



Dear Agency Partner:

Congratulations! You are holding this handbook in your hands because someone in your agency requested, and was granted, an SCA Conservation Crew this season, and it has fallen to you to be your agency's liaison with these volunteers. SCA's professional corps of Crew Leaders and our volunteers have had a long and proud history of accomplishing significant quantities of high quality trail construction and maintenance, bridge and other structure building, site restoration and revegetation, and other important conservation work on our nation's land. SCA expects you to be well satisfied with the quality and amount of work your SCA crew will perform this season.

In saying this, I also want to emphasize that SCA's working relationship with your agency is not as with just another "contractor", but rather, is a true partnership. SCA's goals of providing high quality work opportunities combined with a unique educational experience for our participants directly intersects with your agency's need for high quality conservation work, and the opportunity for you to help shape the conservation ethic of America's young people. This is why your agency and SCA has a master cooperating agreement.

In fifty years of providing huge amounts of conservation service work, SCA has not only developed a reputation for producing quality work, but has also produced over thirty thousand alumni who have gone on to be major citizen advocates for protecting and preserving our public wild lands. Many in fact, have joined the ranks of professionals managing our public lands now. We are very proud of our long association and partnership with the National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and excited to have entered into newer partnerships with the Department of Defense, and many State and local agencies.

We hope that this manual helps you insure a successful and enjoyable association with SCA's Conservation Crew Program. While we hope it is a valuable resource for you, it is not intended to replace the regular communication and support that the Crew Team (both at our National headquarters in New Hampshire and in SCA's regional offices) is committed to give you. We always encourage you to give us a call!

Sincerely,

Laura Herrin
Director
Conservation Crew Program

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- * Copy of Master Cooperating Agreement for Your Agency

1. General Information about the Crews

A Little History. SCA's Founder, Liz Titus Putnam, originally conceived of *Conservation Crews* as a way to both involve young people in conservation work, and to provide the National Park Service a desperately needed resource of willing labor to meet sometimes neglected land management needs. Based on the model of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, SCA fielded its first crews in 1957 in Olympic and Grand Teton National Parks. Additionally, SCA fielded college and graduate students serving as Resource Assistants. These volunteers became so valued in accomplishing the NPS mission that funding for SCA became a line item in the NPS appropriation from Congress in 1969.

The US Forest Service began utilizing SCA crews and adult volunteers in 1968, followed by the Bureau of Land Management in 1981, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1982. In recent years, the Departments of the Navy, the Army and the Air Force have joined other state and local agencies in utilizing SCA services, all under the auspices of National Cooperative Agreements.

SCA has used this very successful model of connecting committed young people to the care of our federal lands in a flexible and adaptive way. Perhaps the largest example of this was in 1989, when SCA worked with the Park Service and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) to launch the *Greater Yellowstone Recovery Corps*. In a three year period, SCA oversaw the mobilization of over one hundred fifty crews which achieved the rehabilitation of thousands of feet of trail, built over fifty backcountry bridges, and restored miles of fire line.

Other crew based activity coordinated by the Conservation Crew Program includes the *Conservation Leadership Corps* for inner-city youth of color and women, several AmeriCorps programs, and *SCA Conservation Work Skills Program*, an award winning training program in traditional and contemporary conservation work skills often utilized to train professional resource managers. In 1996, after over forty years of utilizing and archiving the traditions, skills and lore of this important work, SCA published *Lightly on the Land: The SCA Trail Building and Maintenance Manual*. A second edition was published in 2006 with new and revised material.

Who are the Participants? Whether the crew assigned to your area is part of SCA's year round regional programming or part of the nationally recruited Conservation Crew Program (CC), the participants serving are high school students (ages 15-19) committed to environmental service. Many of them are volunteers, and a smaller per cent are part of year-round programming with SCA which earns them a small educational stipend. However, all of these dedicated young people have made a commitment to spend a month or more as part of a group that will accomplish meaningful, and often arduous and challenging conservation projects.

The volunteers come expecting to see a new part of their country, to meet new people, and to learn about conservation and the environment. They will learn

- how to live safely and lightly on the land,
- to function as a member of a larger group that shares responsibility
- to develop responsible work habits and new work skills, and
- to develop a sense of confidence and comfort with their place in the world.

And for nearly fifty years, well over a thousand such crews have left behind trails, cabins, bridges, rock walls, restored meadows and streams, and countless other tangible evidence of their hard work.

Since 1977, SCA has also been investing considerable time and effort to recruiting local participants to participate in SCA programs. If you are interested in pursuing a project with a local population in mind, you should contact us to discuss your interest.

Who are the Crew Leaders? The leaders of these crews are extremely skilled, dedicated, and talented professionals who come to SCA through their work as trail builders, carpenters, youth service workers, and outdoor educators -- many of whom are also from the ranks of SCA's alumni. Over fifty per cent of SCA's Leaders return for multiple seasons of work.

Crew Leaders must act as work supervisors, mentors, friends, counselors, first-aid providers, environmental educators and parents. SCA Crew Leaders are at least 21 years old, Wilderness First Aid and Wilderness First Responder certified and have, successfully completed SCA's five day Conservation Work Skills Training Program. They bring a significant base of professional experience to the job as well. (SCA hiring standards are available upon request). SCA also provides training in risk management, leadership, skills in working with teenagers, and other subjects on an annual basis. We are very proud of the caliber of this Corps of leaders, who have earned numerous awards presented to SCA Conservation Crews over the years.

How are Crews Funded? The Student Conservation Association, Inc. is a private, not for profit 501(c) 3 educational organization incorporated in the state of New York. SCA has a membership of almost 20,000 individuals who contribute to the cost of annual operations, and a fund raising team who solicits contributions for SCA operations from corporations and charitable foundations. The combined income from these fundraising activities allows SCA to underwrite approximately 20% of the costs incurred to field our volunteers in all of our programs, including Conservation Crews.

