



JUNIOR RANGER

2019 PROGRAM REPORT



We're teaching Boulder youth valuable work and life skills while they explore the city's open spaces and serve their community.

LEARN MORE AT OSMPJuniorRangers.org



Background

PROGRAM MISSION

The Junior Ranger Program creates an enriching work experience dedicated to preserving land through trail maintenance, stewardship and resource management service. Through our work, we foster awareness, knowledge and respect for natural and human communities while cultivating personal growth.



PROGRAM HISTORY

The Junior Ranger Program offers paid jobs for youth ages 14 to 17 years old to work with the City of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) department. Each summer, hardworking and dedicated Junior Rangers complete trail maintenance and construction, forestry, vegetation, and ecological restoration projects across OSMP. Junior Rangers learn critical work skills, explore OSMP, support department and Master Plan goals, and serve the Boulder community. Through the Junior Ranger Program, youth also receive career and leadership development as they work beside natural resource professionals and attend talks with department staff.

Established in 1965, the Junior Ranger Program has now employed over 4,000 youth. The program has built a legacy of community stewards who have a personal investment in the future of OSMP and all public lands.

SERVICE LEARNING MODEL

The Junior Ranger Program is based on service learning, which combines education with community service to provide a pragmatic,

progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs. As Junior Rangers, youth gain practical work skills while learning how maintenance and restoration projects impact larger environmental systems. Exposure to these management practices combined with educational presentations provided by knowledgeable staff, develop lifelong stewards.

We currently hire for two types of Junior Ranger crews: the well-known legacy Conservation/Trail crews and the Youth Ranger crew.

CONSERVATION/TRAIL CREWS

The Conservation/Trail Crews work on trail maintenance and construction, forestry, vegetation, agriculture, and ecological restoration projects. This provides Junior Rangers the opportunity to explore careers in natural resources and become confident stewards of public lands and leaders in their community.

YOUTH RANGER CREW

The Youth Ranger Crew works directly with rangers on field-based community ranger projects and skills-based training. Through experiential learning, youth discover how diverse ranger work is and what other career options exist in conservation, park land and natural resource management. First piloted in 2017, the Youth Ranger crew's vision is to engage youth through involvement in future program planning, land management planning, working to establish local and international partnerships, and encouraging opportunities for participants to be mentors to the next generation.



Program Goals

As an employer of Boulder area youth, our goals not only include meeting department deadlines and completing high priority projects, but also helping youth grow to become the very best versions of themselves. Our youth employment program benefits youth as much as it benefits our community and our OSMP system.



WE DEVELOP COMPETENT, WORKFORCE-READY YOUNG EMPLOYEES.

Teaching essential work skills such as timeliness, work ethic, professionalism, communication, and conflict resolution every day.

WE PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN LAND MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION.

Youth gain real world experience as they participate in forest management, trail maintenance, emergency services training, environmental interpretation, and visitor education and outreach.

WE CONTRIBUTE TO HIGH PRIORITY OSMP PROJECTS.

Many energetic hands make light(er) work.

WE FOSTER CONFIDENCE AND PERSONAL GROWTH.

Giving youth the tools and confidence to succeed.

WE TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK, COMMUNICATION, AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.

Ability to work in a team, solve complex problems, communicate effectively, and motivate and mentor others are consistently in the top 10 most desired skills according to Forbes and Business Insider.



WE OFFER FIELD-BASED EXPOSURE TO COMMUNITY RANGER WORK & NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Working side-by-side with our talented OSMP Rangers gives youth direct experience in Leadership, Teamwork, Communication, Environmental Conservation, Land Stewardship, Natural Resource Management, and Emergency Response.

WE GROW A CULTURE OF STEWARDSHIP AND CARE.

Having fun outdoors + meaningful projects = more engaged young people with strong connections to nature.

DID YOU KNOW?

You don't have to be selected for a job to benefit from the program... All youth who apply for Junior Ranger positions are granted an in-person interview. We do this so that all Boulder youth have the opportunity to practice critical jobhunting skills such as applying online for a government position, requesting a letter of recommendation, and preparing for and carrying out an interview.



OSMP Master Plan Alignment

In September 2019, City Council unanimously accepted and adopted the OSMP Master Plan. So, what does that mean for the Junior Ranger Program? It means we're doing all of the same great work, with renewed attention and effort towards these four key focus areas:

WELCOME DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND ABILITIES

In 2019, we hired a blend of new (first year) youth and returning youth to help provide a continuum of experiences to a variety of youth. We shared this job opportunity through:

- our partnership with Boulder Housing Partners
- the Peak to Peak Summer Job Fair
- brochures in English and Spanish
- staff presence at festivals and farmer's markets

We also updated the youth application to improve inclusivity of different backgrounds and experiences, and implemented a text reminder service to meet preferred communication methods. (CCEI.1, Tier 1)



