. I’ve gained confidence in my ability to be an effective leader. I spent the past six months in charge of six people’s physical and emotional well-being, taught them new and difficult skills, and guided them through the completion of complex conservation projects. Being in the corps has also solidified my priorities: I made very little money and had very few ‘comfortable’ moments, but I was happier than I’ve ever been. I now know for sure that devoting myself to meaningful work is the most important thing to me. I’ve moved around a lot over the past few years, and since joining SCC and immersing myself in the land I finally feel like I have found a home.

Next year I hope to return to Southwest Conservation Corps as a Crew Leader. In fact, I hope to return to SCC as a crew leader for several more years. I find the work deeply satisfying and important and I can’t imagine doing anything else. I also plan to use my AmeriCorps education award improving my medical/rescue skills: I hope to take courses on Avalanche safety, ropes rescue, swift water rescue, and possibly become an EMT.”

Christy is featured in the short SCC video “Strength” accessible at: https://youtube.be/8TX0ZOJpcOI
SIERRA BINGHAM, AZCC
THE TRAIL TO LEADERSHIP

SIERRA HAS EARNED HER WAY THROUGH THE PROGRESSION OF LEADERSHIP ROLES with Arizona Conservation Corps due to her commitment, passion and adaptability while serving as an AmeriCorps member since just after the moment of turning 18 and leaving home with little direction:

"I was in the train station, perching on my luggage in line for a Greyhound bus, when I realized that I had no idea what I was doing. I had just trekked across the United States, and upon finding myself and all my belongings further away from home than I had ever been, I realized that leaving home just after my eighteenth birthday for a job I had a vague grasp of had not magically granted me the adult courage and salted wisdom I was searching for.

As it turns out, "I had no idea what I was doing" was a profound understatement. I procured blisters that encroached on "fester sore" territory within two weeks, my pack proved itself woefully inadequate, and I was not acclimated to the hiking necessary for the job. I was determined not to look like a rookie to my much older crewmates. Instead, I slowly learned that there's always a rookie, and it was my role to play.

However, if I've ever prided myself on one thing, it's been my adaptability, and I not only eased into the work and lifestyle over time, I flourished in it. My crew members and leader were uplifting and encouraging, and more patient with me than I deserved. By the time the season ended, I felt like I had grown three inches taller and ten feet wider, desperate to absorb everything around me.

My third AmeriCorps term was on the Coronado crew, a camping crew designed to be a precise and educated crew working almost exclusively in the Coronado National Forest. We were a small crew of mostly college aged kids who subsisted primarily off REI gear, soldi- tos and a "punny" bad sense of humor. We worked our way across southwest Arizona, leaving beautiful trails and memories behind us, and forging unbreakable bonds. Not only did we spend nine days at a time with each other, we were inseparable even on off hitches. Being with a crew of older, wiser crew members was a constant reminder that I had a good deal of personal growth to do before I took on the leadership mantle.

While I've come a long way from the girl sitting on her luggage and massaging her blisters, I still have miles to go, but I'm determined to only travel forward. The Arizona Conservation Corps has never been just a job for me; it's a thriving community that stretches with long arms across the country with a mission in improvement not only in the environment, but in its members and inhabitants too. The kind of work I've dedicated myself to is an adventure for some, a career for others, but it's a catalyst of self-reflection and change for everyone. I'm not even close to the wizened, sagely adult I hoped that my first season would magically transform me into, but I've changed for the better in ways I thought were impossible. Arizona Conservation Corps has truly evolved into the community I feel like I belong to."

“I STOPPED SEEING MYSELF AS A YOUNG ADULT WITH A JOB AND GOT A GLIMPSE OF A WOMAN WITH PURPOSE AND THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH TO ACHIEVE IT.”
2016 WAS A BIG YEAR FOR CONSERVATION LEGACY PROGRAMS WORKING IN USFS REGION 8 FORESTS.

In 2013, Southeast Conservation Corps (SECC) began their very first year partnering with the Ocoee Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest. Since then, SECC has expanded, working with six Region 8 forests in 2016, including three new forest partnerships.

