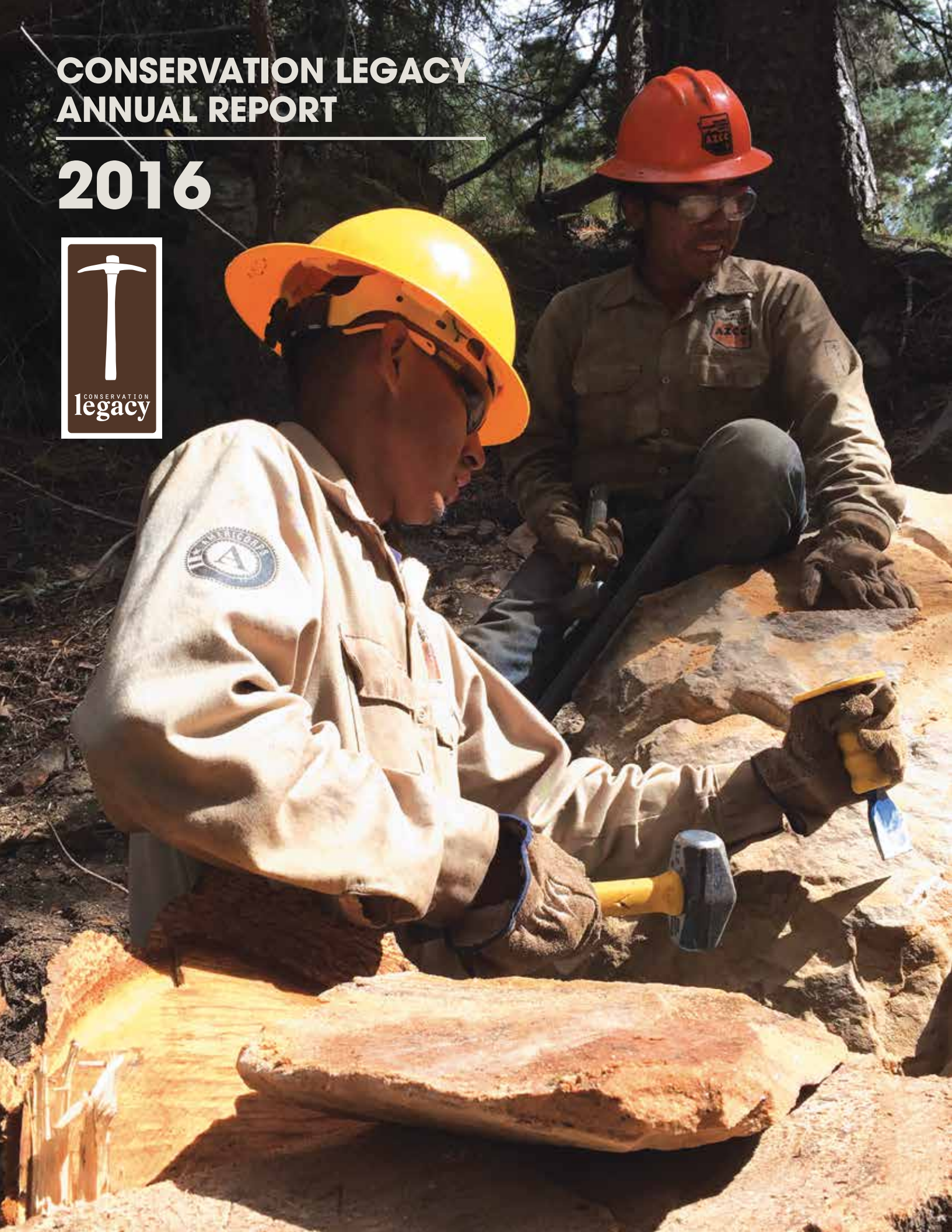


# CONSERVATION LEGACY ANNUAL REPORT

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## 2016





# FOSTERING CONSERVATION SERVICE IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITIES AND ECOSYSTEMS.



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**“I FOUND MYSELF  
SEARCHING FOR  
MEANING AND  
PURPOSE. AFTER  
SOME RESEARCH,  
I KNEW I HAD  
FOUND A ONCE  
IN A LIFETIME  
OPPORTUNITY  
INTO A BETTER  
LIFE AND A  
NEW WORLD.”**

-Chau Huyn,  
Veterans Fire Corps Participant

## 2016 WAS OUR BIGGEST YEAR YET.

Conservation Legacy is the third largest non-profit conservation corps program in the country and is now in its 19th year of engaging individuals to complete important conservation projects throughout the nation by providing structured, safe and challenging work and educational opportunities.

Our dedicated staff and participants surpassed the 1,000,000 service hour mark. We placed 1,679 people in positions serving their communities and the environment across the United States, in 48 states and territories in total. Our programs continue to evolve and grow. Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps and the Zuni Ancestral Lands program completed successful inaugural seasons. BRIDGE Network relaunched as Stewards Individual Placement Program, representing a renewed commitment to fostering conservation and service in communities and ecosystems around the nation. Our Veterans Fire Corps program continues to provide exceptional on-the-ground training and experience, leading to entry level fire employment for a majority of our recent-era veterans participants.

Carrying forward the momentum of the past year, we continue our dedication to building strong and healthy communities and ecosystems, fostering personal growth and life-long service in a changing world and providing leadership and support to deepen the impact of corps.



# PROGRAM PROFILES

## ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS

Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) provides young adults with challenging service and educational opportunities throughout the full calendar year from the White Mountains, Flagstaff and Tucson, AZ. AZCC operates a continuum of programs from community-based initiatives for younger teens to residential camping crews for high school and college aged individuals along with leadership programs for college graduates and job training programs specifically for current era veterans. Programs are completed in partnership with public land agency managers and are AmeriCorps programs.

## GREAT APPALACHIAN VALLEY CONSERVATION CORPS

The Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps (GAVCC) moves forward from the tradition of the Civilian Conservation Corps to engage young people in conservation service projects. Through meaningful work on the land, GAVCC crew members will develop the ability to work and lead within a crew in a challenging and supportive environment. Over the course of the program, crew members deepen their connection to the local community and landscape as well as the greater conservation movement.

## STEWARDS INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Stewards Individual Placement Program (SIPP) places AmeriCorps and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) Members in communities across America for a year of volunteer service by facilitating partnerships between federal agencies and community-based nonprofit groups. Unified in mission, each participant serves on a specific team distinguished by its unique focus and relevant federal agency partner affiliation.

## SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION CORPS

Southeast Conservation Corps (SECC) operates conservation service programs throughout the Southeast that focus on empowering young people to cultivate compassion, responsibility and grit through community service, hard work and environmental stewardship. SECC is focused on connecting local youth to the natural environment through service learning, personal development and recreation. SECC offers a variety of opportunities, including both a youth mountain biking program, Trips for Kids Chattanooga, and a variety of Conservation Programs for youth and young adults.

## SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS

Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) operates conservation service programs across Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico with offices in Durango and Salida, CO, Gallup, Acoma, and Zuni, NM. SCC has broad program offerings including individual intern placements in natural resource positions as well as crew based conservation service programs for youth, young adults, and post 9-11 era Veterans. SCC programs are rooted in the communities served, addressing local public land issues and working to meet local community needs and interests.

## PRESERVE AMERICA YOUTH SUMMIT

The Preserve America Youth Summit (PAYS) Program began in 2007 with the goal of creating an opportunity for young people aged 13 to 18 to get out of the classroom and into the field to learn about history, archaeology, heritage tourism, and preservation. Interacting directly with community partners such as federal, state and local governments and agencies as well as non-profit historic preservation, tourism, community, and education organizations, each Youth Summit provides interactive, outcome driven learning experiences and service opportunities.

