



CONSERVING LANDS

STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

TRANSFORMING LIVES



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CONSERVING LANDS, TRANSFORMING LIVES

If you recall noticing a change in your teenager following weeks on an SCA crew, if you turned your own SCA internship into a satisfying career, if you've heard inner-city students describe their first encounter with the backcountry, then you know the impact of SCA.

Our volunteers are renowned and respected nationwide for their prowess in maintaining cherished public lands, from national parks to city greens. Whether aiding endangered species, restoring threatened habitats, or mitigating the effects of climate change, SCA delivers on critical conservation objectives every day of the year.

It's important to note that SCA's impact extends beyond nature. As detailed elsewhere in this report, new research shows that even a single SCA experience has a powerful influence on participants, instilling the very character skills youth need to prosper at school, home and work. As educators struggle to teach these non-cognitive competencies in a classroom environment, SCA is harnessing the natural environment to foster holistic, continuous growth.

The same spirit of innovation that Liz Putnam employed in launching SCA nearly 60 years ago continues to drive us today. We're aggressively piloting new program models such as ConSERVE—which will soon launch in other major metro areas

after a successful debut in New York City—to expand the ranks of active stewards and reach deeper into under-served and under-represented communities. In addition to empowering the leaders of the future, we're out to create the largest and most inclusive conservation force in history.

We are pleased to report that SCA advanced significantly toward this goal in 2015; in fact, we surpassed a major milestone when we placed our 75,000th volunteer. For all this, we thank you—the SCA parent, alum, supporter, partner—for your ongoing trust and backing.

We are also grateful to the SCA board of directors, our national and regional staff and, of course, to the young women and men of all backgrounds who selflessly and consistently protect the inspirational assets we collectively call the Great Outdoors.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaime B. Matyas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

JAIME BERMAN MATYAS
President and CEO

Our world is changing, and not just its climate.

More and more of the population is clustered in urban areas, further stressing our cities' environments and placing more people at risk. Our long-cherished public lands are growing increasingly irrelevant to large sectors of Americans. Technology, for all its links and "likes," has placed a barrier between youth and the outdoors.

In 1957, SCA sparked a movement and today young volunteers are continuing to make a vital difference in our national parks and forests.

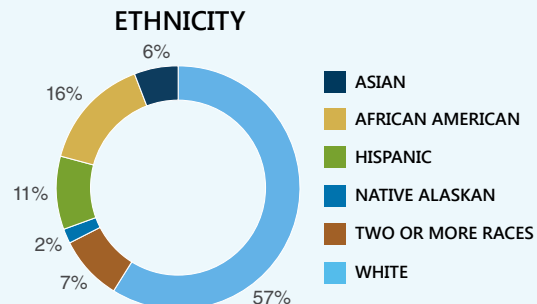
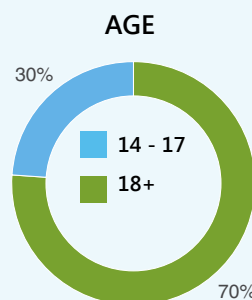
But our needs are much greater now. In 2015, under new leadership, SCA dramatically expanded our nationwide volunteer efforts.

We built more resilient communities as we upheld our commitment to protect the nation's wild lands. We refined our programs to better empower youth, provided more opportunities for under-served populations, and forged new routes to sustainability.

We also brought new thought leadership to the field of conservation service by identifying and integrating powerful youth development aptitudes into our programs and creating new service and outreach models.

Our world is changing—and SCA's impact is growing on the places we most cherish and the people we most count on as the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

WHO WE ARE



12.1 MILLION FEET OF TRAILS IMPROVED & MAINTAINED



493,856 FEET OF WATERWAY IMPROVED

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISH



132,814 ACRES OF HABITAT RESTORED & MAINTAINED



621,824 ANIMALS MONITORED & PROTECTED



434,532 PEOPLE EDUCATED IN ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY

CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE OF OUR TIME, AND SCA VOLUNTEERS ARE LEADING GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND COMMUNITIES IN SPEARHEADING MITIGATION PLANS AND BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCY ACROSS OUR NATION.

CREATING GREEN CITIES

"I grew up in Pittsburgh," Sahar Arbab states. "I really love this city and I'm excited to see its progress and commitment to sustainability."

Rising sea levels drive the climate conversation in coastal regions but the industrial heartland—a region commonly called the Rust Belt—faces an entirely different set of issues. Its urban centers and energy-intensive economy generate vast amounts of greenhouse gases that not only warm our climate but spark "heat islands," boost air pollution, harm water quality, and spur new pests and diseases.

IN PITTSBURGH, HOWEVER, SCA SUSTAINABILITY FELLOWS ARE TURNING SUSTAINABILITY INTO A RALLYING POINT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION.

Collaborating with Sustainable Pittsburgh, SCA Sustainability Fellows coordinated a range of city-wide initiatives. The Green Workplace Challenge alone generated such remarkable results, they were cited by Governor Tom Wolf as he presented Sustainable Pittsburgh with the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence:

- Carbon emissions reduced by 22,821 metric tons
- Energy costs cut by \$7.4 million
- Water savings of 5.4 million gallons – enough to fill the playing surface at Heinz Field 223 feet deep

At American Eagle Outfitters, interns' analyses and recommendations generated additional savings of \$200,000 in energy costs, 239,000 gallons of water, and \$20,000 in paper outlays at stores nationwide.

"Once we articulate parameters and goals, the interns are very creative in shaping the programs and producing effective outcomes," says Sustainable Pittsburgh Program Director Matt Mehalik. "We would not have earned the Governor's Award without the efforts of the SCA Fellows. They've had a remarkable impact."

Cecily tracks energy usage at Highmark, Inc.



