



Enhance outdoor recreation partnerships to provide outdoor play for urban youth.

- Participants in both young adult and youth crews will be exposed to recreational opportunities offered on public lands in the Middle Rio Grande.
- Interaction with other youth corps active in the Middle Rio Grande through social events will provide fun, yet insightful experiences.
- Coordination with private and/or non-profit recreation groups will encourage participation in a variety of outdoor skill opportunities accessible to urban youth.



Enrich the experience for urban youth through cultural awareness and environmental education activities.

- Participants engage in environmental education and cultural awareness activities every other week.
- Involve multiple partners including the National Hispanic Cultural Center and Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in developing activities.
- Young adult crew conducts environmental education programs at agency sites, local schools, community centers, city and county open space properties and state parks.

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Provide a unique, sustainable experience for youth to work in conservation through exposure to a variety of tasks with partner agencies to gain a greater understanding of a career in conservation.

- Work to further conservation and recreational opportunities in the Middle Rio Grande through activities such as trail building and habitat restoration.
- Receive training in basic interpretive and environmental education methods in order to lead interpretive programs, hikes, and conduct environmental education programs.
- Interact with mentors from partner conservation agencies on a weekly basis to gain insight into a variety of conservation careers, skill building, and potential career pathways.



Ensure urban youth have opportunities to devote their time and talents towards volunteering on public lands.

- Provide locally-recruited participants the opportunity to serve as ambassadors at conservation-related events held in their community.
- Encourage participants to work and/or volunteer at city or regional conservation events with the partner agencies.
- Provide opportunities for all participants in the Middle Rio Grande Urban Conservation Corps to give back to the program by assuming a leadership position the following season.



The next generation of scientists, wildlife biologists, tribal experts, park managers and conservation leaders are now in school or just entering the workforce. This is the time we need to invest in creating meaningful connections between young people and the great outdoors.

— Sally Jewell, Secretary, Department of the Interior

Creating Synergy to Foster Environmental Stewardship

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region together with the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs, are looking to inspire the next generation of conservationists by implementing a coordinated effort for youth engagement through employment. Focusing on the highly urbanized Middle Rio Grande and utilizing an array of federally protected public lands including National Wildlife Refuges, National Monuments, a National Historic Trail, and a National Forest all within commuting distance of the urban center, we have the opportunity to provide diverse experiences and meaningful employment in conservation to youth and young adults.

Creating a Unique Experience Sustainable Conservation Constituency

A key component to ensuring that this program is sustainable, is the use of benchmarks to assess our impact on youth and young adults in the program. Through regular assessments we will explore participants' changing attitudes and understanding towards conservation to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Additionally, by assessing participant's areas of interest, strengths, experiences, education, and training, we can provide support in guiding them towards suitable careers in conservation by utilizing resources such as the future Center for Conservation Careers at the Valle de Oro NWR.

Cultural Awareness and Environmental Education

The Middle Rio Grande is a perfect place to explore the nexus between culture and sciences because of the long and unique cultural history with Native American, Hispanic, and early Anglo settler communities. A key component of the urban conservation corps is to explore this relationship between culture and the environment through a series of experiences and activities to cultivate conservation awareness in youth.

Mentoring

Natural resource professionals from partner agencies will serve as mentors to help guide youth and young adults through their experiences in the corps. Mentors will identify and solidify connections with conservation while helping participants navigate the path to conservation careers and awareness.



Framework for the Urban Conservation Corps

The Middle Rio Grande Urban Conservation Corps is a partnership-driven model that provides local youth with an on-the-ground experience in nature to encourage awareness of local conservation issues and provide memorable experiences necessary to establish environmental stewardship. By creating pathways of engagement in conservation from high school to young adulthood, this model furthers the goals of the Department of the Interior to—play, learn, work, and serve—creating a connected conservation constituency. Initially implemented in the Albuquerque metropolitan area, the model can be adopted in urban areas across the country.

Youth Corps (age 15–18)

Full-time Youth Corps starts June and ends August with continued engagement one weekend a month through November.

- Orientation, environmental education, and cultural awareness training, and facilitation from Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and Federal agencies' trainers occurs throughout the program.
- Full-time work—1 crew leader, 7 crew members, for 10 weeks; one-weekend a month for 3 months at a cost of \$76,169.

Young Adult Corps (age 18–25)

Full-time Young Adult Corps starts June through the end of December.

- The Young Adult Corps works on projects that require a higher level of skill and/or training, or more sustained time commitments.
- The Young Adult Corps facilitates monthly events for youth work and service that engages youth and recruits for the following year's program. These programs involve additional environmental education and/or cultural awareness activities.
- Full-time work—1 crew leader, 7 crew members, for 6 months at a cost of \$197,179.



Middle Rio Grande Urban Conservation Corps—Putting it all Together



\$350K





\$80K



\$275K



Environmental Education

-  Youth (3 Month)
-  Young Adult (6 month)

Mentoring



Cultural Awareness



Conservation Work



Recreation



Social Events



Program Components



Why Albuquerque? Why now?

The Opportunity

- Sustainable and replicable model for youth employment that brings federal and local partners together
- 75,000 acres of public lands, including the Southwest's first urban national wildlife refuge, a national forest, national monument, city and county open space, and a 20,000-acre state park along the Rio Grande
- One of America's Top 10 Cities for Wildlife (National Wildlife Federation)

The Need

- 16% of households in this county are below the poverty level
- Close to 50% Hispanic and 6% Native American
- Underserved area with high demand—for example, Valle de Oro NWR hired a Youth Conservation Corps in the summer of 2014. Only 7 positions were available—Over 100 individuals applied

Youth Corps
or Young
Adult Corps

Crew Leader

Federal Internships

Career in
Conservation

