

Trail and Transportation Toolkit: A Guide for Supporting Service and Conservation Corps Projects through Federal-Aid Program Funding

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Introduction

What is a Corps?

Corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults (generally ages 16 – 25) and veterans (up to age 35) in service projects that address conservation, disaster response, and community needs. Through service to our country, Corps participants – or “Corpsmembers” – gain work experience and develop in-demand skills. Corpsmembers are compensated with a stipend or living allowance and often receive an education award or scholarship upon completing their term of service. Additionally, Corps provide educational programming, mentoring, and access to career and personal counseling.

By annually engaging thousands of young adults and veterans in education and service, Corps...

- Increase access to public lands and waters
- Build and enhance multiuse trails
- Support productive fish and wildlife habitats
- Increase recycling and revitalize neighborhoods
- Restore communities and resources following disasters
- Prevent and fight wildfires
- Create and maintain parks and recreational spaces
- Remove invasive species
- Address the maintenance backlog on public lands
- Weatherize homes for money-saving resource efficiency

Why Partner with a Service and Conservation Corps?

Corps are a common-sense partner for transportation and resource management agencies. Corps are effective and show up ready to work. They manage their own crews, insurance, budgets, and recruitment. Engaging with Corps can help increase the capacity of transportation and resource management staff to focus on other priority areas. By bringing matching funds and community support to projects, Corps are cost-effective partners towards meeting transportation and recreation priorities. For example, one Federal land management agency found that using Corps saved, on average, 65 percent over using their own crews, and 83 percent over independent contractor crews. Ninety percent of 1,500 nationwide Corps project partners evaluated the work of Corps as “good or outstanding,” while virtually all Federal project partners (99.6 percent) said they would work with Corps again. Additionally, partnering with Corps gives transportation agencies the chance to engage the next generation of diverse recreation professionals.

Corps Outcomes FY22

- 445,021 acres of habitat restored
- 623,626 trees planted
- 124,206 acres of invasive species treated
- 227,665 volunteer service hours generated
- 93,871 acres of hazardous fire fuels retreated
- 12,791 miles of trail built or improved
- 9,853 industry-recognized certifications earned by Corpsmembers
- 2,892 miles of waterways restored

Building the Future of Trail and Transportation Professionals

The purpose of this guide is to acquaint State trail programs, transportation agencies, and land managers with the benefits of developing contracts and cooperative agreements with service and conservation corps on trail and transportation projects; encourage the use of Service and Conservation Corps in State-funded trail and transportation programs; and promote employing Corpsmembers in trail and transportation careers. Our goal is to build upon Corps success and expand the number of quality trail and transportation projects Corps complete in partnership with State administrators and land managers. By encouraging the use of Corps, we hope to strengthen transportation and recreation career pathways for a younger and diverse workforce.

Why Should Corps Pursue Federal-aid Funding and Partnerships?

Service and Conservation Corps enroll youth, young adults, and veterans in service to their communities and public lands. By serving on trail, transportation, and recreation improvement projects with your State trail program, Corpsmembers receive transportation and recreation workforce training and learn new trail-building skills. Corpsmembers have the opportunity to learn about careers in the outdoor recreation and transportation economy and network with professionals in resource management.

Accomplishments: The Corps Network – FHWA Partnership

Training and Education

- 200+ meetings, workshops, teleconferences, and training sessions

Support

- More Corps accessing state education grants and safety programs

Resources

- 5+ Comprehensive publications and toolkits
- Development of a Trails and Transportation webpage

Department of Transportation Strategic Goals

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) established strategic goals¹ and objectives to reflect the Secretary's priorities for achieving USDOT's mission of ensuring safe and efficient modern transportation systems, improving the quality of life for all American people and communities, and increasing the productivity and competitiveness of American workers and businesses through five strategic goals:

USDOT Strategic Goals (2022-2026)

- How these Goals are interpreted through the Case Studies
- **Safety:** Make our transportation system safer for all people. Work toward a future where transportation-related serious injuries and fatalities are eliminated.
 - Corps projects have a primary objective to address user safety on trails and related projects through restorative work; installation of new trail or other active transportation structures; signage; implementing education and safety programming.
- **Economic Strength:** Grow an inclusive and sustainable economy. Invest in our transportation system to provide American workers and businesses reliable and efficient access to good-paying jobs, resources, and markets.
 - Corps projects strengthen trail and related access and connectivity options to adjacent communities; Corps recruit local young adults and offer post-program career pathway options and exploration.
- **Equity:** Reduce inequities. Support and engage people and communities to promote safe, affordable, accessible, and multimodal access to opportunities and services while reducing transportation-related disparities, adverse community impacts, and health effects.
 - Corps projects are intentional in their outreach and recruitment of young adults from underserved communities. Equity considerations are integrated into the planning, development, and implementation of trail and related projects, training, and workforce development plans.
- **Climate and Sustainability:** Tackle the climate crisis by ensuring that transportation plays a central role in the solution. Substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transportation-related pollution and build more resilient and sustainable transportation systems to benefit and protect communities.
 - Corps projects prioritize minimal environmental impacts to corridors through climate-informed techniques and preplanning. Projects address the effects of natural disasters on trail and related systems through restorative work, sustainable construction techniques, and other enhancements to promote resilience and sustainability.

¹ <https://www.regulations.gov/document/DOT-OST-2021-0140-0002>

- **Transformation:** Design for the future. Invest in purpose-driven research and innovation to meet the challenge of the present and modernize a transportation system of the future that serves everyone today and, in the decades to come.
 - Corps work with diverse stakeholders to prioritize trail and related infrastructure modernization work. Projects are designed and executed to accommodate and respond to the changing needs of users. Corpsmembers are trained in new industry-recognized trail building and conservation techniques.

Federal Aid Funding Programs

Introduction

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist Service and Conservation Corps with strategies for engaging with various Federal-aid highway programs that can help plan, fund, and implement Corps-appropriate projects and agreements. Many Corps have successful, strategic partnerships with their State trails programs, and several have established relations with State transportation programs. Corps meet partner capacity needs through completing backlogged maintenance projects, leveraging program funding for Corpsmember training, and serving as a workforce development voice on State advisory committees. We want to strengthen and expand upon this success by providing step-by-step guidance, best practices, and ready-to-use resources so that your Corps can start building State relationships while improving trail and transportation infrastructure needs in a cost-effective manner.

The intended audiences for this toolkit are Service and Conservation Corps program staff and leadership looking to access additional funding sources, and project partners that will support mission-driven Corps programs. The goal is to provide the institutional knowledge, direction, and framework to cultivate new partner relationships needed for Federal-aid highway programs, and contract and agreement negotiations.

If you are a State Trail Agency Representative...

Since the implementation of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century in 1998², the USDOT has been encouraging State transportation and recreation agencies to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with qualified service and conservation Corps. The more than 150 Corps that make up The Corps Network collectively engage approximately 23,000+ young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 and recent veterans up to age 35 each year. Of these Corpsmembers, 44 percent identify as female and 46 percent identify as persons of color. State agencies should view Corps as a pipeline to diverse and prepared candidates for available and hard-to-fill trail, transportation, and infrastructure jobs. By partnering with Corps, agencies are offering a new generation of young professionals with opportunities in their communities in which these projects are located.

² <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/>

If you are a Federal, State, or Local Land Manager....

By serving on trail, transportation, and recreation improvement projects, Corpsmembers receive relevant workforce training and learn new industry-recognized conservation skills and certifications. Corpsmembers also have opportunities to learn about careers in the outdoor recreation and transportation economy and network with professionals in resource management. Many Corps operate under land management agreements with the Public Land Corps authority, allowing Corpsmembers serving under these agreements to receive a special hiring authority after their term of service. Corps also bring diverse funding sources and grants to a partnership, helping to meet match requirements and expand the work capacity.

If you are a Service and Conservation Corps...

