

# ROCK CREEK CURRENT

A Publication of Rock Creek Conservancy

Summer 2017



Crew members from the 2016 Rock Creek Conservation Corps (RC3) program complete conservation work at the Audubon Naturalist Society. This year, the program has doubled, allowing the crews to expand the reach of their work.

## Double the Hands, Double the Impact

For the third summer in a row, youth from diverse backgrounds are accomplishing critical conservation work as members of the Rock Creek Conservation Corps (RC3), a 4-week youth work program spearheaded by Rock Creek Conservancy.

This year, RC3 is having more impact than ever. The program has doubled in size to include 40 students from three D.C. high schools: Capital City Public Charter School, E.L Haynes Public Charter School, and Roosevelt High School. With more hands on the ground, RC3 crews can work throughout the entire Rock Creek watershed, including new sites in Montgomery County Parks.

During this intensive program, the RC3 crew members work in teams to: remove invasive exotic plants in key restoration areas; install green infrastructure to manage polluted

runoff; and maintain trails for all people to enjoy. In addition to their physical conservation work, the students learn how to engage with local communities, helping to develop a culture of environmental stewardship which will last for generations.

RC3 is designed not only to revitalize Rock Creek, but also to provide a transformative experience to the 16- to 19-year-old crew members. Danny Ayele, a student from 2016, is one such crew member. Ayele states, "RC3 has taught me the value of our city's park and how I can advocate for the well-being of National Parks everywhere." He continued, "I was taught the multiple ways our parks affect every resident's life, and the ways we must conserve them."

Read more about what the crews are accomplishing on the Rock Creek Blog : <http://www.rockcreekconservancy.org/get-involved/rock-creek-blog>.



## Join us for the Annual Gala on October 14th!

This year the Rock Creek Gala will be held on October 14th, 2017. Join us at Hillwood Estate, Museum, & Gardens as we celebrate nature while raising funds to protect the lands and waters of Rock Creek.

The event will feature food from fine restaurants in D.C. as well as wine, cocktails, live music, and a silent auction. For more information about tickets and sponsorship opportunities, head to: [www.rockcreekgala.com](http://www.rockcreekgala.com).

Our Gala Co-Chairs, Mark Lowham and David DeSantis of TTR Sotheby's, are thrilled to announce that this year we are celebrating volunteerism and the community of people who get their hands dirty throughout the year in order to protect Rock Creek.

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**Above:** The Rock Creek Conservancy team poses for a photograph after the first rain barrel installations. 50 homes have already signed up for the voluntary Downspout Disconnect program, and this number is expected to grow.

## Stormwater Solution: Small Steps to Large Change

Stormwater is easily the leading cause of water pollution in Washington, D.C. This year, Rock Creek Conservancy and DC Water are working together to solve this problem by disconnecting D.C. area homes' downspouts from the combined sewer system.

One-third of homes in the D.C. area have downspouts that flow directly into the sewer through a pipe in the ground. These old "combined sewer systems" were once created with efficiency in mind, but they cause a huge problem today. With heavy rain, the sudden influx of water can cause sewers to fill up over the capacity of their internal dams, dumping raw sewage and stormwater runoff directly into Rock Creek and the Potomac. Sadly, this results in the contamination and pollution of our environment and our drinking water.

One solution is "Downspout Disconnect", a pilot program spearheaded by DC Water as part of their larger "Clean Rivers" program. It aims to solve this

problem on an individual scale by offering disconnection services and a rain collection barrel to eligible households. By making these services free to eligible homes, DC Water aims to remove the financial barriers that may stand in the way of clean water. If the project is successful, the area could be expanded to reach more of the Rock Creek watershed.

This is where Rock Creek Conservancy comes in. Our team of canvassers has been contracted by DC Water to knock on doors, assess houses, and sign up homes for disconnection. After the homes have been signed up, our team of installers through the Latin American Youth Center disconnects the downspouts from pipes in the ground and installs easy to use rain barrels. So far, 50 homes have signed up for the installation with more on the horizon.

