

National Park Foundation and Partners Expand Service Corps Impact Across the Country

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EMPLOYING YOUNG AND DIVERSE LEADERS, SERVICE CORPS BENEFIT NATIONAL PARKS, LIFT UP COMMUNITIES, AND PROVIDE IN-DEMAND JOB SKILLS TRAINING

WASHINGTON—As the National Park Service celebrates 103 years of preserving America’s natural and cultural resources, the National Park Foundation (NPF) today announced a more than \$3.5 million investment in expanding young, diverse leaders’ capacity to help protect national parks, lift up communities, and gain in-demand job skills training through service corps programs.

Service corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults and veterans in projects that address recreation, conservation, disaster response, and community needs.

“Service corps are one of the greatest investments we can make, supporting young, diverse leaders and national parks at the same time,” said National Park Foundation President and CEO Will Shafroth. “The National Park Foundation and partners recognize the power of the service corps program to protect national parks and grow the community of champions who care for them.”

With national parks facing an \$11.9 billion deferred maintenance backlog, engaging young leaders through service corps programs to enhance national parks and provide greater access to them is a key tool in the ongoing effort to improve the visitor experience.

Service corps help national parks with projects ranging from invasive species removal, to historical preservation, to trail restoration. At the same time, service corps provide on-the-job training for its members, developing leadership skills, teamwork, and raising awareness about the myriad of public lands career paths.

“We are grateful to the National Park Foundation for supporting the work of service corps organizations in parks,” said National Park Service Acting Deputy Director for Operations David Vela. “These service corps projects strengthen public access to parks and recreational opportunities. Equally important, they provide young, diverse leaders with incredible work experiences.”

In addition, the National Park Foundation supports efforts to engage service corps members in conversations about racial equity, including the work of The Corps Network and its [Moving Forward Initiative](#), which seeks to expand career exposure and increase employment in conservation and resource management for youth and young adults of color.

"Service corps are proud to partner with national parks to engage young people in maintaining our country's natural and cultural treasures," said Mary Ellen Sprenkel, President and CEO of The Corps Network. "We appreciate the National Park Foundation's investment in meaningful service opportunities, as well as their work to foster important conversations about race. The Corps Network is committed to helping make racial equity the standard in resource management. Through partnerships with organizations like the National Park Foundation, we hope to empower a diverse generation of conservation leaders and advance equity and inclusion."

This year, the National Park Foundation is partnering with the National Park Service, American Youthworks, Conservation Legacy, Groundwork USA, Montana Conservation Corps, Northwest Youth Corps, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, and Student Conservation Association to support a diverse network of service corps crews. Some of the National Park Foundation-supported service corps crews include:

- Northwest Youth Corps' LGBTQ+ inclusion crews that are restoring trails in the Carbon River portion of Mount Rainier National Park in Washington
- An all-Latinx Student Conservation Association crew from the greater Houston area that is undertaking critical trail restoration work and helping to connect Houstonians to their closest national park, Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas
- An all-female Conservation Legacy Southeast Conservation Corps crew that is rehabilitating the Red, Green, Yellow, and Mountain Beautiful Trails at Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park in Tennessee

"Working with Southeast Conservation Corps has increased my interest in botany and plants. It's helping me find what I want to do for my career," said Alyssa Dela Cruz, a member of the all-female Conservation Legacy Southeast Conservation Corps crew at Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park. "There's so many paths I could take now after working for Southeast Conservation Corps."

Last year, National Park Foundation-supported service corps crews contributed over 74,000 hours of service to 38 national parks, resulting in the building and restoring of nearly 400 miles of trail and the planting of more than 16,000 trees and other plant species.

Thanks to private philanthropy, including support from Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque premier partner Nature Valley and partners Nissan TITAN and REI, the National Park Foundation is investing more than \$3.5 million in service corps programs across the country. Select projects are also being matched with federal funds that were authorized and appropriated for the National Park Foundation under the 2016 National Park Service Centennial Act (PL 114-289).

“Restoring our national parks so that they can be enjoyed by future generations has been a top priority for Nature Valley,” said Scott Baldwin, director of marketing for Nature Valley. “This program provides an excellent opportunity for young adults to become involved in these preservation efforts.”

“Our national parks are our shared backyard, our shared heritage and history. These service corps programs create a win for all involved – the participants, the parks and nearby communities,” said Marc Berejka, REI Co-op director of government and community affairs. “We are proud to continue our longstanding support for the corps, as well as our partnerships with the National Park Foundation and National Park Service.”

The values shared by the National Park Foundation and partners help ensure the service corps program will expand for years to come. The collective dedication to youth, job training, and the continued preservation of the National Park System are key to the program’s success.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

The National Park Foundation is the official charity of America’s national parks and nonprofit partner to the National Park Service. Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation raises private funds to help protect more than 84 million acres of national parks through critical conservation and preservation efforts and connect all Americans with their incomparable natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history. Find out more and become a part of the national park community at www.nationalparks.org.

ABOUT NATURE VALLEY®

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ABOUT NISSAN NORTH AMERICA

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ABOUT REI CO-OP

REI is a specialty outdoor retailer, headquartered near Seattle. The nation's largest consumer co-op, REI is a growing community of more than 18 million members who expect and love the best quality gear, inspiring expert classes and trips, and outstanding customer service. REI has 155 stores in 35 states and the District of Columbia. If you can't visit a store, you can shop at REI.com, [REI Outlet](#) or the free [REI shopping app](#). REI isn't just about gear. Adventurers can take a vacation of a lifetime with [REI's active travel company](#), a global leader that runs more than 250 itineraries across all continents. In every community where REI has a presence, professionally trained instructors share their expertise by hosting beginner-to advanced-level classes and workshops about a wide range of activities. To build on the infrastructure that makes life outside possible, REI invests millions annually in hundreds of local and national nonprofits that create access to—and steward—the outdoor places that inspire us all.