



# 2021 YOUTH EXPEDITION GUIDE

*For Youth and their Parents/Guardians*



**MONTANA  
CONSERVATION  
CORPS**

*Tools for Living. Experience for Life.*

# WELCOME!

## Program Goals

Our goal for the Youth Expedition program is to immerse participants in challenging projects and the rigors of life outdoors, while providing education developed specifically to create leaders, engaged citizens, and lifelong environmental stewards.

## Our Story

The Montana Conservation Corps grew out of great ideas, great people, and a great legacy. Stories of men joining and serving in the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's and early 1940's can be heard at coffee counters across Montana. Tales of their accomplishments to improve the landscape and the spirits of the young people who joined are numerous and verging on mythical, in the best tradition of Montana.



Since our founding in 1991, MCC has provided transformative, team-focused and service-driven experiences in the outdoors for young people. With the establishment of AmeriCorps in 1993, MCC became one of the first national service programs with an environmental focus.

We are proud of our humble roots and thankful for all those that have served, participated in and contributed to the growth of MCC and to the engagement of our young people in conservation service as a means of preparing them to be leaders and engaged citizens.

**MCC's mission is to inspire young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities.**

# 20121 YOUTH EXPEDITIONS

## Adventure with Purpose

In our Youth Expedition Programs, all youth camp, work, learn valuable skills and explore the wilderness as a crew of six(+/-) students and two MCC AmeriCorps crew leaders, accomplishing valuable trail and habitat projects on our public lands.

### Southern Branch Office

Two or Four week volunteer service experience

Session 1 (2 week): June 13 - 24

Session 2 (4 week): June 13 - July 7

Session 3 (2 week): June 27 - July 7

Session 4 (4 week): June 27 - July 21

Session 5 (4 week): July 18 - August 11

Session 6 (2 week): August 1 - August 11

### Northern Branch Office

Two or Four week volunteer service experience

Session 1 (2 week): June 13 - 24

Session 2 (2 week): June 27 - July 7

Session 3 (4 week): June 27 - July 21

Session 4 (4 week): July 18 - August 11

Session 5 (2 week): August 1 - August 11

## PROGRAM COSTS

MCC aims to ensure that all Montana youth who wish to participate in Youth Expeditions can do so, regardless of family socioeconomic status. We therefore currently provide full scholarships for all Youth Expeditions participants, at no cost to youth and their families. However, as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, MCC relies on grants and charitable giving to fund our youth programs. Donations from families who are financially able are encouraged, to help offset the costs of these programs and to ensure that we will be able to continue to offer them at no cost. Thank you.

# ADMISSIONS PROCESS

MCC's goal in the admissions process is to bring together a diverse group of youth from across Montana to serve together in our programs. We strive to create crews that reflect the diversity of our state and communities and are committed to making sure there is equity and inclusion from all backgrounds.

While MCC hopes to be able to accept each applicant and strives to place each youth in their preferred expedition location and session time, it is not always possible. We will be reviewing applications as they arrive and striving to place all applicants. However, since we typically receive more applications than we have crew positions, we do have an expedition waitlist. If you are placed on our waitlist, you will be considered for crew positions as they become available.

*"It was lots of fun, and I really enjoyed the places we were and the work we did. The crew had a great relationship with each other, and the crew leaders were the bomb!"*

Youth Participant

## Prepare for Impact!

As a participant in our Youth Expedition, you will have the opportunity to broaden your life experiences through participation in challenging conservation projects. Along with education, and the rigors of camp life, the program will help grow individuals through:

- Living and working with your peers.
- Contributing and cooperating with others as a team.
- Learning new outdoor and work skills, the values of conservation service & leadership, the passion for the outdoors and stewardship of the land.
- Lastly, building the strength and confidence to take on challenges in the future.

We find that one's time with Montana Conservation Corps is the ideal environment in which to gain increased confidence, communication and leadership skills, personal growth, and the ability to work well with people from all walks of life.

