



# Recreation and Natural Areas Conservation Corps Investments

**DNR has utilized Conservation Corps crews for 40 years to support, protect, and manage trust lands and natural areas allowing for recreational opportunities across the state.**

**\$8,053,800 Operating Request (GF-S)**

## **Year-long work for up to 70 young adults**

DNR has used Conservation Corps work crews for 40 years to support critical Natural Areas and Recreation programs in sustainably managing the state's lands and waters.

Corps members are a critical component of both the Recreation and Natural Areas programs work force, each of which are under-resourced to meet the expectations of the public.

## **Conservation Corps creates an excellent return on investment for Washington State**



Conservation Corps members are critical to DNR's management of our public lands. Corps members support ongoing maintenance and infrastructure improvements of DNR recreation areas in each region, and across much of the 170,000 acres of Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resource Conservation Areas.

The investment needed will increase DNR's on-the-ground capacity for recreation and natural areas maintenance. This investment will **add up to 70 corps members** to assist with trail maintenance, campground improvements, and invasive species management, all while providing the next generation of natural resource managers the crucial skills needed to pursue successful careers. This investment is needed to meet the growing demand by the public for access to our public lands.

## **Fully Funding Corps work is paramount for DNR and Corps Partners**

Conservation Corps work crews have been underfunded for several years leading to DNR being unable to address the increased usage of our public lands. Failure to fully fund this work has impacted grant and capital project match funding, and can result in unsafe and unenjoyable recreation experiences, unmanaged natural areas, and compounded future maintenance costs. A full investment will allow DNR to continue



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to provide quality recreation opportunities for Washingtonians and address ongoing maintenance backlogs.

In 2023, corps crews maintained more than 175 miles of DNR trails, provided crucial maintenance to 4,645 recreation facilities, built 378 trail structures, built 1.25 miles of fence, planted more than 8,500 trees, and cleared 979 trail blowdowns. This on-the-ground support ensures recreation sites across the state are accessible for recreators, all while building an experienced workforce. Increased investment will provide more trail and infrastructure maintenance and will result in healthier landscapes.



### **Investing in Corps is a win for the lands and the members**

Investing in Conservation Corps creates an excellent return on investment for Washington State. Corps members, while making state minimum wage and earning an AmeriCorps education award, learn valuable skills in recreation and natural resource management, as well as skills in teamwork, communication, professionalism, and what it takes to get work done with colleagues. This request reaffirms the Legislature's investment in public lands and the recreation opportunities on them and invests in the growth and workforce development of young people around the state.