SCA Sustainability Fellows serve throughout the community in a variety of capacities including:

- Emissions specialist with the Higher Education Climate Consortium
- Storm water manager with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority
- Urban canopy expert with Tree Pittsburgh
- Resource efficiency expert with Highmark, Inc.
- LEED certification coordination with Berner International



A SPECIES ON THE EDGE

The sentry milk-vetch's Latin name, *astragalus cremnophylax*, means "gorge watchman," which is entirely appropriate as this tiny plant grows only along the rim of the Grand Canyon.

The milk-vetch was declared endangered in 1990 when the inadvertent trampling of visitors reduced its population to just over 1,000. In 2009, SCA intern Emily Douglas was credited with playing a major role in propagating Grand Canyon National Park's first *in situ*, or greenhouse-grown, sentry milk-vetch, and SCA interns have assisted with cultivation efforts ever since. In recent years 70% or more of their hand-harvested micro-seeds have germinated and more than 90% of nursery transplants have survived relocation to the canyon's lip.

This year, Fangfei (Faye) Duan was part of a new milestone. "An exciting progression in the project," she says, "was planting an entirely new population on the South Rim using our *in situ* plants. Its stock was taken from a nearby site that was disappearing due to erosion—literally crumbling into the canyon!"

Yet the sentry milk-vetch faces an even greater threat.

Federal researchers say because the milk vetch occupies small areas of isolated, specialized habitat, it is vulnerable to climatic changes that could alter pollinator phenology or decrease its habitat. Endemic to narrow bands of the canyon's Kaibab limestone, the milk-vetch has no place else to go when persistent drought or extreme weather events strike.

Faye says her work altered her perspective on climate change and fragile, niche species. "Saving species from extinction by addressing immediate threats is merely a temporary solution," she asserts. "I favor a shift away from single-species conservation towards deeper and more holistic approaches."

After Arizona, Faye took another SCA internship in Alaska, where she is helping to manage old growth forests. "Here, we look at the stand ecology as a whole, to consider sustainability for timber use as well as habitat for wildlife," she notes. "It's my favorite aspect of this work—considering all these interrelated aspects of a natural resource for the sake of more responsible management."



INVENTIVE INTERNS HAVE IMPACT

When the US Fish and Wildlife Service dispatched SCA interns Lauren Breza and Sean Johnson-Bice to inventory endangered native rice rats on the Florida Keys, the duo made a startling discovery.

“We were using ten-year old maps to locate their habitats,” Lauren notes, “and when we got there, the sites were under nearly two feet of water.”

The ocean here has risen nine inches over the past century and scientists predict it could climb another two feet by 2060. To expedite their surveys, Sean devised an innovative monitoring system combining GoPro cameras with helium balloons, and then convinced the state to fund his plan. “We couldn’t afford drones,” he shrugs. “But now we’re able to run GIS analyses, statistical models, synthesize data and provide a lot more value to refuge researchers.”

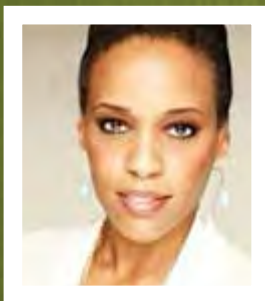
To the north, the Key Largo woodrat is both an endangered and a keystone species. Feeding primarily on fruits and nuts, the woodrat spreads seeds that sustain the hardwood hammock that it and other island species need to survive.

As climate change and development impede the woodrats’ natural habitat, SCA’s Chris Burgess installed hundreds of artificial homesteads made of culvert pipes over which the woodrats pile towering mounds of sticks. And now the agency reports “evidence clearly suggests that [manmade nests] have significantly bolstered the population.”

“We’re contributing to an understanding that will help future generations cope with rising sea levels,” Sean says. “Seeing this impact has really been rewarding.”

75,000 AND COUNTING

SCA reached a major milestone in 2015: our 75,000th member! Throughout this report, we excerpt some of the alumni profiles created to mark the occasion at thesca.org/75K



“MY EXPERIENCE WITH SCA CEMENTED HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO PRESERVE OUR VITAL NATURAL RESOURCES. IT’S SO MUCH BETTER BEING INSTILLED WITH THIS SET OF VALUES AS A YOUNG PERSON. IT TURNS INTO A LIFELONG COMMITMENT.”

– QIANA PATTERSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
NEW GLOBAL CITIZENS; SCA 1993

MANY OF US INHERENTLY RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS. BUT AS THE YEAR DREW TO A CLOSE, INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS WERE DRAWING NEW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SCA EXPERIENCES ON PARTICIPANTS' DEVELOPMENT AND LATER SUCCESS.



FUELING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Stories about SCA crew members arriving home, somehow “changed” by their time with SCA, are familiar to many parents. We get notes all the time about how someone’s child is suddenly more focused, more reliable, and more likely to turn off the lights in an empty room.

Over the past three years, SCA has worked with Search Institute, an international authority on what youth need to succeed, to scientifically identify the ways in which teenagers are affected by their SCA experiences, and how we can accentuate these positive developmental outcomes.

Search’s 2015 Youth Outcomes Study quantified improvements in a range of conservation values, from sustainable behaviors to green career exploration, something we call the *SCA Conservation Leadership Index™*. We were gratified by these results but what really caught our attention were the substantially higher scores in character skills such as self-awareness, initiative and social responsibility—the very factors that spur optimal advancement and help teens prosper.

“It is unusual to see statistically significant differences between pre- and post-program survey results across such a wide range of youth development outcomes,” notes Gene Roehlkepartain, Ph.D., Vice President for Research and Development at Search Institute.

“A SENSE OF PURPOSE, OPENNESS TO CHALLENGE, PLANNING AND PERSEVERANCE—THESE CAN FUEL A LIFETIME OF GROWTH.”

SCA has long pursued the mission of “building conservation leaders.” The Search findings demonstrate that we instill broader leadership traits that enable youth to excel in school, at work and in life.