*"MCC has changed my life. Not only did I gain some powerful self-confidence, but I have made connections that will carry me straight into the future."*

Youth Participant



# LEADERSHIP TRAINING



MCC has a training program for our Youth Crew Leaders that includes first aid, youth development, technical skills, leadership, communication and group dynamics and more. Leaders also have stringent driver requirements. Our Crew Leaders are well-supported by our MCC staff. They pass the skills they have learned along to their crews, as they live, learn, and serve together in some of our country's wildest places.

You will find our Crew Leaders to be energetic, caring and dedicated individuals who come from a wide range of backgrounds. They are dedicated to making each expedition the experience of a lifetime for each of our youth participants.



# DAY IN THE LIFE



While the Expeditions may vary by destination and by types of trail and habitat projects and level of skills learning – they all experience the outdoors and adventure!

- Most days start between 6:00 and 8:00 am with eating breakfast, packing lunches, stretching and preparing for the day's project. The crews will hike or drive to their project site.
- During the day, Expeditions include the perfect combination of work, team building, and educational lessons, along with breaks for water, snacks and lunch, with lots of comradery and laughter.
- The type of work may include building or maintaining trails, improving animal habitats by planting trees or removing noxious weeds, removing litter from our parks and forests, and working on fencing projects to help protect sage grouse.
- You will learn the proper use of tools as well as numerous technical and outdoor skills such as Leave No Trace principals, all while serving and learning in some of Montana's wildest places!
- After heading back to camp, the crews make dinner, complete chores, and typically play games or engage in activities such as an evening hike.
- During Expeditions, crews may work on projects in their community or across the state and surrounding states, in National Forests and National Parks, in State Parks and Wildlife Refuges.
- Weekends are more adventurous and fun with excursions and travel for recreational, educational or logistical purposes.



# BE PREPARED

## How Active Are You?

Are you exercising three times a week for at least 30 minutes? If not, start slowly and work yourself up to more strenuous activities. We want you to be using your muscles and getting your heart rate up so you will be ready for the Expedition!

## Can You Unplug?

There are no cell phones, MP3 players, tablets, kindles, or any other electronic media devices permitted during expeditions (with the exception of small cameras). To prepare for this change, try leaving your cell phone home for the day, play a game instead of watching TV, or talk with a friend face to face vs. sending them a text. You can do it!

## Ready to Open Your Mind?

During an Expedition, you become part of a close-knit, hard-working crew and community. You will live with several other crew members and crew leaders 24/7. There will be times when you will experience challenges but also great joy. Prepare to open your mind, communicate with others, learn from others and be willing to share your thoughts and ideas with others!



# GEAR LIST

This gear list has all of the gear and clothing you might need to keep warm, dry and comfortable during the Expedition. Each Expedition's specific gear list may vary slightly.

## REQUIRED CLOTHING *Head to Toe*

X	Item	Description	Borrow from MCC
	<b>Work Boots</b>	A pair of sturdy, lace-up, comfortable, work boots that are already broken in. Hiking boots would be great too! Boots should be above the ankle. Tennis shoes are NOT acceptable.	
	<b>Camp Shoes</b>	A pair of fully enclosed shoes to give your feet a break and protect them at the camp site. No 'Crocs'.	
	<b>Water Shoes</b>	A pair of old tennis shoes, sandals with a heel strap, or actual "water shoes" are all acceptable. Crew members may NOT go into the water barefoot or wearing flip flops.	
	<b>Socks</b>	At least 4 pairs of quality, comfortable socks to work in. Try on your socks with your hiking boots to make sure they fit well. Many of our members and leaders prefer wool or synthetic socks because they are durable and stay comfortable even when your feet get wet.	
	<b>Underwear</b>	Bring enough to last one week.	
	<b>Work Pants</b>	These should be as tough as you are. Bring 2 pairs of work pants that are in good condition (without holes, tears, patches). Jeans are acceptable. Be prepared for these pants to get dirty, stained, and worn out from the work.	
	<b>Warm Sweatshirt, Pullover, Jacket</b>	Even in the summer, Montana temperatures can drop and it can get very chilly. An extra warm layer (durable wool or fleece is preferable, but warmth is the most important criteria) to wear at work and in camp. Also serves as a great pillow!	
	<b>Long Underwear</b>	A warm top and bottom layer for chilly days/nights. Wool, silk, or synthetic materials like polypropylene are favored for their reliability even while wet.	
	<b>Warm Hat, Gloves &amp; Socks</b>	Great to have for sleeping on cold nights and those random high elevation snow showers in the summer.	
	<b>Towel &amp; Swimsuit</b>	For showering and potential swim sites.	
	<b>Rain Gear</b>	Both a rain jacket and rain pants are required.	X
	<b>'Recreation' Clothes &amp; Shoes</b>	A change of clothes to wear during weekends or at camp after a day of service; shorts and a t-shirt as well as a pair of tennis shoes. "Teva/Chaco/Keen" type sandals are also good to have. Sandals must have a back heel-strap. Flip-flops are NOT allowed.	