CONNECT YOUTH TO THE OUTDOORS

The Junior Ranger Program has long been a critical component to OSMP's ability to connect youth to the outdoors, fostering interest, competence and confidence in enjoying and conserving nature. We achieve this by combining hands-on service learning projects with diverse educational lessons led by experts in their field. Examples include: birds of prey, fishing, forest ecology, fire ecology, and watersheds of Colorado. (CCEI.3, Tier 2)

“Junior Rangers are integral in helping OSMP Trails accomplish our workplans. They bring an excellent attitude, a desire to learn and integrity to complete their work to our high standards. I get psyched every time I see Junior Rangers on our projects because they bring me back to a time when working hard with your friends and going home dirty was not only the best job ever, but also the start of a lifelong appreciation for the outdoors.” - Beau Clark, Trails Coordinator

REDUCE TRAIL MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

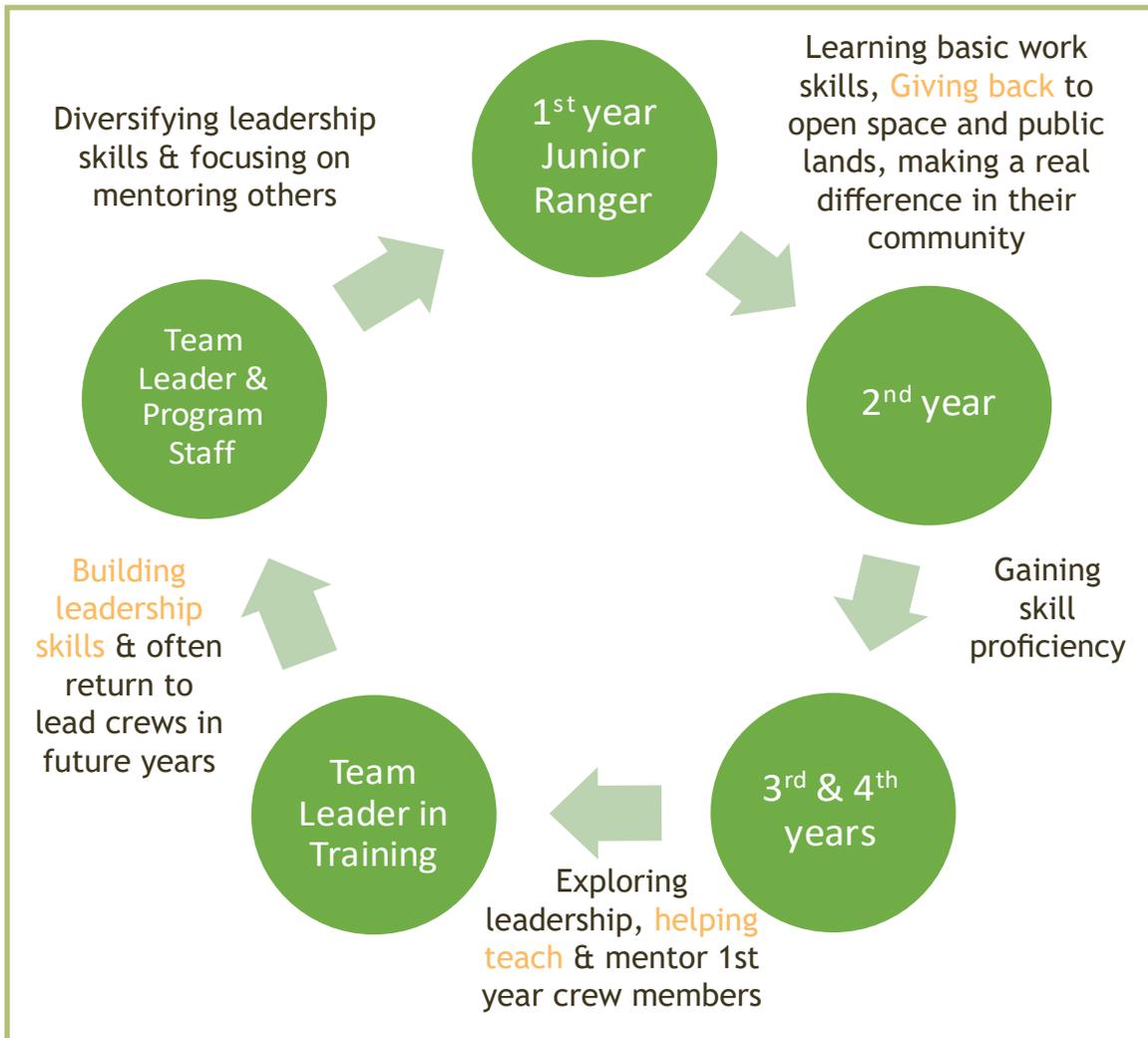
We are part of the maintenance approach that fixes immediate needs and contributes to projects that increase the sustainability and longevity of our existing trail network. Highlighted projects in this category this year were: Fern-Mesa Reroute, Green Mountain West Ridge, and Doudy Draw trail maintenance. (RRSE.2, Tier 1)



CULTIVATE LEADERS IN STEWARDSHIP

The Junior Ranger Program prides itself on the number of staff (youth and adult) who reapply year to year. They are loyal to the program and to their public lands not only because the job is incredibly rewarding and fun, but also because we offer **scaffolded** opportunities for returning staff.

