

National Youth Programs Report

Annual Report 2022



GROUNDWORK
USA

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Yonkers, NY 10701
www.groundworkusa.org

Building The Next Generation of Leaders

Our Youth Program Goals



1 Connecting Youth Through Shared Experiences



2 Building Lasting Connections To Public Lands



3 Inspiring Youth to Explore New Career Opportunities



4 Increasing Confidence Through Conservation Skills

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The mission of the Groundwork USA network is to bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement, and management of the physical environment by developing community-based partnerships that empower people, businesses, and organizations to promote environmental, economic, and social wellbeing.

For over two decades, the Groundwork USA network has worked hand-in-hand with residents in environmental justice communities nationwide to transform underutilized land and waterways into community assets that increase health, resilience, and well-being. Our work is deeply rooted in our commitment to meaningful community leadership. Through our work to change places, we seek to build the capacity of residents - especially youth - to lead this change.

Through age-appropriate education, stewardship, and training programs, we restore the connection between urban youth and the environment and equip young people with the tools, skills, and platforms to reshape that environment into a place that is healthy, green, and resilient.

Our place-based youth programs include:

- **Green Teams:** paid employment focused on environmental education and leadership development for high-school-aged youth.
- **GroundCorps:** paid employment for young adults aged 18 - 30 to gain hands-on experience and training in green infrastructure and environmental stewardship.
- **Individual Placements and Apprenticeships:** career training placements for young adults seeking to enter careers in the National Park Service and other environmental careers.

Unlike many corps, most of our work takes place in urban communities. We work exclusively with the youth that call our communities home - young people that are incredibly aware of the environmental challenges but also the often overlooked assets and opportunities. Our model is based on meeting youth "where they are," both figuratively and literally. Through the hands-on process of transforming their neighborhoods, we build connections between young people and their close-to-home natural environment. This work becomes a portal to Groundwork USA's National Youth Programs, which provide youth an opportunity to hone their skills and deepen their knowledge through work at National Parks, Historic Sites, and Wildlife Refuges across the country. By bringing youth together at these sites, we build their connection to the broader community of conservation leaders, provide opportunities to explore new careers, while stewarding our nation's iconic natural spaces.

This report highlights Groundwork USA's national youth program and celebrates the incredible partnership between Trusts and park partners.

We are incredibly grateful to all our partners for creating new opportunities, connecting and sharing about the benefits and challenges facing our public land, and opening doors for the next generation of leadership.

Heather McMann
Chief Executive Officer
Groundwork USA

Our Shared Priorities

Founded through a partnership between the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency, the work of the Groundwork USA Network is interconnected with the goals of the Department of the Interior. Groundwork USA works in small-to-mid-sized cities across the country with a legacy of environmental harm that disproportionately carry the burden of extreme heat, flooding, poor air quality, and pollution. By working hand-in-hand with community members to efforts undo the legacy of injustice and create healthy, just, and resilient communities, we restore the connection between people and land and build lasting connections to parks, trails, and public lands.

Reclaim and Protect Land and Waterways

We work to transform neglected land into community assets such as parks, trails, and community gardens that protect biodiversity, increase climate resiliency, and restore access close to home outdoor spaces.

Adapting to the Changing Climate

The impact of the climate crisis is not shared equally by all. To address the disproportionate harm experienced by communities of color and low-income communities, we engage youth in climate education, community outreach, and green infrastructure projects on public and private land to bring critical resilience infrastructure to their neighborhoods.

Prepare Youth for Careers in Conservation & the Green Economy

We provide paid opportunities for age-appropriate education and workforce development training to prepare young people for careers conserving and restoring public lands, urban forestry, green infrastructure, and addressing climate change.

Our work with the National Park Service provides an opportunity for our youth to deepen their connection with public lands through hands-on conservation and stewardship projects that meet critical park infrastructure needs. Through these experiences, they gain inspiration, energy, and skills to shape their close-to-home work and contextualize it within the broader conservation movement.

