

STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION NATIONAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT



US Army Corps
of Engineers®



Authority



33 USC 2339, WRDA 2000, Section 213a: Assistance Programs, as amended by WRRDA 2014, Section 1047(e)

- To further training and educational opportunities about water resources development projects
- May enter into cooperative agreements with non-Federal public and nonprofit entities
- For services relating to natural resources conservation or recreation
 - Delegation of authority provided down from the Secretary of Army to ASA (CW), DCW, MSC Commanders, District Commanders in spring 2015
 - Allows district grants officers to enter into local cooperative agreements under this authority
 - Similar to a contract, but provides more flexibility in the scope of work that often results in more getting done than through a contract
 - Career pipeline to participants, larger pool of prospective employees





National Student Conservation Association (SCA) Cooperative Agreement



- National cooperative agreement administered by Fort Worth District, signed February 1, 2025. (1 year plus 4 options years, valid through January 31, 2030)
- USACE pays for crews and interns in a fee-for-service cost share, transferring funds via repositioning to SWF
- Corps provides training, equipment, on-the-job transportation
- SCA provides round-trip travel and living allowance, housing, and liability/health insurance.





SCA Snapshot



SCA is a nationwide force of young adult and high school-aged members engaged in protecting, restoring and interpreting America's public lands and green spaces.

- Founded in 1957
- Urban, Rural and Backcountry Placements/Programs
- Young Adult (18+) and Youth Members
- National Coop Agreements with DOI/USDA/DOD agencies
- 100,000+ alumni (many now USACE staff members)
- 20+ year partnership with USACE
- 65 SCA Members with USACE in FY24; 47,000 hours of service



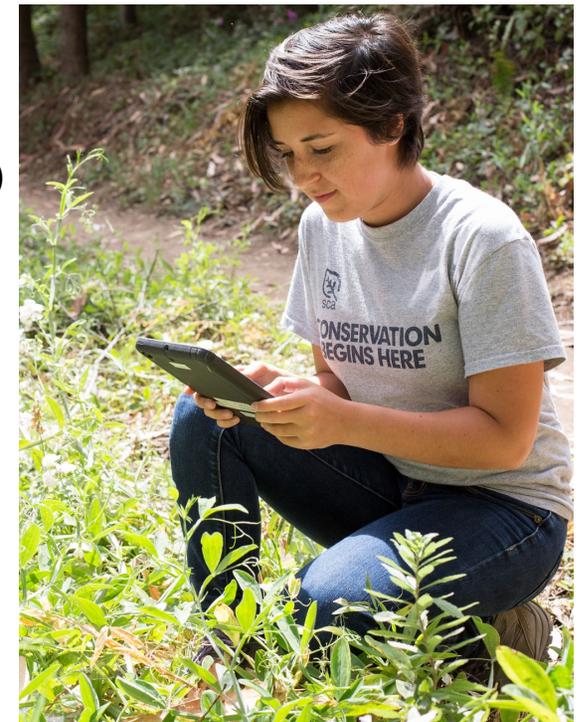


Common Disciplines



SCA members serve in a variety of resource management disciplines and capacities including:

- Fisheries & Wildlife Management, Pollinator Gardens
- Forestry & Land Management
- GIS Mapping/Data Collection (Hydrology, Assets, Boundaries)
- Invasive Species Management, Prescribed Fire
- Park Operations
- Public Outreach & Education/Water Safety
- Social Media & Public Relations
- Trail Maintenance & Development
- Visitor Services/Visitor Use Surveys
- Volunteer Coordination & Community Engagement





SCA Program Models



1. Conservation/Recreation Interns

- Individual (or multi-) Placements
- 18 years+
- Nationally or locally recruited to match desired skills and requirements requested by site
- 12 weeks to 12 months, serving at any time of year

The Corps provides:

- Funding
 - Housing (or cost of housing)
 - On-the-job transportation
 - Training and supervision; professional development opportunities
 - Challenging and enriching positions
 - Time log verification and performance evaluations
- ❖ Cost Range: \$10,000 - \$60,000 depending upon length, compensation, availability of housing and other programmatic variables.





