



Rocky Mountain Conservancy

2022 Stewardship Department

End of Year Program Report





Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Since 1931, Rocky Mountain Conservancy has supported Rocky Mountain National Park and other public land partners through educational programs and philanthropic donations. Over ninety years, the Conservancy has grown to support its public land partners in a breadth of ways.

Currently, Rocky Mountain Conservancy contains five departments:

- **Retail** – manages nature stores throughout Colorado and Wyoming to provide visitors with educational materials and interpretive products for visitors to learn more about public lands.
- **Publications** – produces nature guides, children’s literature, natural and cultural history books, and more to enrich people’s experience in Rocky Mountain National Park and other public lands.
- **Philanthropy** – connects people to Rocky Mountain National Park and the Conservancy through a membership program and donations supporting RMNP and Conservancy programs.
- **Education** – provides field classes, internships, nature-based activities, and fellowships for people of all ages to further understand and connect with public lands.
- **Stewardship** – hosts the High School Leadership Corps, Conservation Corps, and Volunteer Stewardship programs to engage local high school youth, young adults (ages 18-25), and the public (all ages) in conservation work.

Stewardship Department

The 2022 RMC Stewardship Department was comprised of Director of Stewardship and Policy Ian Stafford, Field Manager Nathan Morrow, and seasonal Field Coordinators Charlotte Graeve and Grace McMahon. Together, the Stewardship team put on a very successful 2022 season. Highlights include:

- **First High School Leadership Corps Sessions since 2019**
 - 9 students from Front Range communities participated in the first RMC High School Leadership Corps since 2019, where they spent 11 days living in Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO).
 - Students practiced outdoors skills, leadership development, earned professional experience working alongside NPS and non-profit partners, made close friendships, and had a ton of fun!
 - Developed a close partnership with Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)
- **Largest Conservation Corps in RMC-CC history**
 - 52 young adults from 23 different states made up 9 crews partnering with 8 different agencies
 - Revived the Historic Preservation Crew that partnered with ROMO Facilities and Projects
 - Expanded the Rocky Fire Crew to 7 people who worked daily with ROMO Fire
 - Developed the first RMC trail crew based on the West Side of Rocky Mountain National Park
 - Reopened Tonahutu and Green Mountain Trails
 - Continued to develop partnerships with various ROMO departments and USFS districts
- **First Public Volunteer Events since 2019**
 - 399 hours of service were completed by 127 volunteers across 6 different events in Estes Valley
 - Removed over 399 pounds of trash in Rocky Mountain National Park and Estes Park public parks and walkways
 - The First Inaugural Rocky Mountain Facelift was a massive success
 - Thumb Open Space trail maintenance, emergency access SAR trail established
 - Litter cleanup along Big Thompson River, Lily Lake, throughout Estes Park
 - Continued to develop a close partnership with Rocky Mountain National Park Volunteer Office

High School Leadership Corps

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy hosted two sessions of our High School Leadership Corps in 2022. This unique program provided incoming or current high school students (under the age of 18) with an immersive experience in Rocky Mountain National Park. Students participated in hands-on service-learning projects, professional development opportunities, and interactive educational programming. In total, 10 participants in two different sessions each spent 11 days in Rocky Mountain National Park and advanced their understanding of the natural world while making friends, having fun outdoors, learning about careers, and developing their small group leadership styles.

- **Environmental Stewardship**

- Participants developed an understanding of natural systems and an awareness of public land agencies by completing service work and participating in educational programs. Service work included trail maintenance, habitat restoration, fire management and mitigation, and historic preservation.

- **Personal and Team Leadership**

- Youth practiced valuable leadership skills related to communication, teamwork and group management through in-classroom workshops and field-based skills training sessions.

- **Outdoor Skills**

- Students became competent in the skills required to comfortably travel and camp in the outdoors through experiential learning opportunities while camping and engaging in programming focused on backcountry skills.

The High School Leadership Corps (HSLC) is an immersive 11-day camping experience in Rocky Mountain National Park. During the program, youth complete service projects, participate in a variety of professional and career trainings, and camp in the backcountry. The experience culminates with a picnic, and youth are invited to reflect on their experience with their families and Conservancy staff. Participants receive a \$400 stipend upon successful completion of the program. Additionally, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy provides housing (camping), work clothing, and gear for the experience. In 2022, there were two HSLC crews... Here they are!



June 20th-30th High School Leadership Corps





Name: Bernadette Moreno

Hometown: Denver, Colorado

School: North Denver High School Junior

Testimonial/ Quote: “This program taught me that leadership comes in many forms and not just one. It is okay to ask for help! Working on trails showed me that working together and relying on each other was able to keep us safe and get the job done.”



Name: Eve Weklser

Hometown: Boulder, Colorado

School: Boulder High School Sophomore

Testimonial: “I learned that leadership is not always obvious and is a part of a complex group dynamic that must be figured out over time. Leadership is about adaptation, and that sometimes involves stepping back and opening the floor to someone else.”



Name: Fiona Schreiber

Hometown: Boulder, Colorado

School: Boulder High School Sophomore

Testimonial/Quote: “I have realized that leadership is not about being the “boss” of a group, but about being the “base”. Moving forward, I will continue to develop my skills as a “base” leader, allowing others to find support and helpful information from my skills. Being a leader isn’t about dictatorship, it’s about friendly, helpful guidance. This is what I will take away from this program.”



Name: Jesse Holtsnider

Hometown: Lafayette, Colorado

School: Centaurus High School Sophomore

Career Goals:

Testimonial/Quote: “I practiced prioritizing progress over a perfect plan. I had opportunities to lead while being able to know when I need to step down and be an active follower, supporting someone who has a better handle on the situation.”

June Crew Highlights

The crew arrived in Estes Park on Monday morning with excitement truly radiating from their faces. It was a brilliant sunny day with a slight breeze; things were off to a great start! Day 1 was an adjustment day. The crew set up camp in Rocky Mountain National Park's Moraine Park Campground, discussing what factors to think about when selecting a campsite. After some teambuilding games, an overview of the week's schedule, and a hike around the Big Thompson River valley, the crew cooked a hot dinner and settled in for the night.

Day 2 was skills training and education. The crew practiced several different knots, discussed the importance of Leave No Trace ethics, and how humans can have positive interactions with their environment. Then the crew went on a behind-the-scenes tour of the National Park Service (NPS) headquarters and discussed with Park professionals the dozens of career opportunities within the NPS.

Day 3 began Phase Two of the session: Service Projects. The High School Leadership Corps spent the day working alongside the NPS Vegetation Department. Hundreds of native plants were planted in the nursery for future seed collection and reintroduction to the natural environment of Rocky National Park.



Day 4 was spent with the NPS Fire Crew, who begin each day with a physical training workout of running, pushups, sit-ups, jumping jacks, and more. After PT, the crew sat down for the daily weather report, where they were surprised at how closely firefighters pay attention to weather forecasts. Later, both NPS and HSLC Crews ventured into the forest, where the large group worked on fuels mitigation. They learned that, essentially, wildfires need three things to happen: heat, air, and fuel. Firefighters can't really prevent the heat and air needed for a fire to start, but they can control the amount of fuel a potential fire can burn. Removal of this fuel is called "fuels mitigation" and is very helpful to both the health of natural areas, and the safety of the people who give care to them.



Days 5, 6, and 7 were spent outside of the National Park. The crew worked on US Forest Service land with a nonprofit called the Poudre Wilderness Volunteers (PWV). Folks learned the differences between federal and nonprofit agencies and set to work on some trail building. Using tools like pick-mattocks, Pulaski, rock bars, and Mcleods, the crew moved dozens of boulders to build rock steps along 2-mile-long Lily Mountain trail in southern Estes Park. This was hard work, but it sure was rewarding as the crew took ownership and honor in building a safe, sustainable trail that would last for thousands of hikers in the decades to come.



