



# Advancing the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps

A REPORT FROM THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION  
2015



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In partnership with



## SUMMARY

The Student Conservation Association has played a crucial role in fulfilling the Department of the Interior (DOI)'s resource management objectives for nearly 60 years.

We are pleased to be a major contributor to the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC), which is putting America's youth and returning veterans to work protecting, restoring and enhancing America's great outdoors. This important initiative is especially resonant to SCA given our own links to the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In addition, we are committed to the principles of DOI's "Play, Learn, Serve, Work" Youth Initiatives, including the overall annual placement of one million volunteers on public lands, and the provision of 100,000 work and training opportunities for young people and veterans on DOI sites and through public-private partnerships.

### IN FISCAL 2015:

- 8,567 individuals—3,960 SCA members and 4,607 local volunteers—served with SCA nationwide, including 1,598 with NPS, 373 with FWS, and 63 with BLM
- These young people rendered 1,304,578 hours of service, including 513,354 hours with NPS, 199,485 with FWS, and 44,247 with BLM
- SCA served 586 natural and cultural resource sites including 246 national parks, 149 wildlife refuges, and 14 BLM sites
- Accomplishments include improving 12.8M feet of trail, surveying or protecting more than 616,000 animals, and educating over 568,000 people about America's public lands and the environment
- SCA membership was evenly split between young men and women; 70% were 18 or older, 30% were 14-17 years of age
- 43% of SCA members self-identified as coming from racially or ethnically diverse backgrounds

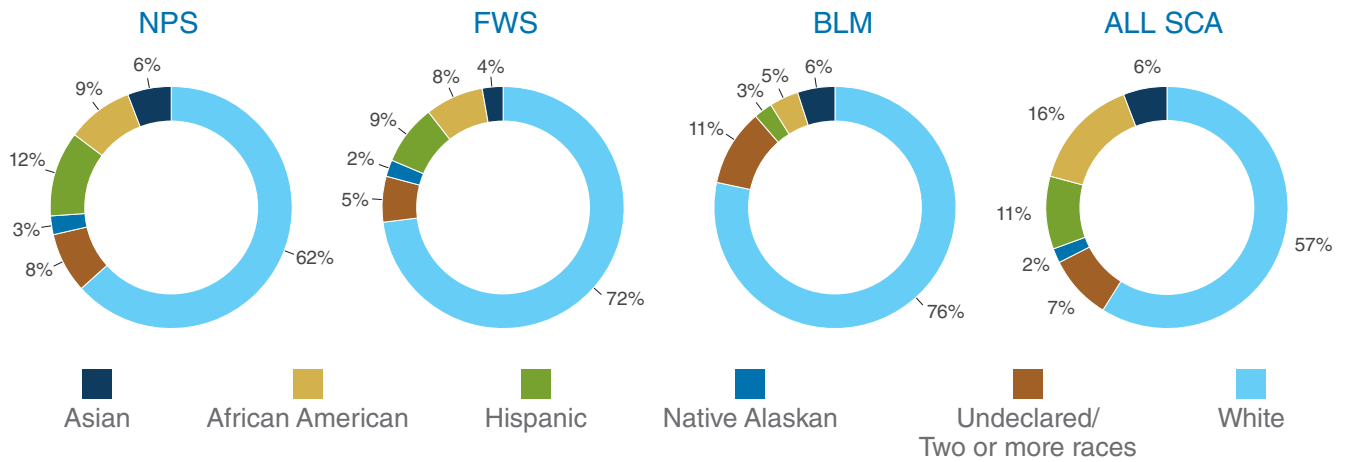
A more detailed presentation on SCA outputs and members may be found in the pages ahead, as well as a series of program capsules and individual profiles.

SCA is grateful to DOI and believes 21CSC demonstrates the effectiveness of our ongoing partnership as, together, we build the next conservation leaders.



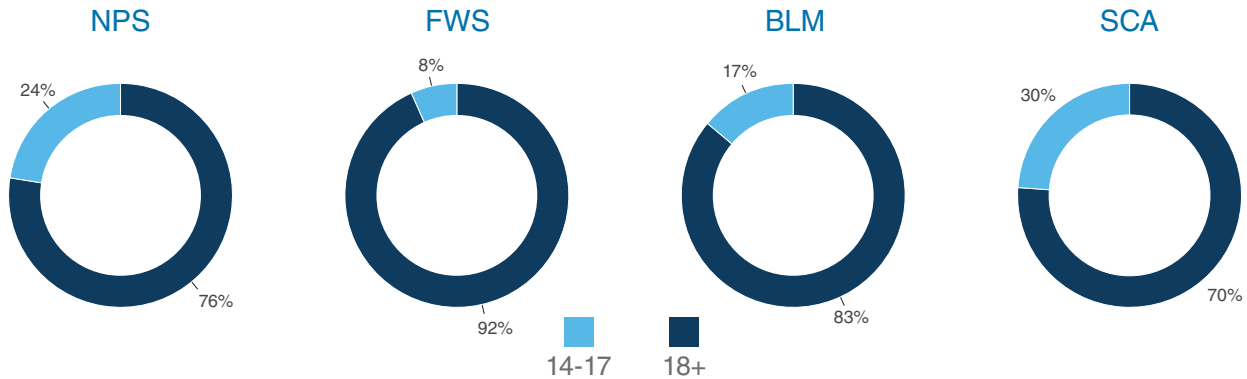
## MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

