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Cover Page Note: On the cover page is a word cloud produced by Wordle.net that provides a graphical representation of survey respondents' open-ended comments about the conservation corps experience. The larger the word the more often it occurred.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation was commissioned by member organizations of the Public Lands Service Coalition. The evaluation strategy was developed collaboratively by leaders from the involved corps organizations and researchers at Texas A&M University and Brigham Young University. The purpose of the evaluation was to build upon previous corps-related evaluation efforts by assessing the impact of the corps experience on participants in terms of targeted outcomes (e.g., civic engagement, leadership, etc.), their intentions to pursue natural resource education and career paths, and their intentions to participate in outdoor recreation activities.

Significant increases were observed across all outcome measures in contrast to the general population comparison group (see Figure 1). In terms of community and conservation efforts, participants reported significantly increased community engagement, positive attitudes toward public lands, and environmental activism. Corps participation was also associated with significantly increased developmental outcomes, with participants reporting increases in their ability to work in teams, leadership skills, self-responsibility, grit, and communication skills.

While corps participants entered programs with higher intention to pursue education and careers related to natural resource management than non-participants did, corps participation intensified this commitment. Finally, participants were more likely to report intentions to engage in outdoor recreational activities and purchase related equipment and gear.

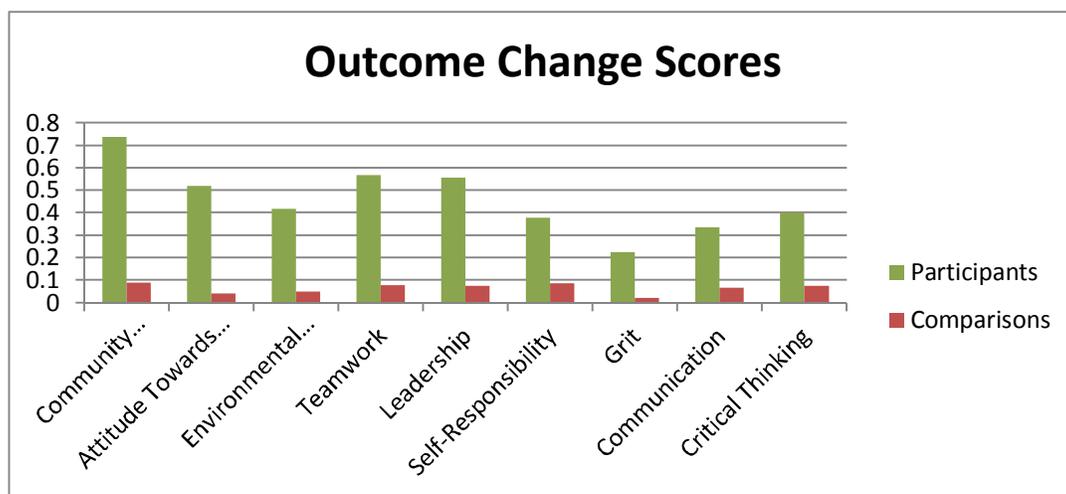


FIGURE 1. OUTCOME CHANGE SCORES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all participating PLSC organizations for their assistance in the development of the survey and subsequent collection of survey data.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW & RATIONALE

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of participating in a conservation corps program on natural resource management education and career intentions, outdoor recreation participation intentions, and key targeted program outcomes (e.g., teamwork, leadership, etc.). Efforts were also made to assess the perceived quality of importance of core program components and processes.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

ACTION-ORIENTED RESEARCH

Our approach followed many of the tenets of action-oriented research where the population under study contributes to the production of the research. Action-oriented approaches to research emerge from the realization that complete objectivity is unattainable in the social sciences. However, it provides significant potential to bridge the divide between theory and practice. For this evaluation, researchers and PLSC organizations collaborated in identifying relevant outcomes to be evaluated as well as developing practical approaches to data collection and analysis. PLSC organizations were engaged as partners in the research process, rather than simply subjects of or settings for the research being conducted. By using this approach, we sought to reduce barriers to participating in research previously identified by PLSC organizations and to build PLSC's capacity to develop and sustain evaluation and research systems in order to improve programs and services in the future.

CITATIONS TO SUPPORT ACTION-ORIENTED RESEARCH APPROACH

- Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2, 34-46.
- Rodríguez, L. F., & Brown, T. M. (2009). From voice to agency: Guiding principles for participatory action research with youth. [Article]. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2009(123), 19-34.
- Small, S. A. (2005). Bridging research and practice in the family and human sciences. *Family Relations*, 54(2), 320-334.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purposes of this study, we used a quasi-experimental design using a general public sample comparison group. The use of a comparison group allows researchers to compare experiences of PLSC participants with the general public. The comparison group was recruited from a national sample of Survey Monkey online panel members between the ages of 14 and 26 that were pre-screened to match demographic profiles (e.g., age, education level) as the participant group. This population was chosen for recruitment because we wanted a sample that represented the general public as much as possible in the same demographic as the participants in the experimental group. The use of online panels as a nationally reflective

sample have demonstrated many of the same properties and limitations as other methods of collecting self-report data from household surveys or phone interviews. While the use of a randomized control group is often idealized as the gold standard in evaluation designs, our approach has proved to be a viable alternative. Additionally, randomized control studies are not without inherent disadvantages. For example, randomized control studies often require narrowing comparable traits to the extent they have limited external validity, and conducting randomized control trials can be very expensive and take much longer to complete; limiting the applicability and usability to organizations. It is also important to note that, according to *The New England Journal of Medicine*, using randomized control designs instead of other acceptable methods does not always guarantee higher quality evidence. Randomized control is especially problematic when using waitlists for random assignment as it is difficult to monitor the behaviors of the control sample that does not enroll in the treatment program.

CITATIONS TO SUPPORT QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL EVALUATION DESIGN AND USE OF ONLINE PANELS AS GENERAL POPULATION COMPARISON GROUPS

- Benson, K., & Hartz, A.J. (2000). A comparison of observational studies and randomized, controlled trials. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 342(25), 1878-1886.
- Concato, J., Shah, N., & Horwitz, R. I. (2000). Randomized, controlled trials, observational studies, and the hierarchy of research designs. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 342(25). 1887-1892
- Rothwell, P. M. (2005). External validity of randomised controlled trials: to whom do the results of this trial apply? *Lancet*, 365(9453). 82-93.
- Basil, M. D., Basil, D. Z., & Deshpande, S. (2009). A Comparison of Consumers and Dieticians: Nutrition Focus, Food Choice, and Mental Accounting. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 21(3), 283-297.
- Vining, J. (1992). Environmental Emotions and Decisions. *Environment and Behavior*, 24(1), 3-34.
- Taylor, S. M., Ward, P., Zabriskie, R., Hill, B., & Hanson, C. (2012). Influences on Active Family Leisure and a Healthy Lifestyle Among Adolescents. *Leisure Sciences*, 34(4), 332-349.
- Ward, P., & Buswell, L. (2009). *Review of online data collection techniques in leisure research*. Paper presented at the National Recreation and Parks Association National Congress: Leisure Research Symposium, Salt Lake City, UT.

RETROSPECTIVE PRE-POST INSTRUMENT

Survey items used a retrospective pre-test design that asked participants to report their attitudes and knowledge following the program as well as *before* they began the program (e.g., Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?). Compared to traditional pre-post designs, this approach allows participants to more accurately report changes in conditions because they have a better understanding of their

baseline condition. This is particularly true in the case for measures of perceptions, motivations, and intentions. For members of the comparison group, a standard time was chosen to represent a similar elapsed time to length of PLSC programs (e.g., How would you have responded to this statement two months ago?). Like a true control group, it is assumed that the comparison group would receive no treatment (i.e., corps participation) and therefore would expect no changes in perceptions and attitudes other than those that might occur naturally over a similar period of time. A qualifying question was asked of comparison group members to filter out individuals that may have participated in a similar experience to corps members during the time period.