SCA Program Models



2. Conservation/Recreation Teams

- Comprised of 3-5 SCA Members (interns)
- Supervised by an SCA Team Leader (waged seasonal)
- Include SCA vehicle, gear, equipment, tools
- 10 weeks to 10 months
- Specialized projects including habitat improvement, trail construction, invasives management, GIS mapping
- Require relatively minimal oversight by the host site

The Corps provides:

- Funding
- Project direction and support
- Housing (or cost of housing)

❖ Cost Range: \$45,000 - \$100,000+ depending upon length, size, availability of housing, vehicle needs and other programmatic variables.





SCA's Key Roles



Recruitment:

- SCA provides intern applicants to site; site interviews and selects member(s).
- Work crews/teams are selected and placed by SCA in coordination with host sites.

On-line Position Management

- Position Descriptions, Applicants, Time and Work Logs, Evaluations

HR, Admin and Program Support:

- SCA administers all member benefits including living allowance, travel allowance, housing allowance (if applicable), commuting allowance (if requested), health insurance, background check and SCA clothing/gear.

Risk Management:

- SCA provides worker's comp coverage, liability and accident insurance and operates a 24-7 emergency response system for managing field incidents involving SCA members.

SCA offers flexibility and accommodation to changing circumstances and unforeseen events.





Recruitment Options



“National” Recruitment (by SCA):

- SCA utilizes the position description (scope of work) submitted by site to generate an applicant pool. Applicants are then shared with the site coordinator to review, interview, offer and select. SCA on-boards intern once confirmed selection is made.

“Local” Recruitment (by USACE Project site):

- Site commits to recruiting a local candidate (daily commuter). Candidate contact info is provided to SCA. SCA Advisor guides the candidate through the SCA Intern Application and on-boarding processes.

SCA Teams/Crew Recruitment:

- SCA recruits and selects Leaders and Members based upon the required KSA's (knowledge, skills and abilities) necessary to complete the identified project work.





SCA Cost Estimates



Length of Service	Estimated Cost (w/housing provided)	Estimated Cost (w/\$600/mo. Housing Allowance)	Estimated Cost (w/\$800/mo. Housing Allowance)
12 weeks (3 months)	\$10,490	\$13,215	\$14,120
16 weeks (4 months)	\$13,015	\$16,645	\$17,855
26 weeks (6 months)	\$19,420	\$24,870	\$26,685
52 weeks (12 months)	\$44,495	\$55,390	\$59,020

Assumptions:

- Weekly Living Allowance: \$350/week (minimum, can be increased if requested by site, will increase cost).
- Relocation Travel Allowance: \$650 (cap, issued as a reimbursement). Interns recruited by SCA will be reimbursed for “relocation” travel expenses (home to site, round trip), capped at \$650 and included in costs above.
- Weekly Commuting Allowance – for local recruits, added in lieu of a relocation travel allowance. Note that any internship position can receive a weekly Commuting Allowance if requested.
- Housing – provided on-site or issuance of a monthly Housing Allowance. Applies to both SCA recruited and USACE locally recruited positions.
- Health Insurance – offered to interns serving 42 weeks or longer (cost included in 52-week cost estimates above).
- All intern allowances are subject to FICA, Medicare and SUI withholding taxes.
- Other: SCA Worker’s Comp, Clothing/Gear, SCA Background Check, Program Development & Support, FICA Taxes and Administration.
- Final position cost estimates developed utilizing requested “input variables” requested/provided by each site.





FLSA Compliance - *NEW*



Effective 7/1/25, SCA is no longer able to provide our members with an AmeriCorps Education Award (AEA) due to the federal government's elimination of the AEA Program.

Americorps legislation contained explicitly written "minimum wage exemption" language which meant we did not need to meet state-based minimum wage requirements when developing the compensation/allowance rates for their SCA members.

With the elimination of the AEA program however, SCA positions are now subject to Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements, meaning all positions must receive the prevailing [state published minimum wage](#) rate equivalent.

SCA calculates the hour wage rate "equivalent" by dividing the position's total weekly compensation (combination of all member allowances) by 40 hours/week. *Note: monthly housing allowance rates are divided by four to obtain a pro-rated weekly rate.*

Rates vary considerably by state (WV \$8.75, WA \$16.66) so minimum wage compensation thresholds will vary greatly depending upon state location.