The other 80% of costs are paid by our cooperating agency partners. The specific costs outlined annually in SCA's pricing documents describe the funds your agency is responsible for after SCA's share of the cost have been subtracted from the total. With SCA's cash contribution, and the dollar figure assigned to the value of the work each crew accomplishes, SCA actually contributes close to half of the total value of the crew to our agency partner. This formula has allowed SCA and our cooperating agencies great success in receiving challenge cost-share funds from both the philanthropic community (National Forest Foundation for example), and through local, state and federal funds such as the National Recreational Trails Funding Act.

How are Crews Scheduled? SCA crews typically run for 15, 21, 30, or 35 days, with the last 3-5 days of the schedule devoted to an educational/recreational trip. It is possible to vary the length of the program to suit the unique needs you may have for a specific project, provided the Crew Program Staff can meet the challenge of recruiting the crew members for the time frame and length you have in mind. Although the majority of crews are run during the summer months, we do consider fielding crews in other seasons of the year, particularly where environmental challenges make it difficult in the summer. Please call us for details.

2. What We Are Agreeing To

The partnerships SCA has engaged in over the past fifty years have been successful, not just because of the quality of the conservation work we provide, but also because SCA is committed to providing the best possible administrative service we can. The foundation of every relationship SCA maintains is open communication, and our work in keeping agreements and expectations as clear as possible. Here is an overview of each of our responsibilities to each other:

SCA's Commitment to You. If you agree to undertake sponsoring an SCA Conservation Crew, SCA is committed to provide the following:

Program Administration

- the recruitment and selection of the crew members
- the recruitment, placement and training of the Crew Leader(s)
- secondary accident insurance for Crew Members and worker's comp for the Crew Leaders
- liability insurance for the program
- help in locating alternative funding sources, processing challenge cost share grants, bringing together multiple partners, etc.
- invoicing.

Program Equipment.

- SCA provides all of the base camp gear,
- kitchen supplies and tents tents?
- all food for the crew

Transportation to the nearest public transport facility.

SCA or the volunteers are responsible to arrange and pay for transportation from each individuals home to the closest public transportation terminal.

24 Hour Emergency Response System.

SCA maintains a 24-hour toll free phone number for emergency response to support all of our crews in the field.

Technical Support and Consultation.

National High School Program Staff are available to offer advice and insight on a whole range of issues from offering advice on how to obtain vehicles to finding additional funding partners for paying project costs to actually laying out trail or designing structures.

A capable, highly motivated work crew with excellent leadership!

Your Agency's Commitment to SCA. If your agency has agreed to undertake sponsoring an SCA Conservation Crew, you are also agreeing to a certain obligation of your resources to the crew. These include:

- An Appropriate Work Project. A conservation work project that meets SCA criteria (see chapter 5), with written specifications and clear instructions for it's completion,

and all appropriate permits, Environmental Assessments and other approvals obtained prior to the crew's arrival.

- Tools and Materials. All the tools required for undertaking the work project, and any necessary materials (timber, dimensional lumber, mulch, seed, transplants, etc.) are the agency's responsibility. It is best to have this material procured before the crew arrives.
- An Agency Person Assigned as Liaison for the Crew. That is you! While SCA takes pride in our ability to operate very independently once we are in the field, we rely on one agency employee committed to assure the basic agency support agreed upon is provided in as an efficient manner as possible.
- A Campsite Appropriate to the Needs of the Crew. Based on the criteria outlined in chapter 6.
- Transportation. While SCA is responsible to getting the crew to the closest public transportation terminal, we rely on the agency to get the crew to the agency staging area and/or trail head (and back again), and for any on the job transport required. Additionally, the Crew Leader may require some additional vehicle support pre and post program (to shop for food, etc.) The financial requirements of the vehicle(s) are the responsibility of the agency. All fuel costs for the vehicle(s) are also the responsibility of the agency.
- Logistical Support. Pack, helicopter, four-wheel drive or sherpa support to get all the camp gear, food and tools from the staging area to the camp site, and out again. A re-supply may be necessary in some locations.
- Radio or cell phone. Any crew based in any area without nearby access to a reliable public telephone (even if located in a front country location) will require an agency radio or cell phone that is portable, and can transmit from both the work and camp site. This device would be held for the duration of the program, including the educational/recreational trip (if the crew remains within agency boundaries).
- Access to the Educational Resources of the Area. This would include the opportunity to have the crew visited by interpretive, research, and resource management staff, etc.
- A Secure Storage Area for Valuables. A locked drawer, safe, or file cabinet where plane and bus tickets, jewelry, electronics and money can be left for the duration of the field portion of the program. This storage will need to be accessible to the crew leaders after hours or on weekends unless appropriate arrangements are made in advance to assure these valuables are available at program's end.
- Evaluation of the Program. It is very important to get a candid assessment of SCA's performance from you, both on the ground, and administratively. We will send you an evaluation form for you to complete (one is attached as an appendix) and send to us by no later than October first.

- Storage for group gear. If it is likely that you host a crew the next season, it often makes sense to store some SCA gear on site. This is not a requirement however.

3. Safety

SCA's Conservation Crew program is proud of our safety record, and has worked hard to develop standards and guidelines for our crews which provide for the safest experience possible, while allowing for their ability to do "real" conservation work. While we maintain a remarkable safety record, we do not assume it can remain so without exceptional diligence. SCA's risk management protocols have been time and event tested, and are thoroughly reviewed (and, if necessary, revised) annually by SCA's Risk Management Team. Additionally, SCA is represented on the National Wilderness Risk Management Committee, and participates in presenting the annual Wilderness Risk Managers Conference.

Anticipation has proven to be our greatest tool in managing risk on SCA programs. Every activity an SCA crew undertakes, from traveling to the site, to running the camp and kitchen, to working the project, to hiking, swimming and other recreation, is assessed first for safety implications. Crew Leaders are trained and instructed to make the conservative safety call at all times. Also, it is important for you to know as our agency coordinator that we welcome and require your assistance to assure we meet our number one priority -- the safety and well being of our participants and staff.

