

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS

2021 Annual Program Report







Youth Employment in Parks is a unique employment opportunity for Anchorage teens. It is made possible by cooperation between the Anchorage Park Foundation, a non-profit which advocates for urban parks and trails in Anchorage, the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, and the support of generous funders.



WHAT IS YEP?

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS IS A SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR ANCHORAGE YOUTH THAT ENGAGES A NEW GENERATION OF DIVERSE YOUNG LEADERS AS CONSERVATION STEWARDS OF PUBLIC LANDS AND THE ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY THROUGH MEANINGFUL JOB TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND EDUCATION.

Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) is a joint program of the Anchorage Park Foundation and the Municipality of Anchorage's Parks and Recreation Department.

Since 2007, YEP has hired over 425 Anchorage youth to complete park improvement projects during the summer. The teens learn valuable natural resource management job skills by building trails, restoring stream banks, and performing a variety of other park improvement projects. Additionally, as part of the YEP program, teens engage in relevant educational opportunities to increase their civic engagement, environmental awareness, recreational activity, and leadership skills. At the end of the program, Mentorship Week links their new skills to future careers.

Each year, about 26 teens are selected from more than 100 applicants to be enrolled in the award-winning YEP program. The YEP summer program usually lasts for ten weeks and coincides with the Anchorage School District schedule to ensure opportunities are available to area youth

without interfering with school calendars. For the duration of the summer, these teens work full-time on park and trail improvement projects.

Funding for the teens' wages and project overhead comes from a variety of grants and contributions, both public and private.

YEP IN ACTION

- **YEP creates** employment opportunities and highlights career paths for youth to work in natural resources fields.
- **YEP inspires** youth to embrace nature while encouraging healthy lifestyles.
- **YEP prepares** youth to become effective, contributing citizens and employees through character development and community action skills training.
- **YEP contributes** to the community by improving parks and recreation spaces.



Youth Employment in Parks

A program of the Anchorage Park Foundation and Anchorage Parks and Recreation

2021 YEP Crew Members



Gabriel

Plays the trumpet



Cooper

Likes watching baseball



Alex

Enjoys cross-country skiing



Devon

Likes existing



Emma

Enjoys traveling



Isabel

Enjoys teaching Sex Ed



Jack

Enjoys driving & listening to music



Kaosheng

Likes video games



Katherine

Likes drawing



Owen

Enjoys snowboarding



Holten

Loves pineapples



JW

Likes debate and public speaking



Meira

Likes exploring



Jorge

Likes hiking



Lilly

Plays the saxophone



Dicanio

Likes working out



Fatoumata

Likes cooking



Xander

Enjoys photography



Ashley

Loves painting and drawing



Kyler

Was in JROTC for four years



Kenndra

Likes working



Reuben

Loves motorcycles



Favor

Likes roller blading



Thomas

Likes hiking



Amelia

Likes tennis

SKILL-BUILDING

YEP crew members participate in park improvement projects like streambank restoration and trail building.



PROGRAM STRUCTURE

PROGRAM DESIGN

Youth Employment in Parks is modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program of the 1930s. The YEP program is designed as a service learning program which balances the work product with job skills training, recreational activities, civic engagement, and environmental education.

The YEP program employs staff to design and implement relevant service learning activities that will help the youth realize the meaningfulness of their work and become engaged citizens.

