



Linking community, education and environment through service

For Immediate Release

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Rocky Mountain Youth Corps Ramps Up Fire Mitigation Efforts

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, CO (July 14, 2023) – With the 3,000-acre Spring Creek Fire near Parachute ushering in Colorado’s 2023 wildfire season, Steamboat Springs, Colo.-based Rocky Mountain Youth Corps is hot on the trail with its fire mitigation efforts, tripling its chainsaw crews this year to seven, including its first [all-female adult fire mitigation crew](#). Its enhanced fire-mitigation program continues its tradition of engaging youth in the outdoors while linking community, education and environment through service.

In addition to focusing on fire mitigation, the crews also work on recovery efforts throughout the region, helping restore habitat in such areas as the East Troublesome and Cameron Peak fires. Their mitigation efforts also include six interns working in the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest in the Yampa and Walden ranger districts supplementing wildland fire staff. One goal of this agreement is in facilitating workforce diversity and employment opportunities within the Forest Service.

“These crews help mitigate fire risk, but their work also does a lot more, from enhancing wildlife habitat to combatting invasive species,” says RMYC’s Chief Program Officer Ryan Banks. “And our fire-specific internship program, which started this year, is a great pathway for getting hired with federal agencies afterward and making a career in fire mitigation.”



Working with a fleet of Stihl chainsaws, the mitigation teams undergo rigorous classroom and field training, with certification assistance from the Forest Service, before hitting the forests, where they clear everything from beetle kill to downfall and everything in between. With today’s fires regularly bigger than those the past, the RMYC crews are also in high demand as other Colorado-based firefighting teams often get sent elsewhere. “That often leaves a void here to complete local mitigation projects,” adds Banks. “We’ve been inundated with project proposals, from everyone from municipalities to the private sector. We’ve tripled our crews, but still have to say no to a lot of people; we’re just too busy.”

The forest service is grateful for the help. “We’re short-staffed right now so having the extra capacity RMYC gives us helps our efforts tremendously,” says Chris Green, assistant fire management officer for the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest. “And their program has grown substantially—my position, in fact, was created to help facilitate the amount of work RMYC is able to do.” Green adds that the crews are given a broad range of jobs, from re-orienting fuel to the ground to falling “low-complexity trees,” habitat restoration and more. At a recent project in Wyoming, crews worked on pinon juniper wildland mitigation to create a buffer with urban interface units, decreasing the risk for spot fires. “We try to get them as much

experience as we can and a broad perspective, which helps if they want to continue with a career in the forest service or other federal agencies,” Green adds.

Based in a 4,300-square-foot headquarters in Steamboat Springs, CO, RMYC has served more than 12,000 youth in its 30 years of service through its youth corps programs. Its crews perform such services as invasive species removal; habitat enhancement; building and maintaining hiking, biking and equestrian trails (including those on Colorado 14ers and along 250 miles of the Continental Divide Trail); felling and removing beetle kill hazard trees on public and private lands to reduce wildfire risk; and helping fight fires on BLM and USFS land.

About RMYC

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps engages the strength and potential of youth and young adults to make a difference in themselves and their community through meaningful service opportunities, educational experiences, and group recreational activities. RMYC strives to meet the needs of the communities of northwest Colorado by offering a variety of programs and services for youth ages 11-30 years old. Info: www.RockyMountainYouthCorps.org.