



**Rooting Environmental Resiliency:**  
*Connecting Local Youth to Conservation to Create  
the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards*

Laura Herrin  
Vice President Mid-Atlantic/Southeast/Gulf  
Student Conservation Association (SCA)

# Presentation Overview

- SCA: who we are; what we do
- Why Houston?
- SCA Houston Program
- Resiliency and the Conservation In Workforce
- Emersion-based programming
- Program results
- Conclusions



# Student Conservation Association



- **mission:** *to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land.*
- \$30+ million operating budget
- Public and private partnerships
- National and local cooperative agreements

# SCA Background

- Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam: Thesis
- SCA founded in 1957
  - First 2 young adult crews: West
- **Now:**
  - In all 50 states
  - 75,000 alumni
  - 2 million volunteer hours annually
  - 75,000 + alumni
  - 4,213 placements in 2014
  - 1,000+ partner sites
- Programs
  - First young adults
  - Expanded to high school then urban areas; now looking younger



# Why HOUSTON?

- **4<sup>th</sup> largest city** in the U.S.
- In 100 years, the **population grew >2 million**
- “The Houston region is now the **most ethnically diverse large metropolitan area** in the country, surpassing [NYC].”
- “Houston has among the **youngest populations** in the nation. The city has the **third-largest Hispanic and third-largest Mexican population** “
- “Energy Capital of the World” - “world’s second largest **petrochemical complex** and the nation’s busiest port in...foreign tonnage.”
- **Other industry** - aeronautics, medical, and technology
- **Coastal city-** high damage from natural/manmade (hurricane, flooding, oil spills, and industrial disasters.)



# Community Conservation Crews

## Community Conservation Crews

### Projects

- Trail (Cutting new and maintenance)
- Habitat restoration (native planting, invasive species removal, debris removal)
- Construction (using hand tools : foot bridges, culverts, boardwalks, fences)
- Erosion control
- Community Gardening



# Bayou & Estuarine- Based Projects

- *Conservation Outcomes Directly tied to estuaries*
  - *Harvest native plant and seed for urban & regional habitat restoration sites*
  - *Installation of culverts along for safe public access around waterbodies*
  - *Installation of native plant ID markers for public education*
  - *Large scale debris clean-up along waterways*
  - *Native grass planting in coastal marshes*
  - *Freshwater wetland invasive removal*
  - *Regional invasive species removal*
  - *Coastal tall-grass prairie plantings*
  - *Dune restoration*



# Community Conservation Crews



- **School-Year Community Conservation Crews**
  - One evening a month
    - Environmental education, teambuilding, leadership development, weekend logistics
  - One weekend a month: December – April
    - Service work, camping, outdoor recreation, & environmental education
- **Summer Community Conservation Crews**
  - Professional, work/service program
    - 4-6 weeks
    - Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm
  - Environmental Education Curriculum
    - Green jobs readiness, ecosystems, leadership,
  - Outdoor rec/camping





# Conclusions

- **SCA Crews Don't Just Build Trail**

- Programs also focus on regional ecosystems health which include invasive removal, native specie planting, coastal erosion control, debris removal, etc.

- **Emersion programming significantly impacts connection to nature & lives/career paths for urban young people**

- *“SCA was one of the best things to happen to my life and I can't wait to come and do it again.”* -  
Tauvon Dupiche-Thomas

- **Conservation industry needs to strive to reflect socio and ethnic make-up that of the community/nation**

- Consider collaborations with SCA for Community Crews

- **Additional data is needed for long-term (5- & 10-year) member impacts**

- Currently using qualitative data but working with The Search Institute



# Contact SCA!



## **Laura Herrin**

Vice President Mid-Atlantic/Southeast/Gulf  
Student Conservation Association (SCA)

[LHerrin@thesca.org](mailto:LHerrin@thesca.org)

## **SCA Houston**

3015 Richmond Avenue  
Suite 290  
Houston, TX 77098

(713) 520.1835

[SCAHouston@thesca.org](mailto:SCAHouston@thesca.org)

[thesca.org](http://thesca.org)