CITATIONS TO SUPPORT RETROSPECTIVE PRE-POST INSTRUMENT

- Pratt, C. C., McGuigan, W. M., & Katzev, A. R. (2000). Measuring program outcomes: Using retrospective pretest methodology. *American Journal of Evaluation, 21*(3), 341-350.
- Davis, G. A. (2003). Using a retrospective pre-post questionnaire to determine program impact. *Journal of Extension, 41*(4).
- Hill, L. G., & Betz, D. L. (2005). Revisiting the Retrospective Pretest. *American Journal of Evaluation, 26*(4), 501-517.

FINDINGS

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Data were collected from 1093 corps participants and 633 comparison group members. Table 1 provides a summary of sample demographics for both participants and comparisons. Overall, both participant and comparison groups were similar in average age. The comparison group had a higher percentage of females than the participant group, but both were representative of the proportion of males to females in their respective populations. The geographic distribution among participants and comparison was also similar.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Group	Mean Age	Gender		Community of Origin			
		Male	Female	Urban	Suburban	Rural Fringe	Rural Distant
Participant	20.56	662 (60.5%)	426 (38.9%)	337 (29.4%)	421 (36.7%)	187 (16.3%)	201 (17.5%)
Comparison	19.00	311 (49.4%)	318 (50.6%)	226 (32.9%)	269 (39.2%)	91 (13.2%)	101 (14.7%)

Table 2 provides an overview of the current educational status and overall educational attainment of both groups. The participant group was generally more educated than the comparison group. Compared to participants, 21.9% more of the comparison group was continuing in high school. The percentage of participants with college degrees was nearly twice that of the comparison group.

TABLE 2. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Group	Current Educational Status		Educational Attainment				
	No Longer in School	Continuing in School	Less than High School	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate	Post-College/ Graduate School
Participant	394 (36.1%)	696 (63.9%)	352 (32.3%)	158 (14.5%)	309 (28.3%)	262 (24.0%)	10 (0.9%)
Comparison	137 (22.1%)	483 (77.9%)	313 (44.9%)	88 (14.0%)	141 (22.4%)	79 (12.6%)	8 (1.3%)

Table 3 provides a breakdown of corps participants involved in the evaluation by organization.

TABLE 3. PARTICIPANTS BY PROGRAM

Group	#	%
Montana Conservation Corps	298	27%
Southwest Conservation Corps	175	16%
Northwest Youth Corps	129	12%
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (CO)	98	9%
Student Conservation Association	66	6%
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps	64	6%
Coconino	62	6%
Conservation Corps North Bay	60	6%
American Youth Works	50	5%
Western Colorado	36	3%
Canyon Country Youth Corps	30	3%
Utah Conservation Corps	25	2%

PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND PROCESSES

Understanding program components and processes was a key evaluation objective. In order to address this objective efforts were made to assess participants' perceptions of important program components as well as the interpersonal dynamics within the program.

IMPORTANCE/PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Participants were asked to indicate the importance they ascribed to corps program components (Figure 2) as well as their perceptions of performance in each of these areas using a 0 to 100 scale. The analysis of this data allows for the identification of not only how well organizations are doing across a variety of domains but also how important each of the domains is to participants. It should be noted high mean ratings were received by all importance (> 73.75) and performance (> 73.99) items. This finding indicated a high degree of quality performance across all components. At the same time, important insights can be gained from this analysis.

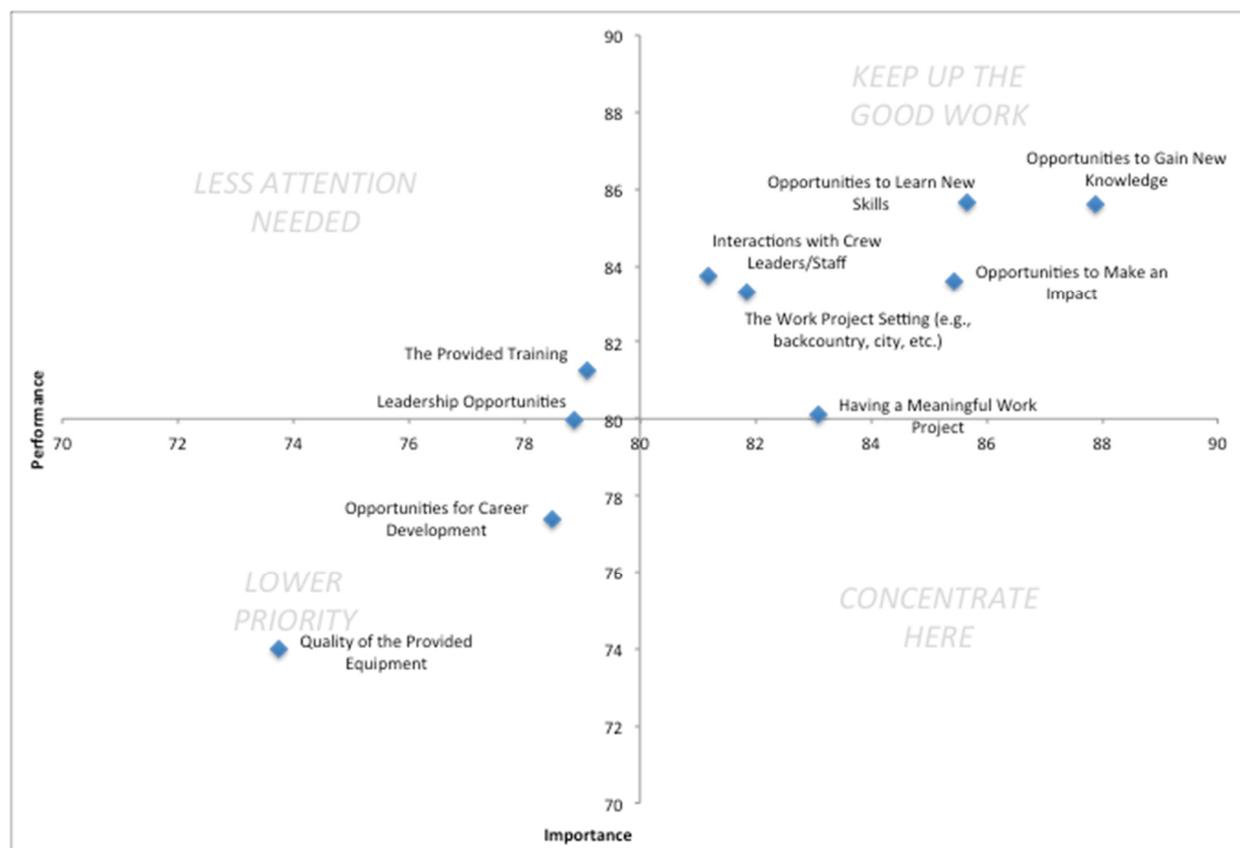


FIGURE 2. IMPORTANCE/PERFORMANCE CHART

Each quadrant of the importance/performance chart is labeled based upon the attention potentially needed in each area. Based upon this breakdown, focus should be given to improving *Having Meaningful Work Projects, Provided Training, and Leadership Opportunities*. The most important and best performing program components included *Opportunities to Gain New Knowledge and Skills, The Work Project Setting, Interactions, Work Project Setting and Opportunities to Make an Impact*.