Groundwork USA Program Data

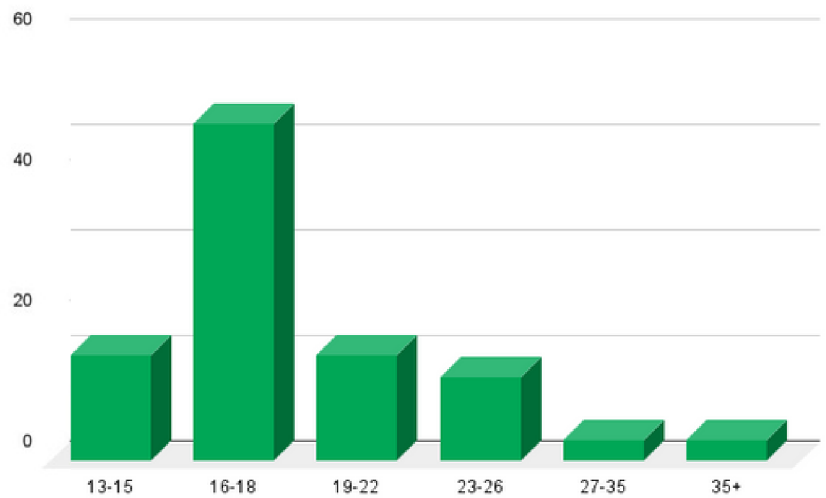
Each year, we survey program participants to collect and provide actionable feedback that informs our future programming. The data and quotes included in this report reflect the responses from 46 anonymous survey submissions, with supplemental data from NPS reporting metrics.



In the 2021-2022 program season, Groundwork USA engaged 124 youth in NPS partnerships, translating to a total of 13,161.25 hours of service.

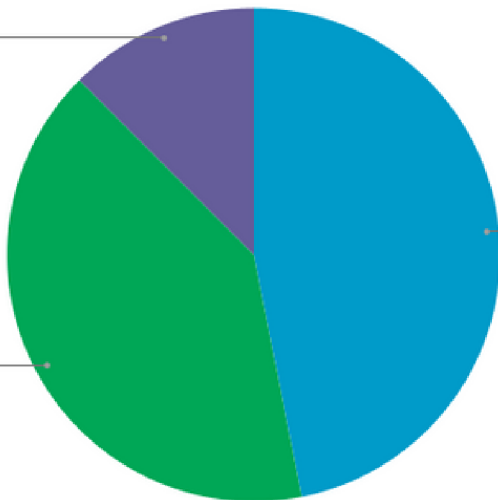
Age

As expected with Groundwork programming, the majority of participants were high-school-aged youth (16-18), with most of our 27+ participants reflecting young adults in leadership roles. A small proportion of youth engaged was in the early high school age bracket (13-15). This reflects the growth in programming in urban national parks, which opens new opportunities for younger participants.



