



## Chapter 1- Commuter Crew: Welcome and Introduction to SCA

**Welcome to SCA!** We are happy you have chosen to join us as a Crew Leader. With a 50 year history of conservation service, we strive to be the leader in uniting motivated members and qualified leaders with partnering agencies to complete work projects that benefit the health of our national landscape.

Supervising an SCA Commuter Crew as part of the Conservation Crew Program (CC) will probably be one of the most demanding and rewarding jobs you have ever undertaken. The skills you need to lead your group of teenage volunteers range from performing technical trail-work, to navigating urban landscapes, to managing complex logistics to accounting, writing, and to modeling first aid and safety practices.

SCA sets several other goals for you to achieve simultaneously during your three to seven week program.

- First and foremost is that you and your crew are **SAFE** in everything you do! Not only have we hired and trained you to successfully assess and manage the physical risks present in your program, but we have high expectations for your commitment to provide an emotionally safe environment as well. As a leader of young people, you must model the integrity, fairness, compassion, courage and decisiveness for which we hired you.
- Second, you will also be directing the completion of a work project for a local park or community site. Projects vary widely, but in all of our work we partner with land management agencies and/or non-profit organizations that are relying on our crews to produce high-quality results. Your project is the medium and framework for all other aspects of what all the Conservation Crews attempts to accomplish, and you must focus a great deal of your energy to assure your project's success.
- Third, you are providing the youth of the Commuting Crew with what may very well be their first job-like experience. We ask that you model and uphold high standards for workplace behavior. The lessons participants learn from you regarding professionalism will stay with them for the rest of their lives.
- Fourth, SCA requires that the students in your care be exposed to conservation values and ethics. You will need to accomplish this through both an environmental education program that you will implement and by living and working "lightly on the land" as a day by day commitment. Outdoor recreation opportunities enhance participants' enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world.
- Finally, we anticipate that you and your crew members all have fun and leave the crew with positive and life-changing memories of the experience.

### **A Short History of SCA**

The Student Conservation Association wasn't always America's largest natural resource conservation organization. We've come a long way from its origins in 1955 when

Elizabeth (Cushman) Titus Putnam - then a student at Vassar College - developed her senior thesis in response to a Harper's Magazine article written by historian Bernard DeVoto, titled "Let's Close the National Parks." DeVoto described the deplorable condition of national parks with limited resources and inadequate funding in the face of the influx of post World War II visitors who suddenly had more time and money than ever before, and could hop in their car with their families and visit parks. In his article, DeVoto suggests that Army personnel be placed around Yellowstone and several other large national parks to keep the public from entering those parks until Congress appropriated sufficient funds to protect the parks from the people and the people from the parks. In response, Putnam conceived the idea of young people performing natural resource conservation on public lands. Two years later, with help from colleague Martha (Hayne) Talbot and national conservation leaders, Putnam realized her vision as SCA placed 53 volunteers in Grand Teton and Olympic National Parks. 31 high school boys, ages 15-18, worked in Olympic in the backcountry in two different programs; and 22 college and graduate men and women, ages 17-52, assisted rangers and naturalists in three different programs in both parks. The organization grew steadily, expanding into all 50 states and beyond, developing urban programs and building partnerships with governmental agencies, environmental groups and conscientious corporations.

### **SCA Fast Facts**

- National nonprofit, founded in 1957
- Nearly 3,000 members annually
- Members perform over 1.6 million service hours each year
- Positions in all 50 states and 3 foreign countries
- Projects in the nation's parks, forests, refuges and urban green spaces
- Nearly 50,000 alumni
- Roughly 60% of SCA alumni go on to careers in the conservation field
- More than 425 sites nationwide

### **Introduction to SCA's High School Conservation Crews**

SCA's High School Conservation Crew program provides opportunities for young people, ages 15-19 years old, to perform environmental service on federal, state, and private land. It sends groups of students with one or two leaders in the field for two to eight weeks at a time. SCA categorizes its Conservation Crew (CC) programming two different ways, 1) by location and 2) by how the crews are recruited and supported. There are three categories of location: commuting, frontcountry, and backcountry. There are two ways SCA recruits and supports programs: nationally and regionally. Understanding this structure will greatly enhance your ability to effectively run your CC program.

### **Types of High School Crews: Location**

Traditionally, CC supports three different kinds of crew location. Agency partners are in need of work done in many different locations, and students gain rich experience from each of these program models.