The Emergency Response Plan (ERP). SCA requires our crew leaders to prepare a detailed emergency response plan before entering the field. Your guidance in the preparation of this plan is essential (please see the sample ERP included as an appendix). The Crew Leader will be researching various details, including medical facilities, search and rescue resources, ambulance and helicopter options, radio and communication protocols for your area, and in general, developing a plan for both self and assisted evacuation. She or he will need to know and understand your agency's emergency protocols, and this is the most appropriate time to assure that all parties understand what role each organization and person will need to take in dealing with an emergency.

The crew is not permitted into the field until the ERP has been received and approved at the Charlestown office. Copies are reproduced so that every SCA Duty Officer supporting SCA's Emergency Response System has the ERP for every SCA program. Additional copies are to be filed with you as agency liaison, and are also carried into the field in the crew's primary first aid kit.

SCA's 24-hour Contact Line. In the event of either an emergency or other crew support communication needs which SCA requires to be handled outside of normal business hours, SCA maintains a toll free contact number -- **800-967-6449**. *This number is only to be used to either communicate during the management of an emergency, or to maintain important communication required for SCA to support the crew.* Calling this number brings the caller into SCA's established Emergency Response System.

During business hours, this line will ring directly in to SCA Headquarters at Charlestown, NH. The reception staff answering the call will know in advance that this call is of a serious nature, and will promptly direct you to a member of Crew Program Staff. Outside of regular business hours, including weekends and holidays, calling this same number will directly connect you with a member of SCA's Field Staff serving on call as our designated Duty Officer. This staff member may be based in New Hampshire, or one of our regional offices (Seattle, Oakland, Pittsburg, Houston or Washington, DC), and will manage the situation or determine if a hand-off to another SCA staff member is necessary.

Reasons to Use the 24 Hour Line. This line has been set up to provide you a communications resource to support your SCA crew, as well as for our Crew Leaders, Members, and family members of the participants. Crew Leaders have very specific instructions regarding when they (or at times, you, as their agent) must call in, regardless of the time or day. Reasons for calling include the unscheduled departure of a leader or participant, any crew member receiving professional medical care, any evacuation for any reason, lost participants, vehicle accidents, etc. Parents and/or participants often need to utilize this system when travel logistics to the program area unravel. SCA would prefer a call is made to this system that perhaps could have waited for a call to SCA's regular business line during work hours, than for a call that should have been made being delayed because it did not seem important enough to disturb an SCA staff member.

In the Event of an Evacuation. In the event of an injury or other emergency situation requiring that a participant must be taken out, a crew leader will need to accompany that student. It will be helpful for you to discuss (before the program) how you and your agency can best support the needs of the crew if such an event arises. This situation obviously becomes more complex on SCA crews with a solo crew leader. It is always SCA's preference that we maintain the supervision of our volunteers in accordance with our legal responsibilities. At the same time, we recognize that it would be impossible to foresee and plan for every contingency or scenario.

When an evacuation is necessary, we will rely on your agency's support in providing any resource necessary to assure the safety and well being of the crew. Assisted evacuations occur rarely on SCA programs, but they do happen. Injury, illness and on rare occasions, discipline can be contributing factors, as well as fires and other environmental factors. On occasion, agency personnel have expressed concern regarding the potential costs involved in mounting an assisted evacuation of one or more members of an SCA crew, particularly if a helicopter is involved. Our assumption is that the costs associated with such evacuations remain the responsibility of the hosting agency. While the vast majority of evacuation plans that SCA field staff make are *never* implemented, if this cost issue is a serious concern to you, we will need to re-evaluate whether an SCA crew is the best option for your resource management needs.

Other Safety Issues. In the next section outlining SCA policies, other safety issues and concerns are addressed.

4. SCA Policies

After an organization has been around over fifty years, you can bet a few good lessons have been learned along the way, and though we can take a lot of credit for thinking ahead, there are some good stories behind where some of our policies came from. The bottom line, however, is that SCA takes our policies and rules as seriously as we take the rules and regulations of our partner agency. Virtually every concern SCA policy addresses is to insure the physical and emotional safety of every member of the crew.

Because we are working with teenage volunteers, we turn toward the conservative to assure that both the crewmembers and their parents feel comfortable. We assure them that participation with SCA will be both as physically safe as possible *and* respectful of their values even while recognizing that their service on a crew will be a growing experience. It is also important to remember that we are working with young people who are both impressionable, and often do not recognize their own mortality. Hopefully, our partners recognize these rationales for SCA's concern -- *our policies are not intended as either value judgments or any other social critique*. For obvious reasons, your staff's observance of SCA policies when dealing with SCA crews will lend authority and credence to the crew leader, rather than undermine her or his efforts.

A good example of where we have had challenges is SCA's policy prohibiting the use of any tobacco products, any non-prescribed drugs or alcohol on our programs. Crew Leaders are also required to abide by this policy -- despite their adult status permitting the use of tobacco and alcohol -- both to be fair, and to allow them to lead by example. We ask that our agency partners respect these policies when working with the crew, visiting the camp, or when hosting the crew for any event.

Another area where challenge may occur is when SCA policies are intended to provide a practical outcome and educational aspects as well. A good example of this is SCA's protocol for running backcountry camps in high density bear habitat. Tents are required to be almost an exaggerated distance from the kitchen, crew members are not permitted to bring clothing that has had contact with food or other "smellies" into their tents, and bear area protocols and camp cleanliness is scrupulously enforced. To professionals with years of experience working, camping and recreating among bears, it sometimes seems a stretch to go through such a tight drill. SCA, however, is committed to both instill an obligation for personal safety in each participant, and to protect wildlife from habituation. This task is difficult to achieve if visitors to the crew are not willing to follow camp guidelines.