No sooner had the Search results arrived when they were followed by a letter from the mother of a four-time SCA crew alumnus from Seattle. In SCA, he discovered that he could take an impenetrable forest and make a path through it, not only for himself but for others, too. He could make the world better. So in college, far from being intimidated, he embraced challenges—learning from them and trying his best to contribute to the greater good.

The academic world has recognized the importance of non-cognitive competencies for many years, but has struggled to instill them within the confines of the classroom. SCA is again blazing a trail across a new frontier by simultaneously fostering lifelong stewardship and developing America’s young leaders.

Researchers say SCA’s capacity for generating significant growth across such a wide range of developmental factors is rare.



Conservation Leadership skills:

- Conservation Awareness
- Comfort in the Outdoors
- Connection with Nature
- Environmental Responsibility
- Critical Ecological Analysis
- Sustainability Behaviors
- Demonstrable Leadership
- Green Career Exploration

Life Leadership skills:

- Emotional Competence
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Planning and Decision-Making
- Altruism
- Self-Awareness
- Initiative
- Perseverance



A WORLD AWAY, A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Growing up in Baton Rouge, Marinell Chandler rarely ventured outdoors. “If you walked outside during the summer,” she says with a grin, “you were equally likely to burst into flames or melt.”

There was little risk of that happening last summer, as Marinell traveled to Denali National Park in Alaska to run their sled dog kennel.

“Coming up here empowered me to explore places I had only dreamed of visiting, do things I had only dreamed of doing,” she states. “My friends and family back home shake their heads because they remember the Marinell growing up, and it isn’t the woman they see now. I have become more confident, more adventurous, and more motivated.

“When I was in college, I studied Sustainable Development,” Marinell continues. “We called it the ‘doom and gloom’ major because we tended to get bogged down by all of the global issues currently facing our generation. I graduated unsure of the impact I could make. I don’t feel that way anymore. Professionally, this is something I want to make a career doing.”

Marinell showed more and more initiative: training dogs, maintaining equipment, conducting research—even writing a blog that forged connections with people around the world. When her internship concluded, Marinell’s supervisor told her to cash in her plane fare home. She’d earned a full-time job.

“It’s funny,” she says, “Denali was where I hoped I’d be in twenty-plus years. Now, I’m pinching myself. This is a dream come true and SCA helped me find it.”

“I FOUND SOMETHING LARGER THAN MYSELF”

One of the year’s more powerful SCA stories came from AmaRece Davis, who bared his anguish, dreams and determination in an op-ed column in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

“I’ve lived in Homewood for all of my 21 years,” AmaRece opened, appearing spent even at such an early age. Homewood is a hard-edged neighborhood plagued by poverty, crime and drugs, and Rece stated bleakly that it is often an unforgiving trap.

“Two of my older brothers are in prison for murder,” he wrote. “They’ll likely never see the outside again, and as a teenager I was right behind them, heading down that same dark path.”

Rece’s course changed, he revealed, soon after joining SCA. He started on a local crew in his hometown. These community-based programs often serve as an important stepping stone, and when Rece advanced to a crew at Sequoia National Park, he saw himself as never before.

“I sat at the base of one of these giant trees on my 18th birthday,” he recalled, “and thought about all of my friends and relatives who had never been out of Pittsburgh and of others who hadn’t even survived to be 18. I came home a different person. I had found something larger than myself, figuratively and literally.”

Rece soon started a local recycling program, enrolled in community college, and got a part-time job.



He then declared he wanted to help other young people restart their lives, starting with his 16-year old brother. “I want to help him understand that we do have chances to live a better life—we just have to look for them a little bit harder than people who grow up elsewhere.”

Rece is not only back in Homewood, he’s back in the park where his journey started, leading SCA crews and enabling others to find their own direction.



“WORKING ON TRAILS WITH THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE RECOVERY CORPS—THAT WAS JUST AN AMAZING TIME. I WAS THE GUY WITH THE GUITAR! A LOT OF HARD WORK BUT IT’S ONE OF THE GREATEST THINGS I EVER DID, AND I’LL NEVER FORGET IT.”

– GARRETT DUTTON, LEAD SINGER,
G LOVE AND SPECIAL SAUCE, SCA 1989

SCIENTISTS WARN THE EARTH IS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF A MASS EXTINCTION, AND HUMANS ARE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND IT. BUT HUMANS CAN ALSO BE A FORCE FOR MITIGATION, AND SCA VOLUNTEERS ARE TAKING THE LEAD IN PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY, OFTEN WHERE THE THREATS ARE GREATEST.

A CHANGING TIDE FOR SEA TURTLES

On a tiny island 70 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, Ann Bishop is all alone. Check that—she has plenty of company but she is the only human at Dry Tortugas National Park for much of her SCA internship.

From June to September, she watches over 500 sea turtle nests—endangered loggerheads and greens, mostly—each nest containing roughly 100 eggs. “I patrol two miles of beach every day,” Ann states, “counting nests and confirming each clutch by digging through the sand to locate the upper-most egg, which can be deep as four feet.”

Once the turtles hatch, she records the date, inventories the hatched eggs, and aids the stragglers that can’t make it out on their own. “The physical aspect of collecting data is very rewarding. I feel like this is my island and these are my turtles.”

Dry Tortugas is among Florida’s index beaches where turtle populations are monitored to determine the effectiveness of conservation policies such as turtle excluder devices on fishing boats and lighting controls on waterfront structures. Of course, Ann notes, the hatchlings are still vulnerable to a host of predators, from sea gulls to tiger sharks. “Once they make it to open water,” she says, “they’re ‘ocean hors d’oeuvres.’”

Recent genetic studies indicate both the local loggerheads—which account for up to 40% of loggerhead nests worldwide—and greens are distinct sub-populations in need of specialized management.

