Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps 2016

Annual Report





About Us:

The Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) is a summer employment program for youth ages 14-17. 2016 was a pivotal year for CJC as a significant number of our program staff were former youth corps members. It was incredible to see the growth, maturity and willingness to engage youth from former corps members as they were crew supervisors, camp specialists and naturalists. They provided insight and guidance for new staff on how to successfully reach youth and resolve conflicts. We hope to continue to reach out to young people in Maryland and encourage them to participate in the stewardship of their communities and enjoy the pleasantries of the natural world.

Operated by the Maryland Park Service, CJC aims to provide a wide array of job and life skills training, while engaging youth in conservation service projects that restore Maryland State Parks and other public lands. CJC combines outdoor experiential activities and the power of nature to challenge and enrich the lives of youth while preparing them for future success in the workforce.

CIC began in 2008, as a special initiative of the Maryland Park Service, and today operates in seven parks including: Assateague State Park, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Gwynns Falls Trail, Lake Clifton Park, Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary, Patapsco Valley State Park, Seneca Creek State Park, and Susquehanna State Park. With increasing support from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and other significant partners, CJC continues to strive to identify creative and meaning projects and enrichment activities that will inspire youth to take an interest in the environment.

The youth, known as Corps Members (age 14 - 17), report to work five days a week and engage in habitat and facility restoration projects at these parks, as well as in nearby city or county parks. CJC youth learn the necessary skills to remove invasive species, maintain trails, plant native species of trees and plants, construct structures, and maintain historic sites. Not only do these skills provide youth with valuable work experience needed for today's job market, but also provides youth with confidence and teamwork skills. The opportunities provided by the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps may open youth to new possibilities, including higher education, technical school, or "green jobs" which they may have never previously considered.

The Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps has created both a mission and a set of goals which serve as the foundation of the program. On a daily basis, CJC aspires to achieve the following:

Mission:

To provide disadvantaged youth with opportunities for skills training, empowerment,

and employment and to restore natural and recreational resources in Maryland State Parks, public lands in general, and the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.



"...the care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope."

-Wendell Berry

Goals:

1. Teach job skills and life skills through conservation service.

CJC members work hand in hand with Park Rangers, Naturalist and other conservationists to learn basic carpentry, landscaping, painting, and other technical skills as they complete conservation and restoration projects. They also learn how to use the tools and other work related equipment, safely. Youth learn fundamental employment skills and principles, such as team work, conflict resolution, and respect for self and others.

2. Restore natural and cultural resources in Maryland State Parks and other public lands.

Youth work as a part of a team to identify and plan work projects, such as building footbridges and pole sheds, building concrete forms and pouring concrete, planting trees and reading landscape blueprints, identifying and removing non-native invasive plants, constructing rain

gardens, re-roofing a nature center, laying patio stone for a garden courtyard, and so much more.

3. Develop environmental citizenship through the introduction and application of environmental stewardship principles.

Understanding how soil erosion, trash, and other pollution affect the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and the many benefits of planting a tree, as well as understanding how we are all connected to that outcome – these are a few examples of some of the key concepts learned

through member participation. When youth can see the consequences of irresponsible actions or unwise practices on the environment, we are step closer to keeping them engaged as active advocates for healthy communities when they become adults.



one

4. Build personal connections to nature through outdoor recreation and nature interpretation.

Many of our CJC youth live in areas with limited to sparse access to natural play spaces and serene areas to reflect on life while enjoying the sights, smells, and sounds of nature. As a part of the CJC program youth are encouraged to spend time taking in the natural



landscapes and its encompassing attractiveness and consider who they are, in relation to a larger system of life. Building an understanding of misunderstood wildlife and the wonder of all things, while gaining a base understanding and respect for the dangers and hazards of the outdoors.

2016 Program Overview:

2016 was an exciting year for CJC and its corps members. This summer CJC hired several former corps members as Program Staff, including Crew Chiefs, Naturalists and Camp Specialists. A significant number of former CJC youth have expressed an academic interest in natural resource management and continue to come back to work for CJC during their summer breaks. Through several new partnerships, CJC youth participated in Osprey tagging, labyrinth design, wildlife rescue initiatives and many other interesting and creative enrichment opportunities.