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## CONTRIBUTORS:

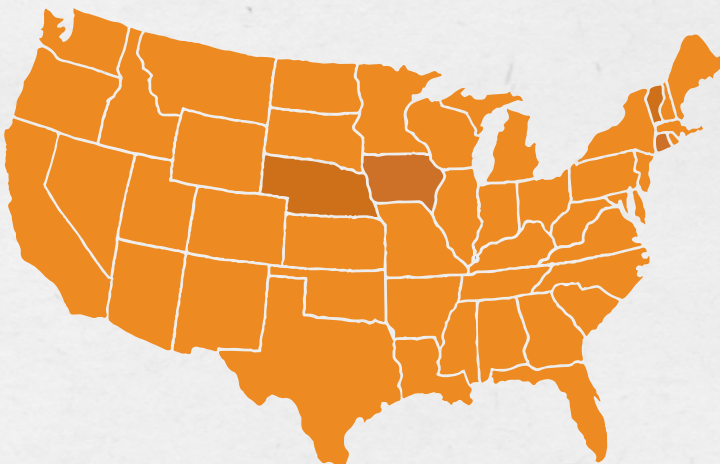
**Photos:** Sarah Hamilton, Aaron Deininger, David J. Swift and SH/FT.



# 2016 IMPACT



IN 2016, CONSERVATION LEGACY PROGRAMS SERVED LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN 45 U.S. STATES AND THREE TERRITORIES, INCLUDING GUAM, PUERTO RICO AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS.



## TOTAL SERVICE HOURS:

Including staff and participants

# 1,074,480

## TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS:

Contributed by 13,113 volunteers

# 34,348

On 935 volunteer projects

## ACRES OF LAND IMPROVED:

More than 5,200 American Football fields

# 6,986

236 campgrounds • 1,061 signs maintained

## MILES OF RIVERS/TRAILS IMPROVED:

Longer than the Appalachian Trail

# 2,630

40 bridges built • 38 miles of fences maintained

## TOTAL PARTICIPANTS:

500 member increase since 2015

# 1,679

UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS:

**CREW MEMBERS: 785**

**CREW LEADERS: 150**

**AMERICORPS INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENTS: 470**

**AMERICORPS VISTA PLACEMENTS: 105**

**YOUTH SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS: 169**

## FINANCIALS

**PERSONNEL AND PARTICIPANTS 78.6%**  
**PROGRAMS 21.4%**



**OTHER 1.3%**  
**GRANTS 15.6%**  
**PROJECTS 83.1%**





**JOB**S AND OPPORTUNITIES Conservation Legacy corps programs build on the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps, established in the 1930's and heralded as one of the most successful efforts to put people to work restoring our lands and waters. Conservation Legacy programs are, however, far more than youth employment programs. They have been shown to have significant benefits for participants: improved job skills, communication skills, leadership tendencies, teamwork and life skills. Conservation Legacy works toward making these opportunities available to a consistently diverse group of veterans and young women and men—and to those who could most benefit from the experience.

**“ALMOST 5 YEARS AGO I SET MY MIND ON TRANSITIONING FROM RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT. HAVING NO REAL IDEA WHAT I WAS GETTING INTO, I STEPPED INTO A CREW LEADER ROLE AT SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS. I LED FOUR SEASONS OF CREWS AND BECAME A PERMANENT STAFF MEMBER. I HAVE HAD OFFERS TO WORK IN NATIONAL PARKS, WITH THE FOREST SERVICE AND WITH OTHER CORPS. I WOULD NOT HAVE HAD THESE AMAZING OPPORTUNITIES, COME THIS FAR, AND WOULD NOT HAVE GROWN THIS MUCH WITHOUT AMERICORPS AND CONSERVATION LEGACY PROGRAMS.”**

-Mandy Bonesteel

Members continue to build employment assets throughout their service term. Every Conservation Legacy member completes approximately four hours of on-going experiential training and education per week while working on conservation field projects. Interns in individual or small team placements typically undertake more technically challenging trainings and projects. Members and Individual Placements often leave programs with many opportunities to continue their employment, not only with project partners in the fields in which they have been working, but more broadly as well. The skills gained through Conservation Legacy programs translate to any field of work.

**NATIONAL SERVICE WORKS** National service is extremely cost-effective. In 2015, the Corporation for National and Community Service generated \$1.26 billion in outside investment from the private sector, including Walmart, Home Depot, Target, Cisco and Citigroup, an amount exceeding the federal appropriation of \$1.1 billion and increasing the return on taxpayer funds.

National service connects people, increases compassion and understanding, broadens perspectives, teaches new skills, expands social networks and increases self-esteem and grit. National service volunteers serving in AmeriCorps, and returned Peace Corps volunteers continuing their ethic of service, are vitally important to our communities and exemplify the values of citizenship.

Conservation Legacy programs embrace the ethic of service, and offer participants an AmeriCorps Education Award, which can be used for education and student loan expenses, in exchange for their dedication and hard work in serving their community and country. Conservation Legacy also embraces private-public partnerships and works to leverage funds awarded to federal and state grant programs, amplifying the effect of our programs and collective impact.



**EXTERNAL EVALUATION** Conservation Legacy also measures the results of its efforts through external evaluation. Beginning in 2012, Texas A&M University and Brigham Young University conducted three years of evaluations of Conservation Legacy participants along with participants from other conservation corps and compared the results to a study group of young people. Participants in corps programs such as those supported by Conservation Legacy reported significant increases in their ability to work in teams, leadership skills, self-responsibility, perseverance and communication.

Furthermore, in an analysis performed by the National Park Service Facility Maintenance Division, it was determined that conservation crews saved 65% on average when compared to NPS crews, and 87% when compared to private contractors.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



**“THE CREW EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS ON EVERY PROJECT AND HAD THE SKILL TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY. WE PLAN TO WORK WITH AZCC AGAIN.”**

-Missy Robinson, Recreation Officer,  
Coconino National Forest



# ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS



**THE ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS EXPERIENCED** another successful year in 2016. Embracing the varied landscapes, elevations, and seasons which exist in Arizona, we provided service opportunities for over 500 young adults and recent era veterans. Whether working on crews or as individuals with partnering agencies, our participants completed over 250,000 hours of service across public lands in Arizona, southern New Mexico, southern Utah, and inland California.

**IN THE FALL OF 2016,** AZCC partnered with the Tonto National Forest to field a Local Ancestral Lands crew. 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.

**CREW MEMBERS TOOK PART** in the Saguaro National Park Centennial Saguaro Survey, surveying the Saguaro population and collecting data from plot 38 in Saguaro National Park. The information collected assists the park staff in monitoring the Saguaro ecosystem and supports the management of this unique natural resource, allowing visitors to continue to enjoy the Saguaro forest. The crew discovered that plot 38 had the most germinating Saguaro cacti in the park and even found a tiny, inch tall specimen.

**ARIZONA CREWS WORKED** with National Monuments across Arizona, where participants were provided a sustained opportunity to learn from National Park Service natural/cultural resource managers and archaeologists about the mission of the National Park Service, its influence on the design and implementation of preservation projects and various challenges facing public land managers. Crews also learned technical field skills in historic

preservation and conservation work. NPS sites included Casa Grande Ruins, Walnut Canyon, Wupatki and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monuments as well as Tumacacori National Historic Site.

**THE AZCC YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS (YCC) PROGRAM 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.

"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."



## SIERRA BINGHAM

### CREW LEADER

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.

**"I STOPPED SEEING MYSELF AS A YOUNG ADULT WITH A JOB AND GOT A GLIMPSE OF A WOMAN WITH A PURPOSE AND THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH TO ACHIEVE IT."**

**517 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**



# GREAT APPALACHIAN VALLEY CONSERVATION CORPS

## GREAT APPALACHIAN VALLEY CONSERVATION CORPS

(GAVCC), began as a new Conservation Legacy program in 2016, operating in area of unmet need in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. GAVCC moves forward from the tradition of the Civilian Conservation Corps to engage young people in conservation service projects, supported in partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation works with partners to preserve the hallowed ground of the Valley's Civil War battlefields. GAVCC's first summer crew worked on lands managed by the Foundation.

