



The
CorpsNetwork

Strengthening America through
service and conservation

MOVING FORWARD INITIATIVE



About the Initiative

Launched by The Corps Network (TCN) in the spring of 2017, Moving Forward is an initiative to expand career exposure and increase employment in conservation and resource management for young adults of color. TCN will explore unconscious bias and structural racism within our own organization, our member Corps, and America's land management agencies. Though often unintentional, unquestioned bias limits opportunities for young adults of color and feeds off economic inequality, which we will also address in this initiative.

TCN describes this work in racial equity as a journey and not just as trainings. The start of this journey is the development of a foundation of knowledge on which to examine racism in the United States and understand our own connections to institutional racism. TCN will provide tools and education to our staff, staff at our member Corps, youth enrolled in our Corps, and staff at America's federal resource management agencies to make all parties more aware and better prepared to address bias and structural racism.

The vision of the Moving Forward Initiative is a space where young people of color are more aware of career opportunities in conservation and resource management; they are ensured equal access to these careers; and the organizations and agencies that manage our public lands are more culturally competent and aware of the history that has shaped the conservation workforce. *The Initiative is supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.*

Who We Are

What is a Corps?

Based on the model of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the Great Depression, modern Corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults (generally ages 16 – 25) and veterans (up to age 35) in up to year-long terms of service addressing conservation, disaster response, and community needs. Through their service to our country, Corps participants – or “Corpsmembers” – gain work experience and develop in-demand skills.

The Role of The Corps Network (TCN)

Founded in 1985, The Corps Network (TCN) is the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. TCN supports Corps by advocating on their behalf, providing access to funding and projects, and offering expertise in Corps operations. Based in Washington, DC, TCN has long-standing relationships with America's federal resource management agencies.

Every year, TCN's 130+ member organizations engage over 25,000 diverse young adults in service projects that often involve conservation-related work on public lands and waters. Roughly half of Corps participants in 2016 identified as non-white. Through their service, Corps participants gain knowledge and abilities that can translate into careers in conservation and resource management.



Southwest Conservation Corps, Ancestral Lands



Virginia Service & Conservation Corps

Why This is Important

Failure to address systems and knowledge deficits that limit opportunities for Corps alumni would be antithetical to TCN's mission of helping Corps empower America's youth. At the intersection of Corps, which train the next generation of conservation professionals, and the agencies that hire such professionals, TCN is uniquely positioned to – with the guidance of experts in racial equity – help make racial equity the standard in resource management.

TCN recognizes the racial inequities at the origin of Corps. Created in 1933, during the time of Jim Crow, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) separated black and white members into different camps. Though they represented 10 percent of overall membership, African-American corpsmen had little opportunity to climb the leadership ranks. Qualified men were overlooked and, when eventually hired, often faced hostility. The CCC was disbanded in 1942, but, **to this day, the contribution of over 250,000 African-American corpsmen remains underrecognized.** These “hidden figures” were essential to the development of our nation's public lands and resources.



A member of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). There were more than 140 African-American CCC Camps.

As TCN's member Corps train diverse young adults for resource management careers, it is essential that we recognize past injustices and help create a conservation work environment in which diversity is celebrated.

Why This is Important at This Time

It has become clear to us at The Corps Network that, as Martin Luther King, Jr once stated, there is **“a fierce urgency of now”** in addressing the issue of racial equity in conservation. History continues to repeat itself in that less than 20 percent of employees with the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service are people of color. The same lack of diversity is also seen at state and local resource management agencies. America's Great Outdoors are for everyone to enjoy, but a range of barriers – including unconscious biases, structural racism, lack of access, and historical hiring practices – have kept people of color from working in the resource management field. This is unsustainable.

Considering the growing diversity of our country, and the power that different backgrounds and opinions can bring to the workforce, it is critical that we address racial barriers to ensure the future preservation of our natural environment. Meaningful, well-paying jobs in resource management should be accessible to all.

Learn More:

Visit: corpsnetwork.org/moving-forward-initiative

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Contact: Capri St. Vil, Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion,
cstvil@corpsnetwork.org

The Corps Network
1275 K St. NW - Ste. 1050
Washington, DC 20005
202-737-6272