



**Florida Department of Environmental Protection**  
**Northwest District**  
**2020 Environmental Stewardship Awards**  
**Nomination Form**

Nominations must  
be received by  
**Dec. 11, 2020**

Please complete this nomination form and include with any supporting documents you wish to provide. Submissions can be mailed to:

Florida DEP  
Northwest District Office  
Attention: Ashley Livingston  
160 W. Government St. Suite 308  
Pensacola, FL 32502

Or by email to:  
Ashley.Livingston@FloridaDEP.gov

**I. Nominated entity information:**

Name of entity being nominated:  
Conservation Corp of the Forgotten  
Coast  
Address: 60 Island Drive, Eastpoint, FL  
32328  
Contact Person: Joe Taylor  
Contact Phone: (850) 323-0176  
Contact Email:  
franklinspromise@gmail.com

**II. Nominator information: (if not the same as above)**

Same as above (*skip to part III*)

Name of Nominator: Kim Wren/Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve  
(ANERR)/Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection/ FDEP  
Address: 108 Island Drive Eastpoint, FL 32328  
Contact Person: Kim Wren  
Contact Phone: 850/670-7718  
Contact Email:  
kim.wren@floridadep.gov

**III. Please use the space below to explain briefly how the nominated entity demonstrates significant and measurable achievements that provide a direct benefit to our environment by reducing environmental impacts, conserving resources, and/or enhancing ecosystem. Please be sure to explain how the activities stretch beyond Florida's environmental laws and DEP permit requirements. (You may use more space if needed, but please limit to no more than 2 pages.)**

The Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast is a comprehensive youth development program for young adults 18-25 years of age which provides participants with job training, academic programming, leadership skills, and additional support through a strategy of service that conserves, protects and improves the environment, as well as community resilience. This initiative will accomplish an array of specific habitat restoration projects throughout the region such as invasive species removal, living shoreline installation, oyster reef restoration, water quality monitoring, and pine savanna restoration. Not only is their focus on coastal restoration, the young people tackle everything from assisting with prescribed burns, forest restoration, protection of the red-cockaded woodpecker and all sorts of things intended to provide training opportunities that can lead to stable, drug-free, constructive careers.

The Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR) has partnered with the Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast over the last four years to accomplish critical conservation projects, while providing young adults an opportunity to learn about environmental issues and challenges. The group continues to coordinate on management activities that help to protect eroding shorelines and create essential habitat in the bay. Stewardship/resource management projects over the years have consisted of the installation, maintenance and monitoring of two living shorelines; planting and monitoring native marsh plants; creating oyster reef habitat; prescribed burn preparation; eradicating invasive species; enhancing public access through boardwalk maintenance, marine debris removal, maintaining trails, installing interpretive kiosks and kayak launches; and coordinating with the Reserve to develop a co-managed native plant nursery and oyster reclamation project to provide materials for upcoming restoration projects. The Conservation and Ed Corps young people are set to take a leading role in the Franklin 98 living shoreline project, under the auspices of the Apalachee Regional Planning Council. The project, to make the county's shoreline more resistant to storm damage and erosion, is funded by millions of dollars from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Emergency Coastal Resilience and Gulf Environmental Benefit funds.

Through the partnership with the Reserve, the Corps has expanded stewardship efforts and works closely with the Reserve-managed St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve to accomplish land management activities including prescribed fire management, invasive species removal, hydrologic restoration and public access enhancement. In addition, the Corps has assisted the Central Panhandle Aquatic Preserve and the Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserve's with resource management projects that have been especially critical to many laborious activities regarding a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Living Shoreline coastal restoration project. The well-organized and dedicated team has enabled projects to run more efficiently while increasing quality of work and productivity. The Reserve Buffer Preserve and Aquatic Preserves will continue to partner with the Corps on resource management and restoration projects and is excited about future opportunities.

**IV. If applicable, please explain how the entity being nominated demonstrates an organizational culture of environmental stewardship. (You may use more space if needed, but please limit to no more than 1 page.)**

Selected by the Corps Network and The Nature Conservancy to be part of the Gulf Coast

Restoration Initiative in 2014, the Coalition has brought the Conservation Corps of the Forgotten and Emerald Coasts to a reality. Now in the fifth year, the program is a comprehensive youth development program for young adults 14-25 years of age (veterans up to 29) which provides participants with job training, academic programming, leadership skills, and additional support through a strategy of service that conserves, protects and improves the environment, as well as community resilience. This initiative continues to accomplish an array of specific habitat restoration projects throughout the region such as invasive species removal, living shoreline installation, oyster reef restoration, water quality monitoring, and pine savanna restoration.

The Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast has gained a reputation for quality work, helping land managers accomplish critical conservation projects while providing young adults an opportunity to learn about environmental issues and challenges. Partnering with the Conservation Corps has been a cost-effective solution for habitat restoration. It is a win/win situation for the environment, for the crew members, and for land managers by providing meaningful opportunities to complete important natural resource projects. The Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast has a successful track record of completing conservation projects on time and within budget.

Crew members are engaged in a series of trainings and certifications identified by land managers in the Apalachicola watershed Region. These core skills are specifically selected to ensure crew members have the certifications and experience which positions them as qualified and desirable to potential employers. As crew members enter their final months of training, a career assessment targets their field/s of interest. Internships and further education are aligned to connect members to meaningful employment.

**V. If applicable, please explain how the entity being nominated provides environmental education and outreach.**

*(You may use more space if needed, but please limit to no more than 1 page.)*

The Conservation Corps empowers young people to positively impact their lives, their community and the land they call home. The Corp provides broad experiences including individual intern placements with natural resource partners as well as crew-based conservation service programs for youth, young adults and Veterans. The ED Corps was established as a partnership between Franklin's Promise Coalition and Franklin County Schools to facilitate crew members' efforts to attain their high school diplomas. Young adults can earn their credits, complete their testing and compete successfully for jobs with a diploma. Along the way, crew members engage in volunteer projects, stewardship projects and service-learning opportunities with a broad range of community partners to expand their support systems, build additional skills and bridge their social capital.

Corps empower young people with the knowledge and skills to be good stewards of our environment. Every year, thousands of people learn about conservation practices through community outreach programs delivered by Corps members. Corps members also attend local trainings and meetings such as the RESTORE Council and Panhandle Estuarine Restoration Team (PERT) meetings to present a willingness to be active participants in Gulf restoration activities. Once a year the group provides a Master Naturalist Training on restoration and living shorelines, along with a variety of other resource management activities happening in the region. The Corps Director also coordinates with the Reserve's Coastal Training Program Director to gather insight on opportunities for the Corps to increase stewardship and resilience within the watershed; help them to understand coastal ecosystems and the value of protecting our coastal and estuarine resources; and to build a strong stewardship ethic for the

youth in our community.

**VI. If applicable, please explain how the entity being nominated demonstrates innovation and exceptional achievement in environmental stewardship.**

*(You may use more space if needed, but please limit to no more than 1 page.)*

Conservation Corps offer a way to both restore valuable coastal habitats and train young adults in marketable job skills for the growing restoration economy. The Corps are increasingly seen by state and local officials as a solution to the Gulf's environmental and economic concerns. The Corps Network seeks to grow Corps capacity to employ more local young adults and veterans in restoration projects across the Gulf Coast. The Conservation Corps of the Forgotten and Emerald Coast is working towards developing the next generation of environmental stewards. Our local Corps has accomplished an array of stewardship and habitat restoration projects throughout the Apalachicola River watershed region and continues to be a tremendous asset to the Reserve's resource management program. Through their training and commitment to conservation and resource protection, the Corps has been able to assist the Reserve, St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve and the Northwest Region Aquatic Preserves with numerous projects and has provided thousands of on-the-ground hours to assist the Reserve in meeting management plan goals.

Crews are training in first aid/CPR, community emergency response, wildland firefighting, wildland chainsaw, and herbicide applicator licensing. Crew members and Corps leadership have honed their construction skills to design, construct and maintain Reserve boardwalks; designed, constructed, and installed low-impact marsh boardwalks at field test sites for the Reserve, completed prescribed fire preparation to help prevent and fight wildfires; completed hydrologic system restoration at the Buffer; cleaned and prepared wire grass seed for TNC/St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge; constructed and installed living shorelines to prevent erosion; created marsh and oyster habitat and maintained productive fish and wildlife habitats; assisted with fire plow scar restoration; relocated bat boxes at the Buffer, completed invasive species control at the Buffer and in the Apalachicola National Forest; increased access to public lands and waters; planted sea oats on St. George Island as a local mitigation project with Franklin County Emergency Management Office and Duke Energy; and restore communities and resources following disasters. Through service, Corps members gain hands-on job experience, earn certifications, and develop skills in leadership, problem-solving and teamwork. By partnering with the Reserve, local businesses, schools and training organizations, Corps help address local workforce needs and create pathways to employment. Federal, state and local government agencies partner with Corps to complete critical projects on public lands and urban infrastructure. Through these public-private partnerships, agencies complete projects sooner, save money, leverage resources and engage with a new generation of potential employees.