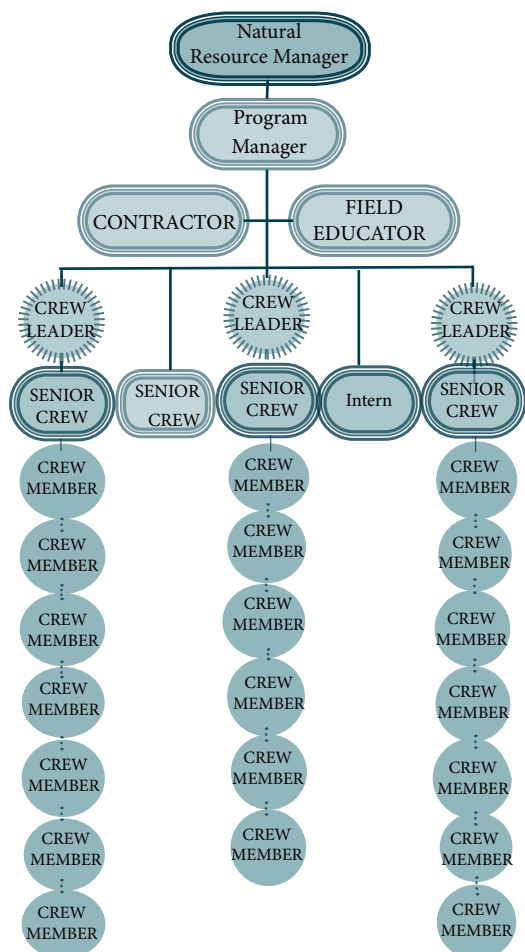
YEP PROGRAM GOALS

1. Create a meaningful first employment experience and career pathway for diverse youth to work in outdoors and natural resources fields.
2. Expose youth employees to the outdoors and connect them with nature to support a healthy lifestyle.
3. Provide youth employees with community action skills and character development so they may become effective citizens.
4. Build community through enhanced recreation opportunities, parks, and public spaces.

STAFF STRUCTURE

Youth Employment in Parks requires a variety of skills and a high degree of organization in order to accomplish its goals. Administrative duties are assigned to a handful of staff members, while project supervision and execution are carried out by the structured crews.

In 2021, the YEP staff divided into three field crews consisting of six to seven youth crew members, a youth senior crew member, and an adult crew leader. The field educator planned and implemented the service learning and educational components for the program, while the on-site professional trail building contractor managed the projects and ensured professional quality work. Both the natural resource manager and the program manager work year round coordinating projects, writing grants, and planning for the upcoming YEP program.



WE REFLECT ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE FEATURES A DIVERSE ETHNIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC POPULATION. THE TEENS EMPLOYED THROUGH THE YEP PROGRAM REFLECT THAT DIVERSITY.

In 2021, the YEP program hired 25 diverse Anchorage youth as crew members, senior crew members, and an intern. In addition, YEP hired three crew leaders, and a field educator. To qualify as YEP crew members, applicants must be a resident of the Municipality of Anchorage, be between 16 and 19 years old, and be enrolled in high school, a GED program, or possess a diploma.

The YEP program coordinates with local recreation centers, hiring centers, and the Anchorage School District to attract applicants. Because Anchorage features such a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population, YEP participants have a wide range of backgrounds.

Interviewers select applicants for the YEP crew that will benefit the most and make the best use of the opportunity. This means that all of the money that goes into YEP supports not only our parks and trails, but family needs and educational pursuits of YEP employees.

Nearly all YEP teens report a very positive, and sometimes life-changing, experience as a YEP crew member. Youth Employment in Parks aims to set teens on a path toward success in future careers, which many of our past crew members have accomplished. In addition to work and social skills, friendships are formed among YEP crew members that last for years to come.

2021 YEP PROGRAM NUMBERS:

25/3

**CREW MEMBERS/
CREW LEADERS**

11

**HIGH SCHOOLS
REPRESENTED**

12

LANGUAGES SPOKEN

28

**% SPEAK A LANGUAGE
OTHER THAN ENGLISH
AT HOME**

10

FIRST JOB EXPERIENCES

56/44

% MALE/FEMALE

10

**AVERAGE HOURS/
MONTH YEP MEMBERS
SPENT VOLUNTEERING**

***ETHNICITY:**

- ☐ 68% - White/Caucasian
- ☐ 16% - Black/African American
- ☐ 16% - Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ 12% - Asian
- ☐ 8% - American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ 8% - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