These scaffolded opportunities build leaders in stewardship (CCEI.7, Tier 3) and provide meaningful career ladders for young adults.



FUN FACT

Hiring returning Junior Rangers also lowers training costs, produces higher quality work, promotes effective communication, and ensures continuity of program standards & traditions.

Working as a Junior Ranger is often just the beginning. Many graduates motivate others to serve in the program, seek jobs in conservation, return to OSMP as full-time staff, or continue to build skills as Junior Ranger Program staff. In 2019, 10 out of 18 program staff were once Junior Rangers themselves.

The Junior Ranger Program goes far beyond just introducing youth to land management, conservation practices and the value of open space; it builds thoughtful, solution-oriented leaders:

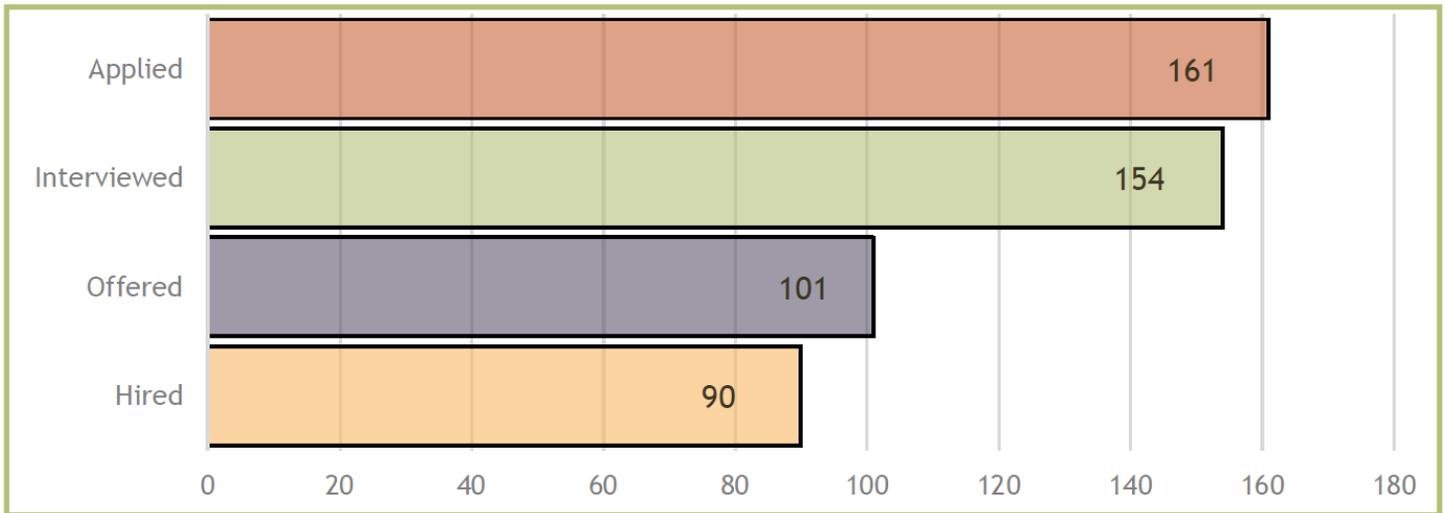
"Throughout my years as a Junior Ranger I have learned many things, such as working in a professional environment with a team. During this session, leadership is something I have been learning more about. My crew leads have given me opportunities to help lead the crew and use my previous experience to help guide my 1st year crewmates. Before JR, I would not have tried to put myself out there and take leadership roles. For me, JR is a great way to meet new people and improve my social skills. JR has also helped me with perseverance. If there is a project such as setting a rock that I get frustrated with, JR has taught me to be able to take a step back and look for a new solution. During this session I have been able to have a new experience by pushing my leadership abilities." - Jessica, 2019 Third Year Junior Ranger