CREW DYNAMICS

All items on the crew dynamic scale employed a 1 (very untrue) to 5 (very true) response scale. The mean score for the seven-item scale was 4.29 out of 5.0 indicating a high level of perceived positive group functioning. Table 4 provides the mean scores for each individual item on the crew dynamic scale.

TABLE 4. CREW DYNAMIC SCORES

Crew Dynamic Scale Items	Mean Scores
Our crew keeps working to reach our goals	4.47
Our crew does not give up easily	4.38
Our crew is committed to its objectives	4.35
Our crew members work well together	4.24
Our crew can resolve problems	4.2
Our crew is united	4.18
Our crew members like to spend time together	4.17

INFLUENCE OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND PROCESSES ON OUTCOMES

Analyses were conducted to determine whether or not any of the program processes influenced the impact of the experience on participants in terms of the amount of growth they experienced on the outcome measures. The components/processes considered in the analyses included participant satisfaction represented by the mean of all performance items, the length of the program, overall mean crew dynamic score and the type of program (e.g., day or camping).

Results indicated that higher participant satisfaction levels were associated with higher change scores on all measures. Longer periods of participation were associated with higher attitude towards public lands, environmental activism, and communication change scores. Crew dynamic scores did not significantly predict any outcome change scores although crew dynamic

scores were positively correlated with performance mean scores. Thus suggesting crew dynamics played a role in participant satisfaction levels.

Participants were asked to indicate if they participated in a day program (i.e., urban) or a camping program. Participants in camping programs generally reported more growth in outcome measures than participants in day programs (see Figure 3).

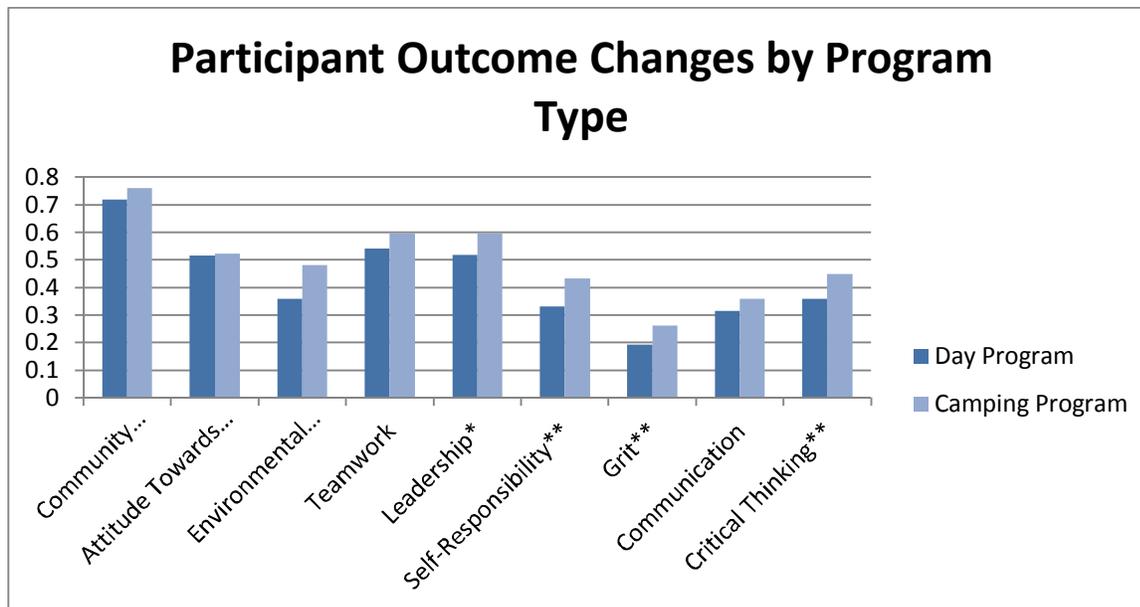


FIGURE 3. PROGRAM TYPE COMPARISONS

** $p < .05$ * $p < .10$

Key Talking Points

- Camp participants demonstrated approximately 33.6% more growth in environmental activism than day participants.
- Day participants' growth in leadership was approximately 10.7% less than camp participants.
- Camp participants demonstrated approximately 32.4% more growth in self-responsibility than day participants.
- Day participants' growth in Grit was approximately 34.7% less than camp participants
- Camp participants demonstrated approximately 25% more growth in critical thinking than day participants.

PROGRAM IMPACTS

OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION INTENTIONS

Respondents were provided with a list of different outdoor recreation activities and asked if they planned to participate in these activities during the next year. Table 5 provides a summary of responses by displaying the percentage of comparison group members and corps participants who indicated they planned to participate in each activity.

TABLE 5. OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Activity Type*	% Who Planned on Participating in the Named Activity During the Next Year		
	Participant	Comparison	Part – Comp Difference
Backpacking Overnight - More Than 1/4 Mile From Vehicle/Home	84.50%	25.30%	59.20%
Camping (Within 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	90.40%	39.70%	50.64%
Hiking	92.50%	46.80%	45.70%
Climbing (Sport/Indoor/Boulder)	65.00%	20.70%	44.30%
Skiing/Snowboarding	66.30%	22.30%	44.00%
Kayaking	60.20%	21.50%	38.70%
Rafting	57.70%	19.00%	38.70%
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)	60.50%	22.10%	38.40%
Canoeing	62.00%	26.90%	35.10%
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	84.90%	50.10%	34.80%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	48.10%	15.30%	32.80%
Running/Jogging	83.70%	52.50%	31.20%
Snowshoeing	42.20%	11.10%	31.10%
Fishing	63.60%	40.40%	23.20%
Hunting	38.20%	16.40%	21.80%
Bird Watching - More Than 1/4 Mile From Home/Vehicle	28.40%	14.70%	13.70%

As can be seen in the far right column of Table 5 a higher percentage of participants planned to engage in all listed activities. The greatest participation differences occurred across for *Backpacking*, *Camping*, *Climbing*, and *Hiking*. Corps participants planned to engage in, on

average, almost six more outdoor recreation activities than comparison group members (see Figure 4). More than half of the corps participants indicated their corps experience strongly influenced their intention to participate in outdoor recreation activities.

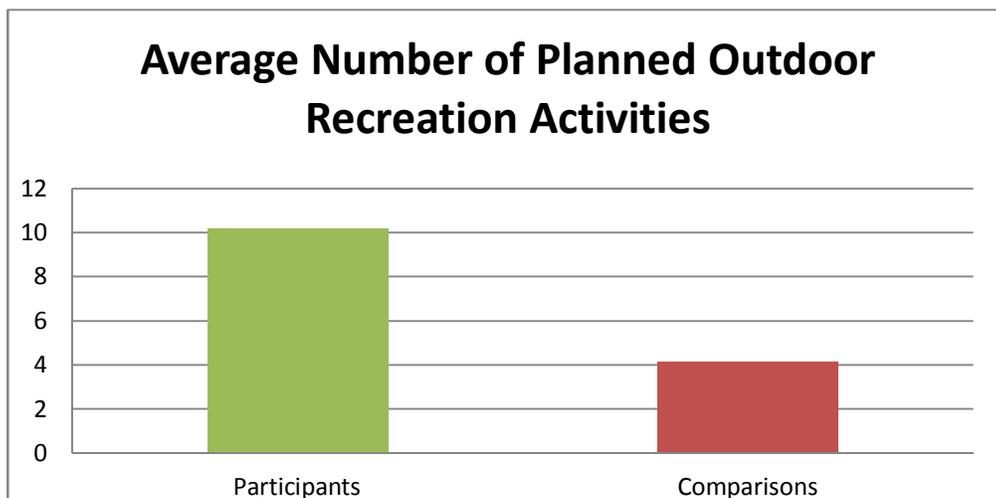


FIGURE 4. AVERAGE NUMBER OF PLANNED OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Key Talking Point

- On average, PLSC participants intended on engaging in 2 ½ times more outdoor recreational activities than members of the comparison group.

