2018

Northwest Youth Corps
ASL Inclusion Conservation Crews
A Partnership with the National Park Service
“It is exciting when a Northwest Youth Corps American Sign Language Inclusion crew arrives at our park. Sure, they get a great deal of vital work accomplished. They also bring an enthusiasm and eagerness to make a difference that is infectious for the park staff. The excitement of witnessing the change on the landscape is only second to seeing the participants grow as individuals and as a team.”

Jonathan Burpee, Superintendent, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park
Northwest Youth Corps
ASL Inclusion Conservation Crews 2018

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**Administrative Partners**
NPS Washington Service Office, Financial Assistance
NPS Washington Service Office, Youth Programs Division

**Site Partners**
Lewis and Clark National Historical Park
Mount Rainier National Park
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

**Recruiting Partners**
Aberdeen High School – Aberdeen, WA
Accessibility Northwest – Eugene, OR
Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Washington DC
American Society for Deaf Children – Washington DC
California School for the Deaf – Fremont, CA
Chemeketa, Sign Language Dept. – Salem, OR
CorpsTHAT – Baltimore, MD *
David Douglas High School – Portland, OR
Deaf Services of Southern Oregon – Medford, OR
DHS – Salem, OR
Direction Services – Eugene, OR
Edmonds Woodway High School – Edmonds, WA
Educational Service District 112 – Vancouver, WA
Eugene School District 4j District Office – Eugene, OR
Evergreen School District – Vancouver, WA
Gallaudet University – Washington DC
Hard of Hearing and Deaf Services – Cottage Grove, OR
Hearing Loss Association of Linn and Benton County – Albany, OR
Hearing Loss Association of Oregon – Eugene, OR
LILA – Lane Independent Living Alliance – Eugene, OR

NPS Pacific West Region, Financial Assistance

Olympic National Park
San Juan Island National Historical Park

Maryland School for the Deaf – Frederick, MD
Northwest ADA Center – Mountlake Terrace, WA
NorCal Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Yuba City, CA
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services – Eugene, OR
Oregon School for the Deaf – Salem, OR
Portland Community College – Portland, OR
Sign On Oregon – Salem, OR
Sonoma County Office of Education, Deaf and HHIA Fiesta Edu. Center – Rohnert Park, CA
Southwest Oregon Community College – Coos Bay, OR
Southwest Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Vancouver, WA
State of Oregon Dept. of Human Services – Eugene, OR
Tri County Sign Language Interpreting, Inc. – Salem, OR
Tucker-Maxon Middle School – Portland, OR
Washington School for the Deaf – Vancouver, WA

* CorpsTHAT made multiple additional national contacts on behalf of the program

Northwest Youth Corps is also deeply appreciative for the partnership of the National Park Foundation, Washington Backcountry Horseman, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Dawkins Charitable Trust for providing additional financial resources to this effort.
Meeting Federal Priorities

Northwest Youth Corps’ American Sign Language Inclusion crew meets the vision of the Department of the Interior to increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans so that our people can be healthier and more fully enjoy the wonderful features of their federal lands. This project also enhances conservation stewardship whereby all levels of government and private landowners work cooperatively to achieve shared natural resource management goals across landscapes. The project also improves the status of our nation’s fish and wildlife and the healthy habitats that support them and is contributing to reducing the National Park Service’s significant cyclical and deferred maintenance needs.

Additionally, Northwest Youth Corps’ ASL Inclusion crew meets the goals of the Administration to increase the participation of more than 56 million Americans living with disabilities to live and work, through equal education and employment opportunities. These include a June 2017 Executive Order expanding apprenticeship programs, giving more people—including those with disabilities—access to the relevant skills and tools needed to secure good jobs. By increasing training opportunities, we give more Americans a chance to thrive in the community, pursue careers, contribute to our economy, and fully participate in our society.

