

# Maryland Conservation Corps



## 2018-2019 Annual Report



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<http://dnr.maryland.gov/Publiclands/Pages/default.aspx>

# Overview and Mission



Managed by the Maryland Park Service since 1984, the Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) provides members with opportunities for personal and professional development and to receive hands-on training in a variety of environmental and natural resource-based careers through a supportive, team-based environment that emphasizes the satisfaction of completing projects that benefit Maryland's natural resources.

The program focuses on three critical areas of conservation work: **environmental and park infrastructure restoration; trail and waterway improvement; and environmental education and interpretation.** MCC members provide critical support to parks as a cost-effective, well-trained, highly motivated, and flexible workforce.



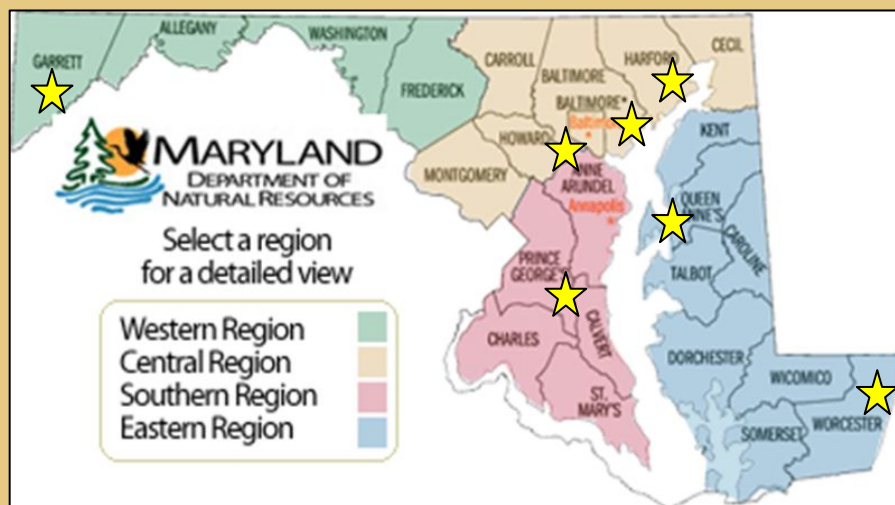
# Program Structure



Statewide, there are **35 members** working in crews of five and hosted in **7 Maryland State Parks**.

Each site has an MCC Crew Leader and MCC Ranger Supervisor, who work with Park Management to develop meaningful conservation projects, provide guidance on daily activities, and mentor members in professional development and public land management best practices.

The MCC Headquarters Staff provides administrative and logistical support, training and troubleshooting, mentoring of Crew Leaders and members, coordination of statewide projects, and management of the AmeriCorps grant.



# Program Goals



## Environmental and Infrastructure Restoration

Members work on landscaping and construction projects, including planting native trees and shrubs, removing invasive species, clearing hazardous trees, installing signs and wayfinding, removing trash and debris, and repairing buildings and infrastructure.



## Waterway and Trail Improvements

Members lay out and construct safe and sustainable trails, and work to manage human impact through the use of trail blazing, fencing, and signage. They assess and remove downed and hazardous trees, build boardwalks, repair eroded areas, restore streams and wetlands, and install living shorelines.

## Environmental Education

Members lead school field trips, campfire programs, guided hikes, and canoe/kayak trips. They also lead nature walks, operate visitor centers, host special events, lead structured park programs and roving interpretive programs, support the Maryland Park Service's Scales & Tales wildlife program, interpret the natural history of Maryland's State Parks, and lead and participate in various outreach programs, festivals, and displays.

# Program Benefits



- Bi-weekly living allowance
- Health care benefits
- Child care assistance (if eligible)
- AmeriCorps Education Award of \$6,095 that may be used toward school tuition, most federally approved student loans, or future education costs for up to seven years
- Low-cost park housing (first-come, first-served)
- Extensive training, professional development, and skill certifications
- Strong mentorship and networking opportunities



# Member Development



MCC provides members with opportunities for professional development in emergency response, landscaping, environmental restoration, construction, and facility management.

## Certifications

- 48-hour First Responder (advanced first aid and CPR)
- 40-hour Wildland Firefighting
- Environmental Education and Interpretation
- Chainsaw Skills and Safety
- Leave No Trace ethics
- Trail maintenance, monitoring, and construction
- Leading canoe trips



## Additional Training

GIS, Search and Rescue, Ropes Course Instructor, Certified Pesticide Applicator, Water Quality Monitoring, Tool Safety, and Welding

# Diverse Participants



The MCC recruits from a diverse candidate pool, building the program's workforce with highly motivated and dedicated individuals. Members draw upon varied backgrounds, education, and life experiences to accomplish program goals and projects. Crew members learn valuable communication, coordination, and collaboration skills as they work together as a team to solve problems, coordinate logistics, and accomplish goals.

