



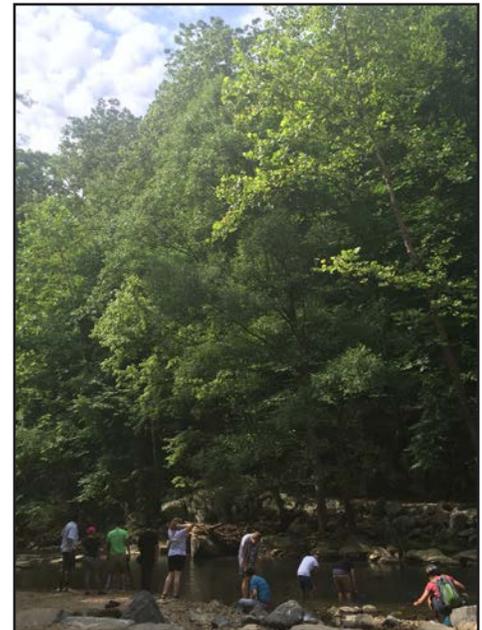
Rock Creek Conservation Corps members bond at the beginning of the season during an initial training week.

DOING OUR PART

To inspire a future generation of stewards

Rock Creek Conservation Corps, or “RC3,” is a summer youth conservation program that helps protect and revitalize Rock Creek and its parklands while providing transformative experiences to youth and strengthening the relationship between the National Park Service, Rock Creek Conservancy and other organizations and volunteers.

RC3’s goal is to accomplish critical conservation work while learning about the Rock Creek watershed: the extensive physical environment as it extends from its source to the Chesapeake Bay, the effects of modern life on water quality, the relationship of the park to the community, and the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed.



Top: Program participants learn about invasive exotic versus native plants; Bottom: The crews monitor water quality in Rock Creek.

2016 PROGRAM SPECIFICS

- A 4-week program including 1 training week and 3 weeks of field work
- Two crews made up of 11 students between the ages of 16 and 19
- The exploration of key themes like understanding and protecting the watershed, connecting participants to the watershed and inspiring a new generation of park stewards (themes complement the Department of the Interior’s focus on enjoying National Parks by working, learning, playing and serving)
- Projects include invasive exotic plant removal with the National Park Service, green infrastructure installation, water quality monitoring and community outreach

“RC3 has helped me understand nature from a person who cares compared to [someone] who doesn’t. If we can properly take care of our environment, then we can properly take care of ourselves.”

- Ashby,
2016 program participant



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2016 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Weed Warriors:

Visitors to Rock Creek Park love to listen to the song of the Wood Thrush, Washington, D.C.’s official bird. Yet the Wood Thrush’s ability to nest is threatened by the invasive exotic Winged Burning Bush, which prevents the growth of mature forests.

RC3 crew members removed 900 Winged Burning Bush from a critical resource management area near Picnic Area 27. This effort will allow native seedlings to grow, providing understory for future generations of Wood Thrushes to nest in the watershed.

Green Infrastructure:

RC3 partnered with Audubon Naturalist Society to install a 700 square foot green infrastructure project adjacent to Rock Creek at Woodend Sanctuary to control erosion, divert water flow, and capture runoff. The project is based on hügelkultur design, which utilizes raised plant beds constructed on top of wood debris to facilitate a composting process that improves soil fertility.



A before and after view of a portion of the crew’s green infrastructure project.

Work outcomes included:

- Digging multiple trenches to divert water flow and capture runoff
- Removing invasive exotic plants
- Planting native vegetation, including ground cover and edible shrubs (6) and trees (15)

Water Quality:

Crew members measured temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, turbidity, and fecal coliform colonies from watershed sites to answer the question: How does the health of the creek differ from the upper, middle, and lower sections, and what are the ecological implications of those results?

Results will be featured in Rock Creek Conservancy’s Water Quality Report Card in 2017 and followed up with school-based action projects throughout the year.