Service and Conservation Corps complete a variety of recreational trail and infrastructure projects, provide educational programming, and perform assessment and design work in partnership with their local communities, State and Federal programs. Through Federal-highway programs - like the Recreational Trails Program, Transportation Alternatives, and other programs - Corps can access new funding sources to support continued land management projects while providing additional workforce development and career pathway opportunities for Corpsmembers and recent veterans eager to enter into the transportation workforce.

If you are a Corps program with existing Federal highway program experience and regularly use State trail program grants, the guidance in this section may help with new strategies for optimizing your State resources, funding, maintaining partner relationships, and exploring next steps for Corpsmember career pathways.

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Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) assistance program that provides funds to the States to administer grants that develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities. Each State works in partnership with Corps, businesses, communities, agencies, and nonprofit organizations to service recreational trail priorities. Each State manages a State Recreational Trail Advisory Committee that provides public input on policies and project selection. Since its inception in 1993, more than \$1.3 billion in RTP funds have been obligated by States, making this one of the largest Federal sources for recreational trail funding for Corps programs to access.

Funding and Administration

RTP funding comes from the Federal Highway Trust Fund³, which collects an estimated \$280 million per year in motor fuel excise tax from nonhighway recreational fuel use⁴. These funds represent fuel used in recreational activities with snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-highway motorcycles, and off-highway light trucks. States are required to use 40 percent of their RTP funds for diverse recreational trail use, 30 percent for motorized recreation, and 30 percent for nonmotorized recreation. The Federal share is usually up to 80 percent of the project cost, with a required 20 percent project partner cash or in-kind match contribution⁵. Each State develops, manages, and administers its own program. In some States, the RTP is part of an overall State trail program, but in others, the RTP may be the primary or only source for trail project grants.

Permissible uses of RTP Funding

There are eight categories of permissible uses for how States may use RTP funds for projects. Trail maintenance and restoration are the most commonly funded projects, followed by trail facilities and trail construction. For most Service and Conservation Corps, the following are the most common uses of State RTP funds that support Corps-appropriate projects: Trail Maintenance and Restoration; Trailside and Trailhead Facilities; Construction of New Recreational Trails; Education for Safety and Environmental Protection. It is recommended that Corps align their partner development and project solicitation efforts with these categories. It should be noted that States may decide to administer grants to a select amount of project funding categories based on needs and priorities each grant cycle. Note: projects eligible under the RTP also are eligible under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside and the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program.

While projects and grants under ‘Assessments’ are typically an underused funding category by both States and Corps, it should be noted that some States have a strong need for trail system evaluation work. It’s common for Corps to have staff, interns, or crews work alongside partners to perform the assessments, collect and analyze the data, and use it to help inform future trail

³ <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/highwaytrustfund/>

⁴ <https://cdn2.assets-servd.host/material-civet/production/images/documents/2021-RTP-AnnualReport-FHWAApprovedFinal-fixed.pdf>

⁵ The Federal share may be higher in western States with large percentages of Federal public lands.

needs. If you find that your State is not prioritizing trail assessment grants and projects, contact your State trail agency and start a conversation around how your Corps can help improve the conditions of your State trail system. Your State trail administrator and trail advisory committee may not know that this is a service you can provide.

Recreational Trails Program - Safety and Education

A State may use up to 5 percent of its RTP apportionment each fiscal year for educational programs that promote safety and environmental protection relevant to recreational trails. Many Corps have used RTP education funds for Corpsmember training, certifications, and orientations that directly benefit trail work. With State agency approval, the following are some of the ways Corps have used RTP education and safety funding:

- Trail planning, design, and construction courses
- Certifications (Wilderness First Aid, Leave No Trace, S-212 Certification⁶)
- Corpsmember orientations and trainings
- Environmental and conservation workshops
- Trail equipment safety courses, such as chainsaw, rigging, mechanized equipment, etc
- Speaker or trail trainer fees and expenditures
- Designing and developing trail brochures, websites, and maps
- Trail interpretation and signage
- Trail patrols to monitor trail use, safety, environmental impacts, or provide emergency services

While some State RTP trail programs regularly use their 5 percent apportionment, some will open the education funding up for bids with their own grant announcements and deadlines. Other times States may elect to not use their education funds altogether. Reasons vary and can range from States wanting to prioritize more direct trail work while others recognize that putting funding towards education ensures that trail work is done properly. If you find that your State trail program is not using its education funds, you can recommend that your State trail agency consider supporting Corpsmember education and safety training. Make the case that funding trail training and education grants not only ensures that trail work is executed correctly, but helps prepare the next generation of trail and recreation professionals, users, and stewards.

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside

Eligible Projects

Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds are transportation-related community projects with the goal of expanding travel choice, strengthening the local economy, and protecting the environment by supporting nontraditional projects linked to the transportation system. Eligible TAP projects⁷ should support the following eligible activities:

- Facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation

⁶ S-212 certification is a popular course Corps may provide their members through contracted local instructors. The lessons include introduction to the function, maintenance and use of chainsaws, and their tactical wildland fire application.

⁷ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/ta_guidance_2022.pdf#page=21

- Safe routes for non-drivers
- Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
- Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
- Community improvement activities
 - Historic preservation
 - Vegetation management
- Environmental mitigation for stormwater and habitat connectivity
- Safe Routes to School
- Recreational trail projects

It's important to note that projects eligible under the TA Set-Aside are also eligible under the much larger Surface Transportation Block Grant Program⁸. States and metropolitan planning organizations select projects through competitive project selection processes⁹, and are encouraged to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with qualified youth service and conservation corps¹⁰.

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a nationwide program and initiative that promotes safe community walking and biking through infrastructure improvements and education. SRTS programs can be implemented by a State Department of Transportation (DOT), local government, school district, or even a local school. Many service and Conservation Corps have supported SRTS initiatives through trail and sidewalk projects, bike safety programs, community clean-ups, and volunteer management. Corps can also benefit from local SRTS grants and partnership since they provide access to new partnerships with shared interests and values, help Corps access new and flexible funding, identify educational programs for Corpsmembers, help complete infrastructure work, and create new recruitment pathways for potential Corpsmembers.

How Corps can Engage with Safe Routes to School

Corps and local school collaboration can address shared interests with accessing new and flexible funding, identifying educational programs, completing infrastructure work, and creating recruitment pathways. For years, Corps have supported SRTS initiatives by learning what local schools need and leveraging their own funding sources, resources, and administration to support SRTS programs - such as tools and materials for trail and sidewalk projects; Corpsmembers leading bike safety programs; and volunteer management for community clean-up events. Corps can manage single placement interns or crews to support schools on a diverse range of community-driven efforts designed to improve and promote safe and accessible routes to schools, parks, and businesses. Schools can also benefit from having their grade school kids and teens work with positive Corpsmember role models leading SRTS programs and projects in their local communities.

⁸ <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/>

⁹ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/ta_guidance_2022.pdf#page=18

¹⁰ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/ta_guidance_2022.pdf#page=24

Funding and Administration

Eligible SRTS projects include infrastructure and noninfrastructure projects, and administering State Safe Routes to School programs that benefit elementary and middle school children in grades K through 12. While there is no FHWA Federal aid apportionment dedicated to SRTS, States can use Transportation Alternatives funds and other FHWA aid programs¹¹⁾ for Safe Routes to School projects.

Programs and Projects

Eligible infrastructure-related projects include the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including:

- Sidewalk improvements - installing new sidewalks; sidewalk repairs; widening
- Traffic and speed reduction improvements - roundabouts; full- or half-street closures; automated speed enforcement
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements - safe pedestrian crosswalk improvements; traffic control devices
- On-street bicycle facilities - new or upgraded bicycle lanes; traffic signs; pavement markings.
- Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities - multiuse bicycle and pedestrian trails and pathways
- Secure bicycle parking facilities - bicycle parking racks and shelters; designated areas with safety lighting
- Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools - traffic diversion away from school zones or designated routes to a school.