AS THE DRY TORTUGAS SURVEYS ARE THE ONLY ONES CONDUCTED IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY, THE DATA ANN COLLECTS IS VITAL TO THE SPECIES’ SURVIVAL.

And with plans to work in marine park management, she says the experience also has been important for her.

“I’m expanding my skill set, doing coral work, networking and meeting with researchers—it’s made me a much more competitive candidate for grad school,” she stated. “Plus, being on my own so often, I’ve learned a lot about myself. How to be more self-sufficient, open-minded, creative. To make do with what I have to work with.”

As for the sea turtles, Ann says the islands’ count dipped slightly last year but the general trend is a slow, upward turn. And, although statistically only one in 1,000 baby sea turtles reach adulthood, Ann is optimistic.

“While nest monitoring, I personally released at least a thousand hatchlings in the ocean,” she says. “Hopefully, one of mine will be among those who make it.”

The commitment interns like Ann Bishop bring to their work is unwavering. “I feel like this is my island,” says Ann, “and these are my turtles.”



SEA TURTLE FACTS:

- Female Loggerheads reproduce between the ages of 17 to 33, and usually mate every two to four years, female greens reproduce between the ages of 20 and 50, also every two to four years.
- Over the past 25 years, loggerhead nest counts on Florida’s index beaches ranged from a peak of near 60,000 in 1998 to a low of 28,000 in 2007.
- Green turtle nest counts have increased approximately one hundredfold over that same period, with record highs recorded 2011 and 2013.



GREAT RESTORATIONS

There's a comeback story underway at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and SCA volunteers are writing some of its most exhilarating chapters.

The Lakeshore's Great Marsh once abounded with wildlife, including a birder's "dream team" of migratory waterfowl. But a century of farming, logging, and development pushed this massive wetland to the brink of collapse. In recent years, however, SCA teams have been part of the effort to restore Great Marsh to its pre-industrial state.

"It's probably the most rewarding thing I could have ever done," stated crew member Jaynae Hartridge, who planted native species, removed invasives, and plugged ditches to restore the area's hydrology. Other crews decommissioned under-utilized campsites to expand park habitats, diverted harmful storm water runoff, and educated visitors about the rebirth taking place at Great Marsh.

"It was a great opportunity to create more awareness about environmental issues and provide viable solutions for everyone," stated Rick Mittler, of Orange, Virginia.

Today, as SCA continues its partnership with Indiana Dunes, great egrets are again roosting in the lakeshore's treetops and green herons have returned to stalk its marshes. And, as the ecosystem recovers, the wetlands naturally filter contaminated water and provide the additional benefit of improving the area's water quality.

"I first served with SCA when I was fifteen and I am continually amazed," says Crew Leader Rebecca Hamilton as she looks out over Great Marsh. "We're doing great conservation work. These are the moments that keep me coming back season after season."

MITIGATING FACTORS

Exotic species affect 100 million acres in the US, an area equal to the State of California, and just north of Berkeley, a team of local teenagers spends day after hot day pulling invasive French broom from the ground. An aggressive plant that can grow to a height of over eight feet, the French broom routinely vanquishes native vegetation and spoils traditional habitats. It also burns easily and, as the region remains in the grip of a stubborn drought, the crew's priority is reducing wildfire risks.

They roam from Alvarado Park and Wildcat Canyon in the Richmond hills to Sibley Park in the North Oakland/Berkeley hills, clearing the land of the yellow-flowering intruder. When four-time SCA crew leader PaHoua Lee says "removing invasive plants can be really fun!" you begin to think she may be trying to rally the troops.

"I'm not going to sugarcoat it—this work is hard," PaHoua concedes. "You might have to hike two miles to get to a worksite. You'll most likely carry heavy tools along the way. But over time, the work we put in now will have direct positive outcomes. I have seen hillsides overridden with invasives newly flourish with native plants after a year or two of removal efforts. It is truly a great feeling."

For Noah Israel of Oakland, the ecological and public safety benefits of ridding these hills of exotics are all the incentive he needs. At the same time, he notes, there is some personal payback. "Eventually, I would



like to work in restoration, especially rivers, lakes, and aquatic species," he says. "I understand that the freshwater of any ecosystem is heavily influential on, and influenced by, the biological and physical processes in the entire ecosystem. I would like to gain exposure to the interventions practiced to maintain and restore forest lands."

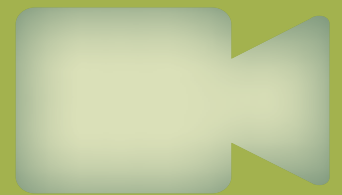
This year, nationwide, SCA members eradicated invasive plants from an area equal to the entirety of San Mateo County—450 square miles—giving native species a fighting chance for survival.



"[SERVING WITH SCA AT PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE] WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE OCEAN OR A SEA TURTLE. IT CHANGED MY LIFE. I HAVE SPENT MY WORKING CAREER HELPING TO RECOVER DWINDLING SEA TURTLE POPULATIONS."

– DR. DONNA SHAVER, CHIEF OF THE DIVISION OF SEA TURTLE SCIENCE AND RECOVERY, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE; SCA 1980

SCA IS DETERMINED TO SEE THE RICH DIVERSITY ON OUR PUBLIC LANDS REFLECTED IN THE PEOPLE WHO VISIT AND WORK THERE. AS WE BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY, PEOPLE OF ALL BACKGROUNDS WILL EXPERIENCE AND BENEFIT FROM AMERICA'S MOST INSPIRATIONAL ASSETS.



A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

SCA is building a new generation of conservation leaders—and it is far more diverse than the old one.

For the fifth consecutive year, college students from all communities and identities explored potential careers through the annual SCA-NPS Academy, our workforce diversity initiative with the National Park Service. The program began in the spring with intensive, week-long orientations at national parks from Kenai Fjords to the Great Smoky Mountains.