Recruitment & Hiring

PROGRAM INTEREST & TRENDS

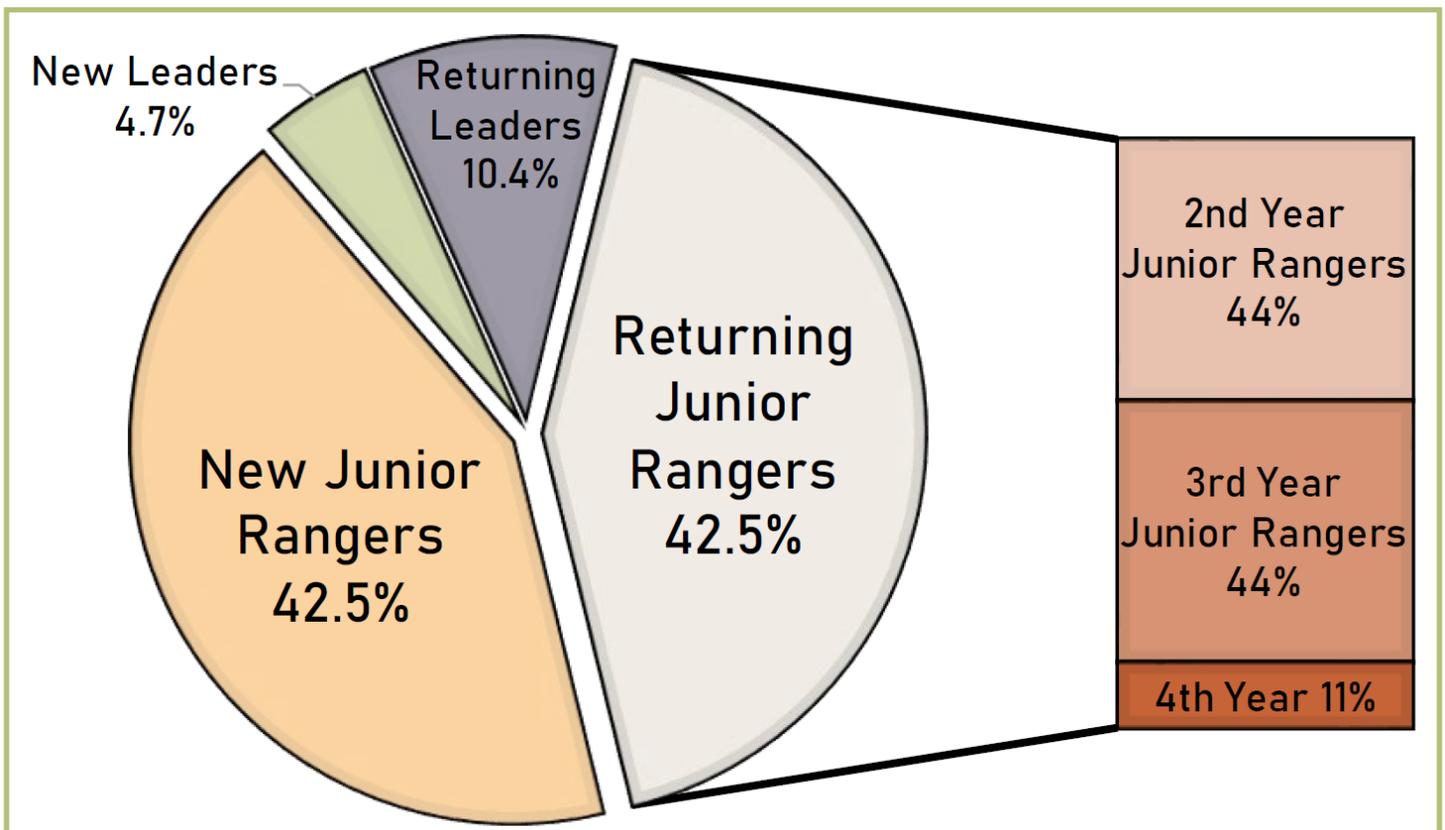
With a 50+ yearlong tradition of providing job opportunities to young people, the Junior Ranger Program is well-known and thus, competitive. We typically receive approximately 150-200 applications for 80-100 youth positions. This year was on par with this trend.

PROGRAM INTEREST & HIRING TRENDS



In 2019, 48.5% of hired staff (youth + leaders) had not worked in the program before. 51.5% of hired staff were returning to the program.

JUNIOR RANGER & LEADER RETENTION



YOUTH RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

For better or worse, the Junior Ranger applicant pool is primarily generated through word-of-mouth and returning staff. In the past, we have recruited through schools, teachers & counselors, job fairs, flyers, and the OSMP website. While we will continue to spread information in these ways, we also hope to increase awareness of the program and increase the diversity of applicants by reaching out to underrepresented schools, neighborhoods, and communities so that all Boulder youth who wish to do so, can apply successfully. See Future Program Opportunities on page 16 for more.

SELECTION & HIRING PHILOSOPHY

In 2019, we received 161 applications for 90 positions. As in past years, the vast majority of these applicants are **highly qualified, highly motivated**, and would greatly benefit from the opportunity.

