

# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS

## 2023 Annual Program Report











Photo Credit: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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.



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# 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.**

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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 480 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

## 2023 YEP Crew Members



**Owen**

Fluent in German



**Arielle**

Likes the color orange



**Enzo**

Collects Crocs



**Bodey**

Snowmachine mechanic



**Ben**

Rides dirt bikes and motorcycles



**Raif**

Has the only green helmet



**Ryan**

Took choir from K-12



**Liam**

Has two brothers



**Sylvia**

Likes dancing



**Dash**

On state champion track team



**Karol**

Middle child of 8



**Faith**

Aspiring animator



**Alex**

Born in Georgia



**Ally**

Is a vegetarian



**Zane**

Runs cross-country



**Judah**

Hard worker



**Jassity**

Hair used to be 4.5 feet long



**Ben**

Likes rock climbing



**Tex**

Likes to listen to music



**Christian**

Likes to go to the park



**Jayson**

Plays football



**Jonathon**

Likes scuba diving



**Seth**

Drinks a gallon of sweet tea weekly



**Logan**

Has flown a glider



**Abraham**

Can deadlift 500 pounds



**Kale**

Likes camping



**Adyn**

Can pop his shoulder



## 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.

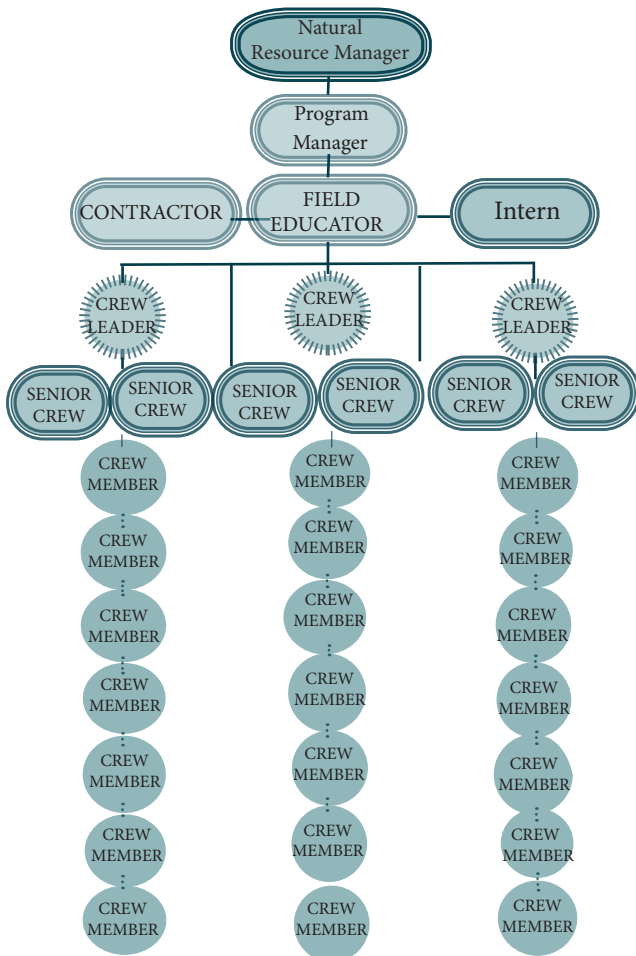
## YEP PROGRAM GOALS

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 2023, the YEP staff divided into three field crews consisting of seven youth crew members, two 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 2023, the YEP program hired 27 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.

**2023 YEP PROGRAM NUMBERS:**

27/3

**CREW MEMBERS/  
CREW LEADERS**

13  
**HIGH SCHOOLS  
REPRESENTED**

13  
**LANGUAGES SPOKEN**

30  
**% SPEAK A LANGUAGE  
OTHER THAN ENGLISH  
AT HOME**

10  
**FIRST JOB EXPERIENCES**

70/26/4  
**% MALE/FEMALE/Non-  
binary**

2  
**AVERAGE HOURS/  
MONTH YEP MEMBERS  
SPENT VOLUNTEERING**

## \*ETHNICITY:

- 57% - White/Caucasian
- 3% - Black/African American
- 10% - Hispanic/Latino
- 6% - Asian
- 13% - American Indian/Alaska Native
- 10% - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

