



# the greenway

## Built To Last

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# Message from the President

LIDIA SOTO-HARMON, PRESIDENT AND CEO



**THERE IS A PARTICULAR KIND OF REFLECTION THAT FOLLOWS A PERIOD OF REBUILDING.** A moment when we can catch our breath, look at the trail we have cleared and prepare for the miles ahead.

After a period of significant federal funding cuts and the difficult decision-making that followed, the Student Conservation Association is entering its new normal. We have

moved from a season of urgent stabilization into one of careful, intentional forward motion.

Yet even as funding disappeared, our program participants never wavered in their desire to preserve and protect our precious natural resources. These determined young people maintained the backcountry of the Smokies, mitigated fire risks in the Sierras, restored urban canopies in Chicago and more in between. Their persistence, coupled with your help, provided the blueprint for our recovery.

To watch a crew member's face light up when they talk about their service project, to see someone learn a new skill in real time, or to have a program participant come back year after year to

serve is remarkable to witness. Knowing that we have more than 100,000 alumni and counting underscores the need for these vital hands-on opportunities for young people and their inspiring enthusiasm to jump in.

As we look toward the upcoming season, we are prioritizing quality programming to ensure young people have sustainable pathways to careers in conservation that are accessible to all, even in a shifting economic landscape. We are strengthening our ties with long-standing partners such as the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service to make certain our programs remain the premier pipeline for the conservation workforce.

Although we have refined our operations, the critical conservation work that happens in the field requires sustained effort. Because generous supporters like you have stood by us, we were able to protect the core of our mission without compromising the safety or the quality of the crew member experience.

The work ahead is no small feat, and the challenges facing our public lands have never been more complex. Your support sends a clear message: protecting our planet and building the next generation of conservation leaders is not seasonal, it's essential.

Thank you for standing for conservation, and for all the future leaders committed to this space. The trail ahead may be long, but the view has never been clearer.

With gratitude and determination,

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

## On the cover

SCA Urban Green Atlanta  
crew member Alanna Rice

PHOTO: AKILI RAMSESS



# Program Roundup | IMPACT IN ACTION

THIS SEASON, OUR CREWS HAVE BEEN HARD AT WORK from the remote, glacial-fed waters of Alaska to the urban forests of the Midwest and the fire-threatened ridges of the West. The following program updates highlight more than just physical labor. This work represents our continued commitment to climate resilience, professional development, and ensuring that public lands remain accessible and safe for everyone.



## Kenai National Wildlife Refuge: Restoring Historic Routes

This summer, an SCA crew headed to the heart of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula to breathe new life into the iconic Swanson River and Swan Lake canoe systems. Established in the 1960s, these routes are a labyrinth of over 100 miles of waterways connecting 70+ lakes. Our team's efforts significantly improved accessibility for those seeking world-class recreation:

- **13 portage trails** improved for easier transport between lakes
- **40 miles** of waterways cleared of obstructions
- **35 miles** of trail maintained and new boardwalks installed



## Wildland Fire Academy: Meeting The Crisis Head-On

In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, our Wildland Fire Academy participants have become a critical line of defense against the wildfire crisis in the Western U.S. Spanning seven states and nine national forests, the program is proving to be a powerhouse for both conservation and career placement.

- **21,000+ hours** of total service
- **30,000 acres** treated to reduce hazardous fuels
- **73% job placement** rate into professional fire and fuels positions since 2023



## Chicago Urban Green: Cultivating The Next Generation Of Arborists

In 2025, the SCA partnered with Openlands, a local nonprofit dedicated to protecting nature and open spaces across northeastern Illinois, to pilot the Urban Forestry Pre-Apprenticeship program in Chicago. This six-month initiative provided participants with rigorous, hands-on training in tree maintenance and community outreach.

- **Professional Certifications:** Participants earned First Aid/CPR and completed specialized training in tree climbing, pruning, and chainsaw operation.
- **Career Momentum:** Each graduate departs as an Openlands TreeKeeper, with 700 hours already credited toward their Arborist Registered Apprenticeship requirements.



# Preserving The Dream:

## A New Generation Restoring The Landscapes Of Dr. King's Life

IT HAS BEEN NEARLY SIX DECADES since the assassination of Civil Rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr. Today, a four-person historic preservation team has the opportunity to walk in his footsteps through a new partnership with the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park in Atlanta.

With support from the National Park Foundation, the team is helping park rangers restore historic buildings connected to King's life and legacy. The 39-acre park contains the King Center, the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Dr. King's birth home and tomb, and a portion of the surrounding Sweet Auburn neighborhood, including the historic Fire Station No. 6, which was one of Atlanta's first fire stations to integrate in the 1960s. As part of the park's expansion, the Prince Hall Masonic Temple and Lodge, which housed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, will reopen to the public later this year.

"So far, I am loving it. It's really rewarding to see that we can carry his legacy forward. If we set the standard of preservation, in the future, my kids or grandkids can go back to these spaces," said SCA crew member Cameron Jordan, 25. "Opinions are subjective, but facts are not. If we completely erase our history, then we are in danger of repeating it."

