



SCA Adirondack Corps

2020 FINAL REPORT



Program Dates: 6/15/20 – 10/19/20

Program Manager: Jeremy Burns

Program Coordinator: Rebecca Kambic

Project Leader: Matthew DiNome



Summary

In 2020 the SCA Adirondack Corps Program partnered with the New York State Commission on National and Community Service and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to complete priority conservation, trail, and stewardship projects in communities throughout the Adirondack Park.

About SCA

The mission of SCA is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land.

SCA was founded in 1957 by Elizabeth Putnam, a college student with a big dream. While at Vassar College, she developed her senior thesis around the concept that a commonsense solution to the abuse and under-maintenance of America's treasured public lands would be putting to good use the energy, talent and hard work of a force of youthful volunteers. In the intervening 63 years, SCA has deployed a force of more than 75,000 members, completing 26 million hours of conservation service in 550 parks, forests, wildlife refuges and urban green spaces at the national, regional, state and municipal level in all 50 states.

About SCA Adirondack AmeriCorps

The Student Conservation Adirondack Corps is funded through a partnership between the SCA, the NY State Commission for National and Community Service, and State of New York. Young adults serving in the program are NY AmeriCorps members, and are a part of the national service movement, making a commitment to support their country through service and volunteerism.



For the past 22 years the SCA Adirondack Corps has fielded teams of like-minded young adults performing critical outdoor conservation projects throughout the Adirondack Park. Like so much of the world, Adirondack Corps changed and adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic as it unfolded in early 2020. The 2020 season saw a reduction in crew size due to new guidelines, as well as new PPE requirements, but the same commitment to getting conservation work done in the Adirondack Park. The 8 members of the Adirondack Corps in 2020 served the land by carrying out high priority trail construction and maintenance projects. In addition to these important duties, SCA members gain skills for future careers in conservation through the Adirondack Corps' nationally recognized work skills training. This training, coupled with a hands-on approach to completing critical conservation and stewardship projects in the backcountry and opportunities for project planning and leadership make the program successful year after year. The Adirondack Corps program is building the next generation of conservation leaders in our country while accomplishing important stewardship projects throughout the Adirondack Park with the support and continued partnership from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

By The Numbers

In 2020, the 8 members of the SCA Adirondack Corps served 18 weeks from June thru October. During this time they were trained and supported by Program Manager Jeremy Burns, Program Coordinator Rebecca Kambic, and Project Leader Matthew DiNome. The members and leaders of the Adirondack Corps devoted over 5,300 hours of training and service to the local communities and natural areas of the Adirondacks this year.

In 2020, SCA members completed intensive outdoor skills training that propelled them into conservation service throughout the Park. According to the value assigned to volunteer hours by The Independent Sector, ADK Corps members contributed \$146,771 worth of labor in 2020. Trainings and certifications provided:

Trainings

- New Trail Construction
- Stone Construction
- Carpentry
- Tool Use and Maintenance
- SCA Vehicle Driver Training & Safety
- Leave No Trace Principles

Certifications

- Wilderness First Aid
- ACA Introduction to Canoeing
- Trail Rigging Systems
- GOL Chainsaw Levels 1 & 2



For the duration of the season, Adirondack Corps members were split into two teams of 4, with one member designated as leader on each project. Crews performed service work in the backcountry from July to October 2020. SCA AmeriCorps members built, maintained and/or restored over 18 miles of trail.

In 2020, members of the Adirondack Corps performed a wide variety of conservation and trail work tasks across the park, from dimensional lumber bog bridging on the Cranberry Lake Trail to repainting the historic Fire Tower on the summit of Mt. Arab. Work was planned, supervised, and supported by the SCA Coordinator and Project Leader who worked closely with NYS DEC Foresters and Land Managers to address priority land management projects that could not have been accomplished without the efforts of the SCA Adirondack Corps. These accomplishments are underscored by an emphasis on designing and constructing high quality structures that will last for many years, help reduce further degradation to the trails/ecosystems, and be enjoyed by generations of visitors to the Adirondack Park. Geographically, the Adirondack Corps performed conservation work over the range of Regions 5 and 6 of the Adirondack Park, travelling to project locations in SCA vehicles.

