



## **Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa**

### **Media Packet**

#### **Contact Information**

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# Background Sheet for Media

**Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI)**, 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.

With our partners, we provide emerging leaders in Minnesota & Iowa:

- Meaningful service opportunities focused on environmental stewardship
- Leadership and workforce skills
- An ongoing community dedicated to service

## Mission

To cultivate a community of emerging leaders in service to people and the planet.

## Conservation Corps offers:

- Hands-on environmental stewardship and personal development experiences.
- On-the-job training in natural resource management, habitat restoration, leadership development, and disaster response.
- 20% of program time is spent on 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 involves camping at the worksite.

## Typical Projects

*Service projects vary by program and participants' age level.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carpentry &amp; construction</li><li>• Disaster response</li><li>• Education &amp; community outreach</li><li>• Habitat management &amp; improvement</li><li>• Mapping &amp; data collection</li><li>• Prairie restoration</li><li>• Prescribed burning</li><li>• Shoreline restoration &amp; stabilization</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trail building &amp; maintenance</li><li>• Tree planting</li><li>• Urban ecology</li><li>• Wildfire suppression</li><li>• Volunteer management</li><li>• Water quality monitoring</li><li>• Water trails</li><li>• Youth engagement</li></ul>
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## Organization History

- Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa traces its roots to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 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 (MCC) was created by the MN Legislature to offer youth and young adult programs through the MN DNR.
- In 2003, Minnesota Conservation Corps transitioned from a state program to an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
- In 2010, Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) changed its name and logo to Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), to be consistent with the brand established in 2009 when we launched Conservation Corps Iowa.

## Core Programs at CCMI

**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 35, 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.
- Crews are located throughout Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and surrounding states within the Midwest region. Members are recruited nationwide as well as from local communities.
- 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, water quality, forestry, community outreach, and more.

- Nearly 20 AmeriCorps members, ages 18 to 35, 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.

## Youth Programs

**Residential:** High school students from across Minnesota participate in an intensive, multi-week summer residential program experience where they connect with the outdoors through paid hands-on conservation work.

**Community-Based:** High school students participate in hands-on work experience and career development opportunities. These youth complete conservation projects, lead volunteers, and participate in STEM education at neighborhood parks.

## Regional Offices

- Saint Paul, MN – CCMI headquarters
- Duluth, MN
- Mankato, MN
- Rochester, MN
- Granger, IA – Iowa headquarters
- Waterloo, IA

## About AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is the federal agency connecting individuals and organizations through service and volunteering to tackle the nation's most pressing challenges. Every year, 75,000 AmeriCorps members serve through thousands of nonprofit, community, and faith-based organizations, joining more than 1.2 million Americans who've taken the pledge to "get things done" since the program's inception in 1994.

As an AmeriCorps grantee, AmeriCorps members serve directly with Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa to give back to their communities while gaining a foundation of marketable skills for their future. Members join to serve their community through environmental stewardship. Many of our young adult positions (ages 18-35) are AmeriCorps positions.



AmeriCorps

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

# OUR MISSION

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa cultivates a community of emerging leaders in service to people and the planet.

## OUR CORE VALUES

- › Safety
- › Justice
- › Stewardship
- › Community
- › Leadership

*“I discovered that true leadership is rooted in service to others and the discipline to endure, growing stronger both in my profession and in my character.”*

– Evan Boelter, Field Crew AmeriCorps Member

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Last year, I wrote that Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa is in the “change business,” and that statement is true now more than ever. As we look to the future, uncertainty challenges us to think creatively, adapt quickly, and lean even more deeply into our mission of cultivating a community of leaders in service to people and the planet. It can be difficult to reflect on the joyful successes of the past while living in a world that feels increasingly uncertain. However, it is vitally important to celebrate the successes we create together as a community. Through community, we are resilient, we can adapt, and we can overcome hardships and uncertainty.

This report shows the value that Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa brings to our community. As you read it, I hope you see what I see every day: the dedication, energy, and leadership of emerging professionals who are ready and willing to serve people and the planet. Behind every number in this report is a person whose life and future were shaped by service—and a community that benefited. When you donate, partner with us, host a crew, or champion our work, you are part of the CCMi community. The accomplishments you read about here are **your** successes. You are helping to build a skilled workforce that is ready for a world that needs them.

When a young person decides to serve with us, they become part of our community too, and we invest in our community. We spend up to twenty percent of our time training Corpsmembers. We cannot expect the next generation of environmental leaders to spring forward without the cultivation, care, and training that comes from this community. The achievements we can report here are only half the story. Long after they finish their service term, alumni of our programs use the training and experience they gain here to positively impact the world.

We’re proud of what we’ve accomplished together in 2024, and we will keep going—because the need is only growing. We hope that seeing these accomplishments, you are reminded of the power of service and are energized to be part of this community. Together, we can continue to meet this moment—and the next—with purpose.

Sincerely,



Nalani McCutcheon  
Executive Director



50 YOUTH  
served 13,063  
hours

95  
project  
partners

303 AMERICORPS  
members served 336,341 hours

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

# INCREASING ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

The Northwoods Crew rebuilt a set of stairs at Judge C.R. Magney State Park in Minnesota. The staircase, which had been washed out by storm damage, provides access to a part of Devil's Kettle waterfall within the park. This project was noteworthy due to the popularity of the trail and waterfall.

The project had an extremely positive reaction from the community, with community members mentioning that

they are grateful for the hard work and the renewed ease of access to the park's waterfall. The crew of six Corpsmembers spent over 1,170 hours completing the project. They hauled tons of lumber and were able to design and implement much of the project themselves. Corpsmembers enjoyed being able to make a positive impact on the park and the visitors that enjoy it.



