

**STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
2011 PHILADELPHIA
CONSERVATION CREWS**



PROGRAM REPORT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Philadelphia Student Conservation Association Program has successfully completed another year of hands on service in our local community parks. Thanks to the support of all the partners and SCA staff, 40 young men and women have gained valuable life skills, job training experience, and knowledge of environmental issues as participants in the summer program.

This year Philadelphia administered four conservation crews, each consisting of two adult crew leaders and ten student members for a six week program. The SCA members, were led by 9 adult field supervisors, of these 9 staff leaders, one leader was designated to be a program assistant, who served as a support for administrative tasks and field operations. In total there were 2 returning Vet SCA crew leaders and 7 first year crew leaders. All leaders came from diverse backgrounds and brought with them a wealth of experience in youth development, education, and outdoor leadership. The program manager provided support to all crews and field staff with the overall management of day to day operations including the hiring process, payroll, workday logistics, site partner communication, project oversight and support to crews.

Daily each crew completed vital restoration and trail maintenance work, while gaining invaluable work skills. To prepare them for this intensive work and outdoor experience, the first week of the program was dedicated to members participating in a weeklong training covering:

- **Program Orientation** focused on program logistics, expectations, teambuilding, conflict resolution and schedule.
- **Job Readiness** providing training and job skills to members who overwhelmingly were starting their first work experience. Topics covered included financial literacy, resume writing, interviewing, dress code, acceptable behavior and language, conflict resolution, and communication. The Financial Literacy presentation covered topics such as life skills, budgeting, banking services, credit, and interest and understanding your pay check (taxes).
- **Environmental Education and Tool Orientation** provided members with hands on technical skills and safety training. Included a workshops led by John Heinz staff in invasive plant species ID and removal (*Weed Warriors*).

This summer the weather started in our favor, outside was very comfortable allowing each crew to complete a variety conservation and restoration projects at each site. Aside from working on the projects, crews also engaged in a series of weekly educational field trips to heighten participants' awareness of environmental issues and to introduce them to environmental initiatives in other parts of the city. Crew Leaders also used SCA's community programs "Green Jobs Readiness" educational curriculum to cultivate, broaden and enhance the participants' knowledge of environmental science and conservation stewardship using the outdoors as a teaching environment.

During May our selected crew leaders attended one of SCA's Community Crew Leader Trainings, where they spent 8 full days with leaders and SCA staff from around the country. The training covered all aspects of successfully managing a crew of high school students.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program highlights:

- 4 crews
- Work accomplishments: 30 water bars were placed, 40 feet of fencing was restored, Restored 5 different areas retaining walls, Cleared and removed estimated 13,040 area feet of invasive species, Over 2 tons of trash was collected and recycled
- 40 members and 9 leaders
- 38 out of 40 members successfully completed the program
- 1400 total service program hours

ACCOMPLISHMENTS PARK AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In 2011 SCA Philadelphia has partnered with The William Penn Foundation, Exelon, Amtrak, The Boeing Company, PNC Bank, Timberland and The Philadelphia Youth Network's (PYN), "Work Ready Program".

The four crews worked in the following parks,

- John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge
- The Friends of the Wissahickon at Wissahickon Valley Green Park (FOW)
- Fairmount park, with the Department of Parks and Recreation
- The Valley Forge National Historical Site

A special thanks to the following company's listed below for their gift contributions to the students:

- Timberland provided each student member with work boots to use out in the field.
- Amtrak provided each student with a water bottle and a natural insect repellent to use throughout the duration of the program.
- REI provided students camping gear to use on their camping trip

PROJECT SITES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Each partnering park site provided staff to support the crews out in the field with materials, tools and education as needed. The on the ground support from park staff was greatly appreciated, the staff assisted in the daily operations of the projects but also shared knowledge of both the ecology and history of the site, helping to enrich the crew's experience and understanding of Philadelphia's rich history.

All crews spent five weeks working in their respective parks. With the advantage of working in one park for the summer the students had the opportunity to see the development of their projects unfold. By keeping the students in one central location they were able to get familiar with their

surroundings and the staff that worked at the parks as well as being able to see their projects develop over time and be utilized by the public

Over the duration of the program Philadelphia crew members contributed overall:

- 30 water bars were placed
- 40 feet of fencing was restored
- Restored 5 different areas retaining walls
- Cleared and removed 13,040 area feet of invasive species
- Over 2 tons of trash was collected and recycled.