Day 8 was restful. The crew slept in, took showers, did laundry, journaled, and joined a resume building session at the Estes Park Library. This began Phase Three of the program: Personal Development and Reflection. Through the resume workshop, the crew learned about the specific formatting required for federal jobs on USAJobs.com. This helped prepare them for future jobs and career opportunities.

Day 9 was a field trip to the less-visited West Side of Rocky Mountain National Park, over the famous (and high alpine) Trail Ridge Road. At over 12,000 feet elevation, Trail Ridge Road is the highest paved road in North America. After stopping at numerous pull-offs and viewpoints, the crew headed down to Holzwarth historic site, to learn about fly fishing, ecology, and the history of human occupation in (from indigenous tribes to 1800s homesteaders) in Rocky Mountain National Park.



Day 10 was a long day hike around Bear Lake, Fern Lake, Odessa Lake, and the plenty of hills and valleys along the way. After a week and half of hiking, working, and living in the sunshine and heat, the crew deserved a pizza party. Good times and merriment were had by all, and the session ended on a happy note with movie night in the RMC Field Institute.

The final day 11 was packing up camp, organizing all materials for the next session, and setting up the end-of-session picnic! Parents and family members were invited to eat food, hang out, and share stories of the adventures of the last two weeks. Everyone headed home with full hearts and happy smiles.





July 18th-28th High School Leadership Corps





Name: Blessing Ngalame

Hometown: Denver, Colorado

School: First Year Student at Regis Jesuit High School

Testimonial/Quote: “The HSLC program taught me that leaders bring people of different strengths together and that, by working together where each person contributes their own leadership skills, the team can accomplish many things. Carrying heavy boulders on the trail showed me this. Without our individual contributions, we wouldn’t have been able to do it.”



Name: Gina Gersabeck

Hometown: Golden, Colorado

School: D’Evelyn High School Senior

Testimonial/Quote: “I realized how important it is to see what needs to happen before it needs to happen, to think a few steps ahead. It also became apparent how speaking up for each other is so important. This can be done by checking in on people and determining what needs to happen for them to be happy and healthy. This was especially important when backpacking!”



Name: Mateo Eggen Huerta

Hometown: Estes Park, Colorado

School: Estes Park High School Junior

Testimonial/Quote: “I think the most memorable moment is when we all opened up and had a deep thoughts kind of talk. We all had to step it up individually on the backpacking trip, and it was helpful that we all knew we could count on each other as leaders and friends. The kind of leadership skills I practiced will certainly help me deal with situations in the future but will also help me help other people who may be in the official leadership position.”



Name: Matthew Bendzel

Hometown: Longmont, Colorado

School/Area of Study: I want to go to University of Wisconsin Stevens point for conservation law enforcement.

Testimonial/Quote: “My favorite memory was working with fire crew and doing the 3-day hitch on the north fork trail. I was able to take the outdoor skills I learned in Scouting and apply them to this trip, while learning other skills of trail building and styles of leadership.”



Name: Noah Sumayasa

Hometown: Hawaiiikai, Honolulu and Denver, Colorado

School/Area of Study: Henry J Kaiser High School Junior

Career Goals: I want to work with forestry and wildlife in any capacity during my career.

Testimonial/Quote: "My favorite memory of the program was when our group went hiking to Sky Pond in Rocky Mountain National Park. The hiking trip was amazing and the biggest highlights from it were the pine marten I saw crossing the trail, the colorful wildflowers, and the view of the lake at the top of the mountain. One thing that has changed as far as my perspective on leadership is the reciprocity between you and your peers and how the leadership roles move fluidly between one person to another."



July Crew Highlights

It was a cloudy Tuesday when the July Crew arrived in Estes Park. Moraine Park Campground soon became a home as tents were pitched, tarps were set up, and the bear boxes were filled with food for the week. A group of high school students from all over the Front Range of Colorado (and Hawaii) would soon become fast friends.

On Day 2, the crew hiked from Moraine Park to the National Park Headquarters area, where they embarked on a tour of various departments and offices. In the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, the crew watched the movie “Spirit of the Mountains”, a film about Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), its history, and future.

The next day, the crew began their working experience with a volunteer trash cleanup in Hidden Valley. There, they cleaned up the landscape, learned about the National Park, and became official Junior Rangers (and found plenty of wild strawberries).

Fire Prevention in Rocky Mountain National Park is a main priority for the health and safety of the landscape and the NPS staff. The high school crew joined forces with the RMNP fire department to complete fuels mitigation service work. It was fascinating for all to learn about the history of fire in the Park and fulfilling to make a meaningful difference in the Park’s future.

Many Park Service staff enjoy days off on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday... But not the July High

School Leadership Corps. The crew ventured to the US Forest Service’s North Fork trail near (Glen Haven, CO) to complete a 3-day backcountry “hitch”, where they camped in the backcountry and completed a variety of trail maintenance and construction projects. For a few folks on the crew, this backpacking trip was a brand-new experience of learning, working, and living as a team. Late nights talking under the stars, waking up with the sunrise, and falling asleep to the sound of the stream were some of the most peaceful highlights of this trip.



After the backcountry hitch, the crew took some well-deserved showers and had a restful morning. Later in the day, a resume building workshop was held in the Estes Park Library and the crew learned some key tips and tricks on how to develop professional skills.

With many days of conservation work, career development training, and personal teambuilding behind them, the crew had entered the final stages of the program, where friendship and fun were number one! A field trip over Trail Ridge Road and a Ranger-guided hike in the Holzworth historic area were awesome and educational experiences for everyone involved.

On the last full day of the program, the crew decided to go on a hike to Sky Pond in Rocky Mountain National Park. Thanks to the shuttle bus system in RMNP, it was very simple to ride from Moraine Park campground over to the Glacier Gorge trailhead. The all-day hike to and from Sky Pond was a highlight for everyone on the crew as they saw towering granite spires, lush meadows, a massive alpine waterfall, and the beautiful, protected landscape. Heading back to camp, the crew packed up and had a movie night pizza party at the RMC Field Institute building.

The next day was the closing picnic, where parents and families commuted up to Estes Park for a lunch of burgers, chips, and homemade apple pie. Each student in the HSLC gave a short presentation about their experience of the last 10 days, sharing lessons of leadership, teamwork, communication, and newfound friendships. Everyone headed home with a belly full of food, a \$400 check, countless stories, memories, and new friends.







High School Leadership Corps Staff Members



Name: Verenice Galvan

Employer: Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)

Position Title: Urban Ranger Program Assistant

Education: I am currently not in school but if I could minor in something it would be horticulture or botany.

Testimonial/Quote: “This RMC trip is great chance to get away from the city and meet new people from all over Colorado! Playing card games, making smores, star gazing, singing songs by the campfire, identifying cute wildflowers, playing by the river, and hiking beautiful trails in Rocky Mountain National Park is better than staying home and being on your phone all day. I really enjoyed the course and being able to gain some insight on the various careers in the National Park Service.”



Name: Nathan Morrow

Employer: Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Position Title: Field Manager

Education: Montana State University, B.S. in Conservation Biology and Plant Science

Testimonial/Quote: “The students in the HSLC this summer reminded me of the wide-eyed joy and wonder I experienced as a kid. It is that passion and excitement for exploring natural areas, camping outdoors, developing as a team, and growing as an individual that guided me in designing and running this program. It’s about being safe, having fun, and maybe even learning something!”