Special Considerations

Procuring Sole-Source Agreements with your State

Section 1524 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act¹² exempts contracts and cooperative agreements with Service and Conservation Corps from Federal-aid highway contracting requirements under 23 U.S.C. 112.⁹ A State's trail or Transportation Alternatives program may sole-source contracts and cooperative agreements to qualified Service and Conservation Corps for any recreational trail, byway, transportation alternatives, bicycle and pedestrian, or safe routes to school project. "Qualified" has been determined by State trails programs as Corps serving on project work deemed "Corps-appropriate" and organizations listed on The Corps Network's "Members by State" page under recommendation from FHWA¹³.

¹¹ The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) and the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) are Federal-aid funding programs that can support SRTS projects and programming.

¹² <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/qandas/qayscc.cfm>

¹³ The Corps Network's Members by State page: <https://corpsnetwork.org/members-by-state/>

Procuring sole-source agreements with your State programs may be a challenging endeavor but a worthwhile long-term investment for your program. There are no particular guidelines or processes for any partners initiating procurements and such agreements are at the discretion of the State program. There's also no one right way for a Corps to approach their State with a procurement conversation. Corps with existing State agency relationships may have ongoing projects for years and will not have a State sole-source agreement (that could be due to a number of reasons), while some States are more receptive to the idea of having a sole-source agreement because it's administratively easier and they know the Corps program very well. As you are working on your long-term strategic plan for building State relationships, keep in mind that your efforts will be supported by Federal statute.

Definition of a Qualified Youth Service and Conservation Corps under MAP-21 Section 1524

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act, Section 1524 defines “qualified youth service or conservation corps” as those that are defined at 42 U.S.C. 12572(a)(2) and 42 U.S.C. 12656(c)(3). 42 U.S.C. 12572(a)(2) refers to the “Healthy Futures Corps,” which is designed to identify and meet unmet health needs in communities. 42 U.S.C. 12656(c)(3) refers to the “urban youth corps,” which means any program established by a state or local government or by a nonprofit organization that -

1. Is capable of offering meaningful, full-time, productive work for individuals between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, in an urban or public works or transportation setting;
2. Gives participants a mix of work experience, basic and life skills, education, training, and support services; and
3. Provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their communities and the United States.

Who to Know in Your State Trail and Transportation Programs

State Trail Administrator. Every State has a State trail program administrator responsible for project work priorities, grant cycles and awards, programmatic and financial compliance, project selections and site inspections, and partner and community stakeholder development. Administrators also usually manage trail advisory committees, recommend member appointments, and facilitate committee meetings and activities. This is the most important partner contact a Corps should connect with for any RTP engagement. For a listing of RTP State administrators, visit: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/rtpstate.cfm.

State Grant Manager. In States with larger populations and/or Federal public lands, there may be an additional State contact that specifically manages RTP or other grant awards and grant cycle inquiries. A Corps should be engaged with this contact when submitting applications, reporting deliverables, or addressing specific funding questions. In some cases, there may also be a specific grant or program manager for motorized trail programs.

State Recreational Trail Advisory Committee. Every State trails program has an advisory committee composed of various recreational trail community stakeholders representing motorized users and

nonmotorized users. Some include conservation nonprofits, foundations, and associations, Federal and State agencies, and other recreation professionals. Sometimes known as boards or councils, advisory committees play an important role in the type, quality of trail work, and educational programming administered in their State. Corps that are active committee members or participants can provide consultation on cost-effective ways to complete trail work, vote on project applications, or serve as a workforce development voice. Corps may also serve as either voting or nonvoting members.

Most advisory committee members are appointed by the State governor's office or the State administering agency, with recommendations from the State trail administrator¹⁴. Committee positions may vary from two to five years and may be responsible for selecting and/or reviewing grant applications, deliberating on priority trail work needs, and public engagement activities. Meetings convene at least once per year and are open to the public. Some Corps use these meetings to present on their Corps program and the services they can provide to grantees and sponsors. Find out more about joining your State trail advisory committee, attending or presenting at meetings, or other engagements by contacting your State trail administrator¹⁵.

State Transportation Alternatives Manager. Every State has a Transportation Alternatives manager within the State DOT who is responsible for administering the TA Set-Aside. Duties vary from State to State. This is the most important partner contact a Corps should connect with for any TA Set-Aside engagement. For a listing of State transportation alternatives managers, visit: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/state_contacts.cfm.

Corps Budget Tabulation and Financial Guidance

Vehicle rentals and other related travel expenditures are not always allowable with some State programs, while others may provide special Corps cost exemptions. A common pitfall for Corps is unknowingly accruing ineligible costs and then not being reimbursed at the end of the project. Before drafting project cost estimates, make sure to work with your State administrator to determine allowable costs in your State.

Corps Project Example

The following is a budget tabulation for a trail crew with a Federal land management agency. Project work included trail restoration and maintenance, restoration of trail irrigation systems, and vegetation management along the trail corridor. The Conservation Corps served as a direct recipient of the Federal funding for a 12-week agreement. Oftentimes, a land management agency is a grantee of State DOT or resource agency grants or through Federal-aid programs

¹⁴ Minnesota and Vermont use independent, nonprofit trail committees that serve as their State's trail advisory committees and therefore the members are not appointed by the State.

¹⁵ The RTP legislation does not require in-person meetings. States may hold committee meetings that allow for public participation through teleconferences, video conferences, webinars, web meetings, or other platforms.

and will contract a conservation Corps to perform the work. As a subrecipient, the Corps must be in compliance with the sponsoring entity - a State agency in this case.

Budget Table Example

- **Personnel**

- Conservation Corps Director
 - \$50 per hour, 5 hours per week for 12 weeks
 - \$0 Federal share, \$3,000 Corps share
- Trail Crew Field Coordinator
 - \$30 per hour, 40 hours per week for 12 weeks
 - \$0 Federal share, \$14,400 Corps share
- Crew Leader
 - 1 crew leader at \$20 per hour, 40 hours per week for 12 weeks
 - \$7,200 Federal share, \$0 Corp share
- Crewmembers
 - 5 Crewmembers at \$15 per hour, 40 hours per week for 12 weeks
 - \$36,000 Federal share, \$0 Corps share

- **Fringe**

- Conservation Corps Director
 - 30% full-time employment fringe
 - \$0 Federal share, \$900 Corps share
- Trail Crew Field Coordinator
 - 30% full-time employment fringe
 - \$0 Federal share, \$4,320 Corps share
- Crew Leader
 - 1 Crew leader, seasonal fringe at 15%
 - \$1080 Federal share, \$0 Corps share
- Crewmembers
 - 5 Crewmembers, seasonal fringe at 15%
 - \$5,400 Federal share, \$0 Corps Share

- **Travel**

- Transportation
 - Truck rental for 12 weeks at \$1000 per month
 - \$3,000 Federal share, \$0 Corps share
- Vehicle Fuel

- \$50 per week for 12 weeks
 - \$600 Federal share, \$0 Corps share
- Site Visit
 - Two site visit trips to the crew project site, 200 miles round trip at \$0.50 per mile
 - \$0 Federal share, \$772.25 Corps share
- **Supplies**
 - Food
 - \$10 per day for 6 Crewmembers for 12 weeks
 - \$0 Federal share, \$5,040 Corps share
 - Corpsmember Supportive Services
 - \$150 per person, 6 total (Crew Leader and Crewmembers). Includes uniforms, tools, small field supplies, and personal protective equipment.
 - \$900 Federal share, \$0 Corps share
- **Indirect Corps**
 - Conservation Corps' Indirect Corps
 - 20% indirect cost rate
 - \$16,522.45 Federal share, \$0 Corps share
- **Grand Total**
 - \$70,702.45 Federal Share
 - \$28,432.25 Corps Share

[PERSONNEL] If Corps staff aren't paid, then their staff time can be used as in-kind match. Value of staff time can be used as a cash contribution if their salary or wages are using non-Federal funds. For example, a Corps may use foundation or non-Federal grants for staff wages and salaries. Some State program funding can be used as a match, but should be approved first by the sponsoring entity.

