

Report to Minnesota State Legislature on State Appropriations

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015



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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 corresponding accomplishments for the reporting period. 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, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

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 the 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, 2015.

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 history

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 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.

Conservation Corps 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 15 to 20 percent of service terms to technical-skills training, career preparation that includes resume writing and interviewing assistance, and educational activities focused on environmental science and technology.

Each year, Conservation Corps provides a wide range of service opportunities for more than 550 youth and young adults. **AmeriCorps opportunities for young adults** include non-residential **Field Crews** that engage young adults in year-round conservation, natural resource management and emergency response work throughout the state. Other AmeriCorps members serve in single placement positions at natural resource agencies, community service programs and nonprofit organizations, conducting work in natural resource management, community outreach and energy conservation. During the summer, **Conservation Apprentices** serve at Soil and Water Conservation Districts across Minnesota, assisting with surveying, monitoring, runoff prevention and landowner outreach. Diverse **Faces of Tomorrow** crews serve in Superior National Forest, receiving intensive training and hands-on experience required to be competitive for federal natural resource jobs. AmeriCorps young adults are also **Youth Leaders** for two Conservation Corps programs that engage youth in outdoor service-learning. The residential **Summer Youth Corps** unplugs teenagers from modern intrusions during two summer sessions, each four weeks long. Youth camp at project sites throughout the region, restoring natural resources. **Youth Outdoors** engages at-risk Twin Cities teens in service-learning 12 hours per week, afterschool and Saturdays during the school year and 30-40 hours per week during an eight week summer sessions. Initiatives launched this past summer provide diverse high school students, interested in pursuing college and careers in environmental science fields, with advanced training in natural resource management skills and preparation for college coursework.

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.

Program participants

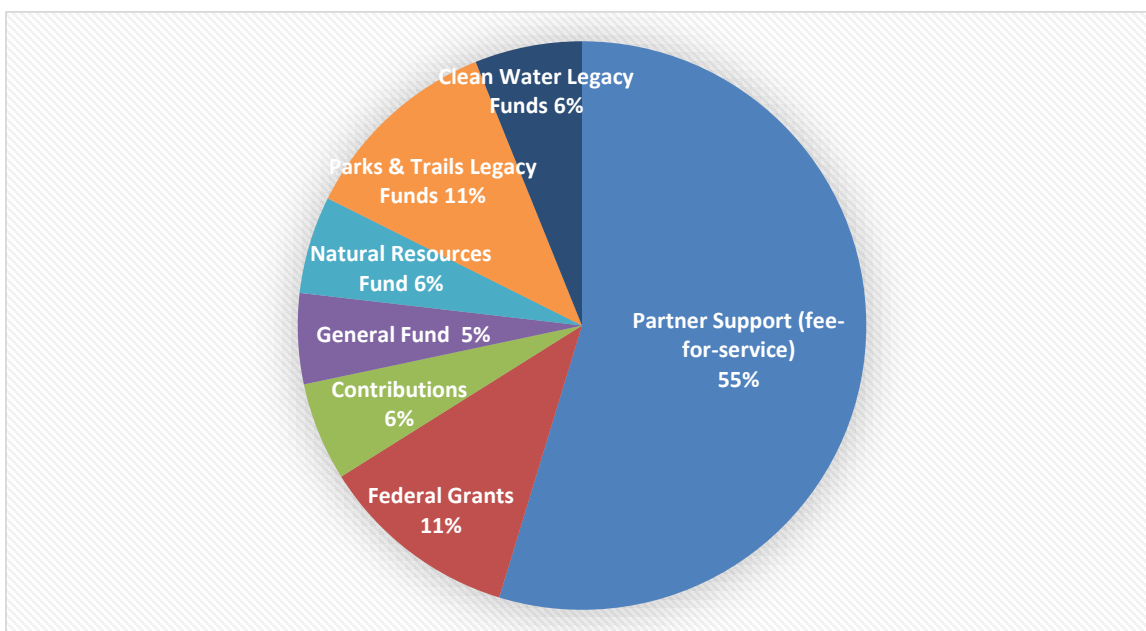
In 2015, Conservation Corps Minnesota engaged over 550 youth and young adults in natural resource and energy conservation projects across Minnesota.

PARTICIPANTS	Summer youth enrollments	146	Youth, 15-18
	Summer youth leaders	32	Young adults, 18-25
	Afterschool youth enrollments	126	Youth, 15 to 18
	Afterschool youth leaders	22	Young adults, 18-25
	Year-round field crew members	163	Young adults, 18-25
	Seasonal field crew members	16	Young adults, 18-25
	Year-round single placements	21	Young adults, 18-25
	Seasonal single placements	30	Young adults, 18-25
	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	556	Youth and young adults
STAFF & BOARD	Full-time staff	33	staff
	Board of directors	13	directors

Importance of Natural Resources Fund for Conservation Corps Minnesota

In State Fiscal Year 2015 NRF dollars comprised 6 percent of Conservation Corps Minnesota’s budget. The chart below shows the revenue breakout.

Revenue	Total
Partner Support (fee-for-service)	4,829,420
Federal Grants	1,004,414
Charitable Contributions & Other	494,112
General Fund	455,000
Natural Resources Fund	490,000
Parks & Trails Legacy Funds	1,016,714
Clean Water Legacy Funds	538,543
Total	8,828,203



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 conducted by Abdo Eick & Meyers LLP. 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 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 Natural Resources Fund (NRF) expenditures and accomplishments. The 2015 report to the DNR is included in this report.

