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LAND STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN 2013

Great Outdoors Colorado Approves Funds for Trail Improvement Projects in Chaffee County

December 12, 2012, DENVER – The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) has announced that young people ages 14 to 25 will get jobs next spring and summer thanks to funding approved by the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) board yesterday. The GOCO board voted to disperse a total of \$45,595 in lottery funds to local governments to improve several outdoor areas in Chaffee County. Of those funds, the Town of Buena Vista will receive \$26,880 and the City of Salida will receive \$18,715.

These government organizations will hire Southwest Conservation Corps-Los Valles in 2013 to complete a variety of projects, including:

Buena Vista River Park Trail Improvements. The Town of Buena Vista will hire the youth corps crew to complete trail improvement projects at the Buena Vista River Park. Youth corps crews will work for four weeks to construct one mile of new trail, close and rehabilitate user-created social trails, and improve drainage on existing trails. These projects will enhance user access to river features and reduce impact on the Arkansas River corridor environment.

2013 Salida Trail Management Plan Implementation. The City of Salida will hire the youth corps crew to help mitigate and remove invasive plant species, while preserving and restoring wildlife habitat, along three sections of the Salida Trail System identified as high priorities in Salida's Trail Management Plan. This three-week project includes weeding, preparing and planting native vegetation, and collecting and spreading native seeds throughout late spring and summer.

Project sponsors speak to the value of these opportunities. Lois Walton of the Buena Vista Trails advisory board said, "The Buena Vista Whitewater Park is a very popular area for tourists, boaters, fly-

fishers and community members. Our goal is to support all recreation activities in the community by ensuring the maintenance and improvement of these trails.”

In Salida, Dara MacDonald, city administrator, said, “We are excited for the opportunity to begin this last phase of rehabilitation of the former railroad grade that has become a central component of our urban trail system. This project will be an educational opportunity for both the youth involved and the Salida trail community. The City of Salida appreciates the opportunity to continue working with SCC and Colorado youth corps.” And Donna Rhodes, president of Salida Parks Open Space and Trails, added, “This project will be of great value to Salida with regard to invasive species mitigation and restoration as we develop a strategy and plan for revegetation of native species. It will also be a tremendous learning opportunity for the youth corps, ‘Adopt-a-trail’ volunteers and community members.”

The projects are among 45 statewide projects totaling \$6.2 million, awarded by the GOCO board on December 11. In addition to supporting youth corps, projects funded by GOCO will help purchase land in a low-income Denver neighborhood to be used for environmental education; protect 6,720 acres of open space in perpetuity; renovate existing parks; and allow planning for future outdoor recreation projects.

Of the \$6.2 million, the GOCO board dedicated \$500,000 in grants to local governments and land trusts for projects that employed Colorado youth corps crews. It was the second such initiative by GOCO: The organization awarded a \$1 million grant to CYCA in fiscal year 2011, which created nearly 500 land stewardship jobs statewide for youth and young adults throughout the state at no cost to taxpayers.

“The GOCO board is enthusiastic about funding Colorado youth corps projects because they are such sound investments in our outdoors and our youth,” said Lise Aangeenbrug, GOCO’s executive director. “Youth Corps participants perform vital work for local governments and land trusts, including fire mitigation, trail maintenance and water conservation. Through this funding, GOCO is helping to train the next generation of land stewards.”

Youth corps teaches job readiness and leadership skills with the goal of preparing young people to be productive and ready for the work force. It also gives them important time in the outdoors and educates them about a range of stewardship issues, including water conservation, land use, fire danger and the impact of invasive species. While in the corps, members can receive high school or college credits or

prepare to take their GED. They are also eligible to receive AmeriCorps education awards for college, trade school or student loans. Corpsmembers earn a living allowance for their service.

Youth corps conservation crews throughout Colorado perform land, water, and energy conservation projects to benefit residents, visitors, and wildlife. Making this work available to young people contributes to lowering the youth unemployment rate, which is about 20 percent, more than twice that of the general population.

Chaffee County young people ages 14-25 who would like to join Southwest Conservation Corps-Los Valles are encouraged to visit www.sccorps.org for application information.

About Great Outdoors Colorado

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) is the result of an initiative passed by the voters in 1992. As the recipient of approximately half of Colorado Lottery proceeds—\$57 million in fiscal year 2012—GOCO awards grants to local governments and land trusts, and makes investments through the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. Since 1994, nearly 3,500 projects in all 64 counties have benefited from GOCO funding. Learn more at www.goco.org.

About Southwest Conservation Corps-Los Valles

Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) engages young women and men with structured, safe and challenging service and educational opportunities through service projects that promote personal growth, the development of social skills, and an ethic of natural resource stewardship. Founded in 1998 to continue the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, SCC partners with land management agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations throughout the southwest U.S. to complete these projects. In 2011, SCC engaged 860 corpsmembers and crew leaders and completed 300,000 hours of service. The organization is headquartered in Durango, Colo., with regional offices in Salida, Colo.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico. For more information, please visit www.sccorps.org.

About Colorado Youth Corps Association

The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) is a statewide coalition of 10 accredited youth conservation corps that employ and train youth and young adults on land, water and energy conservation projects. Youth corps is a proven strategy for engaging young people in service to their communities and stewardship of their environment while cultivating valuable skills to meet the challenges of the 21st

century. For more information about CYCA or the statewide youth corps coalition, visit www.CYCA.org.

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