



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Date: May 22, 2014

Contact: Jessica Kershaw (Interior), Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

USDA Office of Communications, 202-720-4623

Obama Administration Announces \$6.7 Million to Hire Young People to Work on Public Lands Across the Nation

Secretary Jewell Joins Groundwork Denver, Youth Corps Members at Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge, Site of One of 43 Projects Winning Grants

COMMERCE CITY, Colo. – As part of the Department of the Interior’s ambitious [youth initiative](#) to inspire millions of young adults and veterans to play, learn, serve and work in the great outdoors and the President’s 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Initiative, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced \$6.7 million in grants to support conservation employment and mentoring opportunities at 43 projects on public lands across the country – a 60 percent increase over last year’s funding.

The grants, the latest in the Obama Administration’s efforts to develop a [21st Century Conservation Service Corps \(21CSC\)](#) and expand employment opportunities for young people and veterans, will provide jobs resulting in paid conservation work experiences for more than 620 youth on public lands, as well as fund materials, transportation and other related supplies. These projects will also support approximately 1,550 volunteers working on public lands.

Jewell made the announcement at an event at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge outside Denver, Colorado, where she was joined by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Arthur “Butch” Blazer; Greg Knadle, Vice President for Government Relations of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF); Refuge Manager David Lucas and youth corps members of Groundwork Denver.

“We have a shared responsibility to protect and promote public lands that belong to all Americans so our children and their children can enjoy them for generations to come. The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps is built through strong public-private partnerships that not only provide employment opportunities to young adults but also provide powerful connections to nature that will last a lifetime,” said Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. “Through our partnership with Groundwork Denver and other organizations in communities across the country, we can leverage our federal investments with private support to help young adults learn new skills and gain great job experience while giving back to the community.”

“The partnerships associated with developing the next generation of conservationists offer an opportunity to connect our young people to the great outdoors,” said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. “This program engages young people from diverse backgrounds, including underserved populations, and equips them with the knowledge and critical job skills they need to pursue careers in conservation and land management.”

The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps is a national collaborative effort to put America’s youth and returning veterans to work protecting, restoring and enhancing America’s great outdoors. Groundwork Denver, Inc., for example, will provide 38 low-income urban youth with natural resources education, training and mentorship through work at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge outside Denver—a unit of Interior’s National Wildlife Refuge System—and USDA’s Pike National Forest. The youth will improve bison and prairie dog habitat, restore native species of plants and remove invasive species.

“This will be a life-changing opportunity for our youth Green Team members,” said Wendy Hawthorne, Executive Director, Groundwork Denver. “Working side-by-side with the FWS and USFS staff at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal and in the Pike National Forest will provide these young people with the experience and inspiration to pursue careers in natural resource conservation.”

The 43 projects announced today are receiving a total of more than \$6.7 million. They are being funded through the *America’s Great Outdoors: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationists*, a competitive grant matching program launched in December 2011 in conjunction with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Through the program, a total of \$1.9 million in federal funds is being leveraged into the \$6.7 million to support youth across the country. In addition to providing work for youth, the grants facilitate volunteer opportunities for youth and adult mentors.

The land management agencies participating in the NFWF *Next Generation* program include Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Department of Agriculture’s U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The National Park Service and USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also are partners in some projects.

“NFWF is proud to support this initiative in partnership with the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to provide hundreds of young people with the opportunity to get real world, boots in the mud experience with conservation jobs,” said Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director and CEO, NFWF. “By bringing together the public and private sectors, we are able to leverage the initial federal investment and provide three times the opportunity than otherwise would have been available. Providing these additional resources is a huge win for youth, conservation and the future of America’s great outdoors.”

The 43 projects are diverse in work experiences and in locations. The conservation work provides training while helping resources ranging from a wildlife refuge in Hawaii, to a national forest in Alaska, to New York City beaches damaged by Hurricane Sandy, to a California national park where youth help with recovery of the condor.

Urban projects include conservation career training in city parks such as those that are part of the “Greening of Detroit.” In Nevada, projects include work on an historic trail near Hoover Dam, an American Indian reservation and abandoned farmlands.

One landscape-level watershed restoration project in Oregon spans 6,800 square miles in eight counties and will employ more than 60 young adults in restoring native plants. Partners in this project include multiple federal and state agencies, watershed councils, land trusts, schools and communities.

A list of the 43 projects can be found [HERE](#).

###