SECC worked with multiple Ranger Districts on projects completed by adult and youth camping crews. The George Washington and Jefferson NF, Daniel Boone NF and Francis Marion and Sumter NF were new partners this year. In addition, SECC piloted a remotely-based Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program out of Knoxville, TN. This YCC crew worked exclusively on the Pisgah Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest. In total, this funding and partnership engaged and supported 36 members between the ages of 16 and 25.

Continuing this legacy, Region 8 partnerships have again supported the inaugural year of another Conservation Legacy Program: The Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps (GAVCC), based in New Market, Virginia. 2016 saw the successful launch of GAVCC, a new corps program based in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, embracing the tradition of the Civilian Conservation Corps to engage young people in conservation service projects.

GAVCC operated its first roving crew supported by partnerships with three Region 8 forests. The crew traveled across Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia working on developed recreational projects across several forests and districts. Work ranged from trash clean up to campsite maintenance to campground trail construction. This crew was able to spend eight weeks on the road seeing some of the Southeast’s most beautiful USFS lands. GAVCC participants were also able to both support and apprentice under many amazing USFS staff during the season.

“We met all kinds of employees within the Forest Service who went out of their way to show gratitude for our work and demonstrated an interest in helping us navigate our futures and explore possible careers in the conservation work field.” - Carl Sonnefeld, GAVCC participant
“This was hard work in a challenging environment. The crew performed exceptionally well and accomplished a substantial amount of work. SECC leadership and project management were outstanding!

The outcome of the project was increased public safety on the trail as well as a much higher quality experience for the trail users.”

Joseph “Joe” Robles
Outdoor Recreation Manager,
Sumter NF

REGION 8 FOREST PARTNERSHIPS:
Cherokee National Forest: SECC and GAVCC
Chattahoochee – Oconee National Forest: SECC
Daniel Boone National Forest: SECC
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests: SECC
George Washington & Jefferson National Forest: SECC and GAVCC
Pisgah National Forest: SECC and GAVCC
ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS ANCESTRAL LANDS CREW 389 WORKED ON THE MOGOLLON RIM for five weeks from September to October. The crew consisted of young adults local to the White Mountains, AZ communities and came from diverse backgrounds: five White Mountain Apache, two Caucasian and one Navajo member came together to form a conservation crew working with the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest.

This crew of eight worked primarily on Barbershop Trail no. 91, constructing a switchback to equestrian-friendly specifications. The original route was a fall line trail into the canyon. The eventual goal is to build a sustainable trail down the Yeager Canyon section of Barbershop Trail. The project was a continuation of a larger project from the summer and fall of 2014. Funding for this project was acquired through a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant secured by Arizona State Parks.

The crew accomplished 3,963 feet of tread maintenance which included one switchback constructed, one switchback maintained, 310 square feet of rock retaining wall built and 14 erosion control structures installed and maintained (waterbars, checksteps, and drains). This also includes additional trail maintenance that was performed on the U-Bar trail that descends into Barbershop Canyon. Materials were sourced from the brink of the Mogollon Rim and transported to the work site via ATV and assistance from the USFS staff.

This was the first project of the term for the “Mogollon Monsters,” who were completely new to trail work at the offset. The corpsmembers quickly and ably acquired and applied technical trail skills in a short window of time. When project ended, the crew left with a pride in their work which set them on the path to finish out a successful, productive, and fun term.

"Having the opportunity to work on the Mogollon Rim with the Blue Ridge Ranger District was an opportunity of a lifetime. Being able to add my part with those who had come and built trails before me allowed me to be a part of the history and legacy of the Rim. I learned so much; I will always cherish the skills I learned and take the memories I made with me where ever I go.”

—Jake Follett,
Assistant Crew Leader
DURING THE SUMMER OF 2016, ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS INVASIVE WEED INTERNS COMPLETED 13 WEEKS OF PROJECTS in partnership with the Coconino National Forest and the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI). 4FRI is a partnership between four forests: the Kaibab NF, Coconino NF, Apache-Sitgreaves NF and Tonto NF. The goal is to restore Ponderosa Pine ecosystems in the Southwestern Region through a collaboration with various stakeholders and will involve USFS staff, volunteers and contractors. The result of this work will help to reduce fire fuels and the risk of abnormal fire activity by maintaining healthy forests.