# GEAR LIST

## REQUIRED GEAR *Shelter, Eating, Drinking, Hygiene, & Misc.*

X	Item	Description	Borrow from MCC
	<b>Tent</b>	One or two person tent. If you are placed on a crew doing backcountry work, it may be smart to bring one that can easily be carried in your backpack. Make sure you have enough tent stakes!	<b>X</b>
	<b>Overnight Pack</b>	This needs to be large enough to carry all your personal gear. 55 liter is the minimum size pack you should consider bringing. A large duffel bag or suitcase will be sufficient unless you are placed on a backcountry crew. Contact MCC staff for more information.	<b>X</b>
	<b>Day Pack</b>	You will need a backpack that can carry your lunch, rain gear, extra layers, and 3 liters of water to the work site. You will carry this backpack every day, so it should fit well and be comfortable when fully loaded. School backpacks can work, but again- be prepared for it to get dirty and worn!	<b>X</b>
	<b>Sleeping Bag</b>	Down or synthetic bags are required. Lightweight, compact, and warm bags are best for packing. Bags rated for 15-35 degrees preferred.	<b>X</b>
	<b>Sleeping Pad</b>	This item will provide comfort and insulation from the ground. Commonly used varieties include: closed cell foam, or self-inflating. Inexpensive 'blue foam' pads are easily found at discount department stores.	<b>X</b>
	<b>Flashlight and/or Headlamp, plus Extra Batteries</b>	Headlamp is preferred. Light will be used during evening activities, in your tent or when going to the bathroom at night. Plus extra batteries are a must.	
	<b>Spoon/Fork, Container w/tight lid, Mug, Plate/ Bowl</b>	Please bring your own utensils (sporks are cool too); Plastic container (Tupperware) with a well-fitting lid to keep your lunch in; Plastic or metal 'travel mug' for hot drinks, and a bowl and/or plate for meals.	<b>X</b>
	<b>Water Bottles</b>	At least enough to have 3 L of water.	
	<b>Medication</b>	Bring any personal medications for entire session. Plus, 2 sets of any life-saving medications (inhaler, epi-pen, etc.).	
	<b>Watch or Alarm Clock</b>	It will serve as your alarm clock in the morning.	
	<b>Toiletries</b>	Essentials include biodegradable soap and shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, lip balm, small brush or comb, and personal feminine hygiene products (if applicable).	
	<b>Stuff Sack</b>	Any "smelly" items must be kept in a separate sack away from camp.	