Working closely with NYS DEC Foresters, Planners, and Managers, projects were completed in the following locations:

- Allen Pond Campsites- Tooley Pond Conservation Easement
- Fifth and Seventh Lake Trails- Essex Chain Lakes Primitive Area
- Mud Pond- Cedarlands Conservation Easement
- Deerland Canoe Carry Trail- Sargent Ponds Wild Forest
- Cascade Lake Loop Trail- Pigeon Loop Wilderness
- Cranberry Lake 50 Trail- Cranberry Lake Wild Forest
- Mt. Arab Trail, Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest
- Low's Dam Canoe Carry Trail- East Five Ponds Access Primitive Area
- Northville-Placid Trail near O'Neil Flow Lean-To- Blue Ridge Wilderness
- Moose River Plains Road- Moose River Plains Wild Forest
- Stony Creek Ponds Canoe Area- High Peaks Wilderness
- Goodman Mountain Trail- Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest
- Mt. VanHoevenberg East Trail- High Peaks Wilderness



Trails by the Numbers

- **17.5 miles of trail brushed and cleared of Blowdown**
- **128 feet of stone turnpike**
- **370 feet of bridging installed**
- **24 stone waterbars/drains installed**

Other Project Highlights

- **Painted the historic Mt. Arab Fire Tower**
- **Built 4 new campsites**

Safety

Staff and crew members of the Adirondack Corps consider safety and risk management on a daily basis. SCA promotes a strong culture of safety, including but not limited to: performing a Job Hazard Analysis before each project to identify and mitigate risks specific to a project, such as working at heights. Crew members research and complete Emergency Response Plans for each project location in case of a workplace incident. Staff and crew members also complete daily 'tailgate safety sessions' to discuss possible hazards and how to mitigate them. Crew members are also strongly encouraged to hold each other accountable for making safe judgement calls in the field, and to monitor safety throughout the day.

2020 also presented the unique risk management challenge of managing a residential trail crew during the Covid-19 pandemic. ADK Corps staff took many steps, in line with SCA and NYS guidance, to mitigate the risk of infection. The season began with 2 weeks of virtual training, a new addition to the season that enabled the crew

to complete some necessary trainings while maintaining physical distancing. Upon arrival at ADK Corps basecamp, crew members received Covid-19 tests and isolated from each other for a period of 2 weeks. After the quarantine period and negative testing, crew members and staff adhered to SCA and NYS PPE guidelines during worktime including wearing masks when within 6 feet of another person, regular sanitation of work surfaces, and physical distancing when able. Throughout the season, the crew acted as a 'family unit' who quarantined together, as they both worked and resided together.