OUTDOOR RECREATION RELATED PURCHASING INTENTIONS

Figure 5 provides a summary of the amount of money individuals estimated they would spend over the next year on outdoor recreation gear and apparel. Corps participants planned on spending significantly more money on gear and apparel than comparison group members.

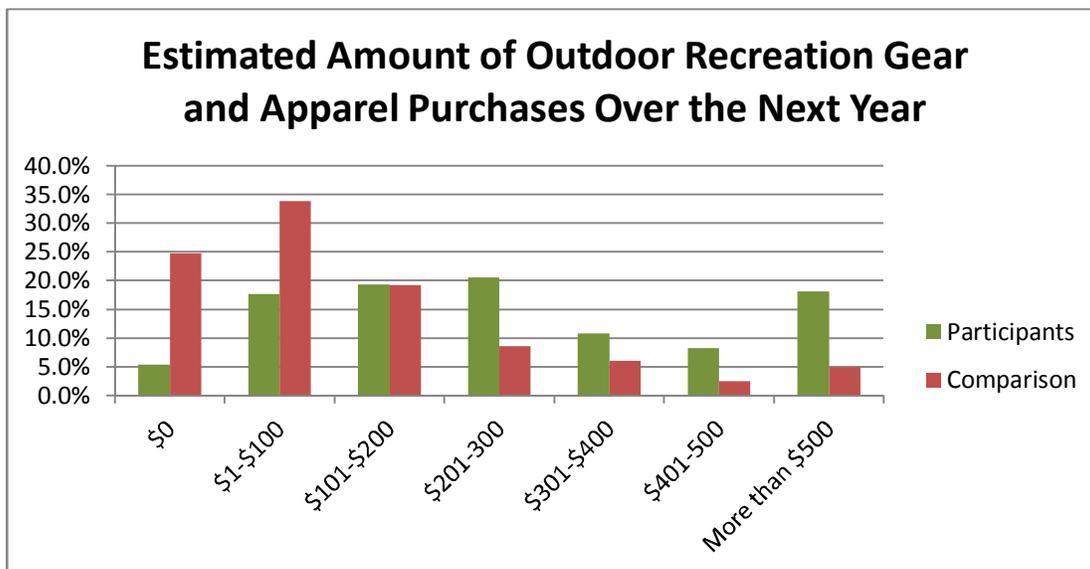


FIGURE 5. ESTIMATED OR RELATED PURCHASES

Forty-nine percent of corps participants indicated they believed their corps experience strongly influenced their future outdoor recreation purchasing intentions.

Key Talking Point

- PLSC participants reported that they intended to spend 123% (or 2 ¼ times) more on outdoor recreational gear and apparel than members of the comparison group.

NATURAL RESOURCE RELATED EDUCATION AND CAREER INTENTIONS

Survey respondents were asked about their intentions to pursue natural resource management related education and careers. Higher scores on the 1 to 5 scale signify higher levels of positive intentions. The following figures provide summaries of responses broken down by corps participants and comparison group members. To assess the changes on outcome measures from pre- to post-corps participation, participant scores across the two periods were compared with comparison scores measured across a similar time-period. Results indicated that corps participant intentions significantly increased across all three questions when compared to comparison group responses.

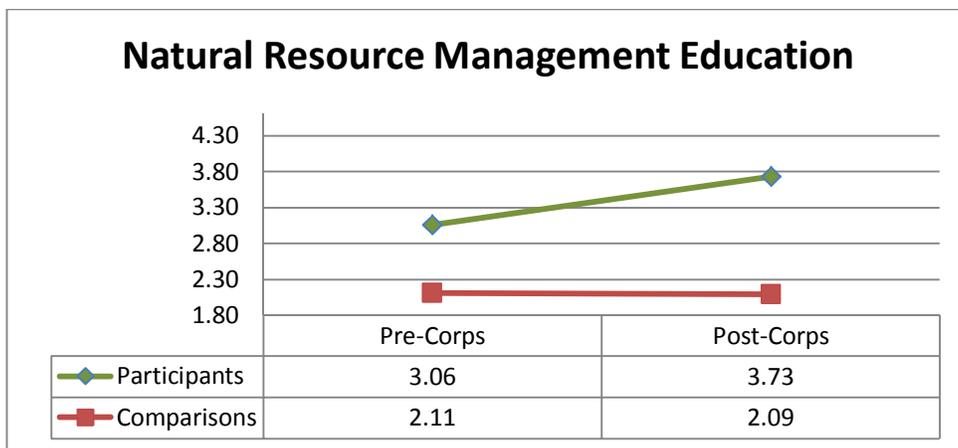


FIGURE 6. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

While participants’ intention scores related to obtaining additional natural resource management education increased by .67, comparison group scores decreased .02 from pre- to post-survey administrations.

Key Talking Point

- The difference between PLSC participants’ intention to pursue natural resource management education and the comparison group at the end of the program was 72.6% higher than it was at the beginning of the program.

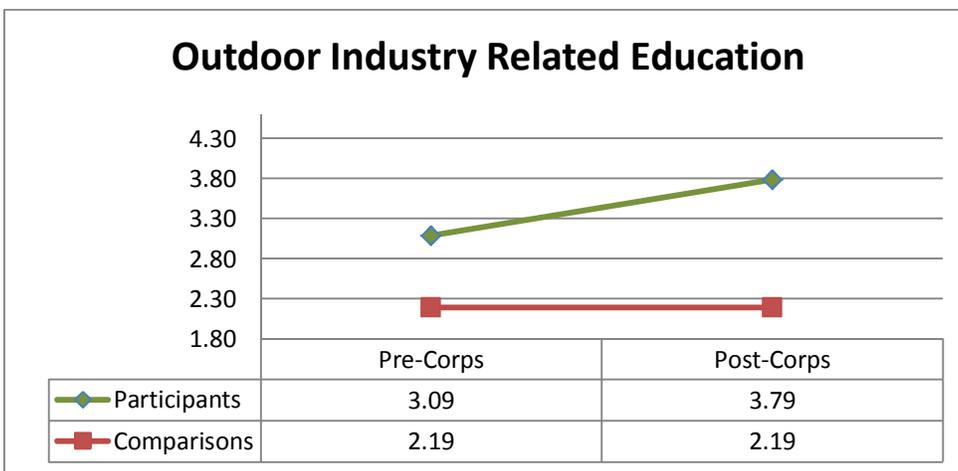


FIGURE 7. OUTDOOR INDUSTRY EDUCATION

Participants' intention scores related to obtaining additional outdoor industry related education increased by .70, comparison group scores did not change from pre- to post-survey administrations.

Key Talking Point

- The difference between PLSC participants' intention to pursue outdoor industry related education and the same intention of the comparison group at the end of the program was 77% higher than it was at the beginning of the program.