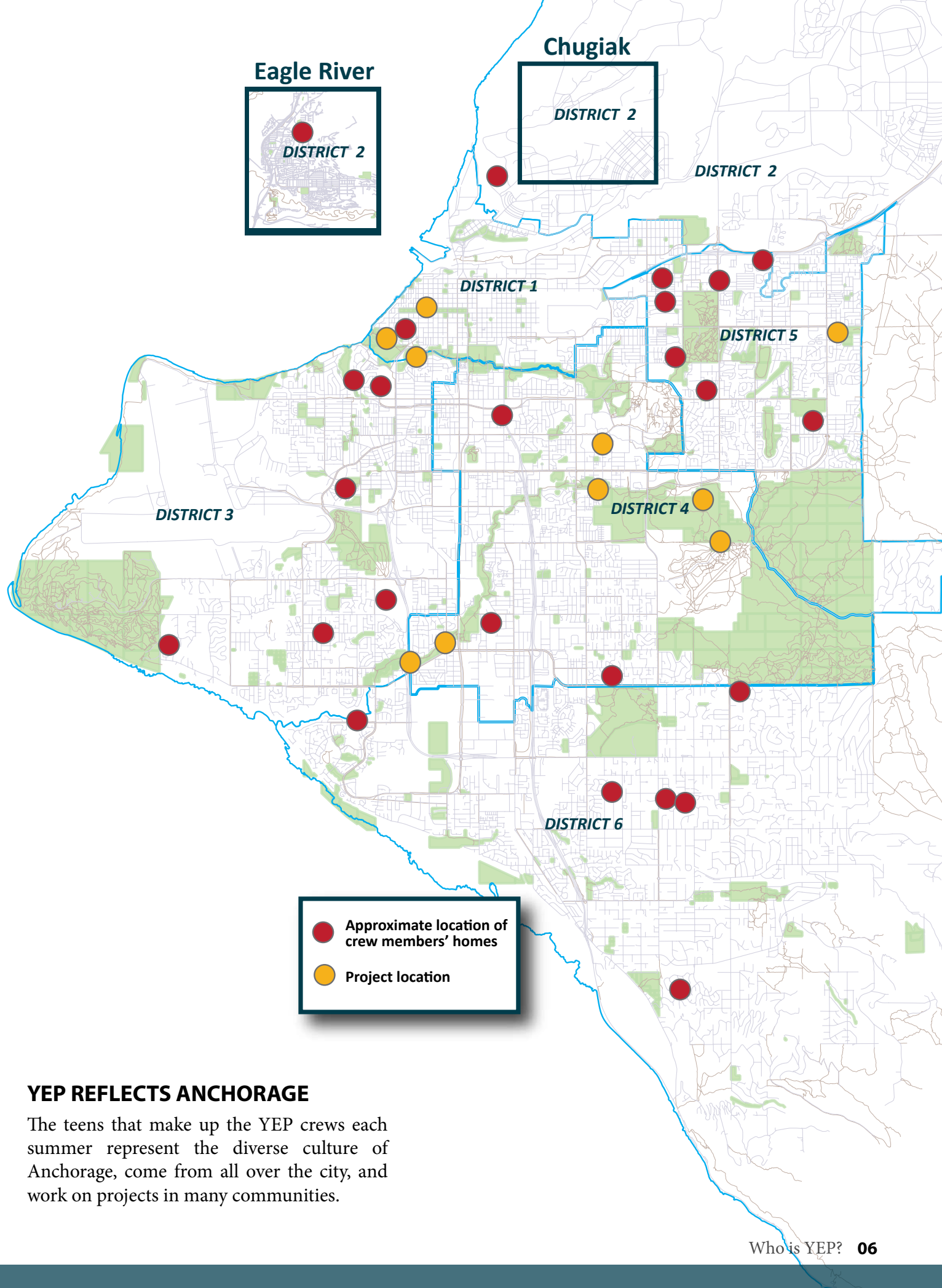
FAMILY:

- ☐ 39% - are from military families
- ☐ 25% - experience a disability
- ☐ 15% - have families that are considered low income
- ☐ 8% - have parents who are unemployed
- ☐ 7% - live in a single parent home
- ☐ 6% - are members of Alaska Native tribes

EARNINGS:

- ☐ 80% - will save part of their earnings
- ☐ 42% - will spend earnings on clothing and food
- ☐ 27% - will spend earnings on tuition
- ☐ 8% - will spend earnings on basic household expenses

*Some participants identify with more than one background



YEP REFLECTS ANCHORAGE

The teens that make up the YEP crews each summer represent the diverse culture of Anchorage, come from all over the city, and work on projects in many communities.

