



# the greenway

## THE Majestic Mojave

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PHOTO: RAFEED HUSSAIN

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# SCA Names Lidia Soto-Harmon CEO



**THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION** is pleased to welcome Lidia Soto-Harmon as president and chief executive officer. Prior to joining the SCA, Soto-Harmon served as chief executive officer for the regional council for Girl Scouts Nation's Capital.

During her 18-year tenure at the Girl Scouts Council, she also served as Chief Operating Officer for six years. She was directly responsible for building a compelling strategy to successfully expand access for girls across the region, transforming program experiences in the outdoors, and engaging communities to support and expand youth opportunities.

"Lidia is a dynamic leader who is well-prepared to pilot the SCA through the exciting opportunities ahead," said SCA Board of Directors Chairwoman Gail Carmody. "The SCA

is in good hands as we work to expand our urban community programming and bolster our recruiting to engage more young people of color."

As the largest provider of hands-on environmental conservation programs for youth and adults, the SCA is hard at work developing the next generation of conservation leaders by building equitable access to nature, providing green job opportunities to young people and teaching its members how to become environmental stewards.

"It is imperative that we use all of our collective resources to make the world a better place," Soto-Harmon said.

"We know that youth who are motivated and committed to the environment will be important catalysts for change and advocates for environmental justice."

# Earth Day with the SCA

AT THE SCA, EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY. And this past Earth Month, we partnered with supporters old and new to protect the planet.

Fittingly, SCA Founder Liz Putnam's birthday falls in April. The SCA Board of Directors officially proclaimed April 'Liz Putnam Month' in honor of her 90th birthday, her service and her dedication to youth and the environment.

"The SCA started so we all can help our country by protecting this land for the future," Putnam said. "That's what excites me about the SCA—it benefits all who are involved."

In the spirit of togetherness, the SCA hosted multiple Earth Day events across the country throughout the month. Here's a roundup of some of the work we did as a unified force for good.



## WASHINGTON, D.C.

The SCA's Urban Green program in Washington, D.C., hosted volunteers who lent a hand with wetland planting, invasive species removal and trash pickup at Four Mile Run Park in Alexandria, Va.



## DALLAS, TEXAS

The SCA partnered with Southwest Airlines and the Friends of Bachman Lake Park, where volunteers were able to spread 30 cubic yards of mulch, pick up 618 pounds of trash and debris, and create wildflower seed balls for participants to take home and spread in their backyards.



## WHITING, IND.

With support from bp America, the SCA's Urban Green program in Northwest Indiana hosted a service day for tree planting and learning about the importance of green spaces in the community.



## OAKLAND, CALIF.

In partnership with Blue Shield of California, the Arbor Day Foundation and the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation, the SCA hosted alumni and guests to plant 40 trees in honor of Earth Month at Columbian Gardens Park.



## ATLANTA, GA.

Volunteers from U.S. Bank worked alongside SCA's Urban Green staff, alums and their families to help prepare a community garden in Atlanta for the spring season. Volunteers pitched in with planting seeds, compost dressing, watering, mulching and building wooden benches at the Wylde Center.



## EAST CHICAGO, IND.

With additional support from bp America, the SCA's Urban Green program in Northwest Indiana also hosted an Arbor Day celebration complete with tree planting in East Chicago, Indiana.