[PERSONNEL] For Corpsmembers, Crew Leaders, and interns, Corps may use the intern or volunteer time valued at IndependentSector.org¹⁶, then subtract the actual Corpsmember or intern compensation. This is a valid method for calculating in-kind services. The partner organization must track the actual hours worked by the Corpsmember or intern and provide clear documentation. Note that while Federal agencies accept the Independent Sector rate, some States do not, and may require a lower rate.

[SUPPLIES] For supplies – such as Corpsmember gear, personal protective equipment, and small tools – if these items are donated, the value of the donated goods can be used as in-kind.

¹⁶ <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>

If these items were purchased with non-Federal funds, then they can be used as a cash contribution match.

Food costs for crew meal provisions are typically considered a disallowable cost on most FHWA aid programs - such as RTP. This may include both front country and backcountry trail projects. Some State trail agencies may provide exceptions on a case-by-case basis or make exceptions for youth conservation corps agreements. It is important that you discuss these costs with your sponsor before including food costs in your budget proposals.

2 CFR §200.94 Supplies. Supplies means all tangible personal property other than those described in §200.33 Equipment. A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes or \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life. See also 2 CFR §200.20 Computing devices¹⁷ and 200.33 Equipment¹⁸.

[INDIRECT COSTS] If a Corps has a Federally-Approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), they can apply up to that full percentage rate, upon approval from the sponsor. Corps should prepare a cost-justification for using their full NICRA rate and provide documentation. A NICRA is a document published to reflect an estimate of indirect cost rate negotiated between the Federal Government and a Grantee's or Subgrantee's organization, which reflects the indirect costs (facilities and administrative costs) and fringe benefit expenses incurred by the organization. If a Corps does not have a federally approved NICRA, a corps can apply a 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate.

2 CFR § 200.414 - Indirect (F&A) costs¹⁹:

No documentation is required to justify the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in § 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

[MATCH] The project sponsor is responsible for the partner match contribution (if required). If the project sponsor contracts a Corps as a subgrantee, then the Corps has zero responsibility for the match requirement. Corps subgrantees can work with their sponsoring entity to provide match documentation (such as value of volunteer time, supplies, etc.) or review of match compliance.

In some cases, fee-for-service budgets, like this one, with non-Federal partners do not need to be as detailed as the ones Federal land management agencies typically require.

¹⁷ <http://federal.elaws.us/cfr/title2.part200.section200.20>

¹⁸ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/xml/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-sec200-33.xml>

¹⁹ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/2/200.414#:~:text=No%20documentation%20is%20required%20to,or%20inconsistently%20charged%20as%20both.>

Summary of FHWA Federal-Aid Case Studies

The case studies in this section will explore six Service and Conservation Corps programs who have completed recreational trail and trail-adjacent projects across geographically diverse locations. As detailed in the summary below, these projects were all funded and supported by a Federal-aid program, a State DOT, or a State trails program grant. The Corps featured served as either direct recipients or subrecipients on these program grants and leveraged Federal awards, private, AmeriCorps or other fundraising sources. Case studies will also highlight what Corps use for in-kind partner match contributions - such as managing community and volunteer groups, providing supplies and equipment, supporting crew labor, and travel.

Each case study includes background and history of the partnership, funding and contracting strategies, descriptions of the project work, outcomes, and effective practices. All project examples intentionally align with the permissible uses of State trail funds — such as construction of new trails, maintenance, trailside facilities, and educational safety programming.

The following case studies will offer the reader strategies, solutions, or direction for what can be accomplished with a Corps grantee or subcontractor through State trail or transportation program support. If you are a State agency and/or land manager, your takeaway will be learning new strategies and best practices for how to partner and develop projects with a Conservation Corps; how to support the implementation of sustainable youth crews and programs; leverage your capacity building through the Corps' facilitation of volunteer and community groups; and read examples of technical and advanced trail building projects completed by experienced crews.

For Corps staff and leadership, these case studies highlight some best practices from your Corps counterparts around the country and can offer strategies for your own funding and development efforts. Case studies demonstrate how the various levels of funding and resources flow into a trail project, which can offer direction for how to approach new partners and build relationships. With workforce development being essential to the Corps model, each case study will highlight the various ways Corpsmembers are impacted during their time providing direct service to the project. Civic engagement, industry-recognized skills and certifications, and

career pathways following their service are some of the many opportunities Corpsmembers receive while serving.

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Active Transportation and Caltrans Trainee Program

State and local California Corps programs complete transformative community projects and train the next generation of California young adults

California Conservation Corps

Project Partners and Sponsors

California Transportation Commission

Active Transportation Program

California Department of Transportation

California Conservation Corps

Redding Center

California Association of Local Conservation Corps

FHWA STRATEGIC GOALS

Safety; Economic Strength; Equity; Climate and Sustainability; Transformation

Background and Overview - The Active Transportation Program

The Active Transportation Program (ATP)²⁰ was created through legislation to encourage increased use of active modes of transportation, such as walking and biking. This statewide program, managed by the California Transportation Commission and CA Department of Transportation, focuses on increasing safety and access to nonmotorized travel through the funding of projects - such as new bike trails and walkway construction; rehabilitation of existing nonmotorized paths; Safe Route to School improvement projects; and other infrastructure and noninfrastructure projects that promote nonmotorized travel. The California Conservation Corps (CCC) puts Corpsmembers to work on these transformative projects by contracting with applicants on large-scale ATP projects and through the development of corps-implemented ATP projects.

Partnerships between California Corps and ATP applicants are established through a consultation process during the application period. Corps project managers, located at the nearest district office, review applications to determine which project activities could be completed by the Corps. Applicants receive a score incentive for consulting with both the CCC and certified Local Conservation Corps (LCC)s²¹ on ATP applications. This process helps promote relationship building between Corps and local municipalities that provides an opportunity for Corps to demonstrate different types of trail and transportation work. Not all ATP projects are feasible for Corps due to the technical nature of some transportation projects, however many contain components that Corps can service, such as planting and irrigation; invasive plant removal; tree maintenance; installation of erosion control measures; trail construction and realignment; bridge construction; bicycle rack, fence, and sign installation; and sidewalk repair.

Project Work - Buenaventura Trail Widening and Reconstruction

The CCC-Redding Center was awarded ATP funding for the Buenaventura Trail Widening and Reconstruction project. This project reconnects thousands of homes in Redding to resources joined by the Sacramento River trail network. After the Carr fire burned over this area in 2018, this trail was left dangerous and impassable. CCC Corpsmembers reconstructed and widened the trail in preparation for 10 fire-resistant bridges that will restore connectivity. Redding Corpsmembers worked on widening the trail corridor to 8 feet; removing trees and stumps; assisting with excavation, grading and contouring; compacting road base; constructing

²⁰ <https://catc.ca.gov/programs/active-transportation-program>

²¹ LCCs are California nonprofit or local government entities that share a similar mission as the CCC, by providing job skills training and educational opportunities while preserving and protecting the environment. The CCC has a long history of working collaboratively with LCCs through the State certification program and CCC grant programs. The CCC administers several grant programs to certified LCCs each year. A list of certified annual Corps can be found here: <https://ccc.ca.gov/what-we-do/funding-opportunities/local-conservation-corps/>

temporary bridges; and planting and installing irrigation to drought-tolerant trees and plants. The success of the California Conservation Corps' ATP program can be seen in these and other projects throughout the State, as well as in the transportation sector training, experience, and exposure Corpsmembers who worked on these projects received.

