



## **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
- Disaster response
- Education & community outreach
- Habitat management & improvement
- Mapping & data collection
- Prairie restoration
- Prescribed burning
- Shoreline restoration & stabilization
- Trail building & maintenance
- Tree planting
- Urban ecology
- Wildfire suppression
- Volunteer management
- Water quality monitoring
- Water trails
- 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.





AmeriCorps



# 2022 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

## OUR CORE PROGRAMS

### Field Crews

Field Crews serve outdoors restoring habitat, managing natural resources, and occasionally responding to natural disasters or community needs. The **Veterans Corps** and **Iowa Monarch Habitat Project** are part of the Field Crew program.

### Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC)

The IDEC program utilizes fellowship, mentorship, and internship opportunities to support underrepresented college students pursuing degrees in STEM/natural resources. IDEC is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

### Individual Placements

Individual Placement members serve directly with nonprofit or government agencies focused on natural resource management, water quality, community outreach, and more.

### 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 is dedicated to accessibility for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community and runs ASL crews.

### Youth Outdoors

Twin Cities youth connect with the outdoors through paid hands-on conservation work and community improvement projects. AmeriCorps members lead the youth in educational and service-learning activities and serve as Field Crews when not leading youth.



**288,015**  
total service hours



**29,857** ACRES  
improved and restored



**765** MILES

of trail constructed or maintained, including water trail improvement

**85%**

reported being better prepared for their next job



**94%**

developed workforce readiness skills (i.e. work better on teams)

**58,930**

trees/shrubs/forbs planted



**95%**

more knowledgeable about the environment



**35,296** EDUCATION HOURS

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

**598** SITES

visited in 2021-2022 by our Iowa Monarch Crews to collect monarch butterfly data for the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program





# LAUNCHING THE VETERANS CORPS

In 2022 Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa launched the Veterans Corps, a new AmeriCorps program for veterans to participate in non-military service on a Conservation Corps Field Crew. Members gain the skills needed for a career in natural resources and have access to support and resources for transitioning to civilian life.

Grace Anne, a 2022 Veterans Corps AmeriCorps Member, shared that *“AmeriCorps adds crucial volunteer experience in a civilian setting to your resume while simultaneously offering incredible experiences for the kind of service we crave, such as wildland firefighting and disaster response.”*

The Veterans Corps program is funded by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.



*I learned during both my terms with CCMI that I want to work in the public sector and work in visitor services. Learning this, along with the training that was provided to me, was crucial for my career development.*

– Jade Pederson, Individual Placement AmeriCorps Member



## AIDING IN FLOOD RESPONSE

After historic flooding hit communities in Northern Minnesota, AmeriCorps members from Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa spent over 3,000 hours with volunteers and other responders filling sandbags and reinforcing sandbag walls around homes in the International Falls and the Kabetogama Lake area. Corpsmembers and crews came together from across Minnesota and Iowa to aid in the flood response. Austin Godwin, an AmeriCorps member on the Iowa Polk County Field Crew, described what it meant to be part of this team effort in a blog post *“We organized together and became one big team. Our team building and communication improved over the days and [we] became closer to one another.”*

Members served in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and alongside community members.



**26** FELLOWS participated in the Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program

**248** AMERICORPS MEMBERS served 272,632 hours



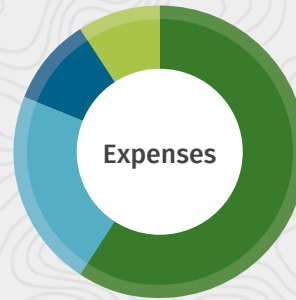
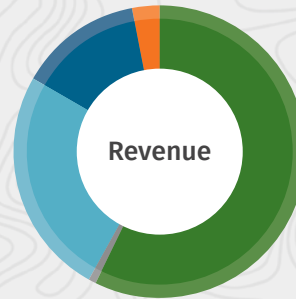


# FINANCIALS

For the year ended December 31, 2022

Support and Revenue	Total
AmeriCorps Grants	\$ 2,254,955
Contributions	\$ 219,823
State Appropriations	\$ 1,213,066
Partner Support and Earned Revenue	\$ 5,155,322
Investment and Miscellaneous	\$ (72,308)
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 8,770,858</b>
Expenses	Total
Programs	\$ 7,501,098
General and Administrative	\$ 1,706,102
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 9,207,200</b>
Organizational Totals	Total
Change in Net Assets	\$ (436,342)
Beginning Net Assets	\$ 6,215,241
<b>Ending Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,778,899</b>

View our latest audited financial report and 990 online at [conservationcorps.org/about/impact/](https://conservationcorps.org/about/impact/)



Thank you to our generous donors who contributed during fiscal year 2022 to support the next generation of environmental stewards!  
[conservationcorps.org/our-donors](https://conservationcorps.org/our-donors)



## SUPPORT THE CORPS

Donors help leave a lasting impact on the lives of our Corpsmembers, in the communities we serve, and on our public lands.