Northwest Youth Corps Overview

Founded in 1984, Northwest Youth Corps is a regional conservation corps which provides youth and young adults with an educational outdoors experience promoting growth, employment training, and community building. As a member of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, we are committed to strengthening our nation’s underserved young people and their communities through service and challenge.

We believe that young people deserve equitable and inclusive access to serve in, and enjoy public lands. This year, Northwest Youth Corps positively impacted more than 1,000 participants from diverse backgrounds by providing 82,317 hours of curriculum engagement and facilitating 219,692 hours of conservation stewardship projects among 161 partners.

Looking toward 2019, Northwest Youth Corps hopes to leverage our six years of experience and partnerships within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community to assist other Corps programs in serving underrepresented people through effective programs, while ensuring that a greater diversity of individuals assist in restoring and enhancing our shared public lands.
Individuals who identify as Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) experience a variety of challenges in life when the language and culture that define them is not well understood. For this reason, it is imperative that this population receives appropriate and equitable accommodations to live more fulfilling lives in a hearing-dominant world. Unfortunately, these accommodations largely go unmet, particularly in the workplace. According to recent data, DHH individuals generally experience higher rates of unemployment and lower lifetime wages compared to those who have the capacity to hear. And in Washington State alone, nearly half of DHH individuals remain unemployed.

Northwest Youth Corps established its American Sign Language (ASL) Inclusion program to provide employment experience to DHH individuals who otherwise face employment and income barriers in a hearing-dominant world.

In our first year (2013), we provided life-changing experiences to three unemployed DHH teens. Since then, thanks to the National Park Service (NPS) and others, this program has continued to grow and improve. In 2018, significant financial investment from the NPS Youth Office funded both crew leadership and ASL interpreters needed to engage 15 DHH teens and six DHH young adults, who served across five National Park units and adjacent lands.

As a result, Northwest Youth Corps’ ASL Inclusion program has been able to accomplish mission-critical projects, particularly those which make recreation more accessible to the public, reduce backlogged maintenance, and provide valuable human resources to NPS trails and habitat restoration teams.

Northwest Youth Corps would not have been able to leverage new and exciting partnerships with the National Park Service were it not for a vision of equity and inclusion shared by both organizations. Working together, Northwest Youth Corps is dedicated to continued partnership with the NPS to broaden access to stewardship and engagement in the 21st Century.

Executive Summary

Individuals who identify as Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) experience a variety of challenges in life when the language and culture that define them is not well understood. For this reason, it is imperative that this population receives appropriate and equitable accommodations to live more fulfilling lives in a hearing-dominant world. Unfortunately, these accommodations largely go unmet, particularly in the workplace. According to recent data, DHH individuals generally experience higher rates of unemployment and lower lifetime wages compared to those who have the capacity to hear. And in Washington State alone, nearly half of DHH individuals remain unemployed.

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### Locations and Outputs

#### San Juan Island National Historical Park
- **Project service hours**: 364 ($8,987 in value)
- **Education hours**: 44
- **Trail decommissioned**: 1 mile
- **Rock retaining wall built**: 65 feet
- **Invasive plants removed**: .25 acres
- **Coastline debris removed**: 1 mile
- **Young adult members**: 6
- **Adult leaders**: 2

#### North Cascades National Park Service Complex
- **Project service hours**: 912 ($22,517 in value)
- **Education hours**: 55
- **Trail built or maintained**: 3 miles
- **Check steps installed**: 32
- **Youth members**: 9
- **Adult leaders**: 2

#### Olympic National Park
- **Project service hours**: 622 ($15,357 in value)
- **Education hours**: 55
- **Puncheon built / trail maintained**: 4 miles
- **Deadfall trees bucked out**: 16
- **Coastline debris removed**: 3 miles
- **Youth members**: 6
- **Adult leaders**: 2

#### Mount Rainier National Park
- **Project service hours**: 868 ($21,431 in value)
- **Education hours**: 55
- **Drainage features installed**: 12
- **Trail built or maintained**: 7 miles
- **Turnpike built**: 20 feet
- **Youth members**: 9
- **Adult leaders**: 2