GAVCC had a very successful pilot year, fielding three crews that worked in partnership with the USFS and NPS as well as assisting with disaster response after major flooding in West Virginia. The project partners that worked with the GAVCC crew on the disaster relief project expressed special gratitude for the level of competency and professionalism that the members exhibited during their deployment.

GAVCC operated it's first roving crew supported by partnerships with three USFS 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 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. This is the second time that Region 8 partnerships have supported innovative local pilot programs in the Southeast with Conservation Legacy.

**"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 Sonnefield, GAVCC Corpsmember



## MORGAN BILLINGSLEY

### CREW MEMBER

Morgan is great example of a Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps AmeriCorps member who has embraced the ethic of national service. When asked about a time that she personally valued the work that the crew participated in over the season, she brought up a particular trail that her crew worked on. This trail connected a lower income community with two public schools, a super market and one of the largest trail networks in the community. Morgan said "the idea that we were going to help make a natural green space more accessible really resonated with me and gave the work we were doing more big picture importance."

Zach Foster, GAVCC Program Director and founder, is a previous Southwest Conservation Corps crew leader who is from the Shenandoah Valley and had a dream of launching a new corps in his home region. He was able to develop relationships with diverse partners including staff at the local and regional level for the USFS, Shenandoah National Park, The Nature Conservancy and a variety of regional and local partners. The program had 100% Corpsmember and Crew Leader retention and project partners expressed satisfaction with the work that was completed. GAVCC is on track to expand programming and provide increased opportunities in 2017.

**100%** PARTICIPANT RETENTION



# SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION CORPS

**IN 2013, SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION CORPS (SECC)** began its 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.



**AFTER INTENSE STORMS** ruined the popular Kiddie Trail in the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, Southeast Conservation Corps dispatched a local adult conservation crew to tackle its re-routing and rehabilitation. The Kiddie Trail, built along the side of Lookout Mountain, was one of the many local areas impacted by storms. As a result, much of the tree and plant vegetation was destroyed. This in turn exacerbated the erosion issues of the fall line trail making many sections of the trail unsafe for users.

Upon receiving archaeological clearance, the crew removed downed trees to begin construction of the new section of trail, installing switchbacks and erosion-control structures. Work was completed ahead of schedule and the crew was able to spend time in the park working on additional projects.

This SECC crew exemplified to the park what a corps crew is capable of and what corps programs offer beyond the project work. The crew reflected the diversity of citizens that live within the Greater Chattanooga area, hailing from different schools, neighborhoods, socioeconomic backgrounds and races.

**“THE CREW DID A SUPERIOR JOB. THE TRAIL WILL BE SUSTAINABLE FOR YEARS TO COME. THE PARK HAS RECEIVED HIGH PRAISE FROM PARK VISITORS WHO HIKE THE TRAILS ON LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN SAYING IT IS A GREAT IMPROVEMENT TO THE TRAIL SYSTEM.”**

-Todd Roder, Chief Ranger  
Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park

**IN PARTNERSHIP** with The Access Fund and the Southeastern Climber's Coalition, SECC worked to maintain trails to prepare for the opening of the highly anticipated Denny Cove climbing area near Chattanooga, TN. Denny Cove was purchased from a private timber company by the Southeastern Climbers Coalition who will eventually turn the land over to the Tennessee State Parks.

“It's been amazing to see the community step up and help build this place out. While there's more to do, it's amazing what we've accomplished thus far,” says Cody Roney of the Coalition, in an article published by The Access Fund. SECC's crews worked during their training weeks, putting in wash crossings, maintaining and building new tread, felling snags, clearing corridor, building rock steps and improving recreation access to the climbing site. Over 1,000 service hours were spent working on these projects.



## LAURA RUBLE

### CREW MEMBER

“My view of national service was very limited earlier in my life. However, being a part of Southeast Conservation Corps has changed the way that I view it. 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 was recently given the opportunity to do disaster relief in Baton Rouge, LA. The work was primarily mucking and gutting houses. The people there who had lost their homes were selfless in everything they did. There were people who had lost everything in the flood, but their outlook on life was incredibly positive. I was extremely humbled to have been able to work so closely with the citizens of Baton Rouge.”

**24** **INTERNS PLACED  
ACROSS THE  
SOUTHEAST**



# SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS



Photo © Sarah Hamilton

**IN 2016, SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS** provided 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 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.

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 project site. The crews accomplished more than expected and the project was a HUGE success!

## KAITLYN ATKINSON

### CREW MEMBER

"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. I have learned so much about the Southwest and Native American History. Working at Aztec Ruins National Monument to help restore the landscape has opened my eyes to a different time and culture. Meeting people who have such a rich cultural tie to the land has really helped me to fully appreciate the work that I've been doing."

### **SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS (SCC) PARTNERED WITH MONTEZUMA SCHOOL TO FARM PROJECT (MSTFP),**

a county-wide school-based educational garden program of the Mancos Conservation District. This partnership supported a Farm Corps pilot program that trained, educated and coached young people to install a new school garden center at Mesa Elementary School in the Montezuma-Cortez School District. Ten local youth had jobs this past summer as a result of the Farm Corps program, which was funded through a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado utilizing Colorado State Lottery proceeds. This new outdoor learning environment will serve more than 400 students on a weekly basis with hands on, experiential education.

It is intended that this will be the first of many local Farm Corps youth programs that will be offered annually in partnership with local growers and other community agricultural partners to encourage connection to the outdoors, instill stewardship of public lands, improve our local food security and growing methods and encourage conservation service learning.

**SCC HAS BEEN PARTNERING** with the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) to run the Veterans Fire Corps since 2009, when the first Veterans Fire Corps in the nation was piloted on the Pagosa Ranger District. Since then, SCC has developed a robust working partnership and often the Forest, SCC and other partners 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 funding to match the regional USFS allocation. All of the funding was awarded which allowed VFC crews to put in 20 full weeks of project work.

"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."

# 467 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



# ANCESTRAL LANDS

**2016 WAS AN INCREDIBLE YEAR OF GROWTH** for Ancestral Lands. Collaboration between Arizona Conservation Corps, Southwest Conservation Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa and La Plazita Institute enabled the engagement of 238 Native American youth and young adults through conservation service work in local tribal communities.



Conservation Legacy established an all-Native American Ancestral Lands program in 2008 based at Pueblo of Acoma, New Mexico, and has expanded and replicated that program to multiple Native American communities. Ancestral Lands programs complete projects that include traditional farming, wash and river restoration, invasive vegetation inventory and monitoring, Russian Olive and Tamarisk removal, fuels mitigation, trail construction, preservation and cultural/language immersion.

This year was the successful inaugural season for the Zuni Ancestral Lands program. Based in Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, the program included several traditional conservation corps crews, as well as a hiking club, the Zuni Explorer's Club, made possible through an Explore Grant from The North Face®. The hiking club and conservation crews spent time exploring and working in various culturally significant monuments and parks. In total, 45 youth and young adults were engaged through the Zuni program.

Internship programs continue to expand and provide Ancestral Lands opportunities for tribal communities where there is an interest in traditional conservation and cultural service project work. The Stewards Individual Placement Program launched a Tribal Resilience AmeriCorps program which places VISTA members in Native American communities to focus and promote community and environmental resilience.

The Ancestral Lands Career Institute Internship program, in partnership with the National Park Service, provided 10 positions placed at parks around the country. The interns are mentored by NPS and Conservation Legacy staff throughout their service with the purpose of preparing them to support future community programs and/or for potential future employment with the NPS.

SCC continued to strengthen its partnership with La Plazita Institute in the South Valley of Albuquerque, growing the program from 10 weeks in 2015 to 22 weeks in 2016. Staff are working with La Plazita Institute to solicit several foundations in 2017 to strengthen the program both internally and externally.

Ancestral Lands programming supports the self-empowerment of Native American communities through further development of program models across Indian Country that provide jobs and experience for local Native American youth, connect youth to their heritage and cultural values, complete important conservation and interpretation projects at National Park Service units and for native communities and expose Native American youth to potential careers with public land management agencies.

The power and impact of Ancestral Lands programming is due to the community investment and support for each program tribally and locally, combined with the network of operational support from Conservation Legacy.