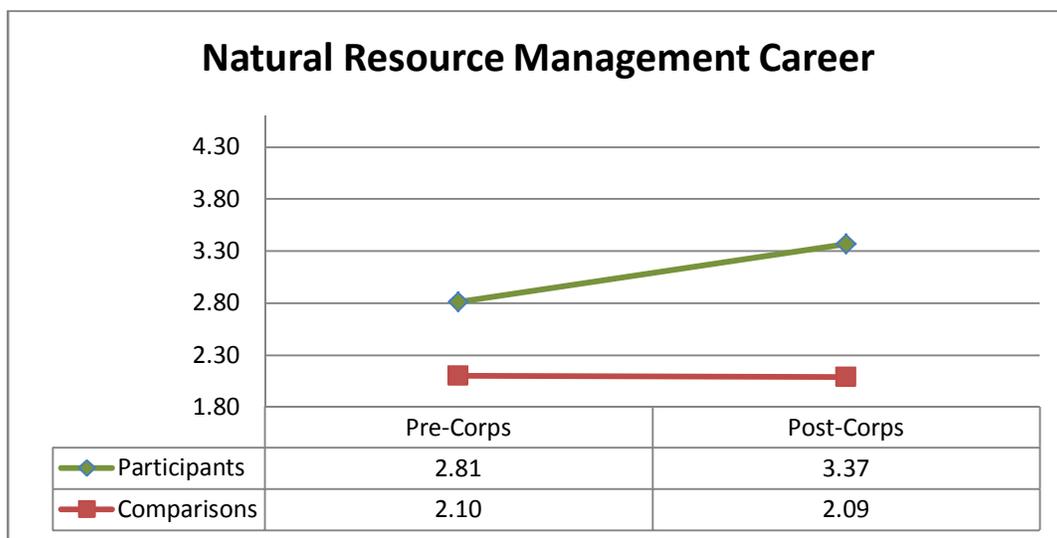


FIGURE 8. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CAREERS

Finally, intentions to pursue a career related to natural resource management increased by .56 for corps participants but declined by .01 by comparison group members.

Key Talking Point

- The difference between PLSC participants' intention to pursue natural resource management career and the same intention of the comparison group at the end of the program was 80% higher than it was at the beginning of the program.

TARGETED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Working with PLSC Corps Administrators, six constructs were identified as targeted outcomes across all participating organizations. Table 6 provides an overview of the constructs and their associated definitions. Previously validated survey scales were selected to measure each construct.

TABLE 6. EVALUATION MEASURES AND DEFINITIONS

Measure	# of Items	Definition
Community Engagement	4	Community engagement focuses on local and community involvement rather than on political activism.
Attitude Towards Public Lands	9	Attitude towards the importance of public lands
Environmental Activism	10	Personal readiness to actively support or get involved in organized action for environmental protection, versus disinterest in or refusal to support or get involved in organized action for environmental protection.
Teamwork	8	Beliefs that one can be an effective and productive group member
Leadership	6	Beliefs that the respondent can be assertive, can organize a group or team, and can be action oriented.
Self-Responsibility	6	Habit of owning and accepting consequences of personal actions
Grit	8	Perseverance and passion for long-term goals
Communication	6	Interpersonal communication skills
Critical Thinking	5	Thinking that evaluates reasons and brings thought and actions in line with evaluations

All items on each scale employed a 1 (very untrue) to 5 (very true) response scale. Mean scores were calculated for each scale. To assess the changes on outcome measures from pre- to post-corps participation, participant scores across the two periods were compared with comparison scores measured across a similar time-period.

Results indicated that participants saw statistically significant increases across all measures in contrast to comparison group members who experienced no significant changes across a similar period of time. The results indicated that corps participation was associated with significant positive change in participants across all measured outcomes. Figure 9 provides a summary of

participant and comparison change scores (post-corps minus pre-corps score) across all measures.

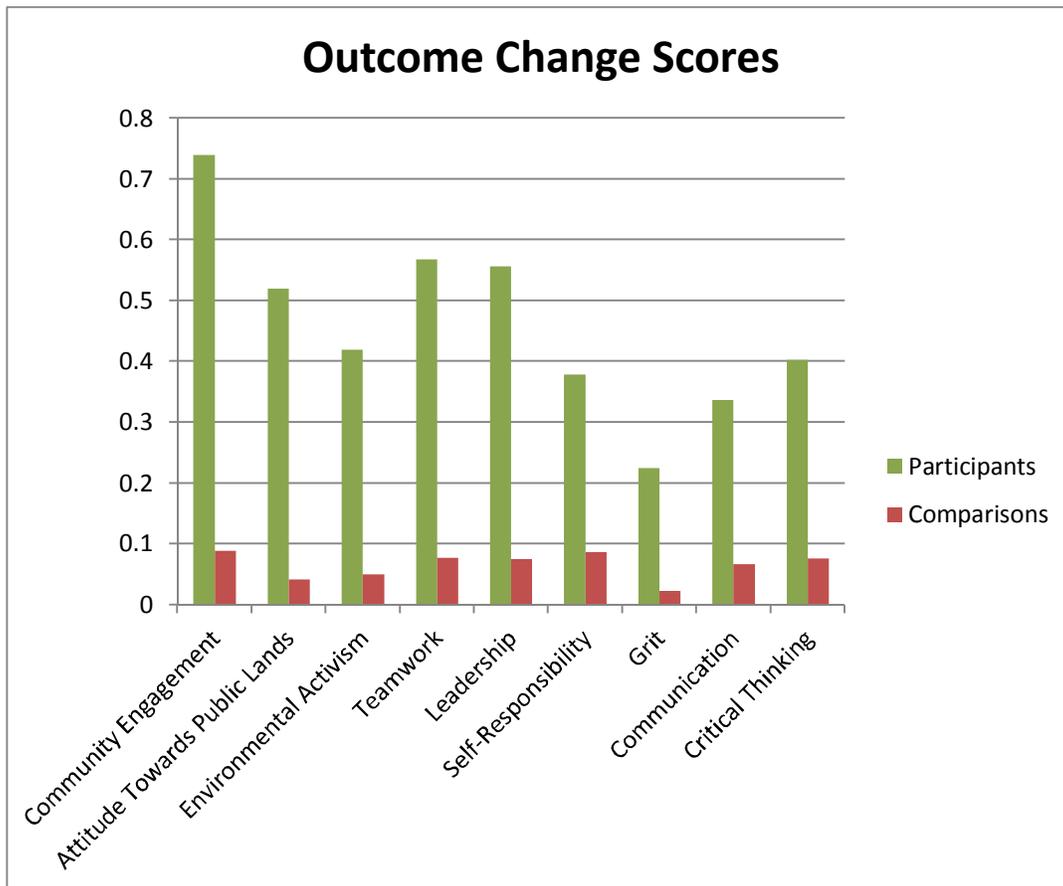


FIGURE 9. OUTCOME CHANGE SCORES

Key Talking Points

- PLSC participants' growth in community engagement was 747% more than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Attitude toward public lands was 1126% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Environmental activism was 755% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Teamwork was 636% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Leadership was 644% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Self-responsibility was 333% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Grit was 923% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Communication was 405% higher than members of the comparison group
- PLSC participants' growth in Critical Thinking was 400% higher than members of the comparison group

ADDITIONAL INFLUENCES ON PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Analyses revealed a number of differences related to the impact of corps involvement across participants based upon factors like age, education levels, and a variety of other factors.

Participants were divided into two age groups, 14-17 and 18+.

Results indicated the 14-17 year old group experienced significantly more growth on all measures except community engagement and attitude towards public lands (see Figure 10).