To select which youth will be offered a position, we rank applicants based on **foundational skills**, such as their ability to be:

- team players
- self-motivated
- committed
- professional
- self-aware
- mature
- personally responsible for something
- excited to work outside with others
- willing to learn new things quickly

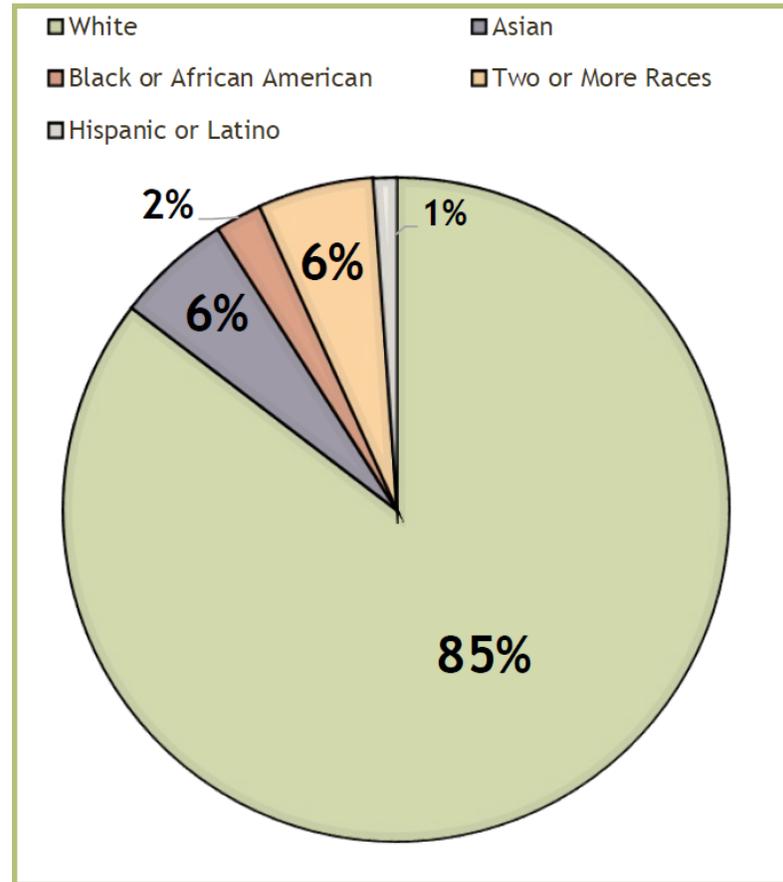
We weight these important skills more heavily than previous program or outdoor experience.

This allows us to hire a **diverse group (CCEI.1)** of highly motivated youth - diverse in age, ability, prior Program experience, background & gender (to name a few).

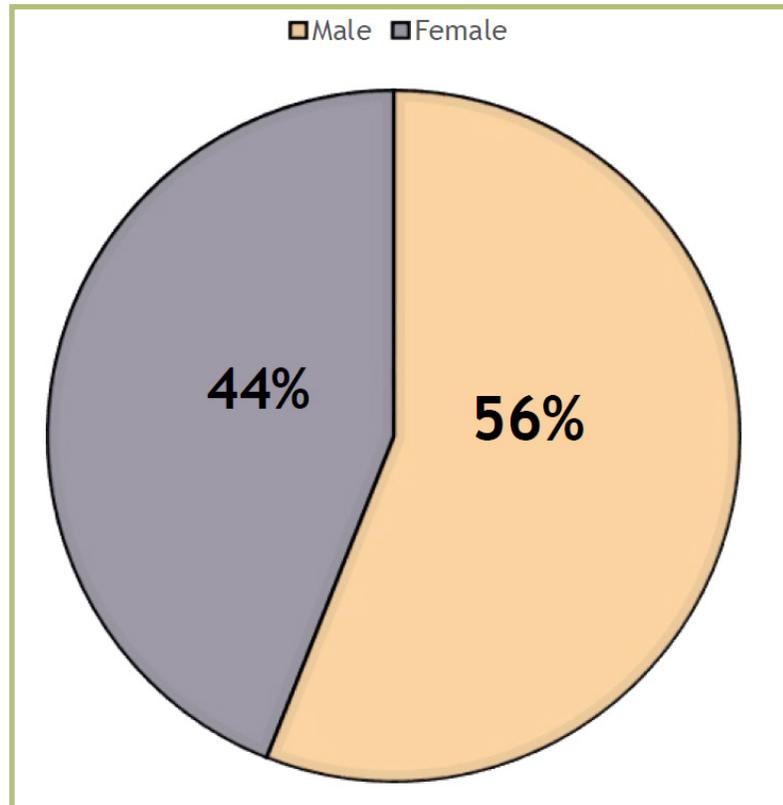
We believe the best way to serve the Boulder community is a **balance** between **exposure** (for as many youth as possible) and **expertise** (offering a continuum of experiences to develop stewardship leaders).

2019 DEMOGRAPHICS OF HIRED YOUTH

RACE/ETHNICITY OF JUNIOR RANGERS



GENDER OF JUNIOR RANGERS



Youth Impact: Testimonials

WE PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN LAND MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION.

