

# Report to Minnesota State Legislature on State Appropriations

July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013



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## Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an accurate accounting of Conservation Corps Minnesota’s expenditures of state appropriations and subsequent accomplishments for the time period July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. The report is created for the committees of jurisdiction in the Minnesota House of Representatives and Senate and the State Legislature in general.

## 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. Later, 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 productive 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, the 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 the Minnesota Conservation Corps in 2003.

In January 2010, the 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.

The Corps continues to be a successful, cost-effective organization built on public partnerships. The Corps has diversified its funding sources and continues to produce high-quality work at an affordable rate. Young people who serve in Conservation Corps Minnesota gain valuable job and personal skills that help them build successful careers.

In 2013, more than 550 youth and young adults enrolled in Conservation Corps programs. Young adult AmeriCorps members worked throughout the state to restore native habitats, improve access to outdoor recreational opportunities, install energy conservation systems in homes, provide community outreach and serve as apprentices with Soil and Water Conservation Districts throughout Minnesota. Young adults also led youth in Conservation Corps Minnesota’s two programs for high school students: our afterschool Youth Outdoors program and residential Summer Youth Corps. All participants received a stipend and AmeriCorps members received an education award for college and qualified student loan expenses after completing their service term. These service-learning experiences change young people’s lives and prepare them for natural resource, green industry and community leadership careers.

## Governing legislation

On July 1, 2003, the 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.*

## 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. In 2013, 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. **Conservation Apprentices** serve at Soil and Water Conservation Districts across Minnesota, from May through August, assisting with surveying, monitoring, runoff prevention and landowner outreach. **Conservation Corps Specialists** serve in nonprofit organizations and government agencies focused on natural resource management and energy, assisting with community outreach, resource management, energy conservation practices and technical field work.

AmeriCorps young adults are also **Youth Leaders** for two Conservation Corps programs that engage teens, ages 15 to 18, in outdoor service-learning. Our rural residential **Summer Youth Corps** unplugs teenagers from modern intrusions during two summer sessions, each four weeks long. Youth begin at a rural base camp, then spike camp through the region, working in crews of six youth and two AmeriCorps leaders each, as they restore natural resources. **Youth Outdoors** engages Twin Cities teens in service-learning 12 hours per week, afterschool and Saturdays during the school year and during an eight week summer session. Youth earn a stipend while revitalizing local neighborhoods, leading volunteers and engaging in educational activities.

All Conservation Corps programs devote at least 15 percent of program time to technical-skills training, career-building skills such as resume writing, interviewing and financial management, and educational activities focused on environmental science and technology.

## Corps functions

- Public service — Conservation Corps Minnesota serves public agencies and nonprofit organizations for the common good.
- Youth and young adult development — The Corps provides training and work opportunities to youth and young adults to create positive outcomes for Minnesota communities. 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.

## 2013 Participants

This past year, 564 youth and young adults served with more than 120 project hosts, completing conservation and natural resource projects across Minnesota. Young adult participants, age 18-25, are enrolled in AmeriCorps.

PARTICIPANTS	Summer Youth Corps enrollments	158	Youth, 15-18
	Summer youth leaders	35	Young adults, 18-25
	Youth Outdoors enrollments	138	Youth, 15 to 18
	Youth Outdoors leaders	26	Young adults, 18-25
	Field Crew members	152	Young adults, 18-25
	Home Energy Squad members	8	Young adults, 18-25
	Apprenticeship Academy members	35	Young adults, 18-25
	Conservation Corps year-round single placements	10	Young adults, 18-25
	Summer single placements	2	Young adults, 18-25
	<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>564</b>	
STAFF	Full-time staff	26	staff
	Part-time and temporary staff	1	STAFF
	Board of directors	17	directors
CREW	Youth Outdoors (2 school semesters)	22 crews	6 youth, 2 leaders per crew
OPERATIONS	Summer youth crews (two sessions)	26 crews	6 youth, 2 leaders per crew
	Young adult field crews	33 crews	5 to 6 member crews

## Reporting period

Conservation Corps Minnesota changed its fiscal year to a calendar fiscal year, starting January 2010, replacing the previous July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. However, this report correlates with revenue and expenses during the state fiscal year: July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013.

