



# the greenway

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# Message from the President

LIDIA SOTO-HARMON, PRESIDENT AND CEO



**AT THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION**, we celebrate the outdoors year-round. Whether trail building on sunny summer days, planting trees in the spring, caring for sled dogs ahead of the winter season and everything in between, there's a way for all our program participants to make a true difference in the world around them. With generous support from donors like you and our many partners, we can continue our legacy

of inspiring the next generation of conservation leaders while transforming lives at the same time.

Although this time of year may mean having fewer members in the field, staff are getting prepped and ready for another action-packed season of working for the planet. With each passing day, we get closer to spring and can enjoy a little more daylight. As we inch closer to summer, we have lots of good news to share from seasons past and some exciting updates from SCA headquarters.

In this issue, you will learn more about our new Chief Operating Officer and get a peek at our newly redesigned website. Read on for more about the wonderful work happening around the country, which will continue to inspire generations to come. We are grateful for your continued support to help make the work we do possible. Thank you for all you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lidia Soto-Harmon".

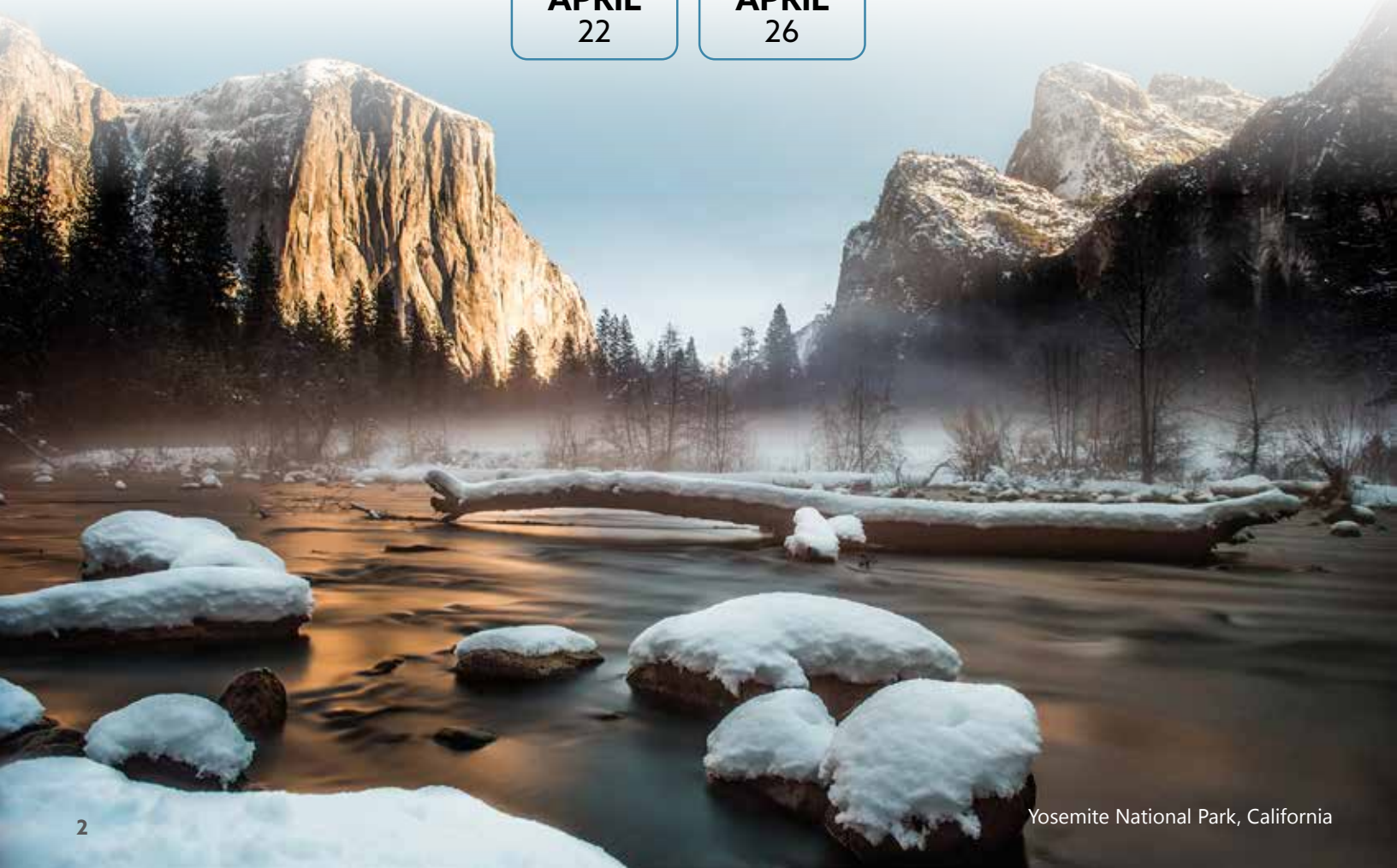
## Save The Date!