#### Lewis & Clark National Historical Park
- **Project service hours**: 868 ($21,431 in value)
- **Education hours**: 55
- **Acres of invasive weeds removed**: 5
- **Trail built/maintained**: 1.8 miles
- **Youth members**: 6
- **Adult leaders**: 2

#### Adjacent Public Lands
- **Project service hours**: 2109 ($52,071 in value)
- **Education hours**: 276
- **Fencing built/removed**: 1 mile
- **Retaining wall built**: 65 feet
- **Coastline debris removed**: 1 mile
- **Invasive plants removed**: .75 acres
- **Logs bucked out**: 10
- **Trail drainages constructed**: 10
- **Turnpike constructed**: 70 feet
Program Demographics

**Teen Program**
(ages 16-19)

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**Young Adult Program**
(ages 19-25)

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**Crew Leaders**

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**Race / Ethnicity**

- **Teen Program**
  - African American: 2
  - Native American: 1
  - Hispanic / Latino: 4
  - Asian / Pacific Islander: 6
- **Young Adult Program**
  - African American: 2
  - Native American: 4
  - Hispanic / Latino: 1
  - Asian / Pacific Islander: 2
- **Crew Leaders**
  - African American: 1
  - Native American: 2
  - Hispanic / Latino: 3
  - Asian / Pacific Islander: 2

**Communication**

- **Teen Program**
  - Deaf / Hard of Hearing: 2
  - Hearing, fluent in ASL: 2
- **Young Adult Program**
  - Deaf / Hard of Hearing: 2
  - Hearing, fluent in ASL: 2
- **Crew Leaders**
  - Deaf / Hard of Hearing: 2
  - Hearing, fluent in ASL: 2
ASL Inclusion Program for Teens (16-19)

Funding from NPS funded the fielding of two five-week ASL Inclusion teen conservation crews. Together we engaged 15 DHH youth and three field staff in conservation service in four National Park units in Washington and Oregon, and other project weeks in the south and central Cascade Mountains. One of the three adult crew leaders was deaf, while the two hearing leaders were very experienced in Deaf culture and fluent in ASL. Collectively, the crews completed 3,706 hours of conservation service projects and approximately 960 hours of education using Northwest Youth Corps’ accredited field curriculum. Each of the fifteen youth participants earned an educational stipend of $1,500 for their term of service, including $250 in additional bonuses for safety, and academic credit in physical education and environmental science.

Members often come to Northwest Youth Corps without real job experience, and rarely any experience in conservation work. Assistant Crew leader Phill Stasz stated that, “the Deaf population, as far as I’m concerned, they need this. They need to see the power of potential and their own empowerment. This work, it’s tough, it’s hot, it’s sweaty, it’s dirty. You have to cook for yourself, you have to make camp, you have to clean up after yourself. You have to learn responsibility and accountability. In my experience, this group, they pick it up. It’s very natural. They’re just used to fighting a little bit more.”

At Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, the members used this power of persistence to eradicate invasive weeds and complete trail work as part of a massive park-wide effort. At Olympic, North Cascades and Mount Rainier national parks, the crews honed their trail-building and maintenance skills to improve public access to recreation. By summer’s end, both crews had built a lasting legacy on the ground through the construction of trails, checksteps, turnpikes, retaining walls, and numerous drainage structures.

“Yes, (my leaders) did make my life difficult, because they made me learn how to deal with tough situations with other crew members. The crew leaders wanted to see me grow and become more independent, and because they made my life difficult, I made changes in myself that I am proud of.”

“My two crewleaders made me want to have a future job in the National Park Service. My leaders were strict and got me to learn important lessons. They inspired me to be proud of who I am.”

“Mountains, beautiful.”

“Improved teamwork, becoming a better leader, and learned … uhm … yes to eat vegetables.”

