



2020-2021 Annual Report



Maryland Park Service
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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.



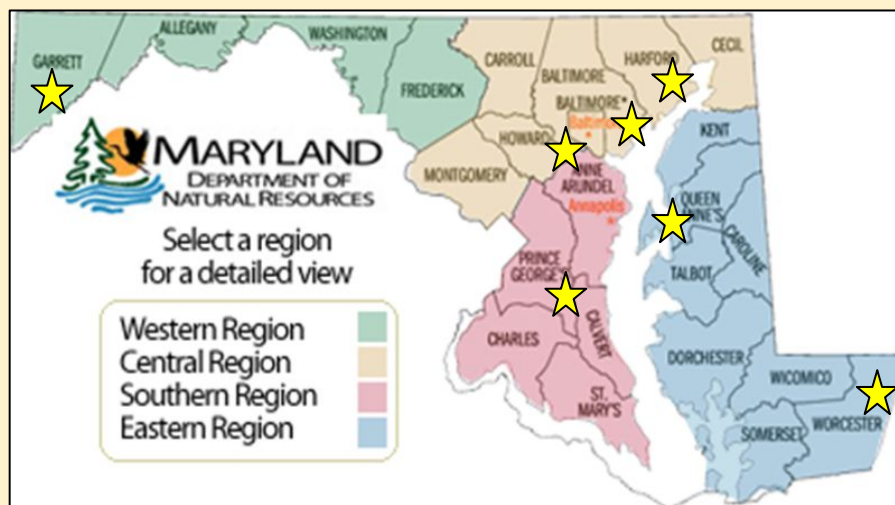
Program Structure



Statewide, there are **35 members** working in crews of five that are 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 \$6,195 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, 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 continue providing a service to their country and community.



Four Pillars of MCC



Trails

- Plan and build trails
- Maintain corridor/tread
- Restore damage/erosion
- Install wayfinding

Interpretation

- Lead hikes
- Conduct interpretive programs
- Develop exhibits
- Develop interpretive signs
- Support Scales & Tales

Conservation

- Plant trees
- Treat forest pests
- Remove invasive species
- Create pollinator habitat
- Maintain water quality practices
- Restore and create habitat

Mission Support

- Lead Conservation Jobs Corps
- Collaborate with Veterans Conservation Corps
- Disaster/storm event response
- Assist with regional projects
- Support wildlife operations
- Support special events



Trails



MCC Members maintained 331.5 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 **new backcountry campsites at the Pogo Memorial Campsite along the Appalachian Trail** by South Mountain State Park.



Conservation



AmeriCorps

Treated **1,840** hemlock trees in Western Maryland to prevent degradation from the hemlock woolly adelgid and treated **205** ash trees for the invasive emerald ash borer.



Removed **424 acres** of invasive species from parks across the state.



Planted approximately **7,050** trees and shrubs, bay grasses, and other native plants.



Interpretation



MCC Crews provided **Environmental Education** programs to **20,363** students, youth, and park visitors.



Mission Support - Regional Projects



MCC Crews improved **2,962** acres of park and public lands, benefiting over one million park visitors and numerous plant and wildlife species.

Members assisted with a **Phragmite Removal project** at Calvert Cliffs State Park.



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



Several MCC Crews worked on a **Dune Preservation Project** at Assateague State Park throughout the year. Members installed experimental dune fencing and planted thousands of grasses.

Mission Support - Conservation Jobs Corps



MCC crews worked with **12 Conservation Jobs Corps leaders** and **21 members** (ages 17-19), for 6 weeks during the summer. MCC Members led projects that consisted of trail work, invasive species removal, tree and pollinator garden plantings, restoration of a hemlock site, playground maintenance, building bat boxes, and building buoy markers for oyster beds.



Mission Support - Veterans Conservation Corps



Cedarville State Forest Trail Improvement Project

MCC crews worked on several projects throughout the year with the Veterans Conservation Corps crew. For several months, the crews worked on the Cedarville Trail Improvement Project, which consisted of an estimated 45 work days, with assistance from 50 staff and members.

Crews constructed and installed **90** signs and **3** bulletin boards, and improved **10** miles of trails.



Mission Support - Veterans Conservation Corps



Wye Island Trail Restoration Project

MCC crews and the Veterans Conservation Corps crew also tackled another major project at Wye Island Natural Resources Management Area. The crews restored a trail by **constructing a 400-foot wooden bogwalk, building 2 puncheons, and cutting a trail reroute.**



Mission Support - Special Events



AmeriCorps



Maryland Park Service Leave No Trace Initiative

Members assisted with the Smokey Bear and Leave No Trace Initiative in State Parks for more than **1,200** park patrons.



Spring Pollinator Festival

The Assateague MCC Crew hosted a Spring Pollinator Festival for park patrons in April. The members planted 50 plants with the public and volunteers and set up drip lines from an irrigation system for the new plants.



