

High School Leadership Corps (HSLC) Frequently Asked Questions



Who We Are

Rocky Mountain Conservancy was founded in 1931 as a way to help provide funds and services to Rocky Mountain National Park. In 2003, the Conservancy decided they wanted to have more of a role in stewardship and created the Conservation Corps, with a total of 6 people and 1 crew that season. As the seasons have gone on, RMC decided to start the High School Leadership Corps, a program focused on getting more Colorado youth outdoor skills and experience in conservation fields.



Is this a day camp?

No. The High School Leadership Corps (HSLC) is an immersive 11-day work[DWI] experience. You will be camping, working, and living in Rocky Mountain National Park alongside a crew of 10 other high school aged students from Colorado's Front Range communities. There are two distinct sessions of the HSLC, one from Tuesday, June 17 – Friday, June 27, and one from Tuesday, July 15 – Friday, July 25. Arrival to Estes Park on the first day of each session will be coordinated by an RMC sponsored shuttle to Estes Park from the Front Range area. This will be discussed as participants are selected and crews are assembled.



Is this an overnight summer camp?

No. Although the structure of the High School Leadership Corps program may have similarities to overnight summer camps, the program is a work experience. Crew members complete multiple days of on-the-ground conservation work and are compensated \$400 at the end of the program for their work. The 11-day High School Leadership Corps is adapted from the Conservancy's full-summer Conservation Corps program, with added time for leadership development, discussions surrounding active citizenship, and teamwork.



What do I bring?

Upon selection into the program, crew members will receive a packing list. Crew members are expected to bring sturdy closed-toed shoes, camp clothes, and toiletries. The Conservancy provides rental camping gear for the experience (tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, camp kitchen supplies, and more) and work clothing (work boots, socks, shirts, pants). After the session is complete, students will keep their work clothing. If you are selected for the HSLC, please review the packing list thoroughly before arriving.



What is the day-to-day schedule like?

The day-to-day schedule depends on the activities of the day. On days that the High School Leadership Corps will be completing conservation projects, the day may begin as early as 6:00 AM to ensure the crew can arrive at the work site prepared for a day of work. Workdays are typically 8 hours with sufficient breaks throughout. Legally, HSLC members may complete a maximum of 8 working hours per day. On days focused on enrichment programming (educational training, leadership development, career awareness), the day may begin a little later (7:00-8:00AM) with multiple activities scheduled during the day. For example, crew members may do a hike in the morning and a leadership or public speaking activity in the afternoon. Regardless of the activities of the day, the High School Leadership Corps will cook breakfast and dinner at the campsite and participate in evening debrief activities and discussions. RMC will provide all food and cooking equipment for the program.



Where do we stay?

High School Leadership Corps crews are based out of Glacier Basin Campground in Rocky Mountain National Park for most of the program. This is a front-country campground (vehicle access directly to campsite) with food-storage, restrooms, and trash services onsite. Crews will have at least one opportunity to shower/wash clothes about half-way through the service experience. Additionally, each crew will spend multiple days on a backcountry project, working alongside Poudre Wilderness Volunteers and the Canyon Lakes Ranger District. Sites will vary for these projects, but generally rule of thumb is several miles away from the crew vehicles and out of service at a designated backcountry camp site.





What amenities are provided at the campground?

Glacier Basin has a fire ring, picnic tables, pit toilets, trash services, potable water, and generally phone service depending on provider. Crews have access to showers and laundry off-site and will be able to use them at least once during the experience.



What is the “backcountry experience” of the HSLC?

For 4 days and 3 nights of the High School Leadership Corps, the crew will participate in a backcountry work “hitch” located in the Poudre Valley Wilderness. The crew will learn backcountry skills and etiquette, such as packing, making food, and Leave No Trace principles. The crew will also work with the Poudre Valley Wilderness Volunteers during this time, maintaining and constructing trails/bridges.



How is food provided?

Food is provided by the Conservancy. High School Leadership Corps crews share cooking and meal preparation responsibilities. Over the course of the High School Leadership Corps members assigned to meal preparation will work with staff field coordinators to prepare food each day. The Conservancy purchases breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack foods for the crew. Dietary restrictions are considered during meal planning and purchasing (vegan/vegetarian, allergies, etc.). In the event of stricter dietary restrictions, members may be asked to bring their own snacks for the duration of the program, but dietary restrictions will be taken into consideration when meal planning.



Will we encounter wildlife?

Wildlife is common in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Poudre Valley Wilderness. High School Leadership Corps crews often see elk, deer, squirrels, and a variety of birds at their camp and work sites. Crews may also see bears, coyotes, bobcats, moose, and other less commonly viewed wildlife. The Conservancy provides seasonal staff and High School Leadership Corps crews with appropriate safety training to understand how safest to view wildlife and the appropriate gear to ensure food storage mitigates wildlife interaction with human food.



Will we have access to cell phone service?

In Rocky Mountain National Park, Poudre Valley Wilderness, and surrounding public land sites, cell-phone service is often unreliable. Some carriers/phones can access service from the campground, but it is extremely limited. During travel to/from work sites or enrichment activities, the crew often has periods of cell-phone service. The Conservancy encourages crew members to use these opportunities to connect with friends/families and share photos of the experience. Cell-phone use is prohibited during work projects and activities, except for capturing photos.



Who supervises the HSLC?

The High School Leadership Corps is led by the Conservancy’s High School Field Coordinator (HSFC) and Program Lead (HSPL), seasonal staff members hired for the sole purpose of designing, managing, and leading the program. Both of these staff members have years of experience working outdoors with children of all ages and must pass NSOPW, state, and federal criminal history checks before hiring. They are also supported by a variety of Conservancy and Park Service staff members.



How is the HSLC supported during their work?

As noted, the High School Leadership Corps is led by the High School Field Coordinator who will be with the HSLC crew throughout the program (24/7). In addition, the crews work closely with project partners (National Park Service, US Forest Service, other non-profits) to complete hands-on service projects. Throughout this work, Field Coordinators have access to satellite communication devices (SPOT device) for emergency communication. Project partners also carry agency radios, which can communicate with the Conservancy.

If you have any additional questions, please reach out to Dani Woods, Field Manager at dani.woods@rmconservancy.org