“(I learned that) not everyone knows things, to be brave and take risks in conversations, and be yourself and don’t let others control you.”
Getting important work done and investing in the quality of the lives of our DHH youth also had a profound impact on our project partners:

“I love working with Northwest Youth Corps crews! The kids have so many great questions about the natural world, the parks, and the work we’re doing together -- their curiosity and enthusiasm recharges me and gives me renewed hope for the future. I’m so grateful that programs like NYC are around, making sure that young people have the chance to connect with nature and their national parks, and their role as our future stewards. Really!”

Carla Cole, Natural Resources Program Manager, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park

“I felt very honored to have this opportunity to work alongside this amazing and dedicated crew. Their level of professionalism and teamwork was stellar. They were quick to laugh, eager to share, and learn new things. Working with this crew was one of the highlights of my entire summer. I LOVE THIS CREW!!!”

Nick Teague, San Juan Islands National Monument, Outdoor Recreation Planner
“The work is hard, it’s physically demanding. You come home at the end of every day and your body just hurts. Also, at the end of every day (the ASL Crew) gets to look down at the work we did, and there’s a lot of satisfaction in that too. It’s neat to pass on that you can work really hard and be really tired and be really satisfied. … Nature is the great equalizer. It doesn’t care how wealthy you are or how old you are or how able you are or what color your skin is or what your sexual orientation is. It doesn’t care about any of that stuff.”

James Montgomery, White River Trail Crew, Mount Rainier National Park

“The ASL (American Sign Language) crew members are quick to pick up new skills and concepts and are excited about new opportunities. They are anxious to do hard physical work and do so safely. They were exceptional at communication, despite the potential perceived barriers. This was a good experience for the Northwest Youth Corps ASL crew and for the NPS staff as well.”

Julie Cowan, Chief of Facilities, San Juan Island National Historical Park
“The Park Service is invested in creating opportunities for young stewards of public lands. Northwest Youth Corps’ American Sign Language (ASL) Inclusion crew program champions diversity and works to create allies for diverse American youth. Through this partnership, we are investing in our future and mentoring leaders - with the ASL program and all of our Olympic National Park youth programs.”

Heather Stephens, Volunteer and Youth Coordinator, Olympic National Park

“The program isn’t just a benefit for the kids who participate. The National Park Service has a multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog, and Mount Rainier is no exception. We have 275 miles of trail. We are not able to work on every mile of the trail. I’ve seen a lot of good work (from the ASL crew). I’ve seen a lot of great attitudes. I’ve seen a love for the park. It’s everything you would want in someone who’s here doing work.”

Jim Ziolkowski, Roads and Trails Foreman, Mount Rainier National Park
This year marked the third year Northwest Youth Corps ran programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults, to create an accessible “next step on the path to employment” for DHH youth previously served in our teen program. This crew model, serving six DHH young adults over eight weeks, experienced two highly successful seasons, the first at San Juan Island National Historical Park in 2016, and at Mount Rainier National Park last year.

Northwest Youth Corps’ was excited to run this program again in 2018 in the San Juan Islands, where a unique consortium of land managers and funders allowed us to expand the reach of the program. In addition to key foundational funding from the NPS Youth Division, Northwest Youth Corps was able to leverage additional funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the National Park Foundation, and the Dawkins Charitable Trust. In addition to work with the National Park Service, the additional funding facilitated the participation of San Juan Island National Monument, Lime Kiln and Moran state parks, YMCA Camp Orkila, and San Juan County Land Bank property.

The work was equally diverse, including shoreline debris clean up, fence and trail eradication for ecosystem restoration, and trail maintenance and construction. The crew also built structures including drainage systems, check steps, turnpikes and retaining walls; deconstructed an abandoned dock; eradicated invasive plants and replaced them with native plants; and removed boulders and crushed rock.