Name: Charlotte Graeve

Employer: Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Position Title: Field Coordinator

Education: Texas A&M University, B.S. in Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences

Testimonial/Quote: “I’m so glad I got the chance to work with the High School Leadership Corps this season. It was amazing to watch a group of once strangers come together to form a truly cohesive team. This was an opportunity for growth all around- they learned so much from each other, and I learned a lot from them.”



Name: Grace McMahon

Employer: Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Position Title: Field Coordinator

Education: Arkansas Tech University, B.S in Environmental Science

Testimonial/Quote: “I’m really grateful I got to be involved with the HSLC program. Spending time with young people who are excited about the outdoors reminded me why I do what I do and getting to be part of a lot of folks’ first times in Rocky was so special. These are extraordinary kids, and I’m excited to see where they go from here.”

History, Information, and Applications

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy's High School Leadership Corps (HSLC) was started in 2017 as a program devoted to helping young people from urban Colorado get outside. It ran in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Then, the program took a break for a couple years. In 2022, the RMC was able to restart its High School Leadership Corps.

The HSLC is a program for Colorado students who are excited to try something new, develop as young adults, and have an unforgettable outdoor teambuilding experience. There are no requirements or prerequisites for this program; all are welcome!

RMC provides hiking boots, work clothes (shirt, pants, socks, hat) safety equipment, transportation, housing, and food for the program. Camping equipment (tent, sleeping bag and pad, backpacking equipment, stoves) is rented at no cost.

Participants will earn \$400 upon completion of the 11-day session and will keep their boots and work clothes for future careers and camping trips.

For information about the 2023 High School Leadership Corps, please visit the RMC website at <https://rmconservancy.org/work-with-us/high-school-leadership-corps/>



Special Thanks

The 2022 High School Leadership Corps would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions to this program. Thank you!

Mike Corbin, Jeanne Corbin, [Poudre Wilderness Volunteers](#)

Cat Eaton, Michael Mueldener, Kevin Gaalaas, National Park Service Vegetation

Katie Phillips, Ben Holt, Maria Lally, National Park Service Interpretation and Education

Kevin Riggs, Ethan Daley, National Park Service Fire and Fuels Module 32

Jeremy Sifuentes, Verence Galvan, [Environmental Learning for Kids \(ELK\)](#)

Michele Bratschun, National Park Service [Historic Preservation Training Center](#)

Angela Meyers, [Thorne Nature Experience](#)

Erin Angel, [Cottonwood Institute Changemakers Program](#)



Poudre Wilderness Volunteers
Caring For Northern Colorado Wilderness

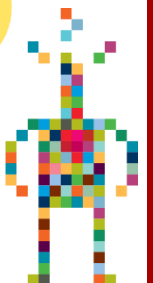


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Congratulations 2022 High School Leadership Corps!





Rocky Mountain Conservancy

CONSERVATION CORPS

2022 Conservation Corps Portfolio



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Conservation Corps Program Outline

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy created the Conservation Corps program in 2003. Initially, the program supported seven interns on one crew in Rocky Mountain National Park. In the years since, the program has grown to provide dozens of youth ages 18-25 with a summer-long internship opportunity on a variety of crews. In 2022, the Conservation Corps was comprised of eight crews worked across Rocky Mountain National Park and the surrounding Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests.

Program Goals:

1. To empower youth with job skills, career development resources, a conservation ethic, and a connection to public lands to create the next generation of stewards.
2. To increase participant awareness of careers related to the environment, environmental stewardship, and public lands.
3. To link Conservation Corps projects to the missions and visions of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, Rocky Mountain National Park/National Park Service, and Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest/USDA Forest Service.
4. To increase participant awareness and use of effective leadership skills based on positive and constructive communication and to provide opportunity for practice of these skills.
5. To increase participant awareness of the cultural and natural history and environment of the Rocky Mountain region.
6. To inform crew members in the need for and use of various methods of construction for environmentally friendly trails, restoration, and reclamation projects.
7. To provide on-the-ground conservation work for Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest (ARNF).

The main 2022 season spanned eleven weeks between early June and mid-August. The Rocky Fire crew completed a season from early June to late September. All crews work directly alongside the National Park Service (NPS) or USDA Forest Service (USFS) completing conservation projects summarized in the following pages. Intentional time throughout the summer was devoted to leadership training, educational programming, and career development opportunities from professionals such as the NPS and USFS.

The program provides work clothing, rented camping gear, housing for the duration of the term, and a biweekly living stipend to all members and leaders. The program is funded through generous donor support, in-kind gear donations, grant funding, and National Park Service and USDA Forest Service project funds.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Conservation Corps is an AmeriCorps program through The Corps Network.



Rocky Fire Crew





Name: Leah Rosenblum (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Deerfield, IL

School/Area of Study: University of Wisconsin- Madison; Economics and Environmental Studies

Career Goals: Regenerative Agriculture

Testimonial/ Quote: *"I loved the opportunity to lead this crew and watch everyone grow. We became physically stronger and thrived for four months in a campsite."*



Name: Elise Lukacs

Hometown: Columbus, OH

School/Area of Study: Columbus State Community College

Career Goals: Try wildland firefighting for a few years, work seasonally outside! Maybe more school, definitely more education.

Testimonial: *"RMC has been an incredible program that has given me education, opportunity for personal growth, and great friendships. Super happy to have had this opportunity. It's okay to explore different career options and to learn about many different things!"*



Name: Ryan Hickey

Hometown: Lake Zurich, IL

School/Area of Study: University of Iowa; Sports Management

Career Goals: Work a couple seasons on the fire line. Really any job outside, Park Ranger, etc. (Millionaire if possible)

Testimonial/Quote: *"RMC allows you the opportunity to try new career paths. It allowed me to spend the summer in a national park and figure out a future working outside."*



Name: Megan Cornwell

Hometown: Carlisle, PA

School/Area of Study: Penn State University; Criminal Justice with minor in Psychology, Class of 2022

Career Goals: Park Ranger, work a couple seasons in fire. Any job within the parks and being outside.

Testimonial/Quote: *"A takeaway from this summer at RMC is no one really knows what they're doing and that's okay! Everyone's path in life is different- don't compare yourself to others. You'll get there, keep going!"*



Name: David Boord

Hometown: Columbus, OH

School/Area of Study: Ohio State University; Environmental Policy and Decision Making

Career Goals: Attend law school and work in environmental justice.

Testimonial/ Quote: *"I'm proud of the work we did and I'll never forget the people I met nor the memories I made."*



Name: Alex Serote

Hometown: Burke, VA

School/Area of Study: Utah State University

Career Goals: Wildland Firefighter, EMT

Testimonial: *"I had fun; it was incredible to work in a national park and I'm looking forward to doing it again next summer."*



Name: Rachel Scuri

Hometown: Meridian, ID

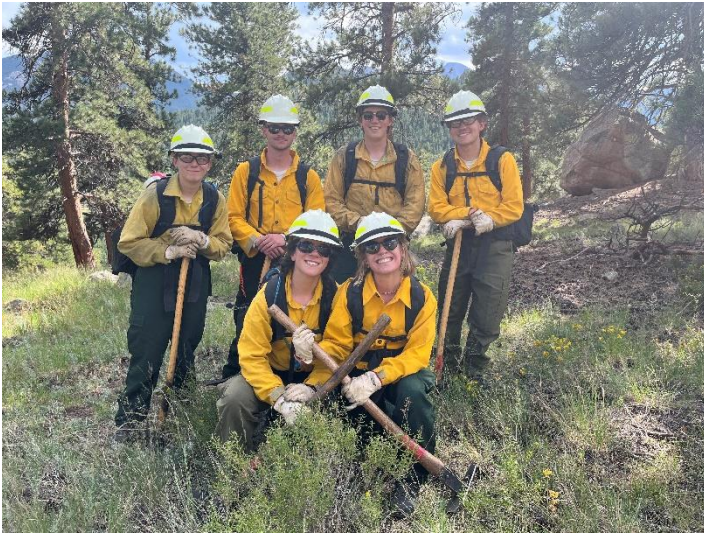
School/Area of Study: University of Montana; Restoration Ecology

Career Goals: Undecided

Testimonial/Quote: *"Highlights: 1. Solo trip to Moab 2. Working super close with Park Fire Staff 3. Having so much fun in the Great Big Backyard"*

2022 Work Highlights

In the second season of the program, the RMC Fire Crew did incredible work alongside ROMO Fire. The seven-person crew served a longer season than most, from May 31st to September 30th.



