

Natural Resources Fund Report

July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014



Conservation Corps Minnesota
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Report purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an accurate accounting of Conservation Corps Minnesota’s expenditures of Natural Resources Fund dollars and subsequent accomplishments for the reporting period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. The report is created for the Department of Natural Resources Commissioner, State Legislature and committees of jurisdiction in the Minnesota House of Representatives and Senate.

Reporting period

While Conservation Corps Minnesota programs operate on a calendar fiscal year, this report correlates with revenue and expenses during the state fiscal year, July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

Governing legislation

On July 1, 2003, Minnesota Conservation Corps transferred operations from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the nonprofit 501(c)(3) Friends of the Minnesota Conservation Corps, which assumed governance responsibility over policies, fiscal management and advancement of Conservation Corps’ mission. The Minnesota State Legislature made the transfer to nonprofit status official through 2003 Session Law, Chapter 128, Article 1, Sec. 35. [84.991]. In addition, the DNR and Conservation Corps entered into a joint powers agreement (CFMS Contract No. A50895) on July 17, 2003. This agreement is renewed every two years, most recently on July 1, 2013.

2.3 Fund Integrity: Conservation Corps Minnesota will utilize Natural Resources Funds only for the purposes for which they were intended. Conservation Corps Minnesota will provide an accurate accounting of expenditures of Natural Resources Funds and project accomplishments annually to the legislature, the Commissioner of Natural Resources, and the House and Senate Committees with jurisdiction over environment and natural resources policy and finance.

Conservation Corps Minnesota overview

Conservation Corps Minnesota traces its roots to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided natural-resource jobs to unemployed young men so they could support their families during the Great Depression. In the 1970s, the federal government launched the summer Youth Conservation Corps and the year-round Young Adult Conservation Corps, continuing the employment of young people in meaningful conservation work. When federal support for conservation corps ended in 1981, the Minnesota Conservation Corps was created by the Minnesota Legislature to offer youth and young adult programs through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In 1999, Friends of the Minnesota Conservation Corps was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization by community supporters and program alumni, and the nonprofit assumed operations of Minnesota Conservation Corps in 2003. In January 2010, Minnesota Conservation Corps changed its legal name to Conservation Corps, dba Conservation Corps Minnesota, to be consistent with the brand we established in 2009 when we launched Conservation Corps Iowa with funding from AmeriCorps and Iowa project partners. Minnesota state appropriations are not used to support the Iowa program.

Each year, more than 500 youth and young adults enroll in Conservation Corps programs. Young adult AmeriCorps members work throughout the state to restore native habitat, improve access to outdoor recreational opportunities, provide community outreach and serve as apprentices with Soil and Water Conservation Districts throughout Minnesota. Young adults also lead youth in Conservation Corps Minnesota’s two programs for high school students: our after-school Youth Outdoors program and residential Summer Youth Corps. All participants receive a stipend and AmeriCorps members receive an education award for college and qualified student loan expenses after completing the service term. These service-learning experiences change young people’s lives and prepare them for natural resource, green industry and community leadership careers.

Mission and initiatives

Conservation Corps Minnesota provides hands-on environmental stewardship and service-learning opportunities to youth and young adults while accomplishing conservation, natural resource management and emergency response work. Our goals are to help young people from diverse backgrounds become more connected to the environment, engaged in conservation, involved in the community and prepared for future employment. Conservation Corps programs devote 20 percent of the service term to technical-skills training, career preparation that includes resume writing and interviewing assistance, and educational activities focused on environmental science and technology.

In 2014, we realized our mission and accomplished our goals through the following initiatives:

AmeriCorps opportunities for young adults, ages 18-25, include non-residential **Field Crews** in northern, central and southern Minnesota that engage young adults in conservation, natural resource management and emergency response work from February to December. **Seasonal Field Crews** work in Superior National Forest (2 crews) and Vermilion State Park (1 crew) building and improving hiking trails, improving timber stands and managing invasive species. **Conservation Corps Specialists** serve a yearlong term in nonprofit and government agencies focused on natural resource management and energy, assisting with community outreach, resource management and technical field work. **Conservation Apprentices** serve at Soil and Water Conservation Districts across Minnesota from May through August, assisting with surveying, monitoring, runoff prevention and landowner outreach.

AmeriCorps young adults are also **Youth Leaders** for two Conservation Corps programs that engage teens, ages 15 to 18, in outdoor service-learning. Our residential **Summer Youth Corps** unplugs teenagers from modern intrusions during two summer sessions, each four weeks long. Youth camp through the region, working in crews of six youth and two AmeriCorps leaders each, restoring natural resources. **Youth Outdoors** engages Twin Cities teens in service-learning 12 hours per week, after-school and Saturdays during the school year. Youth earn a stipend while leading volunteers to revitalize local neighborhoods.