In 2024, Conservation Corps MN & IA received the Outstanding AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team Award during the AmeriCorps 30 Year Celebration.

## RESPONDING TO FLOODING AND FIRES

Corpsmembers provide critical support to communities after natural disasters, thanks to our partnerships on AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams. In 2024, Corpsmembers deployed to North Carolina, where they organized, managed, and maintained a warehouse of donated goods in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Other members aided in cleaning up flood-damaged homes in northwestern Iowa. Still others responded by fighting wildfires in Minnesota. In total, 85 Corpsmembers

deployed during the year and spent 14,087 hours on emergency response and preparedness assignments.

Our members complete disaster and fire-specific training before going on deployments like these. 125 members earned their Incident Qualification Card, which they can take anywhere in the United States to work on a wildland fire-fighting crew. With their training and experience, our members are prepared to respond to disaster when it strikes and aid our communities when needed most.

## SUPPORT THE CORPS

Donors directly fuel vital conservation work in Minnesota and Iowa through trail building, workforce development, wildland firefighting, habitat restoration, and more!

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 2024, of whom we are grateful for their partnership.  
[conservationcorps.org/our-partners/](http://conservationcorps.org/our-partners/)



Make a gift today or join our community of recurring Evergreen Circle donors with a monthly gift.

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

# A LASTING LEGACY AFTER THE CORPS

Our Corpsmembers go on to do great things after their service term. In 2024, we celebrated the 15th anniversary of our Iowa Program. We connected with several Iowa Program alumni to hear how the Corps impacted their career paths and what they did after their service term. Many members went on to work for other conservation-focused organizations across the U.S., others pursued higher education and have research careers, and others went on to start their own businesses.

**“A lot of the skills that I gained while with the Conservation Corps, I still use as a scientist. We worked super hard. We had to develop project management skills. We learned to communicate with lots of different people. And really, all of these skills that you learn translate to any field that you get into later on,”** said Dr. Win Cowger when reflecting on his service with the Corps.



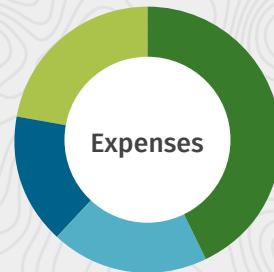
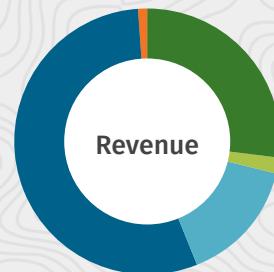
Discover more alumni stories in this video.

[conservationcorps.org/iowa15](https://conservationcorps.org/iowa15)

## FINANCIALS

For the year ended December 31, 2024

Support and Revenue	Total
Federal Grants	\$4,020,489
Contributions	\$243,659
State Grants and Appropriations	\$2,313,851
Partner Support and Earned Revenue	\$8,226,570
Investment and Miscellaneous	\$131,456
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$14,936,025</b>
Expenses	Total
Programs	\$10,564,249
General, Management, and Fundraising	\$2,963,510
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$13,527,759</b>
Organizational Totals	Total
Change in Net Assets	\$1,408,266
Beginning Net Assets	\$6,607,088
<b>Ending Net Assets</b>	<b>\$8,015,354</b>



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



Thank you to our generous donors who contributed during fiscal year 2024 to support the next generation of environmental stewards! [conservationcorps.org/our-donors](https://conservationcorps.org/our-donors)

# OUR CORE PROGRAMS

## Field Crews

Field Crews served outdoors restoring habitat, managing natural resources, and occasionally responding to natural disasters or community needs. The Field Crew program also included **Veterans Corps and Iowa Monarch Habitat Project**.

## Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC)

The IDEC program utilized 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 served directly with nonprofit or government agencies focused on natural resource management, water quality, community outreach, and more.

## Summer Youth Corps

Youth participants connected with the outdoors through paid hands-on conservation work during this summer residential program. AmeriCorps members spent 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 connected with the outdoors through paid hands-on conservation work and community improvement projects. AmeriCorps members led the youth in educational and service-learning activities and served as Field Crews when not leading youth. The **I Can! Outdoor Skills Program** was a seasonal AmeriCorps opportunity within the Youth Outdoors program.

## Energy Corps

Members audited energy efficiency in public buildings and increased awareness of options for lowering energy costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Members were paid to gain the skills and experience needed to be successful in a clean energy career.

**349,404**

total service hours



**397** MILES

of trail constructed or maintained, including water trail improvement

Like walking from Des Moines, Iowa to Duluth, Minnesota!

**91%**



of AmeriCorps members developed workforce readiness skills (work better on teams)



**84%**

of AmeriCorps members reported being better prepared for their next job

**29,268 ACRES**

improved and restored



That is almost as big as Itasca State Park!

**95%**

of AmeriCorps members are more knowledgeable about the environment



**64,332**

trees/shrubs/forbs planted



Same number as the population of Burnsville, Minnesota!

**14,087 HOURS**

providing emergency response and preparedness

**49,693 EDUCATION HOURS**

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



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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

During Calendar Year 2024

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Mary Hilfiker		

## STAFF LEADERSHIP TEAM

During Calendar Year 2024

Jonathan Brown New Initiatives Programs Director	Nalani McCutcheon Executive Director	Duluth, MN
Kelsi Klaers Youth Programs Director	Brian Miller Field Crew Programs Director	Mankato, MN
Carolyn Llorens Human Resources Director	Bin Zhu Finance Director	Rochester, MN
	Nicole Zvoloski Operations & Impact Director	Granger, IA
		Waterloo, IA

## REGIONAL OFFICES

During Calendar Year 2024

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