The 2022 crew worked to mitigate fire risk in and around Rocky Mountain National Park primarily by building slash piles (large piles of logs that will be individually burned) to reduce fuels buildup. The crew also dug defensive line around populated areas, conducted bird population surveys, and cut back overgrown vegetation. Throughout their season, the crew built 139 slash piles, constructed 2000 feet of new trail tread, and dug defensive line around 40 buildings in the RMNP administrative area.



Through their work with ROMO Fire, the RMC Fire Crew also had the unique opportunity to gain the certifications and working hours necessary to qualify them for a Red Card certification in the future, including an S-212 chainsaw certification. Several members of the crew plan to pursue a career in wildland firefighting.

Canyon Lakes Crew



Name: Jill Gehman (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Allentown, PA

School/Area of Study: Associates Degree; Barista by day, Waitress by night, Trail Worker by summer

Career Goals: Continue working with trail crews and playing in the dirt. Someday working with the National Park Service or Forest Service.

Testimonial/Quote: *"Leading a crew was a new challenge I faced this season and I feel as though it boosted my confidence and decision making. I owe it to my crew."*



Name: AJ Lullo (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Sleepy Hollow, IL

School/Area of Study: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Career Goals: Outdoor Education

Testimonial/Quote: *"This summer reinforced my love for outdoor work. Before this season I knew what I wanted to do, but now I know what I want to do."*



Name: Ella Adams

Hometown: Athens, Georgia

School/Area of Study: Haystack Rock Awareness Program (Cannon Beach, OR)

Career Goals: In the future I plan to become a park ranger or work with the park service or forest service.

Testimonial/Quote: *"My favorite experience this summer was using a crosscut saw. I had not done it before so it was cool to learn. Working and living with 9 people in the backcountry was awesome and amazing! Seeing wildlife everyday driving to work was awesome and exciting! Colorado is absolutely an amazing place to work!"*



Name: Alex Casillas

Hometown: Lone Tree, CO

School/Area of Study: University of Notre Dame; Computer Science

Career Goals: Find ways to use coding for environmental preservation

Testimonial/Quote: *"This summer provided so many amazing opportunities to learn about the outdoors and develop an appreciation of the world around me. I loved being able to give back to the trails and to the state that I have enjoyed all my life."*



Name: Dylan Deguzman

Hometown: Ukiah, CA

School/Area of Study: School of Life

Career Goals: Search and Rescue

Testimonial/Quote: *"Such a beautiful experience this season, with so many wonderful and unique people to accompany it. Being outdoors all season was such a blessing while getting to experience the wilderness in a whole new way, to contribute in a meaningful way, and to recreate and enjoy such beautiful places."*



Name: Rachel Craig

Hometown: Houston, TX

School/Area of Study: University of Houston; Environmental Science

Career Goals: Work somewhere beautiful

Testimonial/Quote: *"I loved being a part of preserving a portion of the Rocky Mountains. I have visited the Rocky Mountains in the past and their beauty is unmatched. Having an opportunity to give back to the land and gain stewardship experience is vital to me."*



Name: Chloe Ponder

Hometown: Boise, ID

School/Area of Study: Boise State University; Environmental Studies

Career Goals: Work for the Forest Service

Testimonial/Quote: *"Don't take yourself too seriously, and take time to enjoy the places you go and the people you meet."*



Name: Parker Smithwick

Hometown: Andalusia, AL

School/Area of Study: Current Employer: Taco Bell

Career Goals: Undecided

Testimonial/Quote: *"This summer was the first summer I spent away from my family! It was an amazing experience to just be myself without expectations."*



Name: Hannah Pritchard

School/Area of Study: The Ohio State University

Testimonial/Quote: *"Through working for the RMC-CC, I was challenged to work in the outdoors, further my ecological awareness, and rely on a team in a way I never have before."*



Name: Luke Cronin

School/Area of Study: University of Montana

Testimonial/Quote: *"I would like to help conserve the park so other people can enjoy the outdoors just like I have and to work outdoors with other people who also like the outdoors."*

2022 Work Highlights

The 10-person Canyon Lakes super-crew lived in the US Forest Service's Stub Creek cabin, deep in the Rawah Wilderness. This crew served many parts of the Canyon Lakes Ranger District along the Northwest border of Rocky Mountain National Park by using antique crosscut saws to clear downed trees, installing stepping stones, and building and repairing drains. The crew participated in multiple eight-day backcountry hitches, as well as helping to maintain the Big South Trail, which was damaged in the 2020 Cameron Peak wildfire. Within 38 miles of trail, the Canyon Lakes Crew cleared 663 trees, installed 591 drains, built 322 feet of rock wall, and constructed 35 turnpikes.



Sulphur Crews





Name: Eli Karsh-Lombardo (ANRA Crew Leader)

Hometown: Boulder, CO

School/Area of Study: Montana State University; Environmental Studies

Career Goals: Outdoor Education

Testimonial/Quote: *"I learned a lot about how I personally learn and communicate best, as well as working on my skills on being vocal, open, and vulnerable in a conversation."*



Name: Tom Haynos

Hometown: Lewisburg, PA

School/Area of Study: University of Maryland; Engineering

Career Goals: Firefighting, Search and Rescue, Environmental Engineering, Peace Corps

Testimonial/Quote: *"In a team, I value diversity the most. The more perspectives a team has, the better they are able to make decisions. If a team is single minded in nature, they are going to miss a lot of ways to approach problems."*



Name: Annabelle South

Hometown: Bethesda, MD

School/Area of Study: University of Vermont; Environmental Science

Career Goals: Environmental Research, Peace Corps

Testimonial/Quote: *"Different people have vastly different values, ideas about the world, and ways of thinking- and that is a strength in a team environment! I believe that effective teamwork requires embracing differences of identity and listening to and incorporating people's different perspectives."*



Name: William Calhoun

Hometown: Perry, OK

School/Area of Study: University of Nebraska; Environmental Education

Career Goals: Interpretive Ranger, National Park

Testimonial/Quote: *"I believe that the Conservation Corps aligns directly with my passions and future career plans. It gave me a chance to gain some experience and truly make a difference in aiding this continent's ecosystems."*



Name: Alyssa Wilson

Hometown: Rockford, IL

School/Area of Study: University of Wisconsin-Platteville; Reclamation

Career Goals: Be a ranger, work with plants

Testimonial/Quote: *"I worked with Rocky Mountain Conservancy to gain knowledge and experience I can apply to my schooling, as well as future job opportunities. I want to be able to truly help nature in any way I can."*



Name: Gwynne Ohlson

Hometown: South Bend, IN

School/Area of Study: Indiana University; Environmental Science

Career Goals: Geology Field Research

Testimonial/Quote: *"Not only did this program allow me to work within the park to preserve its health, but it will also provide safe ways for the public to enjoy its beauty (and hopefully want to preserve it themselves!)"*



Name: Mak Booth (Trail Crew Leader)

Hometown: Bloomington, MN

School/Area of Study: St. Olaf College; Environmental Studies with a concentration in Social Sciences

Career Goals: Travel around the country and work on trail crews for the forest service.