“This session, I have been exposed to the work necessary for maintaining our trails, and thus have developed a better appreciation for them. In addition, I am now more familiar with different tools than I was prior to the session. [...] Working for several hours at a time has been a valuable experience and helped instill a good work ethic.” - Jack, 1st Year Junior Ranger

WE GROW A CULTURE OF STEWARDSHIP.

“Before I came to the Junior Ranger program, I wasn’t excited to go on hikes and be out in nature; however, after working hard with my fellow crewmembers on and off trail, I’ve gained an appreciation for the ecosystem and the trails and how much work it takes to maintain their beauty. I’m proud to have worked on such a great crew to do something that everyone can appreciate, and I hope to be back again.” - Brennen, 1st Year Junior Ranger

WE TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK, COMMUNICATION, AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.

“Junior Rangers is a job where you can develop important life skills like time management and discipline. Other things you learn as a Junior Ranger are how to do hard work, while working with a large group. The JR Program also helped me build stronger communication skills. Finally, during my time as a JR I got a greater sense of how many people and hours are needed to create something like a trail. I hope this sense will translate to a greater sense of community with my coworkers at my next job.” - Severin, 2nd Year Junior Ranger

WE FOSTER CONFIDENCE AND PERSONAL GROWTH.

“I think I have experienced a lot of positive growth throughout the three years I have participated in the Junior Rangers program. Before I joined, I think I was a much more selfish and impatient person. Having this job and working with amazing teams of people has taught me to be a much more hardworking, positive, patient and confident person. During this session I have especially learned how to be a more encouraging and motivating leader while working with a crew that is - in general - much younger than I am.”
- Ella, 3rd Year Junior Ranger

WE DEVELOP COMPETENT, WORKFORCE-READY YOUNG EMPLOYEES.

“The program taught me interesting things which encouraged me to get outdoors more. I have become much more hardworking and have devoted more time to personal projects because the program showed [me] how determined I can be if I put my mind to it. Overcoming challenges has also become much easier as I have been shown powerful thinking strategies that can be applicable to and outside of work. Overall, this program was beneficial to me in many ways that I wouldn’t have expected, and I highly recommend the program to anyone who is looking for a valuable way to spend your summer.”
- Theo, 1st Year Junior Ranger



System Impact: Work Accomplishments

WE CONTRIBUTE TO HIGH PRIORITY OSMP PROJECTS.

In **2019**, 90 Junior Rangers

worked **521** crew hours on OSMP projects

building **122** linear feet of **raised rock turnpike**,

creating over **950** feet of **new trail**, deberming and repairing

1,035 feet of **tread**, and moving a **daily** record of **10 tons** of

road base 780 feet on Doudu Draw! Junior Rangers also worked

alongside FEMP, Restoration and Vegetation Management Crews

where they **chipped 861 trees**, collected over **2lbs** of **Arnica**

seed, and **demolished** a hillside of **Moth Mullein**. The

Youth Ranger Crew also spent **81** crew hours

learning about OSMP and **teaching** younger

children **how to fish!**



Project Snapshot

DOUDY DRAW TRAIL MAINTENANCE



“Junior Rangers are integral in helping OSMP Trails accomplish our workplans. They bring an excellent attitude, a desire to learn and integrity to complete their work to our high standards.” - Beau Clark, Doudy Draw Project Manager



Junior Ranger crews contributed towards reducing the trail maintenance backlog. The Junior Rangers collectively spent 29 crew days on the upper part of Doudy Draw trail building a rock turnpike that will improve the usability of a section of trail that is consistently muddy and lacked drainage. This project required patience and teamwork to move and install approximately 100 large rocks, 300 buckets of small rocks (~8 tons), and 7 cubic yards of road base (~10 tons).



SYSTEM IMPACT: reduce trail maintenance backlog, improve trail usability, reduce future maintenance & personnel costs

YOUTH IMPACT: acquired technical rock building skills, improved patience, team work & problem solving skills, and increased confidence

Project Snapshot

PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE SWEEPS



Junior Rangers worked on preventative maintenance to retain and improve trail conditions across OSMP. They spent 25 crew days doing trail maintenance sweeps - roving along a section of trail clearing corridor and cleaning drainage structures to restore functionality to the trail. Trails that were maintained by Junior Ranger crews this summer include: Hogback, Goshawk, Springbrook, Viewpoint, Flagstaff, and Mesa. Overall, Junior Ranger crews cleared over 1,000 feet of trail corridor, cleaned 300 drainage structures, and repaired tread outslope on 1,250 feet of trail.