The prohibition of chain saw and power tool use by our volunteers is another important policy for you to be aware of. These tools are often used on SCA projects, but remain the domain of the Crew Leaders and any agency personnel working with the crew (SCA Crew Leaders understand that they may need to make themselves available for agency training and/or certification before the program). Some power tool use by crew members may be permitted (i.e. carpentry tools), but must be discussed in advance with SCA so we have a full understanding of any training that may be necessary, and of the safety issues to be managed.

Finally, the SCA crew leader is responsible for safely managing and educating the volunteers on her or his crew, and holds sole parental authority by law. We cannot emphasize enough that the final responsibility and word rests with SCA in matters pertaining to the volunteers. The Leaders will rely on you, however, to feel comfortable in bringing any concern about a crew member's behavior in public, their compliance to agency or SCA rules, or inattention to safety to the leader's attention immediately.

A complete list of SCA policies and protocols is available from the Program Director upon request.

5. *The Work Project*

Regardless of your support or enthusiasm for the youth development portion of SCA's mission, the work project is the reason why you requested a Conservation Crew, and it is SCA's primary commitment to you to accomplish this project to your agency's standards and specifications. SCA has long been associated with trail building and maintenance, and building bridges, turnpikes, puncheon, switchbacks and other structures. Conservation Crews thrive on such projects, but also excel at site restoration and maintenance, wildlife or habitat enhancement/protection, riparian zone repair, historic restoration, archeology, and other labor intensive projects your agency may need to be accomplished.

Work projects must necessarily be large enough to keep the entire crew working for the full duration of their stay, but reasonable enough in scale to complete to high standards without rushing or working unsafely. The project should be clearly necessary and of lasting value, and accomplish meaningful conservation or resource management goals. One aspect of projects that SCA staff may work with you to insure is that there is enough variety in the tasks assigned to keep the crew challenged and motivated. Paid professionals will buck up and get 21 miles of trail brushed, for example, but their paycheck is a motivation that our volunteers do not have! (trail brushing still remains a reasonable request of SCA crews when combined with other projects).

It is important to note however, that even though you may have legitimate resource management needs to be accomplished, there are some projects that are *not* appropriate for SCA Conservation Crews. Please keep in mind that our volunteers are motivated by a desire to learn useful skills and to see their hard work make a difference for the environment. And of course, we always analyze the safety of any project. Examples of projects that are most often not acceptable include: building maintenance and/or painting, general landscaping care and/or maintenance, application of chemicals (herbicides, pesticides, etc.) litter removal, etc. In some cases, small amounts of the above-mentioned tasks, in a mix of other more appropriate work, may be acceptable (*not application of chemicals*), but not as "stand alone" projects. Please contact SCA staff for any related questions regarding the work project.

When you initially request a crew, the Conservation Crew Request Form asks for a detailed description of both a primary and a back up project. This is important for several reasons. First, agency professionals, particularly without experience working with SCA, often underestimate the amount of work these motivated young people can accomplish. So it is very helpful to have additional work lined out. It is recommended that projects are listed in order of priority. This way, if the main work projects are completed, the crew can complete other projects that have been included as extras.

Second, particularly for backcountry project requests, it is good to have an alternative project lined out as an option. Challenges we have run into over the years include unprecedented snow packs, loss of funding intended to provide non-native building material or supplies, forest fires and either loss of permits or change of legal status of the area for the intended project. Having another project in mind prevents last minute scrambles.

Written project specifications, trail logs, blueprints for structures, etc. are not required for the Conservation Crew Request Form. But because SCA wants to insure that our crew will meet your resource management needs, we strongly encourage you to have such appropriate resources available for the crew leaders before the work project commences. And finally, because we are committed to insuring appropriate work projects for all SCA crews, it is very important to contact

a Crew staff member if the project scope or specifications change after SCA has granted your agency's request for a crew.

6. The Campsite

Camp will be home to the crew for the majority of the program, and a good camp is one of the most important aspects of a successful Conservation Crew. You and your colleagues will probably have a camp- site in mind as you visualize the project, and the Crew Leader we assign will undoubtedly have certain preferences as well. One of the most important aspects of SCA's philosophy you should be aware of is our commitment to live very lightly on the land, and to fully restore our campsites before our departure. If there is a particular part of our reputation that we have gained over our long history, it is for running large backcountry camps with minimum impact on the environment, and for leaving little evidence of our presence at the site after we have left.

Things to consider in campsite selection include:

- appropriate vegetation or soil coverage to withstand concentrated use.
- adequate room. This should include enough sites for tents, a kitchen/food storage area, a central social area, and appropriate space and soil conditions to set up sumps and a latrine.
- reasonable commuting distance (in time) to the work project.
- appropriate means to implement a secure food storage area. Particularly in bear country, this means enough space to contain a bear box or other storage means that you would provide for us to meet your standards. SCA does have a limited number of bear boxes and other food storage systems available. If necessary, please contact SCA about the availability of these items.
- an area with adequate radio or cell phone reception.
- an area with potable water (a source that will last for the duration!) within reasonable distance to the camp.
- privacy, to both insure the security of the camp, and to protect the experience of the public using the area. For camps in a front country setting, security is an important issue to pay additional attention to in our planning.

One note regarding front country camping that is worth mentioning is that, on occasion, SCA works in areas that have available housing, laundry and shower facilities. Despite the allure of these facilities to you or to us, they are rarely of interest to our volunteers, almost all of whom are longing to live outdoors for their SCA experience. Whenever possible, we will seek out an area to create a tent camp for the crew, while also recognizing that, on a case by case basis, there may well be some unique circumstances which would lead us to conclude that the utilization of barracks facilities would make the most sense.

Needless to say, one of the most important accomplishments of the Crew Leader's visit to the site to meet with you in advance of the program is to actually visit the proposed campsite.