**EARTH DAY**

**APRIL  
22**

**ARBOR DAY**

**APRIL  
26**



# Remarkable Restoration

WHETHER TO HELP ENDANGERED WILDLIFE AND PLANT SPECIES or improve trails on public lands, restoration has been a critical focus for many SCA programs and participants over the last several months. The work SCA crew members complete has far-reaching impacts, from assisting park visitors as they navigate trails to removing invasive plants that can harm local ecosystems.



## MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE AND JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

SCA crew members have been working to keep the Mojave majestic by helping to protect and preserve one of its iconic plant species—the Joshua tree. In partnership with the National Park Service, the SCA Joshua Tree Planting and Resiliency Team helped to restore and protect Joshua trees at Mojave National Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park in Kelso, California. The crew planted 246 Joshua trees and removed 1.2 acres of invasive mustard grass.



## PITTSBURGH, PA.

Through support from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, one of the SCA's high school conservation crews in Pittsburgh had the chance to participate in environmental education lessons at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. When not in class, the crew worked with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to complete hands-on learning and service projects, including improving hiking trails, removing invasive species that don't belong and caring for trees at various sites across the city.



## LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area is a 170,000-acre inland peninsula straddling Kentucky and Tennessee. With access to over 300 miles of undeveloped shoreline, 200 miles of paved roads, and 500 miles of trail, the SCA Land Between the Lakes Restoration Corps Team constructed and restored kiosks that deliver pertinent information to guests and associates. The team successfully installed 67 new trail kiosks and removed 25 old ones.



## U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE MICHIGAN ECOLOGICAL SERVICES FIELD OFFICE

The piping plover is an endangered shorebird that nests in three regions in the United States and Canada. The shores of the Great Lakes are home to a small population of roughly 75 to 80 nesting pairs of piping plovers. In East Lansing, Michigan, an SCA Natural Resource Intern is actively working with conservation partners on endangered species habitat improvement projects and surveys to help piping plovers and other threatened wildlife.



# Coming Together To Protect Indiana's Natural Wonders

AS ONE OF THE MOST INDUSTRIALIZED PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, NORTHWEST INDIANA IS NO STRANGER TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS RANGING FROM POOR AIR QUALITY TO CONTAMINATED WATERWAYS. To help preserve and protect the region, the SCA fielded its first community conservation program there in 2016.

Since then, more than 10,000 trees have been planted across the region to increase the urban forest and overall tree canopy. Planting trees and maintaining the tree canopy have lasting benefits, including absorbing pollution, preventing soil erosion, and providing much-needed protection from the blazing sun.

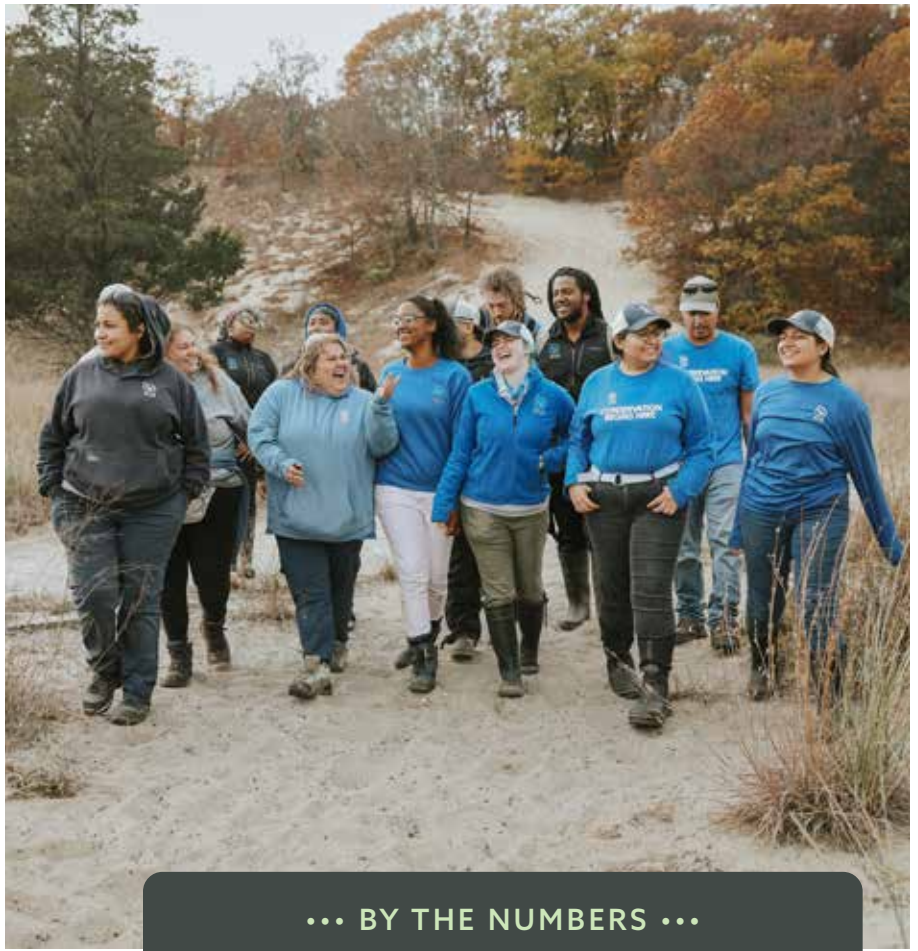
The region also suffers from disproportionately high health concerns, such as high rates of asthma and