Coronavirus

Again this year, the YEP program looked a little different. We are all still dealing with a global pandemic and doing our best to make safe and healthy choices. This year we were able to work on projects together for the entire 10 week program, but we planned and proceeded with caution. The program was different but we made it work!

Due to COVID-19 we continued to maintain some physical distancing and implemented some new policies and practices. These changes allowed us to complete our projects and Education/ Recreation days in a safe and successful manner. Examples of these practices were:

- Physical distancing
- Encourage face mask wearing while inside
- 3 separate (each crew) Ed/Rec activities at the start of the program
- Hand washing and tool sanitizing stations
- Using individually assigned tools and PPE

In all, it was a very safe and successful summer despite the challenges of a global pandemic. We felt fortunate that we could return to the full 10 week program this summer and look forward to another great YEP season in 2022!!



Top: Kincaid Geocaching
Middle: Mentorship Week Tree Planting at McHugh Creek
Bottom: Volunteering at the Musk Ox Farm

EDUCATION

THE YEP PROGRAM IS NOT JUST ABOUT BUILDING TRAILS AND PLANTING TREES. YEP TEENS HAVE A WEEKLY EDUCATION AND RECREATION DAY THAT TEACHES A VARIETY OF SKILLS TO HELP THEM HAVE SUCCESSFUL CAREERS, BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND HAVE FUN!



While park improvement work is a major aspect of the YEP program, the program also incorporates a strong education and recreation element.

Youth Employment in Parks gives crew members the tools and stamina to stand out amongst their peers as skilled and reliable employees, stewards of their community, and future leaders.

On weekly education and recreation days, and sometimes during daily breaks, YEP crew members engage in group activities and discussions that are tied directly to the projects on which they are working. These sessions cover a variety of topics which emphasize civic engagement, job skills, environmental awareness, and healthy recreation. Crew members have hands-on opportunities to serve the community, apply new skills, and learn about a variety of different occupations, all while having fun! Youth Employment in Parks encourages teens to become leaders and create positive impacts wherever they go.



Top: Team building
Above: Kids Don't Float at Little Campbell Lake
Right: The Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center



VALUABLE SKILLS

The YEP program not only teaches the value of hard work, but equips teens with the skills to stand out from the crowd as dependable employees and contributing community members.



EDUCATION AND RECREATION



*"Thank you all for giving young people
the opportunity to be productive and
feel useful within their community."
- Favor Woko*

***This summer our education and recreation
opportunities were made possible by a North
Face Explore Fund Grant.
Thank You!***



"My appreciation for the natural world has changed during the program. I like looking at all the sights of nature and breathing the fresh air." - Fatoumata Sabally



"The most important lesson I learned this summer is that hard work pays off."- Dicanio George



"The most important lesson I learned this summer is that I can accomplish things I set my mind to." - Katherine Pugh



YEP PROJECTS: 2021

A SUMMER IN REVIEW: YEP CREWS COMPLETED 7 PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS OVER THE COURSE OF 10 WEEKS.



Chanshtnu Muldoon Park

Trail, ADA Pad, and Overlook Construction



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$62,000

Private Funds: \$3,000

Project Scope:

The YEP crew spent two and a half weeks working on various projects at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park. The teens constructed a small connector trail and an overlook pad, improved a small social trail that connects the west side of the park to the east side, constructed an ADA accessible pad in the community garden and a small accessible pathway through the food forest. The teens used wheelbarrows to move the gravel and compacted it to create a hard surface. The crews also removed over 100 bird cherry trees and saplings from the overlook corridor.

The project consisted of:

- Building structures for ADA accessible community garden plots
- Constructing soft surface and ADA accessible trails
- Removing invasive species from the trail corridor
- Hauling and compacting approximately 105 tons of gravel.