The crew was also able to share the wonders of the islands. This included sailing on a whale watching boat, bicycling on San Juan Island, attending Park educational presentations, attending the county fair, utilizing Camp Orkila’s high and low ropes/zip line, and having the opportunity to engage in island life with various members of the community that they worked side by side with.
Crew Leader Kensie Channon

Northwest Youth Corps’ ASL Inclusion Program provided me so many opportunities, with a variety of rich experiences for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing crew members, and (for myself) the Deaf crew leader. At Northwest Youth Corps, Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals learn how to work together outside of their comfort zone. It helps them develop independence because they will need to learn how to interact with the environment, hearing crew members, and the job itself.

As the leader for the ASL crew, it was my responsibility to ensure that my crew had the same equitable experiences as hearing individuals at Northwest Youth Corps. Through this program, Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals had opportunities to see and break through barriers, both on the job and personally, that they could overcome through their job duties. They gained experiences they wouldn't otherwise have if they didn’t work with people from different backgrounds. This program teaches Deaf and Hard of Hearing people crew members to work in a hearing environment and meet high expectations.

Thanks to accommodations for the ASL crew, this program gave youth the positive benefit of having a job in the outdoors, along with blissful views of the mountains, trees, and lakes. Through access to the Pacific Northwest, crew members learned how much they have to be grateful for, had opportunities to be more independent, and learned how to prepare for the real world after they graduate from school. Through education, they learn how conservation works, which not everyone is exposed to through lack of access.

As long the ASL program exists, youth will have a good chance to help maintain the outdoors. I strongly recommend the program to give youths and their crew leaders a unique experience with many fortuitous learning opportunities. The ASL crew brings their own language and two different cultures together to create extra beautiful art in nature.

Kensie Channon
2018 ASL crew leader
I am a young woman in my mid-twenties, who is also Deaf. I grew up studying at a Deaf program in a mainstream school, and attended Gallaudet University, the only university in the world tailored for the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing. I graduated with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Mathematics.

(Before Northwest Youth Corps), I struggled to find a job, any kind of job, and I felt the lowest I have ever felt in my life. One day, I saw a video blog about a Deaf person in the Northwest Youth Corps American Sign Language crew. She praised this program, and shared how much better and happier she felt afterward. That was when I decided to apply, and in spring 2017, I was hired as a crew member for the ASL crew.

I showed up and worked for eight weeks in Mt. Rainier National Park; it took a lot of hard work, and required a bunch of sweat, blood and tears. However I was able to succeed, because my crew was surrounded by an abundance of support from Northwest Youth Corps, the NPS, and each other.

This program consists of different members who are all ASL users, which means that we face little or no communication barriers. Also in the real world, we are often faced with discrimination. With this being a Deaf crew, we view each other as equal. I had such a huge positive experience working as a crew member for the ASL crew that I wanted to make sure that future crew members would experience what I experienced. I decided to reapply to Northwest Youth Corps, this time as a crewleader.

Northwest Youth Corps’ American Sign Language program is so important to me. The main reason is that it allows me to have a job. That in itself is already paramount. According to the National Deaf Center, in 2016 only 48% of Deaf individuals were employed in this country. With that, Northwest Youth Corps is a perfect place for a Deaf individual to learn what it’s like to obtain a job and how to keep it. They acquire life skills through this job, something that they may not get anywhere else.

I’ve obtained so much knowledge through these experiences, including learning to have a positive outlook on life, and discovering my self-worth. I realized that not a single person is worthless in this world, and it made me happier. That is why the Northwest Youth Corps American Sign Language program is so important to me.
Program Support and Sustainability

Northwest Youth Corps deeply appreciates centralized funding from NPS, as well as from NPS field units where the crews were mobilized. We were also very successful in raising additional funds from the National Park Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Washington Backcountry Horseman, and Dawkins Charitable Trust. Despite that success, the timing of both funding notification and fund availability was very challenging this year. This lack of predictability prevents Northwest Youth Corps from being able to make multiyear investment in staff, recruitment, and infrastructure, all of which are essential for economic sustainability, long-term program quality, and perhaps most important, credibility in the DHH community.

