



**SPECIAL EDITION:
SCA Members in Their Own Words**



"A trail is more than a path," says Jillian. "It has the propensity to inspire."

A Labor of Love

by Jillian Begin, SCA Crew Member, Borderland State Park, Massachusetts

Trail work hurts. Between the sore muscles, bruises and scrapes, there's no getting around the fact this is physical labor. We live in a world of risks: tick bites, poison ivy, chainsaws, and boulders. Working ten days in a row can weather an individual. Mustering the physical and mental strength to push through the rainiest and muddiest of days does tell me one thing, though: this job is anything but passionless.

We see ourselves as both trail worker and "user," the technical name given to the hikers, bikers, and equestrians who use a trail. As I'm working, I sometimes think back to the trails I loved as a child in northern California and wonder "Who built that trail? Who maintains it? Do they love it like I do?"

Reflections like this not only help me relate to the "user" but remind me that a trail is more than a cleared path through the

wilderness. It holds the possibility of exploration, wonder, and connection. Every trail has the propensity to inspire.

The most rewarding moments on the trail come from the "users"—everyday strangers that come across us working. We'll often see the same locals and their dogs during a stint at a state park, just hiking their favorite trails. When it's time to leave, it can be genuinely difficult to say goodbye. It feels as though we are leaving a newfound paradise.

Borderland State Park in eastern Massachusetts was this paradise for my four crewmates and me in July. We cleared overgrown and invasive vines from a stone wall that dates back to the early 1900s. This striking foot-tall wall runs along the edge of a beautiful pond with a stone bench on its top for users to rest and enjoy the view.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In Their Own Words

This is a special year for SCA and we're commemorating it with a special edition of *The Green Way*. Virtually every word on these pages—with the exception of this column—comes directly from SCA members in the field. These are their stories in their words.

This summer marked SCA's 55th year of engaging diverse young people from all over the country in meaningful, hands-on, conservation service. Thousands of young men and women worked long and hard through one of the hottest summers on record. They are excited to share their experiences with you and I know you'll be inspired by their passion for the outdoors.

The expansion of several key conservation initiatives also made 2012 special for SCA. In national forests across the West, we provided job training for large numbers of young military veterans. I can't tell you how rewarding it is to give back to those who gave so much to their country. At the same time, SCA doubled enrollment in NPS Academy, a program that provides underrepresented youth with professional pathways to National Park Service careers. And our innovative partnership with ARAMARK, in which SCA interns help businesses become more environmentally sustainable, also grew in its second year, while our landmark urban conservation programs provided thousands of city youth with summer jobs and enduring connections to nature.

Of course, having you as part of the SCA team has also made this year one to remember and I thank you for your continuing support. I hope you'll enjoy reading our members' stories and remind you there's much more to see, including videos, slide shows, and blogs, on our website at thesca.org.

Dale M. Penny

Labor of Love *continued from page 1*

One woman we met exclaimed, "I've been coming here for 20 years and I've never seen this wall!" A man said, "You folks are doing really important things for us." And perhaps our favorite came from a cyclist who stopped and yelled from a distance, "Thank you for all you're doing here! This is my favorite spot in the whole world!"

Because the wall was crumbling in the middle, we built a rustic timber fence to keep visitors away from this dangerous section. We used material from nearby in the park, fallen cedars that were overcrowded, effectively granting surrounding saplings more room to grow. We also pulled truckloads of black swallowwort, an invasive plant that is poisonous to butterflies and hides itself among milkweed, the Monarch's favorite food.

We talked to users of all ages and hobbies, engaging them in the conservation and history of their favorite state park. In doing so, it became our favorite state park. Beyond our new visitor and canine friends, we bonded with rangers and the memories of Blanche and Oakes Ames, the historic owners of the park. We were gifted with Borderland doggie bandanas, mine now lives on the dashboard of my truck as a keepsake. The feedback we were given on our positive effects at Borderland, the park, and its community touched us even more. Such a connection to people and place transforms the work we do into something more than physical labor.

It's a labor of love.



In Chicago, SCA members transform empty lots into thriving, community-run gardens and green spaces. Recently, more than 34 high school students and employees from SCA partner Exelon Foundation worked side-by-side with community members to mulch, paint, weed, and clean up what are locally referred to as "pocket parks."

Watershed Moments in New York City

by Michelle Vedder, SCA Intern, Hudson Valley Park, New York

This story is about the blood, sweat, and tears of those who have worked tirelessly over decades to restore a certain water body to its former glory. It goes by the name the Hudson River—you may have heard of it.