Our program expanded partnerships, collaborated with other nature based organizations to create more opportunities for youth and staff to experience Maryland's diverse ecological system.







Name: Destiny Blue

Park: Patapsco Valley State Park (North)

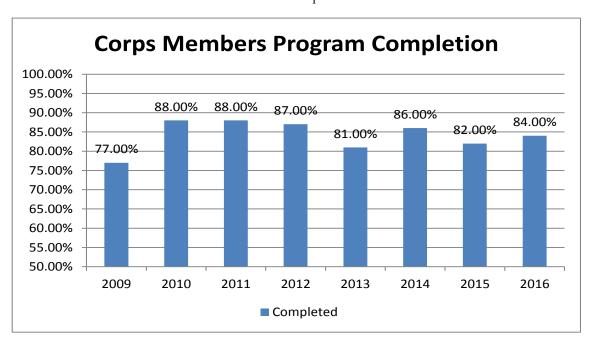
Year with CIC: 3rd

Destiny has had a unique CJC experience as she has worked at 3 different worksites for over her 3 summers as a Corps Member. She started her CJC career at Gunpowder Falls State Park. In her second year she worked at Gwynns Falls and finally she worked at Patapsco Valley State Park -McKeldin. Destiny has excelled as a crew leader and consistently encourages her team to work hard and smart. Destiny enjoys building and repairing things and likes working with tools. As a math wiz, Destiny looks for ways to employ her math skills while working on construction projects and figuring out how much work her crew accomplished during a work day. During the program Destiny asked for a letter of recommendation to accompany her college application to attend Morgan State University. She is still thinking about a major but says she is looking forward to working with CJC next summer as a staff member.

Retention and Successful Completion of the Program:

The CJC Program strives when youth can realize their potential and experience some measure of success through completing challenging work. For many of our youth the journey to get to the worksite is the first of many challenges they will face as they begin their careers in the workforce. More than two-thirds of our CJC youth travel for more than 2 hours to reach a pick up location where youth can ride a school bus to and from work during the summer. This is an obstacle that we are diligently trying to alleviate in order to make work more accessible for our youth. Taking travel as a significant obstacle for CJC youth to reach work, our program looks to improve the daily attendance and overall program completion rates for our youth. A high retention rate is essential to the success of CJC and a key indicator of a worthwhile investment. Since its creation in 2008, the program has made strides to increase its retention rate.

Through corps member orientation, evaluation and strategic staffing, CJC has maintained successful attendance and program attrition rate. We do so through daily attendance tracking, working with partners to identify youth who may need additional attention to get to work and providing guidance and evaluation for youth through their progression of CJC. Additionally, the SPIRIT Principles were created to provide Corps Members with a clear understanding of the program's expectations throughout the summer and a reference for understanding expectations for behavior beyond CJC. "SPIRIT Cards" are provided to youth as a way to both reward Corps Members for positive and discourage negative behaviors. The program's expectations are high and require significant commitment from youth to endure strict rules regarding attendance and performance.



From 2010 to 2016 the retention rate has remained relatively consistent. These results indicate that CJC is a worthwhile investment and is achieving its youth development goals by retaining a significant percentage of Corps Members from the beginning to the end of the summer employment program. Regular daily attendance is critical in planning projects and maintains an efficient and productive use of resources.

Performance Evaluations:

Corps Members also receive three performance evaluations during the program that indicate how well youth demonstrate the SPIRIT Principles on a day-to-day basis. The initial, midterm and final evaluations not only provide constructive feedback on Corps Member's behavior, but also serve as a valuable introduction to the professional world. The evaluations also provide Corps Members with a clear understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses, which allows Crew Chiefs and Corps Members to set goals to strive for by graduation day. Corps Members can score anywhere on a range of 1 to 4. One indicating "needs improvement," two indicating "meets expectations," three indicating "exceeds expectations" and four indicating "outstanding."



Increases in SPIRIT

According to Corps Member Surveys, overall SPIRIT increased in over 91% of Corps Members from the Initial to Final survey. More specifically, Stewardship increased for 87% of Corps Members, Professionalism increase for 92% of Corps Members, Initiative increased for 90% of Corps Members, Respect increased for 91% of Corps Members, Integrity increased for 91% of Corps Members and Teamwork increased for 87% of Corps Members. These results suggest that participation in CJC fosters behavioral changes in all of the SPIRIT Principles.