Corps functions

- Public service — Conservation Corps Minnesota serves public agencies and nonprofit organizations for the common good.
- Youth and young adult development — Corps members receive intensive training, preparing them for natural resource, green industry and other related jobs. Developing a strong work and community service ethic is the foundation of the Conservation Corps philosophy.
- Conservation and stewardship — The Corps completes projects that improve our environment, conserve energy and change corps members' lives through a commitment to community service.

2014 participants

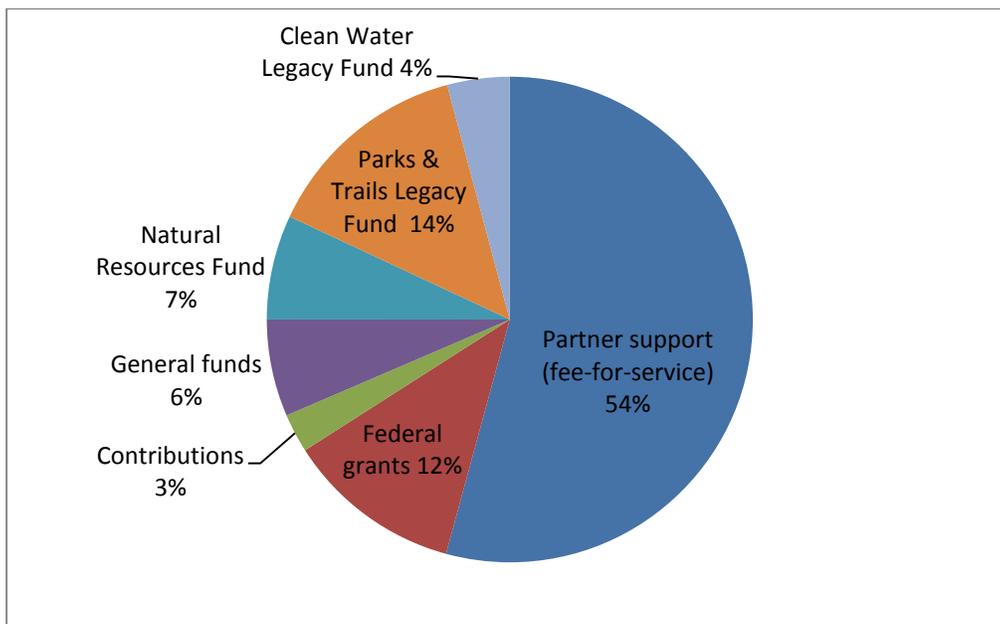
This year, Conservation Corps Minnesota engaged 552 youth and young adults in natural resource and energy conservation projects across Minnesota.

PARTICIPANTS	Summer youth enrollments	135	Youth, 15-18
	Summer youth leaders	30	Young adults, 18-25
	After-school youth enrollments	142	Youth, 15 to 18
	After-school youth leaders	22	Young adults, 18-25
	Year-round field crew members	153	Young adults, 18-25
	Seasonal field crew members	18	Young adults, 18-25
	Year-round single placements	12	Young adults, 18-25
	Seasonal single placements	40	Young adults, 18-25
	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	552	Youth and young adults
STAFF & BOARD	Full-time staff	28	staff
	Part-time and temporary staff	2	staff
	Board of directors	16	directors

Importance of Natural Resources Fund for Conservation Corps Minnesota

In State Fiscal Year 2014, NRF dollars comprised 7 percent of Conservation Corps Minnesota’s budget. The chart below shows the revenue breakout.

Revenue category	Amount
Partner support (fee-for-service)	\$ 3,816,521
Federal grants	\$ 825,030
Contributions	\$ 182,341
General funds	\$ 455,000
Natural Resources Fund	\$ 490,000
Parks & Trails Legacy Fund	\$ 977,116
Clean Water Legacy Fund	\$ 292,176
Total	\$ 7,038,184



Fund management & financial systems

Conservation Corps Minnesota’s financial systems employ clear lines of authority, separation of duties, multiple layers of approval for cash disbursements, oversight by the board of directors finance committee and annual independent audits as part of its fiscal control policies. Annual audits are conducted by Abdo Eick & Meyers LLP, a firm experienced in working with nonprofit organizations. The Corps has received an “unqualified” opinion on all audits, the best opinion a firm can give. In addition, finance staff members participate in trainings sponsored by Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, Nonprofit Assistance Fund, University of St. Thomas and the Corporation for National and Community Service to stay current with changing financial standards.