SYSTEM IMPACT: reduce trail maintenance backlog, retain & improve trail conditions (getting water off, keeping people on), restore trail functionality

YOUTH IMPACT: gained broad knowledge of trail functionality, trail assessment & project management skills, improved perseverance, goal setting and sense of achievement

Project Snapshot

FERN/MESA TRAIL REROUTE



Junior Rangers supported the Trails crew in a project that will improve habitat block size and create a more enjoyable trail experience. The work included removing vegetation, digging new trail, and dispersing excavated material. Their work will speed up the Mesa Trail reroute that will replace an old, dysfunctional section of trail that was challenging and costly to maintain. This season, Junior Rangers spent 19 crew days on the reroute, cutting nearly 900 feet of new bench and refining the tread to near-finished trail specifications.



SYSTEM IMPACT: reduce trail maintenance backlog, reduce future maintenance & personnel costs, protect sensitive riparian areas & habitat block size

YOUTH IMPACT: acquired technical trail construction skills, learned how to assess quality and complete to written specifications, improved goal setting and sense of achievement

Education Snapshot

As a youth employment program that hires many youth for their first ever paid job, education is at the heart of what we do. Every trail we shape, every rock we move, is a lesson in itself. This type of project-based service learning accounts for 83% of our crews' time (of that project time, 76% is spent on trails, 8% on forestry, 7% on vegetation management, 6% on restoration, and 3% on trailheads). Yet, we also set aside dedicated time during the work day (17% of their time) to provide more structured educational opportunities to ensure that the next generation is prepared to steward our land.

“Through the Junior Ranger program I have learned so much about the environment around me and about leadership in a team of peers. [...] I feel much more relaxed and comfortable working with the Junior Rangers than almost any other time of the year. Overall it has shown me how important open space and outdoor exploration is to me.” - Max, 4th Year Junior Ranger

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

- Environmental Education lessons from OSMP Naturalists
- Bike to Work Day for session 1 Junior Rangers and program staff who ranked 12th place out of 300 companies/businesses
- Sustainability challenge week for session 2 Junior Rangers
- Forest bathing and OSMP recreation lessons with David Ford
- Bird banding with Thorne Nature Center
- Outdoor safety, Leave No Trace, and Ranger responsibility lessons
- Wildland Fire lessons



“First I learned that it’s important to ask for help whenever you need it. Second I learned how important a team is and how we must all work together to get things done. This job has changed my perspective on life and it’s given me so much confidence. I would not be the person I am today if I hadn’t had these amazing experiences and I’m so thankful for that.” - Sasha, 2nd Year Junior Ranger

PROFESSIONAL & INTERPERSONAL

- Resume building workshop from program staff
- Accessibility hikes with Topher Downham and Vijay Viswanathan
- CPR/First Aid training
- Defensive tactic trainings
- Youth Ranger crew led public fishing program
- Patience with challenging coworkers
- Perseverance in the face of setbacks, disappointments or adversity & maintaining crew morale

SAFETY & PROPER ERGONOMICS

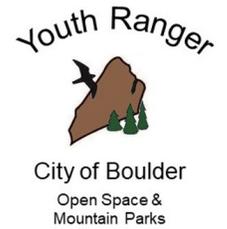
In 2018, we introduced Parks & Recreation’s innovative & robust ergonomic training to our field crews, working together to adapt the training each week. As part of the citywide team working on this effort, we were honored with the 2018 Values Award for Collaboration.

Our once per week trainings gave youth and adult leaders proper techniques for lifting and moving heavy objects safely, knowledge about which muscles to use for certain job tasks, as well as a clear message that doing things safely is more important than getting them done fast.



Crew Snapshot

YOUTH RANGER CREW, SESSION 1



YOUTH IMPACT:

Working side-by-side with OSMP rangers gives youth real-life experience in natural resource protection, leadership, and emergency response. We teach youth life skills while exploring new career paths in the outdoors.

SYSTEM IMPACT:

The Youth Ranger program transforms youth into life-long stewards of open space and creates future leaders who will help protect and preserve our natural resources in perpetuity.



“The program helped me realize that conservation is one of my deepest passions, and it prepared me with the knowledge and skills I need to follow that passion. It had an enormous formative influence on me.” - 2019 Youth Ranger

LEARNING & WORK HIGHLIGHTS

The 2019 Youth Ranger Program had a variety of different activities over the session. Each day was a unique experience encouraging the crew to explore new ideas and incorporate what they had just learned into the work. The activities, training, and work projects were a progression. Skills taught one day were applied later. Some highlights included:

Bird Banding - Youth Rangers captured and banded birds as part of ongoing avian research spanning more than 65 years.

CPR/First Aid - Boulder County Parks and Open Space instructed Youth Rangers who received a CPR/First Aid Certification

Wildland Firefighting - Boulder Fires' Station 8 discussed wildland fire fighting in the urban interface on OSMP and surrounding communities



Defensive Tactics - Rangers instructed the Youth Rangers on self-defense tactics used by law enforcement officers to protect themselves and visitors to the parks

Search and Rescue Day - Members of Rocky Mountain Rescue Group helped to create a mock search and rescue scenario

Bat Ecology Night - Youth Rangers were able to assist in the capture of bats and learned about the importance of their role in the ecosystem.

