



Preserving the wonder...

1. What is the primary goal of the Nature Corps?

The Nature Corps is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization that is spearheading a campaign to involve more Americans in the preservation and stewardship of our National Parks. The Nature Corps is:

- a) Working with the National Park Service and other land management agencies to design and complete critical conservation projects,
- b) Implementing a public education campaign to promote a stewardship ethic, and
- c) Involving the public, especially America's youth, as stewards of our natural treasures.

Since 1987, Nature Corps volunteers have been responsible for restoring and preserving some of our nation's most valued natural treasures in parks such as Yosemite, Sequoia, Kings Canyon, Hawaii Volcanoes and the Channel Islands.

For its accomplishments The Nature Corps has earned the American Express Travel Leisure "Mark of Innovation" Award, National Semi-finalist "Take Pride in America" Award, four "Take Pride in California" Awards, and the National Park Service "Partnership Achievement" Award.

2. What is the Nature Corps relationship to the National Parks?

The Nature Corps (formerly Sousson Foundation) serves as a recruitment arm for the National Park Service to secure volunteers for a wide variety of park projects. The Nature Corps recruits both skilled and non-skilled volunteers, as well as volunteers that can provide professional services to design more complex park projects.

3. What types of programs does The Nature Corps offer?

The Nature Corps recruits volunteers to support projects in one of several National Parks in California and Hawaii. To this end, The Nature Corps offers two programs:

- a) **Project S.A.V.E. (Special Assignment Volunteers for the Environment).** These are one-day events that require a large labor force for various projects such as planting trees, removing nonnative vegetation or potting hundreds of seedlings. Volunteers typically meet at the park's Visitor Center on Saturday morning at 9 a. m. and work until 3 p.m. In most cases the National Park Service will provide free camping to accommodate the volunteers. This program is offered at no cost to the public.

- b) **Volunteer Vacations.** These are staff led, full service excursions. Half of the volunteer vacation is devoted to conservation and the other to playing in some of the most magnificent National Parks in the world.

The Nature Corps' most popular Volunteer Vacation is held in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Volunteers will spend half of the volunteer vacation working with park staff to protect Hawaii's threatened flora and delicate ecosystems from the devastating impact caused by feral goats and invasive nonnative vegetation.

The other half of the volunteer vacation is devoted to learning about and exploring the natural wonders of Hawaii. This Hawaiian adventure gives volunteers an opportunity to visit spectacular waterfalls, lush rain forests, remote seacoasts, snorkel around coral reefs teeming with undersea life, and view glowing lava as it cascades into a moonlit ocean.

The Volunteer Vacations are a tuition-based program to offset the costs associated with lodging, transportation, meals and other excursion related expenses.

4. How do you recruit volunteers?

Project S.A.V.E. (Special Assignment Volunteers for the Environment) volunteers are recruited through the print media and public service announcements. Articles placed in newspapers and corporate newsletters are used to alert the public of volunteer opportunities in the National Parks. **Volunteer Vacations** are typically promoted in travel guidebooks and magazines such as *Outdoor* and *Travel and Leisure* magazines.

5. Do you have other adult programs?

Corporate employees also make up a large portion of our adult volunteer corps. Typically, a corporation will make a contribution to support a park project/s and sponsor employee outings. Employees and their immediate families are then encouraged to invite friends and extended family to participate on weekend work outing in the National Parks. Since 1996, hundreds of employees have teamed up to work, learn and play in intense and unforgettable employee expeditions in several of California's national parks.

6. What's the advantage for companies to participate?

These unique, back-to-nature working adventures are designed specifically for companies looking to build strong employee relationships, foster teambuilding and promote company loyalty. The volunteer outings provide employees with hands-on training in a unique outdoor classroom where volunteerism sets the tone for learning leadership, team building, and time management skills.

In addition to the critical conservation and beautification component of the outing, The Nature Corps provides employees with the inside track on a variety of exciting recreational activities -- from snorkeling the spectacular coral reefs of Hawaii to escaping into the High Sierra as part of a Llama Tour that explores breathtaking wilderness that only few will ever see.

The employee teambuilding excursions are designed to meet the specific needs of the company's employees and public relations objectives. From meaningful projects and ranger-led tours to exquisite outdoor dining and unforgettable outdoor excursions, all aspects of the company outing are organized and carried out by experienced Nature Corps staff.

7. Do you encourage corporate sponsors?

The Nature Corps is working to develop a greater number of corporate partners. The benefit of these partnerships is that companies can provide large numbers of employee volunteers, professional design services that eliminate the obstacles to making complex projects a reality, and the financial resources necessary to organize and implement critical conservation projects.

8. How do you involve youth in stewardship programs?

Young adults are introduced to the program through collaborative efforts with youth organizations, such as the California Police Activities League, Parks and Recreation Departments, Boy Scouts of America, and Boys and Girls Clubs. These partnering organizations recruit and transport the youth to the National Parks where the youth participate in volunteer and experiential learning programs.

The youth groups range in size from twenty-five to thirty-five volunteers who come primarily from the Bay Area, Monterey, Bakersfield, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. The six-day excursions to the National Parks include the following four components:

- a) Volunteering with the National Park Service,
- b) Environmental education,
- c) Exploring career opportunities with the National Park Service, and
- d) Learning about outdoor recreational opportunities that promote a healthy lifestyle.

The students range from 10 to 17 years of age. Many are underserved youth who have never been camping before, let alone explored the Sierra Nevada.

9. How do you do this?

The Nature Corps serves as the coordinating agency between the National Park Service and various youth organizations. Once the youth agency agrees to participate on a conservation project, The Nature Corps secures the funding to organize and

implement the volunteer and educational programs and provide logistical support to the National Park Service and the participating youth agency.

10. Where do you get your funding to support all this?

Funding is typically secured equally from private and corporate foundations as well as individual donors. The Nature Corps is currently preparing a membership campaign that will be kicked off in 2007 to help finance park conservation projects.

11. What are your long-term goals?

On May 13, 2005 members of The Nature Corps Board of Directors along with community leaders, business executives, and government representatives, gathered to celebrate the organization's 18-year history of significant accomplishments in conservation and collaborate on a strategic plan to expand the agency's successful programs of public land stewardship.

As a result of that meeting, The Nature Corps board of directors has committed to expanding The Nature Corps program to a national level by setting up regional offices in the flagship national parks across the United States including Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Great Smoky Mountains and Acadia National Parks .