## Use of State funds

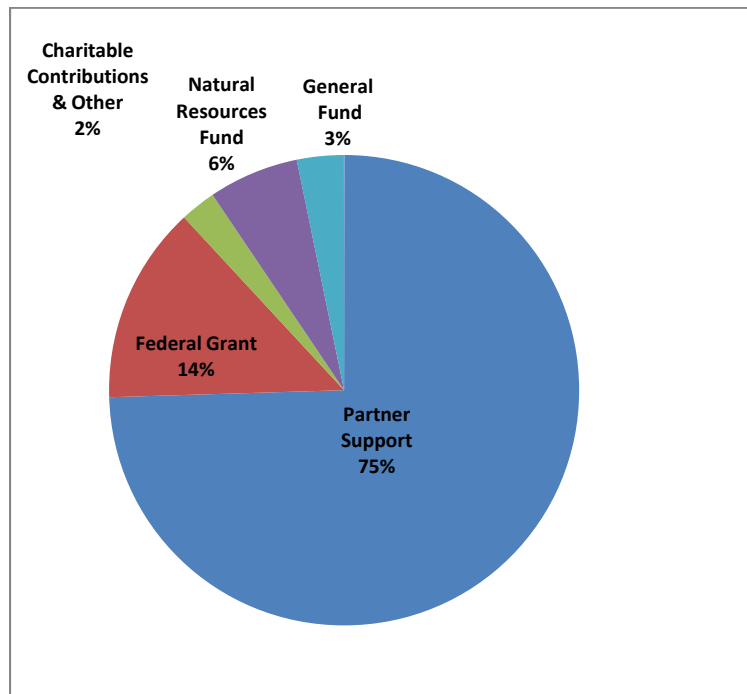
Conservation Corps Minnesota's state appropriation was reduced from \$945,000 per year in the 2010-11 state biennium to \$846,000 in FY 2012 and \$746,000 in FY 2013. The dedicated Natural Resources Funds appropriation of \$490,000 per year was not reduced. However, General Funds were reduced from \$455,000 to \$356,000 in FY 2012 and to \$256,000 in FY 2013. The biennial budget passed during the 2013 legislative session restored Conservation Corps Minnesota's General Funds appropriation to \$455,000 per year for the FY14-15 biennium. The General Fund appropriation in the FY08-09 biennium was \$475,000 per year.

	FY 2012	FY2013
General Funds	\$356,000	\$256,000
Dedicated NR Funds	\$490,000	\$490,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$846,000</b>	<b>\$746,000</b>

### FY 2013 revenue and support

In the State Fiscal Year 2013, Conservation Corps Minnesota generated more than \$5.8 million— 75% of its revenue —from fee-for-service partner support. The chart below shows FY 2013 revenue breakdowns, including previously-received funds that were released from restriction.

Revenue	Unrestricted	Restricted - Released	Total
<b>Partner Support (fee-for-service)</b>	<b>\$ 5,894,245</b>		<b>\$ 5,894,245</b>
<b>Other income</b>	<b>\$4,754</b>		<b>\$4,754</b>
<b>Support</b>			
<b>Federal Grant</b>	<b>\$ 1,073,927</b>		<b>\$ 1,073,927</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	<b>\$160,992</b>	<b>\$29,356</b>	<b>\$190,348</b>
<b>General Fund</b>		<b>\$256,000</b>	<b>\$256,000</b>
<b>Natural Resources Fund</b>		<b>\$490,000</b>	<b>\$490,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$7,909,274</b>



# REPORT TO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Conservation Corps Minnesota's joint power agreement with the DNR requires an annual report that accounts for Conservation Corps Minnesota's Natural Resources Fund expenditures and accomplishments. The 2013 report to the DNR is included in its entirety 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 and energy conservation. 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 Natural Resources Fund(NRF) impacts the Conservation Corps in a variety of ways:

- Projects funded through NRF directly benefit Minnesota's natural resources and the public's use and enjoyment of those resources.
- NRF projects provide quality corpmember experiences, compatible with the Corps mission.
- Corpmembers are given the opportunity to work directly with DNR programs and professionals, offering valuable career-shadowing experiences.
- The funds provide a stable source of funding for Conservation Corps programs.

