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2016-17 Biennial Budget – Conservation Corps Minnesota

Agency Profile – Conservation Corps Minnesota 1

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AT A GLANCE

Young adult programs, ages 18-25

- 153 young adults serve in field crews across the state, completing natural resource work — maintaining state parks, improving trails and restoring habitat.
- 53 serve in single placement positions with natural resource agencies and nonprofits, and conservation apprenticeships at Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- 48 young adults serve as youth leaders for summer and afterschool programs.
- All young adult participants are enrolled in AmeriCorps and receive education awards after completing service.

Youth programs, ages 15-18

- The rural residential Summer Youth Corps unplugs 132 teenagers from modern intrusions to live, learn and work outdoors. About 15 percent are deaf or hard-of-hearing and equal numbers of male/female and rural/urban youth are enrolled.
- The afterschool Youth Outdoors program engages 142 urban high school students from low-income homes in job training, science education and outdoor service-learning.
- Youth in both programs earn a stipend while restoring resources, improving parks and neighborhoods, leading volunteers, gaining job skills and increasing their environmental science knowledge

PURPOSE

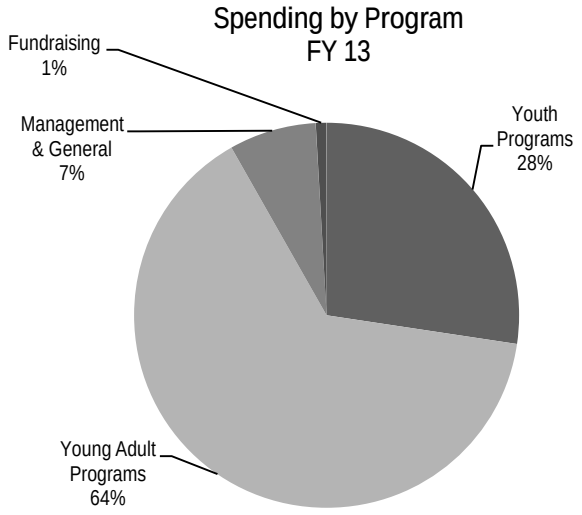
Conservation Corps Minnesota's mission is to provide hands-on environmental stewardship and service-learning opportunities to youth and young adults while accomplishing conservation, natural-resource management and emergency response work.

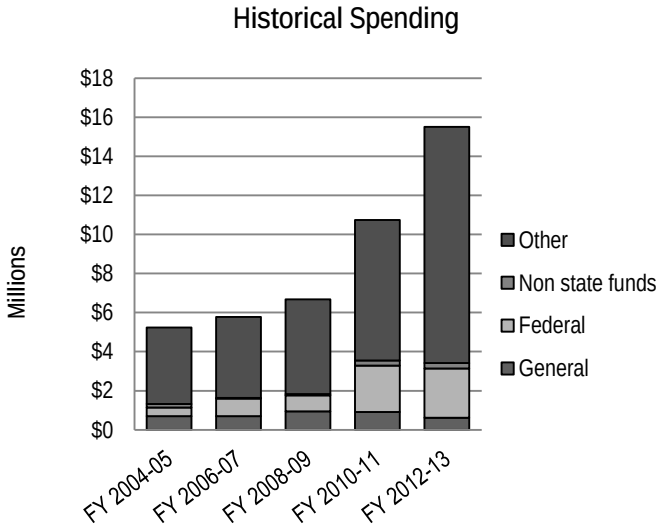
Our goals are to help young people become more connected to the environment, engaged in natural resource conservation, involved in the community and prepared for future employment. We integrate young people from various socio-economic backgrounds and cultural communities, as well as deaf youth, into our programs and live up to our motto: *Resources Restored. Lives Changed.*

Our mission and goals support the statewide outcomes:

- Minnesotans have the education and skills needed to achieve their goals
- A clean, healthy environment with sustainable uses of natural resources

BUDGET





Conservation Corps Minnesota receives funds from a variety of sources including federal government (16%), state government (30%), fee for service (51%), and charitable gifts (2%). The largest increases in "other" funding resulted from fee-for-service work funded by Parks & Trails Legacy Fund, Clean Water Legacy Fund, and the Environmental Trust Fund. The federal funding increase from FY08-09 to FY10-11 came from short-term American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, in addition to AmeriCorps grants. In FY12-13, additional federal funding was generated from disaster response work, primarily in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, as well as Recovery Act and AmeriCorps funds. The fee-for-service revenue is restricted to the service work completed primarily by our young adult field crews.

STRATEGIES

Restoring resources

Throughout our programs, young people are involved in hands-on, service-learning activities that protect and enhance natural resources.

1. Habitat Restoration: Corps members restore habitat on public lands throughout Minnesota by removing non-native invasive species, conducting prescribed burns and planting native trees and plants.
2. Improving Outdoor Recreational Facilities: Corps members build and maintain motorized and non-motorized trails, boardwalks, campsites, park facilities and other recreational structures.
3. Energy Conservation: Corps members install energy-saving measures in Twin Cities homes, assist with solar heat installations and provide education and outreach on renewable energy technologies.

Changing Lives

Conservation Corps Minnesota builds life skills for nearly 600 young people each year with personal development, technical and work-skills training and education.

1. Educational curriculum for youth (ages 15-18): focuses on science and technology and job-search skills. More than 20% of program time is devoted to education and skills training. Eighty-five percent of youth participants report in post-program surveys that their work skills have improved.
2. Skills training for young adults (ages 18-25): includes hands-on training in habitat restoration, trail building, prescribed burning, energy conservation, leadership, communication and other skills. Field crew members receive professional certifications in wildfire suppression, chain-saw safety and first aid.

OPERATIONS

- Non-residential Field Crews – Young adults, working in five-member crews, conduct natural resource, conservation and emergency response work from February to December.
- Seasonal crews – Young adults from diverse ethnic communities, working in six-member crews, receive intensive job training in natural resource management and work in the Superior National Forest "Faces of Tomorrow" initiative from May through August.
- Single placements – Individual corps members are based at the Department of Natural Resources, Neighborhood Energy Connection in Saint Paul and other agencies and nonprofits. During the summer, apprentices serve in soil and water conservation districts throughout Minnesota.
- Summer Youth Corps – Youth begin at a St. Croix State Park base camp, then spike camp throughout the region, working in crews of six youth and two AmeriCorps leaders each as they restore natural resources and lead volunteers during two summer sessions, each four weeks long.
- Youth Outdoors – Diverse urban teens from disadvantaged neighborhoods engage in out-of-school environmental science education, civic leadership and outdoor service-learning as they complete neighborhood improvement projects and lead volunteers during 11-week fall and spring school semesters and an eight-week summer session.

RESULTS

Type	Performance Measures*	2010	2013
Quantity	Number of youth and young adults engaged in job skills training, education and natural resource and conservation work.	402	596
Result	Percent of young adult participants who gained or improved technical skills.	98%	98%
Result	Percent of youth participants who are better prepared for their next job	86%	96%
Quantity	Acres of habitat restored or improved	36,680	37,353
Quantity	Hours of work on recreational access improvements (trails, park facilities, campsites, docks, piers etc)	80,432	88,747

**Performance measures follow the calendar year in alignment with our program schedule and fiscal year*

The legal authority for the Minnesota Conservation Corps is found in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 84, Section 991.