### Ethnicity\*



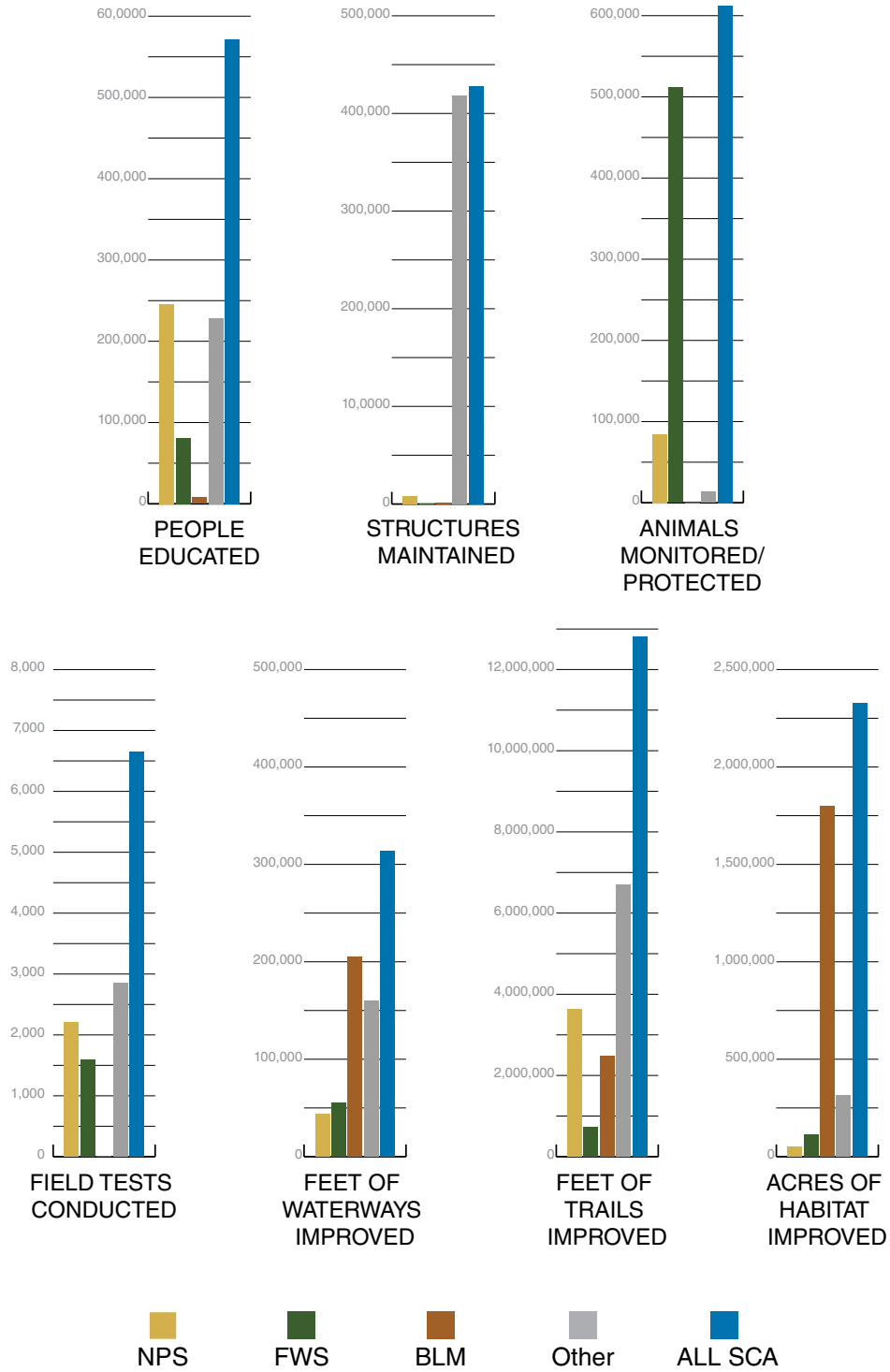
*\*small % chose not to identify*

### Age



# 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SCA Outputs: Oct. 1, 2014 – Sept. 30, 2015



## NATIONAL INITIATIVES

### SCA-NPS ACADEMY

This marked the fifth consecutive year that SCA and the National Park Service collaborated on SCA-NPS Academy, a flagship workforce development program that introduces under-represented college students to national park career opportunities and fosters a younger, more inclusive park workforce. One hundred students from diverse backgrounds participated in spring orientation sessions at Grand Teton NP, Great Smoky Mountains NP, Kenai Fjords NP, and The National Parks of New York Harbor before serving as interpreters, biologists, researchers and more at dozens of national parks across the US.