Millie Jimenez greeted the students at Grand Teton. A 2013 SCA-NPS Academy alumna, she's now the park's diversity outreach and volunteer coordinator and gratefully notes that without the Academy, she'd never be in her current position. "I tell people all the time," she states, "my closet has two sections, 'NPS green and gray' and 'SCA blue!'"

A native New Yorker, Millie never realized during childhood trips to the Statue of Liberty that she was actually in a national park. She recalls few people in uniform, and even fewer who looked like her. "As the diversity of rangers increases, it will be easier to attract and retain visitors that reflect America," Millie noted.

"NATIONAL PARKS BELONG TO EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US. IT'S ABOUT TIME WE LOOK LIKE AMERICA!"

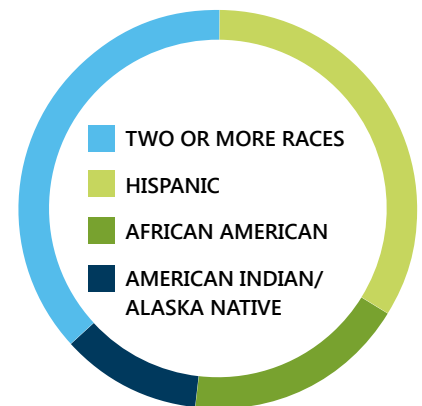
At the National Parks of New York Harbor orientation, SCA-NPS Academy member Jay Chu said "I noticed how African-American and Latino conservation leaders brought different perspectives to their work, and thought this broad mix of viewpoints can only make the park system better." Jay, of Los Angeles, called his summer interpretive internship in the Tetons "one of my most profound journeys."

With scores of SCA-NPS Academy alumni employed at parks across the US, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis says the programs' value is magnified as the Park Service approaches its 2016 Centennial. "With its ability to reach into traditionally under-represented communities," Jarvis said, "SCA is playing a critical role in helping us provide young people with a professional pathway."

A pioneer in engaging under-served youth in the outdoors, SCA collaborates with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on a similar initiative, the award-winning Career Discovery Intern Program. Tylar Greene, who grew up in the Bronx, served in the North Woods of New Hampshire four years ago and today is an agency public affairs officer specializing in urban and youth initiatives.

"Conservation is entering a new age," she notes. "We're focusing on urban areas, reaching out to more people of color and making connections with economically disadvantaged students and families. It's a topic that is very personal to me and, working for the Service, I'm excited to be a part of that."

SCA-NPS ACADEMY MEMBERS' ETHNICITIES



In 2015, 25% of SCA's NPS Academy alumni continued their work in the conservation field, including 35 who returned to SCA for summer internships and 15 who earned full-time or seasonal positions with the National Park Service.

Overall, Academy members rendered over 46,600 hours of service: improving 6,800 feet of trail and 500 acres of habitat, generating over 300 field reports, and providing outreach and education to over 12,000 park visitors.



AWARD-WINNING PERFORMANCE

In addition to programs for under-served college students, SCA annually engages thousands of high school students in our community conservation crews. In America's leading cities, these programs help participants develop early connections to nature in their own neighborhoods, where their comfort level is the highest. In many cases, the experience is the first step in a continuum of SCA service opportunities.

SCA's Seattle community crew program received National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis' 2015 Partnership Award for its service at Mount Rainier National Park. Since 1984, more than 750 teens have participated in the community crew program at Rainier, and in the past 10 years alone, students have contributed a total of 30,000 hours of service at the park.

The award recognizes the most significant accomplishments achieved by parks and outside groups working together on projects, programs

and commemorative events that provide lasting benefits for parks and communities. SCA is a partner of Mount Rainier, providing high school students from the region with park and community experiences meant to foster a future commitment to conservation and stewardship.

"Their extraordinary contributions enhance the national park experience," said Director Jarvis, "and as we look ahead to the National Park Service's centennial in 2016, they expand and amplify our efforts to reach a new generation of Americans."

SCA was founded in Washington State in 1957 at Olympic National Park. The Seattle community crew program was created as an initiative to develop opportunities for local teenagers to participate in conservation leadership. Over 100 students from Seattle and Edmonds, and Joint Base Lewis McChord and Naval Base Kitsap serve each summer in supervised teams, making improvements to Seattle parklands and working a special two-week shift at Mount Rainier.

THE FRUITS—AND VEGETABLES—OF THEIR LABOR

Every desert needs an oasis.

Camden, NJ has been cited as the most dangerous and poorest city in America. Most residents can't buy meal time staples such as fresh tomatoes, onions or squash. But not because they can't afford them—the problem is there are no stores in which to buy them.

That makes Camden a "food desert." Accordingly, SCA crews don't build a lot of trails here. Instead, they tend beds of vegetables and herbs on a formerly vacant lot. Their harvests go to the Camden Children's Garden, which accounts for 10% of the fresh fruit and vegetables consumed in local homes and schools.

"If I can give back to my community," said Desmond Hill, 17, "maybe our violence rate will go down. Maybe it'll look a little nicer. And maybe people will eat healthier foods."

Desmond admits he'd never tasted a vegetable right off the vine before this urban agricultural venture. SCA conducts crews like this in cities across the country, engaging under-served youth from all backgrounds in local park maintenance and special projects like community gardens. Crew members are also trained in resume writing and other professional skills.

These are service programs but not entirely volunteer. Members receive a small stipend because, much as they might like to, most simply cannot afford to work for free. Still, the compensation is not the draw.



Crew member Hanif Williams says he was taunted by friends who called his job pointless and his wages paltry. "But I told them I'm not just here for the money," he explained. "I'm here for my community. From my perspective, you get more from this than a paycheck."

It appears these students learned a lot more than horticulture.