Testimonial/Quote: *"After this past summer, I found great admiration for the wilderness in Colorado, and I valued the work we put in every day, maintaining trails and building relationships."*



Name: Moss Graver

Hometown: Pattonsburg, MO

School/Area of Study: University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Conservation Biology

Career Goals: Conservation Biologist

Testimonial/Quote: *"The people are absolutely amazing! I have made lifelong friendships. I have learned so much this summer and gained so many life and professional skills."*



Name: Sebastian Carranza

Hometown: The Woodlands, TX

School/Area of Study: Colorado State University; Natural Resources Management

Careers Goals: Work on a trail or fire crew

Testimonial/Quote: *"To enact meaningful change and work in a place where I am constantly outdoors and helping the local environment is my life and career ambition."*



Name: Katherine Pollard

Hometown: Locust, NC

School/Area of Study: East Tennessee State University; Geoscience

Career Goal: I'm interested in environmental science, particularly hydrology.

Testimonial/Quote: *"I want to work one day in the field of environmental conservation, and I think this is a great place to start. I believe it taught me important skills that will help me to be a better steward of the earth, as well as help me develop leadership and communication skills that will serve me well no matter where I end up in the future."*



Name: Hunter Jewell

Hometown: Charlotte, MI

School/Area of Study: Michigan State; Environmental Geosciences

Careers Goals: Obtain a career in the natural sciences, possibly hydrology.

Testimonial/Quote: *"Conservation is probably the most important topic to me in today's world. I believe we should be doing all we can to preserve as much wilderness as possible. That is why I am thrilled to have a direct impact on the preservation of the Rocky Mountains."*

2022 Work Highlights

Stationed on the West side of the Continental Divide, the Sulphur crew was a conglomeration of two separate crews.

One crew worked with the Arapaho National Recreation Area (ANRA), while the other partnered with the trails department of the Sulphur Ranger District of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. The ANRA crew focused on informational sign installation and helped to reopen over 500 miles of road systems that had been closed since the East Troublesome Fire in 2020.



The crew partnering with the Forest Service trails team worked primarily in designated wilderness areas, using antique crosscut saws to clear trails of over 200 downed trees, but also participated in some front country projects, such as invasive species removal. Throughout the 11-week season, both Sulphur crews (along with a few llamas to pack in tools and equipment) took part in backcountry hitches, during which every member gained valuable trail work experience.



Everyone on the Sulphur crews left this season with a nationally recognized Crosscut Bucking certification, which they earned through educational classes and experiences with the Forest Service.

Boulder Crew





Name: Kiana Smith (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Orange, CA

School/Area of Study: Chapman University; Environmental Science and Policy, Class of 2019 / Current Employer: Boulder Climbing Community

Career Goals: I want to go into land management with the Forest Service. I plan to go back to school for a Master's degree in the future.

Testimonial/Quote: *"I've had an incredible summer gaining more technical skills in trail work and it has helped me grow so much as a leader."*



Name: Maddy Brunson

Hometown: Herndon, VA

School/Area of Study: Vanderbilt University; Child Studies

Career Goals: To be happy and have fun

Testimonial/Quote: *"Such a fun summer!"*



Name: Sam Lieske

Hometown: Noosa, QLD, Australia

School/Area of Study: University of Wyoming

Career Goals: Fun & Money

Testimonial/Quote: *"A ship is safe in a harbour, but that is not what a ship was built for."*



Name: Mario Alfaro

Hometown: Dalton, GA

School/Area of Study: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Career Goals: End North American species extinction

Testimonial/Quote: *"You know what they say, no bad days in the Conservancy."*



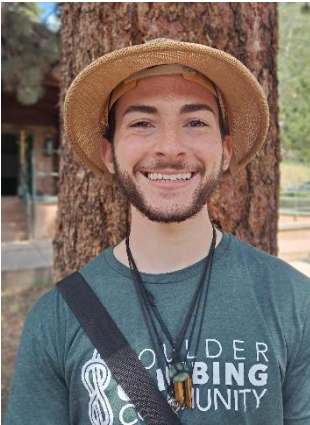
Name: Emily Dewing

Hometown: Rohnert Park, CA

School/Area of Study: Sonoma State University; Environmental Science

Career Goals: Undecided

Testimonial/Quote: *"I've never had this much fun in my life."*



Name: Tyler Pope

Hometown: Edwardsville, IL

School/Area of Study: University of Illinois; Engineering Physics

Career Goals: To find joy in the outdoors.

Testimonial/Quote: *"What a day!" (everyday)*



Name: Katey Ewton

Hometown: Salado, TX

School/Area of Study: Southwestern University; Environmental Studies, Class of 2020

Career Goals: Environmental outreach and education

Testimonial/Quote: *"Get outside, try new things, meet new people! Break out of your comfort zone."*

2022 Work Highlights



The Boulder Crew began their season performing routine maintenance on an array of trails at lower elevations with work on more “front-country” trails due to the significant snowpack on higher elevation trails. The crew helped to improve trail conditions and construct various rock structures, such as retaining walls, check steps, and water bars. This work helps clarify the trail corridor and fortifies the trail surface to prevent erosional impacts from high use and weather.



The Boulder Crew spent a large portion of their season working at the Upper Dream Canyon climbing area. This project focused on improving the access trail that descends into the canyon, by building stairs and other features that make the hike easier for climbers of varying abilities. The crew teamed up with the Boulder Climbing Community’s Front Range Climbing Stewards (FRCS), a professional trail crew with admirable technical prowess to complete this project.

Moraine Crew



Name: Fawn Bennett (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Newville, PA

School/Area of Study: Harrisburg Area Community College Nursing; Leadership Education and Farming (LEAF) Project

Career Goals: Be a nurse... maybe?

Testimonial/Quote: *"I've learned to push past my limits."*



Name: Laurel DesMarteau

Hometown: Marietta, OH

School/Area of Study: University of Cincinnati

Career Goals: Environmental Communication

Testimonial/Quote: *"This summer taught me so much about trails and about myself. I cannot believe it's over."*



Name: Georgia Goldrick

Hometown: Evergreen Park, IL

School/Area of Study: University of Wisconsin-Madison; Conservation Biology, Class of 2022

Career Goals: Make a difference and help people! Hopefully going to PA school in the future.

Testimonial/Quote: *"Hiking is good for the soul! I really learned to appreciate the quiet and solitude of being out here."*



Name: Kyleigh Swindle

Hometown: Republic, MO

School/Area of Study: Missouri University of Science and Technology; Biological Sciences

Career Goals: Wildlife Biologist

Testimonial/Quote: *"I got to really grow as a person, and I enjoyed getting stronger and learning new skills."*



Name: Ryan Leong

Hometown: Littleton, CO

School/Area of Study: University of Denver; Piano Performance

Career Goals: Rocky Mountain National Park Trail Crew employee

Testimonial/Quote: *"Best summer I've ever had! I definitely feel like I have a better idea of what I want to do in my life."*



Name: Abe Luedtke

Hometown: Eugene, OR

School/Area of Study: University of Southern California; Environmental Science and Health, and Jazz Studies

Testimonial/Quote: *"I was able to develop and improve my skills in trail maintenance and construction, habitat restoration, and get hands-on fieldwork that I haven't been able to attain in my university courses."*

2022 Work Highlights

The Moraine crew lived in their namesake geological formation, Rocky Mountain National Park's Moraine Park. Their home was Rocky's Moraine Park Campground, overlooking a beautiful riverine meadow.