## KEVIN COOEYATE

### CREW MEMBER • ZUNI

"To be myself was never easy. I was always shy. However, day by day, I broke that habit. I was asked to talk about my experience with SCC. I started with a subtle introduction in my language (Zuni). Then I went on, speaking of my life seasons. I shared, with a crowd of strangers a personal story about my battle with alcohol and how I would have continued to struggle if it weren't for SCC. I cried through some of my speech. I have never talked about my life stories in that fashion.

My peers and family see me as a changed person. They can see I want to help others around me. I only pray I shall be a source of inspiration for some like others have inspired me!"

# 41 TOTAL ANCESTRAL LANDS PROJECTS



# STEWARDS INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT PROGRAM



Photo © The National Park Service

**THE TAIL END OF 2016** brought about the re-launching of BRIDGE Network as Stewards Individual Placement Program (SIPP). The program continues a commitment to excellence by fostering conservation service in support of communities and ecosystems. SIPP is building on a solid foundation and is focused on serving AmeriCorps members, establishing stronger partnerships, making sure partner goals and objectives are met and that the highest quality experience is had by all.

**THIS YEAR MARKED THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GEO-SCIENTISTS-IN-THE-PARKS (GIP) PROGRAM** with the National Park Service. GIP was developed to provide young college students and recent graduates experience in natural resource, science-based work while enabling the NPS to implement crucial projects that they would otherwise not have the capacity to complete. This year, 121 GIP placements completed 75,312 hours of service. Women made up 73% of these placements and the diversity of the program has doubled over the past several years.

In 2016, Stewards Individual Placement Program became a second program partner, joining the Geological Society of America. SIPP brought an expertise in program administration and enabled the GIP program to offer the AmeriCorps Education Award to its participants for the first time. GIP participants earned \$218,021 in Education Awards at no cost to the National Park Service. In addition, longer GIP terms are now eligible for health care coverage provided through AmeriCorps. The additional support and changes to the GIP program provided by SIPP have contributed immensely to the quality of the program.

Robyn Henderek, pictured above, has been working on a project focused on analyzing fossil remains in Grand Canyon National Park caves. Specifically, her project concerns the presence of Middle to Late Archaic Split Twig Figurines. Through her AmeriCorps service, she has been creating 3D models of significant cave resources using photogrammetry and assisting the hydrology program with the collection and replacement of dye receptor packets from springs along the North Rim of the canyon. Robyn often travels for several days in order to reach the fossils in the cave system. She has accomplished her research through careful planning and support from park staff.



**IN ADDITION** to the Geoscientists-in-the-Parks programming, Stewards Individual Placement Program operates the following initiatives:

**RIVERS TRAILS AND CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE (RTCA) FELLOWS** are AmeriCorps members who work directly with NPS mentors on a variety of RTCA projects across the country. RTCA Fellows learn professional skills and gain experience under the guidance of their NPS mentors, and RTCA offices around the country benefit from the presence of passionate aspiring professionals.

**OSMRE VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA VISTA**  
The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Volunteers in Service to America (OSMRE/VISTA) initiative supports nonprofits who serve communities impacted by legacy mining.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR VISTA**  
The United States Department of the Interior Volunteers in Service to America (DOI/VISTA) initiative supports underserved communities, using public lands for employment opportunities, health, and education.

**TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES VISTA**  
The objective of The Tribal Colleges and Universities Land Grant Development Initiative (TCULGDI) is to support Tribal colleges and universities in fostering food systems development, job training opportunities, and environmental stewardship in Tribal communities.

**BIA WATER RESOURCE TECHNICIAN TRAINING**  
BIA Water Resource Technician Training educates Native American Youth in water resource management skills. Sites hosting participants receive a 22 week long intern to work and learn at their site. Participants take classes at Arizona State University for four weeks in technical skills that apply directly to their work. The skills learned through this program are transferable to a number of careers in water management.



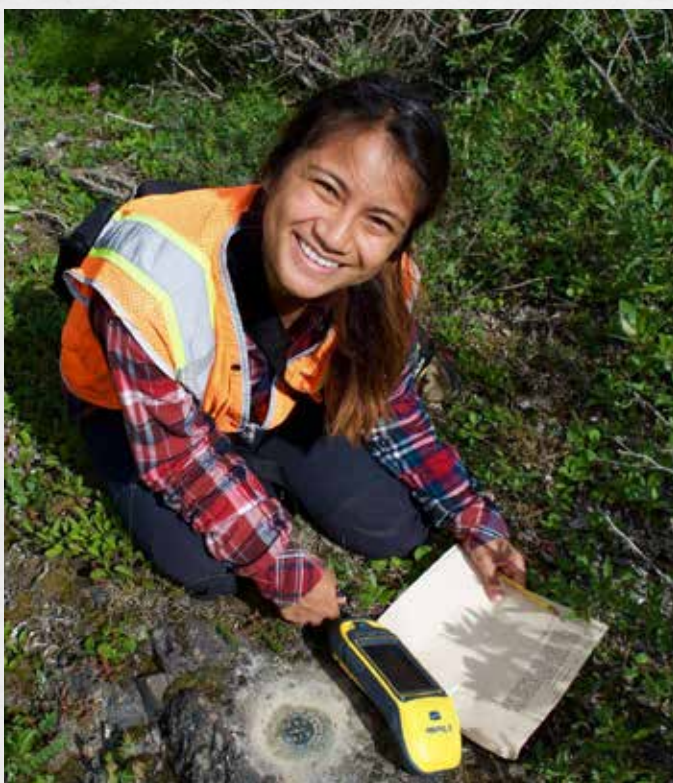
## NORA UTEVSKY

### GEOSCIENTISTS-IN-THE-PARK PLACEMENT

"I feel obliged to take a moment to express my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this program. It's not often that we pause and reflect on experiences, but my service as a GIP AmeriCorps member at Oregon Caves National Monument & Preserve and at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area has been life-changing.

From planting a rare native plant species in Georgia to teaching 4th graders about sand geology during an Every Kid in a Park activity in Oregon, from leading educational cave tours highlighting plate tectonics and climate change, to hiking every trail to classify the condition of culverts throughout the park, I have had some amazing days in beautiful places making a difference.

The future is open, bright, and mysterious, but I am proud of my last few months and know the value of my AmeriCorps service. I feel empowered to get important work done, make change, fuel progress, and educate those around me about places and things in this country worth preserving.



# 630 INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENTS



# VETERANS FIRE CORPS

**THE VETERANS FIRE CORPS** (VFC) is collaborative initiative of Conservation Legacy, The California Conservation Corps and the Student Conservation Association, run in partnership with state and federal agencies including the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The VFC engages recent era Veterans on priority hazardous fuels projects while developing the next generation of wildland firefighters.

Since 2011, the Veterans Fire Corps has engaged over 750 Veterans. The completion of meaningful work alongside 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.



## LOREN RUSSELL

**CREW MEMBER • SCC, LOS VALLES REGION**

**“THE VFC CAN BE HELPFUL NOT ONLY TO GAIN NEW SKILLS AND REINTEGRATE INTO CIVILIAN LIFE, BUT IT CAN BE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE LEARN TO USE THEIR VOICE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE.”**

**IN 2016**, Conservation Legacy engaged 53 current era veterans throughout the Southwest, training and preparing them for jobs in wildland fire while accomplishing priority projects identified by 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. 90% of VFC participants surveyed indicated that the VFC program assisted them in adjusting from military to civilian life.

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. VFC crews reduced fire fuel loads that included Piñon, 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. Almost 100% of VFC participants indicated they were fully prepared for entry-level employment in wildland fire after their service.