Member Benefits

- “Expense Paid” via various allowances
- Health Insurance (for long-term positions)
- Career Exploration
- Skills Development
- Trainings and Certifications (“micro-credentialing”)
- NETWORKING

Note: effective 7/1/25, SCA is no longer able to provide members with an AmeriCorps Education Award (AEA) due to the federal government’s elimination of the AEA Program.





Testimonials



- ✓ “I am more prepared for my professional career because of the skills I learned here. I could not have asked for anything more!”
-Alejandra Larranaga, SCA Wildlife Intern, Willamette Valley Project

- ✓ “During the recreation season our park has an extremely high level of visitation, which makes it very hard to keep up with everything. The SCA positions are vital to the success of each recreation season.”
- Cote Womack, Park Ranger, Summersville Lake

- ✓ “The work conducted by our SCA Wildlife Interns was extraordinary. They were both essential to the daily operation of the summer wildlife program. We would not be able to accomplish most of our work without the help of the two interns.”
- Megan Innes, NR Manager, Clarkston Natural Resource Office





Key Takeaways...

- Start the process early, the earlier the better.
- Even if budget is not yet known, can still start planning and setting things up with Fort Worth PM in Operations (Jennifer Linde) and SCA.
- Contact Jennifer Linde and/or Gary King with questions.



...and a Shout Out!

SCA Intern Nathan Davis is presented with a Heartland Award for Outstanding Effort by COL Niewohner for Nathan's work to improve the integrity and functionality of geodatabase processes and systems for the Kansas City District's Natural Resource Management program. (April 2025)





Process to Obtain Interns/Crews: BLUF

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*****NOTE:** It is strongly recommended that you review the Master Cooperative Agreement before submitting a request.

1. Requesting site will prepare a Statement of Objectives (SOO) and provide this along with labor funds and the NTE (estimated cost of the work order) to SWF.
2. Allow at least 16 weeks from submittal of the SOO to boots on the ground.
3. The SWF Project Manager will work with the SWF grants and cooperative agreements team to award a work order to SCA for the effort.
4. SCA may not onboard interns before the work order is signed, but projects may work with SCA to develop position descriptions and recruit.
5. Once the work order is signed, the project will work directly with SCA for onboarding and during the duration of the work order.
6. Once the work is complete, SWF will deobligate the funds and close out the work order.





Developing the SOO



Your Statement of Objectives should include the following:

Location

Period of performance dates and length of service

Intern or work crew duties

Required and desired skills

Allowances: lodging, weekly subsistence, commuting, duty travel

Travel allowance to/from duty station

Recruitment: SCA recruiting, project recruiting, or both

Driving/transportation requirements

USACE points of contact

Requesting site must state what substantial involvement the government will have with SCA. (i.e. Coordinate services relating to natural resources conservation or recreation management; Provide close monitoring daily during project performance and job training; Involve interns in development of program decisions such as outdoor recreation management, visitor services, and natural resources conservation, etc.)





Housing Considerations



Government housing may be used if available.

In most cases, the intern will receive a lodging stipend and be responsible for locating their own lodging. In this case, the allowance should take into consideration local housing conditions/challenges.

At projects where short-term lodging may be hard to locate, one option is to have SCA rent an RV and park it in a campground.

Interns may share housing but each intern should have access to a sleeping area with a door that locks.

A lodging allowance should still be provided even if project is recruiting locally.





Frequently Asked Questions/Issues



If the intern will need to go TDY during their POP, you can include a “duty travel” budget item. The intern will submit receipts for their travel to SCA. SCA will reimburse them and then bill against the line item when they invoice.

Health insurance is included for interns serving 42 weeks or longer; if the intern does not take the insurance, these funds are returned to the project at closeout.

Interns can drive Government vehicles (with appropriate training) while on duty.

Changes in the budget (moving unused health insurance funds over to training, as an example) or other changes in the work order must be approved by the grants officer. Sometimes this can be done by e-mail, other times a mod will be required.

The Project Manager has plenty of templates available for the SOO.