Project Dates:

May 26th - June 16th

Tour of Anchorage Trail

Trail Maintenance



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$60,000

Private Funds: \$14,000

Project Scope:

The YEP crew spent 3 weeks performing maintenance on the Tour of Anchorage Trail (TOA) in Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBP). The TOA Trail is a main artery through FNBP. The existing trail was uneven, muddy, and rooty; particularly on the Old Rony Trail segment of the TOA Trail. The final trail upgrades will bring the trail to Class 4 specifications. These upgrades will allow increased access for all user types and for a trail groomer. Final trail upgrades will match with the connecting BLM Viewpoint Trail, promoting a seamless transition between federal land and municipal parkland. New surfacing consisted of compacted gravel (E-1 material or similar) to match existing BLM surfacing. The YEP crew spent approximately two weeks in early June and then again in mid July working on the Tour of Anchorage Trail. Crews added gravel to approximately one mile of trail and performed general maintenance to improve the tread and trail corridor. These trail upgrades will be counted as match for a 2 million dollar Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant awarded by the Federal Highway Administration Western Federal Lands Highway Division.

The project consisted of:

- Hauling and compacting 360 tons of gravel
- Limbing sight lines
-

Project Dates:

June 14th -25th, July 19th - 23rd

Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail

Streambank Restoration



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$5,000

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant: \$12,000

Private Funding: \$2,500

Project Scope:

This project is part of a continued effort to restore our streambanks and fish habitat through rehabilitation projects. For this project YEP partnered with Alaska Geographic to obtain a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant. Areas along the Chester Creek Trail corridor have degraded over time from overuse and erosion. Chester Creek is an anadromous stream and this project was necessary to restore the banks and vegetation that provide fish habitat and bank stability. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is a long time partner of the YEP program and staff provided a two day streambank restoration workshop to provide the teens with hands on learning about the different techniques used to restore streambanks and improve fish habitat. The instream work included installing a new toe, 1,500 trenched willows, and approximately 75 ft of spruce cabling. The teens also removed over two hundred bird cherry (*Prunus* spp.) trees and saplings and replaced them with 500 willow stakes and 30 spruce saplings.

The project consisted of:

- Installing a new toe, 1,500 willows, and 75 ft of spruce cabled trees
- Pulling over 200 invasive bird cherry (*Prunus* spp.) trees and saplings
- Planting 30 white spruce trees and 500 willow stakes

Project Dates:

June 28 - 29

Westchester Lagoon Indigenous Place Naming

Bank Restoration and Landscaping



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$25,000

Private: \$5,000

Project Scope:

The Indigenous Place Names project (IPN) is a collaboration with several organizations to bring awareness to Anchorage's First People, Dena'ina history, and place names. Bringing Dena'ina place names into the built environment has been years in the making and has resulted in high profile projects such as the Dena'ina Center in downtown Anchorage, the renaming of Chanshtnu Muldoon Park from Muldoon Town Square Park, and the new Chanshtnu sign at Westchester Lagoon. Chanshtnu means Grass Creek and is the Dena'ina place name for Chester Creek.

The YEP teens spent a week working on the bank restoration and landscaping portions of the project. The teens laid down 20 yards of soil, 400 sq ft of sod, installed landscape edging, planted 19 Feathered Reed grass, 17 iris plants, and 15 Tufted Hair grass, laid down mulch, and placed 5 large boulders. The teens also installed two 30 ft rows of grass rolls on the lower toe of the bank to help with bank stabilization.

The project consisted of:

- Wheelbarrowing and compacting 20 yards of soil and 2 yards of mulch
- Laying down sod and landscape edging
- Revegetating the bank with two 30 ft rows of grass rolls and planting 51 plants
- Installing five large boulders

Project Dates:

June 30 - July 7

Folker Park

Park Improvement Projects



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$31,000

Private Funds: \$3,500

Project Scope:

Folker Park has been transformed into a health and healing park. Through challenge grants and work with community partners this park will have an art area, inclusive playground, paved labyrinth, fitness area, healing and reflexology paths, and musical instruments. The YEP crews spent a week working on various aspects of the improvements taking place in this park. The teens mixed and pour concrete to make four concrete bench pads, hauled 60 tons of gravel and pit run, spread 30 yards of topsoil, 20 lbs of native grass and wild flower seed, and 5 yards of mulch to even out paths and stabilize the area. The teens also installed 3 bird houses and planted 10 iris plants around the forget me not waterfall and river.