The interns worked to identify weeds and rare plants present on the Coconino NF, conducting cross-country, road and trail surveys. Corp-members learned to operate GPS units, record data, identify plants, read maps, navigate overland, drive on rugged roads and judge local weather patterns. Their work helped establish an inventory of biodiversity and weed infestation prior to planned landscape-scale restoration thinning operations through the Four Forest Restoration Initiative.
FOUR CORNERS FEDERAL LANDS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

THE FOUR CORNERS FEDERAL LANDS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (FC-FLIP) CONNECTS REGIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES with resource managers to gain the knowledge and hands on skills of working directly with a federal agency. Whether interns participate in natural, recreational or cultural resource management, the goal of the program is to better prepare the next generation of agency personnel. Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) provides FC-FLIP support and training.

Interns are recruited and placed to assist with a wide range of agency operations including water/vegetation monitoring, GPS use and GIS mapping, grant writing, trail maintenance and building, interpretive services, visitor services, outreach and education, program development, invasive species management and other hands on work. Interns gain relevant work experience, an AmeriCorps Education Award, the experience of being part of a cohort, support from program and agency staff, college credit and employment.

SCC and MSI provided workers compensation and liability insurance, billing and payroll support, AmeriCorps Education Awards, Wilderness First Aid, orientation, training and seasonal gatherings. We are grateful to work in partnership with the San Juan National Forest, Bureau of Land Management - Tres Rios, Mesa Verde National Park, Fort Lewis College, San Juan College, and Southwest Community College to develop and implement FC-FLIP.

In 2016, we had the following interns placed with the following partners:

Kate Weatherly, Bio Tech, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Tres Rios Field Office
Stephanie Cantu, Range Tech, BLM Columbine Ranger District
Lauren Giggy, Fluids, BLM Gunnison Field Office
Erin Navins, GIS Tech, Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)
Talavi Denipah-Cook, Natural Resources, MEVE
Jack Conner, Reforestation, SJNF Columbine Ranger District
James Holderer, Reforestation, SJNF Columbine Ranger District
Madison Morales, Range, SJNF Columbine Ranger District
Amanda Brenner, Visitor, SJNF Dolores Ranger District
Mitch Dorsk, Abandoned Mine Lands, SJNF
Robin Austin, Abandoned Mine Lands, SJNF
Matt Porter, Abandoned Mine Lands, SJNF
The bulk of my summer consisted of working with the Timber Crew of the Columbine District doing vegetation surveys of the 2002 Missionary Ridge Fire. We would travel by vehicle and then by foot through Ponderosa Pine, Riparian, Aspen, Mixed Conifer and Engelmann Spruce forests to estimate cover of each and every tree, shrub, forb and grass species. Cover of bare soil, litter, downed wood, standing wood, rock, rock soil and moss was estimated also. We also performed stocking surveys to access whether or not the burnt forest was returning to what it was before the fire.

I am most proud of this project because the data I collected will be used to improve LAND-SAT accuracy and help guide future forest management decisions. It is difficult to perceive, but knowing that what I did will make a difference in the future feels really good. Other projects I worked on included hunting for a species of rare Melkvetch in timber sale along Fossett Gulch road with the Range crew of the USFS Columbine District, Carbon surveys with the reforestation crew, vegetation surveys and Ox-Eye Daisy treatment research with Mountain Studies Institute in Telluride and collecting data with the Hydro Crew along Rio Lato (a tributary of the Dolores River) to help make a case for receiving water rights.
THE VETERANS FIRE CORPS

2016 BY THE NUMBERS:

52 CURRENT ERA VETERANS TRAINED

22,146 PROJECT WORK HOURS

526 ACRES IMPROVED (INCLUDING PRESCRIBED BURNS)

38 MILES OF FIREBREAK CREATED AND MAINTAINED
OVERVIEW:

The Veterans Fire Corps (VFC) is a collaborative initiative of Conservation Legacy, The California Conservation Corps, and the Student Conservation Association. It partners with state and federal agencies including the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. VFC engages recent era Veterans on priority fuels projects while developing the next generation of wildland firefighters.

