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Executive Summary

The Student Conservation Association Youth in the Great Outdoors AmeriCorps Stewardship Teams will provide critically needed hands-on conservation work and educational programming that promote and cultivate stewardship values and sustainable practices within our public lands and communities across the country. Dedicated to the CNCS focus area of Environmental Stewardship, 45 AmeriCorps Members will complete vital conservation projects and provide educational programming within our public lands and communities with the goal of engaging our nation's youth in these activities. The CNCS investment of \$585,000 per year will be matched with \$918,111 in partner funding.

Rationale and Approach

a. Need:

In April 2010, President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative to develop a 21st-century conservation agenda that will protect America's natural and cultural resources, and connect people—especially our nation's youth—to the great outdoors through meaningful work, recreation, service, and educational experiences.

From parks, rivers, and coasts to forests, mountains and cultural sites, America's great outdoors are gifts that we have inherited from previous generations. They are the places that provide refuge from daily demands, connect us to our national heritage and identity, fuel our economy, and allow us to create memories with family and friends, whether camping in a majestic park, jogging on an urban trail, touring a historic battlefield site, fishing in a wild and scenic river, or simply enjoying a picnic on a waterfront park. Today, however, much of America's great outdoors is threatened by unsustainable use, pollution, and impacts from a changing climate. At the same time, many Americans—especially young people—are spending less time outside in their natural surroundings. Studies show that today's youth are spending half as much time outside as their parents did—and over seven hours per day in front of a screen (Rideout, V.J., et al 2010. Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-Year Olds). As a result, the mental and physical health of our youth is at risk. A decline in physical activity has contributed to soaring obesity rates among young people. Also, excessive screen time detracts from social development and concentration, weakens social cohesion, and fosters a dependency on overstimulation (Richtel, M. 2010. Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction). Recreation in the outdoors is an antidote to many of these physical and mental health risks, and research indicates that regular exposure to nature lowers stress, cultivates creativity, and builds self-confidence among young

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people (Juster, T.F. 2003. Changing Times of American Youth).

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) applauds the President for recognizing that safe and healthy outdoor spaces—public and private, large and small, urban and rural—and active youth, who are connected to the outdoors, are essential to our quality of life, our public health, our economy, and our national identity.

The SCA Youth in the Great Outdoors AmeriCorps (YGOA) Stewardship Teams will take action to address the need to connect people to the great outdoors in two ways: (1) By engaging our nation's youth in hands-on conservation work that protects and restores our land, water, and ecosystems within our public lands and communities; and (2) By engaging our nation's youth in outreach campaigns, events, workshops, environmental education, interpretive programming, and other similar awareness strategies, within our public lands and communities that promote and cultivate stewardship values and sustainable practices.

While the decline in outdoor activity is particularly acute for youth living in or near urban areas, youth in less urbanized areas are not immune to this alarming trend. As a result, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams will target youth in geographically diverse regions across the country including rural, suburban, and urban areas. A special emphasis will be placed on engaging youth from communities with historically low participation rates—specifically disadvantaged, underserved, at-risk, minority, and tribal populations.

b. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems:

The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams program is proposing 45 full-time Members that will serve a minimum of 1700 hours, over a 45-week period from February to December. The Members will serve in teams of 5 to 10 in geographically diverse regions of the country, including rural, suburban, and urban areas. Members will provide a wide variety of impactful service to public lands and communities doing hands-on conservation work and environmental education and interpretive programming. SCA recognizes the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for youth to become acquainted with the outdoors through experiential learning. As a result, Members will actively recruit and engage youth to volunteer with them and partner organization resource management professionals on service learning projects that protect and restore land, water, and ecosystems within public lands and their communities. Members will also reach out to youth where they spend a large portion of their time—in schools. For many youth, the only nature they see during the school day is in the images of their textbooks or from the window of their school bus. Many youth expressed a strong desire for formal and informal environmental education programming in their school via curriculum,

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after-school programs, field-trips, school gardens, and outdoor classrooms.

Partnerships are critical to the success of the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams program. SCA was honored to be recognized as one of the 47 promising non-federal conservation programs that exist in the United States in the America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations report (Appendix D. 2011.) SCA has a 55-year history of successfully training youth for careers in conservation and environmental education programming in collaboration with our partners in public, private, and non-profit sectors; in local, state, federal, and tribal governments; and in local communities. The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams program anticipates collaborating with the following organizations to address the need to connect young people to the great outdoors through meaningful service learning opportunities on public lands and in communities across the country: Environmental Protection Agency, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, City of Gary, Indiana Brownfields Job Training Program: Members will implement green storm water management and water quality improvement features and practices, such as rain gardens, bioswales, and rain barrels throughout the Marquette Park Lagoon watershed. Members will also conduct outreach and training for residents, school groups, and interested volunteers to demonstrate how to implement storm water management and water quality improvements on properties in communities in Gary and in the surrounding metropolitan area.

Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program: Members will work on community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects in RTCA host sites across the country. These projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities: supporting planning efforts for the design of trails, greenways, and bike paths; restoring habitat, removing invasive species, and planting native species; inventorying and mapping of nature preserves, trails, and parklands; coordinating and leading outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, biking, and canoeing trips; conceiving and developing content for newsletters, brochures, flyers, social media, Kids-to-Conservation website, and other outreach materials; engaging the community and coordinating field activities for the Healthy Parks-Healthy People program; researching best practices for the National Water Trail System; developing and delivering environmental education and interpretive programming for classrooms, after-school programs, and community events; developing and leading events that promote active involvement by youth and underserved populations; and supporting planning efforts for revitalizing vacant lots, blighted properties, and brownfield sites into greenways, parks, and community gardens etc.

National Fish and Wildlife (NFW): Members from Tribal populations will work at various Fish and

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Wildlife host stations in the Great Lakes, Mountain, and Alaskan regions engaged in an array of natural resource management activities including: habitat and wildlife monitoring; environmental education and interpretive programs; fire management; and curatorial, preservation, and interpretation of cultural artifacts and resources.

National Park Service (NPS) and Navaho Nation: Members from Tribal populations will work within the Navajo Indian Reservation, Canyon de Chelly in New Mexico, assisting NPS staff and the Navajo people with the following activities: natural resource management; inventorying and monitoring of archaeological sites and artifacts; expanding place-based, experiential learning programs, such as Parks and Classrooms and Junior Ranger; documenting Navajo culture and history; and developing and delivering educational and interpretative programming of cultural resources and traditions.

U.S. Forest Service Southern Region, Greening Youth Foundation, and various local Workforce Investment Boards: Members will assist the Forest Service with planning, coordinating, and implementing Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and Volunteer and Service (VolServ) programming in national forests in Alabama, North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and Virginia. The YCC and VolServ programs aim to provide high quality opportunities for youth to engage in conservation work, paid and volunteer, in our national forests. Members will be engaged in an array of conservation and outreach activities including but not limited to: coordinating and facilitating YCC and VolServ participant activities such as trail maintenance, wildlife monitoring, watershed protection, and invasive species control; leading outdoor recreation trips; and creating and delivering conservation and cultural resources educational programming on-site, in communities, and schools.

Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC): Members will assist PEC with supporting community revitalization and outdoor recreation efforts in select towns along the Upper Monongahela Water Trail by engaging in the following conservation and outreach activities: conducting surveys of town assets, resources, and attractions; coordinating and leading outdoor recreation excursions; conceiving and developing content for newsletters, brochures, flyers, social media, River Town website, and other outreach materials; planning and coordinating workshops, conferences, and town meetings; restoring, enhancing, and improving habitat; and volunteer recruitment, coordination, and management.

National Association of Counties (NACO): Members will assist NACO with developing and implementing local stewardship activities and strategies that mitigate climate change and increase sustainability at the local level in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Some examples of stewardship activities include: identifying and implementing energy efficiency and water conservation

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strategies; reducing and diverting waste via recycling and composting; redeveloping vacant land and creating green spaces; planning and installing bike lanes; planting native trees and other vegetation; and developing and delivering outreach materials to residents, schools, and local governments on recycling, energy and water conservation, local agriculture, renewable energy, car-free modes of transportation, and other sustainability best practices.

Connecting people, especially our nation's youth, to the great outdoors across the nation via hands-on conservation work and outreach campaigns requires commitment and resources from more than just one agency or organization. Without the support of AmeriCorps, SCA would be reduced to addressing a much smaller percentage of projects that protect our natural and cultural resources and educate youth about our lands, waters, wildlife, culture, and sustainable practices. With the support of AmeriCorps, Members will provide thousands of hours of highly trained service to our nation's resources that would otherwise be left to degrade. With the support of AmeriCorps, Members will engage youth across the country in activities and service to meet critical needs within our public lands and communities that would otherwise go unmet.