Nonbinary
12.5%

Woman
40.6%



Man
46.9%

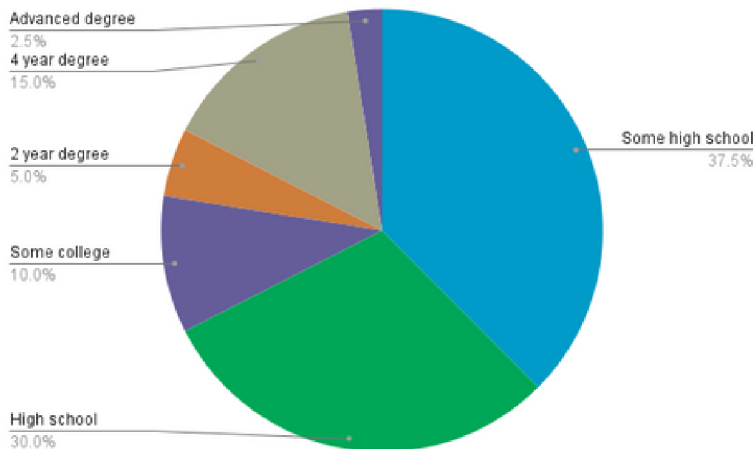
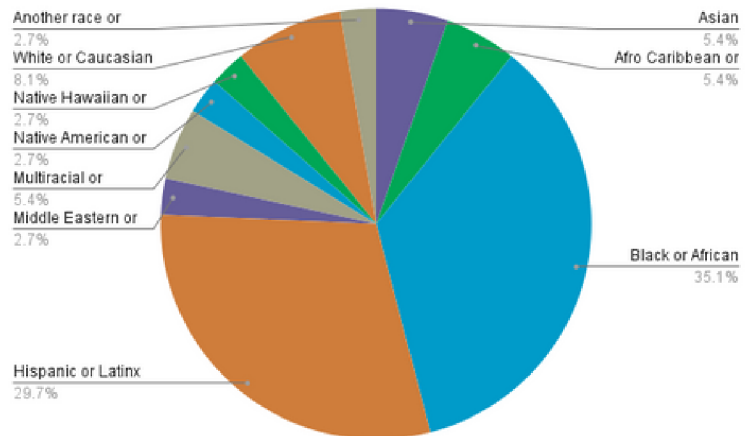
Gender Identity

Historically, slightly more than half of our participants were female identifying; however, in 2022, that dynamic reversed. This is likely a reflection of our increased focus on engaging more GroundCorps young adult (18-30) participants in deferred maintenance work as part of formalized workforce training programs.



Racial & Ethnic Identity

As in past years, the vast majority (in this case, 85.4%) of participants identified as people of color. About a third of participants identified as Hispanic/Latinx, while another third as Black/Afro-Caribbean. Notably, 10.6% of participants identified as Asian/Indian, compared to only 3% last year.



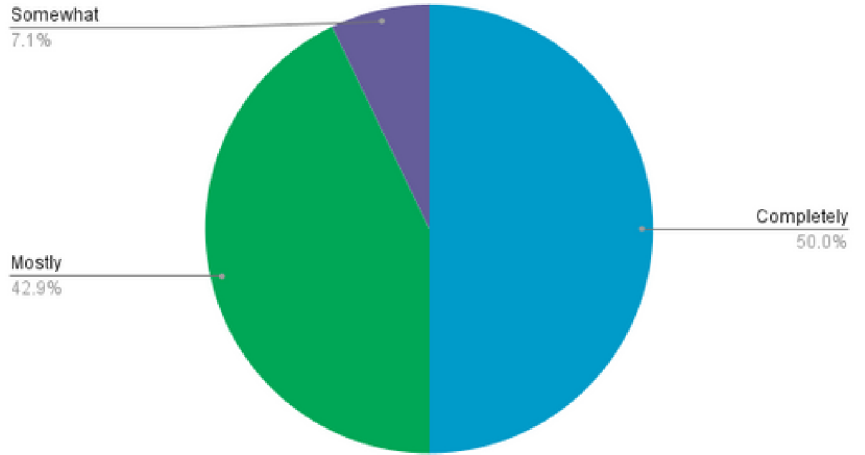
Education

Nearly 50% of youth were still in high school, while a quarter were high school graduates. Similar to age distributions, the third of participants currently enrolled in college or with a college degree represent those in leadership roles in the corps.

What Youth Say About Groundwork USA



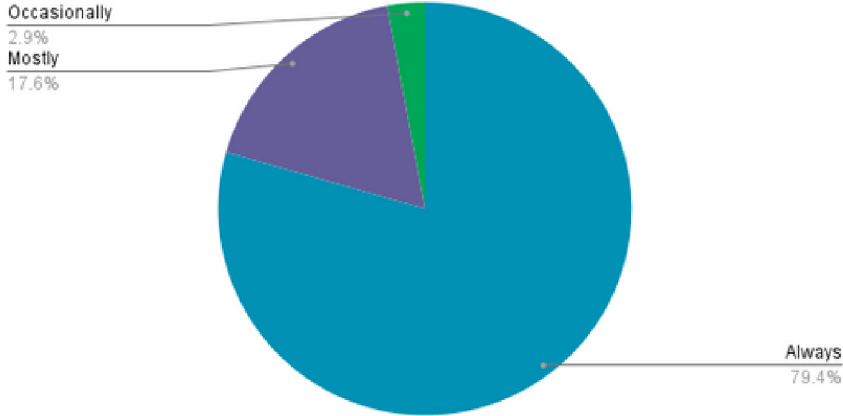
Overall, how well has Groundwork USA met your needs?