7. Tools and Equipment

SCA's agreement with your agency requires us to provide all camp gear, food and supplies for the crew. The agency will need to provide all tools necessary to complete the project, any material required by the project, any equipment needed to assure a successful mobilization of the crew (panniers, manteees, helicopter nets, etc.), and a radio.

Tools. Based on your project request, your SCA crew leader will both come to you with a suggested list of tools gleaned from their own experience, and look to your guidance regarding the resources you have at your disposal. She or he will want to know in advance of arriving on site if all the necessary tools are available. If your agency cannot supply an essential tool, and SCA cannot provide it either, then the agency will need to acquire the tool or adjust the work project. SCA typically does not supply crews with tools. Some of our regional offices have a limited supply of tools that may be available if a project is nearby. Contact SCA for further information.

The leader will also want to set aside the tools while she/he is conducting the pre-program visit. Fires, emergency work projects, and other unplanned uses can easily deplete an area's tool cache. However, your SCA crew will arrive on a set date, ready to work, *and* they will leave on a set date. Everyone benefits by securing the needed tools in advance so that they are available when the crew arrives! Our experience has shown that it pays for the leader to actually gather, flag, and reserve the tools you have both agreed on at the time of the pre-program site visit, to assure that any unanticipated events do not impact the crew's arrival and scheduled mobilization.

Packing. Regarding preparing for the pack in (see more detail below), it is SCA's responsibility to assure that food and gear is packaged, weighed, and otherwise prepared to your packer, pilot (or others) specifications. SCA typically uses four-gallon square plastic buckets for food storage, for example, but whatever the requirements, we will expect to rely on the agency's resources for the actual loading of the "beast of burden". So, whether it be stock (panniers and manteees), human (sherpa frame packs) or mechanical (helicopter nets/slings), the crew leader will rely on you.

Radios and Cell Phones. Radios and/or cell phones are an essential tool for efficient operation of SCA crews, and definitely are a critical safety tool. We recognize that few of our partners possess enough of these devices to go around. So we know that SCA's requirement that the crew have a functioning portable radio (with spare batteries) may be a challenging one for you to meet. However, our crews cannot go into the field without a communication tool that functions consistently, and one that can successfully broadcast and receive from the area in which the crew will live and work. Note: in some cases cellular telephones have worked successfully to meet this communications/safety need.

Our experience has been that agency coordinators who begin the procurement process well before the field season face the least difficulty when it comes to obtaining this valuable commodity for their crew. SCA crew leaders are oriented to radio use, etiquette and care, and will be secure guardians of your expensive communication equipment. You will also probably want to provide the SCA leaders appropriate training and orientation to your agency's particular radio protocols.

Please note: If a front county crew has immediate access to a public phone both at camp and at work, then a radio will likely *not be necessary* until the recreational trip.

Propane Tanks. It is helpful to have a minimum of 2-20 gallon propane tanks available for the crew to use in their base camp. They do not need to be filled, but it is best to keep them on site. These items cannot be shipped and are an important part of the crew's kitchen. It is helpful to store these with your fuel supplies from year to year whenever possible. Another crew will be able to use them.

8. Logistics and Transportation

Our experience (and undoubtedly yours) has led us to plan these important logistics as early in the season as possible. Arrange with your packer early in the season to make sure that the pack-in, re-supply (if necessary or possible), and pack-out, of your backcountry SCA crew is on their radar screen. The crew leaders will look to the guidance your personnel outline for the size, shape and weight requirements your packer will have, what not to bring, and how much can be accommodated per animal or per trip.

Mobilization. Whatever method your agency will use to mobilize your SCA crew, we recognize how tight both resources and schedules can be, and that the best made plans can go awry due to circumstances beyond our influence. When working in backcountry areas, many agencies have a shortage of pack animals or a tight packing schedule, so it may be an option to work with a local backcountry horseman's organization. Weather, mechanical failure, fires, or other emergencies can divert helicopters, etc. Regardless of how well things seem to be coming together, a back up plan for pack-in is highly recommended, either an alternative method to get the crew to camp, or an alternative work project close to the ranger station until the original plan gets back on track. Depending on your logistical capacity, the size of the crew, or distance into the backcountry, a mid-program re-supply may need to be planned as well. Frontcountry sites require less assistance for getting to the basecamp. Often a few extra hands and a truck may be all that's needed. Discussing this with the Crew Leader beforehand is the best solution.

Vehicles. Like radios, SCA recognizes that vehicles are another scarce commodity and that they can be difficult to obtain. However, one of your agency's requirements is to provide a safe vehicle with which to transport the crew from the public terminal(s) in your area to your site and then back again at program's end. SCA will also require you to provide a vehicle for any on the job transport necessary, primarily for front country crews. If your area does not have any vehicles, then you will need to arrange for one (renting, borrowing, etc.). If you have difficulty in procuring a vehicle, or former arrangements collapse (yes, this would not be a first!), please do not hesitate to call our program staff in the New Hampshire office for assistance. There is a mechanism in each Master Cooperative Agreement to assure the procurement of a vehicle if this is necessary.

Please note that fuel costs related to the use of the vehicle is also the responsibility of the agency partner. Crew Leaders are instructed to be mindful of proper planning and keeping fuel costs to a minimum. There are several options for covering the costs of vehicle fuel. Some agency partners prefer to give the Leaders a gas card that is directly billed to the agency. Some may have fuel tanks available for fill-ups. It is also possible for SCA to bill the hosting agency at the end of the program for any related fuel charges. If this is necessary, please inform SCA staff at the headquarters or use your regional contact. Also, please discuss any restrictions or limitations with the Crew Leaders prior to the start of the program. This includes any restrictions to travel related to the recreation/education trip during the final days of the program.

In your arrangements for securing a vehicle, please keep in mind that each student will be carrying at least a large backpack, and possibly a duffel bag as well. SCA standards (as well as agency protocols) require that all vehicles carrying SCA staff and participants must have safety belts for *every* occupant and that the belts must be used anytime the vehicle is in motion.

