

# Rocky Mountain Conservancy: Planting kids in public lands

For the Trail-Gazette

In 2016, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy – Conservation Corps looks forward to hosting 36 youth serving on six crews in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests.

These crews will tackle projects related to flood recovery, wilderness access, riparian restoration, off-highway vehicle trail use, and historic preservation – all to help protect and ensure access to these popular public lands.

In Rocky Mountain National Park, the Corps will support two crews. Similar to previous



Photos courtesy of Rocky Mountain Conservancy

years, one will work on the east side of the park with the trails and resource management teams. Along with main-

taining popular trails, they also will help mitigate future damage to the riparian zone surrounding Lily Lake as well as

rehabilitate the popular Bierstadt Lake Trail in the Bear Lake corridor. Beyond trails, they will be working with park resource management staff to restore habitat by removing invasive plant species and replanting native plants in heavily trafficked areas.

In addition to this, the Conservancy will host a crew on the west side of RMNP, assisting with historic preservation work in the Kawuneeche Valley. Connecting with the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the park, this crew will be completing restoration work on an old CCC Mess Hall at Lake Irene along

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Trail Ridge Road. They also will be working to rehabilitate and improve access to a historic structure in Timber Creek Campground. The Conservancy is excited to support the preservation of the park's rich cultural resources.

Beyond the boundaries of Rocky Mountain National Park, the Conservancy supports four crews in the Boulder, Canyon Lakes, and Sulphur Ranger Districts in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. North of Estes Park, in the Canyon Lakes Ranger District, the Conservancy will have crews working in the remote Rawah Wilderness Area maintaining more than 75 miles of non-motorized trails. Additionally, the crews will be working in the Red Feather Lakes, Poudre Canyon, and Big Thompson River area restoring access and

repairing flood-damaged trails, including the North Fork and Lions Gulch Trails just outside Estes Park.

South of Estes Park, in the Boulder Ranger District, one crew will similarly work to rehabilitate trails in the aftermath of the 2013 flood in the heavily trafficked areas west of Boulder, most of which fall within the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area. Due to the high traffic in this region, the crew also will be working to mitigate visitor impact on the natural areas through restoration efforts to popular destinations and campsites.

On the west side of the Continental Divide, in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest outside of Granby, a crew will help reconnect sections of the 3,100 mile Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, and reroute popular multi-use

trails to protect sensitive areas. This will involve constructing wetland crossings, including wilderness bridges and turnpikes, to reduce impact on the riparian ecosystem.

These crews work hard to support the National Park Service and U.S.D.A. Forest Service in completing priority projects in the third most-visited National Park and one of the top five most-visited National Forests. By protecting and conserving these public lands, the Corps promotes stewardship and connects visitors with Rocky Mountain National Park and the surrounding National Forests.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy is delighted to be engaged with developing the next generation of conservation leaders and public lands stewards through the Conservation Corps. Not only does

the program get kids into the public lands for public service, the experience facilitates job-skill development, provides young people with leadership training, and offers career development activities for all interns.

In addition to the Conservation Corps, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy provides philanthropic support to the park, creates interpretive products and publications, operates Nature Stores in park visitor centers, offers a membership program and hosts educational classes and adventures through the Field Institute.

To learn more about the Rocky Mountain Conservancy visit [www.RMConservancy.org](http://www.RMConservancy.org). You can also follow the Conservation Corps crews' work in-the-field on our blog: [www.rmconservancyconservationcorps.wordpress.com/](http://www.rmconservancyconservationcorps.wordpress.com/)



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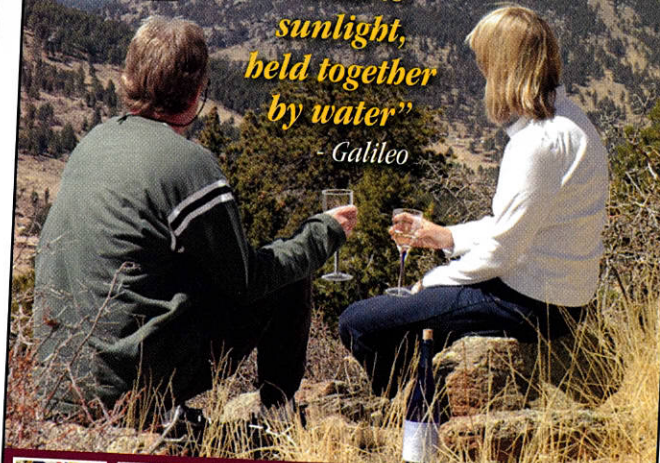
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