

Program links urban youths to careers

The Challenge

The United States, like other developed nations around the world, is becoming increasingly urbanized. Within the United States, the New England/New York area is no exception. This region is one of the most forested areas of the country. Only a small percentage of residents here live within the forests, though, as an increasing proportion of the population packs into densely-populated urban centers. As a result, Americans are becoming less mindful of the natural environment around them and its importance to society and the planet. Forests help reduce greenhouse gases, improve water and air quality, serve as critical habitats for rare and endangered species, and provide a variety of traditional and alternative wood products. While public awareness of critical environmental issues continues to decline, natural resource managers are finding it more difficult today to recruit a diverse mix of young people for careers in conservation fields. This and related environmental challenges will grow in the years ahead as America continues to urbanize.

The Solution

“Future Pathways to Conservation” is a program developed by the USDA Forest Service, to link Boston youths with career opportunities in conservation-related fields. The White Mountain National Forest, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, and the Franklin Park Zoo, along with other partners, designed the initiative to bring together natural resource professionals and Boston youths through an annual careers workshop. Organizers held the workshop at Boston's Franklin Park Zoo in May 2005. About 75 students from local area high schools took part in the memorable outdoor experience. There they spent time with more than a dozen natural resource professionals representing the fields of entomology, wildlife biology, forestry, botany, conservation education, soil science, recreation management and others. The

Forests reduce greenhouse gases, improve air and water quality, serve as critical habitats and produce timber and other products.



youths learned about a variety of potential career opportunities and took part in hands-on activities in about 15 occupational sessions throughout the day.

Resulting Benefits

The program helped dozens of Boston youths learn more about careers paths in natural sciences. Along the way, they also improved their understanding and appreciation for the important resources and values forests provide to the ecosphere and humanity. Participating students also walked away from the event with a variety of program souvenirs, including information packets and backpacks, as well as T-shirts emblazoned with “Future Pathways to Conservation” messages. There are plans to maintain contact between the professional volunteers and participating students as they progress along their respective career paths. The workshop was so successful that there are plans to make it an annual event.

Sharing Success

Sponsors of the initiative have developed a program video to help inform other students of potential career paths in the science, natural resources and conservation fields. The video will also serve as a marketing tool to build sponsor and student participation for the event. The Future Pathways event was modeled after a similar program, “Green Horizons,” that has been a success in New York City for the past decade.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

For more information, contact:
Kathryn P. Maloney, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
Email: kmaloney@fs.fed.us

John Parry, Urban Forestry Coord.
271 Mast Road
Durham, NH 03824
Phone: 603-868-7688
Email: jparry@fs.fed.us