Funding Sources and In-kind Contributions

California Corps can also be used on ATP projects through a CCC-implemented program, funded by a direct annual allocation of ATP funds. This allocation provides the CCC with up to \$2M in project programming and an additional \$2M+ to administer grants for LCC projects each year. 90 California Corps projects have been funded to date, each varying in scope and scale, depending on local needs. One major benefit of the CCC-implemented program is that Corps have discretion over the projects they apply for, allowing them to prioritize corps-appropriate projects that provide meaningful experiences, training, and career pathways for Corpsmembers. Additionally, the Corps' program contributes to the equity of the ATP funding distribution by undertaking smaller-scale projects in resource-limited municipalities by funding projects that benefit historically disadvantaged communities.

Background and Overview - Caltrans Training and Career Pathways Program

The Caltrans Training and Career Pathways Program is a collaboration with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) that prepares actively-serving Corpsmembers for State transportation jobs and careers. For decades, The CCC has worked in collaboration with Caltrans to prepare Corpsmembers for vacant, entry-level positions within the agency through a statewide, interagency agreement. Many of these vacant positions are for high demand but hard to fill jobs across the State that include tree care, vegetation management, trail maintenance, and landscaping work.

The training program is partially funded by the State under an interagency agreement and administered by CCC regional division offices through statewide and local contracts. The CCC commits to providing Corpsmember labor through a structured crew model that's approved and managed by Caltrans. These Caltrans-specific crews support larger projects (ex. highway maintenance, stormwater management) and local projects (ex. trail maintenance, landscaping) that range from six months to 3 years. Caltrans staff manage the Corpsmember trainees and interns on these crews, monitor and approve work hours, issue assignments, and support the projects with providing traffic control, tools, and materials. Caltrans also administers the required final exam that Corpsmembers need to pass in order to complete the training program in good standing.

Caltrans and the CCC work closely on ensuring there's a structured pathway and succession plan in place for converting CCC Corpsmembers to full time State employees. With State funding, the CCC provides each regional division office with a 'Navigator' staff position who will serve as a workforce liaison by navigating individual Corpsmembers through the Caltrans job application process and working with individuals on their personal and professional goals. Once Corpsmembers complete the training program in good standing, they can receive career credits or points that can be applied towards Caltrans job announcements and the assigned

Navigator can work with the individual on State application prerequisites, requirements, and completing the process successfully. The amount of work hours and other prerequisites are determined by Caltrans, depending on the type of job and placement.

For decades, the Caltrans training program has had tremendous success with developing career pathways for a new generation of California young adults. On average, 19k+ hours are contracted annually for highway maintenance and transportation work throughout the State and has prepared thousands of Corpsmembers for jobs and careers at the State level. There are many current Caltrans employees who were former CCC Corpsmembers and have successful State transportation careers at the management and leadership level.

About the Corps

The California Conservation Corps is a department within the California Natural Resources Agency and is the oldest and largest conservation corps in the nation. The CCC program provides young adults 18 – 25 years old a year of paid service to the State of California and during their year of service, Corpsmembers work on environmental projects and respond to natural and man-made disasters. Through this work, they gain skills and experience that lead to meaningful careers. The CCC motto is 'Hard Work, Low Pay, Miserable Conditions and More!'

Connecting with the California Conservation Corps

For more information on Corps partnership development, fee-for-service contracting, agreements, or to learn more about the CCC's other active transportation programs and projects, contact the CCC Headquarters:

916-341-4430

Exec@ccc.ca.gov

La Mesa Sidewalk Connections

Corpsmembers service a community school sidewalk system with gaps and concrete issues

Urban Corps of San Diego County

Project Partners and Sponsors

City of La Mesa

Active Transportation Program

California Transportation Commission

California Department of Transportation

California Association of Local Conservation Corps

FHWA STRATEGIC GOALS

Safety; Economic Strength; Transformation

Background and Overview - “8 to 80 Network”

The Urban Corps of San Diego County (Urban Corps) was connected to the City of La Mesa’s Public Works Department through an existing partnership with the City’s environmental sustainability staff on an urban forestry tree planting project. The project’s goal was to create more pedestrian-friendly infrastructure throughout the city following the City’s vision and strategic goals to create a true “8 to 80 network”, where an 8-year-old to an 80-year-old can walk or ride to their destinations. The project completes gaps in the sidewalk system, provides accessible pedestrian ramps, and constructs ADA compliant driveway and alley approaches.

To support the vision of increased active transportation benefits, the City of La Mesa had in place several adopted master plans, including an Urban Trails Master Plan, a Climate Action Plan, and a Sidewalk Master Plan. Similarly, the City has committed to a goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries through its adoption of a ‘Vision Zero’ policy. The three corridors served by this project are identified in the City’s Sidewalk Master Plan and were prioritized as areas of high need that serve multifamily units and neighborhood residents by connecting them to key destinations - such as schools, parks, and commercial centers. Additionally, this project is part of the City’s existing Bike and Pedestrian Transportation Plans and Safe Routes to School Plan.

Project Work - Sidewalk Connections

The sidewalk connections project started in April 2022 and finished in September 2022 with a second phase beginning in 2023. The scope of this project provided Urban Corps members the opportunity to receive flagger and traffic control training, with crews consisting of 2 supervisors and 4-6 members typically working on each site. The Corpsmembers received concrete training, tool and equipment usage, and mentorship while working in the field. Materials used included ready mixed concrete, crushed rock, detectable warning panels, lumber forming materials, precast concrete retaining wall, PVC and copper piping materials, chain link fencing and precast concrete water meter boxes. Urban Corps used a variety of equipment including traffic control devices, “Bobcat” skid steer loader, dump truck trailer, cutoff saws, compactor, hand tools and a demolition hammer to complete construction of the new sidewalks.

Throughout the project, Urban Corps worked closely with City of La Mesa staff and inspectors. This project is one of two sequential awards from the same funding source and with the same City to complete ATP improvements throughout the City’s sidewalk network. The project completed multiple pedestrian corridors along major streets including Amaya Drive, Jackson Drive and Palm Avenue that serve elementary, middle, and high schools as well as community parks. The project also benefits multiple Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), as determined by Median Household Income.

Funding Sources and In-kind Contributions

The sidewalk connections project was funded through the Active Transportation Program (ATP) (funded in part through the Federal Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside). ATP is overseen by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) with support from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and administered by the California Conservation Corps (CCC)²². Urban Corps is a member of the California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC) and one of 14 Local Conservation Corps (LCC) certified by the State of California to receive State funding. Under this program, Urban Corps received set-aside funds for projects that encourage increased use of active modes of transportation. The funding awarded for this project was \$158,730. Additional funding was committed by the City of La Mesa to provide staff matching funds and to assist with the costs of permitting needed for the project, estimated at \$10,000.

About the Corps

Urban Corps of San Diego County is a certified local conservation corps whose mission is to provide young adults with the tools to expand their career opportunities through education, life skills training and paid work experience on projects that benefit our communities. Urban Corps has given thousands of underserved, low-income young adults ages 18-26 the opportunity to improve themselves while improving their own communities. Urban Corps' unique work-learn program allows youth to finish high school while earning a paycheck, learning real-world job skills and giving back to the community through professional services. The Corps provides a second chance at a high school education and paid job training designed to encourage civic engagement, responsibility and self-sufficiency.

Connecting with the Urban Corps of San Diego

Organizations or individuals interested in partnering with Urban Corps on fee-for-service contracts, grants or to support the hiring of Corpsmembers please reach out to info@urbancorps.org or call 619-235-6884.

<https://urbancorpssd.org/>

Mahican Mohawk Trail

Multiyear Crew work helped connect Massachusetts communities with a local trail rich in natural and cultural history.

Massachusetts Conservation Corps (Student Conservation Association)

Project Partners and Sponsors

Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources

Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program

Massachusetts Service Alliance / AmeriCorps

Savoy Mountain State Forest

Mohawk Trail State Forest

²² The California Conservation Corps receives set-aside funding through different funding sources and puts together guidelines for the funding. These guidelines are sent out to all California Local Conservation Corps to submit a grant application through an RFP process.