Use and importance of Natural Resources Fund for Conservation Corps Minnesota

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, hand-on experience in natural resource management as well as civic leadership skills that help prepare them for future jobs. Natural Resources Funds provide a stable source of funding for Conservation Corps Minnesota programs, enabling the Corps to continue to offer and expand programming to young people.

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 (+\$22,480 carried forward from FY14)**
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	FY15 expended hours	FY14-15 Biennium dollar appropriation	FY15 expended dollars
Water recreation	17,558	8,778	\$350,000	\$175,000
All-terrain vehicle	5,199	2,788	\$100,000	\$50,000
Snowmobile	6,382	3,096	\$130,000	\$65,000
State parks	13,092	6,574	\$240,000	\$120,000
State trails	3,240	1,552	\$60,000	\$30,000
Aquatic invasive species	2,380	2,253	\$50,000	\$47,480
Forest management	2,526	1,285	\$50,000	\$25,000
TOTAL	50,377	26,326	\$980,000	\$512,480

Natural Resources Fund work accomplishments & project partners

The following tables summarize work accomplished per fund:

WATER RECREATION FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
Building & Grounds Maintenance	269	hours
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	90	sites
Carpentry/Construction	481	hours
Debris Removal - Litter/Dump Site	2,050	pounds
Dock/Pier Construction	140	feet
DNR Water Recreation Specialist Management	1,705	hours
Education/Training Provided	48	hours
Environmental Education	68	people
Erosion Control/Slope Stabilization	50,500	sq. feet
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	185	acres
GIS/GPS Mapping/Data Collection	200	hours
Public Access Maintenance	220	hours
Restoration Area Maintenance	43,560	sq. feet
River Obstruction Removal	39	miles
Technical Skills Training	323	hours
Tree Removal	10	trees
Vegetation Removal	66	acres
Water Trail Improvement/Maintenance	17	miles

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
ATV/OHV Trail Construction	2	miles
ATV/OHV Trail Improvement/Maintenance	79	miles
Boundary Work/Signing	54	hours
Building & Grounds Maintenance	61	hours
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	37	sites
Erosion Control/Slope Stabilization	110	sq. feet
Technical Skills Training	335	hours
Trail Structure Installation	171	feet
Tree Removal	80	trees
Vegetation Removal	1	acres

SNOWMOBILE FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
Carpentry/Construction	200	hours
Debris Removal - Litter/Dump Site	7,400	pounds
Natural Resource Area Maintenance	5	hours
Snowmobile Trail Improvement/Maintenance	117	miles
Trail Access Improvement	250	hours
Trail Structure Installation	80	feet
Tree Removal	27	trees
Vegetation Removal	15	acres

STATE PARKS FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
Animal Enclosures/Fencing	230	feet
Boundary Work/Signing	120	hours
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	51	sites
Debris Removal - Litter/Dump Site	15,966	pounds
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	75	acres
Natural Resource Area Maintenance	887	hours
Non-motorized Trail Improvement/Maintenance	35	miles
Planting (Trees/Shrubs/Forbes/Grasses)	24	plants
Prescribed Burning	4	acres
Seeding	400	sq. feet
Trail Structure Installation	44	feet
Tree Removal	576	trees
Vegetation Removal	6	acres

STATE TRAILS FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
Boundary Work/Signing	50	hours
Debris Removal - Litter/Dump Site	50	pounds
Erosion Control/Slope Stabilization	1,200	sq. feet
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	2	acres
Historic Building & Landmark Restoration	17	structures
Non-motorized Trail Construction	1.5	miles
Non-motorized Trail Improvement/Maintenance	59	miles
Restoration Area Maintenance	13	acres
Tree Removal	402	trees
Vegetation Removal	4	acres

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
Boundary Work/Signing	100	hours
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	6	acres
General Invasives Work	320	hours
GIS/GPS Mapping & Data Collection	180	hours
Technical Skills Training	100	hours
Tree & Plant Surveys	847	surveys

FOREST MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT FUND	AMOUNT	UNITS
Campsite Establishment/Maintenance	42	sites
Exotic/Invasive Species Management	2	acres
General Forestry Work	38	hours
Nursery Activities	100	hours
Planting	360	trees
Timber Stand Improvement/Pine Release/Pruning	33	acres
Tree Removal	1,271	trees
Vegetation Removal	3	acres
Wildlife Structure Installation	15	structures

Board of Directors

Anna Kucera, *chair* - Executive Director, Minnesota Spay Neuter Assistance Program

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

Christine Goepfert, *second vice chair* – Upper Midwest Program Manager, National Parks Conservation Association

Jill Johnson, *secretary* - Urban Forester, Conservation Corps alumnus

Kari Grittner, *treasurer* - Accounting/Business Instructor, Rasmussen College

Andrew Arlt - Environmental Science & Biology Teacher, VOA High School, Minneapolis

Rita Garcia - CEO, Business Partners Plus, Inc.

Jennifer Goepfert - District Specialist for Positive Behavior Interventions, Saint Paul Public Schools

Scott Keefer - Vice President, Policy and Legislative Affairs, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Richard Leopold - Director, Polk County Conservation Board, Iowa

Yolanda Lewis – Consultant, organizational leadership and educational advancement for underrepresented students

Sofia Troutman - Segment Manager, Skyline Exhibits

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