

GOCO funds to hire Youth Corps crews for conservation work across Colorado

Grant program applications double in 2015

DENVER – The Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Board announced today an investment of \$510,450 for Colorado communities to employ Youth Corps crews on projects ranging from trail construction and fire fuel mitigation to invasive species removal and installing a school garden.

Eighteen projects in 14 counties will construct or rehabilitate 37.18 miles of trail, mitigate fire fuels on 100 acres of land, remove invasive species on 51.6 acres, and restore 1.5 miles of river habitat.

Demand for Youth Corps grants in 2015 was double that of last year. As communities continue to recover from the 2013 floods, trail work and related Youth Corps projects are in high demand.

The grants will be administered by the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) and will deploy crews from seven Youth Corps across the state. Presently, there are 10 CYCA-accredited Youth Corps in Colorado that engage and train 1,600 youth between the ages of 14 and 25 each year for land, water, and conservation work. Corps members earn a living stipend for their full-time service and an AmeriCorps education award to use toward college or trade school.

Grant details are as follows:

ADAMS COUNTY: The City of Brighton received a \$15,000 GOCO grant to employ Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) crews for two weeks at Morgan Smith Nature Area. Crews will remove several invasive species across 19 acres of the nature area, improving wildlife habitat and public use opportunities. Youth employed by MHYC on this project will also receive urban forestry education sessions.

CHAFFEE COUNTY: The City of Salida will use a \$39,300 GOCO grant to employ Southwest Conservation Corps – Los Valles crews for six weeks of work on the Salida Trail Ecological Restoration Project and the Salida School Garden. Crews will work to remove invasive species, reseed native grasses, plant native shrubs and trees, perform fire fuel mitigation, restore river habitat, maintain creek flow, and collect native seeds.

DELTA COUNTY: GOCO awarded the Town of Paonia \$12,600 for two weeks of work by Western Conservation Corps crews. Youth will triple the length of the existing trails at Paonia River Park, one of the only public access points to the North Fork of the Gunnison River. The park has previously received nearly \$150,000 in funding from GOCO for park development and improvements.

DOUGLAS COUNTY: Douglas County Open Space received a \$22,500 GOCO grant to employ Mile High Youth Corps crews for two weeks for erosion control along 10 miles of trails within Nelson Ranch and Pike Hill Open Space.

FREMONT COUNTY: The City of Cañon City was awarded \$48,450 for eight weeks of Youth Corps work at Royal Gorge Bridge and Park. Crews from Mile High Youth Corps – Southern Front Range will construct two to three miles of new trails and plant 2,500 seedlings in the burn area to help the park continue its long road to recovery since the 2013 wildfire.

GUNNISON COUNTY: The Town of Crested Butte will use a \$25,200 GOCO grant for one month of Youth Corps work in the Gunnison Valley. Over 1,000 acres in the valley have been previously conserved, but increasing use of the area requires substantial environmental work. The town will hire Youth Corps crews from the Western Colorado Conservation Corps (WCCC) to complete 12.5 miles of trail maintenance, two miles of fence repairs, and noxious weed treatment.

JEFFERSON COUNTY: The City of Lakewood will hire crews from Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) to remove invasive Russian olive trees on Bear Creek. A \$75,000 GOCO grant will enable the city to employ crews for 10 weeks of work on 120 acres of Bear Creek Greenbelt Park.

City and County of Denver Parks and Recreation received a \$23,400 grant for trail improvements at Dedisse Mountain Park near Evergreen. Approximately half of the two-mile Dedisse trail needs to be rebuilt, and crews from MHYC will also work to close 6,000 acres of user-created trails.

LARIMER COUNTY: Larimer County will use three grants totaling \$85,200 from GOCO to employ Larimer County Conservation Corps crews at Ben Delatour Scout Ranch, Cottonwood Run Natural Area, and Hermit Park Open Space.

Crews will work for one month on the scout ranch, which GOCO helped permanently preserve in 2010 with a \$1.5 million grant. The ranch provides programming to scouting groups from 16 western and mid-western states. The Youth Corps crews will mitigate fire fuels on 100 acres of high-risk land.

Crews from Larimer County Conservation Corps (LCCC) will remove invasive Russian olive trees from a 12-acre area along the Big Thompson River in Cottonwood Run Natural Area. Crews will work for two weeks. In Hermit Park Open Space, LCCC crews will spend six weeks constructing two miles of new trails.

MESA COUNTY: The City of Grand Junction received a \$15,000 Youth Corps grant to employ Western Colorado Conservation Corps crews at Matchett Park. Crews will clear tamarisk and Russian olive trees on a 2.5-acre area of the park to ensure future park development can take place. GOCO has previously funded more than \$107,000 in grants to develop the parks master plan, trails, and other amenities.

MONTEZUMA COUNTY: The City of Cortez received a \$25,200 GOCO grant to employ youth from Southwest Conservation Corps – Four Corners. The crews will work for one month to install a new school garden and nature trail at Mesa Elementary School, a project that will expand educational opportunities and serve more than 400 students each week.

MONTROSE COUNTY: The City of Montrose received a \$15,000 GOCO grant for two weeks of Youth Corps work to eradicate invasive plant species along the Uncompahgre River. Crews from Western Colorado Conservation Corps will spray or remove Russian olive, tamarisk, thistle and white top before planting 18 native species and protecting young plants from beavers. Work will take place on the 18.1-acre Marine Road Open Space.

RIO GRANDE COUNTY: Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust received a \$12,600 GOCO grant for wetland and river restoration. The land trust will employ youth from Southwest Conservation Corps – Los Valles for two weeks on a conserved ranch that is managed for agricultural production and ecological value. The special focus of this project is enlarging habitat for the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher with approximately 40 new acres of wildlife habitat along 1.5 miles of river.

ROUTT COUNTY: The City of Steamboat Springs received two grants to employ crews from Steamboat Springs Community Youth Corps and Rocky Mountain Youth Corps.

A \$12,600 GOCO grant will allow for two weeks of work on the Spring Creek Trail. Crews will reconstruct portions of the trail to enhance trail safety, prevent erosion, and protect water quality. Six water diversion structures will be completed, along with the resurfacing of two bridge decks, vegetation management, and reconstructing the damaged trailhead.

An \$11,700 GOCO grant will employ crews on Hitchen's Island in downtown Steamboat Springs. The project will include installing 10 bird houses, repairing fencing, vegetation management, and trail reconstruction. Corps members' work will prevent erosion and protect water quality in the Yampa River.

WELD COUNTY: The Town of Erie Parks and Recreation Department received \$11,700 from GOCO to hire crews from Boulder County Youth Corps. Corps members will repair five miles of heavily used trails in the Coal Creek corridor over the course of two weeks.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state's parks, trails, wildlife, rivers and open spaces. GOCO's independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts, and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 4,500 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. Visit goco.org for more information.