By setting an example for others through their commitment to service, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams will leave a legacy of accomplishments and help to foster an ethic of stewardship and civic engagement for many generations.

c. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact:

The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams program mission is to engage our nation's youth in critical hands-on conservation work and outreach campaigns that promote and cultivate stewardship values and sustainable practices within our public lands and communities. In the FY 2013 AmeriCorps grant competition, SCA YGOA AmeriCorps Stewardship Teams program proposes to participate in the National Performance Measures focus area of Environmental Stewardship – EN3, EN4, and EN5. For EN3, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams will commit to increasing awareness and stewardship by conducting outreach campaigns and educational programming that promote and cultivate conservation and environmentally-conscious practices to 20,000 individuals. For EN4, the SCA YGOA Stewardship teams will commit to protecting and improving 300 acres of public or tribal lands in various sites across the country. For EN5, the SCA YGOA Stewardship teams will commit to improving and/or creating 300 miles of public or tribal trails or waterways in various sites across the country. All measures will be tracked using partner- and staff-reviewed and approved Member service logs, partner surveys, monthly Member reports, and participant surveys. Quantitative and qualitative data from service logs and surveys will be compiled for mid-year and end-year reports. Performance

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measure targets were determined using historical data captured from the 3-year Stewardship Team pilot program. During the 2012 program year, Members protected and improved 191 acres of land and 179 miles of trails and waterways, with 100% of our partners reporting the quality of service performed either met or exceeded their standards. While our performance measures were not met during the 2012 program year, the service provided by Members was impactful. In addition to engaging in hands-on environmental stewardship activities, the Members engaged in activities that were not tied to the National Performance Measures focus area of Environmental Stewardship. These activities included testing and monitoring soil and water quality; coordinating and leading outdoor recreation trips; developing and delivering environmental education programming on-site, in schools, and in communities; inventorying and mapping vacant lots for green reuse; creating wildlife shelters; developing and delivering bicycle safety education; vegetation propagation; habitat restoration planning; schoolyard greening master-planning; and other activities involving conservation planning and stewardship awareness outreach campaigns. These activities, in combination with the hands-on environmental stewardship activities, engaged 10,591 adults (over the age of 21) and 9,526 youth (age 21 and younger) in various sites across the country. While we improved upon our data gathering, tracking, and monitoring of metrics tied to our performance measures, there was a heavy emphasis with our partner organizations on activities that were not easily measurable or tied to our performance measures. To correct these actions, SCA is reassessing future placements so that the target number of acres and miles is achieved.

Also, SCA will participate in Performance Measure EN3, stewardship and awareness, which was not an option as a performance measure during the FY 2010 AmeriCorps grant competition.

By participating in Performance Measure EN3, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams will be able to capture, and undoubtedly be able to meet or exceed the performance target. Stakeholder feedback and written evaluations have consistently reported that the Stewardship Teams are highly effective which results in an increased understanding of the natural world; encourages commitment to following environmentally conscious practices and being engaged citizens; and protects and improves access to natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Member evaluations also indicate that the Stewardship Teams not only had a positive impact on the community but on the Members themselves. Alumni survey results indicate that most alumni have increased their own ecological awareness and many pursue employment or advanced degrees in the environmental field, thus becoming the next generation of conservation leaders.

d. Member Recruitment:

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SCA utilizes both local and national recruitment strategies and capabilities to attract the broadest cross-section of diverse young people who are both motivated and qualified to perform service that builds upon their personal and career interests. SCA recruits qualified applicants through direct contact with a network of over 40,000 faculty and advisors at universities and colleges and over 60,000 alumni throughout the United States. SCA's dedicated Campus Recruiters promote SCA through on-site visits to over 200 campuses annually, including a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges and Universities, in an effort to attract applicants from a culturally, economically, educationally, and geographically diverse pool. SCA will recruit at local events and post announcements locally in an effort to include applicants from the communities served. SCA will also recruit from SCA's national Community Program, an urban program focused on diverse youth, in an effort to engage traditionally underrepresented populations. In 2010, SCA completed its Strategic Plan, which states: "SCA will offer opportunities to a wide variety of youth from ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities and from urban, suburban and rural communities as well as Tribal communities." Diversity is a top priority for SCA and recruiting for the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams will reflect that priority. While SCA programming often requires service in more remote areas, SCA maintains a commitment to including people of all abilities by providing reasonable accommodation whenever possible. SCA seeks qualified applicants that demonstrate experience, a strong level of interest in, or an educational background in conservation, environmental sciences, working with youth, leadership, and outdoor living. In exit evaluations, partners consistently give feedback that SCA's ability to recruit such a diverse and highly qualified applicant pools is one of the biggest attractions of the program. In 2012, the combined recruitment strategies resulted in 708 applicants for 30 positions.

