

NEWS

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TRIBAL YCC PROGRAM COMPLETES SUMMER PROJECTS

Custer, SD- The Black Hills National Forest and Devil's Tower National Monument are better off thanks to the work of 20 American Indian youth, members of the forest Tribal Youth Conservation Corps program.

The young people between the ages of 15 and 22 provided over 3,500 hours of labor to resource projects this summer during the 5th year anniversary of the Tribal YCC program.

The 2005 program offered youth employment, educational opportunities, and resource management experience through a cost-share partnership between the forest and the Cheyenne River, Rosebud, Standing Rock, and Yankton Sioux Tribes and Devils Tower National Monument.

At Devil's Tower National Monument the crew spent two weeks working on six miles of trail maintenance and cleaned up old fencing and other materials.

“When I have met in the community for consultation with American Indian elders what comes out repeatedly is we need to help our youth be aware of their culture. That's actually the most important reason to have the youth conservation corps here because the tower is a sacred site,” said Lisa Eckert, park superintendent.

This is the second year the tribal YCC crew has spent part of their summer working at America's First National Monument.

One of the main projects was improving trail drainage at the Monument.

“We had a lot of what we call water bars which are logs that are placed across a trail to divert the water. [We] found out there are probably were far more than we need, so we removed about 150 of them said,” Bill Yett, chief of maintenance.

An important aspect of these programs is to encourage youth to choose potential career opportunities in land management. In the last five years, over 120 tribal youth have participated in the program and provided valuable work managing natural and cultural resources.

“I think in order for the youth, especially tribal youth, they are able to know who they are as individuals and where they come from,” said Alan Reynolds, field foreman and Rosebud Sioux tribe native.

Other crew members said they learned the value of work.

“I’ve learned to be a hard worker. When you first come you have to be by yourself and it’s kind of hard because you don’t know anybody. Then after awhile, I don’t know, it’s an experience,” said Marisa Joseph, Yankton Sioux.

Project accomplishments on the Black Hills National Forest this year included three and a quarter miles of trail maintenance, nine acres of fuels piling, five acres of noxious weed removal, four miles of old fence removal and ¼ mile of riparian restoration including building 25 water dams.

In addition to the field work, the enrollees enjoyed Thursday evening interpretive talks and Saturday field trips, all designed to provide the youth with educational experiences. Thursday evening programs included “Prairie Plants” with Dr. Chase DeCory, Black Hills State University and “Archaeology of the Black Hills” with Dave McKee, forest archaeologist. Saturday field trips took them to Reptile Gardens, Crazy Horse Monument, and Jewel Cave National Monument.

For more Black Hills National Forest news, visit our newsroom at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhill/news/>.

Sound Bites:

1) Lisa Eckert, Park Superintendent

“When I have met in the community for consultation with American Indian elders what comes true and comes out repeatedly is we need to help our youth be aware of their culture. So that is actually the most important reason to have the Youth Conservation Corps here because the tower is a secret site. There are 22 tribes affiliated with this tower and when I have somebody come to me and say they had heard about this area and never been here before and want to learn about this, it was just wonderful. It was just a great opportunity for all of us.”

2) Bill Yett, Chief of Maintenance

“This time here they were going to pick up a little misc. things mostly having to do with drainage, getting the water off right. We had a lot of what we call water bars which are logs that are placed across a trail to divert the water. Found out there was probably were far more than we need and they weren’t done right and so I removed probably about 150 of them or they have.”

3) Alan Reynolds, Field Director

“I think in order for the youth of especially tribal youth, they are able to know who they are as individuals and where they come from. Their identity sometimes they loose themselves and with me being a sun dancer or a spiritual leader, then I am able to encourage them and help them find out who they are as individuals to get their self-esteem built up and teamwork. Make them feel better. Make them feel, think positive of who they are as individuals.”

4) Marisa Joseph, Yankton Sioux Tribe, Marty, South Dakota

“To be a hard worker and individual. When you first come you have to be by yourself and it’s kind of hard because you don’t know anybody. Then after awhile I don’t know it’s an experience.”

B-Roll:

1) 00:02:11:22 various Devil Tower National Monument footage, Devils Tower, Wyoming

2) 00:02:31:21 to 00:03:22:26 various YCC crew on trail working

Reporter/Videographer

Gary C. Chancey/Black Hills National Forest