VFC successfully addresses two needs: 1) veterans who need a way to transition from military to civilian service and 2) land management agencies who need highly qualified and well-trained employees. VFC builds upon the knowledge, leadership experience, and training of the men and women who served in the armed forces, retraining them and refocusing their mission to protecting our public lands from the threat of wildfire.

In 2016, Conservation Legacy engaged 52 current era veterans throughout the Southwest, training and preparing them for jobs in wildland fire while accomplishing priority projects identified by US Forest Service partners. Two Conservation Legacy programs, Arizona Conservation Corps and Southwest Conservation Corps, served veterans over this time period providing S-212, S-130/190, First Aid and some additional advanced trainings including Incident Management and Felling Boss.

Project work was varied but primarily focused on forest fuels reduction, hazard tree removal, prescribed burn preparation and invasive species removal. The forest fuels reduction was the majority of the project work and was focused on treating high-density areas with heavy fuel loads. Veteran fire crews reduced fire fuel loads that included Pinon, Juniper, Ponderosa, and Oak on public lands through Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. Invasive species projects were primarily focused on the removal of Tamarisk and Russian Olive.

THE MODEL:

Veterans Fire Corps targets recent era Veterans, generally between the ages of 23-35. Veterans joining the program are AmeriCorps members, receive a living allowance, training, and support while working on projects varying in length from 12-weeks to six months. Veterans enrolled in the program receive all mandatory training to become certified as a Firefighter Type 2. They are then utilized on thinning projects, pile burning projects, and prescribed burns.

Most applicants applying to the program are searching for a way to transition from the military to civilian world. “Vets speak a common language,” said a former Army interrogator and past participant. He also addressed a more serious issue shared by his crew members. “Most combat vets have problems,” he said bluntly, “and being with other vets helps.” It is this connection that kept one former Marine Corps sniper in the program. He realized that his anxiety around post-traumatic stress seemed to fade the longer he spent living with his “comrades” among trees and streams.

The mission of the program completes when, after serving with the Veterans Fire Corps, crew members gain employment as wildland firefighters. Because many of the VFC crews work alongside agency fire crews, they often are able to network and learn about opportunities locally and make connections with hiring managers long before any job openings are available.

VFC PROJECT LOCATIONS:
- CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST
- GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE and GUNNISON NATIONAL FORESTS
- LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST
- PIKE AND SAN ISABEL NATIONAL FORESTS
- RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST
- SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST
- TONTO NATIONAL FOREST
Since 2011, the California Conservation Corps, Conservation Legacy and the Student Conservation Association have engaged over 750 Veterans. The majority of VFC members have been hired onto a wildland fire crew with a state or federal agency, found employment with a land management agency in a job unrelated to fire, returned to participate in or lead additional VFC crews or continued into higher education for natural resource management.

The combination of completing meaningful work, engaging in this work along with other Veterans focused on a common goal is what makes the VFC program so impactful. It contains the mission, structure, camaraderie and sense of professional and personal purpose that is critical to helping current-era Veterans transition from a successful career in the military to a successful career back at home.

“I found myself looking for meaning and purpose in life again when I came across the VFC posting. After some research, I knew I had found a once in a lifetime opportunity into a better life and new world.”

- Chau Huyhn, VFC Alumni, Former U.S. Army

**VET AND COMMUNITY IMPACT:**

2016 TOTAL VETERANS FIRE CORPS DATA:
DATA COMPILED FROM ALL PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

**52 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS**

- 53% OF VETERANS SURVEYED INDICATED THEY HAVE GAINED OR ARE PURSUING RELATED POST-PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT
- 90% OF VETERANS SURVEYED INDICATED THAT THE VFC ASSISTED THEM IN ADJUSTING FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN LIFE
- 95% OF VETERANS SURVEYED INDICATED THAT THE VFC PREPARED THEM FOR ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT IN WILDLAND FIRE
SCC has been partnering with the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) to run Veterans Fire Corps since 2009, when the first Veterans Fire Corps in the nation was piloted on the Pagosa Ranger District. Since then, we’ve developed a robust and working partnership and often the Forest, SCC and other partners from the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership work together to leverage funds from existing projects to acquire additional funding to accomplish more work on the ground.