The CJC Outdoor Discovery Experience

The Camping Experience:

Corps Members can participate in an overnight, three day - two night camping experience during their summer experience with the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps. The purpose of camping is to

expose youth to a wide range of outdoor recreational activities and to teach concepts such as "Leave No Trace." The Corps Members are challenged to step outside of their comfort zones and asked to leave the conveniences of modern life behind. While camping, youth learn to pitch a tent, what necessities to bring on a camping trip, to identify wildlife, and proper camping



etiquette. Youth also participate in a challenge course, canoeing, night hikes, camp fires, s'more making, and swimming during their time at camp. There were two camping locations during the 2015 CJC season, Rocky Gap and Tuckahoe State Parks. Camping provides youth an opportunity to see the benefits of preserving natural spaces for recreation and relaxation. Camp Staff members are trained for fun and innovative ways to engage youth in outdoor recreation and orienteering. Each summer we discover the impact camping has on changing perspectives of youth who have never been camping before. The experience breeds comradery among corps members and an appreciation for nature that hopefully last a lifetime. At the close of each program year, camp staff selects those youth who not only challenge themselves by eagerly engaging in every activity but also had a great attitude. Almost every youth, when asked about the highlight of their summer points to camping as that time being the most fun they have ever had.

Environmental Enrichment:

Environmental enrichment has been a continuing priority of the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps, as outlined by its mission, goals, and core values. In 2016 CJC's enrichment program continued to challenged youth to build on their understanding of their role in improving the environment and addressing environmental ethics as a major concern for their generation. Youth participated in the following enrichment activities during their five weeks:

Archery and Wildlife Identification

Kayaking and Macro Invertebrates Identification

Fishing and Stream Survey and Water Testing

These activities were geared to provide youth with authentic outdoor recreational experiences and attempt to inspire youth to care for the environment by exposing them to the benefits of an unpolluted natural world. Each activity also introduced CJC participants to a variety of environmental issues including pollution, human impacts, biodiversity loss, and invasive species.



2016 CJC Youth Survey Results

Introduction:

In order to collect information and attempt to draw conclusions about the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps, a survey is administered to youth participants each summer. The survey is designed to gauge changes in attitude (positive, negative and neutral) that occur as a result to participation in CIC. The questions are strongly aligned with elements of the SPIRIT Principles and the survey strives to answer the questions, "Is CJC doing what it intends to do?"

In past years the survey has been administered as a "pre/post" survey, the Pre Survey given during the first week of CJC and the Post Survey given during the last week of CJC. In order to collect more accurate and statistically reliable data, the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps developed a new survey tool, modeled after the American Camp Association's Outcomes Battery. This survey focus on "outcomes related to skills that build successful contributing members of our society." This survey tool offers numerous questions and categories that can be easily customized to fit the needs of CJC.

Structure:

Outcomes Battery is administered differently from traditional "Pre/Post" surveys. Rather than administering the same survey at two points in time, this survey is only administered once, at the end of a program/camp. Youth are presented with a list of questions in the present tense and instructed to answer based on their current feelings. Youth are then presented with the same set of questions, this time in the past tense, and instructed to answer based on their feelings before the given program. This allows youth to directly compare their current feeling to their past feelings, in theory providing a more accurate outcome.

In the 2016 CJC season, youth arrived on June 27th and graduated on July 29th. The survey was administered July 22, 2016 through July 28, 2016. The survey was divided into five days, each day focused around a particular theme or SPIRIT Principle. Each day youth answered ten questions, in both the past and present tense. Answers were circle only and included a choice of: true, somewhat true, a little true, a little false, somewhat false, and false. The survey structured in the following way:

Day 1: Stewardship (Friday, July 22)

Day 2: Professionalism and Integrity (Monday, July25)