**Franklin Land Trust
Friends of the Mahican Mohawk Trail
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Local volunteers and residents**

FHWA STRATEGIC GOALS

Economic Strength; Transformation

Background and Overview - Mohawk Trail State Forest

The Mohican-Mohawk Trail (MMT) is an historic route created and used originally by indigenous populations hundreds of years ago. It follows the Deerfield River east to west across Massachusetts and travels over the Hoosac Range and Todd Mountains. Today, 30 miles of this trail links users to historic towns, forests, and scenic landscapes throughout the State with an additional 10 miles designated as a water trail along the Deerfield River. For years, the MMT has been used for hiking, biking, winter activities, and kayaking but its historic significance is still largely unknown by many trail users and locals. Additionally, many sections of the MMT needed critical maintenance and restoration work to encourage trail users to

Between 2019 and 2022, the SCA Massachusetts Conservation Corps (SCA-MCC) - part of the Student Conservation Association - deployed crews along sections of the MMT and the Mohawk Trail State Forest to complete critical maintenance and restoration work that would address safety and encourage users to experience this historic trail system. Working in collaboration with the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program (MA RTP), local municipalities, and volunteers - the SCA-MCC crews had two goals: 1) make the public aware of the MMT's natural history as an original footpath used by native american tribes, and 2) make the trail more accessible for a wide variety of recreational users. This case study will highlight how the SCA-MCC brought together and collaborated with community organizations and detail the types of complex trail building projects the crews completed. Through a multiyear State transportation grant, the SCA-MCC was subcontracted to service and complete critical trail rehabilitation while training their young adult members in trail and conservation skills that will support their career goals and next steps.

Project Work - Mahican Mohawk Trail

The Massachusetts trail community had been interested in the restoration and maintenance efforts of the historic MMT for years. Local trail nonprofits and the MA Department of Natural Resources (MA DNR) wanted to increase public awareness and education of the MMT through preserving sections that were used as a tribal footpath and making the MMT more accessible and sustainable for diverse trail users. During the proposal development period, SCA-MCC staff performed site visits with local partners and assisted with project scoping, in which four projects were identified that would address these goals.

Starting in 2019, the multiyear agreement kicked off with a public accessibility project. Five Corpsmembers worked on MMT's trailhead facilities for 10 days where they constructed and installed an information kiosk for maps and trail history, cleared 0.2 miles of overgrown trail

brush, and installed a brand new 1600 sq ft parking lot next to the MMT's trailhead. Some of the Corpsmember's time on the carpentry and preparation for the kiosk installation was used as the corps' match contribution towards the MA RTP grant requirement.

In summer 2020, a different crew of four Corpsmembers deployed to the MMT and Mohawk Trail State Forest to complete projects that would address trail user safety, connectivity, and accessibility. Work was completed in partnership with the Franklin Land Trust and the Friends of the Mahican Mohawk Trail. Initially, the crew worked on 4 miles of the MMT, starting at the trailhead and going over Clark Mountain towards the junction with the Indian Trail. They worked on sections that were impassible and blocked off with blown down trees and severe overgrown brush. Additionally, there was a primitive, dilapidated bridge that crosses over Wheeler Brook that was unsafe to use and needed replacing. Over two weeks, the crew used chainsaws to clear 20+ downed trees, replaced the 15ft bridge with native timber wood materials, and completed 2.5 miles of trail resurfacing and brush clearing. SCA-MCC crews also worked with and provided volunteer management during a summer trail event, ensuring that COVID safety measures and procedures were in place for the Corpsmembers and volunteers.

The agreement wrapped up in 2022 with two 20-day hitches taking place in Summer 2021 and 2022. Five Corpsmembers worked on a section of the MMT that runs through Savoy Mountain State Forest and connects users to the Cold River Trail. The crew needed to make this section easier for trail users while preserving the surrounding environment. The crew started working on stone staircases that were unsafe to use and had loose rocks. The reconstruction included installing 18 Gargoyle sets²³, resetting 17 stepping stones, and removing overgrown brush along the steps.

This section of trail was known for being very muddy and causing hikers to walk off the tread, so the crew constructed and installed 10 bog bridges with native materials. Finally, the crew completed trail maintenance projects that included closing off 0.5 mile of area social trails and 0.5 mile of resurfacing.

3 miles of trail clearing
Construction of one kiosk
Construction of a 1600 ft parking lot
80 ft of bog bridges installed
2.5 miles of trail blazing
6 water bars constructed
18 gargoyles sets
15 ft of rustic Timber Bridge Replaced
20 blown down trees cleared

²³ Gargoyles are 'ugly' rocks trail builders will set on either side of a check-step when there are gaps left over between the trail edges and the check-step. The idea is to have a rock formation that is intentionally placed in an 'ugly' way that stands out users and discourages stepping on them and going off-trail.

SCA-MCC crews are typically 5-6 Corpsmembers that are trained in trail building and conservation skills prior to being deployed to the project sites. A pre-project period will consist of extensive 6-weeks of training and orientation where Corpsmembers learn chainsaw, wilderness first aid, trail building, leadership, and public lands lessons. Following their training period, a crew will be deployed on a 10-day hitch²⁴ where they will camp and work on-site. SCA-MCC is based in western Massachusetts and recruits their members locally and nationally who are interested in trail and conservation careers. Many SCA-MCC alumni have found post-program success through jobs and careers with Federal agencies, land management, and nonprofit organizations following their term of service. During the corps program year, SCA-MCC will have time set aside for resume workshops and job preparation activities that Corpsmembers can use as a resource for their workforce next steps.

Funding Sources and In-Kind Contributions

Federal, State, and local funding and resources were used to support the MMT work between 2019 through 2022. The original MA RTP grant proposal was developed by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) who was the direct grantee. The Franklin Land Trust, Friends of the Mahican Mohawk Trail, and the SCA-MCC collaborated during the proposal development. After securing the grant, FRCOG subcontracted the trail services to SCA-MCC who was written into the RTP grant for this purpose. SCA-MCC supported the 25 percent match requirement through in-kind contributions of staff administration time and management of volunteers during summer trail events. Pre-project preparation work by SCA-MCC crews - which included trailhead kiosk carpentry and light construction - was also used as match.

About the Corps

The SCA Massachusetts Conservation Corps program serves Massachusetts's public lands from the Atlantic Coast to the Berkshires each summer. Young adults will receive group training then head out as individuals or in small teams to begin their service.

Connecting with the SCA Massachusetts Conservation Corps

Staff can assist potential partners through site visits, support project scoping, and help partners visualize how to make the land and trails more sustainable and accessible. For more information on partnership and crew contracting, connect with the SCA-MCC director:

scamassachusetts@thesca.org

346-292-5240

²⁴ Some Corps operate on a "hitch" or "spike" model in which Corpsmembers camp near their project site for up to 10 days at a time. <https://corpsnetwork.org/learn-more/corps-faq>

Midstate Trail

The New England trail community comes together to establish and maintain a popular Western Massachusetts Trail

Appalachian Mountain Club

Project Partners and Sponsors

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Local Volunteer Groups

Appalachian Mountain Club - Worcester Chapter
Bemis Associates

FHWA STRATEGIC GOALS

Safety; Transformation

Background and Overview - Mt Watatic and Community Trail Building

Mt. Watatic is a popular Destination for a variety of recreational users and is considered one of the most hiked mountains in New England. Located along the Massachusetts and New Hampshire border, Mt. Watatic hosts popular long-distance trails - such as the Wapack Trail and Midstate Trail. Visitors from across the State and New England use these trails for hiking, biking, and winter activities. The trail system is very accessible for all trail users and helps connect communities together.