In 2016, SCC and the SJNF applied for $54,000 in funding from the Partnership for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) to match the $100,000 regional USFS allocation and the $25,000 that the Pagosa Ranger District acquired in Colorado State Habitat funds. All of the funding was awarded which allowed our VFC crews to put in 20 full weeks of project work. The crews were able to engage in fence removal for habitat improvement, hand thinning with chainsaws, prescribed burn prep and prescribed burning.

“The thinning, piling and fence removal improved forest conditions and will allow for additional, larger scale treatments in the project areas,” Fred Ellis, AFMO on the Pagosa RD said of the project, “The vets are hard workers and want to complete a quality product.”

In 2016 Arizona Conservation Corps Tucson partnered with the Lincoln National Forest (LNF) to operate a three month AmeriCorps Veteran Fire Corps Programs. The crew served on each of the three districts on the forest conducting fire fuels reduction, prescribed burns, and burn preparation. The program was able to serve an eight person crew comprised of six veterans and two crew leaders.

All Program participants received Fire Fighter Type II Training (S130/190/110/L180) and S212 training and certification as FAL3 and were red carded through the US Forest Service. On average, program participants acquired 450 hours of fire-fuels on the job experience over the course of their terms of service. Participants worked directly alongside LNF employees for much of their season. Arizona Conservation Corps partnered with the Lincoln National Forest on the following projects:

**Road Thinning:** the crew cut Ponderosa, Piñon, and Juniper to reduce fire fuels and improve forest health outside of Ruidoso, NM.

**Cedar Creek Rx:** the crew aided USFS resources in a broadcast burn. Goals of the burn were to introduce fire to improve forest health on a Ponderosa stand. The crew aided with ignition, patrolling, holding and mop up.

**Cox Canyon/Rice Rx:** the crew aided in the ignition, patrolling and mop up of pile burning done on the Sacramento district.

**Wet Burnt Canyon Rx Prep:** the crew helped to do advanced preparation of dozer and handline with the use of hand tools, brush cutters and chainsaws.

**Soldier Rx Prep:** the crew removed brush in advance of a handline. Work included cutting and re-moving Piñon, Juniper and scrub oak.

**AZCC LNF Accomplishments**
- **Acres Treated/Cleared:** 6.4 Acres
- **Acres Burned/Rx:** 36 Acres
- **Control Line Maintained:** 5.7 Miles
- **Hours Worked:** 3,120 Hours

**2016 AZCC Tucson VFC Alumni:**
- **Kyle Booker:** Committed to Sacramento Hotshots
- **Tyler Harms:** Committed to Sacramento Hotshots
- **Micah Roberts:** Committed to Sacramento Hotshots
- **Chau Huynh:** Returning to VFC
- **Michael Schiaffo:** Returning to VFC
- **Brandon Sena:** Seeking fire employment in California

**San Juan National Forest**

SCC has been partnering with the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) to run Veterans Fire Corps since 2009, when the first Veterans Fire Corps in the nation was piloted on the Pagosa Ranger District. Since then, we’ve developed a robust and working partnership and often the Forest, SCC and other partners from the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership work together to leverage funds from existing projects to acquire additional funding to accomplish more work on the ground.

**Road Thinning:**
- The crew cut Ponderosa, Piñon, and Juniper to reduce fire fuels and improve forest health outside of Ruidoso, NM.

**Cedar Creek Rx:**
- The crew aided USFS resources in a broadcast burn. Goals of the burn were to introduce fire to improve forest health on a Ponderosa stand. The crew aided with ignition, patrolling, holding and mop up.

**Cox Canyon/Rice Rx:**
- The crew aided in the ignition, patrolling and mop up of pile burning done on the Sacramento district.

**Wet Burnt Canyon Rx Prep:**
- The crew helped to do advanced preparation of dozer and handline with the use of hand tools, brush cutters and chainsaws.