# GEAR LIST

## OPTIONAL ITEMS

X	Item	Description	Borrow from MCC
	<b>Book and/or Journal w/ Pen or Pencil</b>	For reflecting on your experience, drawing, or reading.	
	<b>Resealable Plastic Bags or Nylon Stuff Sacks</b>	Handy for storing or organizing items. Plus added protection to keep things dry.	
	<b>Camera</b>	Small digital or disposable cameras are ideal. Remember, cell phone cameras will not be permitted.	
	<b>Hand Sanitizer, Sunscreen, Insect Repellent</b>	You will be outside everyday and all day.	
	<b>Bandana</b>	Useful for washing your face, keeping you cool, covering your head, etc.	
	<b>Baseball Cap &amp; Sunglasses</b>	To keep sun out of eyes when not wearing your hard hat & eye protection.	
	<b>Cash</b>	In case, you may want to bring a minimal amount of cash for incidentals (souvenirs, gas station stop items etc.).	
	<b>Recreational Items</b>	You are welcome to bring small games, deck of cards, musical instrument, frisbee, ball, etc. There will be time to relax in the evenings with other crew members & leaders.	

## MCC Provides

MCC provides all transportation during Expeditions. We also provide an MCC t-shirt, gloves, hard hat and safety glasses for each youth participant, along with all of the food, work tools, and group camping gear (such as camp stoves, water filtration systems, tarps, kitchen gear, first aid kits, bear spray, etc.).

For families with financial need, we also have some gear available to borrow, including tents, sleeping bags, rain gear and other items. Supplies are limited, so request ASAP.

## Serviceship Award

MCC has limited funding to help assist youth crew members with some of the financial costs associated with participation in an Expedition. MCC assistance can include:

- Cost of gear.
- Travel costs associated with carpooling, rides and gas money to the Expedition Launch Site on the first day, and travelling home at the end of the Expedition.

This funding is made available through a generous grant from the Kendeda Fund as well as other public grants and donors. If you need financial help to participate, please check with your Branch Office staff for more information and guidance.

# EXPECTATIONS

Being part of our Youth Expeditions is an unforgettable experience, but with that comes responsibilities to live and work by, in order to create a safe and positive environment for you and your crew.

## **While serving on the Youth Expedition, you will be expected to:**

- Be respectful and inclusive of other members, crew leaders, staff, project sponsors and community members.
- Participate fully, and within the group schedule in all aspects of the program.
- Exhibit a high level of commitment and a positive attitude toward the organization, staff and service work.
- Display a strong work ethic, stay on task and follow directions.
- Direct concerns, problems and suggestions to your Crew Leaders or MCC staff.
- Use appropriate language at all times.
- Wear the MCC t-shirt, appropriate footwear, work pants, and safety gear while working.
- Balance personal needs with the needs of the crew.
- Leave all cell phones, portable stereos/radios, MP3 players, DVD players and other similar devices at home as they are not permitted on Youth Expeditions.

## **The following behaviors/actions by a youth participant will lead to immediate dismissal from the program:**

- Engaging in any activity that is illegal under local, state or federal law.
- Engaging in activities that pose a significant safety risk to others.
- Consuming, possessing, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or tobacco products.
- Consuming, possessing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs. This includes misuse of or sharing of prescription drugs.
- Engage in harassing or aggressive behavior or activities. This includes verbal, sexual, racial and physical harassment.
- Engaging in fights or making threats of violence.
- Possessing or using firearms or weapons.
- Participating in vandalism or theft.





# SAFETY IN THE FIELD

Youth will spend a good deal of time learning how to safely use hand tools. Each day, crews stop work, evaluate progress, and make sure that everyone is working in the safest manner possible. MCC has many safety policies, procedures and guidelines that our Crew Leaders follow to ensure the crew's safety. Here is an overview:

## DUFFLE SHUFFLE

At orientation each youth empties and repacks their bags. This way, we can ensure that youth have all their needed items and are not bringing unnecessary or unacceptable items.

## SUPERVISION

Youth are never alone with each other, or alone with an adult. Crew members must always be in groups of three in eyesight or earshot of a Crew Leader.

## MEDICATIONS

Youth with medication must bring enough for the entire session, and in original containers. We ask for 2 sets of life sustaining medications such as epi pens and inhalers, with one set kept on person, and a second set kept by the Crew Leader in the event of an emergency. All medications are secured in locking bags. Crew Leaders monitor medication use.