"[Groundwork USA is good at] getting inner city/urban youth into new and different experiences that ultimately open their eyes, minds, and hearts to new possibilities. This is a lifetime impact."

-Listen4Good Survey 2022

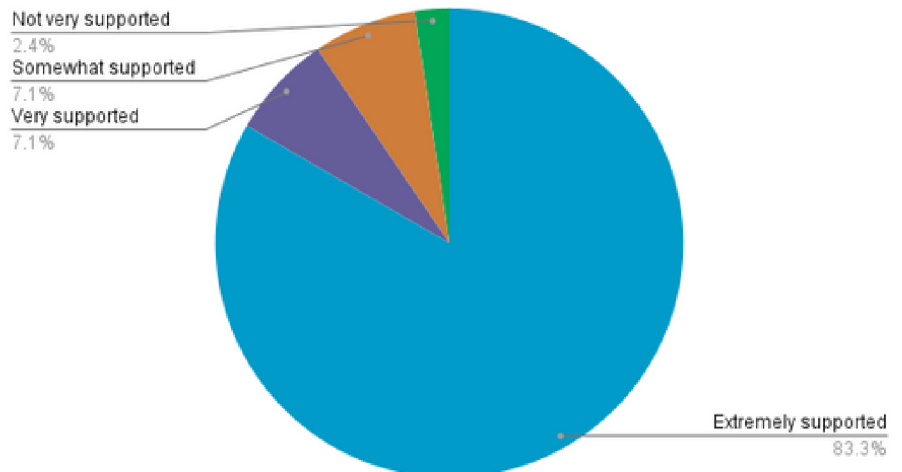
How often do Groundwork USA staff members treat you with respect?



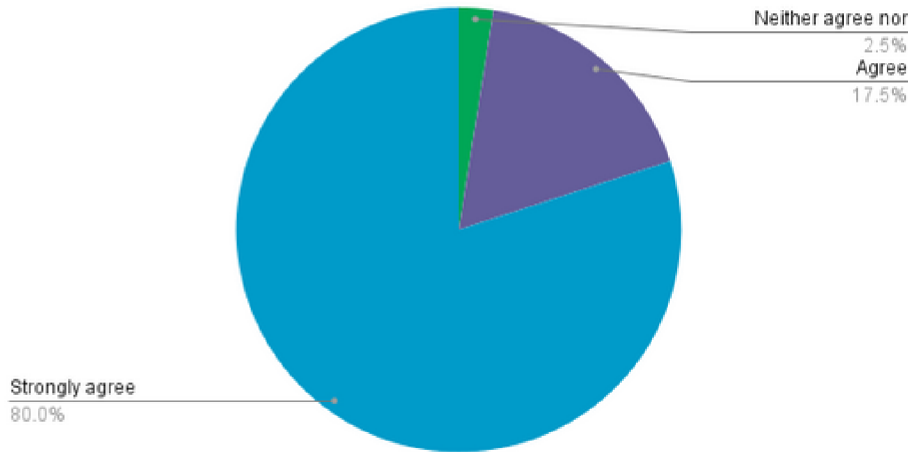
"[Groundwork USA is good at] engaging diverse and underserved communities and building leadership in those communities. Local leadership is connected by broader values. General strong values. Focus on results and long-term community investment over looking good."

-Listen4Good Survey 2022

How supported do you feel by the Groundwork USA staff?



This Groundwork USA program has increased my sense of belonging in nature.



"[Groundwork USA is good at] creating vital opportunities for youth to change lives and places and bringing people from different backgrounds to work closer in nature."