## FAMILY:

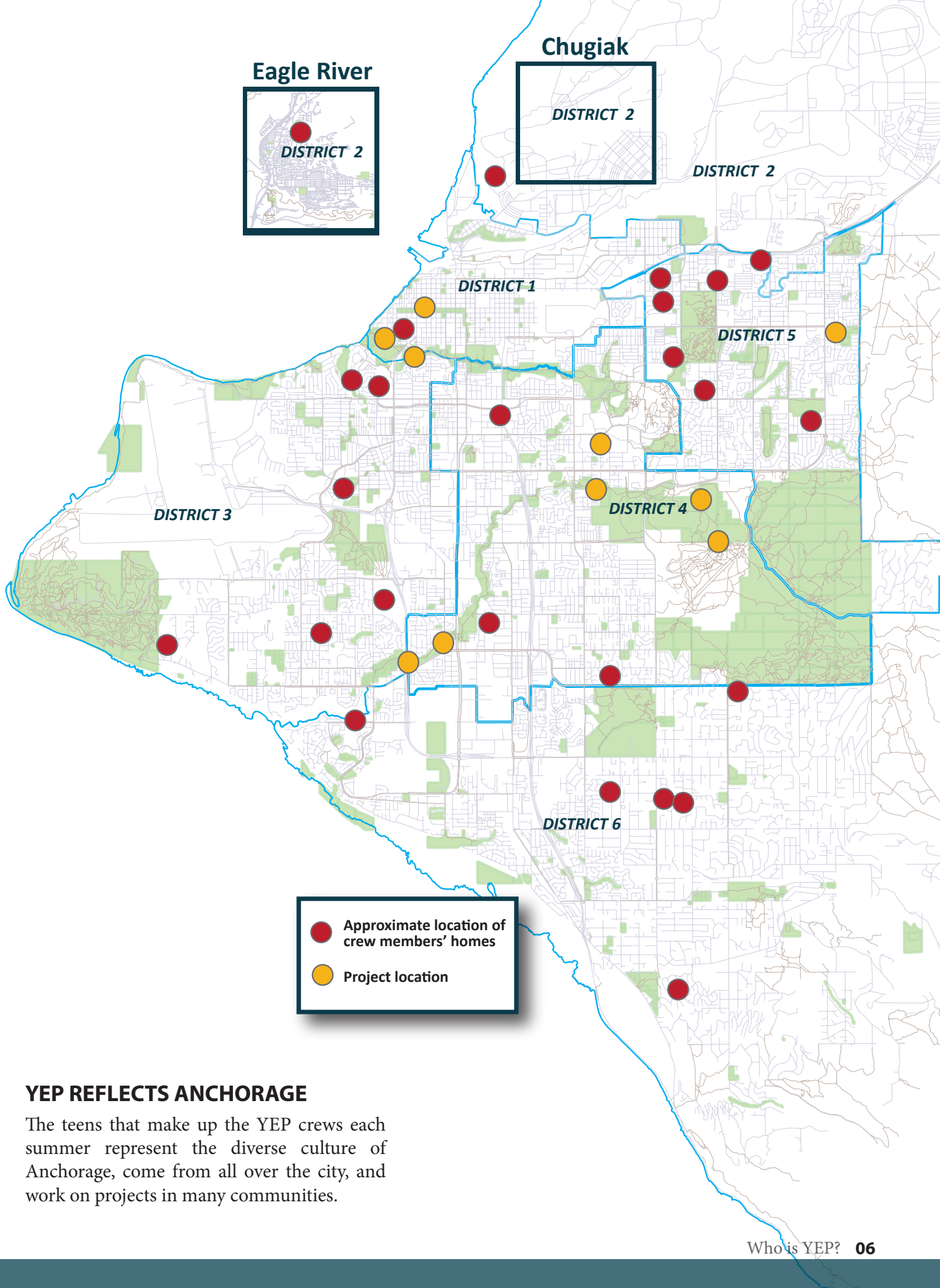
- 30% - are from military families
- 26% - have immigrant parents
- 30% - speak another language at home
- 26% - live in a single parent home
- 11% - have parents who are unemployed
- 11% - are members of Alaska Native tribes

## EARNINGS:

- 56% - will save part of their earnings
- 14% - will spend earnings on clothing and food
- 11% - will spend earnings on tuition
- 21% - 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.











