



building bridges
to the outdoors

July 2009 Newsletter

Building Bridges to the Outdoors Program

Sierra Club Joins Congressman Raúl Grijalva to Support the Public Lands Service Corps

Washington, DC— On July 22nd, the next generation of public lands stewards and enthusiasts joined Congressman Raúl Grijalva, Sierra Club, the Student Conservation Association (SCA), the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), the Earth Conservation Corps and The Corps Network to clear the trail towards green and service-oriented jobs. Gathered at the House Triangle on the East side of the US Capitol building, Grijalva, SCA and Earth Conservation Corps youth participants, NPCA leaders and youth and young adults from Sierra Club took up tools to advocate for the Public Lands Service Corps Act of 2009.



Congressman Grijalva joins youth from the Student Conservation Association, Sierra Club and the Earth Conservation Corps to support the Public Lands Service Corps in front of the Capitol Building on July 22nd. (Image credit: Javier Sierra, Sierra Club)

The Public Lands Service Corps Act would expand an existing program to reach many more young Americans, more public lands and make service work on our marine and coastal ecosystems eligible for Corps funding. It would also help improve the resiliency of our public lands in the face of climate change.

During the event, Sierra Club praised Congressman Grijalva for his leadership in encouraging a new and diverse generation to follow the path towards green and service-oriented careers, and become the next generation of public lands employees and supporters.

Click [here](#) to read the press release!

Click [here](#) to read Sierra Club's Spanish-language blog (en Español)

United We Serve

www.Serve.gov

Register Your Event!!

During the week of August 3rd, the Obama administration's United We Serve summer initiative will focus on energy and the environment. Remember to register your events with the White House, and look for tips on how to make your event a success, at www.Serve.gov. Let us know about your event with the form on our [website](#).

Featured Events

Chicago Forest Preserve Stewards

Join BBTO's Doug Chien, the Holy Angels Boys & Girls Club and the Friends of Dan Ryan Woods for a UWS day of oak woodland restoration in one of Cook County's Forest Preserves. On Saturday, August 8th, volunteers will gather to remove non-native invasive trees and bushes from the Preserve in an ongoing effort to restore the health of the woods. Volunteers welcome. Click [here](#) for details.

Northeast Ecological Corridor Nature Preserve, Puerto Rico

BBTO's Camilla Feibelman and the Puerto Rican Chapter of the Sierra Club are hosting a UWS mural painting event on Saturday, August 8th. The mural features the Leatherback Turtle which nests in the Northeast Ecological Corridor Nature Reserve in Puerto Rico. The mural needs to be updated. The Reserve is under threat from developers who want to build hotels, luxury houses and golf courses in the Corridor. The mural lets the public know that one of our most important natural treasures is at risk. So, get outside and join Camilla and the Chapter as they work to protect the Isla del Encanto! To sign up or learn more, click [here](#).

Neighborhood to Neighborhood

By Douglas Chien, BBTO Chicago

Bronzeville is an African-American neighborhood on the south side of Chicago and was the historic heart of black settlement in Chicago following the great migration north in the 1910s and '20s. Home to famous jazz clubs, authors, and leaders of the black community it was a thriving cultural mecca. From its nadir in the 1930s and 1940s it declined. Only recently has new investment began to bring back some of its former glory. It remains a neighborhood in transition with many difficulties.

In early July, fifteen young people from the Holy Angels Boys & Girls Club in Bronzeville, traveled southwest about 60 blocks from Bronzeville to Beverly. Beverly is a stable neighborhood of mid to large single family homes set upon a hill and edged by Dan Ryan Forest Preserve. It is a majority white neighborhood with higher incomes.

At Dan Ryan Preserve we met up with volunteer steward and Beverly resident Benjamin Cox, who explained that we would be helping the Preserve by cutting out non-native and exotic trees and bushes that have invaded the Preserve, causing it to become unhealthy. Furthermore, we'd be working in a section directly across a street that has seen a string of home burglaries. The unhealthy woods appeared dark and forbidding as we set to work.

As we worked the kids chatted and explored. One found a slug and showed it around to the horror of the others. We watched as a monarch butterfly alighted on an oak tree newly freed from the choking grasp of the non-native trees.



Image credit: Doug Chien, Sierra Club (left and right)

During our time there we had three different neighbors come over and inquire, plus a few dog walkers. In response to learning what we were doing, they brought over ice and sodas and then water for the kids. More importantly, they wanted to know how to build support for the work and to get more neighbors involved. At the end of the day they asked when we'd be back and said they intended to have a BBQ for everyone!

We head back to Dan Ryan Woods in August.

Click [here](#) to read more about BBTO's work in Chicago.

Click [here](#) to read more about BBTO partner, Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago

Welcome Vernard Williams

Vernard is BBTO's new National Youth Outreach Representative. Vernard first became enthusiastic about nature during his days as a 4-H youth in inner city Brooklyn. Between his time competing against some of the best basketball players in New York City, Vernard planted trees, grew a community garden, and engaged in beautification projects alongside fellow 4-H youth. The lessons Vernard learned from experiencing the power of nature in his Brooklyn community heightened his passion for motivating young people and led him to earning a Jurist Doctorate degree from Howard University School of Law—an institution noted for its leadership in civil and social right's causes. Vernard is an engaging speaker devoted to helping children discover their interconnection with the planet, and is currently finalizing a novel detailing how one tree and a single person's dream can uplift the hopes of an entire community. We are so glad to have Vernard on board. Welcome!!

Quote of the Month

“Being outside is the only place where I feel like the impossible is possible and where I, in my mind, can soar infinity feet up to the sky. What calls me to nature is the feeling of being free and not in four walls. That's why I love the Building Bridges to the Outdoors program, for making sure that everybody gets to go outside and be themselves in nature. Everybody has his or her own reason to get outdoors. I know mine - what's your reason?”

Karen de Leon, 14, is a student and young leader with the Girl Scouts of Northern California, a BBTO partner. To read Karen's article in its entirety, visit the *Sierra Club Yodeler*. Click [here](#).