Conservation Corps Minnesota uses the following procedure to properly account for NRF expenditures:

1. Conservation Corps and the project host discuss and agree on the scope, terms, timing and goals of the project as well as project qualifications under the NRF definition.
2. Conservation Corps and the project host sign a contract that outlines these items and indicates the NRF as the project funding source.
3. Conservation Corps assigns an internal project number to track the project and funding source.
4. Conservation Corps crews complete the project.
5. Conservation Corps tracks the hours used on the project with timesheets and the payroll system. The Corps also tracks work accomplished for each project through a Survey of Accomplished Work reporting system.

REPORT TO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Conservation Corps Minnesota's joint powers agreement with the DNR requires an annual report of NRF expenditures and accomplishments. The 2014 report to the DNR is included in this report.

Use and importance of Natural Resources Fund for Conservation Corps

Conservation Corps Minnesota is an effective investment of state monies for natural resource restoration and conservation. The return on investment includes improvements in water quality, wildlife habitats and public access to outdoor recreation. In addition, young people receive work-skills training from natural resource professionals, as well as civic leadership skills that help prepare them for future jobs.

The NRF impacts the Conservation Corps in a variety of ways:

- NRF projects benefit Minnesota's natural resources and the public's use and enjoyment of those resources.
- NRF projects provide quality corps member experiences; corps members are given the opportunity to work directly with DNR programs and professionals, offering valuable career-shadowing experiences.
- NRF provides a stable source of funding for Conservation Corps programs.

Natural Resources Fund appropriation

Conservation Corps Minnesota's direct appropriation of \$490,000 from NRF dollars shall be from the following accounts and corresponding amounts in each fiscal year for biennium 2014-2015:

- a) **Water Recreation Account: \$175,000**
Expenditures from this account shall be for acquisition, development, maintenance and rehabilitation of sites for public access and boating facilities on public waters; lake and river improvements; development of water access sites within state parks; watercraft safety; exotic species inspections and control.
- b) **All-Terrain Vehicle Account: \$50,000**
Expenditures from this account shall be for development, construction and maintenance of state ATV trails and ATV education and training.
- c) **Snowmobile Account: \$65,000**
Expenditures from this account shall be for construction, maintenance and grooming of snowmobile state trails.
- d) **State Parks Account: \$120,000**
Expenditures from this account shall be for construction, maintenance and natural resource management projects in state parks.
- e) **State Parks/Trails (Lottery in Lieu) Account: \$30,000**
Expenditures from this account shall be for maintenance and operation of state parks and trails.
- f) **Natural Resources Aquatic Invasive Species Account: \$25,000**
Expenditures from this account shall be for management of invasive species.
- g) **Forest Management Investment Account: \$25,000**
Expenditures from this account shall include forest management activities.

Natural Resources Fund expenditure by hours & dollars

	FY14-15 Biennium hour appropriation	FY14 expended hours	FY14-15 Biennium dollar appropriation	FY14 expended dollars
Water recreation	17,558	8,779	\$350,000	\$175,000
All-terrain vehicle	5,199	2,599.5	\$100,000	\$50,000
Snowmobile	6,382	3,191	\$130,000	\$65,000
State parks	13,092	6,546	\$240,000	\$120,000
State trails	3,240	1,620	\$60,000	\$30,000
Aquatic invasive species	2,380	120	\$50,000	\$2,520
Forest management	2,526	1,263	\$50,000	\$25,000
TOTAL	50,377	24,118.5	\$980,000	\$467,520

Natural Resources Fund work accomplishments & project partners

The following tables summarize work accomplished and total corps member hours expended per fund.

WATER RECREATION FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Boundary work/signing	214	hours	214
Campsite construction/log shelter	1,200	hours	1,200
Campsite maintenance	15	sites	287
Community outreach	50	hours	50
Construction/carpentry	120	hours	120
Debris removal/litter pick up	3,090	pounds	371
DNR water recreation specialist management	1,652	hours	1,652
Environmental education	967	people	56
Exotic/invasive species management	53	acres	1,164
General building & grounds maintenance	64	hours	64
Public access maintenance	590	hours	590
Rain garden installation/maintenance	261,360	sq. feet	230
Recreation area facility maintenance	190	hours	190
Restoration area maintenance	60,000	sq. feet	61
River obstruction removal	13	miles	200
Technical skills training	837	hours	837
Trail access construction & maintenance	5	miles	451
Tree removal	1,005	trees	473
Vegetation removal	76	acres	1,185
TOTAL HOURS			9,395

Water recreation hour breakdown	
NRF hour allocation	8,779
Corps pro-bono hours	615
Total hours	9,395

Project host	% of water rec funds
MN DNR Parks and Trails	81%
MN DNR Fish & Wildlife	11%
Superior National Forest	5%
Rainy Lake Sportsfishing Club	3%