*Commuting Crews:* members and leaders of commuting crews work with SCA during the day and go home at night. The members of these crews are recruited from a specific geographical area (e.g., Pittsburgh). These crews are usually managed by a regional office and comprised of students involved in year-round SCA regional programming. Specific goals and curricula may vary from region to region as influenced by local issues, the needs of the community, or the interests of the students.

*Frontcountry Camping Crews:* located in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This type of crew establishes a base-camp in a developed campground, an undeveloped campground with vehicle access, or within one mile of a road. The work component may be located in the same vicinity as the base-camp or the crew may have a daily hike or drive of less than one hour to their worksite. Frontcountry crews usually have limited access to amenities such as showers, laundry, phones, and general stores.

*Backcountry Camping Crews:* located in remote settings in areas more than one hour / one mile from an established trailhead. Setting up a backcountry base-camp usually requires the assistance of pack stock or helicopter to bring in supplies and tools. The work component is usually located within a few miles from base-camp. Backcountry crews do not usually leave the field until the program ends. Amenities such as showers, phones, or stores are not available.

### **Types of High School Crews: Recruiting and Support**

*National Programs:* SCA National programs are recruited and supported nationally. Crew members are recruited across the U.S. and Canada utilizing high school teachers, newspaper articles, SCA alumni, previous Crew Leaders, and SCA's website ([www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org)). National crews frequently are geographically diverse and their members come from a broad range of experience. SCA strives to increase the economic and ethnic diversity of National crews by targeting diverse areas and making access to information and funds easy to obtain. National crews are located all across the U.S. There are frontcountry and backcountry National crews.

*Regional Programs:* Regional programs recruit students locally from regional offices. Some of these students participate in year-round SCA programs in that region. Students are often recruited from urban school populations to become members on these crews. Regional crews are primarily of the commuting type.

For the purposes of this Handbook, we will specifically be focusing on the unique characteristics of the **Regionally-focused Commuter Crews**. There is a separate Handbook that provides guidance for Nationally-focused Backcountry and Frontcountry Crews.

### **High School Commuter Crew Leader: Job Description**

Department: High School

Reports to: Program Manager / Program Coordinator

**Position Summary:** Responsible for daily management and supervision of SCA High School conservation crew in a [commuting](#) site with six, eight, or ten high school students members. Assist co-leader in managing student and group safety and development, and work project completion. Represent SCA on-site and coordinate with SCA Staff coordinator and Agency partner on designated projects (s).

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Follow all SCA policies and procedures as required for the position.
- Manage all administrative aspects of the crew and related paperwork (pre and post program included).
- Manage budget and all necessary purchasing for crew and project.

- Manage relationship with agency partner and project. This includes coordinating all logistical and operational work and how it relates to the partner, project, and the crew.
- Facilitate crew operations such as food planning/purchasing, tool and equipment logistics, tool maintenance, and work schedule.
- Manage all medical and first aid aspects of the crew, along with the required documentation.
- Communicate with full time SCA field staff as required and as needed.
- Supervise crew members from 9 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday. (Exact times may vary from region to region due to weather conditions and other factors)
- Train and supervise crew members in safe and proper use of tools and all aspects of the service project.
- Plan and execute environmental education, workforce readiness, and outdoor recreational activities.

**Qualifications:**

- Be at least 21 years old.
- Possess a valid driver's license.
- Be in good physical condition (if selected you will be required to submit written results from a recent physical exam).
- Must obtain current required certification by the start date of the orientation training. First Aid and CPR certifications are the minimum requirement for all Commuter Crew Leaders. Additionally, Commuter Crews with an overnight Recreation trip component will need at least one Crew Leader with Wilderness First Aid is the minimum certification requirement. (We offer a WFA course as a pre-orientation training.)
- Obtain one personal reference.
- Agree to a background check done at SCA's expense, which includes a current driving record. (Please note that some programs require a drug test to adhere to city laws – check with your SCA staff coordinator)
- Participate in a personal interview.
- New Crew Leaders must attend Orientation, Work Skills training and Drivers Training sessions.

**Physical Demands and Work Environment:**

The physical demands and work environment described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee (SCA Crew Leader) to successfully perform the essential functions of this position. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this position, the employee is required to stand; walk; sit; use hands and finger, handle or feel objects, tools or controls, reach with hands and arms; climb stairs and / or steep terrain; balance; stoop, kneel, crouch or crawl; talk or hear; taste or smell. Specific duties of an SCA Crew Leader include performing manual, physical labor for up to 8 hours per day. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move 40 pounds or more and hike 5 or more miles. Specific vision abilities required by the job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus. The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is exposed to various weather conditions.