“This is my second year and I’ve learned a lot over my 6 week experience about, trail work, invasive species, tools and a lot more. As a crew we worked magnificently together to meet each project goal and as people always say “teamwork makes the dream work”, I will never forget my SCA experience.”-FOW member Christina, a quote taken from her sponsorship letter at the friends of the Wissahickon.

WORKSITES

Valley Forge National Historical Park

Valley Forge National Historical Park commemorates more than the sacrifices and perseverance of the Revolutionary War generation; it honors the ability of citizens and their leaders to pull together and overcome adversity during extraordinary times. Valley Forge National Historical Park contains 28 miles of authorized trail that are popular for hiking, biking and horseback riding. This was SCA’s third year having a community crew at Valley Forge; this park also hosts SCA internship, and national crews.

Project accomplished:

- Trail restoration
 - Cleared and mulched chapel Trail hill to prevent erosion
 - Widened trails
 - Built runoffs for erosion control
 - Laid crusher run
 - Created a wildflower bed at the top of the hill
- Stained park information kiosk’s
- Invasive removal
 - Cut down Japanese Knotweed
 - Mile a Minute
 - Oriental bittersweet
 - Rusty Cray fish from valley stream
 - Vine Wisteria
 - Uprooted Asiatic Bittersweet
 - Cut down Multiflora Rose
 - Pulled up Garlic Mustard
 - Collection of native viburnum for rooting
- Valley Forge Historical landmark maintenance
 - Raked and weeded beds
 - Pruned shrubs
 - Edged and mulched beds

Loosened soil for planting pacasandra or sod
Mulched Cranapple trees at Washington Headquarters

John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge

The Philadelphia SCA office has been housed inside The John Heinz NWR at Tinicum since 2009. Thanks to John Heinz' generous donation of office space and hospitality, SCA was able to build great relationship with both JH staff and other local Philadelphia representatives, store tools and complete training and orientations for the program with ease each year. John Heinz is also a host site for SCA interns.

The refuge was established by an act of Congress in 1972 to protect the largest remaining freshwater tidal marsh in Pennsylvania; approximately 200 acres and 1200 acres of varied habitats.

With more than ten miles of trails on site to maintain our crew had plenty of projects daily. The Henderson trail is the area that was selected to focus on because it needed the most attention. This trail is typically maintained and worked on each year by our crews, this year the crews focused on Wood chipping the trail. On this trail the crews worked on a variety of projects including cutting back park road corridors with loppers and restoring the tread to safe and usable condition by beating back biomass and vegetation. The overall goal was to do the job well as to prevent John Heinz from doing expansive restoration in the future. The target trail audience is tread for two people walking side by side (in most sections). Another project included restoration and painting a maintenance yard fence. On a few rainy days the crews spent sometime building birdhouses, that eventually would be placed and used on the refuge.

Friends of the Wissahickon

This was SCA's third summer working with FOW. For many years the park has also been a true regional attraction, bringing together the residents of Philadelphia with those of neighboring Montgomery County in a way that few other public sites in the city can boast. The Wissahickon Park has been featured in national publications as a prime Spot for birding, trail running, and mountain biking, drawing visitors seeking a unique outdoor recreation experience to the region.

Projects accomplished:

- Cleaned out 8 culverts.
- Installed two rolling grade dips
- Constructed and installed check damns.
- Trail drainage at Bell's Mill.
- Trail maintenance and illegal dirt bike jump destruction at Saylor's Grove.
- Trail choking and invasive removal at Wigard House.
- Trash clean up and graffiti removal at Devil's Pool
- Improved drainage of stone steps at Bell's Mill
- Performed trail maintenance with Dave Bauer (Fairmount Park rep) at Andorra Natural Area, and worked on water drainage at Bells Mill.

Each year crew member's work at a commonly used park area called "Devil's pool". This area was commonly used by the public to BBQ and swim. Members removed trash and graffiti as a

routine project completed twice a week, collecting over 20-30 bags of trash daily. As a result of this project the crews designed, constructed and installed a trash bag dispenser in efforts to help solve the problem at Devil's pool.