Through its volunteer groups and management and its Conservation Corps professional Trail program, AMC has been instrumental in the development and maintenance of the Mid-State trail since its inception. This long-distance trail runs through Mt Watatic and has been supported through years of grassroots work and advocacy of local communities and residents. Initially, local partners wanted the development of a Mid-State Trail to promote community connectivity and recreational use. AMC's Trail Department first got involved with the Mid-State Trail through its years of volunteer work, local presence, and community connections. The trail is administered by Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, a State agency that has worked with the local Western Massachusetts trail community for years. They reached out to AMC who had existing land management relations on other trail projects throughout the region. The trail agency wanted both the services of professional trail restoration and rock work and to support its young adult conservation Corps program.

Project Work - The Midstate Trail

The primary work of this project was extensive rock work to construct rock check steps approximately a half mile from the trailhead. The steps were constructed to allow two-way traffic due to the high use of the trail. The steps are accompanied by scree and junk wall on each side, helping to define the path, ensure its structural integrity, and to retain the tread. The steps were constructed and installed using a technique that would protect the surrounding trail corridor and provide a naturalized aesthetic. This required that crews build up the trail tread with crushed rock made by the crew with sledgehammers and dirt fill sourced on site.

AMC used its Professional Trail Crew - part of its youth conservation corps program that receives rigorous training in trail building industry recognized skills for the purpose of constructing and restoring New England trail systems while engaging with young adults with a passion in this work. The Corpsmembers on the Midstate Trail project received weeks of orientation and lessons in the specific skills needed for this project before being deployed to the work site. Orientations start in the beginning of the spring and summer season where newly enrolled Corpsmembers receive training with AMC staff and leadership at its base office in Massachusetts. Crews are then deployed to various parts throughout New England for their

service projects. For the Midstate Trail, the crew received training and mentorship in advanced rock work techniques, such as - rigging, uphill hauling, stone splitting, shaping, wall building, dry stone masonry, and manufacturing crush fill. Crews also used various trail building hand tools, power tools (such as rock drills and generators), griphoist draglines, and highline rigging setups.

The project kicked off with the AMC crew setting up a base camp near the worksite and preparing for the following work day by setting up its tool cache and identifying locations for quarrying rocks and dirt. Local rocks would be used for the check step construction and installation starting with a base step made up of two large rocks that were moved and replaced through a rigging system setup by the Corpsmembers. The crew initially had difficulty finding the appropriately sized rocks and rock Crush for the check steps, so they used AMC's rock drills and other tools for carving and breaking up local boulders. The crew broke up into two work groups - one group continued drilling while group two worked on setting rocks and starting the Scree wall on both sides of the corridor.

Additional work on the Midstate Trail included the naturalization of surrounding social trails. The crew created a formidable wall of dead and downed wood material to encourage hikers to use the new check steps. The rock check steps were also extended to further direct hikers onto the desired route. Previous work to mitigate social trails has failed in the past. Some regular users of the trail expressed disappointment with the crew obscuring social trails and routes that they were accustomed to. It is AMC's hope that through the cruise work of building user-friendly Rock check steps and heavy Brushing in of the social trails that it will encourage regular and new users of the trail to use the approved route and help protect the surrounding environment and Trail corridor.

1184 Crew hours over 6 weeks
16 rock steps set (37 rocks)
270 rocks used in scree rock set²⁵
240 cubic feet of rock crush
325 square feet of brush naturalization
30 linear feet log retention

Funding Sources and In-kind Contributions

The Appalachian Mountain Club served as the fiscal agent and recipient of the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant²⁶ and contracts its conservation corps program to perform the project work. As the grantee, AMC manages the RTP proposal, agreement, and invoicing while another division of AMC manages the contracting of the conservation corps program. AMC was awarded \$38,560 and provided a 20 percent in-kind match through proving tools, equipment, supplies, value of volunteer time, and administration. A variety of local and State Partner Contributions were used both for the RTP match requirement and supporting the underground work.

²⁵ Scree is a collection of broken rock fragments

²⁶ The Appalachian Mountain Club has been the fiscal agent and recipient of State trail program grants in the following States: NJ, CT, MA, NH, and MA.

Bemis Associates, a corporate entity located in Western Massachusetts, wanted to support the work of the Mid-State Trail and had 14 of its staff members volunteer on some trail work. AMC worked with and managed its Worcester Chapter volunteer group to support and work alongside AMC's professional trail crew; staff from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife had staff periodically visit the work site to provide oversight and mentorship; and the Massachusetts DCR provided free camping for the crew.

About the Corps

AMC AmeriCorps offers Members a service opportunity that focuses on improving recreational trail networks in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts. AMC AmeriCorps Members serve for a total of 450 hours where they will develop their trail stewardship skills and leadership abilities. Members receive AmeriCorps Education Awards upon completion of their service term. AMC has received accreditation from the Corps Center of Excellence and has proven our ability to provide safe, appropriate, meaningful experiences to the young people who engage in our service projects.

Connecting with the Appalachian Mountain Club

AMC provides a wide range of professional trail building services to all land managers and landowners, from bridge construction and campsite development to trail maintenance, design, and planning. Whether it's front country or backcountry work, our AMC professional crews can help you complete your project.

For more information on partnerships, project development, contracting, and partnership, reach out to the Director of Trails & Recreation Management
603-374-8517

amcconservation@outdoors.org

Warren Highlands Trail

Corpsmembers engage in a new initiative that promotes conservation education while serving on Warren County trail systems

New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg

Project Partners and Sponsors

New Jersey Recreational Trails Program

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

New Jersey State Park Service

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Worthington State Forest
The Corps Network

Delaware River Climate Corps

FHWA STRATEGIC GOALS

Economic Strength; Equity; Climate and Sustainability

Background and Overview - Warren County

Warren County, New Jersey is a popular regional destination for outdoor enthusiasts and a key gateway into the Highlands Region. The popular Warren Highlands Trail offers recreation users access to scenic and cultural sites that include rolling hills, valleys, and diverse forest ecosystems. With nearly 53,000 acres of public green space, the trail system helps connect users to historic villages and towns, hiking and biking trails, and water recreation areas. Considered a high-use trail with very little staff capacity, basic maintenance and social trail mitigation needs became backlogged over the years.

The Warren Highlands and Worthington State Forest trail systems were selected as project sites by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ-DEP). In summer 2022, the NJ-DEP partnered with the New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg (Phillipsburg) on a new initiative that would engage young adults from environmental justice communities from Warren County. Crews assisted the New Jersey State Park Service staff on deferred maintenance projects while receiving new workforce development skills with the goal of promoting career exploration in conservation and stewardship professions. Through this new initiative, the NJ-DEP developed a successful new partnership with a local NJ Corps while addressing critical backlogged maintenance needs, increasing Park staff capacity, and engaging with a new generation of local young adults.

Project Work - Warren Highlands Trail and Worthington State Forest

Between June - September 2022, the NJ-DEP selected two locations within Warren County for the Corps service-learning projects. For the first two weeks, the Phillipsburg crews worked on trail corridor clearing of overgrown vegetation, reapplying trail blazes, and complete trail maintenance along a 6-mile section of the Warren Highlands Trail. At Worthington State Forest, crews served on social trail mitigation along the Red Dot and Dunnfield Creek Trail. Located on Mount Tammany, the Red Dot Trail loop is considered a challenging hike with scenic views of the Delaware Water Gap, making the loop popular with local users. The Dunnfield Creek Trail is approximately 3.5 miles and follows a designated wild trout stream within the Dunnfield Creek Natural Area. Social trail mitigation work was needed at both locations to keep users on the designated loop and help preserve the corridor and surrounding area. Additional crew work included supporting Spruce Run Recreation staff, part of the New Jersey State Park Service, with vegetation clearing, trail maintenance, blazing 6.5 miles of trail; and bird house construction.