The project consisted of:

- Wheelbarrowing 60 tons of gravel and pit run to level out areas
- Spreading 30 yards of topsoil, 20 lbs of native grass seed, and 20 lbs of native wildflower seed mix
- Mixing and pouring 3 tons of concrete to build four concrete pads for benches
- Installing 3 bird houses

Project Dates:

July 5-9

Tree Planting

Reforestation Efforts



Funding:

MOA Funds: \$12,500

Arbor Day Foundation Grant: \$20,000

Private Funds: \$8,000

Project Scope:

The Municipality of Anchorage was awarded an Arbor Day Grant sponsored by FedEx. This grant purchased 500 trees to offset the devastation cause by the Spruce Beetle to our old growth White Spruce trees. An additional 100 trees were purchased from the Society of American Foresters. The YEP teens worked at various sites along the Campbell Creek greenbelt planting approximately 600 spruce and birch saplings. The teens also potted 300 seedlings purchased at the Society of American Foresters local chapter tree sale for future tree plantings.

The project consisted of:

- Digging holes for 600 trees
- Planting, fertilizing, and watering 600 trees
- Potted an additional 300 Spruce and Birch Seedlings

Project Dates:

July 7, 8, 15, 22, 28

Far North Bicentennial Park/Campbell Tract

Trail Maintenance



Funding:

BLM Funds: \$14,000
MOA Funds: \$50,000

Project Scope:

The teens worked alongside the Bureau of Land Management on trail improvements in Far North Bicentennial Park and Campbell Tract to create a seamless experience for trail users. The YEP teens worked on laying down gravel in known muddy spots and lopping overgrown areas along the trails. Altogether, the teens moved roughly 200 yards of gravel (~ 350,000 lbs) onto a half mile stretch of trail. The first week of work was devoted to getting the gravel evenly distributed along the trail, while the second week was devoted to smoothing, defining the crown, and the finishing touches to the tread to assist with drainage. Alongside the gravel project, crews worked on lopping to improve sight lines along several trails in the area.

The project consisted of:

- Brushing approximately 1 mile of wooded trail to improve sightlines
- Wheelbarrowing 350,000 lbs of gravel
- Shaping, crowing, and improving drainage along a half mile stretch of trail
- Clearing sight lines

Project Dates:

July 19 - 30



THE YEP CREW

The YEP program provides Anchorage youth an opportunity for employment that allows them to build social and leadership skills to use in their community and their careers.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The YEP program has a positive impact on local youth and our parks. You can support their work by becoming a funding partner.