¹ http://www.acacamps.org/research/youth-outcomes-battery

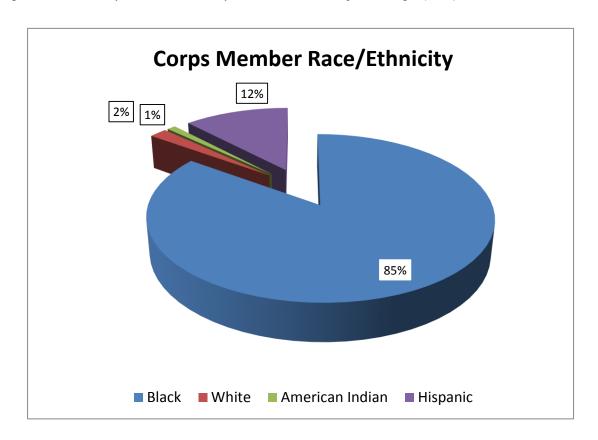
- Day 4: Respect and Initiative (Wednesday, July 27)
- Day 5: Teamwork (Thursday, July 28)

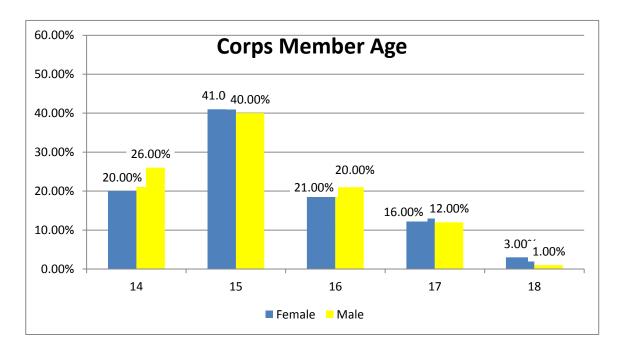
2016 Survey Results

In the summer of 2016, 400 youth participated in the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps. CJC received 308 responses to the survey that was administered July 22, 2016 through July 28, 2016. (77% response rate)

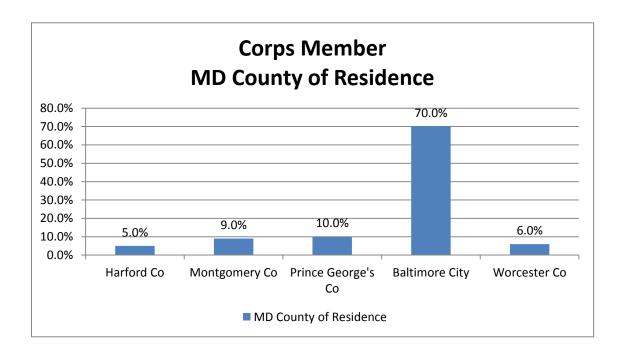
Demographic Information:

Of the 308 survey responses that were received, 58% were male and 42% were female. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were of age 15 (42%), of Black/African American ethnicity, completed their first year with the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps (85%).





The Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps is an intervention program and geared towards modeling positive work habits in youth who have never worked before. We find that as youth become older, the program's principals become a less effective mode for evaluating youth. Our strategy for recruiting youth to CJC includes identifying youth ages 14 or 15 who have never worked before or express an interest in working outdoors, while saving older slots (16 and 17 year olds) for returning corps members who show an aptitude and desire for working outdoors.



The large majority of our youth reside in Baltimore City. It is critical that we provide access to state parks and diverse outdoor experiences for youth who have cannot readily access these natural places. Our focus is presented in the chart above.

Scores:

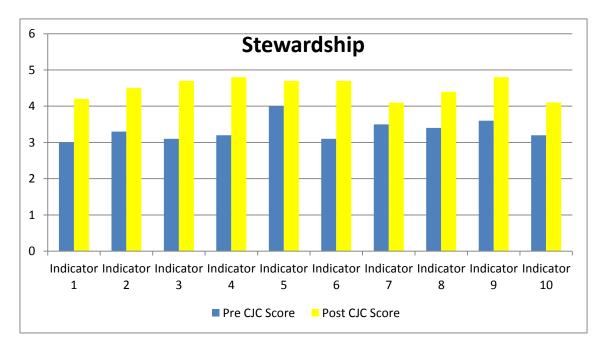
Corps Members responded with one of the following; "true, somewhat true, a little true, a little false, somewhat false, and false" to each of the survey questions. Each response coordinates with a numerical value. More positive responses correspond with higher point values and less positive responses correspond with lower point values, for example:

True = 6	False = 1
Somewhat True = 5	Somewhat False = 2
A Little True $= 4$	A Little False $= 3$

After all the responses were recorded, means were taken, to represent the average score for each question/category. Higher means represent a more positive average attitude and a lower mean represents a less positive average attitude.