diabetes, coupled with high energy costs, a lack of green space and issues with toxic wastewater management. By planting and maintaining trees in the area, the SCA is contributing to lasting improvements in the health and ecosystem made possible by the area's expanding tree canopy.

To increase conservation efforts there, last year, the SCA hired multi-year alum Leo Sawyers as its first Community Program Manager dedicated to the region. "I'm excited to see how we can transform the region. There is a growing need for the work we do," said Sawyers, 29, of Hammond, Indiana. "With the expansion of Urban Green, it's a really great time to be in this space."







The area is also home to Indiana Dunes National Park, where, over time, wind and waves have shaped glacial sands into dunes nearly 250 feet high along nearly 15 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, boasting a rich mosaic of habitats.

“My experience was exciting and rewarding,” said SCA crew member Ian Enriquez. “I find the maintenance of natural habitats, from flora and fauna to mammals, and for this area, reptiles, to be one of importance.”

In partnership with the National Park Foundation and onX, a recreational navigation app company, the Northwest Indiana Dunes Restoration Crew teamed up with the SCA’s Chicago Women’s Conservation Crew and Northwest Indiana Calumet Tree Conservation Corps to work alongside National Park Service Indiana Dunes staff to remove invasive species.

“My time at the dunes was not only productive, but it was fun and refreshing as well. From the majestic oaks that towered above me to the tiny prickly pears that sprinkled the forest ground, I felt very at home and thoroughly enjoyed working outside and spending time with people from different organizations,” said SCA crew member Tarah Shaw. “There were many things for me to learn and study, and I am greatly looking forward to new opportunities in the future as I continue to immerse myself in the field of conservation.”

... BY THE NUMBERS ...

Northwest Indiana Dunes Restoration Crew  
August – December 2023

 **17**  
volunteers

 **136**  
volunteer  
service hours

 **45.75**  
acres of land  
improved

 **23**  
acres of invasive  
species removed

The crews worked at the site for two days, removing as many of the target species as possible. They also went on a group hike to learn about the local ecosystems at the park. With the unwanted invasive species out of the way, the remaining native plants will no longer be crowded and finally have more room to grow.

“Working on the Dunes joint days was an amazing experience. Getting to see what other members in this field do to help take care of our forests was very educational. Just being in the forest alone was enough to make my day,” said SCA crew member Bella Munoz. “Learning about invasive species and how and why we need to either remove or control them was very interesting. Being able to clear areas and knowing that native trees will now be able to grow and thrive there was humbling.”

# SCA Welcomes New COO

THE SCA IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE DR. USHA CHAUDHARY AS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (COO). Dr. Chaudhary joins the SCA from Internews, an international media development non-profit organization where she was the Global COO responsible for its strategic and business transformation. As the SCA's COO, Dr. Chaudhary will play a pivotal role in the organization's growth and operational excellence.

"We are delighted to welcome Usha to the Student Conservation Association for the newly formed role of COO that will connect financial brilliance and operational excellence with the organization's long-term strategy," said Lidia Soto-Harmon, SCA President and CEO. "Her extensive experience and leadership in building high-performing teams will be instrumental in advancing our mission and vision into 2024 and beyond."

Dr. Chaudhary will report directly to SCA President and CEO Lidia Soto-Harmon and will focus on driving the SCA's strategy development, financial management, and operational excellence, accelerating the expansion of the SCA's urban programming and ensuring the organization's long-term sustainability.

Before joining the SCA, Dr. Chaudhary also served as the Chief Transformation Officer of The MITRE Corporation, President and Chief Operating Officer of Kettler, Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer of The Pew Charitable Trusts, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at The Washington Post, and Executive Vice President and



Dr. Usha Chaudhary, SCA COO

Chief Financial Officer at United Way of America. Prior to that, she held several executive positions at Freddie Mac with a focus on strategy, operations and risk management.

"I am thrilled to be joining the SCA, an organization that is making significant contributions to raise environmental awareness among our youth while protecting, preserving, and restoring our natural and cultural resources," Dr. Chaudhary said. "I look forward to partnering with the SCA's capable leadership and management teams to help advance the mission and vision of the organization."