## WATER AND SWIMMING POLICY

Youth can wade and wash in creeks and rivers, but will only go deeper than waist high when they are at a location with a lifeguard present.

## CLOSED TOE SHOES

Crew Leaders and Expedition Members must wear closed toed shoes in camp kitchen areas. This reduces the risks associated with boiling water and sharp objects.

## TENT SITE SET-UP

Youth will bring their own tent. Crew Leaders place their tents in a central location among the group of tents.

## BEARS AND WILDLIFE

Crew Leaders are trained in bear safety and proper use of bear spray, if needed. Traveling in a large group makes a lot of noise, so typically our crews have minimal negative interactions with wildlife.



# MEDICAL EMERGENCIES



MCC Crew Leaders are trained in emergency procedures. They also have the ability to communicate with MCC staff and with emergency responders if needed.

In the event of an emergency situation or one that has the potential to affect the continuation of the Expedition, MCC will coordinate a response to ensure parents / guardians receive important information regarding their youth's well-being.

While MCC spends a great deal of time mitigating risks, sometimes incidents can still happen. MCC has worker's compensation insurance to cover project site related injuries. Parents/guardians are financially responsible for all non-project site situations.

While the youth experience is 'unplugged', our leaders are 'plugged-in' to communication devices for safety purposes. Leaders have cell phones, and when out of service will have radios, GPS or PLB devices. Crew Leaders also communicate all travel plans and changes with the Youth Program Office prior to any movement.

# AFTER THE ADVENTURE...



## A Qualifying Experience

Most universities, colleges and employers recognize the contributions of those who have volunteered or have been involved in service projects. While on your Expedition, we encourage you to reflect on your projects in a journal or diary including:

- Name of project, dates, host agency, and number of hours served on that project.
- Work accomplished by the project (e.g., removed barbwire from 5 miles of fencing along the border of Yellowstone National Park, etc.)
- Skills learned (e.g., safely removing barbed wire using large cutter tools, working as a team, etc.)
- Other experiences or highlights (e.g., special awards from the host agency, comments from your Crew Leader, team-building exercises)

When the Expedition is over, you will have content for a résumé or an essay to use in the next school year, applying for college, or when applying for jobs. The activity also helps you to think critically about what you learned from your MCC Expedition and how it can be applied to future endeavors.



# COMMUNICATIONS

## DURING BUSINESS HOURS

If parents/guardians need to reach their youth, they are directed to call the Southern Branch Office and speak with the Associate Director of Youth Programs to relay the message.

## AFTER BUSINESS HOURS

Call the “on call” number, located on the back of the guide.

This “on call” number is manned by an MCC staff member 24/7.

## PLEASE NOTIFY US

If parents/ guardians plan on traveling out of town or out of cell service for an extended period of time, we ask that you inform the Associate Director of Youth Programs. MCC always needs access to an emergency contact.



## EXPEDITION CARE PACKAGES AND CHECK-INS

Depending on the Expedition and logistics, there might be an opportunity to send a care package or letter to a Crew Member. If care packages are possible, please send a fun snack the entire crew can enjoy. The Crew Members are generally also able to place a call home at the mid-point of the Expedition. If the opportunity is available for your particular Expedition, more information will be communicated to parents/guardians at their orientation or drop-off.

Our programs are designed to focus heavily on the crew community, and developing the team. By restricting interaction with outside influences, we see the experiential education benefits improve greatly, for each individual and the team as a whole. Emergencies are certainly an exception.



*Tools for Living. Experience for Life.*

## **Southern Branch Office**

301 N Willson Ave | Bozeman, MT 59715

**Stephanie Beeman, Associate Director of Youth Programs**  
(406) 587-4475, ext. 220

**Marisa Abrahams, Southern Youth Program Coordinator**  
(406) 587-4475, ext. 111

## **Nothern Branch Office**

1203 Hwy 2 West #27 | Kalispell, MT 59901

**Ann Marie Bowlus, Northern Youth Program Coordinator**  
(530) 220-3205

[www.mtcorps.org](http://www.mtcorps.org)