Cedarlands Campsite Construction

Relocating privies on Moose River Plains Road



Gripchoist and Rigging Training



Mt. Arab Fire Tower



Cranberry Lake Bridging



Essex Chain Blowdown Removal



Before and after photos on the Lows Dam Canoe Carry Trail



Stone steps on
Mt. VanHoevenberg

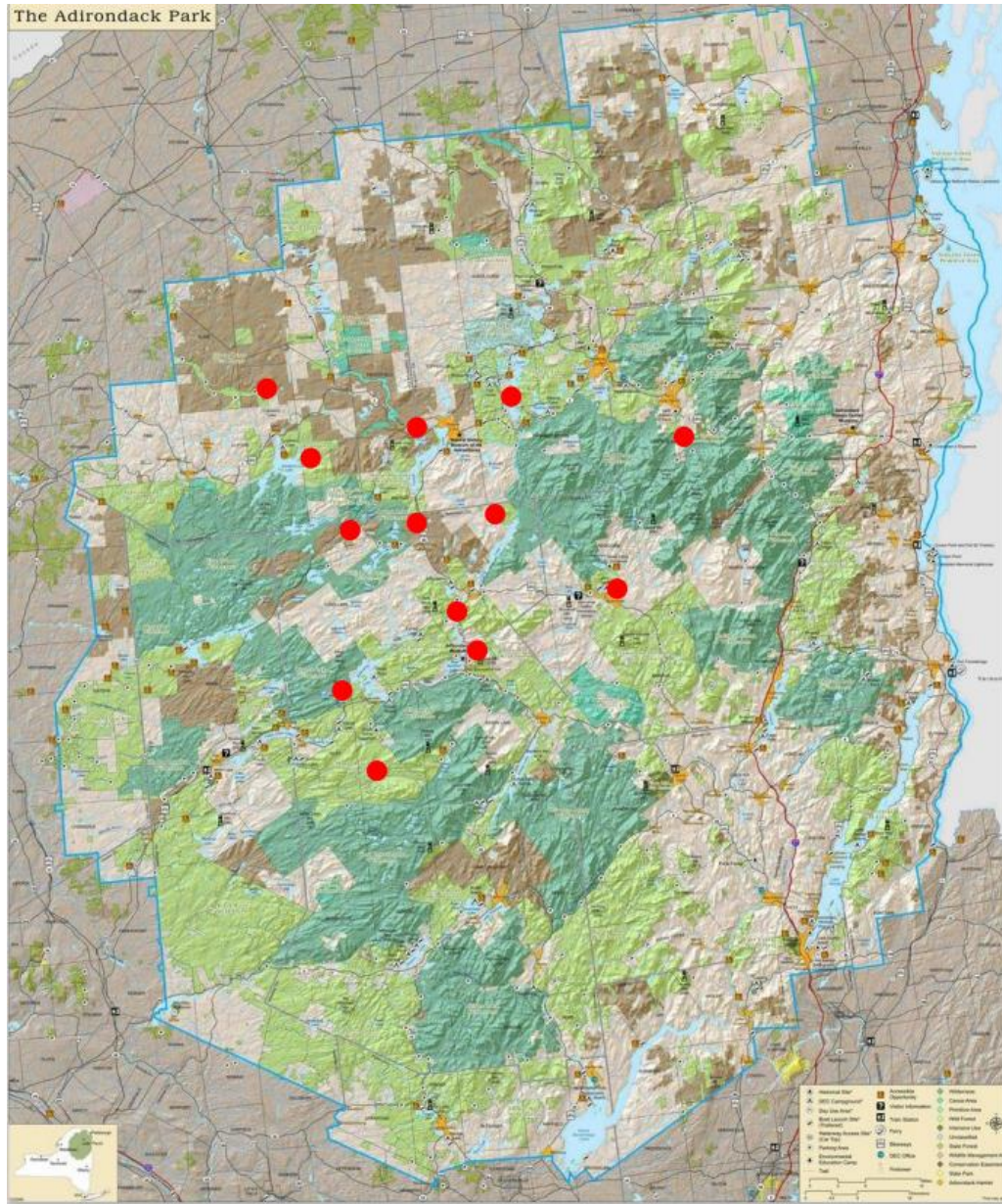


O'Neil Flow Bridge Before



O'Neil Flow Bridge After

ADK Corps 2020 Project Locations



Partnerships

Strong partnerships play a key role in the success of the SCA Adirondack Corps program. Since its inception, the program has been run in partnership with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. The NYS DEC provides residential facilities at Whitney Wilderness in Long Lake, NY which serve as a base camp, training location, and SCA staff office. Members and staff live at Whitney throughout the season, and it serves as the ideal location to immerse members in the ethics and practice of conservation work in the Adirondacks. Without these facilities this program would not be possible. The program manager and leaders also work closely with DEC foresters and regional staff to identify and plan hitches for the member crews throughout the year. For the first time in 2020,

the Adirondack Corps worked in both Region 5 and Region 6 of the Adirondack Park, continuing to expand the impact of SCA's service. The strong continuing partnership between SCA and DEC staff help make the program a success year after year.

At the end of each field season, an annual survey is sent out to our DEC partners who supported our SCA crews. The survey contains a series of questions about the improvements made to public lands and quantifies the protection of resources accomplished by the project. The survey is also a way for us to gather partner feedback on the quality of our service work.

The site partner survey continues to be a successful tool for SCA to gather partner responses in an objective manner, and also evaluate whether the impact of our service has been meaningful to local managers and the larger community. It's also a way for us to gather partner feedback on the quality of our service work. Below are some comments from 2020 partner surveys that represent the impact and appreciation for the service work performed by SCA AmeriCorps members.

The tent site restoration work completed by SCA will enhance a beautiful camping spot, and prevent shoreline erosion. Thank you!

The accumulated blowdown on the Essex Chain trails had made the trails largely unusable for equestrians and mountain bikes. Existing resources were unable address, and SCA's work on this project was very much needed and critical for the area's success. Thank you so much!

The crew completed all tasks asked of them in an efficient way without much supervision. They exceeded my expectations for the amount of work they completed for the time allotted and the project will have a meaningful impact on the public use and enjoyment of a popular recreational area. Job well done.

Really enjoyed working with the crew and hope to again in the seasons to come!

The work the Adirondack Corps did for this project is very important for opening this land for public recreation. It will be great to be able to give people another option for a place to visit.

Improved maintenance and life span of fire tower; had not been re-painted in 20+ years; improved trail maintenance and drainage of trail. Very professional and high quality work performed.

This trail build is the first of its kind within the High Peaks Wilderness. In addition to actually building this trail for usage it is a critical step in creating a pilot project to help all those involved see the benefits of sustainable trail building efforts. This project is critical in demonstrating the benefits of sustainable trail construction to Agency Staff, Stakeholders, user groups and policy makers.

Member Experience

The member experience is a focal point of the SCA Adirondack Program and is achieved not only through a community based team building approach, but ultimately through fostering a culture of learning and growth. SCA staff help create a culture of learning and growth by providing guidance, mentorship, and hands-on training; throughout the season members often gain a tremendous amount of personal and professional growth. After completing the SCA Adirondack Corps, members leave with more focused professional goals, and many are propelled into careers in outdoor leadership and conservation. We ask members to reflect often throughout the experience. Below are a few descriptions of what the ADK Corps meant to members.

