

Testimony of Marcus Hendricks  
before the  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests & Public Lands  
of the  
House Natural Resources Committee  
on the  
The Public Land Service Corps Act of 2009

April 2, 2009

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Marcus Hendricks. I am a sophomore at George Washington University, majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

I grew up in the D.C. area, and went to high school at the School Without Walls. I started working with SCA as a sophomore in high school to gain community service hours that I needed for high school graduation. I have now worked on three crews, as well as participated in the Conservation Leadership Corps program with SCA. Some of the happiest moments of my life took place in my service in the parks with SCA, not only because of the people that I was with, but also because the natural environment brought me to a place where we did not consider things at home like school- or work-related stress.

Before my SCA experience, I had very few field trips to national or state parks. The ability to work in the parks allowed me to connect what I was learning in the classroom with the work I did in the parks. For example, I learned that the mountains of Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Texas were carved out by large seas that existed thousands of years ago, evidenced by fossil remains of sea-based animals found in the now desert-like area. Watching videos in my high school geography class could not compare with seeing and hearing it with my own eyes and ears.

After planting trees and restoring trails in parks in Texas, West Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC, I developed a connection to the parks that I worked in and those like it. I believe that my service was valuable to me for a number of reasons. First, the fresh air found in national and state parks is simply amazing compared to the air I am used to breathing where I attend college in downtown Washington, DC. Also, parks offer a peaceful respite from the everyday stress and commotion of the city.

Second, my desire to protect the parks has increased. I now recycle more, refuse to litter, and always want to make sure that I take care of green spaces that we all must share. When I participated in a Potomac River clean-up event, my crew took several empty trash bags with us to the bank of the Potomac and we went to our cleanup site. When I got there, I saw so much trash that I was shocked. I could not believe that so much trash was left in such a small area along the

bank. After everyone on our team collected about 3 bags of trash each, there was so much more left that I knew that it would take at least 100 people filling at least 3 bags to make a significant difference in the amount of trash that was piled up along the shore. Since that experience, I have become a recycling “junkie” not only at home, but also at school.

In school, students should have the opportunity to enhance their classroom learning with outdoor field trips so that they can experience the personal attachment to what is learned in a textbook or in educational videos. When I proposed going to a local national park for my senior class field trip, several members of my senior class immediately turned it down. They said it would be boring, they would not want to get dirty, or they would not like being around bugs. I believe that they missed an opportunity to experience that sense of connection and attachment that comes with exploring outside or taking in the scenery on a hike on one of the trails I worked on.

If I had my way, this Committee would support any program that expands opportunities for young people to have meaningful experiences and connections to the parks and public lands the way I had with SCA. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.