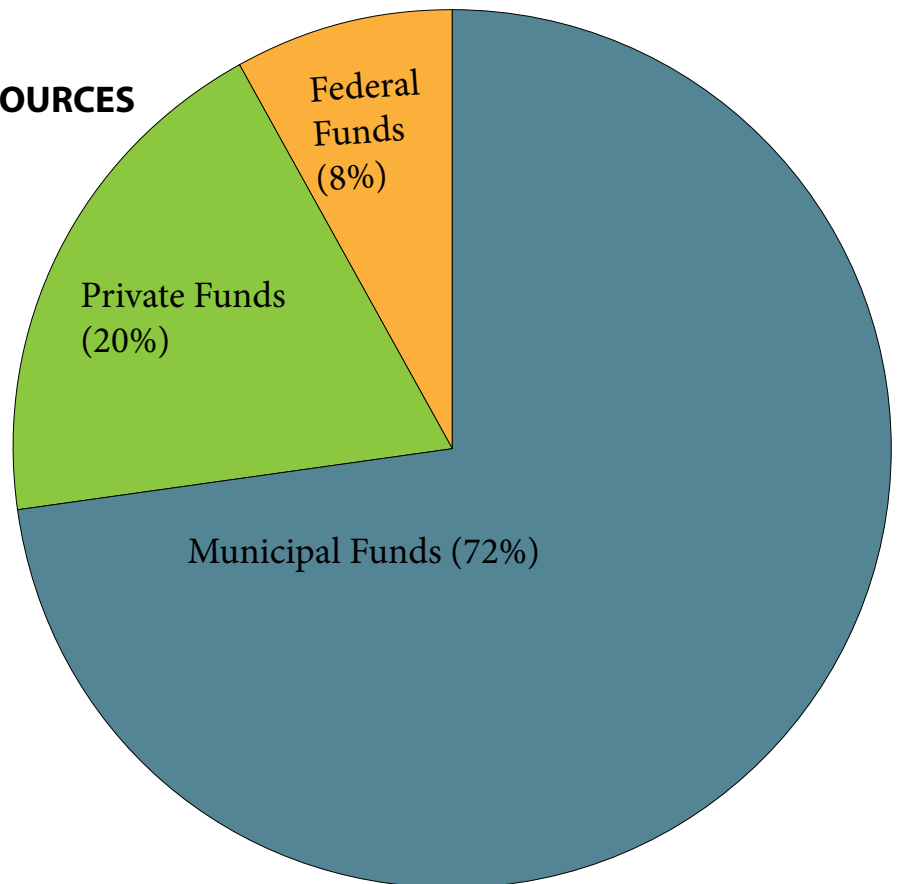


YEP FUNDING

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A COMBINATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING.

*2021 PUBLIC-PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES AND FUNDING BREAKDOWN

- Private Funds - \$68,000
- Municipal Funds- \$246,000
- Federal Funds - \$26,000
- Total Funds = \$340,000



*Funding includes all program cost

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to these partners and funders of the 2021 YEP program who have made a difference in the lives of 25 youth and thousands of community members through Anchorage parks and trails improvements.



YEP ACCREDITATION

THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS PROGRAM IS EXCITED
AND HONORED TO BE ACCREDITED BY THE CORPS NETWORK.



Anchorage's Youth Employment in Parks was accredited in 2014 by The Corps Center of Excellence. This esteemed honor is granted to highly rated youth development programs that provide participants with opportunities for leadership skills, job training, community improvement, and the development of environmental stewardship.

The Corps Center of Excellence is a leader of the corps movement. They provide an example for corps programs nationwide to harness the power of young adults to solve some of the nation's greatest challenges--often while transforming their own lives in the process.

Youth Employment in Parks is proud to have been granted accreditation by this leading organization. This accreditation assures partnering agencies and donors of the quality of the YEP program; further, the YEP program joins a group of nationwide youth development and service programs that have been evaluated to the highest degree.



The Anchorage Park Foundation builds Healthy Parks & Healthy People by mobilizing public support and financial resources for Anchorage parks, trails, and recreation opportunities.

To learn more about supporting Anchorage's Youth Employment in Parks program, please contact the Anchorage Park Foundation:



907-274-1003



www.anchorageparkfoundation.org



3201 C Street, Suite 110
Anchorage, AK 99503

2022 YEP Employment Information

YEP will be accepting applications for the following positions on these approximate dates:

YEP Crew Leader, Jan 10-Feb 27 (3 positions)

YEP Senior Crew Member, Jan 10-March 13 (4 positions)

YEP Crew Member, Jan 10-March 13 (21 positions)





A Special Thanks....

We would like to thank the following individuals, organizations and groups for helping to make YEP a reality this year!

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Forestry Division
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Boating Safety
- Alaska Geographic
- Alaska Rock Gym
- Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
- Anchorage School District
- Arbor Day Foundation
- BLM Campbell Creek Science Center
- BLM Anchorage Field Office
- E.A. Hamm
- FedEx
- The Home Depot
- Kaladi Brothers
- King Tech High School
- Lifetime Adventures Alaska
- Moose's Tooth
- The North Face Fund
- Northwest Archers
- NOLS
- Phillips Cruises and Tours
- Rasmuson Foundation
- Skinny Raven Sports
- The Student Conservation Association (SCA)
- The Bicycle Shop
- University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Victor Mollozzi
- Wells Fargo

Many individuals get involved with YEP by helping conduct education and mentorship activities. Contact us if you want to contribute!

To Contact YEP:

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**YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT
IN PARKS**