"PROGRAMS AND MOVEMENTS COME AND GO, BUT THE FACT THAT SCA HAS ENDURED AND PROSPERED IS A TESTAMENT TO THE WISDOM OF ITS FOUNDERS AND TO THE CONCERN THAT NEW GENERATIONS HAVE FOR PRESERVING OUR NATURAL WORLD."

— ELIOT PUTNAM, INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CONSULTANT, SCA 1957

WATER USE IS GROWING AT MORE THAN TWICE THE RATE OF OUR POPULATION, AND SUPPLIES ARE FURTHER STRESSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION. SCA MEMBERS ARE PROTECTING WATERSHEDS AND MARINE HABITATS THROUGHOUT THE US, AND EDUCATING USERS ABOUT THIS MOST ESSENTIAL RESOURCE.

“THE PROGRESS WE’RE LOOKING FOR”

New York’s Hudson Valley is renowned for its natural splendor, so you can understand why those who live along the river yearn for unobstructed views. But years of shoreline clearing have led to unintended consequences including pollution, erosion and flooding.

Jacob Oblander, a College of Charleston graduate (Biology), joined SCA to assist the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation with its *Trees for Tribs* (as in tributaries) riparian buffer and restoration initiative. He advises property owners and mobilizes volunteers to identify the estuary’s most vulnerable areas, organize bareroot pottings, manage large-scale revegetation projects, and analyze the health of recent plantings.

“Trees in the Hudson Valley often don’t have a chance to reach maturity,” Jacob states. “They may be overbrowsed by deer or overtaken by invasives, and can’t create the sort of habitat that helps to sustain wildlife and ward off erosion.”

“THAT’S WHERE WE COME IN—WE HAVE A BETTER SURVIVAL RATE THAN NATURE.”

To maintain a well-planted property, Jacob recommends a buffer zone of trees, shrubs and grasses. The vegetation slows and filters runoff, which reduces the amount of nitrogen, phosphorous and other non-point source pollutants that might otherwise enter the river. When one homeowner countered that he doesn’t want to give up his view, Jacob replies “Well, if we’re not careful, your view will come right up to your house.”

Destructive storms like Hurricane Sandy have also made the case for a defensive “green infrastructure” along the Hudson watershed. Trees for Tribs was launched in 2007, and they’ve put thousands of native oak, maple, and pines in the ground and, he says, the early signs are encouraging.

“We held a planting in the fall at a vacation home owned by some guy from the city,” Jacob recalls. “We’d planted there before, maybe five or six times over the years, and from a high point you could walk and see the trees we just put in ground and those that were planted previously. And they looked like different layers, different periods in time, and I thought this is the progression we’re looking for.”



Trees for Tribs, Seeds for Success

- Trees planted: 12,502
- Shrubs planted: 25,927
- Acres planted: 91
- Volunteers engaged: 6,038



ASSETS TO THE COMMUNITY

Under an EPA mandate to reduce storm water runoff into local watersheds, Pittsburgh—a city synonymous with its riverways—tapped one of its most reliable partners: SCA.

In just over a month, SCA crew members installed 200 hi-tech, residential water barrels. Each unit captures hundreds of gallons of rain, prevents harmful sediment and phosphorus from entering sewers, and filters the water for use on homeowners' lawns and gardens. "This crew did what was supposed to be a two-year project in five weeks," states Dick Wilford of the Pittsburgh Department of Parks and Recreation.

The effort kicked-off Project 15206 and the East End Rain Container Initiative, a strategy formed by State Senator Jim Ferlo, the Penn State Center and Pittsburgh Community Services, to reduce stress on the neighborhood's aging sewers. "SCA has been an awesome partner," Joe Kramer, Senator Ferlo's

economic development director, told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "We wouldn't have been able to get all this done without them."

SCA's community-based conservation programs regularly provide city teens with work in their hometowns, though usually in municipal parks. This project often had crew members toiling in their neighbors' yards, bringing conservation that much closer to home. "I gained experience, self-respect and motivation," says crew member Markiece Hanner, "and next time, I can do it better."

"When I look at a program like this, it reminds me that too often when we look at teens, they're seen through the lens of a deficit and what isn't going right," says Grant Oliphant, president of Heinz Endowments, an SCA benefactor. "These kids are demonstrating what an asset they can be and are for their community, and leaving it better than they found it."

PRESERVING THE PAST, PROTECTING THE FUTURE

The Ancient Puebloan dwellings at Canyon de Chelly National Monument have stood for thousands of years but around them, new risks are taking root. Invasive plant infestations are altering stream processes within the canyon's watershed, causing erosion, interfering with agriculture, and reducing biodiversity along the riparian corridor.

An SCA conservation crew comprised of local Native American teenagers assisted the park in an ongoing watershed restoration project by eliminating hundreds of exotic Russian Olive and Tamarisk trees, stabilizing stream banks, and collecting stones to fill erosion-controlling Gabion baskets near notable archaeological sites.

The work moved the park closer to its 2016 goals of re-establishing an ecologically sustainable riparian system, protecting critical habitats, and revitalizing the living landscape of the canyon's Navajo residents.

"Participating in this program meant a lot to me," stated Montreal Brown, 18, "because we were staying on my grandpa's land."

This annual initiative, launched in 2011, is another example of SCA's engagement of under-served youth in their home communities. Canyon de Chelly lies entirely on Navajo trust land and, in addition to their field work, the crew curriculum includes presentations covering local history, archaeology and tribal culture. The students also restored a traditional Navajo Hogan.



"SCA has changed the way I see things around me. I realize I am part of something bigger," said 17-year old Kayla Curly. "I now know I can do more as part of this incredible land and people."



"MY SCA TRIP IN THE NORTH CASCADES WAS ONE OF THE BEST EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE. IT GAVE ME MORE CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF AND MADE ME MORE AWARE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND HOW OUR ACTIONS TODAY WILL AFFECT FUTURE GENERATIONS."

