



# connections

*The newsletter of the Massachusetts  
Greenways and Trails Program*

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## **Summer Trail Crew Opportunities in Massachusetts**

### **SCA MassParks AmeriCorps:**

Imagine it. . .

You roll over, slightly tangled in your sleeping bag, and see the condensation thick on the walls of your Mountain Hardwear tent. Is it time to get up already? You glance at your watch groaning to see that, yes, it's 7 o'clock and time to start the day. You unzip your sleeping bag and search through the bottom of your tent to find your well-worn Carharts and a mildly dirty long-sleeved shirt. Who cares? No one will see the dirt for you're sure that your trusty rain gear will be enveloping it again today. You slide into your mud encrusted hiking boots and cringe because they remain wet from the previous day's work, but you lace them up anyway and stumble into the "kitchen" for breakfast. There you see one of your crewmates already cooking some oatmeal so you pull up a bench and fish for your bowl. Your body screams out in hunger and you ingest the oatmeal in huge mouthfuls. You pack up your gear- backpack, water bottles, and tools and start to hike. It will be another long hard day on the trail and you start to question



why you're here. Is it for the \$75 a week, the experience to put on your resume, and the scholarship you'll earn to put towards your insurmountable college loans? Maybe.

Nine months ago you packed up your car and drove to Hawley where you began your service with SCA's Massachusetts Parks AmeriCorps. You'd graduated in the spring and were looking for somewhere to apply your skills when you found the SCA website. After so many years of studying you wanted to do something meaningful, to give back, and in the end

you chose the MassParks AmeriCorps program here in western Massachusetts because you wanted to work with kids and teach environmental education in the schools, you wanted to learn the art of trail maintenance, and you wanted to live and work as part of a community. You knew you would gain skills and see a new part of the country, but that was merely where the adventure began.

And look at all you've accomplished thus far this season including building the bridge over Dunbar Brook, the box steps at Hemlock Gorge, GPSing the rail trail out in Waltham, and

clearing ice storm damage from numerous trails across the state. You made these structures, you learned how to wield a chainsaw and swing a Pulaski with ease and confidence. You built them with your own two hands so that others could follow in your footsteps, passing with ease, enjoying their experience and growing just a little closer with the natural world.

Maybe, in fact, you're here for all these reasons. And so you smile. You smile to yourself, to your crewmates ahead of and behind you, and you smile to whom and whatever may be secretly peering at you through the darkened cover of the canopy. You readjust your hard hat and see the thunderclouds pending overhead, pregnant with water. No longer do you guess why you're here for you know you're here because today, despite the rain, is going to be a good day.

- Excerpts from "Put Yourself in the Boots of a Corps Member" by Jackie Lucero

*For more information, contact Jonah Keane, SCA Conservation Corps Program Director at 413-339-6631 or email [jkeane@theSCA.org](mailto:jkeane@theSCA.org)*

### **AMC Trail Crew in Blue Hills Reservation:**

The Appalachian Mountain Club Professional Work Crew has been working in the Massachusetts Department of Conservation's South Region Urban Parks for several years, mostly funded through Recreational Trails Program grants. During 2008, the trail crew worked an entire summer season and half of the fall in multiple parks within the region. The crew completed work at the Blue Hills Reservation's Sky Line trail, Ponkapoag Boardwalk and Miniciello Bridge, among others, including the construction of water bars and rock steps at Wilson Mountain's green dot and red dot trails. Despite the small number of members in one trail crew, the group consistently completes all trail work swiftly, efficiently, and sustainably while still finding the time to enjoy the work and the benefits of a rewarding summer job.