Armed with a degree in Kinesiology, Jordan was working at a local gym when he came across the job posting and decided to apply.

"I was born to do something that matters," he said. "For me, it was the opportunity to do something new out of my comfort zone. The park is so special and holds such historic value. It's important for us to know our history so we know how to move forward in the future."

The team is spending their season working on various service projects alongside park service staff, including window restoration and glazing, historic wood repair, brick structure maintenance, painting and basic masonry.

"I feel honored to be a part of such an important part of history and also a living legacy where people can come together and understand the importance of the work we do," said SCA crew leader Andrew Roznowski, 34, of Atlanta. "It's extremely uplifting, and I'm very grateful to be in this moment."

After working in construction throughout the city, Roznowski landed a spot on the production team for HGTV's Married to Real Estate series. Following the show's cancellation last year, he came across an ad for the team.

"I see myself as a worker, and I love to do manual labor, and at the same time, I am very much an artist. I always saw the work as an opportunity to make something beautiful that is available to everyone," he said. "The stories and messages are some of the most powerful things. And the fact that we can

“The park is so special and holds such historic value. It’s important for us to know our history so we know how to move forward in the future.”

CREW MEMBER  
CAMERON JORDAN



not only retell the stories, but we can also help preserve the objects and structures, is transformative and builds a sense of self-confidence.”

The park is one of only a few National Park Service sites in an urban setting. Its unique location and collection of historic buildings tell a story outside of a landscape.

“Preservation is how we ensure that history remains a tangible conversation rather than a fading memory. Welcoming this dedicated SCA crew to the park has been an absolute inspiration for our staff,” said Reginald Chapple, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park & Preservation District Superintendent. “We are not just maintaining resources. We are honoring the living legacy that Dr. King left behind, ensuring that when future generations visit the park, the spirit of the Civil Rights movement remains as resilient as ever.”

The historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Dr. King was baptized, ordained, preached, and delivered many of his sermons and speeches, left an indelible mark on SCA crew member Alanna Rice.

“One thing that struck me was that the church he preached in was also a hub for mutual aid, and I was very touched by that. Now we are preserving that spot in time so people can feel what was felt then,” she said. “I am proud of myself for the work we’re doing and thankful to all of the people who have been teaching me.”

Rice moved from California to Atlanta with a group of friends at the end of last year. The 26-year-old was excited to learn more about historic preservation while working outdoors.

“I never knew a position like this would be accessible to me. There are so many people like me who need someone to take a chance on them and give them the freedom to be great,” Rice said. “It’s been really awesome, and I feel lucky to wrestle with the things I have to think about.”



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park in Atlanta was first established as a National Historic Site by Congress on Oct. 10, 1980. The site was then reestablished as a National Historic Park on Jan. 08, 2018. Park visitors can explore where Dr. King was born, lived, worked, worshipped and is buried. The park receives over 1 million visitors annually.

## Stand For Conservation.

We need your support now more than ever to continue our legacy of building the next generation of conservation leaders. Make a difference today.

**Donate Now!**

[thesca.org/tgwSpring26](https://thesca.org/tgwSpring26)



# 2025 Impact

With your generous support, the SCA could continue providing hands-on opportunities for young people to preserve and protect the planet.



**1,882**

SCA members in 2025

**740**  
Conservation  
Interns

**551**  
Urban Green  
Members

**551**  
Corps & Crew  
Members



**988,638**

total hours of  
conservation service



**1,856**

miles of trail built  
or improved



**353,845**

people received  
education & outreach



**96,861**

acres of land or  
wetland improved



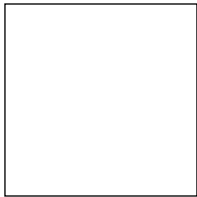
**530**

miles of shore/  
waterway improved



STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, INC.  
 PO Box 830603, Dept. 510  
 Philadelphia, PA 19182-0603

THESCA.ORG  
 thegreenway@thesca.org



The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is the largest provider of hands-on environmental conservation programs for youth and young adults whose lives are transformed while they protect and restore natural and cultural resources across the country. Founded in 1957, the SCA is committed to building the next generation of conservation leaders dedicated to the lifelong protection of the environment and the communities we serve.

BOARD CHAIR: D. Lena Hickman-Miott  
 PRESIDENT/CEO: Lidia Soto-Harmon  
 EDITOR: Sarah Hoyer  
 GRAPHIC DESIGN: Julia Eva Bacon



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ATTENTION ILLINOIS AND OHIO RESIDENTS!

## Save The Date

### Stand for Conservation Community Event

Join the SCA Northwest Indiana Urban Green program to learn more about the work we do in the region, followed by a nature walk at Indiana Dunes National Park.

**May 21, 2026 | 5-7 p.m.**

The Barker House, 444 Barker Road  
 Michigan City, IN 46360

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