My name is Michelle, and I am many things in life. I am a daughter, a sister, an optimist, and what I like to call an “urban conservationist.” I work at Hudson River Park, Manhattan’s largest development project since the creation of Central Park! We span 5 miles from Battery Park City all the way to West 59th Street. My job is to educate the public about the Hudson River estuary. I teach summer camps, care for our fish tanks, and collect specimens from the park. Twice a week, we host a program called “Big City Fishing.” This free event allows anyone to show up and drop a line into the river. We use the opportunity to informally educate people about the Hudson. We love it when they ID the fish they’ve caught using our “Fish of Hudson River Park” poster. We usually release the fish, though occasionally we’ll temporarily place some in the tanks of our indoor classroom. This program connects people to the river in a way that they would probably never experience otherwise. I don’t expect everyone to dedicate their lives to rescuing pandas afterwards, but I do hope that families and individuals will leave with a greater appreciation for their local resources.

The amount of green space in New York City is often overlooked, even by lifetime residents. There is everything from the world-famous Central Park to lesser known areas such as Gateway National Recreation Area. Not only are these spaces beautiful, but they are sorely needed in this sea of buildings. Normally, rainwater is absorbed by the grass, soil, and trees



located within an area. However, when we begin to fill those areas with impervious material, we lose our storm water retention system, as well as its ability to cleanse the water before putting it back into the watershed. This means a lot of the city’s pollution ends up in the Hudson River.

However, the amount of green space and “green” opportunities created in recent years has given us conservationists hope that we can turn this around. And one of the best solutions is to introduce people to the natural resources right in their own backyard.

Read Michelle’s “Follow Me” blog at followme.thesca.org.



Could Tax Benefits From Your Charitable Gifts Get Clipped in Future Years?

Maximize 2012 Tax Savings!

Because there are many proposals on the table from both sides of the aisle to limit the benefits of the charitable income tax deduction or eliminate it entirely in future years, this may be an especially good year to make substantial gifts to SCA and other charities.

Consider outright gifts of appreciated securities you have owned for more than one year. You will get an income tax deduction for the full value and avoid capital gains tax. Or create a life income arrangement such as a charitable gift annuity (see ad page 7) or charitable remainder trust (which can be funded with appreciated securities or real estate). You will get lifetime income and an income tax deduction for part of the value. You can also donate your principal residence or a vacation home, reserve the right to use it for the rest of your life and get a tax deduction now for a substantial part of the value.

For further information, please contact Hugh Montgomery at 603.504.3241 or hmontgomery@thesca.org

SCA Provides New Opportunities for Young Veterans

James Love enlisted in the Marines straight out of high school, just over a decade ago. The Missouri native's first day of boot camp was September 11, 2001. Following eight years in uniform, including two tours of Iraq, Sgt. Love joined SCA's Veterans Fire Corps, a transitional career training program for young military vets, where he continued his service to country by fighting and mitigating wildfires in national forests.



What kind of work are you doing?

Our work so far has been in the Kaibab National Forest based out of Williams, Arizona. We have two prescribed burn units and one thinning unit located within the Wildland Urban Interface surrounding the city of Williams.

What's a typical day like?

At Holden Lake, our objectives were to cut down Ponderosa Pine trees measuring less than nine inches in diameter at breast height and any oaks and junipers measuring less than eight inches in diameter. Due to fire restrictions, chainsaw operation only occurred until 11:00 each morning and the rest of the day would be spent hand-piling all limbs and felled trees for a future prescribed burn.

What led you to SCA?

Specifically, I was interested in the SCA Veterans Fire Corps because it was geared towards recent era military veterans, which meant I would be working with fellow veterans that have had similar experiences to my own, unlike 95% of the young college kids I am surrounded by in school.

Has anything surprised you?

I would say that I am definitely surprised by just how serious everyone takes fire in Northern Arizona. It probably has to do with the fact that the city is literally surrounded by the forest. Everyone seems to be aware of the weather and local fire warnings.

How does this fit into your career plans?

My goal is to work for a federal agency so my time in the Marines counts towards my retirement and pension. The chance to find out if a future in the USFS is right for me is what's motivating me to put forth all my effort.

Setting, and Scaling, Boundaries

by Ian Mayer, SCA Corps member,
White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire

Our "backcountry hitch" was actually a six-day portion of a 24-day hitch in the Androscoggin region of the White Mountain National Forest. By some definitions, most of our work has been "backcountry" because we've been more than two hours from definitive medical care. For the past six days, however, we've been camping on Mount Madison, just below tree line. The commute to our kitchen area was farther than the commute to our work site. We added a tent platform to the campsite for a total of six sites, and tried to use brush and fallen trees to create barriers to keep people from venturing off into the woods to make their own sites. It was interesting to see how people behaved when they encountered our boundaries. We learned where we needed to add brush and what size rocks people are willing to dig out of the ground to create a place to pitch their tent.