The AMC trail crew typically consists of 5-6 members, both females and males, between the ages of 20-30, with about 80% of the crew hailing from a state other than New England. They are supervised by a crew leader and learn trail skills primarily while on-the-job, though they do attend a brief trail skills training prior to their summer hitch. As a part of the job, the AMC crew offers the opportunity for DCR staff at Blue Hills and surrounding parks to learn trail building skills by working alongside them at their worksites, always willing to share and teach important trail maintenance and safety techniques as a learning experience. Hand tools are primarily used at worksites to complete tasks - it is always an impressive site to see a 170 lb individual move and set a 400lbs rock with his bare hands! Many of the members of the trail crew complete trail work during their college breaks, military vacations or after college, while some take time off from their regular full time job to learn trail building and environmental skills as well as to give back to the environment.

*For more information, contact Mariah Keagy, AMC Trail Crew Supervisor at 603-466-2721 or email [mkeagy@outdoors.org](mailto:mkeagy@outdoors.org)*



**Groundwork Lawrence:** The Groundwork Lawrence **Green Team** is a year-round program that offers part-time, paid positions for 10 Lawrence high school students each year to help learn about and lead local environmental and healthy community initiatives, conduct research, raise awareness, challenge their peers to do community service, and participate in hands-on improvement projects throughout the City of Lawrence, including trail maintenance and restoration in the summer field season. The program is intended to promote the protection and restoration of

Lawrence's critical ecological systems, natural resources, and public health by engaging teens in advocacy and service-learning efforts focused on the community's parks, gardens, waterways, and vacant open spaces. The Green Team program has dual goals - to prepare Lawrence's youth for a lifetime of environmental and healthy community leadership, and to invest in our community's future and capacity to improve its physical environment.

*For more information, contact Groundwork Lawrence at 978-974-0770*

### **DCR Summer Trail Crew – Western Region:**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation hires a professional trail crew for motorized trail restoration in the Western Region, for approximately 16 weeks through the summer field season. The trail crew is funded through grants awarded by the Recreational Trails Program and focuses on the restoration and maintenance of trails impacted by motorized use in state forests including Pittsfield, October Mountain, and Greylock Reservation which see the heaviest ATV traffic in the state and have the greatest needs in terms of trail maintenance issues. This year, the RTP has awarded \$24,569.60 to the trail crew for next summer's field season (2010). This project not only helps to satisfy the growing recreational demand for OHV use, but also helps to protect the environment as well as other public and private land by providing for legal and sustainable OHV riding opportunities.



*For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Western Region at 413-442-8928*

## On the Trail Ahead (Upcoming Events)

**Massachusetts Trail Workshop Series:** September 19, 2009 at the Doyle Conservation Center in Leominster, MA Sponsored by the Massachusetts Recreational Trail Advisory Board (MARTAB), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Recreational Trails Program, this trail workshop will provide volunteers, conservation land managers and those interested in becoming trail stewards with some of the tools and techniques needed to develop and maintain sustainable and enjoyable trails. The workshop will focus on reading the trail landscape, understanding the psychology of trail users, and clarifying trail purpose in addition to providing sustainable trail design and construction training in the field. The workshop will be instructed by experienced professionals and volunteers among a variety of trail user groups in Massachusetts and will be an opportunity to bring together the trails community throughout the state and encourage participants to contribute ideas and experience to the learning process. For more information, contact Amanda Lewis at [Amanda.lewis@state.ma.us](mailto:Amanda.lewis@state.ma.us) or 413-586-8706 ext.19.

**National Public Lands Day:** Saturday, September 26th, 2009, 8:30 am to noon. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, The Grand Trunk Trailblazers and the trail committees of Southbridge, Sturbridge and Brimfield will host this multi town, national volunteer program to work on local trails. Proposed projects include trail tread improvement, gravel spreading, sign installation and painting, brush cutting, invasive plant removal and more. For more information log onto [www.NPLD.org](http://www.NPLD.org) and search for Massachusetts or contact Park Ranger Tom Chamberland at: [thomas.a.chamberland@usace.army.mil](mailto:thomas.a.chamberland@usace.army.mil) or call 508-347-3705

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**Please forward** to others who might be interested in Massachusetts Greenways and Trails.



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