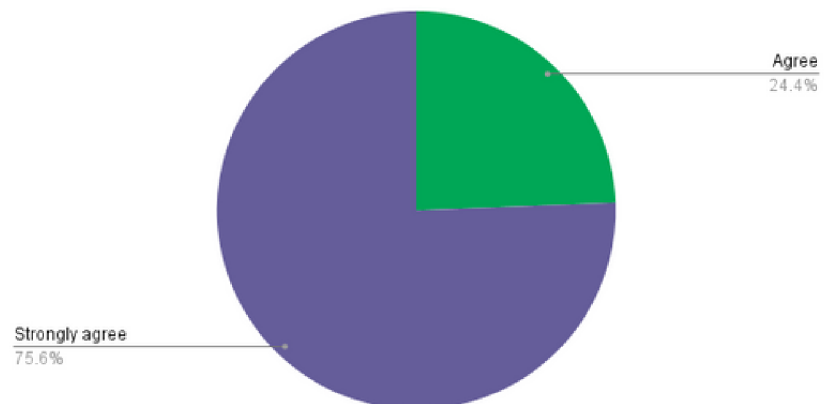
-Listen4Good Survey 2022

"This program has allowed me to take account of my impact and encouraged me to treat the Earth with respect."

-Listen4Good Survey 2022



After participating in this Groundwork USA program I have a better understanding of the National Park Service.



Groundwork Trusts & Parks Partnerships

Over the next several pages, you will see briefs on NPS projects completed in partnership with Groundwork USA during the 2021-2022 program year. A special thank you to all the Groundwork Trust staff that coordinated these programs!

Groundwork Bridgeport

Christina Smith, Executive Director
Peter LeDuc, Land Steward

Project Sites

Weir Farm
Coltsville National Historical Parks

Groundwork Elizabeth

Jonathan Phillips, Executive Director
Lucy Crespo, Former Youth Programs Director
Beren Delgado, Youth Programs Director
Sarah Sosa, Climate Safe Task
Force Coordinator

Project Sites

Gateway National Recreation Area
Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park
Morristown National Historical Park
Yellowstone National Park
Mountains to Main Street

Groundwork Hudson Valley

Brigitte Griswold, Executive Director
Lily Bartlett, Youth Programs Manager
Jhanelle Rahim, Youth Programs Associate

Project Sites

Gateway National Recreation Area
Yellowstone National Park

Groundwork Indy

Adam Velazquez, Executive Director
Elizabeth Wallin, Former Managing Director

Project Sites

Indiana Dunes National Park

Groundwork Jacksonville

Oscar Psychas, Youth Program Manager

Project Sites

Mountains to Main Streets
TTAP

Groundwork RVA

Rob Jones, Executive Director
Rosa Roncales, Green Team Manager
David Cayrampoma, Project Manager
Melissa Guevara, Program Advisor

Project Sites

Mountains to Main Street
Yellowstone National Park

Groundwork Ohio River Valley

Tanner Yess, Executive Director
Luis Aguilar, Youth Program Manager
Micah Johnson, Green Corps Worksite Supervisor
Tory Putterbaugh, Youth Program Manager

Project Sites

Indiana Dunes National Park
Mountains to Main Street
Yellowstone National Park

Groundwork New Orleans

Todd Reynolds, Executive Director
Riley Essert, Youth Environmental Programs Manager

Project Sites

Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park

Yellowstone National Park



Groundwork Elizabeth installing bear boxes.



Groundwork RVA working on the boardwalk.

Work Projects

In August and September 2022, 34 youth and crew leaders from Groundwork Elizabeth (NJ), Hudson Valley (NY), RVA (Richmond, VA), and Ohio River Valley dedicated 1,784 hours to restoration projects in Yellowstone over two nine-day sessions. They installed 11 bear boxes in Bridge Bay Campground, replaced 259 and stabilized 1,058 decaying deck and railing boards in Norris Geyser Basin, installed or replaced six trail signs around the park, and completed four days of water quality monitoring.