We made a great start on diversifying funding with a very successful fundraising initiative for FY18 that began last year. We were gratified that the NPS National Youth Office committed to a higher level of financial engagement after seeing the success of FY17 programming in the field. An application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (which was too late to apply to 2017 programming) was great to have “in the bank” as part of the overall funding plan. However, while more than $63,000 from this source was available to apply toward our 2018 program, the timing of final approval was so significantly delayed that it negatively impacted on-site planning with San Juan Island National Historical Park.

The difficulties service-wide with both the Task Agreement Process and budget clarity/timing posed a significant challenge to the overall planning and implementation of our ASL initiative this year. Approval for more than 75% of the total funds granted from the National Youth Office was not finalized in a timely way. Programs planned at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park and Mount Rainier National Park were first delayed by uncertain budgets, and then by the slowness of the Task Agreement process. We were extremely fortunate to receive unanticipated funding from the National Park Foundation that we were able to use to prevent the loss of the ASL program at both sites.

Despite these challenges, this program remains highly replicable, and also allows the larger Corps community to provide similar opportunities for the underserved DHH population to gain employment and conservation experience. In fact, other corps in The Corps Network have run similar programs using “inclusion toolkits” filled with valuable information for supporting diverse populations. We are currently building upon our own inclusion toolkits, with resources gleaned from both the DHH community and their allies, to improve program quality and success.

In regard to building a continuum of experience into our program model, we were very excited to welcome one of our highly successful corpsmembers from last year’s ASL Young Adult program as a crewleader for that same program this year.

Each of our successes also point to opportunities to improve, gain greater depth of experience and learning, reflect inward, and bring these lessons to make our programs more inclusive and equitable.
We will continue to move forward in our:

- **Commitment to Community.** Northwest Youth Corps will continue to build trust within the community and its stakeholders. Once a Corps opens its doors to the Deaf community, it must be committed to working through all of the challenges to support cultural diversity which may arise. Corps will bring flexibility and humility to the collaboration.

- **Cultural Competence.** Northwest Youth Corps will continue to engage in a close working relationship with not only DHH individuals, but the interpreting community as well. Better understanding of the issues around how DHH individuals choose to interact with the hearing world in different ways is essential to effectively and respectfully serving this community. Deliberate and proactive training is essential in this work, and we will be sharing what we learn with our partners.

- **Coalition Building.** Northwest Youth Corps will continue to work with project partners and stakeholders to build investment in the project. Once we piloted the project, we promoted it among our agency partners. Now, Northwest Youth Corps’ federal, state, and local partners are all excited about this project and want to support it and make it sustainable in the long term, including opening opportunities on their staff for these valuable employees.

- **Building Capacity.** Northwest Youth Corps will build opportunities throughout our entire organization for Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth and young adults, including all programs, field staff and full time positions, and our Board of Directors.

**Media Exposure**

Northwest Youth Corps’ ASL program was generously featured in The Daily Chronicle (Centralia WA) article, “Teenagers Pour Sweat, Love Into Mount Rainier’s Trails”, published September 11, 2018. The article featured, in words and photos, members of the ASL inclusion group and the work they carried out on Mt. Rainier National Park’s Lakes Trail and Wonderland Trail this summer, often alongside members of the National Park Service. The article discusses, among other topics, the challenge of engaging individuals from diverse backgrounds on our public lands, and quotes Mount Rainier trail foreman Jim Ziolkowski, who thinks that Youth Corps crews are an example of how that change can happen.

The full article is located: [http://www.nwyouthcorps.org/pdf/The%20Daily%20Chronicle.pdf](http://www.nwyouthcorps.org/pdf/The%20Daily%20Chronicle.pdf)

Northwest Youth Corps’ ASL program was also mentioned in another article published in the Idaho State Journal, published September 21, 2018, located here: [http://www.nwyouthcorps.org/pdf/idahostatejournal.pdf](http://www.nwyouthcorps.org/pdf/idahostatejournal.pdf)
Funding

WASO. The Washington Service Office, Division of Youth Programs provided a grant of $200,000. This funding was focused on four areas of support for this program.