Kay Emery



“It’s hard to capture in a few sentences what this program has meant to me. It didn’t take long after arriving here for me to realize that this was exactly where I needed to be at this point in my life. I’ve learned so much about conservation, trail work, and how we humans impact the environment. I’ve also grown as an individual; becoming more confident, capable, and willing to take on challenges. I know that this program is something that I will look back on as a treasured time and a turning point in my life. The things I’ve learned here, and the people I’ve been lucky

enough to call my crewmates and friends, I hope will stick with me for the rest of my life.”

“When I decided to come join the Adirondack Corps I wasn’t exactly sure of why, but in my gut I knew that I should. Now that my first season is over I couldn’t be happier that I took this leap into the unknown. Here in the park I received great outdoor experience, I learned many new and useful skills along with a chance to live in a beautiful place, surrounded by new lifelong friends, and help make the world a better place all at the same time. “



Drake Fortner

Emily Brown



"I believe our group has created structures and contributed in maintaining areas that will last this community for years to come. The structures and maintenance will provide the community with a greater recreational experience because of the improvements we made. We upheld conservation ideals and protected the community's natural resources by creating spaces for people to recreate without leaving too much of a trace in. This program is unlike anything I've ever done, and absolutely couldn't have

come at a more crucial time in my life. I would say I came into this program as a child and am leaving more competent and capable than I have ever seen myself before. I have gained confidence knowing that I am able to get through difficult tasks and work effectively with teammates to remember a greater cause when adversity strikes."

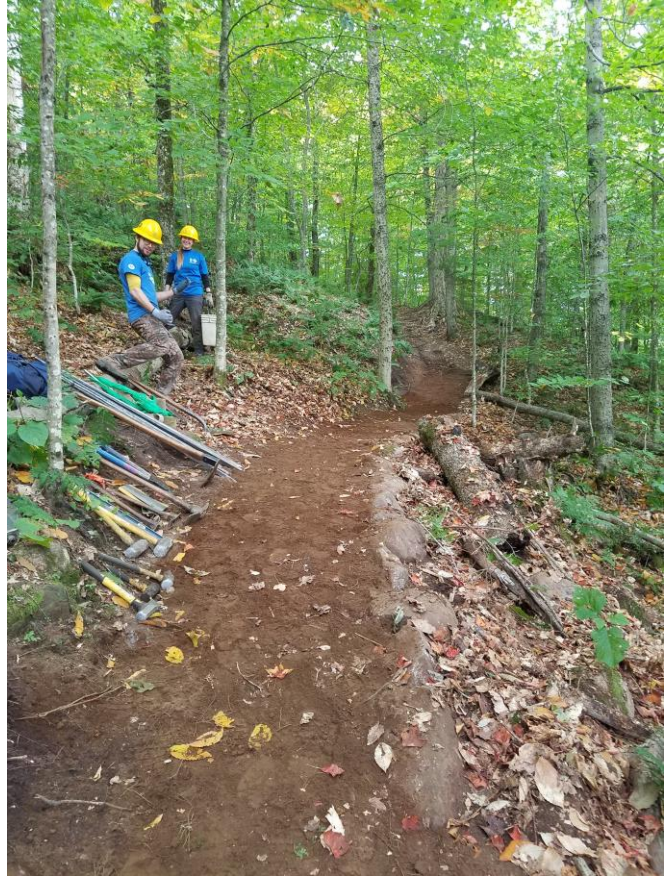
Jake Westrich

"I helped make natural areas in Adirondack Park more accessible to the public; both local and out of state. Trails I worked on are now more resistant to erosion and general degradation. The Adirondack Corps has introduced me to the conservation world. We made turnpikes, bridges, retaining walls, water bars, drains, and stairs out of rocks and wood. I feel comfortable creating all of those things, and I know what to do and what not to do in the field.

The thing I got the most and expected the least out of this program were friends. We shared countless experiences, and in many ways that's just as important as all of the training and

experience I got during the season. I've undergone a lot of personal growth through this program. What I most value from this program is how it taught me to communicate effectively with people, regardless of any differences in personality, background, or moral codes. The close-knit, community aspect of this program allowed me to improve my communication abilities, especially in stressful environments, by leaps and bounds."







"My time in that wilderness holds memories never to be forgotten. Those early experiences and others for which I feel so fortunate, have had a deep and long-lasting impact on my life and on my commitment to conservation and the environment. They are also at the root of SCA."

Elizabeth Titus-Putnam, SCA Founder