**22,146 PROJECT HOURS**



# PRESERVE AMERICA YOUTH SUMMIT

**"PRESERVATION IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE PEOPLE WANT TO VISIT NATIONAL PARKS AND IF THEY WERE DESTROYED, THEY WOULDN'T BE AS IMPORTANT. PEOPLE CAN COME HERE, GO ON TOURS AND REALLY ENJOY THE SCENERY. GENERATIONS AFTER US WILL BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE THIS AND BE AMAZED BY EVERYTHING WE'RE AMAZED BY RIGHT NOW."**

-PAYS Participant

Over four days at the Colorado National Monument and other historic places in Grand Mesa County, the Colorado PAYS Summit brought together middle school and high school students and their teachers in an interactive educational program. The curriculum highlighted the pivotal anniversary year: the Centennial of the National Park Service and the 50th Anniversary of the Historic Preservation Act. After interacting and working with leaders in historic preservation, history, interpretation, public lands stewardship and tourism, the students presented their recommendations and ideas.



**"WE'RE SEEING HISTORY AS IT WAS AND IF WE CONTINUE TO PRESERVE IT, EVEN PEOPLE GENERATIONS FROM NOW CAN SEE THE HISTORY OF THE EARTH AND WHAT OTHER PEOPLE DID TO PROTECT THIS PLACE."**

YOUTH PARTICIPANT • COLORADO SUMMIT



**PRESERVE AMERICA YOUTH SUMMIT (PAYS)** is an innovative program that provides a diverse group of middle and high school students and their educators' interactive, goal-focused, results-oriented experiences that foster their knowledge of our nation's cultural heritage. This program demonstrates the complexity of balancing sustainable use with historic preservation and cultivates life-long stewards of historic places and public lands. Youth gain invaluable experience being treated as "consultants" providing ideas and producing recommendations on critical current issues. This experience empowers youth to learn more about history, culture, and historic preservation, as well as provides specific trade-related skills through service projects.

PAYS explores places of national importance that tell the stories of America's diverse culture and works to develop a curriculum around four study themes: advancing the appreciation of historic places, preserving America's special places, connecting people to places and parks and enhancing leadership and stewardship.

**THE YOUTH SUMMITS PROVIDED 169 OPPORTUNITIES** in 2016 for high school and middle school aged youth through three immersive historic preservation summits in Texas, Colorado and Montana as well as a trip to Washington DC over the months of June and July. These summits are focused gatherings at historic places, allowing students to directly address current preservation challenges. PAYS provides interactive, outcome-driven learning experiences and service opportunities to advance youth engagement and knowledge in cultural heritage, history, archaeology, heritage tourism and historic preservation.

The Texas PAYS Summit, "Next Generation Students: Building a Greater Society", brought students and their teachers together in Texas Hill Country, highlighting the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park and related sites. Students worked with over 40 leaders and brought their recommendations and ideas to the Texas State Capitol in Austin after the summit activities were completed.

# 169 YOUTH PARTICIPANTS



A person wearing a white protective suit, a yellow hard hat, and blue gloves is looking out of a window. The person is making a peace sign with their right hand. The window has a blue frame and is set into a white building with horizontal siding. The roof is dark purple or black shingles.

# FOR THE GREATER GOOD

**CONSERVATION LEGACY  
PROGRAMS TAKE ON  
DISASTER RELIEF  
AND RESPONSE**

**CONSERVATION LEGACY PROGRAMS** are an integral part of national disaster relief and recovery efforts. Conservation corps programs are uniquely qualified for swift deployment to disaster relief projects on a moment's notice. Crew members, who complete diverse conservation projects, are well suited to for disaster response activities. The skills learned from erosion control, tree planting, trail building, fencing, invasive species management and fire mitigation are easily transferable to disaster response needs. Crews are accustomed to working long days with little amenities and creature comforts and have the teamwork and camaraderie to perform self-sufficiently in tough situations. Corps training allows them to be effective from the moment their boots hit the ground and crew members are well versed in safety procedures, as the nature of their daily work demands it.

Conservation Legacy has been offering crews for deployment on federal disaster relief projects since SCC mobilized and dispatched a crew in 2006 for two weeks in response to tornadoes in Florida and six crews for 25 weeks on the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Since the first disaster deployments, Conservation Legacy programs continue to be called into service, working on many more assignments including Hurricane Sandy and the Joplin, Missouri tornado recovery efforts. In addition, Conservation Legacy has vast experience responding to wildland fires. Southwest Colorado saw the devastating impacts of wildfire first hand in 2002 when the Missionary

Ridge Fire burned 72,962 acres and destroyed 56 homes. The San Juan National Forest subsequently contracted with SCC to complete thousands of hours of fire rehabilitation work on trails and public lands through the burn area.

Conservation Legacy programs are active members of the AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team (A-DRT), supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service, leveraging program resources to assist communities in disaster relief and recovery. A-DRT programs have a heightened focus and commitment to disaster response, engage in activities and trainings year round, are a nationally deployable resource and are recognized as leaders in the emergency





management community. A-DRTs are experienced in identifying needs, working with diverse partner organizations and can deploy on short notice. Project capabilities include, but are not limited to, mass care and shelter operations, mucking and gutting, debris clean-up, mold suppression, hazard tree removal, public lands and infrastructure restoration, volunteer reception center management, field leadership, needs assessment and case management.

In 2016, Arizona Conservation Corps, Southwest Conservation Corps, Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps and Southeast Conservation Corps all contributed fully dedicated crews to relief efforts around the country. These crews worked on assignments in West Virginia, Texas and Louisiana, supporting communities as they dealt with the aftermath of flooding and storm damage. Veterans Fire Corps crews were part of these efforts and performed exceptionally well as disaster relief teams.



#### **REGAN BOHMER • SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION CORPS BATON ROUGE FLOOD RELIEF**

"During SECC's 30 day deployment, our crew managed to participate in fully mucking and gutting 14 homes within Baton Rouge and the surrounding parishes. While many homes were already assigned for our team to work on upon our initial arrival to Louisiana, we had the opportunity to canvas in the town of Clinton. This small parish of around 1,600 was devastated by nearly six feet of water in many of the homes in which we worked. Debris and condemned structures seemed as common as the hay bales sprawled along the quiet countryside. Many of the home owners did not have the means to prepare their home for rebuilding. They did not have the funds, the resources or insurance. For these home owners, the mold continued to engulf their home until the day they got the knock on their door that we were here to help. It is very gratifying to walk up to someone in a devastated community and offer them your sweat and hard work to help get their home, and consequently their life, on the road to rebuilding."

#### **KEVIN AGUILAR • SCC VETERANS FIRE CORPS TEXAS FLOOD RELIEF**

"We arrived at Angleton, Texas Intermediate School late at night and were greeted by an oppressive level of humidity and an energetic and smiling supervisor. Our primary goal for the following few days was to acclimate to the unforgiving coastal atmosphere. I personally grew up in Colorado and my fellow crew mates had all gotten used to the wonderfully dry Colorado mountain air. This was going to take a lot of effort and a lot of water.



Once we started the mucking and gutting work that we had been deployed to the area to help with, we realized that it was going to take all of our knowledge of human physiology and limitations to maintain pace with the Texas Conservation Corpsmembers. We aren't the types to sit back and watch when there's work to be done and there aren't blinders thick enough to quell the competitive nature that resides in all of us. We pushed through the downpour of sweat and the fear of heat exhaustion. The greatest good for the greatest number, right?

I don't know if I or any of my compatriots truly acclimated but we pressed on. As we started to chip away at the stacks of work orders, I was asked to assist with the Spanish speaking citizens to schedule them in. I inquired who it was that I would be working with from the Texas crew and received a blank stare from one of the crew leaders. It was then that I realized they didn't have anyone that could speak Spanish. We had a stack of about 30 work orders for Spanish speaking households and many of them had been submitted at the beginning of the disaster, gathering dust due to lack of resources. I was now the primary resource and was immensely grateful for the opportunity to apply some meaningful action to these work orders.

I would not say that I am fluent in Spanish by any means, 'pero estoy aprendiendo a hablar el'. Even though I had the most Spanish-speaking experience, I was still very nervous to call these people. Speaking in another language can be incredibly frustrating because you are trying just to think in the other language. Without the backing of verbosity, I felt like an idiot. But I continued to push myself and practiced some basic phrases and responses to common questions in my spare time. We were able to get through all of the work orders and as a consequence were better able to serve the whole population of Angleton, Texas, regardless of language barriers. This was a great opportunity for my own personal growth as an Americorps member, a quasi-Spanish speaker and as a compassionate human being."