We were warned that people would tend to stop and ask questions. One of the most common and difficult to answer is, "what exactly do you do?" I tell the public that I am part of a corps of 29 members who educate youth about conservation and the environment, engage youth in volunteer opportunities, and work on conservation projects on public land in New Hampshire. Whether they fully understand or not, their reaction is almost always one of great thanks. They see us as volunteers who are spending time away from friends and family and sacrificing normal lives for the good of conservation. We accept their gratitude, but really we're doing what we like to do: work outside, meet new people, travel, and advance a good cause.

Before this, I had never heard of Mount Madison. But I got to work where people vacation, and live where most people only visit, and play in some of the most beautiful scenery I've ever laid my eyes on.



Postcard from Alaska

by Stacey Kehaulani Torigoe, SCA Intern, Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska

Aboard the *Serac*, the Kenai Fjords research vessel, we bob gently in Aialik Bay, listening to the sounds of gulls, surf, and an ancient tidewater glacier calving. Every five minutes or so, a piece of the massive ice wall half a mile ahead rips away with the noise of thunder and gunshots exploding all at once, and plunges into the green-blue silt-tinted sea below, sending up a cloud of spray.

I am an Exotic Plant Management Team intern with the Student Conservation Association and a member of NPS Academy, a workforce development program sponsored by SCA and the National Park Service. Tim, from the NPS Regional Office and Eric, the EPMT Educator at SCA, are joining fellow intern Travis and I to help with the monumental task of pulling weeds in the furthest reaches of the park. Most of Kenai Fjords NP is inaccessible unless you have a boat, a helicopter, or both. That's a big reason why there are so few weeds here—with few boots and wheels to track seed in, the glaciers and fjords remain mostly pure, untainted. These rugged miles of spruce-set coastline is home to whales, otters, birds, and salmon.

We've been blessed with a window of glorious weather for days—and subsequently cursed with bugs. Clouds of black flies, moose flies, and mosquitoes storm the shores, out for blood. They are vicious, biting through gloves and clothes, hurling themselves with audible “thunks” against our meshy bug shirts. We look like alien Druids in our heavy green hoods.

There are other nasties here as well. Bluegrass and dandelions ride in on kayak gear, or boots hauled from Colorado. We are



pulling *Taraxacum officinale* by the pound from the cliffs of Dinglestad Glacier. Dinglestad is still infested with them, even after years of manual control. The lines and polygons of infestation data seem to grow every year with the population, interrupting ecological succession on the newly-shed moraines.

Still later, we reach the end of the Harding Icefield Trail. Here, it feels like the end of the world. There is no plunging cliff, no soaring overlook. Just flags through the snow, and tracks, and then nothing. Our crew braved rain, cold, and biting katabatic winds from over the icefield to flag the route through the crumbly rock and white powder of the alpine zone. After working on it all summer, the trail feels like an old friend. It's our trail, in a way. It's our legacy, albeit a fast-melting one. And our gift to visitors and staff at Kenai Fjords.

See Stacey's blog and photos at followme.thesca.org.

The Glue That Binds Us

by Elena Marroquin, SCA Crew Leader, Houston, Texas

Our first assignment? Create a 508-foot trail to a giant bog. When you look at the bog, all you see is a huge circle surrounded by trees. As Bobby and Mike, our contacts here at Spring Creek Greenway, explain, “it looks like aliens landed here.”

In only three days, we clear the route and place down mulch on the freshly cut trail. The best part is seeing the students' amazed faces and hearing them say “I can't believe we did this!” It is by far the most rewarding part of the project.

For a lot of our students, this is their first job and their first time working in the outdoors. Yet they adjust to the Houston heat and work hard as a team. Now we need to build the benches and trashcan holder. But we run into a few bumps along the road. First, the wood isn't in on time and when it comes in, it isn't the correct kind. Bobby is nice enough to exchange it. In the meantime, we maintain trails in other parts of the park. The crew eventually finishes three benches and a trashcan holder in two days! I honestly smile every time I look back and see all of the hard work they did. Those numbers still blow my mind.



On our final day, we dig a few holes in the ground and fill them with cement to secure the benches. We give Mike and Bobby SCA tee shirts so that they can always remember us. We even get them to put them on for a few pictures.

The trail is open for the public to enjoy. Our work here is done and although we'll be at another site the following week, parting is still bittersweet. This trail is the glue that binds us together.



Great? Yes. Dismal? No Way!

By Elizabeth Ruiz, SCA Intern, Great Dismal Swamp NWR, Virginia

I've been trudging and mucking around in the Great Dismal Swamp for almost two months now. I've been getting to know the land, the history, the plants, the birds, myself, and since I'm a Hydrology Technician Intern, I've really been getting to know the water.

My work involves reading gauges all around the 113,000-acre refuge. I like the concept of working with the swamp to keep it, well, swampy. The water here is an organic soup—stained deep red and brown from the organic material in the peat soils. The data collection is a huge perk. I've been doing a lot of flow work, too. This means I spend a lot of time in the ditches with equipment that makes me feel quite accomplished. I can't count the number of times I've wrung my socks out this summer—but I've learned to not mind.