**Soldier Rx Prep:**
- The crew removed brush in advance of a handline. Work included cutting and removing Piñon, Juniper and scrub oak.
IN THE FALL OF 2016 THE USFS REGION 3 PARTNERED WITH ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS to host the first Veterans Vegetation and Fire Effects Monitoring Crew. The program aimed to engage recent era (post-911) veterans in a four month long professional development program focused on fuels and vegetation sampling as well as introducing participants to the broad array of careers in federal land management. This crew’s primary work activity was to sample and measure vegetation associated with planned or implemented hazardous fuels projects.

The crew began their service with a week of wilderness preparedness training including Wilderness First Aid, Leave No Trace Training, and primers on living and working in a small cohort in the outdoors. The crew then spent a week on the Payson Ranger District of the Tonto National Forest for intensive training in vegetation sampling and monitoring with our USFS lead, Tessa Nicolet. The crew spent the remaining 13 weeks of the season hopping between different forests in Region 3 performing site samples and inventories. Work was performed on the Tonto, Kaibab, Coconino, Carson, Lincoln, Coronado and Santa Fe National Forests. Every two weeks crew members would have the opportunity to meet with or shadow agency employees from other divisions and learn about other avenues of employment with the agency. Crew members were able to work with wildlife biologists, range managers, foresters and fire program leads.

At the conclusion of the program two of the three members were seeking agency employment, both on the Lincoln National Forest. Kim Kuhar, a long time partner with AZCC’s Veteran Fire Corps Program, was working with the members to pursue fuels monitoring positions on the Smokey Bear Ranger District of that forest.
BOOTS ON THE GROUND:
LOREN RUSSELL
Southwest Conservation Corps, Los Valles Region

I OFFICIALLY SEPARATED FROM THE US AIRFORCE ONE WEEK BEFORE THIS PROGRAM STARTED. In the Air Force I was a US Airforce Intelligence Officer stationed in Japan for my last hitch. I flew over 800 combat hours as an airborne reconnaissance crew member providing threat warning and intelligence reporting to US and Coalition ground troops in Afghanistan.

I was in charge of 26 people while in the military at the end of my service. I was the boss. I learned how to be the boss differently here and what being the boss can mean. I learned to support leadership differently, I learned that I can be a member of something and be a powerful voice and still be humble. Finally, I feel like I was able to ‘pay it forward’ a little bit.

I have never had an opportunity to spend this much time outside and to be that impacted by the environment as I have been this year. I have learned to take care of myself and to help the team take care of themselves and to see how we impact the environment. I’ve learned skills that I have always wanted to learn and these skills will help me find a post-military path that has meaning and service.

“The VFC can be helpful not only for vets to get new skills and reintegrate into civilian life but it can be a place where people learn to use their voice for positive change I would like to think I helped people to start being solution-oriented.”

I am applying to wildland fire and prescribe burn crews now, using this experience to help me get into the field at the ground level. I also am registering to get more schooling in this field of work and study: wildland fire, forestry and GIS work. I know that my experience in aviation with the military and with fire and saw work here in the SCC will help me to follow a path that I have wanted to follow but never thought possible.

I seem to be at my best when I am serving and looking to help others do better, not when I looking for my own greatness. I think helping others be great would be a great legacy.
PARTNER AND PARTICIPANT QUOTES

“The crew picked up on things really well for being so new. They worked together well and were respectful. They finished the primary goal of the project and more. The experience was very educational for me and I would definitely work with an AZCC crew again.”

- Rose Harley, Coconino NF

“The GAVCC work was much needed and appreciated. Having them live and work in Hurricane Campground was convenient for us and the crew. Much of the work accomplished was too labor intensive to ask our volunteer campground hosts to preform and consisted of deferred maintenance that our Forest Service staff (which currently has 50% vacant positions) would not have been able to accomplish this year.”

- Eric McCloud, George Washington & Jefferson NF

“The crew had a great attitude and great supervision from SCC. They assisted with a prescribed fire on their first day. Thinning, piling and fence removal required very little input from USFS personnel. We pointed them in the right direction and they got it done. Their assistance on the Brockover Prescribed Fire was greatly appreciated. They filled an essential role in our organization.”

- Fred Ellis, San Juan NF

“We are extremely satisfied with the work that was done and the professionalism of the crew and administrative staff. The quality of work was the highest quality we have received from a youth corps crew! Great coordination, very timely responses to questions, overall great experience working with this organization.”

