



Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa

Media Packet

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Background Sheet for Media

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and AmeriCorps grantee, engages hundreds of youth and young adults each year in programs and initiatives that improve access to outdoor recreation, restore natural habitat, protect waterways, and respond to community needs and natural disasters.

Mission:

To engage youth and young adults in meaningful service, leadership development, and environmental stewardship.

Vision:

A world where everyone has equitable access to nature, is equipped to succeed in career and life, and is empowered to make a difference in conserving natural resources.

Conservation Corps offers:

- Hands-on environmental stewardship and personal development experiences.
- On-the-job training in natural resource management, habitat restoration, youth and civic leadership, and disaster response.
- 20% of program time is spent in environmental and science education, technical skills, and job-readiness training.
- Projects throughout Minnesota, Iowa, and neighboring states — from urban settings to wilderness.
- Service work performed primarily outdoors — often involving camping at the worksite.

Typical projects

Service projects vary by program and age level of participants.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| • Carpentry & construction | • Trail building & maintenance |
| • Disaster response | • Tree planting |
| • Education & community outreach | • Urban ecology |
| • Habitat management & improvement | • Wildfire suppression |
| • Mapping & data collection | • Volunteer management |
| • Prairie restoration | • Water quality monitoring |
| • Prescribed burning | • Water trails |
| • Shoreline restoration & stabilization | • Youth engagement |

Program history

- Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa traces its roots to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided natural resource jobs to unemployed young people so they could support their families during the Great Depression.
- In 1971, the federal government launched Youth Conservation Corps and Young Adult Conservation Corps nationwide.
- When federal support ended in 1981, the Minnesota Conservation Corps was created by the Minnesota Legislature to offer youth and young adult programs through the Department of Natural Resources.
- In 2003, Minnesota Conservation Corps transitioned from a state program to an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
- In 2009, a federal grant expanded young adult field crew operations to Iowa, and Conservation Corps Iowa was launched in Ames.
- In 2010, Minnesota Conservation Corps rebranded as Conservation Corps Minnesota to better reflect our work, and we now use a single logo for multi-state operations: Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa.

Program Overview

Field Crews – Field Crews serve outdoors restoring habitat, managing natural resources, and occasionally responding to natural disasters or community needs.

- Over 200 young adults, ages 18 to 25, serve in crews of five to six members each.
- The full-term program operates from February to December with seasonal opportunities available during the summer and fall.
- Crews are located throughout Minnesota, Iowa, and surrounding states within the Midwest region. Members are recruited nationwide as well as from the local area.
- Participants gain technical field experience and professional certifications for futures in natural resources and green industry career fields.

Individual Placements – Individual Placement members serve directly with nonprofit or government agencies focused on natural resource management, energy, and community outreach.

- Nearly 20 AmeriCorps members, ages 18 to 25, serve with partner organizations to implement community outreach initiatives that connect people to the outdoors and provide education on sustainable practices.
- The full-term program operates from February to December with seasonal placement opportunities available in the summer with Soil & Water Conservation Districts.

Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) – Fellows participate in a fellowship, mentorship, and internship program focused on natural resources while pursuing a STEM degree in college.

- The IDEC program provides students with critical support and workforce preparation as they progress throughout their academic journey to graduation and beyond.
- IDEC is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR), Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

Youth Outdoors – Youth participants earn a paycheck while learning about the natural environment through conservation and community improvement projects. AmeriCorps members lead the youth in educational and service-learning activities and serve as Field Crews when not leading youth.

- The program engages youth, ages 15 to 18, who live in the Twin Cities Metro.
- Sessions in the fall, spring, and summer engage youth afterschool and on Saturdays at least 12 hours per week.
- When not engaging youth, AmeriCorps members complete natural resource and environmental education projects throughout the Twin Cities.

Summer Youth Corps – Youth participants connect with the outdoors through paid hands-on conservation work during this summer residential program. AmeriCorps members spend the summer living outdoors while leading and supervising the youth.

- Summer Youth Corps engages youth, ages 15 to 18, in a four-week intensive summer work-based learning experience based in St. Croix State Park.
- Crews camp (or spike) while participating in hands-on environmental conservation projects located throughout the state of Minnesota.
- Youth participants are from urban, rural, and suburban communities throughout Minnesota. Many are from disadvantaged backgrounds. About 10% are deaf or hard of hearing.



2021 IMPACT REPORT

OUR MISSION

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa engages youth and young adults in meaningful service, leadership development, and environmental stewardship.

OUR VISION

A world where everyone has equitable access to nature, is equipped to succeed in career and life, and is empowered to make a difference in conserving natural resources.

OUR CORE VALUES

- › Safety
- › Service
- › Respect
- › Equity
- › Community



"I'm so grateful for the opportunities IDEC has afforded me in my pursuit of higher education to be of service to the environment and all that it impacts."

– Alyssia Bell, IDEC Fellow



OUR COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

In response to the urgent need to create an inclusive and equitable program experience, and create more accessible opportunities in the environmental field, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa established a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee in 2018. The committee built from the work of a previous task force and the advocacy and input of staff and AmeriCorps members before that. In 2021, CCMI published its Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion statement to guide our organizational work, hold ourselves accountable, and further our commitment to equitable access to our programs and to nature.