Groundwork HV after finishing a bear box install.



Groundwork Ohio River Valley enjoying Yellowstone Falls.

Recreation and Adventure

Each session offered two full recreation days and daily evening activities for participants. Youth participants hiked two mountains, visited Old Faithful, Yellowstone Falls, and the Grand Prismatic Spring, engaged in indigenous cultural exploration opportunities, learned about the history and challenges of Yellowstone through a resource education curriculum, went swimming in the largest high-elevation lake in North America, played campfire games, and observed elk, bison, bears, wolves, and bald eagles in their natural habitat.

Mountains To Main Street

A collaboration between Grand Teton National Park and Groundwork USA, Mountains to Main Street (M2M) is an annual training program focused on building the next generation of community leaders by inspiring participants (called ambassadors) to discover and recognize the unique passions and needs within their communities and learn to utilize the assets of national park sites to meet those needs.

Ambassadors complete one week of in-person training at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, learning more about themselves, exploring techniques and activities to connect diverse and new audiences with national parks, and strategizing effective ways to partner with local national park sites and organizations. In the following weeks, ambassadors apply what they learned to complete an independent youth engagement project in their community.



M2M Ambassador Beren Delgado at Delaware Water Gap NRA



M2M Ambassador Erik Zepeda-Flores at Golden Gate NRA



Groundwork Jacksonville participants at Timucuan EHP.

2022 Project Highlights

- Teaching bike riding and repair skills to community members at Gateway National Recreation Area
- Exploring identity through photography with youth at Delaware Water Gap
- Learning about local cultural history and self-expression at Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve
- Utilizing local history to improve financial habits at Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site
- Participating in planning efforts and exploring recreation opportunities at Golden Gate National Recreation Area

"I learned that I can harness my ability to have a vision rather than only start with worrying about what I can't do. I came in worrying about my event only from the practical side of things and had support from the team to be bold and create something with a vision. By turning that vision I had created into a successful event, I gained confidence in my abilities to accomplish something."

- Oscar Psychas, Groundwork Jacksonville

Traditional Trades Advancement Program (TTAP)

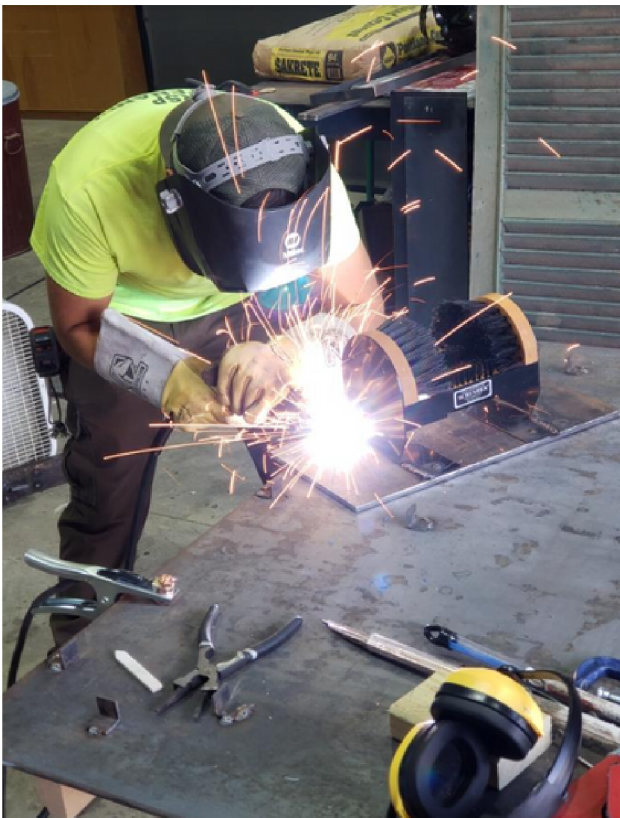
The Traditional Trades Advancement Program (TTAP) connects young adults to internships at national parks and provides technical training and skill development in historic preservation trades. Through a partnership between Groundwork USA and the NPS Historic Preservation Training Center (HPTC), we engaged 10 interns at six NPS units, totaling over 7,000 hours of service in FY22.



