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## Grant funds youth National Park projects in Idaho, Northwest

By JERRY PAINTER [jpainter@postregister.com](mailto:jpainter@postregister.com) Sep 21, 2018



Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve staff and Idaho Conservation Corps pose for a photo after a day of tearing up old asphalt on an interpretive trail being rebuilt at the monument earlier this summer.

Courtesy of Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve Supervisor XXXXXX

The National Park Foundation, a nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, announced a grant of nearly \$300,000 to support youth and young adults providing conservation projects in the Northwest and Idaho.

The grant of \$290,753 will enable the Northwest Youth Corps and Idaho Conservation Corps to engage 150 youth in eight National Park areas on multi-day projects and fund another 100 youth on one-day service and education activities during the year, according to a Northwest Youth Corps news release.

One of the projects involves replacing a popular interpretive trail at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve that has fallen into disrepair.

“We were happy to be the recipient of that grant and the additional capacity provided by the National Park Foundation through Idaho Conservation Corps,” said Wade Vagias, superintendent at Craters of the Moon.

Dwayne Moates, chief of facilities at Craters of the Moon, oversaw the rebuilding of the North Craters Flow Trail, which was “a two or three-year project.”

“It’s an asphalt trail that has a lot of wayside exhibits about volcanic activity here at Craters,” Moates said. “It’s in poor shape so we wanted to fix it up. So they helped us begin that process this year. They came out and helped a park service crew, worked alongside a park service crew and did a lot of physically tough work pulling asphalt off the lava flow and hauling it out to the trailhead by hand in wheelbarrows using shovels and rock bars and provided great work for us.”

Moates said the youth crew of eight were mostly from Idaho with a few from other Western states and elsewhere.

“I told the Idaho Conservation Corps folks and the Northwest Youth Corps folks that I’ve been working on crews like this for 35 years and that was probably one of the best crews I’ve ever seen providing lots of work and being very pleasant to work with,” he said.

Vagias said the park and the youth volunteers benefit from the experience.

“My hope is that it turns the lights on for some of them,” Vagias said. “There is a professional career track that they can walk into a job someday like the one that Dwayne has or that I have or others in the National Park Service.”

Projects involving youth started in June and continue into November at Mount Rainier National Park; Olympic National Park; Nez Perce National Historical Park; City of Rocks National Preserve; Lewis and Clark National Historical Site; San Juan Island National Historical Park; and the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial (part of the Minidoka National Historic Site). Most of the work involves trail construction and maintenance and improving public access to recreation, historical and cultural resources, the news release said.

Northwest Youth Corps formed in 1984 to offer teenagers an education-based work experience mostly in an outdoor setting. Most of the programs youth and young adults are pulled from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California.

Crew members come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and organizations and include programs specifically designed to engage the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community; both urban and rural youth; the LGBTQ community and partners including Washington Trails Association, Seattle Parks and Recreation and OUT There Adventures, according to the news release.

“Witnessing the pride and accomplishments of our crews of youth and young adults is inspirational,” Northwest Youth Corps Executive Director Jeff Parker said.

“National parks bring people together for shared experiences that last a lifetime,” said Katherine Chesson, vice president of grants and programs at the National Park Foundation. “The National Park Foundation’s grant funds service corps helping to maintain these treasured resources and enable more people to connect with them and each other.”

“Youth conservation corps crews are an integral part of the National Park Service team,” said Stan Austin, regional director for the National Park Service’s Pacific West Region. “Through their service, many of these young people will leave behind a legacy of infrastructure improvements that will be enjoyed by generations of visitors.”

To learn more about the Northwest Youth Corps, go to [www.nwyouthcorps.org](http://www.nwyouthcorps.org).

For information on the National Park Foundation, go to [www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org).