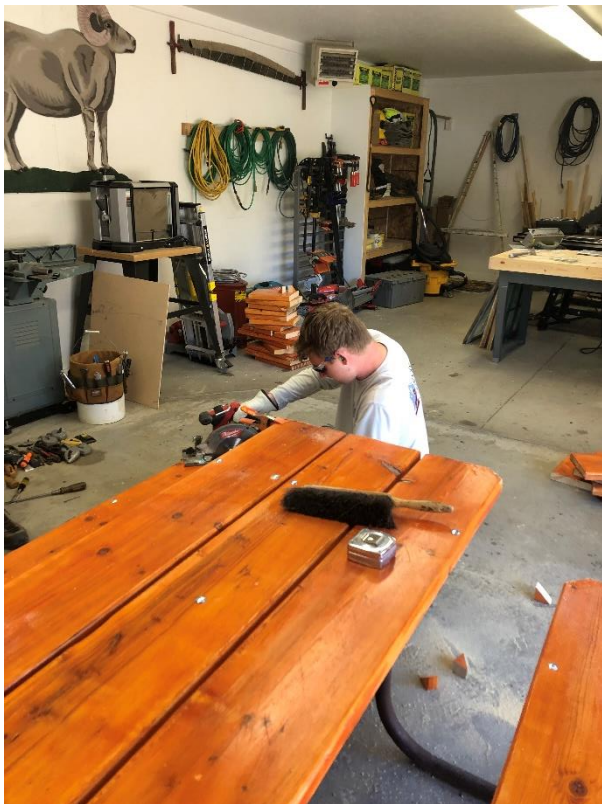


Comprised of six members hailing from across the country, the crew worked alongside Rocky Mountain National Park's trail crew. The group spent the first few weeks of their season doing maintenance runs throughout Rocky National Park – hiking several miles daily while clearing drains to ensure minimal soil erosion and witnessing the Park's natural beauty.

The latter portion of Moraine Crew's summer was spent working right in their backyard, on the Fern Lake trail, in order to combat the effects of the East Troublesome Fire. There they installed numerous check steps and stone pavers to improve trail stability and accessibility.



Historic Preservation Crew





Name: Nate Hendley (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Charlotte, NC

School/Area of Study: University of Chicago; Biology, Class of 2020

Career Goals: To become a physician

Testimonial/Quote: *"My favorite part of the summer was hiking Mt. Elbert. After coming back from a severe ski injury, I felt like this experience tied together my RMC experience."*



Name: Tim Hawkins

Hometown: Nashville, TN

School/Area of Study: Tennessee Technological University; History, Class of 2022

Career Goals: I want to work outside.

Testimonial/Quote: *"There are so many mountains, it's intimidating. I loved working with the NPS every day, they really made the season."*



Name: Jaden King

Hometown: Greenwood, IN

School/Area of Study: Purdue University; Botany

Career Goals: Become a research professor

Testimonial/Quote: *"My favorite part of the season was climbing Longs Peak and taking a short nap at the top."*



Name: Joey Sailer

Hometown: Mechanicsburg, PA

School/Area of Study: Shippensburg University; Mechanical Engineering

Career Goals: Undecided

Testimonial/Quote: *"The people around you are there to support you more than you think."*

2022 Work Highlights



Back for the first time since pre-pandemic, the Historic Preservation Crew provided a unique opportunity for members to gain experience with the restoration of historic buildings throughout the Eastern side of Rocky Mountain National Park. Working alongside the RMNP Historic Preservation department, the crew worked on a variety of projects, including repainting 10 structures at McGraw Ranch, constructing new picnic tables, and repainting windows on historic buildings throughout Rocky. Primarily, this crew completed an extensive rockwork project at the Moraine Park Discovery Center, to maintain this building as a resource for generations to come.



Kawuneeche Crew





Name: Claire Sneed (Crew Leader)

Hometown: Philadelphia, PA

School/Area of Study: Ohio State University; Earth Science with a minor in Hydrology

Career Goals: Working with the National Park Service or US Forest Service either on trails, interpretation, or fire- anything that allows me to work outside and wear a cool uniform, and enable others to enjoy the outdoors

Testimonial/Quote: *“After this summer, I feel much more confident in navigating federal positions in terms of knowing which jobs I want with the NPS or USFS and how to apply to them. I have a much clearer picture of what careers I want to pursue after I graduate. The people I worked with this summer changed my life and I love having family all over the*

country who I share a deep connection to the outdoors with.”



Name: Meredith McMillen

Hometown: Durham, NC

School/Area of Study: North Carolina State University; Parks and Recreation Management

Career Goals: Anything in outdoor recreation! I want to be outside the rest of my life and share the outdoors with others.

Testimonial/Quote: *“This summer taught me about leadership, community, and how to heal trench foot. I loved my crew and this season.”*



Name: Hunter Griffey

Hometown: West Fork, AR

School/Area of Study: Environmental Science/West Fork Fire Department

Career Goals: National Park Service Ranger, Trails, or Fire

Testimonial/Quote: *“The best thing to know is that you know nothing.”*



Name: Michelle Mariscal

Hometown: Chaska, MN

School/Area of Study: Hamline University; Criminal Justice

Career Goals: Crime Scene Investigation, or Park Ranger

Testimonial/Quote: *“The work was incredibly rewarding, and it makes you feel like you're making a huge impact on people's lives. It is truly a life changing experience.”*

2022 Work Highlights

The Kawuneeche Crew was a new addition to the RMC-CC in 2022, and the first RMC trail crew to work on the West side of Rocky Mountain National Park. The crew primarily worked to rehabilitate trails in burn scars, including the Green Mountain and Tonahutu trails.



Working in partnership with NPS Trails, the Kawuneeche Crew helped rebuild and reopen the Green Mountain Trail, which has been closed since its destruction during the East Troublesome Fire in 2020! The crew also participated in several eight-day backcountry hitches, where they would accomplish an incredible amount of work, such as building nine new timber bridges, installing 119 drains, and constructing three stone walls (a total of 45 feet).



Extended Season Trail Crew



Name: Grace McMahon

Hometown: Natural Dam, AR

School/Area of Study: Arkansas Tech University, B.S. in Environmental Science

Testimonial/Quote: Good morning, Thumb!



Name: Charlotte Graeve

Hometown: Houston, TX

School/Area of Study: Texas A&M University, B.S. in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences

Testimonial/Quote: *clears throat* **lunch**



Name: Nathan Morrow

Hometown: St. Charles, IL

School/Area of Study: Montana State University, B.S. in Conservation Biology and Plant Sciences

Testimonial/Quote: So, I can really put anything as my yearbook quote? Hm let me think...

2022 Work Highlights



This season's project was located right in the heart of Estes Park. On the south side of Prospect Mountain lies two notable rock formations, known as the Needle and the Thumb. On these towering granite pillars lie dozens of bolted rock-climbing routes, ranging from beginner to expert difficulties.



For four weeks from early September to early October of 2022, a crew of three Rocky Mountain Conservancy staff members worked in collaboration with the Town of Estes Park to improve the Thumb Open Space trail. The crew was primarily focused on clearing and widening the trail corridor to allow for easier access for hikers and climbers, with a particular focus on electric-assist hand cycle users, for whom a wider trail and less debris would make accessing the Thumb possible.



The RMC crew, with tremendous help from volunteers and organizations such as the Access Fund, the National Park Service, and Boulder Climbing Community, was able to clear 3,696 feet of corridor, widen 1,057 feet of tread, build 55 feet of rock wall, and install 40 feet of stone pavers and armoring. Through hard work and collaboration, we hope to evolve a trail system that will increase recreational opportunities for Estes Valley residents and visitors alike to explore a historical recreation area, experience gorgeous vistas, and create memories and connections to the natural world.