# THE Majestic Mojave

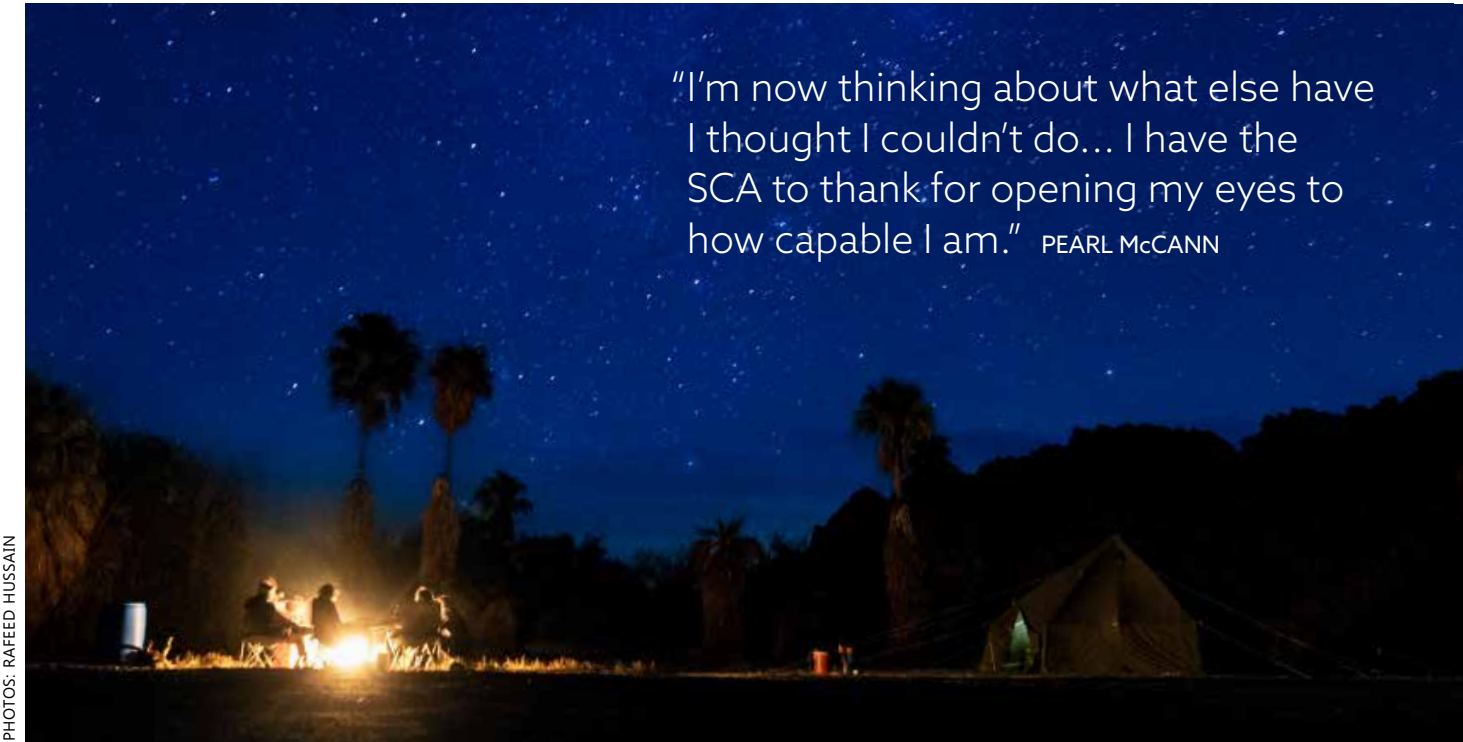
FOR THE LAST DECADE, MEMBERS OF THE SCA DESERT RESTORATION CORPS HAVE MONITORED, PRESERVED AND REPAIRED FRAGILE HABITAT AT THE MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

The Desert Restoration Corps is one of the SCA's most challenging programs. Small crews live and work in extremely remote locations and quickly become a tight-knit community.

Environmental conditions can be harsh, and the projects are physically and mentally challenging, resulting in an unforgettable conservation adventure that will test their very limits.

"The best part of working with the service crew was the effect it had on my self-esteem," crew member Pearl McCann said while helping prep chicken kabobs skewers for the evening meal at the campfire. "The SCA has built my confidence ... particularly as a woman who never saw myself on an equal playing field physically. I feel differently about myself and my capabilities because I hadn't tested myself [until now]."





"I'm now thinking about what else have I thought I couldn't do... I have the SCA to thank for opening my eyes to how capable I am." PEARL McCANN

PHOTOS: RAFEED HUSSAIN

With financial assistance from REI outdoor outfitters and the National Park Foundation, the SCA was able to help restore and protect much-needed sections of the Preserve this winter.

"I'm chainsaw certified—never saw that coming. I'm now thinking about what else have I thought I couldn't do," said McCann, 27, of Pittsburgh. "I have the SCA to thank for opening my eyes to how capable I am."