## Dedicated fund account distribution

Conservation Corps Minnesota was appropriated \$490,000 of Natural Resource Fund dollars each year for biennium 2012-2013. For FY 2013, DNR and Conservation Corps Minnesota agreed to the following dollar distribution:

2.2 Natural Resources Fund Appropriation (per fiscal year). Conservation Corps Minnesota direct appropriation of Natural Resources Funds shall be distributed at the beginning of each fiscal year in the following manner:

- 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 improvement, development of water access sites within state parks, watercraft safety, and exotic species inspections and control.
- b) All-Terrain & Off-Highway Vehicle Account: \$75,000  
Expenditures from this account shall be for development, construction and maintenance of state trails, education and training, and program support and administration.
- c) Snowmobile Trails Account: \$115,000  
Expenditures from this account shall be for the administration, design, construction, maintenance and grooming of snowmobile trails.
- d) State Parks Account: \$125,000  
Expenditures from this account shall be for construction, maintenance and natural resource management projects in state parks.

## Conservation Corps expenditure of Natural Resources Funds by hours

	Biennium total hours	FY12 expended	FY 13 expended
Water Recreation	17,410	7,947	9,463
ATV/OHV Trails	7,511	2,894	4,617
Snowmobile Trails	11,172	5,451	5,721
State Parks	13,858	6,458	7,400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,951</b>	<b>22,750</b>	<b>27,201</b>

## Conservation Corps expenditure of Natural Resources Funds by dollars

	Biennium total \$	FY12 expended	FY13 expended	TOTAL expended
Water Recreation	\$350,000	\$162,838	\$192,741	\$355,579
ATV/OHV Trails	\$150,000	\$61,606	\$89,250	\$150,856
Snowmobile Trails	\$230,000	\$115,495	\$115,187	\$230,682
State Parks	\$250,000	\$117,856	\$133,602	\$251,458
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$980,000</b>	<b>\$454,307</b>	<b>\$524,510</b>	<b>\$988,575</b>

## Work Accomplishments: July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013

Conservation Corps Minnesota used Natural Resources Funds in accordance with the Joint Powers Agreement between the Conservation Corps and DNR. The following table summarizes the work accomplished and total corpsmember hours expended from each dedicated fund.

WATER RECREATION FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS	HOURS
Boundary Work/Signing	30	hours	30
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	51	sites	916
Community Outreach	100	hours	100
Construction/Carpentry	158	hours	158
Data Collection	67	Hours	67
Debris Removal/Litter Pick-up	6,450	pounds	1,013
DNR Water Recreation Specialist Management	1,683	hours	1,683
Environmental Education	1,966	people	152
Invasive Species Management	40	acres	730
Grounds Maintenance	238	hours	238
Natural Resource Area Maintenance	15	hours	15
Other	345	hours	345
Public Access Maintenance	198	hours	198
Public User Surveys	75	surveys	10
River Obstruction Removal	15	miles	312
Seeding	25,300	sq. feet	83
Technical Skills Training	170	hours	170
Tree Removal	1,455	trees	690
Vegetation Removal	9	acres	594
Water Trail Construction/Improvement	11	miles	1,616
Wetland Restoration	343	hours	343
	<b>TOTAL HOURS</b>		<b>9,463</b>

