

## **Case Study:**

# **The All-Sensory Trail - Maryland Conservation Corps**

## **Project Partners**

Patapsco Valley State Park, National Park Foundation

## **Key Terms**

Accessibility, Interpretation, Vegetation Management

## **Background**

Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) members designed and constructed the All-Sensory trail at Patapsco Valley State Park in Catonsville, MD from 2012-2014. The trail is one-tenth of a mile and compliant with the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and ABA (Architectural Barriers Act). This trail is universally accessible, enabling visitors of all abilities to interact with and experience the great outdoors. The project was funded by an RTP grant, as well as by various sponsors via a federal grant from the National Park Foundation. The trail was designed to actively engage multiple senses through a series of interactive natural experiences, including interpretive signage in Braille, tactile gardens, and soundscapes.

## **Project Work**

In order to make this trail safe for a multitude of visitors, large rocks needed to be removed from the path. Corpsmembers faced difficulties with removing all the rocks, but were able to overcome these hardships with persistence, strong backs, and hard work. Occasionally, heavy equipment was needed for extra power. The MCC members used some of the large rocks they removed to define the sides of the trail.

MCC enlisted help from the Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) summer program to complete the trail construction. The CJC is a five-week job skills training program for underserved youth ages 14-17. All of the CJC participants at this site at Patapsco Valley State Park were from Baltimore City. The older, college-aged MCC Corpsmembers served as mentors for the CJC crew and helped teach them job skills while engaging them in completing the trail project. Both MCC and CJC Corpsmembers still maintain the trail today to keep it free from downed limbs, poison ivy, and invasive plants. They have also helped repair the structures as needed and added new elements.

## **Outcomes and Successes**

The All-Sensory Trail expanded access to the Star-Spangled Banner and Captain John Smith Chesapeake national historic trails; targeted populations traditionally underserved by the National Park Service; and engaged program participants in meaningful watershed experiences. This trail allows visitors to more fully experience the outdoors and provides jobs skills training to MCC and CJC participants.

Visitors can traverse the trail via wheelchair on a wide, flat, wood chip-based surface. Visually impaired visitors can hold a guide rope the entire length of the trail and stop along the way to read Braille interpretive signs. All visitors can enjoy playing the drums and chimes placed along the trail. A visual centerpiece for the trail is an insect hotel which serves to educate visitors about the importance of insects. Along the path are plants to touch, including velvety lamb's ear, which is placed in wheelchair-height planter boxes. There are also smells to enjoy, such as lavender, and a few herbs to taste as well.

## **For More Information**

Maryland Conservation Corps

[www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/mcc.aspx](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/mcc.aspx)

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