e. Member Training:

SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams will participate in ongoing trainings throughout their term of service. Trainings are conducted by SCA staff, subject matter experts from partnering agencies, and conservation professionals. To begin their service all Members will participate in a one week orientation. The educational objectives of the orientation are to build cohesion amongst the members, serve as overview of SCA, AmeriCorps, and partners, and train Members in the specific projects that they will be completing during their service. To meet the educational outcomes of the training, orientation topics that are covered include: history of SCA and AmeriCorps including policies and prohibited activities; risk management; volunteer recruitment and management; working with diverse youth populations and navigating youth culture; facilitation and leadership skills; project

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management; and program documentation and evaluation. Members will complete training evaluations at the end of orientation and mid-service training, and upon completion of their service. Members will have the opportunity to provide feedback on training content, trainer quality, relevance to their service experience, and overall effectiveness. Staff will evaluate the results and use the information to improve future training components and will share the results of the evaluations with Members through training debrief sessions. Upon completion of their first five months of service Members will reconvene for a one week mid-service training. During this time, Members will have the opportunity to share best practices, conduct presentations on their projects, provide peer-to-peer feedback, and review AmeriCorps prohibited activities to assure compliance. The mid-service training also serves as a time for SCA staff and partners to provide updated training for the Members and gain valuable feedback on their service and experience. Near the end of their service, Members will be given trainings and resources focused on resume building, employment opportunities, and job interview skills. Throughout their service, Members will receive additional trainings from their host sites and will have the opportunity to suggest additional trainings.

f. Member Supervision:

SCA staff, combined with the partner supervisors provide a high level of support to Members before, during, after their term of service. The SCA staff consists of a Program Manager and Regional Program Director. The role of the SCA Program Manager during the pre-program phase is to ensure that all Members are enrolled correctly, develop the pre-program orientation in conjunction with our partners, provide SCA and AmeriCorps policies training (including prohibited activities) to the partner site supervisors, program design, supervisor responsibilities, paperwork and evaluation, and project development. During the service period, the Program Manager serves as the main point of contact for all Members, provides project management guidance, and schedules and facilitates a once a month check-in with Members and site supervisors to discuss accomplishments, challenges, and to assess the overall quality of the Member experience. Throughout the duration of the Member's service the Program Manager continually reviews the service logs to ensure compliance and works with the Member and site supervisor to make mid-stream project changes accordingly. The SCA Regional Program Director works with the agency to ensure alignment with Member placements and the metrics that the program is aiming to achieve, assists in the training of the members, and serves as a back-up resource to the Members in the absence of the Program Manager. The partner supervisors also serve in a critical supervisory role. Each Member is assigned a partner mentor and their responsibilities include day-to-day oversight of the Member and their projects, scheduling professional

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development opportunities and providing career guidance, and providing the Member with constructive feedback and evaluation. Site supervisors are evaluated by the partner through a process of evaluating their commitment to the program and member. This process consists of outlining the expectations of serving as a mentor, evaluating their project plan and scope of work, and their experience providing guidance to young adults.

g. Member Experience:

Ensuring that Members have a valuable and life-changing experience is accomplished in three ways: (1) by fostering a sense of community and identifying themselves as SCA AmeriCorps Members; (2) by emphasizing and providing an environment where Members can reflect on their service; and (3) by providing opportunities for them to connect with the larger AmeriCorps community through participation in SCA-wide service projects and events. The process of fostering a sense of community begins during the initial orientation and training at the beginning of the Member's service. During this training, emphasis is placed on building teams of Members who are working towards achieving the same program mission of engaging youth in hands-on conservation work and educational programming that promote and cultivate stewardship values and sustainable practices within our public lands and communities. Also, Members are encouraged to share their background, experiences, and ideas for how they are going to achieve the mission of the program. An overview of SCA and AmeriCorps, and the historical importance these organizations have in conservation and national service is provided to the Members during this training. As these timelines are presented, Members begin to understand the mission of SCA and AmeriCorps and start to identify themselves as SCA AmeriCorps Members. The Members also utilize social media and other marketing platforms, uniforms, and community outreach materials to serve as vehicles for the public, partners, and local communities to strengthen their identities as AmeriCorps Members. At the end of this training and orientation, Members have established teams of peers as a resource that they can call upon throughout their service to gain insight, share experiences, and provide peer-to-peer feedback. Throughout their service, starting with their orientation, members participate in structured sessions that allow them to reflect on their service experience. During orientation, Members are asked to create personal and professional goals and to define what community service means to them and reflect on how they see themselves contributing to the mission of SCA and AmeriCorps. Members are encouraged to keep a journal to capture their experiences and reflections throughout their service. To continue reflective learning, Members participate in required monthly calls with other members in the program facilitated by the SCA Program Manager. The purpose of these calls is twofold. First, the