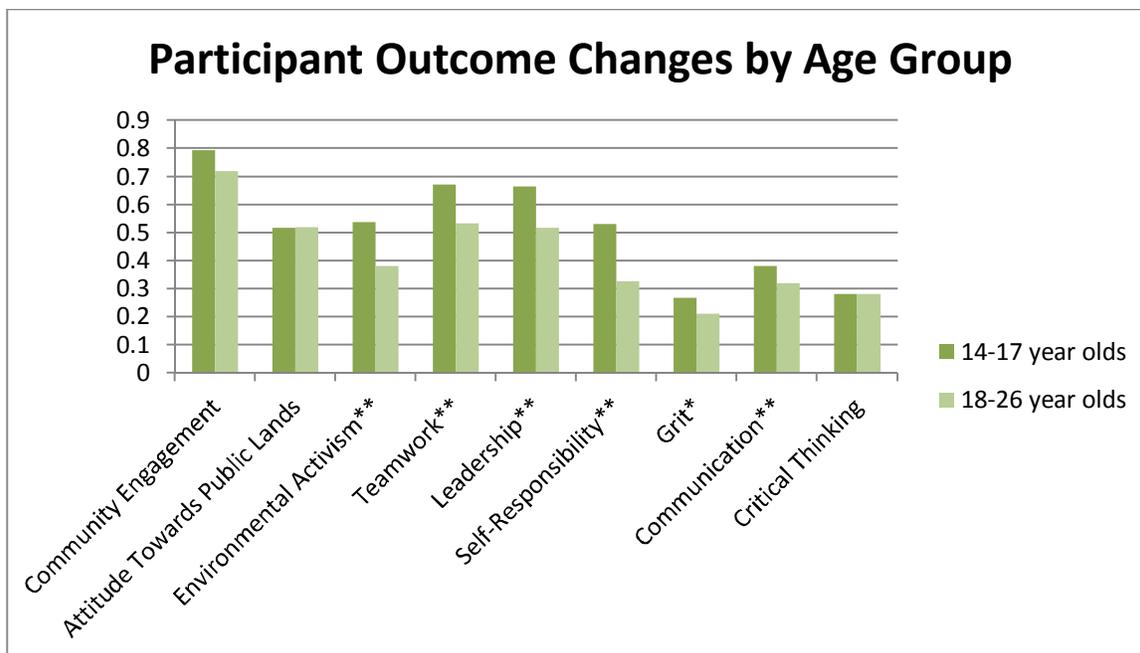


FIGURE 10. AGE COMPARISONS

** $p < .05$ * $p < .10$

The 18+ group was also asked if they were how much schooling they had completed before participating in a corps program. Results indicated that while individuals with more schooling had higher scores on baseline measures of community engagement, attitude towards public lands, and environmental activism the education level outcome gap narrowed as a result of participating in a corps program.

FOLLOW-UP RESULTS

Participants were sent an email approximately 90 days after completing their respective corps program inviting them to complete an online follow-up survey. The survey link was opened 290 times but in the end only 100 responses were useable for data analysis. This is attributable to individual starting the survey but only completing small portions and individuals completing the follow-up survey who did not complete the initial end of program survey. Table 7 provides a breakdown of follow-up respondents with useable data by corps.

TABLE 7. FOLLOW-UP RESPONDENTS BY CORPS

Group	#
Montana Conservation Corps	2
Southwest Conservation Corps	12
Northwest Youth Corps	24
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps	24
Coconino	13
American Youth Works	16
Western Colorado	3
Canyon Country Youth Corps	6

Statistical tests compared participants who did and did not complete the follow-up survey. This helps to identify any potential differences between these two groups. Results indicated very little differences between the two groups in terms of change scores on all major outcomes, age, gender, length spent in the program, and a variety of other demographic measures. The only two significant differences involved participants who completed the follow-up survey reporting slightly higher levels of education completed by themselves and their fathers. These results lead us to believe that the participants who completed the follow-up survey are fairly representative of the entire participant sample.

Analyses were conducted to compare pre-program, post-program and follow-up data across all the outcome measures. No significant changes occurred from post-program to follow-up on the community engagement, attitude towards public lands, and grit measures. Follow-up scores decreased significantly from post-program scores but were still higher than pre-program scores for the teamwork, leadership, self-responsibility, communication, and critical thinking

measures. Environmental activism follow-up scores declined significantly in comparison to both post and pre-program scores. Table 8 includes mean scores for all measures across a time periods.

TABLE 8. FOLLOW-UP DATA COMPARISON

Measure	Pre-Corps	Post-Corps	Follow-Up
Community Engagement	3.20	3.89	3.93
Attitude Towards Public Lands	3.44	3.89	3.82
Environmental Activism	3.60	3.98	2.86
Teamwork	3.73	4.37	4.25
Leadership	3.58	4.12	4.01
Self-Responsibility	4.11	4.50	4.31
Grit	3.16	3.36	3.43
Critical Thinking	3.67	4.04	3.89

The follow-up results are not too unexpected because it is not uncommon to detect an end of program peak in self-reported outcome data. Participants are usually especially excited about the program at its conclusion and some of this excitement can wear off after they return home. It is important to note that follow-up scores remained significantly higher than pre-corps scores for all measures except for environmental activism.

The steep decline in environmental activism scores after participants returned home deserves further consideration. It may be attributable to the fact that for many participants leaving the program also meant they no longer had direct contact with natural settings. Therefore their feelings of attachment towards natural spaces, and their desire to actively protect these spaces perhaps declined accordingly.

CONCLUSIONS

Participating in a PLSC sponsored conversation corps program appears to have produced a variety of benefits from increases in targeted outcomes (e.g., leadership, self-responsibility, etc.) to intentions to pursue education and career paths related to natural resource management and other outdoor recreation industries. Participants also reported high levels of satisfaction with interpersonal aspects of the experience (e.g., crew dynamics) and various components of the corps programming model (Figure 2).

The data from this evaluation provide PLSC member organizations with a good baseline from which to assess the impact of future programming innovations or management changes. Continued evaluation work will facilitate the ongoing assessment of program impacts and the identification of key programming processes.

APPENDIX A: OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

Please share with us one or two sentences that best summarize your conservation corps experience. - Open-Ended Response

Categories:

I had an amazing time:

- *This was a great experience that I would recommend to anyone*
- *Amazing! Really changed the way I look at the world.*
- *The corps has exceeded my expectations in providing for me an experience to work in beautiful places with great people doing wonderful things!*
- *This crew was the most inspiring, amazing experience of my life. I enjoyed every bit of it, from the people to the work to the lifestyle, and I fully intend to participate again.*
- *Fantastic. I have enjoyed every aspect of the experience and look forward to the continuation of my life in the corps world.*

Learning and growing:

- *I appreciate the places I have worked around Phoenix and the assistance my Crew Leaders have given me in developing personal strengths.*
- *I have learned many new things about conservation practices and made many wonderful friendships.*
- *An amazing learning experience. One that I will never forget and has definitely changed my life.*
- *I have grown so much and my personality has changed so much - to make me a better person overall. I am grateful for this experience.*
- *My experience at SCC has been a life changer. I was timid and unsure of what I wanted to do and my abilities and now I am ready to continue growing and making a difference and encouraging others to do the same.*
- *Before my experience, I was very narrow-minded and knew little about work in the environment and opportunities outdoors. Now, having experienced the outdoors and met different workers, my horizons have been broadened, and now I'm amazed by all the opportunities I haven't considered!*

Physical conditioning:

- *My conservation experience has been very satisfactory and rewarding. My physical conditioning has been continually improving as well as my appreciation for natural resources and habitat.*
- *My conservation corps experience made me much more confident of my ability to perform manual labor and allowed me to gain experience using hand tools and chainsaws.*

Career opportunities:

- *I was a great experience got to meet a lot of like-minded people. The program has opened a lot of new career opportunities for me.*
- *I really enjoyed the program. It gave me an amazing opportunity to go onto a meaningful career.*
- *I gained valuable skills and training for a future career in the forest or public lands management. I also made valuable contacts and was able to network with valuable project partners and potential employers.*
- *My conservation corps experience has helped me better define my future career goals, and solidify my desire to work in an outdoor setting. I have greatly enjoyed my conservation corps experience and am thinking about participating for a second time.*
- *My crew inspired me to pursue careers in trail work and conservation efforts. I have learned what it is like to participate in that line of work and I'm definitely hooked.*
- *This Conservation Corps experience changed my life. I learned a lot about being a better leader, working and living within a crew and community and about ecology. I am very happy that I participated and it helped me pick a track for my career in the future.*

Friendship and community:

- *I have met a ton of great people with similar endeavors, and I have had the opportunity to experience a vast array of landscapes while working on a number of conservation projects. Tons of fun, and I've learned so much as well!*
- *I felt that there was a definite sense of community in our program*
- *The time I spent on my crew in Alaska was by far the best month of my life. I will always cherish this experience for the meaningful work our group accomplished, the beautiful place we were in, and the lasting friendships I've made.*
- *My best experience was making new friends and making my community a better and safer place.*

Well-rounded experience:

- *My conservation corps experience was well rounded in many aspects of professionalism, educations, leadership and group work. I learned valuable skills and developed important qualities for myself being a part of the corp.*
- *My conservation corps experience was an experience of a lifetime. I learned to live with a group of people that I have never met before and became a family at the end. I have learned to communicate much better than I did before I started. I learned to work and clean a chainsaw. I have learned about myself and grown as*

an individual through this program than I ever have before. I have grown mentally, physically and emotionally stronger and healthier through this experience and knowing how much my body and mind are capable of doing.

- *My conservation corps experience was literally the time of my life. I loved the landscape, the people both on my crew and the locals or tourists of the area, the wildlife and nature experiences, as well as the work.*

Environmental stewardship and attitudes:

- *I have enjoyed my time with E-corps, this is the toughest job I have ever loved, and I am inspired to go on to a lifetime of environmental stewardship.*
- *I wish this type of work was active year round and not just exclusively with AmeriCorps; if I could continue this work of conserving on public and private lands, I would for the rest of my life. Conservation is broad enough that there are many fields that provide much meaningful stimulus and community, and as a movement I support conserving what we have now for the future, especially after having done practical conservation work, and I will continue to promote it now and to future generations. Please help to expand this industry for the future generations.*
- *The experience expanded my perspective on the effects of past land management policies. It was an on the ground experience.*
- *It's a great fun way to get out into the outdoors, and help the environment we all love.*
- *It opened my eyes to how important the environment is, and how much I can do to help preserve it.*
- *It was lots of fun and inspired me to consider outdoor clubs and environmental majors more when applying to college this fall. I also hope I can participate more in my high school's environmental club or find a conservation project in my city.*

Unfavorable response:

- *I didn't like it to the fullest wish it was a little better run since the beginning*
- *Could've used a bit more organization/oversight in the planning and scheduling of projects. Wish more time/energy were spent on making education hours worthwhile. Overall I enjoyed the professional experienced I gained as well as the chance to see the outdoors.*
- *Disappointed with general lack of actual environmental interest/ethics among members, as well as maturity levels at times. Appreciate opportunity to work outside and do physically rewarding work*

Open-ended responses from the follow-up survey

- *Without the experience of being in rocky mountain I don't think I would be where imp at now*

- *I know how to meet new people, and how to talk to them. I am now able to open up to people. Before I was the shy kid on the block.*
- *It's given me a positive sense of direction and opened a lot of doors professionally*
- *My time with the corps was awesome; it left me with experience that I know I will value for a long time afterwards. It helped me to develop my leadership skills and my tolerance for working with people who can be disagreeable at times. It improved my physical strength and my mental endurance and solidified my love for living and working outside.*
- *I now go hiking every weekend, I exercise a lot more, and I have become really interested in gardening. I also work better in a team and I am more patient with people.*
- *I met the love of my life and gained skills to carry me through life's endeavors.*
- *I have become a much more confident person and I am able to stand up for myself. I am much more aware of my surroundings, and have shared that knowledge with my friends and family. MCC is a life changing experience, with mostly once in a lifetime opportunity, a great place to make life long friends.*
- *It was amazing. I appreciate nature now, I'm less intimidated by nature, and I appreciate my daily utilities like running water and electricity haha!*
- *I think it influenced the way that I communicate with people as well as the way that I interact with others. I learned to be a more patient person, as I had to work with people I wouldn't generally be with for extended periods of time. I am now more open minded as I have learned so much about not stereotyping others upon first glance and instead seeing how they act throughout my time with them.*
- *I have learned that we can go through tests that may be difficult but not impossible and we can see a bit of effort from our parents who do everything for us so I do not regret having participated in NYC and thank you very much and if I have a new opportunity would try again.*
- *Well, the work ethic I worked so hard to build has diminished, but I definitely know I have the possibility to have a good one, so I have become mentally and physically stronger and a more inept worker.*
- *I'm in love with backpacking, now. I'm currently an active member of my college's outing club and I'm working to get my mountain guide certification. I'm looking forward to many more outdoor and adventures. Some day I'm going to backpack across Europe.*
- *This experience has taught me a lot about teamwork, things that I wouldn't have experienced in school. Now, I have a more open mind to the natural beauty around me, as well as to the voices of other people.*
- *It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. They were the summers I was raised; the summers I learned the most about myself and the world around me. Out of all my years in school, including college, the time I spent with the conservation corps was the best form of education I've received. It was the most disconnected from the world I've ever been, yet the most connected at the same time. I have changed my career path to a field more closely related to the ideas, practices, and, missions that were instilled in me*

during my corps experience. My corps experience has given me a new outlook on life and has impacted me like no other influence.

- *I respect the great outdoors more and have a better idea of the work involved in conservation and natural resource management. I also have a better idea of how to work closely with a group of people for an extended amount of time, and how to work together to complete a project.*

APPENDIX B: PLSC SURVEY

2012 PLSC Evaluation

Name: _____ **Corps Name:** _____

ID*: _____

*Your ID consists of your first and last initials and the month and day you were born. All ID's should be 6 digits long. For example, if your name is Sam Green and your birthday is May, 10. Your ID would be SG0510.

This survey will allow you to provide feedback on your corps experience and to help us understand the impact of our programs on participants. The survey should only take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential.

Section 1

Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	Our crew is united	1 2 3 4 5
2	Our crew members like to spend time together	1 2 3 4 5
3	Our crew is committed to its objectives	1 2 3 4 5
4	Our crew can resolve problems	1 2 3 4 5
5	Our crew does not give up easily	1 2 3 4 5
6	Our crew keeps working to reach our goals	1 2 3 4 5
7	Our crew members work well together	1 2 3 4 5

Section 2

1. We would like to get your feedback on various aspects of your Conservation Corps experience. On a scale from 0 to 100 please indicate how **important** each of the following components of your Corps experience was for you?