The crew of four worked along the historic Mojave Road to reverse damage from unauthorized Off-Highway Vehicle use. This iconic road traverses throughout the Preserve and has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. To assist with the project, the crew led 24 volunteers who helped remove 4,000 feet of tire tracks using specialized restoration techniques.

Because of the dry and arid nature of desert climates, Off-Highway Vehicles use tramples plants, increases erosion, damages the soil and creates an environment where invasive species thrive. To prevent future illegal road use, the crew also placed long-lasting carsonite signs and metal T-posts along the impacted areas.

In addition to the roadwork, the Mojave crew welcomed and educated park guests at visitor centers while roving around the park. The crew also assisted with repairing ramps at "game guzzlers," protected watering holes, to make it easier for animals, such as the endangered tortoise or coyotes, to get in and out of.

"It's so wonderful to be able to do something that I can instantly see making something better," said Sarah Philips while taking in the splendor of Soda Lake, a large inland lake (now dry) that is part of what remains of the ancient Ice Age Lake Mojave. "I could physically feel what I was doing, and then I could look at it and go, 'Wow,' now a desert tortoise isn't going to get stuck trying to drink water."

Prior to joining the crew in the desert, Philips, 21, of Oakland, said she didn't quite know what to expect.

"I was really nervous coming into it ... but everyone I have met has been wonderful. We grew together and created loving memories I will take with me," Philips said. "I will continue my work outdoors with a new understanding of the conservation world and will forever appreciate my time in the Mojave with the SCA."

Together, they improved 250 acres of land and 2,210 feet of shoreline across the Preserve while interacting with more than 50 visitors and collecting 358 data points, including finding 270 cultural artifacts such as rock flakes, charcoal, animal bones and an indigenous people's obsidian half-leaf point.

"This was my first work experience after I graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in wildlife biology and a minor in ecosystem restoration. All this gave me valuable insight into the career that I am starting," said Matthew Bell, 22, of Germantown, Wisconsin. "The best part of this experience is the people I am working with—the other crew members, the project leader, the volunteers in the park, local wildlife biologists and staff cookouts. The camaraderie at the park is by far the best."



on conservation service projects, including improving trails, removing invasive species and improving community gardens.

“All of us at KeyBank are committed to partnering with organizations dedicated to improving the lives of those we serve,” said Carla Frost, KeyBank’s Western Pennsylvania Corporate Responsibility Officer. “The hands-on experience SCA programming provides young people prioritizes care for our environment and strengthens participants’ life skills that are crucial to their success in school, careers and the communities where they live. We are excited to partner with the SCA in their work to develop the next generation of leaders to help make the Greater Pittsburgh area an even better place to live and visit.”

In Cleveland, SCA programming centers around team-based projects designed to introduce participants to conservation work in the outdoors while learning valuable interpersonal and work skills. Crew members will work alongside land managers from Cleveland Metroparks on much-needed service projects to improve and protect natural areas within the region.

“At KeyBank we are dedicated to building stronger communities and improving the lives of our neighbors,” said Kelly Lamirand, KeyBank’s Cleveland Market President and Commercial Sales Leader. “We are thrilled to support the Student Conservation Association, creating jobs for the young people in our hometown market. The efforts of SCA closely align with our values and we look forward to working together to improve the landscape of Northeast Ohio.”

Last year, the SCA engaged more than 2,000 youth and young adults in hands-on environmental conservation programs that collectively provided nearly 1 million hours of service at federal, state, and local parks and natural areas. SCA participants increased the nation’s climate resiliency, reduced wildfire risks, enhanced equity and environmental justice, strengthened urban communities, implemented historic preservation initiatives and retired backlogged maintenance projects.

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT:

# Joining Forces for Good

THE SCA IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE that the KeyBank Foundation will award the organization \$300,000 over two years to help provide green conservation jobs for high school students in Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

This generous support is part of KeyBank’s \$40 billion investment into the communities it serves and demonstrates its ongoing commitment to climate action and environmental justice.