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
ATV/OHV trail construction	4,073	feet	260
ATV/OHV trail maintenance	56	miles	1,698
Erosion control/slope stabilization	5,400	sq. feet	80
General building & grounds maintenance	14	hours	14
GIS/GPS mapping	40	hours	40
Technical skills training – ATV operation	451	hours	451
Tree removal	154	trees	234
TOTAL HOURS			2,777

All-terrain vehicle hour breakdown	
NRF hour allocation	2,599.5
Corps pro-bono hours	177.5
Total hours	2,777

Project host	% of ATV funds
MN DNR Parks and Trails	92%
Itasca County	8%

SNOWMOBILE FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Boundary work/signing	80	hours	80
Construction/carpentry	215	hours	215
General building & grounds maintenance	120	hours	120
General trail work	125	hours	125
Snowmobile trail construction	500	feet	60
Snowmobile trail maintenance	112	miles	2,368
Technical skill training – snowmobile operation	55	hours	55
Tree removal	117	trees	207
Vegetation removal	0.25	acres	25
TOTAL HOURS			3,255

Snowmobile hour breakdown	
NRF hour allocation	3,191
Corps pro-bono hours	64
Total hours	3,255

Project host	% of snow funds
MN DNR Parks and Trails	93%
Three Rivers Park District	6%
Lutsen Trailbreakers	1%

STATE PARKS FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Animal enclosures/fencing	1,150	feet	150
Boundary work/signing	40	hours	40
Campsite maintenance	182	sites	238
Construction/carpentry	210	hours	210
Debris removal/litter pick up	6,400	pounds	229
Dock/pier construction	30	feet	9
Exotic/invasive species management	283	acres	997
General building & grounds maintenance	520	hours	520
Natural resource area maintenance	293	hours	293
Non-motorized trail construction	421	feet	367
Non-motorized trail maintenance	26	miles	1,724
Restoration area maintenance	43,560	sq. feet	54
Sandbagging/flood response	110	hours	110
Timber stand improvement/pine release	12	acres	110
Trail structure installation	3,870	feet	1,290
Tree removal	525	trees	1,005
Upland forest restoration	125	hours	125
Vegetation removal	7	acres	147
TOTAL HOURS			7,618

State parks hour breakdown	
NRF hour allocation	6,546
Corps pro-bono hours	1,071
Total hours	7,618

Project host	% of state park funds
MN DNR Parks & Trails	100%

STATE TRAILS FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Boundary work/signing	180	hours	180
Construction/carpentry	250	hours	250
Exotic/invasive species management	15	acres	233
Firebreak construction/maintenance	750	feet	75
General building & grounds maintenance	53	hours	53
General trail work	100	hours	100
Non-motorized trail construction	5,280	feet	50
Non-motorized trail maintenance	9.5	miles	342
Motorized trail maintenance	12.5	miles	570
Trail structure installation	1,040	feet	390
Tree removal	100	trees	153
Vegetation removal	2	acres	61
TOTAL HOURS			2,457

State trails hour break-down	
NRF hour allocation	1,620
Corps pro-bono hours	836
Total hours	2,457

Project host	% of state trails funds
MN DNR parks & trails	100%

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Public access maintenance	120	hours	120
TOTAL HOURS			120

Aquatic invasive species hour breakdown	
NRF hour allocation	1,190
Total hours spent	120
Hour roll-over to FY15	1,070

Project host	% of aquatic funds
MN DNR Parks & Trails	100%

FOREST MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Construction/carpentry	30	hours	30
Environmental education	20	people	30
Exotic/invasive species management	3	acres	95
Planting	700	plants	170
Timber stand improvement/pine release	16	acres	210
Tree removal	1,391	trees	800
Vegetation removal	15	acres	61
TOTAL HOURS			1,396

Forest management investment hour breakdown	
NRF hour allocation	1,263
Corps pro-bono hours	133
Total hours	1,396

Project host	% of forestry funds
MN DNR Forestry	96%
MN DNR Parks & Trails	4%

Board of Directors

Anna Kucera, chair: Marketing & Public Relations Director, Multiple Sclerosis Society, Upper Midwest Chapter

Larry Kramka, first vice chair: Environmental Services Sector Lead, Houston Engineering

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Jill Johnson, secretary: USFS Urban Forester, Conservation Corps alumnus

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Yer Chang: Performance Improvement Specialist, State of Minnesota Dept. of Human Services

Rita Garcia: CEO, Business Partners Plus, Inc.

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Yolanda Lewis: Organizational Leadership Consultant

Shawn R. Murphy: CEO, Tradition Creek

Barbara Sommer: Oral historian, presenter and author

Sofia Troutman: Segment Manager, Skyline Exhibits

John Velin: Former Executive Director for Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources