Maine Conservation Connection
Maine Conservation Corps
August 2013

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Summer Field Team Celebrates

The 2013 Field Team summer season concluded with a celebration of the teams’ service at the Recognition Ceremony on August 9th at Lake George Regional Park in Canaan. Attendees had the pleasure of hearing from Jo Orlando, MCC director, Mick Rogers, Supervisor of Outdoor Recreation, Michael Ashmore from the Maine Commission for Community Service, Rex Turner from the Bureau of Parks and Public Lands, Lester Kenway from the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, Fern Burns form the Swan’s Island Lighthouse Committee. The ceremony was also graced with the presence of Anne Madore, Phil Gouzie, and Robert Poisson of the Maine chapter of the CCC Legacy. Madore and Gouzie had Team Leaders composed haikus, choreographed, and highlighted the accomplishments of their teams, and Program Coordinator Sara Knowles spoke about the season before everyone enjoyed lunch and, of course, cake.

The 5th annual MCC Olympics & BBQ took place the night before, with events including MCC Jeopardy and the ever-popular pie eating contest. The Olympics ended in a tie between Roy’s team and Nate’s team. The Senior Team Leaders devised a Sing-Off to break the tie, which Nate’s team declined and so forfeited. As a result, Team Leader Roy and his crew were crowned champions for 2013.
Team Leaders

Savannah Steele of Newberg, OR is a graduate of the MCC’s 2013 Trail Training Academy (TTA). Steele previously served as a Team Member with the MCC in 2012. Her team served on two projects: eight weeks working for Maine Huts and Trails in the Kingfield area and four weeks at Pineland Public Land in New Gloucester.

“We spent the first part of our season in the Carrabassett Valley working with the nonprofit organization, Maine Huts and Trails (MH&T). We focused on clearing about three miles of mountain biking trail designed by New England mountain bike trail guru, Hardy Avery. The trail follows killer hairpin turns and varying geological features from MH&T’s newest addition, Stratton Brook Hut, to the Narrow Gauge Pathway across from Sugarloaf. For the first two weeks of the season all nine field teams worked in sopping wet conditions. They cut trail in the rain. They found rocks for stone structures in the rain. They hiked and cooked and slept in the rain. Team Members from away must have had such a bitter impression of Vacationland: cold, soggy, miserable. Our team worked in the rain, too, but unlike the rest of the field teams, we spent our first rainy two weeks under the roof of Main Huts and Trail’s Stratton Brook Hut. It featured hot showers, clean composting toilets, soft bunk beds and even a drying room for our sopping wet clothes at the end of the day! After working out of Stratton Brook Hut for about a month, the team hopped over to Poplar Streams Hut. There we went on waterfall hunts and wildflower walks, spending our evenings enjoying delicious cuisine and sometimes indulging in a good cup of tea. (The team enjoys the finer things in life)! While working on the trail, we get to spot some of our favorite wildflowers: lady slipper, iris, lupine, buttercup, and Indian paintbrush. We’ve seen lots of critters, too! Moose, snowshoe hare, a scarlet tanager, salamanders, frogs, butterflies, and of course black flies and mosquitoes!

We resided at the Flagstaff Hut, where the view of the Bigelow mountain range is breathtaking, and the team took refreshing dips into Flagstaff Lake. We certainly couldn't get better housing as trail workers! Our second project brought us to Southern Maine where we cleared a new hybrid mountain biking/hiking trail to connect Bradbury mountain State Park’s trail system to two existing loops in Pineland Public Land Trust.”

Steele is serving as a Team Leader for the 2013 Fall season as well.
Jared Ress of Richmond, VA is a 2013 graduate of the MCC’s TTA, and previously served as an Assistant Team Leader with the MCC in 2012. His team served six weeks in Scopan Public Land in Aroostook County and six weeks on Tumbledown Mountain in Weld.

“We worked at the Scopan state land reserve way up in Aroostook County. Having braved much wet weather and many biting insects of sundry varieties, we have completed the task they set out for us: construction of a new, roughly 3-and-a-half mile loop trail, which passes by a pleasant open meadow-like beaver bog and climbs something like 1100 to 1300 feet onto a ridge looking out over Presque Isle and the surrounding rolling countryside covered with the region’s characteristic mix of forest and farmland. At Tumbledown Mountain state land reserve we worked on stone drainage structures on the Little Jackson trail.”

Ress is continuing as a Team Leader for the Fall season.

Josiah Gray of Yarmouth, ME is a 2013 graduate of the MCC’s TTA. Gray previously served as a Senior Youth Crew Leader with the Montana Conservation Corps in 2010-2012. His team served six weeks at Amherst Community Forest and six weeks at Nahmakanta.

“This summer my crew has been working in the Amherst Community Forest in Amherst, Maine. We constructed bog bridges and set stepping stones on the Partridge Pond Trail and cleared a re-route on the Bald Bluff Trail. We also built water bars and 26 foot long stringer bridge on the Ducktail Pond Trail. While we were working in Amherst we stayed in a cabin where we competed for the Keepers of the Amherst Wood trophy. Next hitch we headed to Nahmakanta for the rest of the summer to dig part of the Great Circle Trail.”

Gray is staying on as a Team Leader for the Fall season.

Amy Freund of Howards Grove, WI is a 2013 graduate of the MCC’s TTA and she previously served in the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in 2010 and 2012. Her mini-team served in the most locations of any team this summer.
“Garrick, Suzanne, and I have been bouncing all over the state as the mini team. We started at Vaughan Woods State Park building retaining structures along the river and repairing bridges. Next we were off to Mackworth Island where we restored a pier by filling holes in the large granite blocks, adding gravel and loam, and planting Rosa Virginiana to help retain the soils. Then came Ellsworth City Forest. We did a day of blow down removal and built about 130 feet of bog bridging. The next project was Jewell Island. We took a nice half hour boat ride with all our gear, built 37 steps to various shore access points, placed 2 wooden water bars, ate lobster dinner on the shore, and made some fresh clam chowder with the camp host Vinny. We had a blast moving around the state and exploring all these new places.”

Freund is continuing to serve as a Team Leader with the MCC for the Fall season.

**Jevin Hoeper, of Cincinnati, OH** served six weeks on Old Blue and six weeks on Poplar Ridge, both on the Appalachian Trail.

“For the first three hitches we worked on Old Blue, which is located on the Appalachian Trail. We finished our time there and are proud to say that we achieved our goal and set 115 stone steps and 516 side steps. We then moved on to Saddle Back Jr., which is also on the AT, where we did more fun work with rock.”

Hoeper is continuing to serve as a Team Leader with the MCC for the Fall season.

**Emily Wilmers of Cincinnati, OH** is a 2013 graduate of the MCC’s TTA. Her team served four weeks in Baxter Park and eight weeks in Deboullie Public Land in Aroostook County.

“Our first three weeks were spent in Baxter State Park. We worked to clear blow-downs and maintain some of Baxter’s most popular trails leading to and surrounding Mt.
Katahdin, as well as trails in the northern section of the park. The fourth hitch was spent working with the great people of the Baxter State Park crews learning new skills such as bog bridging, water bar maintenance and replacing the decking for a bridge. Though our time in Baxter had a plethora of cold, rain, bugs, and dirt, we made sure not to be ‘pussyfooters’, and enjoyed ourselves nonetheless! Our most recent hitch was spent up in the great expanses of Deboullie. Whilst working there we cleared over half a mile of new trail, praised da Lord every time we made it to the top of several God-forsaken hills, built a small bridge, set five sections of bog bridging, and worshipped the friendly fishermen who brought us trout and moose meat. YAY WILDERNESS!!!!”

Wilmers is continuing to serve as a Team Leader for the Fall season.

Matthew Bernier, of Poland, Maine, previously served with the MCC as a Team Member in 2012. His team served eight weeks at Mount Blue State Park in Weld and four weeks at Bradbury Mountain State Park in Pownal.

Matthew comments in list form:

- Old men rescued from mountain: 1

- Trees that came within minutes of falling on our van during a windstorm that we had to chainsaw our way out of: 7

- Porcupines startled: 2 adults, 1 baby

- Helpings of ginger cake dessert eaten by Andrew at fancy dinner he got us invited to at Camp Kawanhee that also included seared bluefin tuna, lobster newburg, and fillet mignon, and much more: 2

- Average estimated weight of steps used in our first staircase: 900 lbs

Bernier is continuing to serve as a Team Member for the Fall season.

Roy Kresge, of Jaffrey, New Hampshire, is a 2013 graduate of TTA. Kresge previously served as a Team Member with the MCC during the 2010 and 2011 seasons. His team served five weeks with the Mahoosuc Land Trust on the Black and White Trail, a week at
Mount Blue State Park in Weld, and six weeks on East Baldpate on the Appalachian Trail.

“The guys and I had a pretty thrilling tour of stonework projects. We spent our first 5 weeks on Whitecap Mountain in the Mahoosuc Land Trust, where we built stone steps, water bars, ditch & drains, check steps, rip rap and retaining walls, along with all the side hilling we could imagine. We successfully finished rehabilitating about 500 feet of trail that included some seriously tricky structures! The guys are now all enthusiasts of strong contact points, erosion control, and huge rocks dug into the earth. Other great victories include establishing several delicious 1-pot meals such as schlul and fush, as well as a naming convention for any weird sandwich that is pioneered by the brave. Then, the crew got their first taste of the backcountry on East Baldpate while working on the AT. The rest of the season brought work that includes stepping stones, stone steps and water bars.”

Nathan Oppenheim, of Yarmouth, Maine, served two weeks at Seal Cove in Damariscotta, and 10 weeks building the Schoodic Woods trail system in Winter Harbor.

“Things have gone great! Our first two weeks were spent building a bridge through muck and water near Damariscotta. We had a lot of fun grip hoisting cribs down into the swamp and using a nail gun to finish our bridge off.

We have since gotten well acquainted with our brush and chain saws cutting trail on the Schoodic Peninsula. We have had amazing views of the ocean and Mount Desert Island, occasional cool breezes, and the rare sighting of bald eagles, partridges, and other birds of prey. In addition, while driving, we saw two juvenile moose. As we drove towards them, our driver remembered from his driver education course, to hit them in the rear, though this was avoided by judicial use of brakes.”

Oppenheim is continuing to serve as a Team Leader for the Fall season.

Fall Field Team Gets Underway

Fall Field Team members joined the MCC on August 13th and teams headed into the field for their first projects on August 19th. They are currently working on projects in Nahmakanta, Baxter, the Appalachian Trail, Androscoggin Riverlands State Park, and Grafton Notch State Park. Good luck to you!
Maine Conservation Corps Celebrates the Breaching of Veazie Dam With the Penobscot River Restoration Trust

By Alison Leonard

July 22nd proved to be a sunny and temperate day. Good thing too, since several hundred people were awaiting the beginning of the Veazie Dam Breaching Ceremony and Community Celebration. At 10:00 AM, as osprey and small planes flew overhead, members of the Penobscot Indian Tribe, in perfect rhythm, beat a common drum and sang songs to open the ceremony. Butch Phillips, Penobscot Nation Elder, sang a medicine man song while performing a smudging ceremony containing tobacco, sweet grass, sage and cedar as the Penobscot River tumbled over the dam behind him.

Members of Maine Conservation Corps were there to support the rivers’ renewal including Mick Rogers, Supervisor of Outdoor Recreation, Amber Hardy, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator, Dylan Cookson, Veteran Community Leader, Michael Duley, Veteran Community Leader, Krista Rogers, Training Coordinator, and Alison Leonard, Trail Crew Member. Dylan’s AmeriCorps placement is with the Penobscot River Restoration Trust. He helped out in many ways in preparing for the event. He manned the information booth for the Trust, and shared information with community members about how many organizations worked together to make the dam breaching a reality.

Destruction of the Veazie Dam won’t happen overnight. It will take about two years before final demolition. The removal of a dam is the most effective way to provide passage of sea-run fish to upstream spawning grounds. Destruction will hopefully result in an increased number of Atlantic salmon, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, American shad, alewives, blueback herring, American eels, smelt, striped bass, tomcod, and sea lamprey, not to mention the restoration of birds, insects and other wildlife.

After members of the Penobscot Nation sang, varied community leaders gave remarks, and then hundreds of people walked to the water’s edge on the Eddington side of the river and watched as the demolition team began drilling into the top of the dam. It wasn’t long before the water began to pour over a spot where the drilling started and then the applause began.
Afternoon events around the community in celebration of the breaching included tours of the Penobscot Indian Nation’s scenic boardwalk; a presentation at the Milford Dam in Old Town on the benefits of hydropower; a view of the Great Works Dam in Bradley to learn about dam removal process; and finally, a tour of Leonard’s Mill in Bradley to hear about rock and pool fishways that allow alewives access to spawning habitat. This project is a great example of many caring citizens, organization’s and community leaders coming together to make things happen. The end result will be a greater connection of inland and coastal Maine and a Maine living in greater balance with nature.

MCC Alumni

Patrick Emery

What initially drew you to the MCC?

I heard about spending the summer building hiking trails with MCC from my college professor as an idea for an internship as part of our coursework. I was a sophomore at the time and I was looking for real world experience in my field of study (Environmental Studies) instead of returning to my high school job at a pizza shop. I chose to apply to work on a trail crew.

What was your favorite part about serving with the MCC?

My favorite part would have to be meeting the people that I did. Whether it was the people I served directly with, or people from another team, I still look forward to seeing the people that I worked with. In one instance, I met another team’s leader while at work on the Allagash Waterway. He was on the home stretch of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail and I met up with him at Lock Dam on Chamberlain Lake, of all places. It was just like seeing Luke after a week in the field. We chatted for about a half an hour and then he and his traveling companion continued paddling north.

What was your favorite project/favorite place you served?

I served on 4 different projects in Oakland, Grafton Notch, Auburn, and Augusta. They all were great but my favorite project was helping complete the Grafton Loop. My team and I camped on the back side of Slide Mountain, between Sunday River Whitecap and Old Speck Mountains. It was trail building 101. It was incredibly hard work with a 5 mile hike to and from camp and the work site. We ate great food for cooking on a makeshift table with a two burner grill.
How did your time with the MCC affect your career/life path?

The summer after I served with MCC, I served as the University of Maine Fort Kent intern on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. My time with MCC laid the groundwork for my time as an intern. I worked a very similar schedule there as MCC as far as length of work weeks. I was familiar with buying enough food for 9 days. And it was also very hard work. I've noticed several ways MCC changed me that enabled me to be an effective intern for the Allagash Waterway. I had gained skills in staircase building and general trail building that helped me contribute more than muscle to several projects.

If you could give any advice to current or future MCC members, what would it be?

Do it and stick with it. Besides the sore feet from new boots the first week, it is a great time with great people in some of the most beautiful places in the State of Maine.

Please tell us about what you have been up to since you served with the MCC as well.

Since serving with MCC, I also served as the Allagash Wilderness Waterway’s UMFK intern. Directly after my internship, I was hired as an Assistant Park Ranger at Chamberlain. I spent three summers as an assistant. After those seasons, I was promoted to be the Allagash Park Ranger at Eagle Lake. In this position, I work 42 weeks a year, protecting the wilderness and serving the public in many different aspects.

The past eight years working on the Allagash Waterway wouldn’t have been possible without serving MCC the year before. During my time on the Allagash, I met my lovely fiancée and we plan to marry this June.

Tia Sukin

Dr. Sukin joined Pacific Metrics as a Psychometrician in January 2012 focusing on a contract with the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center’s Defense Language Proficiency Test 5. In this position, she makes recommendations related to psychometric tasks, and develops procedures for the integrity of performance data. In addition, she performs psychometric processes and conducts research.

Prior to joining Pacific Metrics, Dr. Sukin held the position of Psychometrician at Measured Progress where she conducted operational psychometric analyses and tasks for statewide assessment program contracts. She also served as the lead Psychometrician for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Judgmental Standard Setting and Writing Achievement-Levels Setting contracts. Previously, she worked as a Research Assistant at the University of Massachusetts, contributing to a variety of projects including a College Board Advanced Placement research contract. Dr. Sukin has also served as Assessment Specialist for the Department of Assessment and Accountability for the Charleston County School District and taught Classroom Assessment at the University of Maryland.

Dr. Sukin holds an Ed.D. in Research Methods and Evaluation from the University of Massachusetts, a M.A. in Measurement, Statistics, and Evaluation from the University of
Maryland, a B.A. in Psychology from Rhode Island College. She is an active member of the American Educational Research Association, National Council of Measurement for Education, and the Psychometric Society. She also served as a program co-chair for the 2012 Northeastern Educational Research Association conference.

What initially drew you to the MCC?

I had a couple of very influential history teachers in high school that nurtured my passion for hiking during a summer outdoor adventures program. I couldn’t get enough so I searched for how I could continue hiking after high school and discovered MCC.

What was your favorite part about serving with the MCC?

I very much enjoyed the cyclic schedule of 8 days on and 6 days off. Beyond logistics, meeting like-minded caring individuals to grow and mature with was ultimately the most rewarding return.

What was your favorite project/favorite place you served?

My favorite project was building a low ropes course in Auburn.

How did your time with the MCC affect your career/life path?

Being a part of the MCC always makes for interesting conversation when out on job interviews. It really shows a depth of character.

If you could give any advice to current or future MCC members, what would it be?

Journal. You don’t want to forget the wonderful experiences you will have and challenges you will overcome.

A Volunteer Day with Jenn at Wolfe’s Neck State Park

MCC’s News Staff caught up with Jennifer Clark to talk about stewardship and volunteering with the MCC.

What is the Environmental Steward Program and how did you get involved?

Environmental Stewards are AmeriCorps members who serve individually with non-profits, state or federal agencies to increase organizational volunteer capacity by recruiting and training community volunteers in conservation projects; fundraise for assistance in conservation efforts; and aid in the implementation of host sites’ land management plans.
Environmental Stewardship at Wolfe’s Neck Woods State Park combines trail work, environmental education, volunteer mobilization and maintenance into an all-in-one position. I am responsible for completing tasks in a wide range of conservation work; varying from but not limited to, writing new 45 min-1 hour long nature programs, trail maintenance, leading volunteers, research and weekly cleaning. I applied for the Maine Conservation Corps via the Americorps website and with my previous experience as well as a current student studying Environmental Studies, was able to jump from the “Team Member” position to Environmental Stewardship.

Explain how the IDEXX group got involved at Wolfe’s Neck.

Volunteer Coordinator for the Maine Conservation Corps Amber Hardy contacted me in early June to ask if I had any projects available for 12-15 volunteers from the company IDEXX. I had been hiking all of the trails at the park and building a list of projects that I wanted to see completed without the help of another MCC Trail Crew and after talking it over with the park’s manager Andy Hutchinson, decided on one and then came up with a few small side projects to keep the group busy as well and passed all of the information between an employee at IDEXX organizing the group, myself and Amber via email.

How much have you worked with volunteers at the park? Do you have many big groups like the one from IDEXX?

It was slow going with volunteers at first at Wolfe’s Neck Woods, before the IDEXX group in July we didn’t have any. Now I’ve had the group from IDEXX in July and I currently have a volunteer up from Boston helping at the park for a week. We have 3 more coming soon in the next couple weeks as well to help with trails and interpretive work. I really enjoyed having the big group from IDEXX and although I haven’t had another group that size, I would definitely love one! We really enjoyed working with each other and I was happy to provide them with a fun day out of the laboratory.

What projects did you have the IDEXX group do?

The IDEXX group took out an old rotten bridge on the North Loop Trail, after they destroyed the bridge they replaced it with 4 large rocks to be used as stepping stones with drainage in the middle.
They hauled loads of gravel to be placed in spots on the trail that had poor drainage. They raked all the debris off of our ADA trail and raked the picnic sites for visitors. They hauled brush from a small stream into the woods.

I felt the North Loop Trail was the most neglected in the park not only in terms of maintenance but by hikers as well and chose the project to make the trail more enjoyable for visitors. Placing the gravel down along the trail allows the hikers a clear path for their feet, in some places because they were walking around the water, they had widened it as far as 8ft killing the plants on the sides of the trail. Taking out the bridge removed a hazard for visitors on the trail and aesthetically looks much better than a rotten board. Raking the ADA trail and picnic sites make it more accessible for visitors with limited mobility. Hauling the brush out of the small stream created better drainage for running water which means potentially eliminating a mosquito breeding area and again, looks much better than a mess of rotting tree branches next to a bridge.

**What kind of impact did the IDEXX volunteers have on the park’s trails? Would you take more corporate volunteer groups like that?**

I would definitely take more corporate volunteers like that, they were extremely efficient and eager to get the job done. They all had a great time enjoying the park and the work and I was very grateful for the help.

**How much would you say volunteers help the park? Would you encourage people to contact the MCC or the park to help out?**

The volunteers we have this year have helped immensely, I have had more time to work on research for the new nature programs we’re offering this year with the small jobs off of my hands. Education is the focus at Wolfe’s Neck Woods and time is of the essence with only 900 hours to offer the park. The senior staff at the park all made an effort to walk out on the North Loop Trail after the IDEXX project and just this morning driving in I got a compliment from an employee who has been at the park for decades, he really enjoys the stepping stones which means a lot to me considering he used to manage the place many years ago.

**Volunteers of the Month**

**July**
Ilan Mandil of Brooklyn, NY was nominated by Roy Kresge’s team for his quick learning, hard work and determination during a 9-day, 80-hour volunteer stint at East Baldpate on the Appalachian Trail, as well as his willingness to take a bus from Brooklyn to Augusta and back to go with the team.

August

John Mylroie of Cape Elizabeth, ME, was nominated by Roy Kresge’s team for his hard work, positive attitude, and team orientation during a 9-day, 80-hour volunteer stint at East Baldpate on the Appalachian Trail. Mylroie has joined the MCC as a Team Member for the Fall season.

Lisa Mossner of Jamaica Plain, MA was nominated by Jenn Clark at Wolfe’s Neck State Park and Janet Gorman at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. She volunteered 30 hours with Jenn and 30 hours with Janet over the course of her two-week vacation. In addition to calling Mossner a “superstar”, Janet had this to say about her:
“She volunteered a total of six days and did some amazing work for us. Lisa remained self-motivated and flexible as we worked out a schedule and list of priorities/ work to be completed. Our gardens at the office look the best that they have all season, we pulled bags of invasives out of the Carson Trail and down in Kittery at another unit of the refuge we manage for cottontail, and she helped interns in our greenhouse with a whole boat load of good stuff. “

Volunteer Opportunities & Events

As always, all of the MCC’s volunteer opportunities can be found here:

For all Field Team opportunities, contact Amber Hardy at amber.hardy@maine.gov or 207-624-6092 to volunteer or learn more.

Baxter State Park, Millinocket, ME
This project is ongoing through September
Project details: Rerouting and blazing the O-J-I Trail.

Haystack Mountain, Castle Hill, ME (near Presque Isle)
This project is ongoing through September
Project details: Erosion control and stone work.
Androscoggin Riverlands State Park, Turner, ME
This project is ongoing through September
Project details: Erosion control and stone work.

There are tons of great Field Team projects later in the fall, so be sure to check out the MCC’s Volunteer Calendar for all the details:

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