

## SEEAL CONSERVATION CORPS WRAPS UP SUCCESSFUL PILOT SUMMER

The SEEAL Conservation Corps is wrapping up an eight-week youth employment program launched this summer to provide *youth development through environmental stewardship*. SEEAL (Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance), a program fund of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts, worked with lead advisory partners, Mass Audubon's Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary and The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), to create the Roving Crew.



The Roving Crew worked with 11 organizations: Save the Bay, Coalition for Buzzards Bay, Westport River Watershed Alliance, Sharing the Harvest, Mass Audubon Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, Round the Bend Farm, UMass Dartmouth Sustainability office, The Trustees of Reservations Cornell Farm, P.O.W.E.R., Lloyd Center for the Environment and the SouthCoast Energy Challenge. Their projects included invasive plant removal, fence construction, trail maintenance and construction, garden creation in unused lots, canvassing for energy efficiency, and boardwalk construction for habitat restoration.

The eight youth Crew Members (ages 16-19) were Alexis Miguel, Jerome DaSilva, Frances Jennings, Trevor Criollos, Dereck Hunt, Vanessa Silva, Hailey Cambra and Zac Rawcliffe. There was one Crew Leader (Chancery Perks) and two AmeriCorps leaders (Kyle Lauchmen and Aurora White).

The Roving Crew came together with the 15 members of the South Coast Youth Corps from TTOR, for five All Corps Days. These days were an opportunity for the youth to work with a larger group, as well as participate in enrichment activities such as a ropes course at the Dartmouth YMCA, kayaking in Allens Pond and a GPS urban adventure in New Bedford with Boston University Experiential Education. These days were highlights for many of the youth, and gave them a sense of being part of a larger workforce in the SouthCoast.

Besides the work they accomplished, the youth also experienced a great amount of person and team growth. Jerome DaSilva of Fairhaven “wanted to do this job so that [he] could do something for [his] community and for the environment... [His] favorite part of the summer has been working with a team that respects each other.” This sums up the experience for many of the Crew Members who are walking away with strong leadership and communication skills as well as the camaraderie that comes with being part of a team. The summer taught them life skills that they will be able to use as they move into adulthood.

Building upon the success from the pilot summer, the SEEAL Conservation Corps would like to expand next summer to offer opportunities for a greater number of youth, as well as work towards offering a school-year program based on similar principles.

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