After graduating, MCC alumni have advanced into careers with the Maryland Park Service, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Maryland Forest Service, NASA, and a variety of non-profit organizations. Many have gone on to become teachers.



# Program Partnerships



**Maryland Environmental Trust**  
Crews monitored conservation easements and verified compliance with easement conditions.



## **National Aquarium in Baltimore**

Members worked on conservation projects, including tree plantings, shoreline restoration, BioBlitz species counts, and wetland clean-ups.



## **MD DNR Chesapeake and Coastal Services**

Crews worked on restoration projects, including invasive species removal, shoreline and stream restorations, tree plantings, and tree and shrub maintenance.





# Preservation Efforts



Treated **3,935** hemlock trees in Western Maryland to prevent degradation from the hemlock woolly adelgid and treated **175** ash trees for the invasive emerald ash borer.



Removed invasive species from parks across the state.

Planted approximately **30,000** trees and shrubs, bay grasses, and other native plants.



# Park Improvement Projects



MCC Crews improved **2,112** acres of park and public lands, benefiting over one million park visitors and numerous plant and wildlife species.

Members assisted park staff with the ongoing renovation of the historic Election House at Sang Run State Park.



MCC Crews removed over **3,000** lbs of debris and **50** tires, installed gates and fencing at park entrances, created **4** miles of trails, and removed invasive flora to assist with the grand opening of Wolf Den Run State Park.



Members completed **over 100** park recreation and facility improvement projects.



# Trail and Waterway Improvements



**MCC Members maintained 308 miles of trails and waterways** by building, clearing, re-routing, and blazing trails, and by restoring wetlands, creating living shorelines, and improving fish habitat.



Crews helped park staff and volunteers build **4 new backcountry campsites and 2 youth campsites** at the Pogo Memorial Campsite along the Appalachian Trail by South Mountain State Park.



# Disaster Relief



Crews responded to **2** disasters: a tornado that devastated Elk Neck State Park and a powerful storm that brought down hundreds of trees at Gunpowder Falls State Park, providing skilled equipment operators and essential manpower. Often working long hours in harsh conditions, the crews were flexible and mobilized quickly.



# Interpretation and Outreach



MCC Crews provided **Environmental Education** programs to **34,809** students, youth, and park visitors.



MCC members mentored more than **400** under-served youth through the **Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC)**.



# Conservation Jobs Corps



MCC crews worked with **400 Conservation Jobs Corps** members, ages 14-17, for 5 weeks during the summer. MCC Members led projects that consisted of trail work, invasive species removal, bat box and bird box construction, park bulletin board painting, trail sign construction, and the construction and installation of Trash-Free Parks biodegradable bag receptacles.

MCC Members also led Enrichment Days for the Conservation Jobs Corps Members. They taught the members about fishing, canoeing, archery, stream surveys, hiking, and bicycling, reinforcing the many values of outdoor recreation.



# Special Events



## Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Several crews participated in the conSERVE DC: MLK Day of Service at Anacostia Park with the Student Conservation Association. This major volunteer event consisted of picking up trash in the Anacostia River watershed area.



## “Es Mi Parque” Events

Members from the Gunpowder Falls, Merkle, and Susquehanna crews assisted with Es Mi Parque events at Sandy Point State Park and Point Lookout State Park for approximately **700** Latino visitors.

## First Day Hikes

MCC members from all of the crews assisted with and led First Day Hikes at parks across the state for **1,799** participants.



## Easter Egg Hunts

Assateague and Tuckahoe MCC Crews assisted with Easter events for **1,275** participants.



# Program Accomplishments



On July 31, 2019, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources honored 28 graduating members of the 2018-2019 Maryland Conservation Corps.

The ceremony commemorated the members' completion of 10 months (totalling 54,987 hours) of job skills training, conservation work, and stewardship with the Maryland Park Service. The graduation ceremony emphasized the participants' achievements and the values imparted by their work, including leadership, responsibility, and effective teamwork.

*"The program is a great mix of getting things done for others and personal gain. The training and experiences help others by preparing us to serve while we are able to benefit as individuals."*

**MCC Member Sarah Fellerman, Tuckahoe Crew**



*"I didn't anticipate the amount of personal growth I've experienced in over just a 10 month period of time. I've really changed a lot for the better because of MCC."*

**MCC Member Samantha Waby, Assateague Crew**