History, Information, and Applications

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Conservation Corps (RMC-CC) was started in 2003 as a program devoted to helping young adults gain hands-on conservation experience while supporting Rocky Mountain National Park. Over 300 participants have spent a summer on our Conservation Corps in the 19 summers since 2003.

The RMC-CC is a program for US citizens aged 18-26 who are excited to try something new, develop as young adults, and have an unforgettable outdoor teambuilding experience. There are no requirements or prerequisites for this program; all are welcome!

RMC provides hiking boots, work clothes (shirt, pants, socks, hat) safety equipment, transportation, and housing for the entire duration of the summer program. Camping equipment (tent, sleeping bag and pad, backpacking equipment, stoves) is rented at no cost.

In 2023, participants will earn between \$450-\$550 per week and be eligible for a Seagal AmeriCorps Education Award upon completion of the program. Furthermore, RMC Corps members will keep their boots and work clothes for future careers and camping trips.

For information about RMC's 2023 Conservation Corps, please visit our website at

<https://rmconservancy.org/work-with-us/conservation-corps/>



Special Thanks

The 2022 Rocky Mountain Conservancy - Conservation Corps would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions to this program. Thank you!

Matt Cowan - Canyon Lakes Ranger District US Forest Service

Miles Miller, Amy Sullivan, Vicky Burton - Sulphur Ranger District US Forest Service

Ben Husted, Lyle Skaar - Boulder Ranger District US Forest Service

Kevin Riggs, Charlie Reynar, Ethan Daley, Liz Brown - Rocky Mountain National Park Fire

Bob Maitland, Chuck Tubb - Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Preservation

Doug Parker, Jesse Miller, Pete Kingham - Rocky Mountain National Park Trails

Ryan Kuehn - [Boulder Climbing Community's Front Range Climbing Stewards](#)

Katie Phillips, Christie Wilkins - Rocky Mountain National Park Interpretation and Education

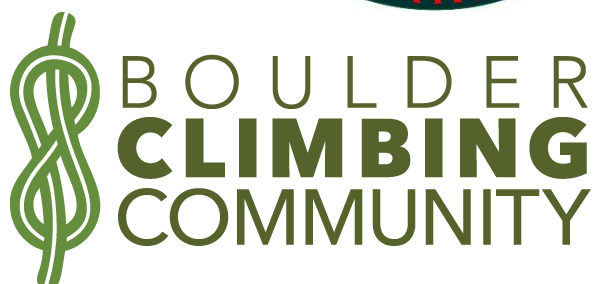
Michele Bratschun, National Park Service [Historic Preservation Training Center](#)

Zach Zehr, [Estes Park Mountain Shop](#)

Brian Berg, [Town of Estes Park](#)



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Rocky Mountain Conservancy

2022 Volunteer Events



Volunteer Events in 2022

In 2022, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy revived its volunteer stewardship program and hosted a variety of volunteer stewardship events throughout the year. For the first time since 2019, residents of Estes Park, Colorado’s Front Range, and visitors from all over were invited to participate in stewardship projects. In total, **127 participants contributed nearly 400 hours of service across 6 events** held throughout the year. From our litter cleanup events, **over 332 pounds of trash were removed** from Rocky Mountain National Park and the town of Estes Park’s public areas. This was a very successful year for the RMC Stewardship Department’s Volunteer Programs, and more events are already being planned for 2023 and beyond.

Name of Event	Type of Service Work Completed	Locations	Number of Participants	Service Hours
January 19 th – Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Food Drive	RMNP offices	2	4
June 4 th - National Trails Day	Litter Cleanup	Hidden Valley RMNP	26	48
August 4 th – Great American Outdoors Act Day	Invasive Species Removal	West Horseshoe Park RMNP	16	64
September 10 th – Day of Remembrance	Litter Cleanup	Many Parks Curve RMNP	2	4
September 17 th – Rocky Mountain Facelift	Trail building, Litter cleanup	Thumb Open Space, Big Thompson River Corridor	72	247.5
September 24 th – National Public Lands Day	Litter Cleanup	Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, “The Island” RMNP	9	31.5
		Totals	127	399

For more information, please visit <https://rmconservancy.org/volunteer/>



January 19th Martin Luther King Jr. Day Food Drive



From January 1st to January 18th, numerous food drive collection boxes were placed throughout the Rocky Mountain National Park offices and visitor centers. On Tuesday the 19th, RMC staff collected the various boxes and delivered them to the Community Cupboard Food Bank in Allenspark, Colorado.

In total, **143.1 pounds of food (enough to support 20 families)** were donated to **Community Cupboard**. The generosity of National Park staff and volunteers was able to make a significant contribution to rural families through the cold of winter.

January 2022 was the first year of this food drive, and it is scheduled to happen again, perhaps on a larger scale, in January 2023.



June 4th National Trails Day: Litter Cleanup at Hidden Valley



The American Hiking Society declares the first Saturday in June as National Trails Day. On June 4th, 2022, a fleet of 26 volunteers from across Colorado's Front Range arrived in Rocky Mountain National Park's Hidden Valley. A ski resort with operational chairlifts until 1991, Hidden Valley is now the headquarters of the Junior Ranger program. As such, the area sees heavy traffic throughout the year from sledders, skiers, hikers, and families. When the snow melts in spring, massive amounts of microplastic trash from the winter season are revealed.

In just one day of work, **48 hours of service were completed by the 26-person crew as they picked up over 60 pounds of trash** across the area. Experienced National Park volunteers, families, couples, and people of all ages transformed Hidden Valley through beautification and general upkeep of this heavily visited area.

National Trails Day 2023 is on Saturday, June 3rd, and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy plans to hold another volunteer litter cleanup in Hidden Valley. Visit the RMC website in spring 2023 for more information!



August 4th Great American Outdoors Act Day: Invasive Species Removal



The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), enacted on August 4th, 2020, is a massive investment in United States public lands and protected natural areas. Intended to update infrastructure across National Parks Service sites nationwide, the GAOA will prove to be a massive aid to supporting the NPS dual mission: to preserve and protect natural resources while balancing human enjoyment and interaction in these natural areas.