# 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: New Crew Members Learning About the YEP Program  
Above: Senior Crew Members Organizing the Tool Traier  
Right: YEP at the Assembly





## 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





# EDUCATION AND RECREATION



*"My YEP experience was AMAZING! I enjoyed the wonderful people in the workplace. I would recommend future youth to join the program."*

*- Jayson Pickens*

***This summer our education and recreation opportunities were made possible by a NOAA grant. Thank You!***





*"With the right attitude and people, work will go by faster and seem more fun. Because of YEP, I am more active and extroverted." - Faith Gonzalez*



*"The most important lesson I learned this summer is that consistency and perseverance pay off." - Arielle Magana*

*"The most important lesson I learned this summer is how to work as a team with people from different backgrounds." - Jonathon Wooley*







# YEP PROJECTS: 2023

A SUMMER IN REVIEW: YEP CREWS COMPLETED 6 PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS OVER THE COURSE



# University Lake Dog Park

## Shoreline Restoration



### **Funding:**

MOA Funds: \$50,000

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant: \$39,000

### **Project Scope:**

The Youth Employment in Parks Teens worked at University Lake Park for over two weeks restoring approximately 3,200 ft of degraded shoreline around the lake. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game put on a Wildlife Habitat and Streambank Restoration workshop for the YEP teens. This included a classroom portion followed by a hands-on restoration project that allowed the teens to put their new knowledge to use.

For the instream portion of the project, the teens installed a 100 ft silt fence, a new 80 ft toe, dug trenches, and installed and layered over 5,000 willows cuttings with lifts. The teens worked with Fed Ex Volunteers to rehab an old trail. They added over 150 yards of topsoil and planted 150 trees and 160 shrubs and native grass seed to aid in restoration efforts. In addition, the teens dug trenches and installed an additional 2,000 willows at 3 different locations around the lake. Approximately 900 feet of dune fencing was installed to protect the instream restoration and trail rehab projects. Invasive *Prunus* spp. (bird cherry) was removed from various locations throughout the 64 acre park.

To still allow access and enjoyment of the lake, the teens grubbed a new 200-foot trail and built a 20 ft by 12 ft overlook pad. The trail and overlook involved moving and compacting 45 tons of gravel and constructing a 190 ft buck and rail fence around the trail and overlook.

The project consisted of:

- Grubbing a 200 ft trail and hauling and compacting 45 tons of gravel
- Constructing a buck and rail fence and installing dune fencing
- Restored an 80 ft section of shoreline
- Planting native plants and removing invasives

### **Project Dates:**

June 2nd -16th



# Tree Planting

## Reforestation Efforts



### **Funding:**

MOA Funds: \$25,000

US Forest Service Grant: \$15,600

### **Project Scope:**

The Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage Park Foundation were awarded funding from the USFS to help combat the devastation caused by the Spruce Beetle to our old growth White Spruce trees. This grant has helped fund reforestation efforts for the past three years. The YEP teens worked at various sites along the Campbell Creek and Chester Creek greenbelts planting approximately 600 spruce and birch saplings. The teens also helped care for approximately 1,800 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
- Caring for approximately 1,800 Spruce and Birch Seedlings

### **Project Dates:**

June 13th -16th



# Campbell Creek Trail

## Streambank Restoration



### **Funding:**

MOA Funds: \$25,000

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF): \$38,000

### **Project Scope:**

The YEP teens spent another week this summer working at various spots along Campbell Creek planting native vegetation to help restore areas of the bank that have lost a lot of the tree canopy due to the Spruce Beetle infestation and are experiencing erosion issues. The teens planted approximately 3,000 willows, 100 spruce trees and 100 native shrubs.

The project consisted of:

- Revegetating the bank with 100 spruce trees and 100 native shrubs
- Trenching 3,000 willows
- Watering all plantings

### **Project Dates:**

June 20th - 23rd



# Campbell Tract

## Invasive Prunus spp. Surveys



### **Funding:**

MOA Funds: \$50,000

BLM Grant: \$19,000

### **Project Scope:**

The YEP teens spent two weeks working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The teens walked transects on Campbell Tract and in Far North Bicentennial Park pulling bird cherry seedlings and saplings and recording the location of larger trees with GPS locations. The teens also helped remove an old moose enclosure. The enclosure was used to see how the forest would grow without the influence of moose. The enclosure was up for approximately 22 years and enclosed around 1.5 acres of forest land. The teens ended up taking down over 1,000 feet of fence.

The project consisted of:

- Using GPS applications to collect plant location data
- Hand pulling small bird cherry seedlings and saplings and flagging larger trees
- Removing an old moose enclosure

### **Project Dates:**

June 26th - July 7th



# Russian Jack Springs Park

## Single Track Trail Construction



### **Funding:**

MOA Funds: \$50,000

Challenge Grant Funding: \$16,000

### **Project Scope:**

The teens worked alongside Alaska Trails to help construct phase one of the new single-track trails on the Northside of Russian Jack Springs Park. Phase one of trail construction involved grubbing, shaping, and adding gravel to approximately 2,000 ft of trail. The teens used rock features to armor rooty areas and helped lay down gravel in strategic spots. The new trails followed social trails using topography to establish the best route for sustainable trail construction.