Phillipsburg crews worked alongside the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference volunteers on a project that would help construct 300 ft of new trail and install stone staircases along the Fairview Trail. Corpsmembers were able to work alongside the volunteers, receive mentorship experience on technical trail projects and gain valuable experience and appreciation for the work. The crews completed 1/3 acres of Japanese Barberry invasive removal along the Rock Cores Trail; repaired and replaced stone stairs on Mt. Tammany; completed social trail mitigation along the Appalachian Trail; and completed picnic area fencing and landscaping improvements.

The 2022 summer initiative included education days, lessons, and discussions from NJ-DEP resource management professionals and NJ State Park staff on topics including: impacts of invasive species; native tree and plant identification; proper tool and equipment handling; the protection of sensitive areas; climate change impacts and resilience within our outdoor spaces. The Corpsmembers received exposure to NJ-DEP career pathways and learned about seasonal maintenance crews, resource management, and Park Service law enforcement jobs. Corpsmembers spent one designated education day with an Appalachian Trail Ridge Runner from The Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Funding Sources and In-kind Contributions

The New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg was the direct recipient of a NJ-DEP grant of \$29k in 2022. Phillipsburg provided staff administrative time, power tools and supplies as part of their partner match contribution. Phillipsburg was also the direct recipient of the Delaware River Climate Corps grant that helped with the purchase tools, supporting competitive crew leader wages. New Jersey Department of Labor funding was used to support Corpsmember compensation and insurance.

The Corps Network launched the Delaware River Climate Corps (DRCC)²⁷ in 2021, an initiative that seeks to expand Corps programming through the Delaware River watershed across the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Corpsmembers are outreached and recruited largely from underserved communities to learn skills in landscaping, horticulture, green infrastructure, and conservation. Phillipsburg was able to leverage NJ-DEP and DRCC funding to expand upon the crew's length of time on their trail projects.

About the Corps

New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg's mission is to restore and preserve the dignity of high-potential Opportunity Youth who have been underserved, and enhance their value to society by providing an equitable program of academic instruction and community service that form a solid foundation upon which to build a brighter future.

Part of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development²⁸, the New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) is one of the largest youth service and conservation corps, with 15+

²⁷ <https://corpsnetwork.org/programs-initiatives/delaware-river-climate-corps>

²⁸ <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/youth/njyouthcorps.shtml>

programs serving across the state. NJYC engaged with young adults (ages 16 to 25) without a high school diploma in full-time community service, training, and educational activities. They receive guidance and mentorship from staff while they complete their term of service through projects that restore and strengthen communities. The New Jersey Youth Corps program is nationally recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor, and received validation from the U.S. Department of Education as a replicable model. It is a state-administered, locally operated program.

Connecting with the New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg

Contact the NJYC of Phillipsburg Director for more information on partnership development, project scoping and contracting of land management and trail projects:

908-859-2969

michael@njycphillipsburg.com

info@njycphillipsburg.com

Appendix

About The Corps Network

About The Corps Network

Established in 1985, The Corps Network is the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. Our more than 130 Corps provide young adults and veterans the opportunity to serve our country through projects on public lands and in rural and urban

communities. The Corps Network supports Corps by advocating on their behalf, providing access to funding and projects, and offering expertise in Corps operations and programming.

- **Our Mission:** The Corps Network advances programs that transform young people's lives and communities through career development, conservation, and civic engagement.
- **Our Vision:** A high-quality Corps serving every community in America.

Trail and Transportation Page

Our Trail and transportation page serves as a portal for Conservation Corps staff, State trail programs, and Federal land managers who are looking for resources and guidance on how to partner with service and conservation corps. The page offers a growing resource and video library, photo gallery, and technical assistance on how to connect with a local Corps for trail projects and career pathways.

- **Resource Library**
The trail and transportation resource library is recommended for those looking for guidance on how to connect with their State trail program, learn more about Federal-aid funding programs, review model contracts and agreements, access TCN's publications and documents, and read Conservation Corps case studies on trail project best practices.
- **Video Library**
Our Trail and Transportation video library highlights field level footage of Corpsmember serving on trail and transportation projects and candid stories from Corpsmembers who share their transformational experiences working with their Corps. New videos will be uploaded periodically to showcase the type of work getting done through State trail program and Federal funding support.

Visit The Corps Network's Trail and Transportation page:

<https://corpsnetwork.org/programs-initiatives/trails-and-transportation/>

Nonprofit Trail Organizations and Programs

The following are national nonprofit trail organizations with a history of working with youth conservation Corps and Federal land managers on recreational trail projects. These organizations advocate for the use of Corps in legislation and policy, provide small grants and funding opportunities, offer educational programming, host national trail conferences and events, and serve as comprehensive resources on strengthening trail programs and initiatives. These organizations are recommended partners for Corps looking for guidance, technical assistance, and direction in how to build relationships with the recreational trails community.

Partners for the National Trail System

The Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) connects member nonprofit trail organizations and Federal agency partners to further the protection, completion, and stewardship of the 30 national scenic and historic trails within the National Trails System. The PNTS advocates on behalf of the National Trails System as a whole for land preservation and stewardship resources. Other major roles of the PNTS include the collection and dissemination of National Trails news and the development of outreach initiatives and youth programming.

<https://pnts.org>

American Hiking Society

The American Hiking Society is a nonprofit dedicated to preserving trails, the areas that surround them and the hiking experience with three main avenues of action: Volunteerism and Outreach; Policy and Advocacy; and Trail grants and assistance.

www.americanhiking.org

American Trails

American Trails is a comprehensive online source for planning, building, designing, funding, managing, enhancing, and supporting trails, greenways, and blueways. Since 1988, American Trails has been a training resource and collective voice for a diverse coalition of trail enthusiasts, professionals, advocates, land managers, conservationists, and friends of the outdoors and livable cities.

<https://www.americantrails.org/>

Coalition for Recreational Trails Annual Achievement Awards

This awards program recognizes outstanding uses of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds, showcasing excellent projects made possible by RTP funding and enhancing awareness and appreciation of the RTP among Members of Congress and other key officials. This award is given out by the Coalition for Recreational Trails, a federation of national and regional trail-related organizations

<https://www.americantrails.org/communications/awards/crtAwards>

Partnership Acknowledgments

The following are project partners and sponsors who have supported the conservation corps projects featured in these case studies either through direct grants, fundraising, volunteer support, or in-kind contributions. Some may have sponsored Corps as direct recipients through Federal and State awards while others subcontracted Corps for their services. The support of these partners have been invaluable to the overall successful implementation of a Corps' trail program, strengthening community relationships, and creating workforce opportunities for Corpsmembers.

Active Transportation Program
Appalachian Mountain Club - Worcester Chapter
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Bemis Associates
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
California Department of Transportation
California Transportation Commission
City of La Mesa
Delaware River Climate Corps
Franklin Land Trust
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Friends of the Mahican Mohawk Trail
Local volunteers and residents
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program
Massachusetts Service Alliance
Mohawk Trail State Forest
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
New Jersey Recreational Trails Program
New Jersey State Park Service
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
Savoy Mountain State Forest
Worthington State Forest

List of Corps Featured in the Guide

Appalachian Mountain Club

10 City Square
Charlestown, Massachusetts 02129
(617) 523-0636

California Conservation Corps

CCC Headquarters:
1719 24th Street
Sacramento, California 95816
(916) 341-3221

New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg
1 Meyner Road, Walters Park
Phillipsburg, New Jersey 08865
(908) 859-2969

Urban Corps of San Diego County
3127 Jefferson Street
San Diego, California 92110
(619) 235-6884

**Student Conservation Association,
Massachusetts Conservation Corps**
SCA Headquarters:
1310 N. Courthouse Rd, Suite 110
Arlington, Virginia 22201
(703) 524-2441

Massachusetts Office:
466 W Hawley Rd
Plainfield, MA 01070
[\(413\) 339-6631](tel:4133396631)

Sources and Credits