# THE BARRIO YOUTH CORPS

## **SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS' ANCESTRAL LANDS**

and La Plazita Institute (LPI) have formed a true partnership, collaborating to form the Barrio Youth Corps, which engages Native American youth and young adults in the Albuquerque area. The partnership began in 2013 with a four week program and has since grown to a 16 week program that engaged 16 people this year, with partners at Petroglyph National Monument, Aztec Ruins National Monument, El Malpais National Monument, Pecos National Historical Site and Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge.

Despite being the smallest segment of the population, Native Americans have the second largest incarceration rate in the nation and are at the greatest risk of becoming incarcerated. La Plazita is a proven leader in both the prevention of incarceration and restorative justice programming. About half of the participants of this year's program were previously incarcerated, giving these members a chance to share their experience and to step into leadership roles to serve as mentors for their peers.

This year's crews worked on projects including fire break creation and invasive species control at Petroglyph National Monument, constructing wildlife-friendly fencing at El Malpais National Monument and creating multilingual resources for and engaging the surrounding communities of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition, the crew spent time working on the community farms run by LPI, learning everything from planting to harvesting to farm business. Their work on the farm has culminated with the launch of the La Cultura Cura Summer CSA program. All proceeds

and donations made to this project go directly back into the community to help support critical healing work and to create more opportunities for youth and families in the south valley.

The crew also assisted in hosting a 'Guns to Garden' event, taking confiscated guns and forging them into garden tools while providing a space for the community to gather, speak, dance, eat and join together in support of non-violence. The young people that LPI serves come to the organization often from prison or gang activity and are introduced to urban farming and conservation work. Individuals who may have once used firearms in a previous life may have the opportunity to use that very piece of metal reformed into a garden tool.

These projects support community based youth-led conservation work to protect and restore local habitats and natural areas, enhance water quality, promote traditional and cultural indigenous urban farming and agriculture practices, including transformative learning and professional and technical training of youth and community. Engaging local tribal communities and developing programs with them is integral to the success of the Barrio Youth Corps.

"We're not all privileged to that American dream, we don't all make it to college and end up with a nice job, so we have to create a way of life outside of that," says Joseluis Ortiz, Agricultural Director for LPI. "And how we've done it for thousands of years is through the land. That's how we survive. So we're re-instituting that, creating a land based way of life as a means of survival in today's world."





**"IT'S MORE LIKE A SECOND FAMILY TO ME.** This is how dedicated I am: I wake up at 4:30 in the morning to ride the bus, get here at 7:30, and usually get home around 6:30, 7:30, depending on what time we get off. There's really good influences here, there's really good people here. I'm gonna stay here as long as I can, I love this place. I'm making some pretty good progress here."

-Dominick, Crew Member



**"I GREW UP IN A VILLAGE NEAR TAOS,** New Mexico. When I was 13 I moved to Denver, where I became involved with street gangs, and because of that I was incarcerated for 12 years.

Upon my release, I became involved in the food justice movement. I'm now actually working in a field that has helped me find my life path. I feel privileged to be given the opportunity to be able to work with SCC and La Plazita. I've been able to see the beauty and history of my state and I've realized how much I enjoy being and working outdoors with my fellow crew members.

In the future I'd like to be able to continue working with the Barrio Youth Corps. I believe that a degree in environmental sciences may help me continue my success with the conservation corps."

-Loren, Crew Leader



# PARTNERS

At Conservation Legacy's core is an honest appreciation of collaboration. In meeting our mission, we would not have success for our members or the communities and ecosystems that we serve without true in-depth partnerships with a diversity of organizations, agencies, tribes, businesses and initiatives.



## AMERICORPS

Engaging young adults in intensive community service work with the goal of meeting the critical needs of the community and environment, we are proud to partner with AmeriCorps, providing service opportunities to young adults across the country.

## 21ST CENTURY CONSERVATION SERVICE CORPS

Conservation Legacy provides strategic leadership to support the Partnership for the 21CSC, with the primary goal of providing leadership to expand and deepen the impact of corps work. The 21CSC is a bold national effort to put thousands of young American's and veterans to work protecting, restoring, and enhancing America's great outdoors and cultural and community resources. The program is operated through a public-private partnership between government, industry, non-profit and community organizations, working together to foster the next generation of community leaders and resource stewards. Conservation Legacy is proud to be a leader of the 21CSC movement.

## THE CORPS NETWORK

Conservation Legacy is a proud member of The Corps Network, providing critical leadership to the corps movement and to the nation's service and conservation corps as they tackle some of America's greatest challenges.



## PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHTS:



## PROJECT BUILD

In 2015 KEEN® Footwear partnered with Conservation Legacy to grow Project Build, in support of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC). That partnership continued in 2016 with KEEN® Utility donating over 300 pairs of work boots to corps members across the country and with a \$25,000 grant to Conservation Legacy for its leadership in building capacity for the 21CSC. KEEN® Footwear representatives spoke on behalf of conservation corps at a 21CSC congressional briefing and lobbied congress on behalf of corps for legislative support for the 21CSC.



In 2016 Conservation Legacy continued its partnership with the North Face®. Through its Explore Fund grants, The North Face® awarded over \$500,000 to non-profits that work to engage youth in the outdoors; in celebration of the National Park Service Centennial, \$250,000 of that was awarded to groups working in National Parks and for the first time, the Explore Fund opened its grant requirements to include stewardship opportunities in order to support conservation corps. In collaboration with Conservation Legacy on behalf of the 21CSC, The North Face® awarded \$100,000 to 21CSC programs. One of which was the Ancestral Land's Explorers Club of the newly established Zuni program. With the Explore Fund grant, the Zuni program was able to engage 20 local youth on public and tribal lands.



In 2016, the REI Foundation made an unprecedented one million dollar investment in the 21CSC to inspire, educate and engage the next generation of outdoor stewards. This funding supported the 21CSC, which includes Conservation Legacy programs, in reaching its goal to employ 100,000 young, urban, at-risk Americans and veterans working on municipal, state, and national lands. REI has a long history of giving to local conservation corps in support of their work, and this lump-sum donation has given much needed visibility to the efforts happening throughout the 21CSC network. REI has also been a long standing community partner with Arizona Conservation Corps, financially supporting local conservation projects through grants and giving in-kind gear donations that support individual members as they begin their service to public lands.



Conservation Legacy has been a long time supporter of SH/FT and its ongoing development since its inception in 2014. This year, Ann Baker-Easley, member of the Conservation Legacy Board of Directors, presented at the SHIFT Summit's Marketplace as well as moderated the panel 'The Volunteers' as part of the annual Summit. Anthony 'Chako' Ciocco was awarded a Youth Leadership Award and Conservation Legacy also supported the Emerging Leaders Program, sending two young leaders to participate.

**"WE WERE ABLE TO TAKE A RESOURCE, LEVERAGE IT IN PARTNERSHIP, AND TURN, FOR OUR COMMUNITY, \$18,000 INTO \$100,000. THAT'S THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP WITH PETROGLYPH NATIONAL MONUMENT AND CONSERVATION LEGACY.**

**EACH GROUP IN THIS PARTNERSHIP HAS A PARTICULAR SKILL SET. WE ALL BRING SOMETHING TO THE TABLE TO MAKE IT STRONG.**

-JOSELUIS ORTIZ  
LPI AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR





# EMERGING LEADERS

Photo © SH/FT

**THE EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM** (ELP) is an integral component of the annual SH/FT (Shaping How we Invest For Tomorrow) Festival, which occurs annually in Jackson Hole. The festival tackles issues of conservation, outdoor recreation and cultural relevancy, specifically where the three overlap. ELP engages a culturally diverse cohort of young leaders to further the conservation conversation. SH/FT is a program of the Center for Jackson Hole, whose mission is to strengthen the coalition of interests devoted to our public lands investing in the future of their constituencies.