Stewardship Trends:

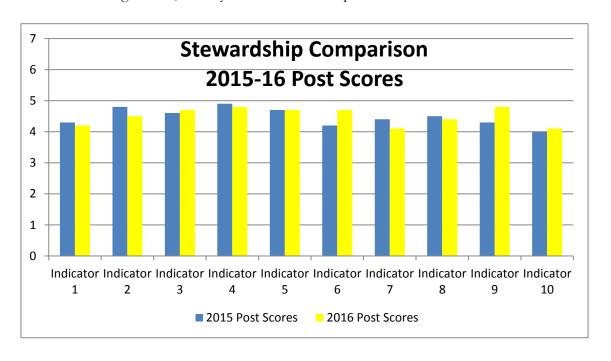
Corps Members were asked ten questions in both the present and past tense relating to Stewardship. A significant number of Corps Members responded more positively in the present tense than the past tense, showing that Corps Member's attitudes towards Stewardship became more positive after participation in CJC.



There was an overall increase across all stewardship indicators from Pre to Post responses. The largest increases were represented in Indicators 3 and 6 (see below). There was an overall increase from stewardship Post CJC scores from 2015 Post scores.

Stewardship Indicators:

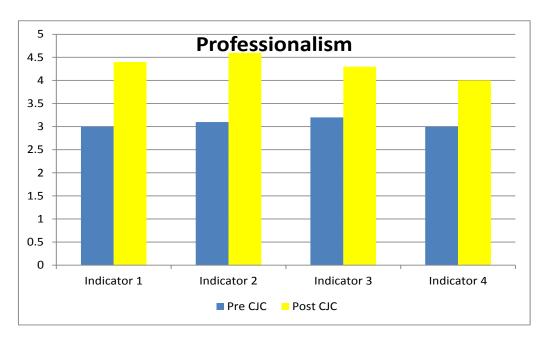
Indicator 1: "I enjoy being outdoors and in nature" False (1) – True (6) Indicator 2 "I want to spend time outdoors" Indicator 3 "I feel free when I am outdoors" Indicator 4 "I feel safe and comfortable in nature" Indicator 5 "I feel connected and a part of the natural environment" Indicator 6 "I enjoy outdoor activities like camping, hiking and swimming" Indicator 7 "I enjoy learning about the environment and want to learn more" Indicator 8 "I can see myself in a career working outside" Indicator 9 "I want to protect the environment in the future" Indicator 10 "Having a clean, healthy environment is important"



Post score comparisons from 2015 to 2016 show slight increases in indicators 6 and 9. Decreases in indicator 7 may be the result of the decrease in returning corps members from 2015 to 2016. Traditionally over 65% of the corps members for a program year are returning from a previous summer. In 2016 less than 30% of the corps members were returners from a previous program year.

Professionalism Trends:

Corps Members were asked four questions relating to Professionalism in both the present and past tense. Each question was responded to more positively in the present tense than the past tense, showing that Corps Member's attitudes towards Professionalism became more positive after participation in CJC.



Professionalism scores increased across each indicator and may be an unintentional effect of administering the survey to youth at the end of the program, which would not include program voluntary and involuntary attrition. The pre-program survey administered to youth as a part of their interview process may be a more accurate pre-program measure of professionalism. It is critical to note that we are observing any decreases in professionalism as an evaluative measure of our program and a tool to address programmatic changes. As a part of the exit interview for youth exiting the program prior to completion, we may look to complete the professionalism questions for a better post measure.

Professionalism Indicators:

Indicator 1 "I am a good employee" False (1) – True (6)

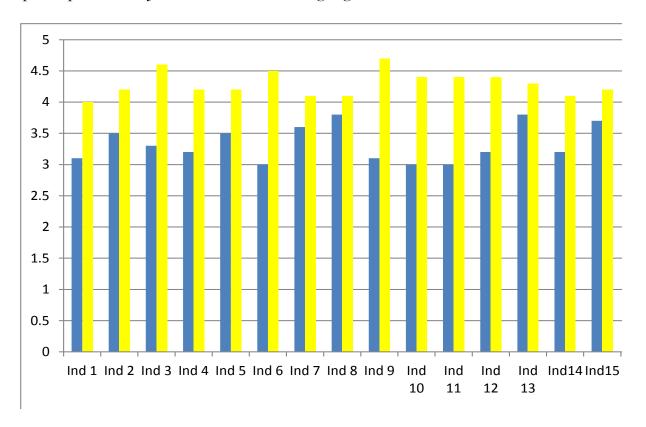
Indicator 2 "It is important to show up to work everyday and on time"

