



Over 120 Years of Connecting People with Nature

# Audubon Society of Rhode Island

## Rhode Island Conservation Stewardship Collaborative (Project Proposal Submitted December 6, 2019)

Project Title: Rhode Island Youth Conservation League Summer 2020

Outcomes:

- Provide a **six-week** summer employment for high school aged youth and job experience for those interested in careers in natural resource management, wildlife and landscaping;
- Provide substantial labor and other inputs towards stewardship needs of conservation land holders;
- Draw public attention to stewardship needs of conservation land and portray those activities as personally, socially, and economically valuable and make stewardship activities attractive to a public seeking new forms of outdoor recreation and new ways to re-engage with nature;
- Broaden community support for regional and local land conservation.

Brief Description:

The Youth Conservation League (YCL) was formed in 2010 as a collaborative effort of the Rhode Island Chapter of the Nature Conservancy (TNC), Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI), and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS) with the hope that it will be a permanent conservation stewardship program for the state. The YCL is an innovative approach to meeting important needs of the local land conservation movement through:

- 1) Greater capacity for stewarding conservation land;
- 2) Sustained, broadened public support for land conservation generally; and
- 3) Renewed and strengthened connections between people and nature.

The YCL hopes to create opportunity for young people to consider a career in conservation.

The YCL model includes:

- 1) Crews of high school-aged youth, with college-aged leaders/mentors, hired to tackle diverse stewardship tasks during a 6-week session;
- 2) More complicated projects that bring together youth crews, adult land trust volunteers, and professional stewardship staff; and
- 3) A schedule with built-in educational components and opportunities for YCL members to communicate their learning and growth to the community. YCL consists of a crew of 6-8 high school-aged employees, with a college-aged (or older) leader and assistant leader. The program focuses on diverse stewardship tasks from invasive plant removal and habitat restoration to signage, trail building and facility maintenance, but additional regular activities include job training, leadership and teambuilding exercises, natural history lessons and public outreach.

The stewardship tasks will take place on land conserved by ASRI, TNC, RIDEM, and local land trusts and includes invasive plant removal, erosion control, trail work and fencing. Details and a day-by-day schedule will be planned by staff of the partners and finalized by the crew leader and assistant before the crew starts.

Hiring for crew leader and crew assistant leader will be done by ASRI with assistance of TNC. Planning for projects would be done by ASRI and TNC, with the crew leader and the assistant leader starting 1 week in advance of the crew.

Available student crew positions would be publicized at the Land and Water Summit and in communities based on the partner organizations' needs and/or the priorities of funders, for instance, in forested, rural areas or urban areas. Power tools, chemicals, construction materials, permits, and additional field labor for projects would be the responsibility of the land owner.

Deliverables:

1. Employment of 6-8 youth crew, one crew assistant leader and one crew leader;
2. One week of advance planning by crew leader and assistant
3. Two days of crew training/team building;
4. 24 days of crew work on partner lands;
5. Public celebration with parents, organization partners, teachers and community leaders;
6. Financial and written reports to CSC and for public release.

Timeline and Benchmarks for 2020 season:

February: Advertise crew leader and assistant positions; Advertise crew positions;  
Solicit Land Trusts for project proposals.

March – June: Planning by partners.

Promote program at the Land and Water Summit

April: Hire leaders and crew.

Late June: Crew leader and assistant leader starts one week of training and orientation.

Early July – early August Crew works 6 weeks on projects funded by the RICSC and partners.

Budget:

Seeking \$26,000 from the RICSC. See attached page for details.

Land Trusts will be asked to contribute 26% cost share on a daily basis (\$500/day).

Main partners (ASRI, TNC, RIDEM) will contribute a 53% per day cost share at (\$1,000/day).

Payments will be made to the fiscal agent for the project:

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

12 Sanderson Rd. Smithfield, RI 02917

Project oversight will be done by: Scott Ruhren