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Very Unimportant				Average Importance						Very Important
1	Opportunities for Career Development									
2	Opportunities to Learn New Skills									
3	Having a Meaningful Work Project									
4	Leadership Opportunities									
5	Opportunities to Gain New Knowledge									
6	The Provided Training									
7	The Work Project Setting (e.g., backcountry, city, etc.)									
8	Interactions with Crew Leaders/Staff									
9	Quality of the Provided Equipment									
10	Opportunities to Make an Impact									

2. Now think about how well your Conservation Corps organization **performed** in each of the same areas.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Very Poor Performance				Average Performance						Very Good Performance
1	Opportunities for Career Development									
2	Opportunities to Learn New Skills									
3	Having a Meaningful Work Project									
4	Leadership Opportunities									
5	Opportunities to Gain New Knowledge									
6	The Provided Training									
7	The Work Project Setting (e.g., backcountry, city, etc.)									
8	Interactions with Crew Leaders/Staff									
9	Quality of the Provided Equipment									
10	Opportunities to Make an Impact									

Section 3: Reflective Statements

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS: The following items ask you to respond to statements about your *current* and *past* attitudes, knowledge, and behavior towards a variety of topics. Each item has two parts:

- The first part is about your current attitudes, knowledge, intentions, etc..
- The second part asks you about your attitudes, knowledge, intentions, etc. before participating in a conservation corps program.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

Section 3a

1	I plan to pursue further natural resource management related education.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
2	I plan to pursue further outdoor industry related education (e.g., leisure service management, business management, outdoor skill training, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
3	I plan on pursuing a natural resource management related career.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5

Section 3b - Please use the scale at the top of the page to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	I am very interested in being a part of my community.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
2	I feel I have the ability to make a difference in my community.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
3	I try to find the time to make a positive difference in my community.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
4	I am very interested in joining local groups, projects or clubs.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5

Section 3c - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	There is already an adequate amount of public lands in this country	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
2	Additional public lands need to be acquired	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
3	Acquiring additional public lands is a good idea	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am willing to contribute money to assist in the acquiring of public lands.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
5	The government should set aside more money for acquiring public lands	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
6	The management of public lands is an important national issue	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
7	Public lands are important to my quality of life	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
8	We need to preserve public lands to protect wildlife habitat	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
9	Federal and State governments should set aside current public lands or acquire new public lands for outdoor recreation	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3d - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	If I ever get extra income I will donate some money to an environmental organization.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
2	I would like to join and actively participate in an environmental group.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
3	I don't think I would help to raise funds for environmental protection.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
4	I would not get involved in an environmental organization.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am prepared to help out in an environmental protecting fund-raising effort.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
6	I would not want to donate money to support an environmental cause.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
7	I would not go out of my way to help recycling campaigns.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
8	I often try to persuade others that the environment is important.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
9	I would like to support an environmental organization.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
10	I would never try to persuade others that environmental protection is important.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3e - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	I can be a good group leader	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can help a group be successful	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
3	I can be happy even when my group has decided to do something I don't want to do	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
4	I can appreciate opinions that are different from my own	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
5	I can place group goals above the things that I want	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
6	I can cooperate with others	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
7	I can be a team-player in a small group	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
8	I know I can get along with other people in a small group	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3f - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	Once I know what needs to be done, I am good at planning how to do it.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
2	When I see something that needs to be done, I try to get my friends to work on it with me.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
3	I am pretty good at organizing a team of people to do a project.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
4	If I'm the leader of a group, I make sure that everyone in the group feels important.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
5	I feel like I can stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
6	When I see something that is wrong, I try to change it.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5

Section 3g - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	I accept responsibility for my actions	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
2	I own up to my mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
3	I don't blame others for my mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
4	If I mess something up, I try to make things right	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
5	If I make a mistake, I try to fix it	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
6	If I hurt someone's feelings, I apologize	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3h - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

1	I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
2	New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
5	I finish whatever I begin.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
6	Setbacks don't discourage me.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am diligent.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am a hard worker.	1	2	3	4	5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3i - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Untrue				Very True

When I communicate with others:

1	I try to keep eye contact	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
2	I recognize when two people are trying to say the same thing, but in different ways.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
3	I try to see the other person's point of view.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
4	I change the way I talk to someone based on my relationship with them (i.e., friend, parent, teacher, other adult, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
5	I organize thoughts in my head before speaking.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
6	I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5

Section 3j - Please use the following scale to respond to each statement. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is for you. Only circle one number.

1	I can easily express my thoughts on a problem	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
2	I usually have more than one source of information before making a decision	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
3	I compare ideas when thinking about a topic	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
4	I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision.	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5
5	I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem	1 2 3 4 5
	Before participating in the conservation corps, how would you have responded to this statement?	1 2 3 4 5

Section 4a - Please indicate if you plan on participating in any of these activities over the next year.

Activity Categories	NO	YES	Activity Categories	NO	YES
EXAMPLE: Fishing	X		Fishing		
Backpacking Overnight - More Than 1/4 Mile From Vehicle/Home			Hiking		
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)			Hunting		
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)			Kayaking		
Bird Watching - More Than 1/4 Mile From Home/Vehicle			Rafting		
Camping (Within 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)			Running/Jogging		
Canoeing			Skiing/Snowboarding		
Climbing (Sport/Indoor/Boulder)			Snowshoeing		
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)			Other: _____		

Section 4b

1. How much, if any, has your corps experience changed your desire to participate in outdoor recreation activities?

- a. Decreased
- b. Did not decrease or increase
- c. Increased a little bit
- d. Increased some, I am sure
- e. Increased a lot, I am sure

2. How much do you plan on spending on outdoor recreation gear/clothing over the next year?

- a. \$0
- b. \$1-\$100
- c. \$101-\$200
- d. \$201-\$300
- e. \$301-\$400
- f. \$401-\$500
- g. More than \$500

3. How much, if any, has your corps experience changed your desire to purchase outdoor recreation gear/clothing over the next year?

- a. Decreased
- b. Did not decrease or increase
- c. Increased a little bit
- d. Increased some, I am sure
- e. Increased a lot, I am sure

4. Other than this conservation corps program, how involved have you been **over the last** year in similar programs where you work in the outdoors or learn about the environment?

- a. Not at all involved
- b. Minimally involved
- c. Somewhat involved
- d. Very involved
- e. Heavily involved

Section 5

1. Were you part of a River Restoration Watershed Program?

- a. No
- b. Yes

2. Are you a Military Veteran and if so did you participate in a Veterans Green Corps and/or Veterans Fire Corps program?

- a. No, I am not a Military Veteran
- b. Yes, I am a Military Veteran but I did not participate in either named program
- c. Yes, I am a Military Veteran and I participated in a Veterans Green Corps program
- d. Yes, I am a Military Veteran and I participated in a Veterans Fire Corps program
- e. Yes, I am a Military Veteran and I participated in in both named programs

2. How long did you participate in your conservation corps program?

- f. One Month or Less
- g. Two Months
- h. Three Months
- i. Four Months
- j. Five Months
- k. Six Months or More

3. What type of Conservation Corps program did you participate in?

- a. Day Program
- b. Camping Program

4. What is your home residence **ZIP code**? _____

5. Which of the following best describes the community in which you grew up?

- a. Urban (generally inside a city or urbanized area with a population greater than 100,000)
- b. Small Urban/Suburban (generally a city an urban area outside a principal city with a population less than 100,000)
- c. Rural Fringe (Generally inside a town or rural area that is within 10 miles from an urban area)
- d. Rural Distant (Inside a town or rural area more than 10 miles from the nearest urban area)

6. What is your date of birth? ____/____/____

7. Please indicate the highest level of school you have completed.

- a. Less than high school
- b. High school graduate
- c. Some college
- d. College graduate
- e. Post-college/Graduate School

8. Please indicate your current education status.

- a. No longer in school
- b. Continuing in school

9. Sex? Female_____ Male_____

10. What is the highest grade your mother completed in school?

- f. Less than high school
- g. High school graduate
- h. Some college
- i. College graduate
- j. Post-college/Graduate School

11. What is the highest grade your father completed in school?

- a. Less than high school
- b. High school graduate
- c. Some college
- d. College graduate
- e. Post-college/Graduate School