Herpetology - The Colorado Center for Snake Conservation allowed Youth Rangers to examine a wide variety of species learning about the important ecosystem role reptiles and amphibians play on OSMP.

Flight for Life - Lifeguard Station 1 visited the Youth Rangers to expose them to the world of emergency air transport and how they are used in search and rescue.

Interpretive Naturalist Training - Youth Rangers learned how to develop and manage a public program.



“Being able to witness firsthand the transformative powers of the natural world has truly been life changing. I have learned things about the world and the environment that have made me change my habits to help contribute to the conservation of the beautiful world we live in. I have learned skills that I know will not only help me in college, but will also help me for the rest of my life.” - 2018 Youth Ranger

Future Program Opportunities

With the completion of the Open Space and Mountain Parks Master Plan, we have important direction from the community on where to focus our energy first.

CONTINUUM OF LEARNING & STEWARDSHIP (CCEI.7, CCEI.3):

With the Junior Ranger Program and Junior Ranger-Naturalist (now Youth Ranger) crew fully merged under one umbrella, we have the opportunity to explore ways to further build out a comprehensive continuum of experiences to complement our existing programs. Some options include: a full season crew that focuses on more technical projects, additional crews during 2nd session to allow more 1st years to experience this job, specialty crews that focus on forestry or water quality, or school-year stewardship options such as a Youth Advisory Board or weekly volunteer projects.

FOCUS ON WELCOMING DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS (CCEI.1):

The Junior Ranger Program puts significant emphasis and effort into ensuring that our application process, recruitment methods, and program are inclusive and welcoming to the incredible diversity of youth that wish to work with us. However, because our biggest source of recruitment is word-of-mouth (thank you, alumni!), we recognize that the majority of applicants learn about this opportunity from the same social, socio-economic, religious, cultural, or school-affiliation circles. So, we follow intentional strategies to reach other community members and families who may not already have access to this incredible opportunity. Some strategies we currently use are:

- Rewriting job postings to be straightforward and accessible to all
- Offering drop-in hours for application support to all youth
- Building relationships with community members, partner organizations, and schools who work closely with diverse populations to share job opportunities. Special thanks to our colleague Juanita Echeverri for all her work building partnerships over the years.

In the next year, we will further develop a plan to diversify our workforce, including further outreach to parent groups, high school clubs, and possible radio outreach on KGNU.

HIRING PROCESS CHANGES:

This year, the City of Boulder transitioned to an online onboarding process through NeoGov. While this proved very efficient for the majority of new City staff, it was exceptionally challenging for our youth Junior Ranger members, who had to sign in to complete paperwork they needed adult support to fill out. In 2020, we hope to hold a “Paperwork Computer Lab Night” so that we can walk each Junior Ranger through the necessary forms and empower them to learn early job skills such as how to complete an I-9, W4, and Direct Deposit form correctly.

PARTNERSHIPS TO CHAMPION YOUTH VOICE & BUILD CAREER PATHWAYS (CCEI.7):

A major outcome of the Junior Ranger Program is to help youth develop the skills they need to confidently apply for future jobs - whether in natural resources or not. This year we hope to forge stronger partnerships with members of the Youth Exploring Stewardship (YES) Coalition and the E Movement to identify program pipelines, and start new initiatives where we identify gaps or opportunities.

“I have gained more than I can put into words. I’ve grown as a leader and as a person. Everything about this program was educational for me and has helped me develop my skills! I personally loved outside EEs so that I could learn as well.” - 2019 Team Leader

Acknowledgements

This program would not be possible without all the hard work and time from dedicated City of Boulder staff, conservation professionals, emergency responders, and other professionals who helped with this program.

CITY OF BOULDER OPEN SPACE AND MOUNTAIN PARKS STAFF

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Gabe Wilson
Trails crews
Forest Ecosystem Management Plan crew
Vegetation Management crew
Agriculture Management crew



OTHER PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM COLLABORATORS

Mary McCormack, Statewide Interpretation & Wildlife Viewing Coordinator for Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Steve Jones, Naturalist, Historian, and Author
Oakleigh Thorne II, Ph.D., Thorne Nature Experience founder
Flight for Life Flight Crew
City of Boulder Wildland Fire Crew
Cameron Young, Executive Director for the Center for Snake Conservation

BOULDER COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE STAFF

Sarah Andrews, Caribou Ranch Resident Ranger
Bevin Carithers, M.S., Ranger Supervisor
Amanda Hatfield, M.S., Volunteer Coordinator

“Two important things I learned this session was that an individual contribution to a team effort might not feel like much, but it makes a significant difference to the project. I also learned that water on trails is a bigger deal that I thought it was.” - Kendsy, 1st year Junior Ranger