- Amy Simms, USFS Recreation and Lands Program Manager
“I am now confident that I am capable of things that I never thought I could do.”
- Ashley Compton, GAVCC Corpsmember

“We are here to work. Every morning we brave the cold, hike rough terrain into the work site. And then we toil with the trail with our picks and tools. For ten hour days. But pain is necessary for growth. Out here I was reminded of a strength within me, I am reminded of the deep connection out people have always had to the land. Here I found solace and clarity.”
- Blackhawk Dodge, AZCC Ancestral Lands Corpsmember

“This is my first time serving in a conservation corps and so far my time with SCC has exceeded my expectations. Aside from individual growth this has been a wonderful educational experience. Meeting and interacting with people who have such a rich cultural tie to the land has really helped me to fully appreciate the work that I am doing. Considering all that I’ve learned, the things I’ve gotten to experience, and the people I’ve met, my time serving with SCC has turned out to be far more enriching than I imagined. I’m extremely glad that I made the decision to join this program.”
- Kaitlyn Atkinson, SCC Corpsmember

“Challenging myself, both physically and mentally, has led me to a sense of belonging within the crew. The cohesion within the crew has developed to a point where we all care for each other.”
- Kyle Booker
VFC Alumni, Former U.S Army

“My journey with AmeriCorps started four years ago when I was a teenager in high school. I had never had a job before nor made a resume. It was by some miracle I was hired, but there I was with my first job. My first spike was spent in the Big Frog Wilderness, and is something I will never forget. Those first five days were some of the hardest days of work I’d ever do.

My time with the Southeast Conservation Corps and Americorps has been a literal life changing experience that continues to shape who I am and what I do in life.

- Ian Bartenfeld, SECC YCC Corpsmember

“My view of national service was very limited earlier in my life. However, being a part of SECC has changed the way that I view national service. I think back to all the projects that I have worked on and am currently working on and can be proud of the work that our team has contributed to our country and the community.

I am interested in volunteering my time as a volunteer firefighter. I would like to learn more about the duties associated with the job and along the way obtain certifications. I feel that with my experience from SECC I’m equipped with the skills needed to tackle a new job.”
- Laura Ruble, SECC Corpsmember of the Year Nominee

“From my work I have seen how it positively impacts the communities we go to. We leave the worksite better than before. Our work makes us more aware of the environment and environmental issues. Being a part of this [National Service] movement leads to a lot of personal growth and transformation”
- Justine Pike, AZCC Corpsmember Alumni
Burned in wood: Study uses tree rings to trace Taos-area fire history
The Taos News, J.R. Logan, August 30, 2016

Youth Conservation Corps wraps up season on the Kaibab
Th Williams News, Wendy Howell, August 30, 2016

Bear Creek loop may be completed in the fall
Telluride Daily Planet, Jessica Kutz, September 13, 2016
http://www.telluridenews.com/news/article_8f5bb3e0-7a0a-11e6-a736-73d20a5e2441.html

Partnering with the Ancestral Lands Program
Conservation Lands Foundation, September 19, 2016
http://conservationlands.org/partnering-with-the-ancestral-lands-program

Trailhead moves: Public lands work day begins project at Ruby Mountain
Chaffee County Times, Tyler Grimes, September 21, 2016
http://www.chaffeecountytimes.com/free_content/trailhead-moves-public-lands-work-day-begins-project-at-ruby/article_9a4f7d36-802c-11e6-b26a-a391ca188453.html

Trail update: Mount Columbia will be a multi-million dollar mountain
Chaffee County Times, Tyler Grimes, October 20, 2016
http://www.chaffeecountytimes.com/free_content/multi-million-dollar-mountain/article_c5e6b176-9643-11e6-82a3-b73b5d2d3be3.html

Rocky Mountain Field Institute's work is all around you, just look down
Colorado Springs Independent, Helen Robinson, November 9, 2016

Helping hands aid in restoration of historic cabin

2016 looking forward: Trails work aims to connect opportunities
Chaffee County Times, December 29, 2016
http://www.chaffeecountytimes.com/free_content/looking-forward-trails-work-aims-to-connect-opportunities/article_848005ce-cd3f-11e6-b8c3-f72a551eb316.html