Indicator 3 "I respect others, even when I don't agree with them"

Indicator 4 "It is important to wear my uniform properly"

Initiative Trends:

Corps Members were asked sixteen questions in both the past and present tense relating to Initiative. CJC defined initiative by both taking responsibility for tasks that involve the corps members self and also by taking ownership or leadership in tasks that involved others or their team/crew. The 16 questions geared towards initiative attempted to rate present tense and past tense, showing that Corps Member's attitudes towards Initiative prior to and after participation in CJC. The chart below highlights 16 indicators for Initiative.



The most significant increases in responses **Post CJC** occurred in questions 3, 6, 9, and 11. There is also a distinct difference in how youth associate the connection between their educational goals their perception of giving their best effort (indicator 3) and (indicator 11):

Initiative Indicators:

Indicator 1:	"I will be successful in life" False (1) – True (6)
Indicator 2	"I plan to graduate from high school / get my GED"
Indicator 3	"I plan to educate myself past high school"
Indicator 4	"My future job will be one that I enjoy"
Indicator 5	"I will be able to make my own decisions about my future"
Indicator 6	"I want to get an education beyond a 4 year college degree (Masters) (Doctorate).
Indicator 7	"I look forward to learning to do new activities"
Indicator 8	"I can make good decisions by myself, without the help of adults"

Indicator 9 "I go out of my way to help others"

Indicator 10 "I can do things on my own and I am independent"

Indicator 11 "I give my best effort in everything I do"

Indicator 12 "I can solve problems without help from my friends"

Indicator 13 "I do good work"

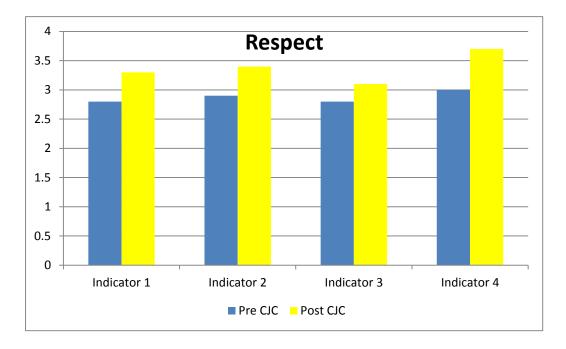
Indicator 14 "I do what I say I am going to do"

Indicator 15 "I want to learn more about new ideas"

Indicator 16 "I want to meet new people and get to know them"

Respect Trends:

Corps Members were asked four questions relating to Respect. Corps Member responses trended towards being higher in the post questions than in the pre questions. Respect is defined by not only how youth feel they show respect but also how they feel they receive respect.



Respect Indicators:

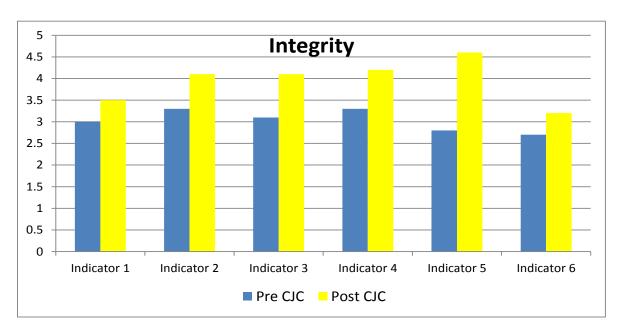
"I am respectful to my Crew Chief and fellow Corps Members" False (1) – True (6) Indicator 1:

Indicator 2 "I use tools properly and pay attention to safety while working" Indicator 3 "I feel respected by adults"

Indicator 4 "I respect others and myself"

Integrity Trends:

Corps Members were asked six questions relating to Integrity. All six questions were responded to more positively in the present tense than the past tense, showing that Corps Member's attitudes towards Integrity became more positive after participation in CJC.



