

RC3 Celebrates a Successful In-Person Summer of People-Powered Restoration!

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While temps soared and the world around us began to open up, the Conservancy kicked off our annual summer youth employment program, Rock Creek Conservation Corps (RC3). Members in two RC3 crews committed to a summer of hands-on, people-powered restoration and learning in the best outdoor classroom around: Rock Creek and its parks. After a [virtual program in 2020](#), it was thrilling to be back outside for a great summer with RC3.

In the sixth summer of the program, youth participants from Washington, DC and Montgomery County worked for six weeks to help restore Rock Creek while learning about important issues like stormwater runoff, environmental justice, local advocacy, and more.



[RC3 hosted crews with participants from Washington DC (left) and, for the first time ever, from Montgomery County (right).]

Crew members in DC and Montgomery County learned about some of the threats facing Rock Creek, including stormwater runoff and invasive plants. Crews spent time removing invasive knotweed, English ivy, porcelainberry, oriental bittersweet, and bamboo, learning identification and proper removal techniques. Two DC crew members have even been trained and certified as Weed Warriors in Rock Creek Park, with plans to continue this important restoration work beyond the program.

This was the first year the program has expanded to include a Montgomery County crew. Activities included much of the same restoration work and invasive removal, while also building more specific place-based connections for youth to the Rock Creek watershed, 80 percent of which falls within Maryland. Partnerships with the National Park Service and Montgomery Parks strengthened these connections, while also providing exposure to some of the many recreation opportunities available in our local parks, including birding, nature photography, horse stables, and more.

All crew members also participated in Stream Team Leader training and citizen science projects, learning how stormwater runoff impacts water quality and what to do about it. The Montgomery County crew members installed storm drain markers and provided informational brochures through canvassing in the [Glenmont Forest](#) neighborhood, where the county is working to implement green infrastructure.



[MOCO crew members add storm drain markers, serving as a visual reminder that our litter ends up in the Chesapeake Bay.]

To help facilitate deeper personal connections to Rock Creek and other public lands, the program partnered with Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg of GWU Corcoran School to offer art-based workshops and development experiences. These sessions explored equity, access, and the members' sense of belonging in parks culminating in a tile creation project, a permanent artifact of the experience and lessons learned.

By participating in this program, made possible through the generous support of the National Park Foundation and Veverka Family Foundation, as well as our many generous individual supporters, these young people are able to transform into lifelong Rock Creek stewards. RC3 alumni serve as vocal advocates on environmental concerns, environmental leaders in their schools and communities, and ambassadors to their communities sharing all the benefits and joys of Rock Creek.

To culminate the summer experience, crew members celebrated at a final showcase event and presented to community, partners, and family about the work they accomplished. Participants shared pride in the hard restoration work completed, having made a tangible impact on the health of Rock Creek, as well as in some of the other projects they worked on. Crew members shared nature tiles they created during art workshops and Recreate Responsibly educational materials to support healthy park use by visitors.



[DC crew member Jhoana shares about her experience with guests at the final showcase.]

At the end of the six weeks, participants gained the knowledge and tools to embody what it means to be a good steward to Rock Creek, and the new connections and enthusiasm to share this great oasis in our region with their families, friends, and school communities. We look forward to seeing many of these stewards continue to make a difference in the world and environment around them!