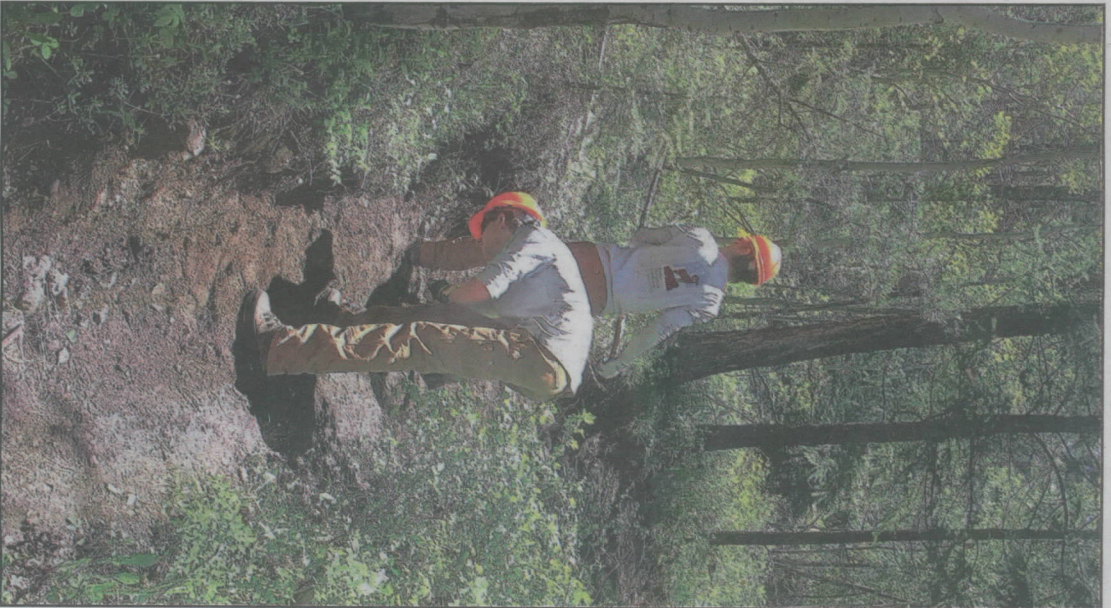


**By Geoff Elliot, Conservation Corps manager
Special to the Trail-Gazette**

This past May, Rocky Mountain Conservancy proudly sent thirty-six conservation corps interns out into the field for an eleven-week internship as part of the Conservancy's Conservation Corps Program.

Split across six crews, these Conservation Corps interns work with the National Park Service in Rocky Mountain National Park and the USDA Forest Service in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest to protect these public lands against ecological damage and provide safe and sustainable recreational experiences for visitors and resident of the area. Alongside their work in the field, these students earn internship credits to Colorado State University, participate in educational field classes, and gain valuable experience and networking opportunities with land management agencies.

With half the season behind us, Rocky Mountain Conservancy's crews working in Rocky Mountain National Park have completed maintenance runs on the popular Cub Lake, Emerald Lake, Deer Mountain, Gem Lake, Bierstadt Lake, Finch Lake, and Ute Trails. These maintenance runs insure the trails are safe for visitors to pass by clearing downed logs



Courtesy Photo / Estes Park Trail-Gazette
Volunteers working on the Lion Gulch Trail.

and brush from the path while maintaining the integrity of the trail by digging drainages and building erosion control structures.

Along with the Conservation Corps crews in Rocky Mountain National Park, the Conservancy supports



Courtesy Photo / Estes Park Trail-Gazette
Volunteers working on the St. Vrain Trail.

four crews in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, two of which work in the area around Estes Park. These crews are working diligently with the USDA Forest Service to address areas heavily affected and closed by the floods this past fall. These crews have

successfully opened the Lily Mountain Trail along SH 7 just outside of Estes Park and have been working to open the Lion Gulch, North Fork, and Ceran St.

Vrain Trails throughout the Canyon Lakes and Boulder Ranger Districts. Just last week, all six crews combined forces and assisted with the National Park Service on the Ouzel Falls Bridge Project in the Wild Basin area. After a day of retrieving the old bridge from the river, disposing old cut logs, and preparing materials for construction, the area and the National Park Service was markedly more prepared to move along with the construction of the bridge, which will allow hikers to view the beautiful Ouzel Falls and hike to the scenic Bluebird and Ouzel Lakes.

With another half of the season to go, the Conservation Corps is back in the field excited to maintain, repair, and reopen many more trails and recreational areas for recreational use. If you run into the crews in the field, don't hesitate to check in and see what they are working on. The best part of everyday in the field is the conversations intern have with visitors in the field. To learn more about Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the Conservation Corps Program, please call (970) 586-3262 or visit www.RMConservancy.org.