The largest increase from pre to post scores occurred in question 5, "I own up to my mistakes and try to make things right". While each question in the Integrity category experiences positive change, question six, "It is important for me to be honest and have people trust me", experienced the least amount of change from Pre CJC to Post CJC.

Indicator 1: "It is important for me to take care of myself" False (1) – True (6)

Indicator 2 "It is important to eat healthy"

Indicator 3 "It is important to exercise"

Indicator 4 "I except responsibility for my actions"

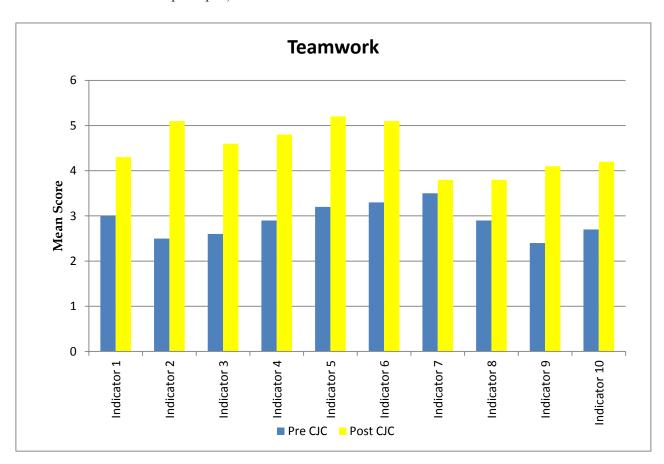
Indicator 5 "I own up to my mistakes and I try to make things right"

"It is important for me to be honest and have people trust me" Indicator 6

Teamwork Trends

Corps Members were asked ten questions relating to Teamwork. CJC defines Teamwork as the ability to cooperate with fellow corps members, lead and follow, disagree but still be a functional member of the

team. This appears to be the strength of the corps based model that CJC employs. The program promotes projects and activities that require teams of youth to cooperate, collaborate and endure difficult conditions and circumstances to complete projects.



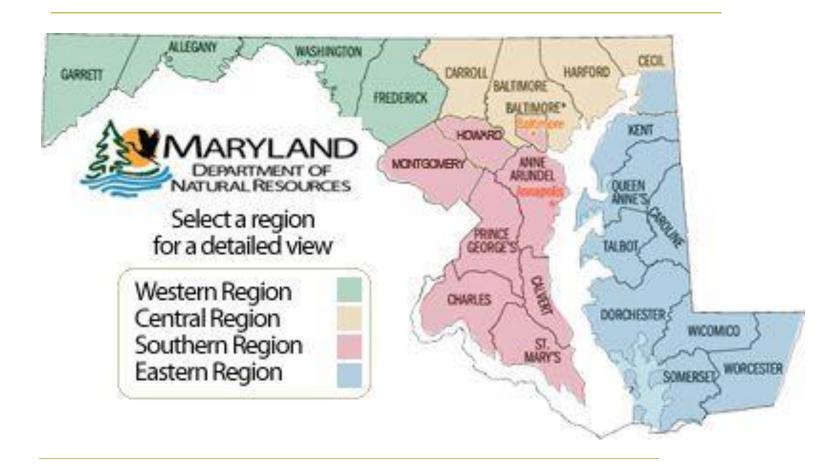
Teamwork Indicators:

Indicator 1:	"I can be a good group leader" False (1) – True (6)
Indicator 2	"I can help a group be successful"
Indicator 3	"I can be happy even when my group has decided to do something I don't want to"
Indicator 4	"I can appreciate opinions that are different from my own"
Indicator 5	"I can place group goals above the things that I want"
Indicator 6	"I can cooperate with others and I enjoy working as a team"
Indicator 7	"I get angry when people disagree with me"
Indicator 8	"It upsets me if I let my team down"

Indicator 9 "A team can accomplish more if they work together"

Indicator 10 "I get along well with others"

CJC across Maryland



Susquehanna, Gwynns Falls, Gunpowder, Patapsco, Clifton Central -Park, Cylburn Arboretum, Sandy Point, Merkle, Seneca

Assateague, Tuckahoe Eastern -

Rocky Gap, Cunningham Western -

Our Partners:

In order to provide youth with conservation service opportunities and to ensure positive outcomes in terms of youth development, the Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps maintains invaluable partnerships with the Parks & People Foundation, Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Employee Development, Civic Works, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, National Park Service, Maryland Department of Human Resources, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, Montgomery County Parks, Montgomery County Department of Recreation, Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, Prince George's County Parks and Recreation, Worcester County Public Schools, Lower Shore Workforce Alliance, Susquehanna Workforce, Harford County Department of Social Services, Harford County Sheriff's Office and numerous other youth-based organizations.