Some crew leaders (particularly if they are coming to your resource area from afar) may require a vehicle to use during the days immediately before the project, to shop for supplies and handle last-minute equipment needs. If your area requires that drivers of government vehicles obtain government licenses or must pass a driving test, please make sure we know of this requirement in advance by noting it on the program request form. Please also take the lead in arranging for the crew leader to do all that is necessary to meet your requirements before the program begins.

9. SCA's Educational Goals

Serving on an SCA Conservation Crew is often a life changing experience for the crewmembers (and sometimes for the leaders too). Participants are traveling far from home, sometimes for the first time, to share an experience in the company of strangers with completely different perspectives and experiences. Of course, the strangers will soon become like family, living in a unique and wonderful place for a month or more, and most of them will work harder than they ever have before.

SCA is committed to providing an educational experience to our participants that combines an experiential conservation service project and living situation with hands on environmental education. Whether or not every one of our participants goes on to a professional career in the resource management or environmental arena, SCA wants every one of our alumni to become committed land stewards who value the national legacy and heritage of our public lands.

Helping SCA meet our educational goals will not only provide additional perspectives and points of view to these young people. It will also provide your agency with the opportunity to develop advocates for your particular part of the world, and in the understanding of a conservation issue or controversy that is of great importance to your resource area.

Our Crew Leaders will be arriving on site with an educational “bag of tricks”. These will include a small camp library of books and games designed to spur discussion, and the incredibly powerful tools of the work project itself and a campsite committed to be run at minimal impact as educational resources for the program. As the Coordinator for the SCA crew, you can aid us by helping identify agency staff, as well as local folks -- ranchers, miners, historians -- who would be willing to come and visit the crew as guest speakers, to share their experience and expertise.

10. Pre-program Site Visit

Your SCA crew leaders will be contacting you shortly after they have been assigned to your agency project to set-up a pre-program visit with you. Even though your schedule may make it challenging to accomplish, meeting with your Crew Leader on your turf, and then actually getting out to the work and campsite *with* the crew leader in advance of the crew's arrival is a critical ingredient of a successful program. Most pre-program visits occur just prior to the start date of the program, typically 4-7 days beforehand. On occasion, if there are complicated logistics, Crew Leaders may need to arrive earlier.

In those rare instances that a misunderstanding develops about agency or SCA expectations, it is usually because a pre-program visit happened too close to the project start date, or the agency coordinator was unable or unwilling to be fully involved. Despite SCA's commitment to autonomy, this is probably the most important chunk of your time that you will devote to SCA during the season. Nothing else solidifies a project and brings out important issues to address like walking the trail and seeing where the work will actually be done. Your participation on a pre-program site visit will allow you to ask and answer questions and to establish clear guidelines for the work. You and the crew leader will be able to talk about specifications, priorities, locations for material procurement, emergency contingencies and planning, and many other topics that will help us assure that the project meets both your and SCA's goals. And if any concerns or misunderstandings develop, it gives both you and SCA enough time to resolve the issues successfully.

SCA crew leaders do not need to meet everyone on your district or area; however, making a pleasant, personal connection before the field season with people they may be working with directly can make their job (and yours) much easier. On the pre-program site visit, try to arrange introductions to the people who manage the tool cache, are in charge of packing, are familiar with natural history or local history references, dispatch the radio, etc.

Check List. Here is the check-list of items which need to be covered in the pre-program site visit. Most of the items on the following list are self-explanatory; and almost all have been discussed in more detail somewhere else in this Handbook.

- a) review the work project for safety and suitability
- b) visit the camp and work site *together* (conditions permitting)
- c) review tools necessary for project
- d) set the actual tools aside in reserve
- e) review safety procedures for a detailed Emergency Response Plan which the leader must provide to SCA prior to entering the field
- f) reserve a functioning radio or cell phone, and test reception at both the work and camp sites
- g) arrange dates, times, and logistics for transporting gear supplies to the camp/work site
- h) arrange vehicle transportation, both to and from the public terminal, and during the project, as necessary
- i) meet other key area personnel
- j) arrange first day welcome of the crew
- k) tentatively set up the educational / recreational trip (considering permits)
- l) arrange for secure storage of participant valuables and set of clean clothes during the program
- m) inspect existing SCA equipment cache if applicable
- n) arrange for a place for the crew to take showers on last day

- o) determine what training/certification is necessary for SCA's Crew Leaders
(government license, chain saw, etc.)

Permits. An important reminder about permits. Many of the work projects undertaken by SCA crews are of the scope and nature that often require an Environmental Assessment or other permitting process before work may begin. Once established, SCA schedules are essentially unchangeable, and in order for the crew to begin work immediately upon arrival, you must have seen to it that all permits and possible requirements for an EA have been met.

As well, a special permit may be required to allow the SCA crew to camp in a certain location, or with a maximum number of individuals, particularly in designated wilderness. The crew leader may also ask for your help with attaining any necessary permits for the recreational trip at the end of the program. You are the region/district's authority on permits, and the crew leader will be counting on you to make sure that all permits are in place before the program begins.

11. During the Program

Once your SCA crew is in the field, it is our hope that we can accomplish the project you set out for us with a minimum impact on your time. If all goes according to plan, the crew may see only the packer or folks who have agreed to come and visit the crew for educational purposes. One more request we have of you though, is to come up for a visit and work inspection after the crew has had enough time to settle in to their routines.

Inspecting the Work Project. Inspecting the work while in progress is a great idea, both because it allows you to clear up any questions before it is too late, and because it allows the participants to “show off” their accomplishments. Unless it is necessary to visit earlier because of project questions or scheduling constraints, it’s best to visit during the second week of the program, for several reasons:

- it allows the crew leader to work out the kinks and establish a rapport with the crew;
- the crew is set into its working stride; and
- a measurable amount of work can be done, so you can best gauge how it’s going, and provide thorough feedback. And you can bet that the crew will be looking to you for compliments and a sense that their efforts are having a positive impact.