**Is your home eligible for disconnection?**  
Find out more at [dcwater.com/projects/downspout-disconnection-program](http://dcwater.com/projects/downspout-disconnection-program).



**Above:** A volunteer plants the last coneflower in the ground. Around 1,500 plants were planted during the June beautification event.

## A Natural Twist on Beautification

On a hot and humid Saturday in June, 48 volunteers joined Rock Creek Conservancy and the National Park Service to restore a historic Lady Bird Johnson flower planting.

But this year, we've done something a bit different. Instead of the traditional daffodils, over 1,500 native wildflowers were planted from three different species: coneflower, false indigo, and black-eyed susans. Each species was selected to provide habitat and food for urban pollinators, like native bees and butterflies.

Through hard work (and lots of sweat), our volunteers transformed the area from a hard plot of earth into a beautiful garden and thriving ecosystem that everyone can enjoy.



Hello everyone,

As we all know, it is a trying time for the environment and for the National Park Service. Federal budget cuts to the Department of Interior will not only lead to a decrease in conservation jobs, they will undoubtedly threaten the National Park Service's ability to maintain the lands that define America's landscape. Rock Creek is no exception as D.C.'s own national park.

In times like these, the work to protect and preserve our parks and watersheds falls to philanthropic partners like Rock Creek Conservancy. This is a role that we take very seriously, and we couldn't rise to the challenge without your support.

We have already done so much work together in 2017. As I'm writing this, we have removed 1,500 bags of trash, mobilized 3,400 volunteers, and planted over 2,000 native plants.

Your support has also allowed us to reach for larger goals. In Montgomery County, we have launched our most ambitious conservation landscaping project to date, a 200 ft garden of 1800 native plants that will help capture the stormwater runoff from 1.5 acres of impervious pavement. We've also initialized a comprehensive park signage project and a large land restoration collaboration with Casey Trees. With your help, we are tackling the almost \$50 million backlog in maintenance that challenges the National Park Service.

So, we want to thank you for being a part of the Rock Creek family. You are an essential part of our mission. With your support, we can restore and protect Rock Creek for generations to come.

Matt Fleischer  
Executive Director

### 2017 EXTREME CLEANUP BY NUMBERS



9

years in a row



70

cleanup sites along  
Rock Creek



1630

volunteers



## 3579 VOLUNTEER HOURS

817

bags  
of trash  
removed



470

bags of  
recycling  
removed

Extreme Cleanup is a huge volunteer effort we look forward to every spring! It's never too early to start getting your team ready for next year!

[rockcreekconservancy.org/what-we-do/upcoming-events/extreme-cleanup](http://rockcreekconservancy.org/what-we-do/upcoming-events/extreme-cleanup)

## Meet the Conservancy's New Staff

2017 has been a year of growth. The Conservancy has welcomed 6 new members of the staff. We are excited to have them join us in our mission to restore Rock Creek and its parklands.



Top to bottom , left to right : Scott Einberger, Matt Fleischer, John Maleri, Katy Cain, Alena Kaufman, Kate Arion, Stacey Norman, Erica Carlsson, Michelle Kokolis.

**Kate Arion:** Development Manager of Special Events

**Katy Cain:** Communications Manager

**Scott Einberger:** Project Manager for Downspout Disconnect

**Michelle Kokolis:** Director of Programs and Operations

**Alena Kaufman:** Director of Development and Communications

**Stacey Norman:** Office Administrator



Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

Please do not share my name with other nonprofits

**Return this form and your check to:**

Rock Creek Conservancy  
4300 Montgomery Ave, Suite 304  
Bethesda, MD 20814

**OR**

**Donate online at:**

[www.rockcreekconservancy.org/donate](http://www.rockcreekconservancy.org/donate)

**YES, I want to continue to help protect and restore Rock Creek!**

Enclosed is my renewal donation of: (please check the box)

- \$50 - Individual Membership
- \$100 - Family Membership
- \$250 - Advocate Membership
- \$500 - Leadership Membership
- \$1250 - Olmsted Society Membership
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_