Lucia Engbert at George Washington Birthplace NHS



Jaclyn McCreary and Macy Ballew at Fort Vancouver NHS



Jacob Munoz at Fredericksburg Spotsylvania NMP

2022 TTAP Partners

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve
Jacksonville, FL
Morgan Baird, Facility Manager

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park
Fredericksburg, VA
John Storke, Facility Manager

George Washington Birthplace National Monument & Thomas Stone National Historic Site
Colonial Beach, VA and Port Tobacco, MD
Beverly Bruce, Facility Manager

Arkansas Post National Monument
Gillett, AR
Kirby McCallie, Integrated Resource Manager

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site
Vancouver, WA
Alex Patterson, Facility Manager

Gateway National Recreation Area- Sandy Hook Unit

"Sandy Hook Beach was a truly fascinating location. I was never aware of its existence until this summer. After my trip to Yellowstone National Park last year, I have developed a strong interest in other sites protected by the National Park Service. I now know about the Gateway Recreational Areas and their importance to urban areas. It was an amazing place for the Green Team to visit this summer, and I hope there are more locations like it."

- Derrell James, Groundwork Hudson Valley



Groundwork Elizabeth painting a bus shelter

From July 26th to August 5th, 2022, 50 youth from Groundwork Elizabeth and Groundwork Hudson Valley completed a variety of projects at Gateway National Recreation Area - Sandy Hook Unit through a partnership with the National Park Foundation. These projects included removing over 200lbs of litter and dumped trash from the beach and marsh, installation of 17 signs on a multi-use path, and historic preservation and restoration of two bus stops near the Sandy Hook Lighthouse. The youth also participated in recreation activities at the beach, hiking, camping, and tours of the lighthouse and Battery Gunnison.



Groundwork Elizabeth discussing the roof



Groundwork HV after completing their project

Indiana Dunes National Park

During three week-long trips in the summer of 2022, Groundwork Indianapolis, with support from Groundwork Ohio River Valley, improved and revitalized 2.5 miles of park trails and reconstructed a 275 sq. ft. observation deck while camping in the park.



Inspecting the old deck before demolition



The completed observation deck

"Being able to work directly with park staff was a big opportunity for Groundwork youth as they gained direct experience of what a career in National Parks would look like."

- Groundwork Indy

Trail work involved the construction of raised turnpikes, ditches, and buried tubing to prevent flooding in the wetland environment. To accomplish these projects, youth learned to use pulaskis, pick mattocks, tampers, and power drills. The reconstruction of the observation deck involved the demolition of the existing rotten deck, resetting of concrete footings, leveling and measurement of new posts and stringers, and installation of a new deck and stairs. In addition to work days, youth had the opportunity to explore the park and enjoy the natural recreation opportunities. They spent time swimming and picnicking at the beach, hiking park trails, and camping.



Groundwork Indy member tamping trail surface

Morristown National Historical Park

In the second year of a project at Morristown National Historical Park, eight youth and two youth leaders from Groundwork Elizabeth dedicated two weeks to identifying and removing invasive species and revitalizing park trails.



Youth also installed weed clothes to prevent future weed growth, mulched trails and garden beds to make footpaths, harvested native crops, and installed water bars to prevent erosion in the Tempe Wick community garden. The youth also learned about the wildlife and completed a community science project with Parker Ranger Masson. They learned about wildlife along creeks, learned how water quality impacts the ecosystem, and learned how water quality is monitored in the park.



Participants also had the opportunity to explore the history of Morristown through visits to the Ford Mansion where George Washington lived for a few years, Jockey Hollow where George Washington's army built a winter encampment in 1779, and Fort Nonsense a fortification with an elevated strategic advantage.

Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park

In July 2022, Groundwork Elizabeth returned to Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park with 10 youth and youth leaders for the third year of deferred maintenance work in this park.