<b>ATV/OHV FUND</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>UNITS</b>	<b>HOURS</b>
ATV/OHV Trail Construction	7,960	feet	310
ATV/OHV Trail Maintenance	127.5	miles	2,587
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	8	sites	10
Construction/Carpentry	165	hours	165
Debris Removal - Litter Pick Up	300	pounds	35
Erosion Control	120	sq. feet	10
General Trail & Grounds Maintenance	271	hours	271
Technical Skills Training	336.5	hours	336.5
Trail Structure Installation	575.5	feet	689.5
Tree Removal	10	trees	100
Vegetation Removal	5	acres	100
<b>TOTAL HOURS</b>			<b>4,617</b>

<b>SNOWMOBILE FUND</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>UNITS</b>	<b>HOURS</b>
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	54	acres	755
General Trail Construction & Maintenance	356	hours	356
Grounds Maintenance	61	hours	61
Other	213	hours	213
Snowmobile Trail Construction	295	feet	166
Snowmobile Trail Improvement/Maintenance	202	miles	2,895
Technical Skills Training	436	hours	436
Tree Removal	862	trees	618
Vegetation Removal	15	acres	220
<b>TOTAL HOURS</b>			<b>5,721</b>

<b>STATE PARKS FUND</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>UNITS</b>	<b>HOURS</b>
Animal Exlosures/Fencing	110	feet	100
Boundary Work/Signing	89.5	hours	89.5
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	82	sites	361
Construction/Carpentry	630	hours	630
Erosion Control	600	sq. feet	40
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	46	acres	1,180.5
Firebreak Construction or Maintenance	12,730	feet	190
Grounds Maintenance	648	hours	648
General Program Work	48	hours	48
Indirect Fire Suppression Project Work	80	hours	80
Non-motorized Trail Construction	2,512	feet	210
Non-motorized Trail Improvement/Maintenance	53	miles	2,628.5
Prescribed Burning	55	acres	50
Recreation Area Facility Maintenance	60	hours	60
Surveying/Data Collection	340	hours	340
Timber Stand Improvement/Pine Release/Pruning	3	acres	160
Tree Removal	231	trees	253
Vegetation Removal	3	acres	270
Animal Exlosures/Fencing	110	feet	100
Boundary Work/Signing	89.5	hours	89.5
<b>TOTAL HOURS</b>			<b>7,400</b>



## Fund management

The Corps uses the following procedure to ensure the Natural Resources Funds are properly spent and accounted for:

1. Project hosts may solicit for the use of the funds through a project request form which can be obtained on the Corps website: [conservationcorps.org/hire-a-field-crew/](http://conservationcorps.org/hire-a-field-crew/)
2. Corps Managers and a potential project host discuss the project to ensure that it qualifies under the NRF definition.
3. The Corps and the project host agree on the scope, terms, timing and goals of the project.
4. The Corps and the project host sign an agreement that outlines these items and indicates the NRF as the project funding source.
5. The Corps assigns an internal project number to track the project and funding source.
6. Crews complete the project.
7. The Corps tracks the hours used on the project with timesheets and the payroll system.
8. The Corps tracks work accomplished for each project through a Survey of Accomplished Work (SAW) reporting system.
9. The Corps provides an annual report to the Legislature and the DNR as required by legislation.

## Use of General Fund dollars

The Minnesota State Legislature appropriated \$356,000 in state general funds to Conservation Corps Minnesota for fiscal year 2012 and \$256,000 for fiscal year 2013. These dollars are essential to Conservation Corps Minnesota's continued operation. Without these general fund dollars, the Corps would not be able to:

**Fund general operating expenses:** General funds have been used to cover front-end costs, including a portion of general operating and administrative expenses. General funds provide base revenue for resources needed to adequately train, equip and support youth and young adults enrolled in Conservation Corps Minnesota programs. We could not operate at our current level without these funds.

**Operate both Summer Youth Corps and Youth Outdoors programs:** Our summer and afterschool youth programs success is well documented, exceeding almost every outcome goal for both programs. The service youth provide in restoring resources and leading community volunteers, and the environmental science and job-skills training they receive is a life-changing experience for almost 300 youth annually. With general fund dollars providing a base level of support, the Summer Youth Corps and Youth Outdoors programs are able to generate additional dollars through project partner and foundation support.