– GRACE BOGNE, PROCUREMENT AGENT, BOEING; SCA 2007

SCA IS THE NATION'S OLDEST YOUTH CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION, BUT WE DON'T ALWAYS ACT OUR AGE. LIKE A SILICON VALLEY START-UP, WE ARE CONSTANTLY REFINING OUR PROGRAMS AND METHODOLOGIES TO ENGAGE MORE YOUNG PEOPLE IN HANDS-ON STEWARDSHIP AND ACCOMPLISH MORE ON-THE-GROUND CONSERVATION.

AIDING AMERICA'S VETERANS

California's Rim Fire burned more than a quarter million acres on the doorstep of Yosemite National Park. In its aftermath, as the worst drought in over 1,000 years continued to take its toll, members of the SCA Veterans Fire Corps converged on Yosemite to make a stand...and a new start.

The Veterans Fire Corps prepares post-9/11 military veterans for new careers in wildfire mitigation. Members conduct prescribed burns, remove potential fire fuels, and monitor fire effects. They also receive training in wildlife ecology, botany and resource management. But the program, which SCA piloted four years ago with the US Forest Service and has since expanded to other federal land management agencies, also has a secondary objective. "It helps veterans reintegrate into civilian life," says Corps alumna Katy Tuckerman. "You're surrounded by fellow veterans, which makes it an easier transition."

The shift can be challenging for veterans. Many talk about losing their sense of purpose. The Veterans Fire Corps puts them back on familiar ground. They get a uniform, the company of a team, and a vital mission. "I wanted to be part of something bigger again," says former Army infantryman Donovan Hayes.

Wesley Adams agrees. Wes was a Navy medical technician in Afghanistan. Now he's leading the Veterans Fire Corps at Yosemite. "That perpetual sense of accomplishment," Wes says. "The recognition of one's hard labor. The bond of new friendship. I wanted to be a part of that."

As they return from overseas, many veterans also confront unemployment; this was the fourth consecutive year that joblessness among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans outpaced the national average. The 30% of program graduates currently working in an outdoor field are proof of the Corps' effectiveness.

"They're mission focused, are used to taking orders, and work as a team until the job is completed," states Daniel Pearson, a National Park Service fire management officer. "When we heard about this program, we were really excited to be a part of it."

"ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP THEM TRANSITION INTO CIVILIAN LIFE, WHILE KEEPING THAT SAME INTEGRITY AND WORK ETHIC, IMPROVES THE OVERALL CAPABILITY OF NATIONAL LEVEL FIREFIGHTERS. IT'S AN A-PLUS ALL AROUND."

After their work in Yosemite, the SCA team moved on to the Grand Canyon where they staged a prescribed burn to protect Native American archaeological sites. Most of the team had never seen the Canyon before and snapped the requisite photos before getting back to work.

"You want to do things for your community and you also want to know you have a career," Adams says. "SCA provides for all that."



Q&A with Wes Adams, SCA Fire Corps Leader and US Navy Veteran

What challenges are involved in returning to civilian life?

Some veterans struggle with what they want to do next and where they'll fit in society. The reality is you have to take a couple steps back before you can take the next step forward.

What do you mean?

A lot of veterans, including myself, thought we'd transition into a civilian career with the same responsibilities, compensation and authority, but that's quite difficult.

How does the Veterans Fire Corps fill that sense of purpose?

Even though we no longer wear the cloth of the nation, a desire to serve remains ever-present in today's veterans. The pace may be a bit slower when compared to the military, but I've rediscovered that the sense of accomplishment.



CONSERVE CATCHES ON

Not everyone can, or even wants to, travel crosscountry to work in the woods for free. But by bringing conservation service opportunities to people where they live, SCA is tapping into an entirely new volunteer base and inspiring acts of stewardship in communities across America.

We launched ConSERVE NYC in 2013, a year after Hurricane Sandy, with the idea of hosting 12 monthly, clean-up projects designed to build a more resilient New York City. Yet when the year ended, the commitment of our volunteers still shined. So we extended the program, expanded our partner network, and engaged thousands more in park restorations, revegetation projects, and trail construction in every borough in the city.

Among those participating was UN Ambassador Samantha Power (second from left, above), who brought her five-year old to a Hudson River restoration project and told the assembled volunteers “I want my son to grow up to be like all of you.”

“We were surprised that the volunteers achieved as much as they did, and honored that SCA attracted

so many people who enthusiastically contributed their time,” added Terese Flores of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

Three out of four ConSERVE project volunteers are under the age of 25, and 25% return to participate multiple times. This engagement model not only builds stronger communities, it creates new communities of like-minded young people determined to work together for the greater good.

“I witnessed and experienced a utopia: people of all ages, ethnicities, backgrounds, and beliefs, working together to help the planet,” says Jane Chan, a student at St. John’s University.

Additionally, SCA engages many more people nationwide in signature service events on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Earth Day, the 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance and Veterans Day. These single-day projects engage nearly 4,000 people a year—equal to the number of youth in our traditional field programs. With their success and that of ConSERVE NYC, SCA will expand the initiative to other cities in the year ahead.

INNOVATIONS AHEAD

SCA was born in national parks and we will always protect and preserve America's iconic public lands. As more and more of our population moves to urban areas, however, cities will provide another critical mass for the practice of sustainable behaviors. As the year drew to a close, SCA was starting work on a bold, new strategic plan and piloting several new conservation initiatives with both traditional and non-traditional partners.

In advance of the National Park Service's 2016 centennial, SCA and the National Park Service will field 70 Centennial Volunteer Ambassador Interns to increase volunteer engagement and awareness at parks nationwide. The Ambassadors will focus on recognized service dates such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Earth Day, and the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance while also developing original annual events on a local basis to ensure ongoing community outreach and involvement.

