



**MONTANA  
CONSERVATION  
CORPS**

*Tools for Living. Experience for Life.*



## **A Strategy to...**

*Ensure Relevance...*

*Cultivate Resilience...*

*Foster Wellbeing...*

**2024-2028**

# MONTANA CONSERVATION CORPS

## A Strategy for Relevance, Resilience, and Wellbeing

### BACKGROUND

Founded in 1990 with a mission to inspire young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities, MCC continues to deliver transformational experiences for young adults and teens while adding to an impressive legacy of conservation, including 25,000 miles of trails improved and over a million trees planted.



In 2023, MCC engaged 600 corps members in 400,000 hours of service learning. Their accomplishments are staggering! 2,400 miles of trails improved; 6,062 acres treated for noxious weeds; 971 acres of wildfire fuels reduction; 118 miles of fencing improved for wildlife. Yet, for all their productivity, our corps members' greatest achievement remains their personal story of development.

*I learned to dig deep on long days that seemed to never end and how to use my voice in a way that empowers me and others. I learned how to build myself up to do challenging things and the importance of becoming an active citizen and a steward of the land and planet we all occupy and enjoy. But most importantly I learned that I still have much to learn.*

## SHIFTING TRENDS

2023 marked the final year of MCC’s post-pandemic “Strategy for Recovery and Renewal.” During these three years, and in the face of shifting labor markets, growing concerns about the climate crisis, and increasing anxiety and mental health needs for the younger generations, MCC demonstrated the value of its programs to provide meaningful work, a sense of belonging, and experiences that foster hope and a sense of purpose for emerging adults. Under the strategic plan, MCC implemented changes in its staffing structure and adopted technology solutions to strengthen efficiencies and build organizational capacity. MCC was able to develop a modest reserve fund while significantly boosting net assets for greater financial resiliency. Tribal partnerships were reestablished with the Blackfeet Nation to grow a Piikuni Lands Service Corps, and MCC relaunched its youth programs to engage Montana adolescents. Prolific federal funding from the Great American Outdoors Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and Inflation Reduction Act has created extensive project and program development opportunities.

Yet, while MCC has excelled in many ways in recent years, internal and external currents in societal and organizational conditions indicate a need to evolve and respond to changing circumstances. For example, soaring housing costs undermine member wellness and resilience, impacting our recruitment and retention. The impacts of climate change demand innovative conservation solutions. Increasing wildfires and smoky air impact our members’ health and safety. Shifting post-pandemic labor markets have likewise impacted recruitment and retention, and created new expectations from employers. The pervasive crisis in mental health among young people demands new strategies to support our staff and corps members. MCC is not immune from these trends, and must adapt its operations and programs to meet the needs of our participants, employees, and environment.

## PRIORITIZING A CULTURE OF CARE

In 2023, the MCC Board of Directors initiated a planning process to assess current conditions, identify organizational priorities, and define strategies for ongoing success. Through this process, MCC articulated a guiding principle to inform decisions. To ensure the continuing vitality of the organization, MCC’s culture and operations will prioritize the wellbeing of staff and members in service of our mission and conservation partners.

By centering the wellbeing of our most valuable resource – our people – MCC will strengthen our programmatic, operational, and financial resiliency, and ensure we remain relevant and profoundly impactful in the lives of our participants and for the needs of our conservation partners.



## GROUNDED IN OUR HERITAGE

**OUR VISION:** Resilient and skilled leaders taking action for a better world.

**OUR MISSION:** Inspire young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities

### OUR COMMUNITY:

- **We care** - At MCC, we center relationships and strive for inclusive excellence in building a community where everyone experiences **belonging**. Authentic connection enables us to relate across differences, build empathy, value inclusion, advocate for equity, and lean into challenges together.
- **We empower** - MCC instills hope and purpose in young people. MCC is a catalyst for change, cultivating character and resilience, fostering a growth mindset, and teaching work and life skills that help young people lead change in their own lives and in their communities.
- **We conserve** - Conservation connects us to the land and to the legacy of corps. We get things done to improve our lands and communities, including mitigating impacts from climate change. By getting things done, we instill hope and purpose, build skills, and cultivate character. We acknowledge the connections to the land of the indigenous peoples that live here, and seek connection with partners that continue to steward the Northern Rockies and Plains.
- **We serve** - We believe in service as a strategy for personal growth, community impact. Through service, we foster compassion and skills for life. The spirit of service inspires our commitment to our colleagues, corps members, and project partners and communities.
- **We lead** - We believe that everyone can be a leader and that leadership may be learned. By intentionally empowering young people to learn, grow and lead, we cultivate the next generation of leaders. Our place-based learning fosters a commitment to action for the environment.
- **We work for quality results** - We honor that each person has the right to define and celebrate their own measures for excellence – yet we strive together for personal and organizational accomplishment. We learn from mistakes and choose a growth mindset. We work hard and persevere, yet value balance in life and work. We proudly roll up our sleeves to get things done.



## OUR STRATEGY AND PRIORITIES

**CORE STRATEGY:** MCC will thrive and best serve our stakeholders and natural resources by cultivating a culture that prioritizes the wellbeing of our staff and corps members.

### 1. HEALTHY PEOPLE

MCC will reduce barriers to service for corps members, supporting their housing needs, mental health, and sense of belonging while offering transformative experiences that connect them to climate action and conservation impact. We will cultivate a culture of care that supports a healthy and resilient staff. We will center the wellness and ongoing professional and personal development of our employees so that they may thrive and meaningfully impact our corps members' lives.

#### OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Support basic needs and resources for corps members, including housing, stipends, gear
- 1.2 Sustain our staff with competitive pay, professional development, and leadership within MCC
- 1.3 Increase access to mental and physical health resources for staff and members
- 1.4 Foster organization-wide collaboration
- 1.5 Cultivate belonging and respect of a diverse community

### 2. RIGHT-SIZE OPERATIONS

MCC's systems center people and contribute to a sense of community, while fostering efficiency and capacity, and promoting healthy relationships. Our operations enable top quality, sustainable programs and a resilient organization.

#### OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Develop org. structures & staffing for high quality programs that reduce overwhelm
- 2.2 Embrace new technology and information systems to foster efficiency and collaboration
- 2.3 Youth programs are staffed and funded for sustainability, safety, quality and growth
- 2.4 Collaborations with tribal partners empower a native-led Indian Youth Service Corps
- 2.5 Plan for succession and transitions of key leadership positions

### 3. PHILANTHROPIC EXCELLENCE and COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

MCC will develop a lean and effective development team to raise funds for program priorities, and steward relations with stakeholders. MCC will cultivate community support and awareness, develop partnerships for climate-related conservation, and sustain strong support from AmeriCorps.

#### OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Create a lean but effective Development Team with expertise and capacity
- 3.2 Steward a cadre of core donors and grants to sustain \$1M+ in annual philanthropic support
- 3.3 Facilitate activities and local projects to enable stakeholder engagement and MCC visibility
- 3.4 Develop opportunities for climate-related service while sustaining core conservation partners
- 3.5 Sustain strong engagement with AmeriCorps and the Climate Corps initiative



301 N. Willson Avenue – Bozeman, MT 59715 – (406) 587-4475 – [www.mtcorps.org](http://www.mtcorps.org)