A hydrologist from the US Geological Survey is here, collecting water samples for isotope analysis. In case your chemistry is a little rusty, a periodic element, like carbon, can have a varied number of neutrons. The most common form of carbon has 12, but it can have more or fewer, and this is useful because a greater amount of one isotope over another can provide some clues as to where the water came from—because not all water is created equal.

He's collecting from different sites all over the refuge, and I've been tagging along. The collection itself has been way simpler than the science—it involves filling a small glass bottle with water at a certain site, after checking parameters like acidity and temperature. It's been nice to be outside of the rigid protocol of an indoor lab. Outdoor science is incredibly liberating. As summer closes, I'm happy with what I've done. I've grown as a person—I have renewed confidence in my ability to seek out and accept new challenges. I pushed myself outside of my comfort zone and have emerged wiser because of it. I feel like a Vassar Girl—as strong and bold as SCA's founder, Liz Putnam.

The Great Dismal Swamp is a part of me now—and not just the ticks and bug bites and tiny scratches I've picked up along the way. When I first imagined it in the nervous weeks leading up to my arrival, I pictured something out of a tale that parents would tell young children when they want them to behave. Instead of songbirds, I pictured mosquitoes; instead of the lush understory of the forest, I imagined a boiling, stinking muck. With a name like "Great Dismal" how could I not?

As it turns out, I couldn't have been more wrong. The greens are glowing and varied, and though the mosquitoes grow large, the butterflies are larger. The beauty of the swamp has captured me completely.

Read more from Elizabeth, including her encounters with wildlife, at followme.thesca.org



They did their best to get me involved and challenge me. I was assigned the project of developing a Blackwater app for smart phones and created a free tour guide.

I also took a training course in archery that certified me as a basic instructor at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. The training opened my eyes to recreational archery and qualified me to teach the Youth Conservation Corps members and other young kids in the area. It was rewarding to work with little kids who had never shot a bow before. They had a hard time in the beginning but by the end of the course they were close to hitting the bull's-eye and having fun the whole time.

One of the first events I participated in was a fishing derby in Eastern Neck. I helped kids get fish off their hooks and I took photos of them so they could remember that moment. I also went to Baron Island, which was very beautiful. It's home to a whole suit of species of salt marsh obligates, species that are found only in these title salt marshes. Overall, diversity is lower than, say, a boreal forest but you can see dragon flies here, for example, that are found nowhere else It was an amazing experience.

I would like to thank U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Student Conservation Association for giving me the opportunity to participate in this internship. It changed my perspective and helped me understand why these refuges are so important.

SCA Hits the Bulls-Eye

By Deliair Docilet, Jr., SCA Intern,
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Maryland

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is located south of Cambridge, Maryland. Living on the refuge is very different from my hometown of Miami, where I am used to either walking or taking a bus to where I need go to. The refuge is a 10-15 minute drive to town.

My experience with Blackwater has been great. I have learned many things about visitor services and on my first week I even met the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dan Ashe (above). Working with visitor services was fun and challenging.



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For further information, please contact Hugh Montgomery at 603.504.3241 or hmontgomery@thesca.org



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SCA is a nationwide conservation force of college and high school volunteers who protect and restore America's parks, forests, and other public lands. SCA's active, hands-on approach to conservation has helped to develop a new generation of conservation leaders, inspire lifelong stewardship, and save our planet.

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Stewardship and Sustainability

by Chelsea Rozek, SCA Intern,
ARAMARK/University of South Florida, Florida

My mission here is to design and implement a process for tracking sustainable food purchasing campus-wide. Other tasks include creating an "always local" list, conducting waste audits, researching composting options, and developing an awareness campaign to educate the campus community on the benefits of sustainable eating and procurement.

For the tracking itself, I call every vendor we have used in the past year, get a history of what we have purchased, and then go through each and every product to determine if it was produced and processed within 250 miles and if it has third party certification such as USDA Organic or Rainforest Alliance. These criteria are based on a self-reporting framework that higher education institutions use to gauge their sustainability initiatives against one another and to measure their own progress.

This internship has given me a unique perspective in that I am viewing sustainability from a business standpoint versus from a purely ecological standpoint. This means that the easiest way to sell a particular course of action is to thoroughly examine the benefits versus its costs. Having just graduated, it's interesting to be on the opposite side of things now.



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This internship has also enlightened me as to how environmentalism can take on many different forms. By trying to source more of our food locally, we will reduce the pollution from transporting it across the country. By composting our food waste, we will reduce the methane being released from landfills and increase the quality of our soils. The list goes on and on. Now these might not be as exciting as say, rescuing a species from the brink of extinction, but it is just as important because we must all work together at being more sustainable to actually make an impact.