SCA will join with Sustainable Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountainkeeper behind Solarize, a proven model that makes it easier and more affordable for homeowners and small businesses to go solar. This pre-funded, six-county initiative will scale up solar electric power as SCA members conduct solar workshops and other educational events, build awareness and learn the business of renewable energy.



In collaboration with Davey Trees, a nationwide, employee-owned company that provides scientifically-based horticultural and environmental services to residential, corporate and government entities, SCA will offer young adults—particularly those who are not college-bound—with valuable experience and career development in landscaping, arboriculture, and other disciplines, and expand post-SCA job opportunities beyond our usual government partners.

SCA is committed to increasing the size of, and diversity within, the conservation community. We pledge to expand the conservation opportunities in which young people may serve, learn and grow. And we are unrelenting in the pursuit of conserving lands and transforming lives.

Conservation begins here.



"SCA GAVE ME A NEW WAY TO INTERPRET THE WORLD AND MY PLACE IN IT. IT INSTILLED IN ME AN ETHIC OF STEWARDSHIP, AND EQUIPPED ME WITH THE LIFE SKILLS AND MENTAL AGILITY REQUIRED FOR AN INCREASINGLY DEMANDING WORLD"

– MAURICIO ESCOBAR, TEACHER AND FORMER PARK RANGER, SCA 1993-97



SCA'S LIZ PUTNAM LEGACY SOCIETY serves to recognize and thank those who have taken the special step of providing for the future of SCA's youth conservation service work by supporting SCA in their estate plans and/or establishing life income or other planned gifts. The Society honors SCA's founder, Liz Putnam and her vision in creating SCA.

If you would like to learn how you can make your own legacy gift to SCA, please call 888-722-9675 ext. 2024 or send an email to: giftplanning@thesca.org.

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YELLOWSTONE ANNIVERSARY

Twenty-five years after SCA's Greater Yellowstone Recovery Corps restored widespread damage caused by the 1988 wildfires, Clarence Wadkins recalls "that summer changed my career goals completely." Today, he is a National Park Service interpretive specialist. Rebecca Quiñones, a postdoctoral field researcher at UC Davis, says Yellowstone represented her first field work, and jokes the highlight was "having both hot and cold water streams nearby!" A quarter-century later, SCA remains the first choice for our federal partners to assist in restoring lands in the wake of natural disasters such as wildfire and floods.



THEY CAME, THEY SAWED...

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell (center), US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, members of Congress and other officials joined SCA volunteers for some trail building at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey. Great Swamp became the first wilderness site so designated under the Act exactly five decades earlier on September 3, 1964. "How many 22-year old lumberjacks can say that they've cut away a blowdown with the Secretary of the Interior?" crew leader Emily Bowles queried afterward.

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 Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Fischer
 Mr. William D. Fischer
 Ms. Linda J. Fisher
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 Mr. Whit Fletcher
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 Peter Foster
 Florence B. Fowlkes
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 Barbara & Ivor Freeman
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 Garden Club of Cleveland
 The Garden Club of Houston
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 Alice Gates
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 David and Dorothy Meeker
 Barbara Meislin



ADVANCING FORESTS

SCA CEO Jaime Matyas and the US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell signed a five-year Master Participating Agreement in March. The national covenant extends SCA's decades-old partnership with the Forest Service and expedites protection and restoration projects by SCA volunteers. "More than renewing an agreement," Matyas said, "we are recommitting to equipping a new generation to know, love and care for our nation's forests."



GOLDEN HALO

SCA and American Eagle Outfitters took the prestigious Golden Halo Award in May at the Cause Marketing Forum's annual conference in Chicago. The award recognized the "AEO + SCA + You" campaign that featured college students serving in national parks, a potent fundraising component, and a combination of in-store, online and social media activity that spread SCA's youth conservation message to millions of Millennials nationwide.



Ms. Friedrike Merck
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 Priscilla Paton and David Anderson
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 Mr. Perry C. Peine
 Jeffrey N. Pennell
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 Jane Rogers and Michael Fischer
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 Dr. Suzanne Rose and Rabbi
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 Mr. Craig W. Ross
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Nancy Shaidnagle and Gene Luckey
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 Caroline N. Sidnam
 Rae L. Siporin
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 Stifler Family Foundation
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 Roger Stube and Anita Lam
 Susman Family Foundation
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CONSERVATION'S RUSHMORE

As America commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, theclymb.com—an outdoor adventure and retail site—hailed SCA Founding President Liz Putnam as one of “5 Heroes of the American Wilderness” along with John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and Act author Howard Zahniser. The Clymb quoted Liz as saying young people should “go for their dream...This world needs their help more than ever before.”



CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS

\$500,000 or more

BP America, Inc.
The Kendeda Fund

\$100,000 or more

Anonymous
American Eagle Outfitters
Foundation
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** SCA alumni*



2015 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Year ended March 31, 2015

OPERATING REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT	
Program revenue	\$24,064,651
Contributions and private grants	5,148,264
Net assets released from restriction	3,249,364
Other income	153,338
Total operating revenues and other support	\$32,615,617

OPERATING EXPENSES	
Field expenses	\$21,393,412
Program support and development	5,505,836
Participant recruitment	1,229,223
General and administrative	2,531,429
Fundraising	1,485,816
Total operating expenses	\$32,145,716
Surplus from operations	\$469,901

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Year ended March 31, 2015

Total Assets	\$21,817,671
Total Liabilities	\$10,544,305

CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted - from operations	\$469,901
Unrestricted - from nonoperating activities	(750,940)
Temporarily restricted	(587,938)
Permanently restricted	92,745
Total change in net assets	(776,232)
Net assets, beginning of year	12,049,598
Net assets, end of year	\$11,273,366

ENDOWMENT VALUE	
Board Designated Funds	\$2,781,222
Donor Restricted Funds	\$5,130,023
Total Endowment Funds	\$7,911,245



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