Real Results: CJC's 2016 Accomplishments

Clifton Park

25 Park Signs routed, stained and installed 12 Bags of debris removed from local parks Fence built, painted and installed Planted vegetables @ Great Kids Farm Harvested Lettuce, seeded farm and mulched @ Great Kids Farm Mowed farm field Constructed irrigation system for farm Fed farm animals

Cylburn Arboretum

Painted and installed 81 park signs Constructed 15 picnic benches Cleared 100 linear feet of invasive plants from local parks Collected 12 bags of debris from local parks Painted baseball backstops and fencing Mulched rose garden Painted amphitheater @ Cunningham

Girls Go Green @ Gwynns Falls

Mulched gardens @ Rawlings Conservancy Repaired shutters and windows @ Ft McHenry 12 bags of invasive plants removed from local parks Stream cleaning at Middle Branch

Gwynns Falls

18 Bags of debris collected – Sandy Point 8 Picnic tables constructed

35 foot wooden bridge constructed @ Sandy Point 3.5 miles of trail maintenance

½ mile of stream cleaned

7 raptor perches constructed @ Carrie Murray Nature Center 6 dangerous trees removed from trails Cleared 520 square feet of invasive plants Stone Path built

Gunpowder South

105 / 40 gallon bags of debris removed 12 Picnic tables constructed North Point fence constructed 50 feet of invasive plants removed from the Orange Trail 13 miles of trail maintenance 60 trees mulched Painted parking lines and lift gates Removed and replaced marine rope 240lbs of bamboo removed Replaced 45 buckets of beach sand for erosion control Replaced archery targets Replaced 65 feet of marine fencing

Gunpowder North

100 yards of growth removed for gardening 10 miles of trail maintenance 2 Storage sheds painted 9 large logs removed from trails Painted parking lots and curbs 67 / 40 gallon bags of debris collected 40 yards of invasive plants cleared 1 Patio built

1 barn painted 4 trenches constructed for gardens Scraped and stained 45 feet of fencing 75 wheel barrows of invasive plants removed 7 drainpipes installed Installed gravel floor to park structure

<u>Assateague</u>

6 picnic tables constructed 150 feet of dune fencing installed 14 recycling bins constructed 6 billboards constructed Bath house stairs built Built additions to Park Aviary

Susquehanna

12 Compost bins constructed 23 / 50 bags of debris collected 200lbs of bamboo removed 2 Insect hotels constructed 34 Native species planted 4.25 miles of trail maintenance 100 feet of fence installed 3 billboards constructed and installed 6 park signs constructed and installed Butterfly garden planted and mulched 2 Pollinator houses constructed Toll House garden landscaping

<u>Seneca</u>

Cleared 400 square feet of brush for Picnic pad installation Constructed 3 picnic pads

Weeded 87 trees

42 / 50 gallon bags of invasive plants collected Constructed obstacle course 2 miles of trail maintenance Rebuilt bath house 2.3 acres of mulch spread for playgrounds 4 tree stumps removed

Merkle

3 flying squirrel boxes constructed 4 Osprey tagged 6 bat boxes constructed 27 feet of fence constructed 1.5 miles of trail maintenance 2 bulletin boards built 1000 square feet of grass cleared for Nature Play Space Bird cages constructed

Patapsco – North

11 miles of trail maintenance Removed wood and rebar from steps at overlook Replaced and repaired walkway @ Hollofield Gate and blacktop installed 11 / 50 gallons bags of debris collected 1900lbs of fibar spread at park playgrounds

Patapsco – South

Hemlock Restoration – 20 Hemlock Trees planted and caged Soapstone Trail Reroute and Maintenance Built retaining wall for erosion control Constructed drainage trench Planted herbs in the sensory garden

Constructed planter boxes Pollinator garden @ the sensory trail 2 tons of invasive removal Painted parking lines @ Avalon Refurbish camp pads @ Hilton