When you or other agency staff does come in for a visit, you will also see not just the work they are accomplishing for your resource area, but also the implementation of SCA’s goals for youth development and environmental education. Keeping both goals spinning at full speed is a balancing act for which SCA Crew Leaders are quite adept. They weigh the work project objectives equally against matters of group cohesion, personal growth, gender balance, and resource education, to name just a few. This balance will not deter from the quantity or quality of work done; but it may mean that SCA crews function differently than other work crews with whom you may have worked.

If you or your trail crew spends time working with the SCA crew, you will truly be welcomed! Experience has taught us though, that the following tips will prove to be helpful:

- 1) as noted earlier, please support SCA policies when working or interacting with the crew;
- 2) discuss problems you have with the kind or quality of the work with the Crew Leader, in private and away from the group. Openly criticizing the crew’s work and/or the leader’s direction (even if justified) will only impact the crew’s morale and make correcting the problem more difficult;
- 3) if you plan on eating meals with the crew, ascertain whether or not you should bring in food to supplement the meal. Often, menus and supplies are tightly planned, and there may not be enough to go around;
- 4) Please remember it is the Crew Leader’s responsibility to supervise SCA volunteers. If you require a task completed or need assistance, make this known to the leader rather than instructing a crewmember yourself.

- 5) follow the crew leader's example when dealing with crew members. Remind yourself to think of the crewmembers as young people first, rather than as laborers getting important work done for you.
- 6) be sure to bring up the mail, and perhaps fresh fruit or other treats the leaders may have arranged for!

Agency Support Assigned in the Field. Very occasionally, an agency feels it is necessary to assign a field person to stay with the crew for the entirety of the project. Although SCA's many years of experience leading volunteer youth crews has proven to agencies the benefits of an autonomous crew, in some cases a particular work project or your agency management protocols deems this arrangement to be most appropriate for you. SCA remains committed to working within this arrangement, but our experience has taught us that extra effort must be applied to pre-program communication between your agency, SCA administrative staff and the Crew Leaders to assure smooth operation of the program. Items to pay particular attention to include:

1. Make your intention to have a member of your staff on site for the duration of the work project clear on your initial Program Request Form. This information will impact the match of Crew Leaders to your project.
2. Both SCA and your agency should completely discuss SCA policies, and take advantage of this handbook to assure agreement on SCA's goals.
3. The pre-program visit should include enough time for the Crew Leaders, the assigned staff person and the Agency Coordinator (you) to meet in person to discuss every one's roles, responsibilities and concerns. Please note that one person should not share the roles of coordinator, and an on-site support staff.
4. If possible, seek out a member of your staff who not only has the technical and logistical skills required, but also has experience working with youth, and has a genuine interest in SCA's commitment to youth empowerment and education
5. Scheduling. You can rely on the crew to put in a lot more than forty hours of work in a one-week period (if not, SCA wants to hear about it when you evaluate the crew!). But because the leader is also managing base camp life, environmental education and group dynamics, our hope is to have the needs of the crew drive the schedule, rather than the schedule needs of the agency employee assigned to the crew. Of course, we recognize our obligation to meet *your* schedule needs for major logistical support -- particularly any time lines for mobilization requirements or other significant support.

Finally, probably the single area we have found to be the most challenging to manage in the presence of agency staff on site full time is the supervision of SCA's volunteers. Regardless of your employee's experience, *the Crew Leaders must make every safety call, determine which crew member is appropriate for what task, or whether it is appropriate for the crew to work at all based on any given set of circumstances.* Careful pre-program discussion and planning should prevent most differences of opinion, but should difference arise, any discussion should take place away from the crew.

Emergency Support in the Field. In the event that circumstances require the Crew

Leader(s) to put the Emergency Response Plan they prepared into action, or need to leave the field to attend to minor illness, injury or other issues, they will be relying on your support as outlined in the plan. As mentioned before, full scale assisted evacuations are far less common than the need to take a student out for medical attention -- a stitch or two or to get some medication prescribed -- or the need to replace a tool, stove or radio.

Sometimes, due to injury, illness, family emergency or group dynamic issues, a participant must leave the program early. When this happens during the first week, SCA is often able to fill that position with another student. After the first week, however, it becomes logistically unrealistic. Because of the logistical challenges that such a replacement may require, SCA would prefer to make this decision with your active involvement.

Despite the odds, however, a full-scale evacuation may be necessary. There have been either serious enough injuries or medical concerns on SCA crews in the past to require helicopter support. Some crews required complete evacuation due to forest fire activity. In the event the ERP does need to be implemented, your involvement and support will be critical to the success of the operation.

In terms of other potential emergencies to plan for, there is one final thing to consider. If you need to leave to fight fires, or are otherwise pulled from your planned activities, who on your staff will take over the role of supporting the SCA crew (or at least knowing schedules, etc.) in your absence? Communicate this with your Crew Leaders if this becomes necessary.

12. Post-program Wrap up

Most SCA crews choose to take the last few days of the assigned program dates to spend on a backpack, canoe or other recreational and educational trip. Although we recognize that many other important duties may make it difficult to schedule, it is important to inspect the project, and to assure yourself that the crew did an appropriate job in rehabilitating the camp site. If you haven't already had the opportunity to do so, this might be a good time to inspect the work. Another option to consider would be to accompany the Leaders up to the site after the crew has departed. This may be difficult if the Crew Leaders have a limited amount of time due to travel schedules, etc. The Crew Leaders will most likely be spending a day or two on site after the crew members depart to assure that they meet their responsibilities to both SCA and your agency. It would be wise to discuss this plan with the Leaders early on so that it is part of the post-program planning.