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members are asked to share a success and a challenge that they have encountered. This is shared with the group, all members provide feedback, and they are encouraged to reflect on those success and challenges. Secondly, the calls serve as a time for the members to reflect on their personal and professional goals and whether they are meeting those goals. Throughout their service, Members are encouraged to participate in service opportunities with other AmeriCorps members that are not affiliated with their specific program. This is accomplished through inviting them to four separate yearly SCA national service projects; (1) National Public Lands day, (2), MLK Day of Service, (3) Earth Day, and (4), Outdoor Nation Conference. These service projects occur in the following cities; Pittsburgh, Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, New York City, Chicago, Houston, Oakland, and Seattle.

h. Volunteer Generation:

In the FY 2013 AmeriCorps grant competition, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams aim to recruit and manage 9500 volunteers. In 2012, the Stewardship Teams successfully recruited and managed 6469 volunteers who served 25,260 hours. The Stewardship Teams will utilize their resources, partners, local community connections, and social media to announce service opportunities and target youth, especially from communities with historically low participation rates, specifically disadvantaged, underserved, at-risk, minority, and Tribal populations. Volunteers will greatly enhance the capacity of SCA, partner sites, and community organizations to address critical projects that are beyond program partners' budgets and would not otherwise be possible. Recruiting and managing volunteers also offers excellent leadership opportunities for Members.

i. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification:

SCA is committed to recognizing AmeriCorps as a primary partner, both nationally and locally. Program staff will create and distribute all recruitment, outreach, and orientation and training materials, banners, signs, press releases and program calendars. The Director will review all materials to assure AmeriCorps' name and logos are included. Members will wear name tags and shirts with the AmeriCorps logo during their education service, as well as during volunteer events.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background and Staffing:

SCA was founded in 1957 by Elizabeth Titus Putnam who wrote her senior thesis at Vassar College on the development of a youth-based civilian conservation corps to protect our national parks. SCA has since grown to protect a variety of public lands, both urban and rural, and to champion environmental justice issues in disadvantaged communities. SCA's mission is to build the next

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generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land. Over a half century of experience has given SCA the skills to provide capable programmatic and financial management of the proposed program. SCA is the largest and oldest conservation service organization in America. Approximately 4,000 SCA members provide nearly two million hours of service annually at over 600 sites in all 50 states. Over 60,000 alumni around the world continue to practice the ethics and values they cultivated over their time with SCA. SCA has ongoing agreements with dozens of federal, state, and non-governmental organizations. SCA is involved in the development of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and all of SCA's programming, including the SCA-AmeriCorps Stewardship Teams, are positioned to play an instrumental role in its implementation. SCA has been publicly recognized by, among others, the White House, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and The Wilderness Society for its achievements in conservation and youth development. AmeriCorps-funded SCA programs in New Hampshire, Idaho, Massachusetts, and New York have been successfully operated and overseen by both local and national SCA staff for over 18 years. During those years, SCA has built a proven organizational ability to successfully administer AmeriCorps grants, and has developed tools to effectively monitor grant-related programmatic and financial systems. These monitoring tools are continually evaluated for their effectiveness. Changes are made when necessary and as new regulations are presented.

SCA is governed by a 30-member Board of Directors, which manages, controls, and administers the affairs of the organization. The Board operates under a committee structure; standing committees include: Executive, Audit, Board Governance, Finance and Administration, External Relations, Program Quality and Risk Management. SCA's headquarters is in Washington, DC. The organization's administrative office in Charlestown, New Hampshire houses management and administrative staff including the Program, Finance, Recruiting, Member Services, Human Resources, and Partnership departments; these provide services and direct support to the SCA- AmeriCorps Stewardship Teams staff throughout the programmatic cycle.

SCA has a 55-year history of successfully training young people for careers in the conservation and environmental education fields. SCA utilizes a national network of professional conservation skills trainers. Education training is provided by experienced teachers, staff, and local volunteers. Emergency medical training is provided through Aerie Backcountry Medicine, a national leader in wilderness medicine training. While SCA has strong organizational capacity to train members, it recognizes the importance of external training resources in providing a broad knowledge base and

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perspective, and continues to network with training organizations and individuals who provide high-quality training opportunities.

