



The Student Conservation Association

2018 Final Report

SCA. Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission



JULY 19-AUGUST 23, 2018

INTRODUCTION TO SCA

Conserving Lands, Transforming Lives

Founded in 1957, SCA is the nation's leading youth conservation service organization, providing young people with opportunities to serve nature and to shape their futures. Through programs that mirror the diversity of the U.S. population, SCA strives for a world in which conserving our environment is a lifelong commitment shared by all young people as they enter their careers and assume the responsibilities of citizenship. By empowering young people through hands-on service to the land, our participants come to understand that work that benefits other people, the natural environment, our community or the world, is what unites us as a society.

SCA's mission—to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment and communities—is needed now more than ever. Climate change is having a profound impact, not only our wild, public lands, but on vulnerable and often unprepared, urban centers and communities. The nature of childhood has changed: there is not much nature in it, and increasingly, young people lack the necessary skills and experience to become productive, self-reliant adults. Faced with these challenges, we need strong young leaders. SCA believes that young people, with the right support, training, and investment, can become conservation leaders and leaders in every sense of the word. SCA builds leaders who are guided by conservation values, and ready to lead in today's complicated global marketplace of ideas and careers.

Recent research confirms that our program develops young people in powerful ways. A study by the Search Institute, a globally-recognized leader in discovering what kids need to succeed, reveals that SCA not only develops and nurtures stewards of our lands, it also develops and nurtures the skills and character strengths that position young people to thrive in the classroom, in the workplace, and in their communities. In this way, young people develop a sense of mattering and feel that they can create change with their thoughtful actions. By equipping young people with the tools to discover positive creative solutions in their lives, SCA improves the resilience of both natural and human communities.



SCA Crew member Rachel Hultman installs decking on a timber bridge at the Heather Trail in E.C. Manning Provincial Park, British Columbia

THE CANADA-US CREW

2018 marked the 32nd year of SCA's partnership with B.C. Parks, North Cascades National Park, and the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission (SEEC). Together, we engage youth volunteers in projects focused on improving recreational resources on protected lands on both sides of the border, while at the same time delivering vital workforce skills to the next generation of conservation leaders.

This year's crew—comprised of two members from British Columbia and six from Washington (in addition to two leaders) engaged in a variety of conservation projects in both the U.S. and Canada. They were also able to take part in recreational outings, helping them to cultivate a sense of personal connection to the Skagit Valley-North Cascades region while gaining technical competence and making substantial and long-lasting contributions to the two parks.

This year's crew worked in six different sites in the North Cascades (four in E.C. Manning Provincial Park, and two in North Cascades National Park). Throughout their five weeks together, the crew deepened their appreciation for the outdoors; learned the firsthand about the craft of trail maintenance; learned about conservation careers while working alongside park rangers; and gained a firsthand look at the complexity of public land management systems in two different countries.

E. C. MANNING PROVINCIAL PARK

SCA's Canada-U.S. Crew completed projects at four work sites in E.C. Manning Provincial Park, British Columbia. During the first week, the crew divided in two, and each half was flown with their gear by helicopter to two different backcountry locations. One group worked near the northern terminus of the Pacific Crest Trail, while the other worked at Nicomen Lake. Each crew focused on improving remote campsites and clearing trails. Our crew then reconnected for a weekend of recreational camping, after which, they divided once again for two more projects. One crew dismantled and rebuilt two timber bridges on the Heather Trail, while the other worked on the Skagit Bluffs Trail, installing three culverts and building two timber bridges. The reunited crew finished their time at the park by building a 24-foot native timber bridge on the Skagit Bluffs Trail.



SCA crew members prepare for a helicopter flight to the first work sites in E.C. Manning Provincial Park

After finishing work at E.C. Manning Provincial Park, the crew enjoyed a four-day recreational trip in Garibaldi Provincial Park (thanks to our park partners), where they explored the beautiful alpine terrain of western British Columbia, rich with peaks, wildflowers, and glaciers. The members' heightened understanding

of trail work gave them a new lens through which to view the complex logistics of maintaining backcountry campgrounds and trails in fragile environments.

NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK

Crews were originally scheduled to spend their final two weeks working out the Hozomeen Campground at Ross Lake in North Cascades National Park, but wildfires forced a complete campground evacuation before the project could begin. Our crews moved to the ranger station in Marblemount, WA, where they worked on two different projects. The crew worked on the Sourdough Mountain Trail, improving tread and clearing vegetation. They then moved to the Thunder Woods Nature Trail near Colonial Creek Campground. While there, they completed several projects, including improving tread, building a 10-foot rock retaining wall and several rock steps.

CREW LEADER MENTORS

SCA Crews are comprised of a diverse team of teenage youth who work in collaboration under the guidance of two mentoring young adult crew leaders. All leaders receive two weeks of training, with the first focused on team management and the second on conservation work skills. Specific topics include fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion; principles of positive youth development and strategies for building developmental relationships with adolescents; leadership; field-based teaching techniques; conflict resolution and behavior management; hazard mitigation and building a culture of safety; SCA policies and procedures; and Leave No Trace outdoor ethics.



A triumphant SCA crew stands atop their final project—a ten-foot stone retaining wall in an area that had been deteriorating due to erosion and the steepness of the slope. Thunder Woods Nature Trail, North Cascades National Park

CONSERVATION IMPACT

During their time in the field, our Canada - U.S. Crews completed vital conservation projects on both sides of the border. Together, they completed the following:

- 21,722 feet of trail improved
- 50 feet of new trail built
- 28 feet of steps or stairways installed
- 96 feet of bridge construction
- 6 structures built or maintained

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

Through hands-on exploration, youth learned about environmental issues impacting the Skagit Watershed, which helped them develop a commitment to conservation practices and increased their leadership capabilities.

- 95% Have a greater understanding of how my actions affect nature.
- 89% More knowledgeable on one or more conservation issues.
- 84% More likely to teach others about the importance of conservation.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

As a result of taking action on important conservation projects, SCA crew members report:

- 84% are more likely to join with other members of the community to conserve natural spaces.
- 69% are more responsible for addressing issues in their own community.
- 85% plan to get more involved in community issues.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE

When asked whether they would recommend an SCA experience to a friend, youth rated their SCA experience an 8.93 on a scale of 1 to 10, and 69% of participants said that their SCA experience was an opportunity to do work that was meaningful.

“This has been the best experience of my life that has not only taught me about the Northwest and how the Parks system works, but also something I’d love to do with the rest of my life.” –Jeff Comiskey, 17

CONCLUSION

SCA is grateful to the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission for the continued support of our U.S.-Canada crew. Your partnership allows SCA crews to complete vital conservation projects that preserve the natural beauty of the region. Our programs also make a tangible impact on the youth who take part in them. Participants complete projects that involve real-world challenges and allow them to see tangible results of their hard work. Through this work, crew members learn how to conserve resources and protect the planet, learn why their conservation work projects are critical to that effort, and they are exposed potential careers in conservation and green industries.

At SCA, we believe in the need to protect our most treasured natural wonders for future generations. We also believe in the power of young people to create change. At SCA, everything we do is about giving young people the opportunity to realize the true power of nature and, more importantly, their ability—and responsibility—to protect it.