The 2016 SH/FT festival brought a transformative inaugural ELP program that touched the lives of many participants. Thirty-four young people between the ages of 19 and 31 representing a broad spectrum of outdoor recreationists from across the country gathered in Jackson Hole, WY to participate. Conservation Legacy supported two young leaders through the ELP program: Christian Gering, Stewards Program Assistant, and Leandra Taylor, Americorps VISTA and Ambassador for the Middle Rio Grande: Education, Employment & Environment Alliance. After participating in intentional programming and small group interactions focusing on bringing the conversation back to their communities, the event culminated when Terry Tempest Williams brought all ELP leaders to the stage for her sold-out presentation.

Since the October event, ELP participants have presented case studies at a panel discussion focused on outdoor recreation and inclusivity at the Outdoor Retailer Winter Market in Salt Lake City and also facilitated a stakeholder discussion on outdoor recreation and cultural relevancy in Washington, DC.

After the momentum of the first ELP class, 25 alumni were reconvened over the winter to focus on further developing the program and working towards increasing its impact across the United States. Participants worked on developing tools for bringing their work home, most notably, the development of the SH/FTx sharing model, in the form of local stakeholder discussion meetings allowing for engagement outside of the annual event. SH/FTx supports the sharing of impact stories, identifying solutions on a local level and connecting ELP participants to networks in their own communities. SH/FTx events are in the works for communities in Seattle, Los Angeles, Portland, and Albuquerque. This winter retreat was made possible in part by support from Conservation Legacy.

ELP Alums will be heavily involved in the 2017 SH/FT festival, as supporters of the event and the next class of Emerging Leaders.



Photo © David J Swift

“My time at the Emerging Leaders Program was a monumental moment. Conservation only registered to me as a word/ideology. After this conference, I gained a renewed understanding of what conservation means, but also what it means to Conservation Legacy and many other organizations around the nation. The ELP was not only a chance for me to meet other young and upcoming professionals, but it was an opportunity to engage with them on a level that was deeper than who we worked for and what we did.

From the first day, my peers felt like family. With everyone working together towards a common goal of facilitating discussion and engagement at the SHIFT Summit, we were able to accomplish a lot. We all had roles; moderators, panel hosts, and speakers, so there was no shortage of things for us to do. It opened up many doors for us to converse and share with many of the organizations in the topics we discussed as a group.

The Emerging Leaders (us) are now continuing the work to keep the momentum going for next year's cohort. We are planning on meeting to discuss next year's theme and how to refine the Emerging Leaders Program. I am grateful for the opportunity to partake in this event and would highly recommend it.”

Christian Gering,  
Stewards Individual Placements Program



# COLLABORATION AND CONSERVATION WITH THE NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



**THE NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION**, along with The Department of the Interior and the US Department of Agriculture, awarded \$3.16 million in grants to support conservation employment and mentoring opportunities for youth at 60 projects on public lands nationwide through the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) Initiative. One million dollars of this money came from private fundraising, leveraged for an additional \$3 million in matching contributions. The supported programs and projects employed more than 760 youth in conservation-related activities, restoring approximately 5,150 acres of habitat on public lands.

Agencies participating in this NFWF Next Generation program include the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

The goal of the 21CSC Initiative is to support organizations across the country that engage youth in the conservation and enhancement of natural resources on our nation's public lands. The 21CSC Initiative supports organizations that employ youth and veterans in activities such as trail maintenance, watershed restoration and forest regeneration. Through the projects highlighted to the right, youth and veterans will actively participate in creating a healthy environment while learning essential skills that foster careers in natural resources.

"Long-term conservation efforts can only be successful if new generations share our commitment to sustain, restore and enhance our nation's wildlife and habitats," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. "Young people growing up today often don't get the chance to connect with nature, especially when they live in urban areas. Programs such as the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps can bridge that divide and get these young people outside, where they can develop a deep appreciation of the natural world."

The 21CSC is built through strong public-private partnerships with companies like REI, American Express, Thule, Backwoods, American Eagle Outfitters, CamelBak, The North Face, Coca-Cola, The Campion Foundation and Youth Outdoor Legacy Fund.

NFWF was created in Congress in 1984 and is one of the world's largest conservation grant-makers, working with both the public and private sectors to restore our ecosystems. NFWF works to bring all parties to the table, and currently partners with 15 federal agencies and more than 45 corporate and private partners.

Conservation Legacy programs are long time NFWF partners, and through the 2016 21CSC Initiative, completed several projects this past summer. Conservation Legacy has also been an integral piece in the formation and execution of the 21CSC.



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## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

### STEWARDS INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Stewards Individual Placement Program worked with the U.S. Geological Survey to engage four participants in multiple projects in California, New Mexico, Montana and South Dakota. Work included sampling salt ponds and surveying birds, monitoring vegetation and forage sampling, radio tracking of elk, mule deer and black bears, investigating mountain lion kill sites, data collection for bear and elk habitat selection studies, aquatic invasive species surveys and conducting capture-recapture studies of small mammals (including prairie dogs). Project locations included Fremont, California; Valles Caldera National Preserve in Albuquerque, New Mexico; BLM lands along the Yellowstone River near Billings, Montana; Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks; and the Badlands National Park, South Dakota.

### ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS

Arizona Conservation Corps worked with the Bureau of Reclamation to engage 8-10 young adults in the removal of invasive buffelgrass at the Cibola Valley Conservation and Wildlife Area. Benefits from this project include decreasing the risk of fire at the Wildlife Area through control of invasive grass species. The absence of buffelgrass promotes the growth of native grasses and understory plants, which provide habitat for species of concern, such as Arizona cotton rat.

AZCC also worked to restore riparian habitat in the Gila and Verde River watersheds by engaging 16 young people on two crews. Crews received technical training and support from agency experts on species identification and the mechanical and chemical treatment of invasives species such as Tamarisk, giant reed, tree of heaven, and Russian olive. Crews also worked to establish native species—this project restored 85 acres of habitat. Five project sites were improved in the Upper Gila Watershed that spans the Gila Valley from Geronimo to Pima, Arizona.

### ANCESTRAL LANDS

Arizona Conservation Corps engaged Native American participants and crew leaders in conservation service work on public and Tribal lands and waters in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Corporation for National and Community Service. A crew of five Native young adults ages 18-24 and one Native crew leader spent 22 weeks camping, working and traveling together, working on 30-40 hours of recreation and reforestation projects each week, to meet the highest priority conservation needs. Project work included desert restoration, recreation, and trail improvements with the Tonto National Forest and maintenance and construction of trails in municipal parks across Maricopa County.

Arizona Conservation Corps worked with the National Park Service to place an Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps crew on the North Rim of Grand Canyon. The shortened visitor season on the North Rim, and park-wide reductions in staffing over the last five years, has led to the development of a large backlog of deferred maintenance needs across all divisions. Projects for 2016 included a vegetation program, visitor and resource protection, an interdisciplinary cultural resources program, wildlife habitat improvements and re-vegetation projects. Project work was completed at Toroweap Overlook, Tuweep Ranger Station and other sites at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.





# SAVING THE DOLORES

**NOT TOO LONG AGO** James Parker's morning commute consisted of sitting in traffic for hours surrounded by angry impatient drivers attempting to get to their tech jobs in Silicon Valley. Now, his commute involves rolling up his pants, clipping his boots to his pack, slinging a chainsaw over his shoulder and crossing the river at the spot precisely where the San Miguel meets the Dolores.

James is a Southwest Conservation Corps crew member working on a project to eradicate the invasive Tamarisk plants from the riparian area along the Dolores River in Southwest Colorado. This project work is supported by a unique public-private collaborative, the Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP), which came into fruition in 2009. The Partnership involves five counties, four Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field offices, two states, many non-profit organizations and funders and dozens of private land owners. Southwest Conservation Corps has been a member of the DRRP Core Team and has been integral in the formation of the partnership and the execution of project work, dedicating passionate staff and crews to this effort.