Earth Day Events

Members assisted with the several park Earth Day events, including an invasive species removal project at Patapsco Valley State Park with Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford.

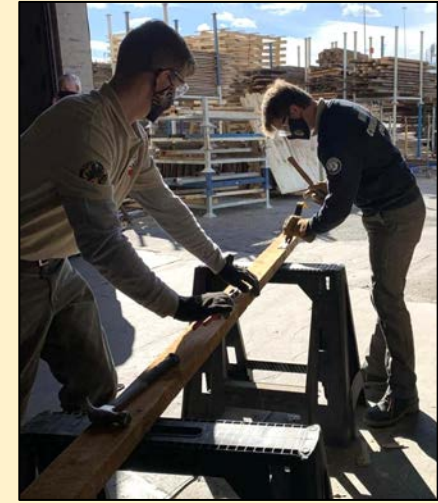


Mission Support - Special Events



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Some crews attended the MLK Day of Service in Baltimore where they assisted in many ways at Second Chance in coordination with CivicWorks. Groups helped organize the warehouse and prep newly received lumber for sale by removing nails.



Other crews hosted trash clean-up days in their parks as MLK Service Day Projects.



First Day Hikes

MCC members from all of the crews assisted with First Day Hikes at parks across the state for hundreds of participants.



Program Partnerships



AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

MCC Members and Veterans Conservation Corps members assisted an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) crew with re-routing a section of trail at Susquehanna State Park that was more than **1/3 mile** long and demolishing and reconstructing **242 feet** of boardwalk decking.

Susquehanna State Park hosted the NCCC crew from March until May for their last quarter of service.



The Nature Conservancy and Maryland Forest Service

Members assisted staff from The Nature Conservancy and Maryland Forest Service with controlled burns to restore health and diversity to natural lands.



Program Partnerships



The National Aquarium
Members assisted The Nature Aquarium Conservation Team with tree and bay grass plantings, shoreline restoration, and wetland clean-ups.



MD Department of Natural Resources Chesapeake and Coastal Services
Crews worked on restoration projects, including invasive species removal, shoreline and stream restorations, tree plantings, and tree and shrub maintenance.



Member Stories



“Happy Trails” - by Emily Baker (Assateague Crew)

“The Pogo Camping area, which is located along the Appalachian Trail, contains campsites for backpackers who have a long journey. As many MCC crews before us, my crew worked on improving some of the campsites this year. While working, we learned some of the history about the area. The Pogo site was dedicated to a young avid hiker who lost his life in a boating accident. Knowing that people stopped at this trail to honor Pogo, I now felt a great urge to leave the site better than we found it so that his legacy can live on for years to come.

The day was filled with trail work and lessons on being responsible campers. We were able to learn about a totally different landscape and we were introduced to a whole new world of critters. After a long day of hiking and hard work, we all sat around the campfire for dinner. It was so nice to be able to mingle with another crew. We all shared camping stories and bonded over our varying MCC experiences. In this moment I was able to truly reflect on the one of a kind year that the Maryland Conservation Corps had given me so far.

I have been fortunate enough to meet so many great people who all share the same love and appreciation for conservation and I have been presented with so many unique experiences that I have been able to grow through. MCC has pushed me to better myself even in the most challenging settings. This is just one of the many reasons why I am so thankful for my time with the Maryland Conservation Corps!”

Member Stories



“The Nature of Conservation” - by Matthew Spiliadis (Susquehanna Crew)

“During my time with the Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC), I learned not only about what work in the park service looks like, but about myself. I found my strengths, and areas in which I can grow. Something about MCC that I found really profound is how “conservation” can hold so many different meanings depending on who you’re working with and what their beliefs are. My understanding of what conservation work looks like has changed since entering the program.

Some hold the understanding of conservation as a means to protect the natural world in order to get more people outside, using parks, nature centers and being involved in conservation efforts as a public health and community aid tool. Others understand conservation differently, with less of an intention to bring people into the parks and natural spaces. Instead, they view it as a means of protecting the land, wildlife and natural resources from the harmful effects of pollution, climate change and deforestation that threaten our planet. Another understanding of conservation holds the natural environment as inherently important and worthy of care.

I have learned to see value in each of these ways of understanding conservation and truly believe that each plays an important role. I appreciate the role I was able to play in each of these forms of conservation while working in MCC and this will continue to stay with me throughout my life.”

Program Accomplishments



AmeriCorps

On August 5, 2021, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources honored 28 graduating members of the 2020-2021 Maryland Conservation Corps.

The ceremony commemorated the members' completion of 10 months (totalling 53,874 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.

"I have learned some crucial fundamental skills throughout my MCC year that will help me in my career."

MCC Member,
Tuckahoe Crew