Fairmount Park

Fairmount Park is Philadelphia's largest park system. With over 9,200 acres, it claims 10% of the land in Philadelphia (City and County). Fairmount Park has been called "one of the largest urban parks in the country". Fairmount Park is comprised of 63 regional and neighborhood parks. This is our second year as a partner with Fairmount Park.

The first 3 weeks the Fairmount park crew worked hard to began to clear a spot where they would be creating a new trail. In only a few days effortlessly the crew members blasted through a portion of the woods within Cobbs Creek removing, tree roots, shrubs, and fallen trees to make their newly created trail connect to another part of a commonly used trail. They also spent a great deal of time removing trash and debris.

At Belmont Plateau crews worked to create of new mountain bike trail in order to reconcile multiple stream crossings created by public users. They finished the lower trail and then started on the main mountain bike trail by rerouting and creating new path ways for users to ride on. The crews also created a video that was presented at graduation highlighting portions of the trail and bike ramps they constructed.

"My favorite memory of the program was when the bike riders went over the ramp we built on our trail and told us it was awesome!" - Fairmount park member Erica

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DAYS AND SCA'S GREEN JOB READINESS CURRICULUM

Each week the crews participated in a day of Environmental Education, Job readiness and outdoor recreation activities, designed to teach members how their work and actions affect the ecology of the region as well as how they can personally impact the environment through conservation. Environmental Education Days were planned by the crew leaders with the assistance of SCA staff and partner organizations. The intent of these activities is to expand the students' view on the meaning of conservation, explore careers that can incorporate green practices, engage them in low-impact outdoor activities and develop an awareness of the local ecology. EE days added more variety to the work week and helped the crew members appreciate and understand the significance of their hard work and offer varied opportunities for learning about the environment and summer fun.

Environmental Education Field Trips

Each week the crews participated in a half day environmental education (EE) and outdoor recreation activity. These programs are designed to teach members how their work and actions affect the ecology of the region as well as how they can personally impact the environment through conservation.

- **PECO Green Roof**: Students learned about resource conservation by utility companies.

Representatives from NPS and Temple University spoke about the Pro Ranger Program, a scholastic and career opportunity

- **Zoo trips, Philadelphia and the Elmwood Park Zoo:**
During trips to the zoo, members had time to visit stations focusing on conservation and habitat restoration and see the animals. This led to discussions on how members own lives and actions effect habitat and animals. At the Elmwood Park Zoo, which holds animals native to the Americas, crews had a brief discussion with the Zoologists about the running of the zoo, the animals and employment opportunities. The students then paired off to complete a scavenger hunt that had them learn more about the different species in the Park.
- **Penn Pack Mills, Historic lands and buildings:** crews were given a tour at both locations. They learned local history and finished with an Art and Nature pencil water coloring class, where students collected a specimen with tour guides permission and sketched the specimen with pencils then dabbing the with water on a brush to create a water color pencil sketch
- **Hopewell Furnace NHS**
Crews went on a tour of the grounds where they saw demonstrations of homestead cooking and making casts for the iron pieces that would have been cast while the furnace was in operation. Members viewed a PowerPoint on the history of the area, the furnace, and its impact on the nation.
- **Energy Coordination Agency:**
They toured the Certified Building which is an education and training center for Green Jobs such as energy auditors. We also discussed ways to reduce energy usage in everyday life and in normal Philly homes. Students then were given a scavenger hunt type project to complete about the center and what they do.
- **Belmont Water Treatment Plant:**
Students learned about the importance of watershed health. Students were shown the process and actual facilities utilized to treat and distribute raw water into drinking water.
- **Atlantic County's Waste Water Treatment Center:**
Which uses alternative energy to power their plant such as, wind, solar, bio fuel and geothermal. The students got to see first hand alternative energy being used. They toured and learned about how wind turbines are constructed, saw a landfill that was once a superfund site and toured the recycling compound.
- **Longwood Gardens**
Members went on a self guided tour where they saw species of plants and trees that they had worked with this summer and learned about others. They got a chance to make their own sample fragrance out of nature's own scents. They also learned about the history of the garden and the different bugs that contribute to the garden, like bees.
- **Greens grow Urban Farm**
On a trip to Greens grow Farm which, an urban farm that supplies an impressive amount of food and flowers in northeast Philadelphia, the students were shown the differences

and complications of running a farm in an urban area including space, supplies, and funding. They also got to see interesting ways to recycle supplies, a small scale bio-diesel operation, rooftop gardens, and the importance of green houses.

Green Jobs Readiness Curriculum Activities

The following are examples of activities from SCA's Green Job Readiness Curriculum that crew leaders facilitated for their crews:

- Renewable/Non-Renewable Quiz-discussed various energy forms and impacts on environment
- Environmental Justice Scenarios-crews discussed health concerns in areas of Philadelphia
- Green Collar Jobs activity-members discussed the differences in green jobs and green collar jobs. As well as discussing the education and training needed for a green collar job.

CREW MEMBER RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

In our pursuit to recruit students for the 2011 summer program, SCA's Philadelphia program manger provided flyers and information to many high school counselors and local community organizations across the Philadelphia area.

In class presentation were completed at:

- Abraham Lincoln High school,
- W.B Saul high school of Agriculture sciences,
- Science Leadership Academy
- Parkway NW High School for Peace and Social Justice.

In addition, SCA staff and alumni members attended a large community outreach fair held here in Philadelphia at Gerald College in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King day; there we distributed information to hundreds of community members about our SCA programs and youth/adult opportunities. Flyers were distributed to all of our park partners, including Valley Forge National Historical Park, John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Fairmount Park, Friends of the Wissahickon and the Philadelphia youth network.

In late February, a mass mailing and emailing was sent to each alumni member of SCA Philadelphia since 2009; Enclosed students would find application information, and a "tell a friend flyer" to share with other friends and family members about the summer opportunities.

SCA also collaborated with one of our program partners, the Philadelphia Youth Network for recruitment assistance; a well established youth service organization that increases capacity and resources in order to provide high-quality preparation so our City's youth can thrive in a regional and global economy.

After completing an initial online application, all students that registered were invited to attend one of two mandatory conservation service projects:

- John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge hosted one project where the students participated in a Darby creek clean up project removing debris and trash from the creek.

- Happy Holly House Playground was the partner for the other project where students removed litter, broken branches, vines and invasive species from a soon to be community garden.

During these two service projects students were observed and briefly interviewed to see if the crew member position was a good fit for them. Students who were hard working and proactive during the project were selected to participate in the 2011 Philadelphia SCA program. The Happy Hollow House event was cut a little short this year due to a rainy day wash out.

Leader retention:

- Over 50 leader applications submitted
- 12 offers and 9 acceptances
- 13 interviews

Member retention:

- Over 100 online application submitted
- 47 students offered positions
- 40 students started the program
- 38 completed the program

PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS AND ROSTER

The following tables reflect the demographics of the all 40 participants of which 22 were alumni returning students that participated in the program.

Students	Participants	Percentage
Hired to start	40	100%
Completed program	38	95%

Member Gender

Gender	Participant	Percentage
Female	21	53.5%
Male	19	48.5%

Philadelphia Schools Represented by 2011 Participants:

Members attended schools from every corner of Philadelphia. The following 27 schools had at least one student in the program.

Philadelphia School Represented:

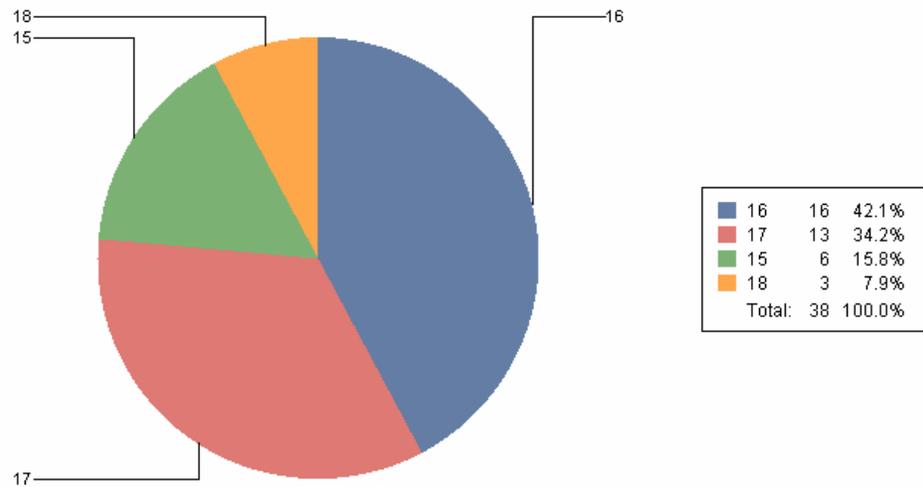
- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Northeast High School. (4) | Simon Gratz H.S. |
| Prep Charter School | Philadelphia H.S. for Girls. |
| Math Civics Science Charter H. S. (4) | Sayre High School |
| W.B. Saul of Agricultural Science H.S. (2) | Abraham Lincoln H.S. (2) |
| Science Leadership Academy (2) | Upper Darby H.S. |
| Martin Luther King High School | Aya Educational institute |

Pennsylvania Leadership Cyber Charter School

New Media Technology Charter School
 PA Leadership Charter
 Truebright Science Academy C.S.
 Academy Park H.S.
 Fels High.School.
 Bodine H.S.I.A
 Academy Park H.S.
 Shipley High School
 Home School

Chad Charter School (2)
 Olney H.S.
 Science Leadership Academy
 Walter D. Palmer
 Central High School

Member Age Upon Entry



Race and Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Participants	Percentage
Asian	2	5%
African American	35	87.5%
Caucasian	3	7.5%

CAMPING TRIP

During the final week of the program crews participated in a three day and two night camping trip. The location and scheduled activities were set up by the leaders. Including activities such as hiking, fishing, white water rafting and rock climbing were planned... The end of program camping trip proved to be extremely rewarding to all the students participating, as it was a first time camping for many of them. The camp grounds they visited included;

- Astion family campground, Whorton State Park

- Hickory Run State Park
- Belle Plain State Park
- Killen's Pond state park

STUDENT PROFILE



“The part I loved the most about this summer is my crew and crew leaders we had our ups and downs but at the end of it all we still pulled through and got all our work done!”

- Jason Faison, FOW crew

Jason Faison is a 2 year alumni student for the Student Conservation Association. He was one of the 40 students selected to participate in the Philadelphia program in 2011. He was actually referred to the program by his twin brother, Brian Faison who started with the SCA in 2009. During Jason's first summer year in 2010 he worked at the Valley Forge National Historical Park and in 2011 he returned to the program working at the Friends of the Wissahickon Park. Jason was a pleasure to be around; his sense of humor, positive attitude and strong work ethic was contagious to those working beside him. Every day he exhibited role model behavior, stressing that professionalism and hard work are the key to being a good team member.

Jason also participated in the launch of our 2011 year round program, he was actually one of our most loyal and dedicated members of the bunch. It is because of his experiences with the SCA programs and his charming personality that he has been selected to engage in media interviews and to help recruit other students to join. These parks that he has worked in are located in the heart of Philadelphia and it was important to him and his crew to make a difference starting at home first. Jason understands that his hard work and dedication is a good way to help give back to his community on a larger scale because more people in the Philadelphia area can benefit. Due to his contributions to restore and maintain these parks others can now have a little fun and peace of mind in a safe environmentally friendly park.

CONCLUSION

The success of the program and experience gained by members was due to the dedication and team work, amongst members, leaders program and park staff.

SCA's Philadelphia Crew program came to a close with a 3rd year celebration ceremony attended by participants, partners, family and friends. The celebration was a culmination of all 4 crews sharing their accomplishments through skit, photographs and individual presentations. Students and leaders shared individually what they've learned from their summer experience. The room was filled with laughter and smiles; it was the perfect way to end such a successful summer. Following the ceremony a BBQ style lunch was provided by SCA to all that attended.

"I've been with SCA from the start and this is my last year because I am headed to college but I will surely miss my friends and all the summer fun! I've been thinking a lot about coming back to be a crew leader in the future!!" Dan –John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge crew member