The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams has a successful track record of hiring qualified staff and retaining them, allowing the program to run smoothly and remain in compliance with AmeriCorps reporting requirements consistently. The SCA Young Adult Regional Program Director (RPD), Ted Miller, has 18 years of experience in managing conservation programs in the public and private sector and 5 years of experience running SCA AmeriCorps programming. He serves as the primary contact for this proposal, holds the overall responsibility for the health of SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams, and provides oversight, supervision, and support. The SCA RPD is responsible for working with the partners on revenue generation, contract and agreement creation, assuring member positions are aligned with the AmeriCorps National Direct performance measures, and facilitating Member's trainings in the areas of Risk Management, Youth Engagement, and Technical Conservation Skills. The Program Manager, Linda Morgano, will oversee the day-to-day management of the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams. Linda has worked with the SCA YGOA AmeriCorps Stewardship Team for one year and has 15 years of management experience in non-profit, private, and government sectors prior to working with SCA. The SCA Program Manager is responsible for coordinating recruiting and enrollment activities with SCA national staff and partner organizations, developing program orientation and training in conjunction with partner staff, facilitating monthly meetings with Members and site supervisors, tracking and reporting metrics, and developing and delivering training and resources for the Members in the areas of Service Reporting, Volunteer Recruitment and Management, Project Management, and Career Coaching. Program staff will receive substantial assistance and training from SCA's national office for information technology, programmatic and financial management, and administrative responsibilities. SCA's extensive Program Management Guide and Field Operation Standards, posted on-line, provide in-depth guidance on program implementation procedures.

b. Sustainability:

For the past 3 years SCA has continued to receive and will retain the support of the following partners: federal agencies including the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and US Fish & Wildlife Service; programmatic partners including the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and the Progress Fund; and philanthropic partners including the Benedum, Colcom, and McCune Foundations. In total these partners provide a 58% match to the Stewardship Teams. SCA's experience and ability to raise funds can be found in its organizational structure which includes a dedicated Advancement team

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that secures philanthropic funds, a Partnership team that secures federal funds, and a Corporate team that secures financial support from sizable corporations. The retention of our partners can be attributed to four aspects of SCA's partnership goals: (1) assessing the partner's programmatic needs and creating SCA programs that assist in meeting those needs; (2) providing systematic and detailed financial reporting; (3) accurate and timely reporting on program outcomes; and (4) engaging the stakeholders in the creation and implementation of Member training, projects, and evaluations. Achieving program sustainability and long term community investment in activities is accomplished through partner participation in project creation, assigning a mentor to all SCA Members, having Members create project sustainability plans in conjunction with their work plans, and volunteer engagement. When developing project plans it is an expectation that Members will work alongside partnering organizations and communities to brainstorm ideas, solicit feedback, and delegate tasks accordingly. Through this process the goal is to create project ownership which ultimately fosters long-term program sustainability. From the onset, Members are assigned a counterpart such as a member of the local community, a partner employee, or local government official. These individuals are responsible for working alongside the Members to create and achieve the project goals. The overall purpose of assigning the Members a project counterpart is to assure that the project will continue after the Members' service is completed. A large portion of the Members' service is spent engaging and soliciting volunteers to help achieve successful project outcomes. Through volunteer engagement, Members begin to build a sense of project ownership with the community and ultimately gain an engaged citizenry who are determined to continue the project after the Member's service is completed.

c. Compliance and Accountability:

The Program Manager utilizes the policy and procedure manual developed for all of SCA's AmeriCorps programs as a critical tool in assuring programmatic and financial systems compliance. Program staff will provide Member support, oversee service sites, assist in the careful development and review of position descriptions and monitor policy compliance through structured site visits and regular phone support for members and service partners. All service sites and projects will be selected based on demonstrated need, compliance with AmeriCorps guidelines, project appropriateness for Member development and program mission, feasibility of completion within Member skill level and time allotted, and proven programmatic and financial ability of the partner. All service partners will sign a service agreement that outlines their programmatic and fiscal responsibilities, member scope of service, and project details. The program will ensure that Members do not violate non-duplication, non-displacement, and non-supplemental requirements and other prohibited activities by openly

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discussing these issues with service partners and other community stakeholders during the agreements process. If risk of noncompliance is determined to be high, Members will not serve at a site. If noncompliance is identified, SCA will determine the cause, communicate with the partner and AmeriCorps, and work quickly to assure compliance.