Short films featuring Southwest Conservation Corps
Filmed, edited and directed by Sarah Hamilton, Crew Leader
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTsFZ2vo8JcJropDVOMiGl5_plZgs31K
CONCLUSION

CONSERVATION LEGACY IS EXTREMELY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE US FOREST SERVICE TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES for young people and veterans to serve on public lands and to provide much needed services in the areas of land restoration, trail maintenance and construction, vegetation management, historic preservation, wildfire prevention, community development and other critical areas.

Participation in corps programming has a long track record of success and results in young people developing professional and life skills as well as an increased awareness of environmental and resource stewardship. These activities promote the mission and vision to which both the US Forest Service and Conservation Legacy are committed.

The physical and financial support from the USFS, the interns, crews, communities, partner agencies, staff and partner conservation corps in this effort have been remarkable. Conservation Legacy is humbled to continue to learn and grow together and to continue to provide systems, administrative and coordinating services that can build capacity at the local level to engage youth and young adults with public lands, for the betterment of our shared future.
APACHE SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
14-PA-11030114-017
Improve recreational access

CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST
Southwest Conservation Corps • Intern
16-PA-11030300-001
Research, survey and community engagement

CIBOLA, SANTA FE & CARSON NATIONAL FORESTS
Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11030200-021
Improve recreational access

COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030408-017
Improve recreational access

National Forest Foundation
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030408-015
Improve recreational access

Coronado National Forest
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030500-051
Improve recreational access

GILA NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11030600-021
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030600-011
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030600-012
Improve recreational access

National Forest Foundation
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030600-011
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030600-019
Improve recreational access

GRAND MESA UNCOMPAHGRE AND GUNNISON NATIONAL FORESTS
Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11020400-030
Protect communities from wildfire, vets

Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11020405-038
Restore, protect and improve habitat

KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030704-014
Improve recreational access, youth crew, Ancestral Lands

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030701-015
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030701-009
Improve recreational access

LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030800-017
Improve recreational access

MARK TWAIN NATIONAL FOREST
Stewards Individual Placement • Intern
16-PA-11090521-009
Restore, protect and improve habitat, youth crew

Stewards Individual Placement • Intern
16-PA-11090500-027
Restore, protect and improve habitat

Stewards Individual Placement • Intern
16-PA-11090500-028
Restore, protect and improve habitat

PIKE SAN ISABEL NATIONAL FOREST
Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11021200-061
Protect communities from wildfire, vets

Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11021201-072
Improve recreational access

Southwest Conservation Corps • Intern
16-PA-11021200-078
Research, survey and community engagement

Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11021202-059
Improve recreational access

Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11021211-071
Improve recreational access

Southwest Conservation Corps • Intern
16-PA-11021200-033
Research, survey and community engagement

PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030900-013
Improve recreational access, youth crew

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030903-018
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11030901-016
Improve recreational access

REGION 3 MULTIPLE FORESTS
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11031600-051
Fire monitoring, veterans fire corps
REGION 8 MULTIPLE FORESTS
Great Appalachian Valley CC • Crew
16-PA-11083150-043
Improve recreational access

Southeast Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11083150-033
Improve recreational access

REGION 10 REGIONAL OFFICE
Stewards Individual Placement • Intern
16-PA-11100100-013
Research, survey and community engagement

RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST
Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
16-CS-11020900-008
Improve recreational access

SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST
Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11021305-026
Protect communities from wildfire

Protect communities from wildfire, vets

SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST
Southwest Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11021305-035
Improve recreational access

Support local economies and restore community/cultural assets

TONTO NATIONAL FOREST
Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
15-PA-11031200-011
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Intern
14-PA-11031200-029
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11031200-019
Improve recreational access, vets

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11031200-015
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11031200-016
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
16-PA-11031200-015
Improve recreational access

Arizona Conservation Corps • Crew
14-PA-110316-050
Support local economies and restore community/cultural assets

Arizona Conservation Corps • Intern
16-PA-11031200-017
Research, survey and community engagement