The project consisted of:

- Constructed approximately 2,000 ft of new trail
- Built rock features to protect roots

### **Project Dates:**

July 9- 20



# Abbott Loop Community Park Trail Maintenance



## **Funding:**

MOA Funds: \$24,000

Challenge Grant: \$10,000

## **Project Scope:**

This project was part of a challenge grant awarded to community members for improvements in Far North Bicentennial Park. The teens worked at Abbott Loop Community Park for two weeks working on drainage, hauling gravel, and shaping the trail to create a more sustainable tread. The teens hauled and compacted 142 tons of gravel.

## **The project consisted of:**

- Constructing french drains
- laying down geotextile in wet areas
- Wheelbarrowing 142 tons of gravel
- Compacting gravel

## **Project Dates:**

July 23-28



## 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.**



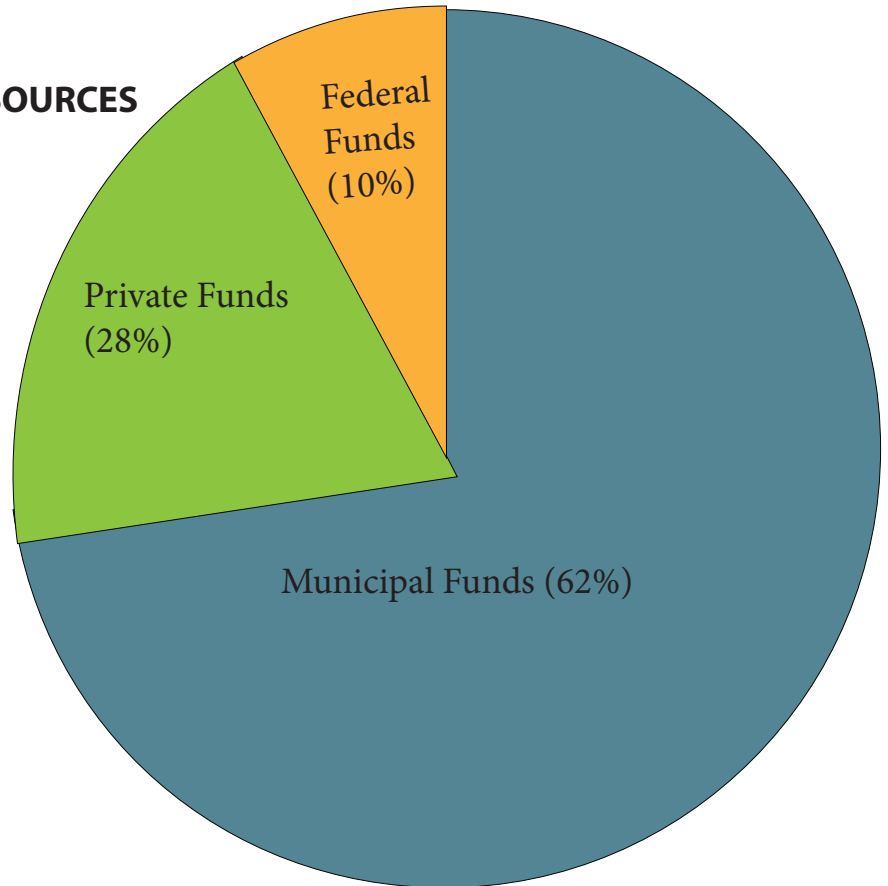


# YEP FUNDING

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

## \*2023 PUBLIC-PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES AND FUNDING BREAKDOWN

- Private Funds - \$103,000
- Municipal Funds- \$225,000
- Federal Funds - \$34,600
- Total Funds = \$362,600



\*Funding includes all project cost

## THANK YOU!

We are grateful to these partners and funders of the 2023 YEP program who have made a difference in the lives of 25 youth and thousands of community members through Anchorage parks and trails improvements.



ANCHORAGE  
PARK FOUNDATION





# 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](http://www.anchorageparkfoundation.org)



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Anchorage, AK 99503

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 2024 YEP Employment Information

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

YEP Crew Leader, Jan 15-Feb 27 (3 positions)

YEP Senior Crew Member, Jan 15-March 17 (5 positions)

YEP Crew Member, Jan 15-March 17 (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 Airlines
- 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
- 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
- NOLS
- Rasmuson Foundation
- Skinny Raven Sports
- U.S. Forest Service
- Victor Molozzi
- 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:

907.343.4355

[yep@anchorageparkfoundation.org](mailto:yep@anchorageparkfoundation.org)



**YOUTH  
EMPLOYMENT  
IN PARKS**