Demonstrated Compliance: In 2012, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams did not experience any compliance issues. An area of weakness included partner organizations not allotting enough time in their workplans for hands-on conservation activities. This is largely due to partner organizations responding to the needs in their communities for community engagement, planning, coordination and other technical assistance that were not directly tied to our measures. SCA's plan for improvement is to more thoroughly assess the needs of potential partners and to emphasize, to partners, SCA's expected commitment to meeting AmeriCorps performance targets.

Enrollment: In 2012, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams had an enrollment rate of 100%. SCA consistently receives a high number of qualified applicants so the program does not anticipate a problem maintaining an enrollment rate of 100%.

Retention: In 2012, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams had a retention rate of 84.4%. Five Members left early without completing service requirements. Of those that left without completing service requirements, one was dismissed, one started graduate school, and three started full-time paid positions. For the 2013-2016 grant period, when making an offer to a candidate, we will more thoroughly describe the expected commitment to the entire 10 month term of service. During orientation we will reiterate the importance of this commitment. The Program Manager will also continually remind staff and partners about the importance of thoroughly interviewing candidates and reviewing references.

Consultation with State Commissions: During the program's initial application process for the first three-year grant in 2010, the program completed a comprehensive consultation process with the states where the program could potentially have operated. Over the last three years the program has annually repeated the consultation process with states where the program operates. The program has maintained relationships with State Commissions during this period. Twice annually -- during the application process in December/January and in the summer -- the program distributes information to State Commissions about where Members serve locally. For this application, the program shared updated details about the program with states. Because the program will be operating with additional partners, the process started with an initial consultation submitted to all states where the program plans to operate: AL, CA, CO, CT, DC, FL, GA, IL, IN, MA, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NM, PA, SC,

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SD, UT, VA, VT, WA, and WY. To date, all states that responded to our request for consultation expressed support for the program's continued operation. Based on the information gathered during these consultations, the program does not duplicate other programs and addresses states' otherwise unmet needs.

Operating Sites and Member Service Sites: Programs and projects with well-defined goals and designed to meet specific needs in the areas of hands-on conservation work and educational programming within our public lands and communities across the country will be included in the YGOA Stewardship Teams programming. These programs and projects will be designed in conjunction with the following current and potential partners: Environmental Protection Agency, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, City of Gary, Indiana Brownfields Job Training Program; RTCA; NPS; Navajo Nation; USFS Southern Region, Greening Youth Foundation, and local Workforce Investment Boards; NFW; PEC; and NACO. To date, we have received positive feedback from current and potential partners who are interested in either continuing their partnership, or creating a partnership, with the SCA-AmeriCorps YGOA Stewardship Teams program.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

a. Cost Effectiveness: The total CNCS cost per MSY for the proposed SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams program is \$13,000. Federal agency partners such as The National Park Service, US Forest Service, and US Fish & Wildlife Service; philanthropic donors such as the Benedum and McCune, and Colcom Foundations; and programmatic partners such as the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and The Progress Fund have expressed their commitment to continuing the partnership in 2013 and beyond. Partner funding has also made it possible to decrease the program's reliance on CNCS. The proposed budget for 2013 demonstrates a continued trend in increasing match funding with 61% of the program budget coming from non-CNCS sources compared to 58% last year. The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams total budget for program year 2013-2014 is \$1,503,111. The CNCS grant share is \$585,000. The SCA program share is \$918,111. The basis for the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams budget is the Conservation Corps budget model, which has been tested by the over 150 member organizations of The Corps Network. The budget reflects an emphasis on the following three areas that allow the program a cost-effective means to meet its goals: (1) Building community through Member teams and programming combined with ongoing engagement with the public and conservation areas in need; (2) Training to adequately prepare Members for the variety of service activities and to ensure their safety; and (3) Solid support of SCA's National office. Finally, the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams significantly benefit from the resources of SCA's full-time finance and

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development staff that provide expertise and support to ensure that the SCA AmeriCorps programs are fiscally sustainable. SCA's national partnership and philanthropic development staff comprise the team that works to secure additional funding to support the service of SCA AmeriCorps Members. This team identifies and solicits funding from private foundations and individual donors from across the country and works closely with program staff to leverage new resource agency partnerships. This ensures the stability of the organization as a whole, guarantees support to the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams program, and augments funding from CNCS.

b. Budget Adequacy:

SCA has full confidence in the SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams budget. This budget has been prepared in collaboration with SCA's Program Manager, RPD, Young Adult Programs National Director, Operations Director, and Chief Financial Officer. SCA hires the auditing firm Grant Thornton LLP to prepare annual audits of all its programs and grants. The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams cost per MSY of \$13,000 covers 39% of the support for each SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams Members, leveraging CNCS funding by 61% match. The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams budget adequately supports the proposed program's design and its activities by providing for strong central and local program direction, coordination, and support. The budget provides resources for SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams service-learning projects through a model that has been tested by SCA for many years on AmeriCorps programs of similar size, scope and duration. The SCA YGOA Stewardship Teams Members' support includes living allowances, background checks, benefits, supervision, transportation, tools, gear, equipment, medical insurance, back-end support, and technical expertise. Costs include staff salaries, benefits, staff travel, staff training and professional development, risk management, communications, technology, office supplies, facilities, and consulting support. In addition to member living allowance, the budget provides for high quality member training curriculum, instructional delivery, technical assistance, data collection and reporting for program outputs and outcomes, and third-party evaluation. The budget supports three full-time SCA staff responsible for managing the efforts of all members and partners. SCA's Program Manager, RPD, and Director of Partnership Development are tasked with Member enrollment, training, and evaluation, budget management, project planning, partnership development, and AmeriCorps compliance. SCA has a 55-year track record of implementing successful field programs that meet all project outcomes as well as the developmental needs of participants, including standard conservation principles and methods, safety trainings and team building.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

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The evaluation will be conducted as an internal evaluation, based on the protocol used to evaluate SCA's other national program, the SCA AmeriCorps Education Award Program.

Evaluator: The evaluation will be developed and carried about by SCA's Education, Training and Evaluation (ETE) department. The purpose of the ETE department is to develop and expand SCA's conservation-based education principles and practices as well as further SCA's capacity to assess and measure outcomes across program. The evaluation will be completed under the direction of Doug Caum, M.Ed., a professional in the field of experiential education with nearly 20 years of experience.

Evaluation Timeline: Because the evaluation instruments and protocol are currently being developed as part of a larger organizational effort, the data collection phase will begin with the last year of the program's current grant and will include retrospective surveys by members who served with the program during its first three-year grant cycle. Data collection will occur primarily in 2014 and early 2015 and will cover more than one full program year. The evaluation report will be completed in late 2015, though data analysis will be conducted throughout the full term of the evaluation period.

Stakeholders: The Corporation for National and Community Service is an important stakeholder in this evaluation. A final report will be submitted with the program's next recompetitve application in 2016. Program staff members are also critical stakeholders and will be using evaluation results to assess the impact of the program on members. The results of the evaluation will inform the training, support, and professional development opportunities that the program provides to members.

Evaluation Questions: Key questions this evaluation seeks to answer focus on the program's success in meeting SCA's organizational mission to build the next generation of conservation leaders:

- ¿ Are members developing leadership skills at SCA?
- ¿ Is the SCA experience expanding the members' conservation ethic?
- ¿ Are SCA members continuing their commitment to environmental and/or community stewardship?
- ¿ To what extent is the SCA experience influential in determining changes to member behaviors and attitudes in these areas?

Evaluation Design: The evaluation approach will employ a descriptive design. Assessment tools will include member surveys as well as supervisor performance reviews and member self-reflections based on goal-setting exercises. Member surveys include three instruments:

- ¿ Pre-assessment completed at the beginning of service.
- ¿ Post-assessment completed in the end of service.
- ¿ First follow-up assessment completed six months after service.
- ¿ Second follow-up assessment completed two years after service.

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Data Collection Timeline: The data collection phase will begin with post-assessments by the members serving under the program's current grant.

¿ November 2013

o Program year 2012 members complete post-assessment.

o Program year 2010 members complete two-year follow-up assessment.

¿ February 2014

o Program year 2013 members complete pre-assessment.

¿ May 2014

o Program year 2012 members complete six month follow-up assessment.

¿ November 2014

o Program year 2013 members complete post-assessment.

o Program year 2011 members complete two-year follow-up assessment.

¿ February 2015

o Program year 2014 members complete pre-assessment.

¿ May 2015

o Program year 2013 members complete six month follow-up assessment.

¿ November 2015

o Program year 2014 members complete post-assessment.

o Program year 2012 members complete two-year follow-up assessment.

Data Management and Analysis: Data will be collected electronically in online surveys through Clicktools, an application integrated into SCA's Salesforce program management database. The Clicktools application facilitates analysis with frequency and percentage charts and allows for correlation of answers to two questions in a survey. The tool also facilitates the categorization of open answer questions during analysis. SCA's Education, Training and Evaluation department will conduct the analysis and write the evaluation report in collaboration with program staff.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

Narratives

N/A