Frequently Asked Questions



- Can you have more than one lake/location on a work order? Yes
 - Works best if the work order is similar scope, similar POP, similar allowances
 - Cannot closeout/deob (without a mod) until the final intern is done
 - Have one POC (usually district-level) for the entire work order
 - Partial deobs/closeouts will require extra labor funds
- Can you explain how the period of performance dates work?
 - In the SOO, you will need a number of weeks (12, 14, 30) and a date range. The date range can (SHOULD) be greater than the number of weeks
 - Example: 12 weeks between 1 May 2026 and 31 October 2026
 - This will allow time for onboarding and wiggle room for delays, lapses in appropriations, etc.





Process to Obtain Interns/Crews: Money



1. Labor: the requesting site should set up labor cross charges for the following and provide the information to the SWF PMs:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| – M2R0A00 (SWF PM-Linde) | \$1500 |
| – M2HO300 (Program Analyst Support) | \$1200-\$2400 |
| – M2P0700 (Contract Specialist) | \$3693.50 |
| – M2P0700 (Grants Officer) | \$1262.25 |

*This is an estimate to get the work started. Additional funding may be needed depending on the requirement and complexity of the agreement. Additional funding may also be requested to perform a modification and/or at the end of the period of performance to close out the agreement. Contracting labor rates for a modification are \$3020 and for a deobligation and closeout, \$3882. These labor rates are as of October 2025.





Process to Obtain Interns/Crews: Money



1. The estimated (Not to Exceed) amount will need to be repositioned to SWF before the SOO can be sent to SCA for official quote.
2. SCA's estimate will include:
 1. Intern allowances (lodging, subsistence, transportation, duty travel) determined by project
 2. Uniform and other personal accessories
 3. Background check
 4. Evaluation at end of POP
 5. Program development
 6. Program support
 7. FICA and Workers' Compensation (varies by state)
 8. Indirect Costs

*Admissions, recruitment and risk management are now folded into the indirect costs.





Process to Obtain Interns/Crews: Money



Indirect (NICRA) Costs:

Each estimate will include indirect costs. This is a percentage of the total direct cost of the work order. SCA has negotiated this amount with the Government to provide for its indirect costs of doing business- payroll management, legal support, etc. SCA's current indirect rate is 29.88%.

Previous estimates included admissions, recruitment and risk management as separate line items; they are now included in the indirect cost.

EXAMPLE:

Total of Allowances and other direct costs: \$20,000

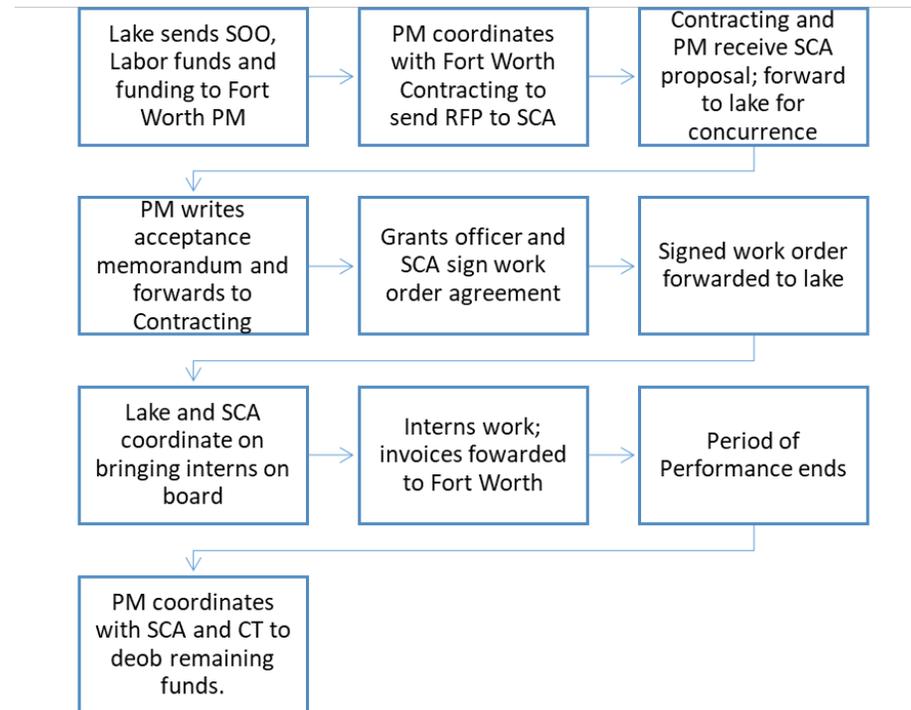
NICRA/Indirect Rate: 29.88% \$5976

Total cost of work order: \$25,976





Process to Obtain Interns/Crews: Summary





NOTE



At all times, Corps employees need to be very careful about not obligating the Government to any course of action or financial commitment when discussing aspects of this program outside USACE.

For example, be careful discussing benefits provided directly to interns by SCA such as scholarship or tuition voucher programs administered by SCA, which are not part of this cooperative agreement.





Invoicing



- SCA will send invoices (SF 270) to the SWF PM as often as monthly but may spread out to every two or three months depending on the length of the project. The SWF PM will send the invoices to the project for verification.
- Invoices should be reviewed by the project site within 48 hours (This is not a hard deadline. It is a recommended response time). Once verification is received from the project, the SWF PM will direct the program analyst in SWF to proceed with payment. The project is responsible for tracking and verifying hours worked.
- The SWF program analyst will input the invoice into CEFMS and send to Millington once all verification is made and the invoice is signed. ENG 93 forms are not required for cooperative agreements.





Modifications



- Work orders can be modified. Do not agree to any modifications without notifying the PM; only the grants officer can approve modifications to what is in the work order and to the budget.
- The most common modification request is to extend the end date of an existing active work order.
- Budget realignments require the approval of the grants officer.





Closeout/Deobligation



- Once the final invoices are received and paid, SCA has 90 days to submit a final SF-425.
- Remaining funds cannot be deobligated without the final SF-425.
- Once the SF-425 is received by the PM, you will receive a request for labor funding to close out/deobligate.
- Once the labor is received, the PM will request that the grants officer deobligate and closeout. Once that has happened, you will receive an email from the PA asking your project to pull back the remaining funding.
- Partial deobs can be done but there will be a labor cost.





Resources: NRM Gateway

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/partners/national.cfm?Partner=sca>



US Army Corps of Engineers ®

Natural Resources Management Gateway *to the future . . .*

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- [Lake Discovery](#)
- [Recreation](#)
- [Env Compliance](#)
- [Env Stewardship](#)
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Student Conservation Association

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is America's conservation corps. Our members protect and restore national parks, marine sanctuaries, cultural landmarks and community green spaces in all 50 states.

SCA's mission is 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.

Tens of thousands of green professionals, from park superintendents to urban planners, can trace their start to SCA. This is where college and high school students connect with nature, render hands-on service, gain new skills and perspectives, and launch a lifetime of stewardship.

- [Website](#)
- [Partner News](#)
- [Procedures to Request SCA Interns/Crews](#)
- [Map of SCA Intern/Work Crew Sites](#)
- [Agreement](#)
- [Partner Contact Information](#)
- [Success Stories](#)
- [SCA Public Safety Intern Training](#)

● Social Media Sites:



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/ SCA Partnership Locations 2003–PRESENT



Internships have included:
 GIS/GPS, Interpretation, Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Visitor Services, Volunteer Coordination, Trail Work, Natural Resource Management, Invasive Plant Management

High School Crews have included:
 Trail Reconstruction / Maintenance, Campsite Construction, Revegetation, Invasive Plant Removal

For more information, please contact:

Gary King
 SCA Partnership Director
 603.504.3230
gking@thesca.org





USACE Points of Contact



- Government Program Manager: Heather Burke, 503-808-4313
heather.d.burke@usace.army.mil
- SWF Project Manager: Jennifer Linde, 817-886-1578
jennifer.b.linde@usace.army.mil
- SWF Program Analyst: Deanna Hinton, (817) 886-1223
deanna.hinton@usace.army.mil
- Grants Officer: Cheryl “Sheri” Vendemia, (817) 253-3341
Cheryl.r.vendemia@usace.army.mil





SCA Point of Contact

Gary King
SCA Partnership Development
603-504-3230
gking@theSCA.org