Dr. Chaudhary has served on several for-profit and non-profit Boards, including on the Board of Nathan Associates, an international economic consulting organization. She is a strong advocate for education and supports several charitable organizations geared toward bettering youth through structured enrichment programs. A few of her philanthropic involvements include serving on the Boards of the George Mason Honors College and India International School, a Northern Virginia Indian American education and cultural center.

Dr. Chaudhary holds a Doctor of Business Administration from Drexel University, a Masters in Business Administration from George Washington University and a Bachelor of Arts in English from St. Stephen's College in New Delhi, India. Dr. Chaudhary is also a Certified Public Accountant and was a 2016 Honoree of the Washington Business Journal 2016 Women Who Mean Business.

The SCA is excited to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website. Developed to be more user-friendly, the new website provides visitors with an easier way to learn more about our programs, our partners and how to help grow our impact.

We've streamlined our web pages and created a more responsive interface with faster load times, so whether you are using a desktop, mobile device, or tablet, the information you need is just a click away.

Check It Out!







# HONORING Martin Luther King, Jr.

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., WAS A TIRELESS ADVOCATE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY, WORKING CLASSES AND THE OPPRESSED.** To honor the life and dream of Dr. King, the third Monday of January is a federal holiday designated as the MLK National Day of Service to encourage people to volunteer and give back to their communities.

This year, the SCA partnered with the Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and Casey Trees to host a clean-up event at one of the most biodiverse natural areas in the nation's capital, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. Staff were happy to return to continue conservation efforts made previously by SCA staff and volunteers who planted trees with President Obama and other cabinet members in 2009.

The 2024 event was open to the public and featured special guests, including SCA CEO and President Lidia Soto-Harmon, Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young, The Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens Executive Director Sheena Foster, Casey Trees Director of Education Melinda Peters, National Park

Service NACE Parks Superintendent Tara Morrison and AmeriCorps Director of DEI Nate Benjamin.

The SCA began fielding local community conservation programs in the Washington, D.C., metro area starting in the mid-90s. Since then, more than 2,000 young people from the capital region have built and maintained trails, constructed boardwalks, managed invasive species and completed countless other projects.

Meanwhile, across the country, SCA staff and members joined city leaders and other volunteers to plant 50 trees in the MLK Jr. Legacy Grove behind City Hall in Vallejo, California. The SCA fielded its first community conservation program in the Bay Area in 1977. Since then, hundreds of youth in the region have participated in SCA programs. Participants work to build climate resilience and increase access to outdoor recreation for all Bay Area residents by building trails, planting and caring for trees, restoring habitat, conducting research, and supporting community-level outreach and education initiatives.



## Become an SCA Trail Builder

Becoming a monthly donor is the best way to support our crews year-round as they protect our parks and planet and preserve our future. [thesca.org/trailbuilders](https://thesca.org/trailbuilders)

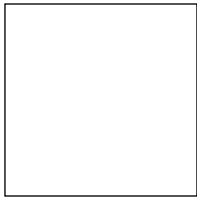




STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

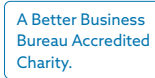
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The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is America's largest and most effective youth conservation service organization. SCA conserves lands and transforms lives by empowering young people of all backgrounds to plan, act, and lead, while they protect 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  
EDITOR: Sarah Hoyer  
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FIND US ON:



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: CJ Goulding

CJ GOULDING SPENT HIS FIRST SCA SUMMER IN 2011 WITH the National Park Service as an energy intern at Yellowstone National Park. During the internship, he worked alongside graduate students performing energy audits on the park's buildings. While spending several summers mentoring youth with the National Park Service Academy Program, Goulding visited several national parks. One of them was Grand Teton National Park, the very park where the SCA got its start.

“Grand Teton is a special place. That fed my curiosity, sense of wanderlust, and the exploratory part of me. There’s a connection to the land that excited me,” said Goulding, 33, of Teaneck, New Jersey. “I love being outside. It allows us to shift from our daily routines, reconnect with nature, and find the space to find who we really are.”

Goulding went on to work for the Children & Nature Network, where he began his journey toward supporting young adult leaders striving to make changes in their communities while creating equitable access to nature. Last year, he founded Boyz N The Wood, a non-profit dedicated to using the outdoors to help Black men restore and reignite the best versions of themselves.

“I don’t think I would have survived the year without this work. I am our intended audience. Everything that we do helps me and gives me an understanding of how to help others,” he said. “The SCA gave me the opportunity to find my purpose and started me on the path to use the outdoors as a canvas for painting my purpose. The SCA helps young people write a chapter in their story. To give people the tools to blaze their trail is invaluable.”

Make your gift today at [thesca.org](https://thesca.org)