In our JEDI statement we commit to:

- » **Use equity as a lens for all the work we do and the decisions we make.**
- » **Build a shared vision surrounding Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion goals with our partnering organizations and communities.**
- » **Provide an equitable training environment and high-quality programming to all our participants.**

Read our full JEDI statement and learn about our progress towards these goals at conservationcorps.org/about/jedi/



299,617

total service hours

66,696

ACRES

improved and restored



852

MILES

of trail constructed or maintained, including water trail improvement



78%

reported being better prepared for their next job

ENGAGED 326

total Corpsmembers in service (AmeriCorps and youth)



94%

more knowledgeable about the environment

90%



developed workforce readiness skills (work better on teams)



91,325

trees/shrubs/forbs planted

28,738

EDUCATION HOURS

including personal development training, technical skills training, and professional networking



PROTECTING POLLINATORS

Corpsmembers had a successful summer kicking off the new Monarch Habitat Project in Iowa. The Monarch Crew surveyed and collected data on monarch butterflies and their habitat, contributing to a national database managed by Monarch Joint Venture. This data is vital to understanding how butterfly populations are doing at a large scale and can help inform land management decisions to preserve and protect the species. In 2021, our crew doubled the data collected in Iowa, filling gaps in the data and helping to improve our understanding of monarch migration. Our Monarch Habitat Project will continue working to protect this critically endangered species.

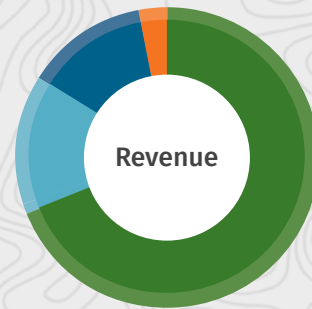


FINANCIALS

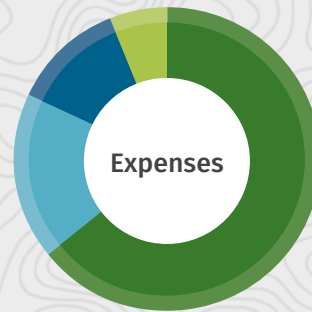
For the year ended December 31, 2021

Support and Revenue	Total
AmeriCorps Grants	\$1,358,444
Contributions	\$284,864
State Appropriations	\$1,207,676
Partner Support and Earned Revenue	\$6,511,159
Investment and Miscellaneous	\$22,939
Total Support and Revenue	\$9,385,082
Expenses	Total
Programs	\$7,154,341
General and Administrative	\$1,515,557
Total Expenses	\$8,669,898
Organizational Totals	Total
Change in Net Assets	\$715,184
Beginning Net Assets	\$5,500,057
Ending Net Assets	\$6,215,241

View our latest audited financial report and 990 online at conservationcorps.org/about/impact/



- 14% – Federal Grants
- 13% – State Grants & Appropriations
- 3% – Contributions
- 69% – Partner Support & Earned Revenue



- 18% – Participant Stipend & Benefits
- 65% – Program-related Supplies, Equipment, Fleet, & Other
- 12% – Personnel
- 6% – General and Administrative



SUPPORT THE CORPS

Donors make it possible for us to start new programs and initiatives, like the Monarch Habitat Project, and help us reduce barriers for Corpsmember to join CCMI through the Member Assistance Fund.



Please consider making a gift today or joining our community of recurring Evergreen Circle donors with a monthly gift. conservationcorps.org/donate



FIGHTING WILDFIRES

In 2021, Corpsmembers spent triple the number of hours fighting wildfires compared to previous years, over 22,000 hours total. Our Corpsmembers support the Minnesota DNR's firefighting efforts by being strategically placed on standby for quick response, supporting camp logistical duties, and actively participating in fire suppression on the fire line. Much of the time in 2021 was spent on active fire suppression. These Corpsmembers worked directly with firefighters from over 25 different state and federal agencies from across the country. Crews worked on small wildfires of only a few acres; to large wildfires, like the Greenwood fire at over 20 thousand acres.



IMPROVING URBAN WATERSHEDS

Youth and AmeriCorps members helped install 130 new raingardens throughout the Twin Cities in partnership with Metro Blooms in 2021. Field Crews installed these projects throughout the year, but for a few months, Summer Youth Corps joined in as part of their service. All together, they helped establish roughly 18,407 square feet of clean water project installations with thousands of new native plants. These new raingardens will capture over two million gallons of runoff annually.

“[The best thing about the program was] being away from all the technology around me and seeing nature, going on hikes, and seeing state/national parks.”

– Joseluis, Summer Youth Corps Youth Member



44 FELLOWS



participated in the Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program receiving fellowship, mentorship, and paid internship opportunities during their academic journey. IDEC is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

247 AMERICORPS MEMBERS
served 291,832 hours



97 PROJECT PARTNERS

79 YOUTH
served 7,785 hours

See our 2021 project partners at
conservationcorps.org/partner/our-partners/

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

During Fiscal Year 2021

Erin Anderson , Vice Chair	Shirley Nordrum
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Vern Fish	Katie Tedson , Secretary
Mary Hilfiker	Justin Tomljanovic
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Janet M. Newberg , Treasurer	

REGIONAL OFFICES

Duluth, MN	Fergus Falls, MN
Mankato, MN	Granger, IA
Rochester, MN	Waterloo, IA

“Throughout my service term with the Corps, I gained skills and knowledge about myself and the environment that I will take with me and build upon for the rest of my life.

– Sarah Longville, Field Crew
AmeriCorps Member



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