In 2016, the DRRP received funding to conduct fuels reduction and riparian restoration work in three BLM Districts. These funds have been leveraged by grants from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Department of Agriculture, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, and Southwestern Water Conservation Districts well as by donations from businesses, community members, and other partnering organizations.

A three person team of technicians from Southwest Conservation Corps completed three weeks of restoration work in San Miguel County, Colorado. Specifically, this SCC strike team completed 72 acres of Russian knapweed treatments along the Dolores River and along one of the river's tributaries. Much of the work done in this region has transitioned to a maintenance phase—agile and adaptive strike teams have proven themselves effective for controlling tamarisk resprouts and patches of Russian knapweed, as well as conducting project monitoring to track progress, inform future restoration work and adapt management practices.

In Montrose County, Colorado, an eight-person SCC crew completed the initial removal of Tamarisk just below the confluence of the Dolores and San Miguel Rivers. This crew completed the last section in this area, after five years of DRRP-supported work projects. The community stands to benefit greatly from this work, as this is a popular recreation site.

Three crews, one from each Canyon Country Youth Corps, Western Colorado Conservation Corps, and SCC started the fall season in Utah, along nine miles of river above the Dolores-Colorado confluence. They completed initial tamarisk removal project work as training for their upcoming seasons.

In total, 130 acres of Tamarisk and Olive were removed, 60 acres were revegetated, 500 acres of Tamarisk and Russian Knapweed resprouts were treated and five conservation corps crews were engaged. Southwest Conservation Corps put 40 young adults on the ground, totalling around 300 crew members since beginning in 2009.



"As I cross, I aim for our work area which lies on a island covered in Tamarisk and grass taller than myself. Looking up, I admire the towering orange and red walls of the canyon that the river cuts through. I think about my family and friends back home. I miss them and their smiles but I've made a new family—my fellow crew members and leaders. We cook and eat together, do dishes together, we do yoga, we listen to music and sing together, we cross rivers together, we watch out for each other, we talk, we listen, we smile, we laugh and we work hard together. We take pride in our work, our crew and our corps.

As we step out of the rig, we can hear the Dolores River flowing below and our breath floats out into the crisp morning air. We don our hardhats, slip on our packs and sling our saws on our shoulders. Carefully, we make our way down the steep bank to the river to prepare for our daily battle. This specific battle is with a tree called Tamarisk, which is gnarled, dirty hardwood full of sand that is relentless and resilient in nature. It is a puzzle of long branches and limbs. We bring these trees down to give the native species some help with their comeback. And a comeback they will make! Its hard work battling this tree but it's worth it. After a long day, I look to the river and I fill my heart with gratitude. This is where I belong. On this river with my family, making a difference."

James Parker,  
DRRP Crew Member



# 21ST CENTURY CONSERVATION SERVICE CORPS (21CSC) CHAMPIONS OF THE YEAR

**LED BY THE CORPS NETWORK AND CONSERVATION LEGACY**, the Partnership for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps recognizes individuals from partner organizations who have gone above and beyond to engage Corps and help train the next generation of conservation and preservation professionals with the Champion of the Year Award. The following Conservation Legacy partners are 2017's winners and nominees:

- **MERLENE MAZYCK** U.S. Forest Service
- **GEORGE MCDONALD** National Park Service
- **DR. CALVERT CURLEY** Bureau of Indian Affairs

"Not only has Calvert's support helped the Ancestral Lands Navajo Program get a foot hold and grow to a sustainable capacity, but he has also had the understanding to help support the program through mistakes, growing pains, and hence support the long term ability of our program to serve our community."

-Anthony Ciocco , SCC Ancestral Lands

## NOMINEES:

**DONNA RICHARDSON** Grand Canyon National Park

"Donna has been a willing advocate for Corps programs and has worked hard to ensure the sustainability of providing educationally rich and personally challenging growth opportunities for Corpsmembers at the park."

-Paul Schmidt, AZCC

**TODD ROEDER** Chickamauga and Chattanooga NMP

"Todd works to engage youth on NPS land literally out their back door. He assists in fostering a land ethic for youth hailing from urban and rural areas alike."

-Brenna Kelly, SECC

**LONNIE PILKINGTON** Glen Canyon Natural Recreation Area

"Lonnie's unyielding dedication to science, environmental education and youth development is apparent: he goes above and beyond to provide youth participants a robust experience that shapes their perspective of the natural world and their relationship to it."

-Natalie Pyrooz, SCC

**KEVEN WALKER** Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation

"Mr. Walker was able to use his local knowledge of public land management and community involvement to help guide a new program that completed over 6,300 hours of service work with three field crews."

-Zach Foster, GAVCC





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## RECOGNITION

### RIPARIAN CHALLENGE AWARD

The Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP) Project was selected for the 2017 American Fisheries Society Western Division Riparian, Watersheds and Habitat Committee Riparian Challenge Award in the BLM project category for excellence in riparian watershed management.

### MARK E. MACK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD

The Ancestral Lands ArcheoBlitz Team is the recipient of the Mark E. Mack Community Engagement first place award given by the Society for Historical Archaeology - Gender and Minority Affairs Committee. The Mark E. Mack awards are intended to honor those individuals or teams that exhibit outstanding best practices in community collaboration, engagement and outreach in their historical archaeology and heritage preservation work.

### TAMARISK COALITION PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Mike Wight, Regional Director for the Ancestral Lands programs, has received the first President's Award from the Tamarisk Coalition, honoring dedication to restoring natural resources through application of education, science and volunteerism.

### SH/FT YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD

Anthony 'Chako' Ciocco was recognized by SH/FT as a 2016 Youth Leadership Award recipient, recognizing individuals for their distinguished work as young leaders within their communities.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WE ARE DEEPLY THANKFUL FOR THE SUPPORT AND DEDICATION OF OUR CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS:

Andrew Moore, Chair	Arthur 'Butch' Blazer, Vice-Chair
Enrique Figueroa, Treasurer	Loretta Pineda, Secretary
Ann Baker-Easley, Immediate Past Chair	
Robert Burkhardt	Nelson Cronyn
Larry Hand	Karen Rudolph
Cornell Torivio	Philan Tree
Dawnafe Whitesinger	Stephanie Wu
Elwood York	Mike Znerold





Photo © Sarah Hamilton



## **CONSERVATION LEGACY ANNUAL REPORT 2016**

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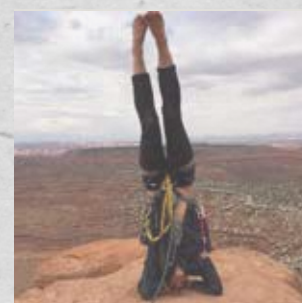
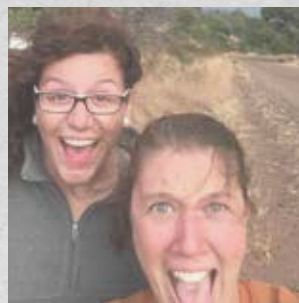
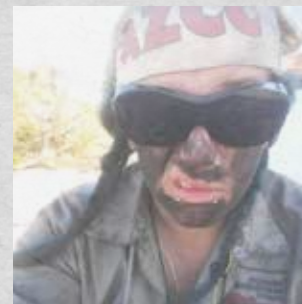
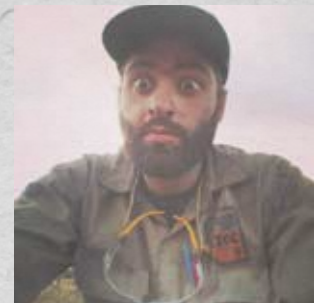
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# BOOTS ON THE GROUND

THE HARD WORK, SACRIFICE AND GRIT OF OUR MEMBERS INSPIRES US EVERY DAY. SPECIAL GRATITUDE TO OUR CREW MEMBERS, LEADERS AND INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENTS. WE OWE EVERY BIT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT FROM THE PAST YEAR TO YOU!

## #WORKTHATISREAL



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