**Help generate fee-for-service work:** Fee-for-service work generates revenue from a variety of project hosts who partner with Conservation Corps Minnesota. General fund dollars provide a base level of support so Conservation Corps programs are in a position to generate fee-for-service contracts, especially with partners such as city and county parks, other local nonprofits and federal agencies. Typically these projects are not covered by dedicated funds or performed in conjunction with other state project hosts.

## Conservation Corps Minnesota contributions to the state

With General Fund dollars as the catalyst, Conservation Corps Minnesota was able to positively impact the lives of 564 youth and young adults last year. Beyond the impact on program participants, Conservation Corps Minnesota improves the quality of life of countless Minnesotans by conserving natural resources and energy.

In 2013, Conservation Corps Minnesota completed more than 400,000 hours of work that improved the environment, our communities and the lives of young people who participate in our programs. Whether maintaining recreational trails, restoring native habitats or leading community volunteers, Conservation Corps service projects are important to the health of Minnesota.

Conservation Corps Minnesota also plays a crucial role in responding to natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes and wildfires. All young adult corps members are "Red Card Certified," which enables them to

respond to calls to suppress wildfires. Conservation Corps Minnesota works closely with the Interagency Fire Center in Grand Rapids, Minn. to dispatch crews effectively and efficiently.

## **Financial management systems**

Conservation Corps Minnesota has taken a proactive stance in developing sound financial management systems and financial integrity. The Corps' financial system continues to employ clear lines of authority, separation of duties, multiple layers of approval for cash disbursements and annual independent audits as part of its fiscal control policies. The Conservation Corps Board of Directors has an active and engaged Finance Committee that oversees fiscal and program operations.

Also, the finance staff has participated in workshops and training, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, Nonprofit Assistance Fund and University of St. Thomas, to stay current with changing financial standards.

Conservation Corps Minnesota uses the accounting services of Abdo, Eick& Meyers LLP, a firm that is experienced in working with nonprofit organizations. Audits have been completed annually each year since 2003 when Corps operations transitioned to an independent nonprofit. The Corps has received an "unqualified" opinion on all audits, which is the best opinion a firm can give.

## **Current board of directors**

Anna Kucera, Chair

Marketing and Public Relations Director — National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Upper Midwest Chapter.

Larry Kramka, First Vice Chair

Environmental Service Sector Lead — Houston Engineering  
Former DNR lands and minerals division director

Christine Goepfert, Second Vice Chair

Midwest Program Manager — National Parks Conservation Association  
Former Board President — African American Action Committee

Jer Jian Koh, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair

Audit Supervisor — Boyum&Barenscheer PLLP  
Holds CPA, CIA and MBA

Barbara Sommer, Secretary

Oral historian, investigator, presenter and author for museums and historical research projects nationwide  
Former Carlton County Historical Society Director

James Cannon

Employment Coach — Twin Cities RISE!  
Board member — Minnesota Second Chance Coalition, AccessAbility Inc. and Take Action Minnesota

Yer Chang

Independent Consultant — University of Minnesota Access to Success Program and other education, diversity and community corrections research and evaluation services

Jennifer Goepfert

District Specialist for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports — Saint Paul Public Schools  
Outdoor Educator — Camp St. Croix, Hudson

Kari Grittner

CPA; Accounting-Business Instructor — Rasmussen College

Jill Johnson

Midwest Urban Forestry Coordinator — U.S. Forest Service

Scott Keefer

Vice President, Policy and Legislative Affairs – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Richard Leopold

Deputy Director – Polk County Conservation Board, Des Moines

Yolanda Lewis

Consultant – organizational leadership and educational advancement for underrepresented students

Shawn R. Murphy

CEO, Tradition Creek, Saint Paul

Former member of DNR Citizen Advisory Committee for Lake Vermilion State Park

Mark Skeie

Founder of Mapping Your Retirement, Inc.

Former 3M department and project manager

Sofia Troutman

Segment Manager –Skyline Exhibits

John Velin

Retired Executive Director – Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources