



American Recreation Coalition

*Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right
to health and happiness through recreation.*

NEWS

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Partners Outdoors 2014 Becomes Forum for FICOR Priority Issue

Washington, D.C. (June 19, 2014) - *Partners in Stewardship Through Volunteers and 21st Century CSC* – a featured part of the third day of Partners Outdoors 2014 – offered an exciting view of efforts underway and proposed for greatly expanding the role of conservation service corps and volunteers on public lands and waters. The two-hour session was developed by the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR), the coordinating body of directors of agencies that manage Federal outdoor recreation facilities, lands and waters.

FICOR sought to develop a report on service and volunteerism programs and share that report with the top private and public sector recreation community leaders participating in the annual Partners Outdoors program, held for the first time in conjunction with Great Outdoors Month. The report was delivered through oral presentations, PowerPoint displays and videoclips. The reporting session was moderated by U.S. Forest Service Associate Chief Mary Wagner and Mary Ellen Sprenkel, President of The Corps Network. Six efforts were highlighted which connect youth and veterans to the outdoors through service.

The first presentation described NOAA's Veterans Conservation Project, which aims to help reintegrate combat veterans into civilian life through conservation projects. Work in Northern California to support salmon populations through improved habitats in the Eel River Watershed was highlighted. Recently discharged veterans use teamwork and physical skills and receive additional training and job placement assistance. More information on this project can be found at www.restoration.noaa.gov.

The next program described was H.O.P.E. – Hands-On Preservation Experience. The project is a joint undertaking of The Corps Network and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). Two examples were offered. First, a videoclip showed how 700 H.O.P.E. volunteers restored Hinchcliffe Stadium in Patterson, New Jersey, transforming the stadium from an eyesore to a historic landmark. Then, a H.O.P.E. effort in Shenandoah National Park was described. A historic national park stable was

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FICOR Holds Forum At Partners Outdoors Add One

rebuilt by eight urban youth employed by a conservation corps and mentored by restoration experts provided by NTHP, overseen by the National Park Service and paid for by the concessioner in the park, Delaware North Companies. The project was completed at less cost, more rapidly than standard historic-restoration projects and with many serendipities, including skills training for and park exposure to the corps members. The concessioner has announced plans to use the Shenandoah model for more than \$3 million in historic-restoration work in Shenandoah, Yellowstone, Kings Canyon and other national parks over the next 18 months.

The third program described was the Veterans Fire Corps, a successful training effort which recruits young veterans for wildland firefighting job opportunities. Steven Cooper, a veteran of several tours in the Persian Gulf region, shared his story and the direct and indirect benefits arising from a program which has involved hundreds of veterans recently returned to civilian life and encountering challenges finding good jobs. In addition to actual firefighting, the Veterans Fire Corps members work to reduce forest fire fuels and take on other important conservation projects. Many are aided in academic work which leads to jobs in federal and state natural resource agencies.

The next program described was the Reaching the Summit Community Service Initiative. In 2013, the Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia managed 352 projects occurring over five days in nine southern West Virginia counties and on National Park Service property located at the New River Gorge National River. Over 1,700 local volunteers participated in the Initiative, which also included the volunteer efforts of 744 Boy Scouts of America Troops from all over the country, totaling close to 40,000 participants, and 16 teams of AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps members. The combined volunteer hours recorded for the Initiative totaled over 319,000 and the total economic impact was over \$5 million. The presentation featured The Corps Network Vice President Marie Walker and Jennifer Prall Murphy, Program Officer – Operations for the Corporation for National and Community Service's Disaster Services Unit.

After that came a presentation by Leah Allen, the President and Co-Founder of MobilizeGreen, a nonprofit whose mission is to jumpstart green careers for young people. The program model focuses on recruitment and engagement of interns and Corps participants. MobilizeGreen recruits diverse candidates for individual placements requiring specialized skills and experiences. Outreach at career fairs and on social media levels the playing field for qualified candidates interested in natural and cultural resources careers.

The next program described efforts of the Appalachian Trails Conservancy (ATC). The

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FICOR Joins Partners Outdoors Add Two

ATC is a national leader in volunteer development and coordination. The presentation highlighted partnerships between the ATC and several other organizations, including “A Trail to Every Classroom,” which teaches children about nature and conservation efforts on the trail, and “Walk Off the War”, a program that takes veterans - dubbed “Warrior hikers” - suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder on long-distance hikes and contacts with communities along the trail. In 2013, a group of Warrior hikers hiked the entire 2,185-mile long trail. The presentation was made by Laurie Potteiger, ATC’s Information Services Manager.

These programs highlight just how much can be accomplished when public and private organizations join forces, and serve as inspiration to the entire recreation community.

Videos of these presentations, as well as a full breakdown of times and speakers can be found at <http://www.funoutdoors.com/node/view/3152>.

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About the American Recreation Coalition:

AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION — is a nonprofit, Washington-based federation founded in 1979. The association provides a unified voice for recreation interests to ensure their full and active participation in government policy-making on issues such as public land management. ARC membership consists of more than 100 organizations, including national and regional associations and corporations that represent a major share of the \$600+ billion a year recreation/leisure industry and enthusiast groups representing millions of recreationists. Since its inception, ARC has sought to catalyze public-private partnerships to enhance and protect outdoor recreation opportunities and resources. ARC conducts research, organizes national conferences, and disseminates information through a variety of means, including its Web site www.funoutdoors.com. ARC plays a leading role in several key coalitions and organizations, including the Coalition for Recreational Trails, Scenic Byways Coalition and Coalition for Recreation in the National Forests. ARC also supports and promotes the WOW - Wonderful Outdoor World outreach to urban children and was instrumental in the re-launch of Take Pride in America. ARC was also instrumental in launching National Get Outdoors Day, a national effort dedicated to helping children enjoy healthy, active outdoor lives.