### CAREER DISCOVERY INTERN PROGRAM

SCA also collaborates with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on workforce development and diversity. The award-winning Career Discovery Intern Program engaged more than 60 racially and ethnically diverse students in a range of hands-on positions, from building urban constituencies at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum in Philadelphia to strengthening Monarch butterfly habitats and awareness along the Monarch's migration route from Dallas to Des Moines.



## CENTENNIAL VOLUNTEER AMBASSADORS

In advance of the National Park Service's 2016 centennial, NPS and SCA fielded 70 interns to increase volunteer engagement at more than 50 national parks. The Centennial Volunteer Ambassadors are focused on building park constituencies and volunteer capacities. A special emphasis is placed on recognized service dates such as Earth Day, National Trails Day, MLK Day and more. Many joined NPS Director Jon Jarvis on The Mall in August for a 99th birthday/Find Your Park celebration conducted in partnership with American Express and SCA.



### SCA Spotlight: Aurelia Casey

*Aurelia's extensive SCA portfolio includes a Hurricane Sandy recovery crew, numerous ConSERVE NYC projects, and this summer she was a Junior Ranger intern at Rock Creek Park as part of SCA's NPS Academy.*

#### ***What made you want to pursue SCA Academy?***

I've been growing with SCA, growing as a woman, and the Academy position seemed the best way to get into urban education. I really enjoy the look on kids' faces when they learn something new or figure out something on their own.

#### ***NPS Academy also aims to bring greater diversity to national park staffs. Why do you want to be part of that?***

When I was a child, my mother would take my brother and me to all types of places but I wouldn't see anyone in top positions that resembled my family. I like that SCA and NPS are doing this because kids of all cultures need to realize they don't need to go down some path their community has pre-set for them.



#### ***That sounds like the very course you're on...***

When I started with SCA, I didn't like getting in the dirt at all. I hadn't heard of the term "invasive species." Now I'm teaching Junior Rangers about the solar system. Who knows? One of them could go on to become an astronaut.

#### ***Does that make you a role model?***

I want children to see me and see themselves. I want that little girl to say to herself "Wow, she looks like me. She has my hair, my skin color, and if she's doing this, I can, too!"

## VETERANS FIRE CORPS

Through one of the most destructive wildfire seasons ever witnessed, more than 30 post-9/11 US military veterans patrolled Western national parks, refuges and forests with the SCA Veterans Fire Corps. Five additional teams are scheduled to deploy in the fall. The Veterans Fire Corps trains former servicemen and woman for careers in wildland fire and forestry. After participating in prescribed fires, fuels reduction, fire effects monitoring and educational outreach, corps members emerge with professional training, experience and credentials.



## COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

SCA this year provided more than 1,200 under-served urban teens with summer jobs and career training through our community conservation crews. In a dozen cities across the country, including Chicago, Houston, Oakland, Seattle, and Washington, DC, these crews empower city teens by enabling them to forge new connections with nature and learn outdoor skills. An effective “feeder” program, community crews are a key component in the SCA program continuum.



## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP

New research indicates that even a single SCA experience has a profound developmental impact on members of our National and Community Crew programs. Studies conducted by Search Institute, an international authority on what youth need to succeed, show that SCA crews strengthen numerous life skills that foster optimal advancement and help teens prosper. Cited non-cognitive competencies include self-awareness, emotional competence, communication, decision-making, and teamwork.



### SCA Spotlight: Sean Johnson-Bice

The Florida Keys are often seen as a paradise. But the islands also present what SCA intern Sean Johnson-Bice calls “a case study for the effects of climate change on endemic species.”

Since last fall, Sean has been performing a range of field research for the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges. Using ten-year old maps, he set out to monitor silver rice rats, an endangered species found only in the Lower Keys. “When I got to where they were supposed to be, I was knee-deep in water,” he states.

To monitor nesting ospreys, Sean’s plan to monitor nests via GoPro cameras attached to helium balloons won state approval. “We couldn’t afford remote-controlled drones,” he shrugs. But if the birds turn out to be a sub-population, Sean’s research could spur more funding to protect them.



“As a field tech, usually someone else takes your data and works it. Here I have opportunity to do the second half of the equation: run GIS analyses, statistical models, synthesize data and write up reports” Sean notes. “We’re contributing to an understanding that will help future generations cope with rising sea levels.”

## EXPANDED VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the nearly 4,000 young people who participated in our service programs this year, SCA engaged another 4,600+ individuals in one-day service events from coast to coast. Our 47 projects included our ConSERVE NYC service days – which started as a complement to our Hurricane Sandy recovery program at the National Park of New York Harbor – as well as events on Martin Luther King, Jr Day, Earth Day, the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance and others.

- Volunteers: 4,607
- Pounds of storm debris removed: 6,300
- Trees and shrubs planted: 16,489
- Feet of trail treated: 32,170
- Pounds of trash removed: 41,869





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