The first project involved the construction of a 2ft by 10ft stone retaining wall near the overlook of the falls to prevent erosion by slowing down storm water coming down the steep hill. The youth crew stacked large dry stones and filled in gaps with crushed stone to build the wall without the use of mortar.



Final touches on the retaining wall



Groundwork Elizabeth with the finished staircase

Groundwork Elizabeth also reconstructed a wooden staircase on the Passaic river. Though they endured Yellow Jackets, bugs, and dense brush, the youth crew successfully replaced over 50 boards on the decaying staircase, added additional steps to improve walkability, and supported the foundations by the addition of stone supports. The youth learned how to effectively handle power and hand tools, as well as how to effectively remove invasive species along the trail.



Groundwork Elizabeth replacing and improving the staircase

Weir Farm & Coltsville National Historical Parks



In the summer of 2022, 10 Groundwork Bridgeport spent time in Weir Farm and Coltsville NHPs completing stewardship projects and exploring how nature inspires art. After experiencing the urban environment of Coltsville, and the rural, natural environment of Weir Farm, students produced ten paintings showcasing their interpretation of the beauty of Connecticut's national park sites. The participants presented their work at the end of the project to local community members and supporters.



Second Place Winner - Teen Artist Category
Original artwork by Mia Andre.

Groundwork USA

Park Partnerships Project Funding 2021-2022

**Martin Luther King Jr.
National Historical Park**
February - April 22



NPS Funding \$64,130.32

**Traditional Trade
Advancement Program**
April - December 22



NPS Funding \$175,000
NPF Funding \$105,000

**Morristown National
Historical Park**
June - July 22



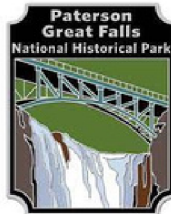
NPS Funding \$42,849.99

**Indiana Dunes
National Park**
June - August 22



NPS Funding \$40,164.98

**Paterson Great Falls
National Historical Park**
July 22



NPS Funding \$30,944.16

**Gateway National
Recreation Area**
July - August 22



NPF Funding \$31,706.12

**Weir Farm and Coltsville
National Historical Parks**
July - August 22



NPS Funding \$29,999.99

**Yellowstone
National Park**
August - September 22



NPS Funding \$32,456
NPF Funding \$24,250

**Mountains to
Main Street**
September 22



Grant Teton NPF Funding
\$35,561.74

Total Funding

National Park Service: \$415,546.42

National Park Foundation: \$158,549.48

Grand Teton National Park Foundation: \$35,561.74

Total: \$609,657.64

Thank You To Our Park Partners!

Groundwork USA's Youth Programs would not be possible without the support, knowledge, and passion of many of our partners with the National Park Service. We'd like to give special thanks to some partners that have made our 2022 program possible and successful.

Washington Office

George McDonald, Former Director of Youth Programs

Floyd Myers, Acting Youth Programs Director
Ernestine White, National Youth Employment Programs Coordinator

Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

Heather Passchier, National Program Coordinator

National Park Foundation

Lisa McClure, Former Senior Program Manager, Connecting Audiences

Historical Preservation Training Center

Moss Rudley, Superintendent
Claire Finn, TTAP Program Manager
Kiel Rommel, TTAP Program Manager

Groundwork USA

Curt Collier, Former Youth Programs Director

Gateway National Recreation Area

Pete McCarthy, Sandy Hook Unit Manager
Gage Biongiovi, Park Ranger

Grand Teton National Park

Megan Kohli, Director of Youth, Community, and Volunteer Engagement
Julie Gonzalez, Community Engagement Coordinator
Asnoldo Benitez, Teton Science Schools Faculty

Indiana Dunes

Ron Griffin, Roads and Trails Supervisor
Todd Raveslout, Facilities Manager

Morristown

Robert Masson, Superintendent

Paterson Great Falls

Darren Boch, Superintendent

Yellowstone National Park

Bob Fuhrmann, Youth Education & Work Program Manager
Mike Coonan, Youth Work Program Coordinator