The SCA is the largest provider of hands-on environmental conservation programs for youth and adults. Program participants protect and restore national parks, marine sanctuaries, cultural landmarks and community green spaces at various locations across the country. Through our Urban Green Program, the SCA provides young people with paid green jobs, including in Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

Pittsburgh is home to the SCA’s largest and longest-running program for high schoolers, which provides youth with a 6-week summer job doing hands-on conservation work in city parks and community green spaces. Crew members work



## ANNOUNCING SCA’S

# Million Dollar Challenge

Don’t miss this opportunity to *double* the impact of your support! For a limited time, your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar! Learn more and make your gift today!

Visit [thesca.org/tgw](https://thesca.org/tgw)



## Be Bear Aware: Encounters Increase During Summer

**AMERICAN BLACK BEARS** found in Yosemite National Park have long been of intense interest to park visitors and managers. With anywhere between 300 to 500 black bears at the park, it's important to know what to do in case you see one.

Bear sightings usually increase in early summer when young bears strike out on their own for the first time. Their breeding season also occurs in early summer, leaving many male bears in search of a mate.

Although black bears are naturally cautious animals that normally avoid contact with people for their safety, conflicts between people and bears can happen. Their powerful sense of smell can often lead them to populated areas in search of food. And once bears dine on camper cuisine, they tend to keep coming back for more as they quickly learn to associate humans with food.

Thanks to the generous support from a local donor, SCA interns at Yosemite have been helping manage bear conflicts through education and intervention for more than a decade. With 3.3 million visitors, there's plenty of potential for people to encounter bears.

Recently, SCA member Skyler Flynn took part in nearly 50 bear patrols, including overnight backcountry tours. He kept an eye out for bears at campgrounds, picnic areas, parking lots and mitigated more than 900 violations.

“One of the bears had been raiding picnic areas by coming up to people until they left their food,” Flynn said. “She was easily spooked, but many visitors would not know this. After one incident, I chased her off and instructed the visitors on how to scare a bear away successfully. Education is extremely important.”

Last summer, SCA member Clara Jessup worked as a Human-Bear Management Intern. She wrote nearly 3,000 citations for food storage violations, which can result in a fine of up to \$5,000.

Jessup also assisted in a bear capture, during which she monitored the creature's vital signs, captured blood and hair samples, and affixed a radio collar.

“As more people begin spending time in wild spaces, human-wildlife conflicts have become a growing issue,” she said. “There is no easy solution.”

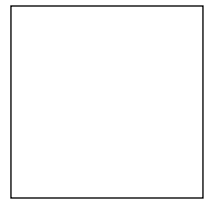
Despite the surge in food mishaps—many of which may be related to less-experienced campers seeking refuge during the pandemic—the SCA-Yosemite Park outreach program has proven successful. In 2022, bear incidents fell 50% compared to the previous year and are down an extraordinary 98% since the park's most problematic year in 1998.



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The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is America's largest and most effective youth conservation service organization. SCA conserves lands and transforms lives by empowering young people of all backgrounds to plan, act, and lead, while they protect and restore our natural and cultural resources. Founded in 1957, SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders.

BOARD CHAIR: Gail Carmody  
PRESIDENT/CEO: Lidia Soto-Harmon  
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# Helping Protect Ancestral Lands

PHOTO: BRIANNA MANCINI FOR THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION



THE SCA RECENTLY PARTNERED with the National Park Foundation to complete a very special service project along the Musconetcong Wild and Scenic River in New Jersey. The SCA, Ramapo Munsee Lunaape Nation, Musconetcong Watershed Association, National Park Foundation and the National Park Service are part of a widespread community collaboration to preserve and protect ancestral land.

The collaboration is helping repair 1.8 miles of trails along the river, creating access to land while carefully preserving the Ramapo Munsee Lunaape Nation's ancestral sites, including ceremonial stone landscapes and sacred land. The Musconetcong Watershed Association also hopes to add Indigenous language to signage in the future.

The SCA crew overseeing this conservation project gained valuable job skills and learned the importance of climate justice and land restoration.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO AND LEARN MORE.



"When I'm on the land, it feels peaceful to me. This is where my ancestors were living, and I just feel honored to be able to come here and clean up and let other people come to see the earth and what we're doing." - MAHALIA GORHAM

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