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

[conservationcorps.org/donate](https://conservationcorps.org/donate)

Our impact is amplified through collaborations with government entities, nonprofit organizations, individuals, and other key partners. Visit our website for a full list of our project partners from 2022, of whom we are grateful for their partnership. [conservationcorps.org/our-partners/](https://conservationcorps.org/our-partners/)



**79**  
PROJECT PARTNERS

**103** YOUTH SERVED  
15,383 hours

# OUR COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

Highlights from our progress toward our JEDI goals:

- » All staff members and 10 AmeriCorps Field Specialists completed a Racial Equity Certification in 2022 facilitated by the Soul Focused Group and Workforce 180. New staff members continue to complete the certification as they are onboarded.
- » The CCMI board and senior leadership staff completed the Intercultural Development Inventory assessment which revealed an opportunity for improvement in engagement, empathy and understanding of each other's cross-cultural competence.

- » Staff created and strengthened relationships with Tribal Nations and Native-led organizations to increase the number of projects completed with these partners. The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa created a dedicated Indigenous Conservation Corps Crew in partnership with Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa - known as the Maajii-akii-gikenjigewin Crew.

Learn more about our progress and read our full Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI) statement at [conservationcorps.org/about/jedi/](https://conservationcorps.org/about/jedi/)

## SUPPORTING OUR ASL CREWS

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa has run various iterations of American Sign Language (ASL) crews since the late 1970s through our Summer Youth Corps (SYC) program. Even through evolving program models, inclusive programming and a sense of community have always been important to the SYC experience.

In 2022, for the first time in a decade, SYC ran an ASL backcountry Wilderness Crew, in addition to the usual first-year ASL crews who complete front-country projects. Using only hand tools, the ASL Wilderness Crew completed five miles of trail rehabilitation in Isle Royale National Park.

The crew was made up of 3 AmeriCorps Crew Leaders and 5 returning youth that included Deaf, Hard of Hearing,

CODA (Child of Deaf Adult), and hearing members, and one ASL interpreter. Everyone on the crew was expected to communicate in ASL as part of this immersive experience. Members found this model to be educational and empowering, as it offered enhanced communication and support for Deaf members through a three-leader model and daily activities focused on practicing ASL for the hearing youth.

We continue to foster and grow the SYC community, and work towards our vision of creating a world where everyone has equitable access to nature. This not only includes improving our ASL Crew model and program experience, but finding more ways to make all of our programming more accessible and building valued partnerships.



Check out a day in the life of the 2022 ASL Wilderness Crew.

[instagram.com/reel/CouPx25s8IN/](https://www.instagram.com/reel/CouPx25s8IN/)



# REGIONAL OFFICES

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Bemidji, MN

Rochester, MN

Duluth, MN

Granger, IA

Mankato, MN

Waterloo, IA

# STAFF LEADERSHIP TEAM

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**Kelsi Klaers**

Director of Youth Programs

**Mark Murphy**

Executive Director

**Carolyn Llorens**

Human Resources Director

**Michele Rohricht**

Director of Finance

**Brian Miller**

Program Director of  
AmeriCorps Field Crews

**Nicole Zyvoloski**

Operations & Impact  
Administrator

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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During Calendar Year 2022

**Erin Anderson**

Chair

**Shirley Nordrum**

(In Memoriam)

**Deb Berg**

**Troy Rosenbrook**

**Eric Chien**

**Nicholas Sannito**  
Secretary

**Robert W. Craggs**

**Yordi Solomone**

**Brett Emmons**

**Stephanie Stein**

**Vern Fish**

**Katie Tedson**

**Mary Hilfiker**

**Justin Tomljanovic**

**Liz McAllister**

**Dr. Michael G. Wulf**  
Vice Chair

**Janet M. Newberg**

Treasurer



PROUD MEMBER OF

**The Corps Network**

Strengthening America through  
service and conservation



**AmeriCorps**



*I've learned so much, met  
awesome people, and  
overcome challenges I never  
thought I was capable of.  
Believe me, I wouldn't trade  
this year for anything.*

– Madeline Peterson, Field Crew  
AmeriCorps Member

## Headquarters

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