Thank You to the Crew. Before the crew departs however, we hope you or perhaps the senior manager of your resource area can make some time to give the crew an official thank you for all of their hard work. Whether it is serving the crew the first ice cream they have seen in five weeks, hosting a barbecue, providing T-shirts, or simply delivering a simple, heartfelt “thank-you”, it will be the agency that can most impress on the students the value of their work. Let them know that they made a difference and will be remembered; and they will go home proud and happy.

Plans for Next Year. It is not too early to consider plans for a hosting a crew next year, and your Crew Leaders will most likely query you on this matter. We certainly recognize that budget issues are far from clear at this time of year, but hopefully you will feel that a preliminary conversation is worth while. You may even have funds available that you must either spend or obligate to the next fiscal cycle before the close of your fiscal year September 30th, and it is possible to arrange for a crew for next year in this way. Contact Catherine Gorman in our New Hampshire office to facilitate this.

SCA Gear Storage. Another implication of this discussion will be the consideration of whether it makes sense to plan on storing SCA's equipment cache on site for the winter. If a project next year is likely, it is often more economical to store our gear on site than to ship it back to SCA and then back again next season. The storage area should be dry and hopefully safe from critters (though no food will be stored!), and lockable, to insure that the gear is not mistaken as agency gear, and used for other things.

Program Evaluation. SCA is committed to providing you a resource management service that is both cost effective, and of the highest quality, and we are always seeking to improve our performance. Your feedback regarding the success of your crew is one of the most important evaluation tools that SCA uses to measure our Conservation Crew successes and issues. Candor is essential, but you should also be aware that it is our policy to share the evaluation with the Crew Leader(s), so if you would prefer to add an extra sheet of comments separate from the Evaluation Form we provide, please do so. It is also very helpful if you can accurately quantify the dollar value of the work performed. In all honesty, this is one of the most important – and most often neglected – feedback opportunities we provide for our agency partners.

13. Administrative Details

The Director of the Crew Program makes all final hiring decisions, develops and manages the program budget, and oversees SCA's crew marketing strategy and client agency relations from SCA's Northwest office in Seattle. The Director works with SCA Regional Field Staff based in SCA offices in Seattle, Oakland, Washington DC and Charlestown, New Hampshire, all who will be involved at some level, usually more programmatic, in supporting your crew.

The day to day administration of the program, however, resides in SCA's Charlestown, New Hampshire headquarters.

What Happens in New Hampshire. You will receive all of your SCA correspondence from New Hampshire, and return almost all of your agency correspondence to this office. Both the specifics of the program, such as Program Requests, granted letters and the like originate here, as well as more specific administrative functions such as invoicing, insurance and contract amendment. Among the tasks managed by the Crew staff include:

- 1) marketing the programs to SCA's agency clients, and evaluating program requests for the appropriateness of work projects
- 2) coordinating the recruitment, placement and training of SCA Crew Leader(s)
- 3) oversight of the recruitment and selection of the crew members (which the leaders actually choose).
- 4) providing advice and assistance for locating alternative funding sources, processing challenge cost share (NRTFA, NFF, other) grants, or bringing together multiple partners for hosting crews.

The SCA Finance Department also handles several tasks in support of your agency. This includes:

- 1) invoicing and price adjustments
- 2) secondary accident insurance coverage for the Crew Leaders and Crew Members
- 3) liability insurance for the program
- 4) maintenance and revision of Master Cooperating Agreements between SCA and each Agency with which we work.

Financial Considerations. Prices for Conservation Crews are based on the number of leaders, participants and in some cases, the duration of the program. SCA Conservation Crew Request Forms are revised annually and have current price information. This information is also located on SCA's website, www.thesca.org.

When your agency requests a crew, the request itself does not constitute a financial obligation to you. SCA Program Staff will stay in contact with you as the fiscal cycle unfolds, and will secure an obligation from you before March 1st, when determinations are made for which programs are to be granted, and granted letters are sent out. After March 1st, SCA is very willing to keep a program request alive without financial commitment required on the agency's part, as long as a good faith communication effort remains. After March 1, if a program request is canceled after receiving a granted letter without a good faith communication effort as described above, SCA may charge an administrative fee to cover costs thus far expended (crew leader hiring and training, participant recruiting, etc.).

Once we have confirmed your program, SCA will prepare the first of two invoices you will receive for your crew. The first invoice is for 75% of the total cost of the crew, and it is sent approximately 45 days before the crew's arrival. The second invoice, for the remaining 25% of the crew's cost, is sent out shortly before the crew's departure. Both invoices are payable within thirty days of posting.

Both the Director of the Crew Program and Manager of Program Services work on finalizing financial details of each individual project. Van rentals, specialized tools, or additional SCA staff time focused on the preparation of the program are some of the items which may be involved, but for the most part, SCA expenses associated with the program are highlighted in the Master Cooperating Agreement between your agency and SCA.

Some pricing adjustments may be possible if discussed and agreed to well in advance of program preparations. However, on occasion, due to the unscheduled departure of a crewmember, unexpected logistical issues or unforeseen environmental conditions, your SCA crew may not complete the project as requested. This does not happen often. Because virtually all the funds required for running the crew is expended regardless of the status of the project, refunds are rarely possible. Any concerns or questions regarding either this policy, or the specific circumstances of a particular project should be directed to the Director of the Crew Program, in the NH office.

*** Technical Support and Consultation.** Both National and Regional staff are available to offer advice and insight regarding a whole range of issues. This may run the gamut from offering advice on how to obtain vehicles to finding additional funding partners for paying project costs to actually laying out trail or designing structures. Consultation requiring a site visit will most often be handled by SCA Field Staff closest to the site.

*** Customer Service.** When in doubt, give us a call. It is our commitment to give you the best possible service we can. If a question, issue or concern you raise can be better addressed by a different department or office at SCA, the Crew Program Staff will be happy to take the lead to find the solution.