- A significant portion of this funding facilitated Northwest Youth Corps’ ability to hire a full-time staff member as an Inclusion Coordinator in support of the program. This staff member, fully fluent in ASL, coordinated recruitment of both members and field staff; coordinated with the Deaf community to build awareness of our program; worked internally to facilitate our own organizational cultural competency; identified and hired qualified interpreters; and supported the programs in the field. She also offered ASL instruction to Northwest Youth Corps staff during work hours.

- A small portion of this funding was used to provide North Cascades National Park Service Complex with an extra crew week of the ASL youth program.

- The funding also supported the CorpsTHAT organization (founded by two former Northwest Youth Corps employees) in attending and presenting at The Corps Forum in Washington, DC in February 2018 on ASL inclusion program opportunities, and to pay for member and leader recruiting.

- The funding also paid and provided ASL interpreter support in the field for training, agency liaison and project planning, field visits, graduation ceremonies, and (if necessary) emergency response.

Private Foundations. This year, Northwest Youth Corps was able to leverage WASO’s financial commitment to our ASL Inclusion initiative by approaching philanthropic funders for additional support. This highly successful effort yielded grants totaling more than $100,000 of supplemental funds to mobilize the ASL Young Adult crew at San Juan Islands National Historical Park (as well as including work with San Juan Island National Monument, Washington State Parks and YMCA Camp Orkila). In addition, we provided ASL Youth Crews to Lewis and Clark NHP and Mount Rainier National Park, and supported the cost of ASL interpreters and tools used by the ASL young adult program. Significant funders included the National Park Foundation ($36,500); the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation ($63,706); and the Dawkins Charitable Trust ($10,000).

NPS Sites. Two National Park Units in western Washington provided supplemental funding for programs that served in their parks.

- North Cascades National Park Service Complex $8,625
- Olympic National Park $17,500
Conclusion

The ASL Inclusion program is one of several initiatives at Northwest Youth Corps which introduce under-represented populations to educational and vocational experiences in the outdoors. This continues to be an enriching experience for all involved, starting with the corpsmembers all the way through to our Corps administration staff.

More and more, this enthusiasm is also mirrored by the NPS staff who welcome the crews to their parks each year. Chris Clatterbuck, Chief of Resources at Lewis and Clark NHP, stated in his program evaluation from this summer that “NYC helps the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in its mission to connect to underserved communities. They do a fantastic job finding crews that reflect the diversity of the country. I can’t wait for our ASL crew next year!”

Northwest Youth Corps is currently collaborating with our NPS partners to evaluate what was successful and where improvements can be made. As part of this learning experience, we’ve been reminded that our programs cannot use a “one size fits all” philosophy; we must work with each member to meet his or her needs, and provide the necessary support to ensure a positive experience. We will continue to improve our support of our members as we carry out the legacy of the original Civilian Conservation Corps to create a more cohesive society. We look forward to a full debrief of all NPS partners before planning occurs for next year.

Northwest Youth Corps is deeply appreciative of both NPS and other partners committed to engaging DHH youth in conservation service, inviting their own internal cultures to be more inclusive, and diversifying their own work force through partnership with us. We look forward to discussing our partnership to continue this program in 2019.
“The Northwest Youth Corps ASL Inclusion program provides substantial value on many fronts; good quality work is done on high priority trails, which ensures people have access to their national park. Just as important, these remarkable individuals gain valuable job skills, experience high caliber teamwork, and form lasting bonds with public lands. Finally, park employees who get to work with the ASL crew are inspired by their resilience, commitment, and quality of support for the park. It’s a trifecta of great outcomes!”

Chip Jenkins, Superintendent, Mount Rainier National Park