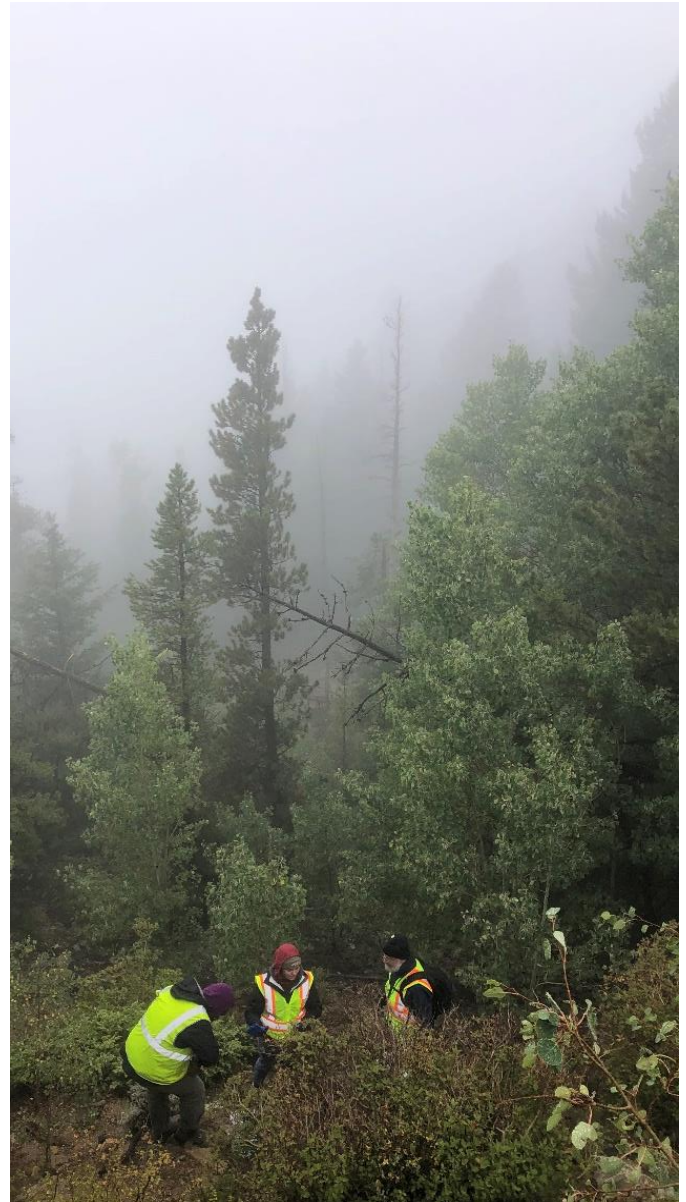
To celebrate the anniversary of the GAOA, RMC and Rocky Mountain National Park's Vegetation and Volunteer departments teamed up to put on a large-scale event in RMNP's Horseshoe Park. Unlike our other volunteer events, this project was available only to RMC's corporate partners. Together, Visit Estes Park, Estes Valley Land Trust, and Greystone Technologies were able to provide **16 volunteers to remove 100 pounds of invasive thistle from Horseshoe Park.**

The Great American Outdoors Act is a monumental step in the conservation of American public lands, and the RMC will continue to recognize the importance of federal policy in protecting such important natural areas.



All photos from GAOA Volunteer Day courtesy of John Berry, including this report's cover photo. Instagram @John_Berry_

September 10th Day of Remembrance: Litter Cleanup at Many Parks Curve



It was a gloomy September Saturday when the Rocky Mountain Conservancy held their September 11th Day of Remembrance volunteer event at Many Parks Curve in Rocky Mountain National Park. Due to the chilly, misty weather, only two volunteers attended this event. Not a worry! The RMC and RMNP Volunteer department staff coordinated a very successful event at a location that certainly needed the attention.

For the few hours the crew was out, they **picked up over a dozen pounds of Microtrash** from the area below the Many Parks Curve overlook. [Microtrash](#) is the term used to describe miniscule particulates of litter which can drastically harm wildlife from the base of the food chain all the way up to the apex predators. As Microtrash is carried up the food chain, its effects are magnified and is terribly destructive to all kinds of fish, birds, elk, and entire ecosystems. So, while 12 pounds of trash removed may not seem too impressive, it's **12 fewer pounds of harmful, pesky litter** that could otherwise seriously injure Rocky Mountain National Park's incredible wildlife.

It is often said that "many hands make light work", and this is especially true with litter cleanups. The RMC and RMNP volunteer program plan to continue their partnership into 2023 with even more litter cleanups across a variety of scales, locations, and goals.

September 17th Rocky Mountain Facelift: Trail Building at Thumb Open Space, Litter Cleanups at Lily Lake, and Big Thompson River Corridor



On September 17, 2022, the largest single-day volunteer event in the history of Rocky Mountain Conservancy occurred at a variety of locations across the Estes Valley, including Rocky Mountain National Park's Lily Lake, and the Town of Estes Park's Big Thompson River Walk, Lake Estes, and Thumb Open Space.



Numerous partners collaborated to produce and direct this massive event. Rocky Mountain Conservancy, Rocky Mountain National Park, Boulder Climbing Community, the Access Fund, and the Town of Estes Park all played major roles in transforming the access trails within Thumb Open Space.

Rocky Mountain National Park's Trails department (led by Jesse Miller and other Park staff) guided their team of volunteers to **widen 381 feet of walkway** on the upper sections of trail towards the Thumb. Using McCleods, pick mattocks, and shovels, this team was able to noticeably transform a massive section of trail to make it more accessible and accommodating to people of a variety of abilities.

The Boulder Climbing Community's Front Range Climbing Stewards (led by Ryan Kuehn and RMC Corps Alumni Kiana Smith) utilized their skills in technical rock construction to set dozens of stones in the path. This technique is called "armoring" and is one of the most durable and sustainable methods of trail building. **In total, the team was able to armor 40 feet of trail in just one day.**

Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Field Team utilized the help of volunteers to build the emergency access Search and Rescue (SAR) trail off Curry Drive. The most direct route to the Thumb and Needle formations, this route was historically used before the Thumb Open Space (and its new trail) was established. However, in the event of an emergency when rescue crews need to get to a patient as soon as possible, this SAR trail provides the quickest route.

Thanks to the team of dedicated volunteers, **the quarter-mile SAR trail was established in just one day of work.** This is a huge step towards safer outdoor recreation at Thumb Open Space.

Overall, the 2022 Rocky Mountain Facelift projects at Thumb Open Space were a massive success. Thanks to a variety of inter-agency collaborations, access by trail to the Thumb was overhauled for the benefit of hikers, climbers, dog-walkers, athletes with disabilities, and all who choose to recreate at this historic location.

In addition, volunteers at the Facelift event **removed over 200 pounds of trash from around Lily Lake, Big Thompson River walk, and Lake Estes.** The immense power of this team of dedicated volunteers is recognized and appreciated.



September 24th National Public Lands Day: Litter Cleanup at “The Island” Near Highway 34 and Beaver Meadows Visitor Center

Across the street from Rocky Mountain National Park’s Beaver Meadows Visitor Center is a seemingly unremarkable strip of grassland and ponderosa pine. However, this parcel of savannah on the north side of US Highway 34 is owned and managed by Rocky Mountain National Park. Of the millions of visitors who visit RMNP each year, a large majority of them enter through the Beaver Meadows entrance and pass by this “Island” of land. As such, large amounts of litter are collected each year in the shrubs and brambles of “the Island”. On Saturday, September 24th, RMC and RMNP hosted a public volunteer event outside of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. Volunteer coordinator Sarah Corning ran a public sign-up table, where RMNP visitors could sign up to collect trash for 15 minutes (or more!).

In total, **9 participants completed 31.5 hours of litter cleanup** around Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and its adjacent “Island”. Approximately **40 pounds of trash were removed** from the area in total in celebration of our National Public Lands Day.



History, Information, and More

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Volunteer Programs are available to all people of all ages and abilities. These public-facing volunteer events serve to assist Rocky Mountain National Park in a variety of ways, from trail maintenance to trash cleanups to invasive species management and more.

The mission of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy is to support Rocky Mountain National Park through education and philanthropy. The close collaboration with Rocky Mountain National Park's Volunteer Department, led by Sarah Corning and Jordan Downie, is a crucial partnership in supporting the needs and goals of both RMC and Rocky Mountain National Park.

For information about volunteering in Rocky Mountain National Park with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, please visit the RMC website at <https://rmconservancy.org/volunteer/> or contact Director of Stewardship and Policy Ian Stafford at Ian.Stafford@RMConservancy.org.



Special Thanks

Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Volunteer Programs would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions. Thank you!

Sarah Corning and Jordan Downie, Rocky Mountain National Park Volunteer Department

Cat Eaton, Michael Mueldener, Kevin Gaalaas, National Park Service Vegetation

Community Cupboard Food Bank, the [Old Gallery at Allenspark](#)

[Greystone Technology](#)

[Visit Estes Park](#)

Madeline Green, [Estes Valley Land Trust](#)

Zach Zehr, [Estes Park Mountain Shop](#)

Brian Berg, Town of Estes Park



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