

JUNE 2020



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF WISCORPS

Statement of Solidarity

In response to the recent killing of George Floyd, WisCorps has adopted the following message of solidarity with those who are fighting systemic racism, injustice, and oppression in our country. We know that this is just a start and a statement has little value without action. To this end, WisCorps will begin to closely examine how we can bring more diversity, equity, and inclusion to our organization. Over the next several weeks, we envision a committee of staff, board, and community members who will begin to do this important work. WisCorps staff are also taking the critical first step of educating ourselves about anti-racism and the impact of systemic racism on people of color. We know that we will possibly make mistakes along the way, but we believe that taking the first step and following that up with subsequent specific actions is what we need to be doing.

We stand in solidarity with the Black community and those who must continuously mourn the deaths of innocent Black lives. The killing of George Floyd is just the most recent in a long list of examples of systemic racism, harassment, and violence against Black Americans and people of color.

Nobody should have to live in fear of harassment, violence, or death because of the color of their skin. Likewise, no one should lack access to quality education or healthcare, good jobs, or safe neighborhoods because of systemic racism within the very systems that are supposed to provide these basic needs to all Americans. We, as a society, can do better than this.

WisCorps is committed to advancing equity and diversity within the conservation movement, but we also recognize that we can and need to do better. Within the next few weeks, we'll share some concrete steps that we will be taking to do a better job of creating greater equity and diversity within our organization.

Right now, our hearts are with those fighting to end systemic racism, injustice, and oppression in our country – we stand in solidarity with you.

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2020 Environmental Education Summer Camps

WisCorps offers nature themed summer day camps for children of all abilities ages 3 – 8. Children spend time outdoors, investigate critters living in their natural habitats in the adjacent marsh and forest and engage in games, crafts and activities based on the week's theme. This week's camp was Silly Swimmers for ages 3 -5. Campers learned about fish, turtles and frogs as well as other aquatic animals.

These programs have a low teacher to student ratio for the best learning experiences. Other protocols put in place for a safe and enjoyable time during this public health crisis include having assigned seating that is spaced by at least 6 feet, having nature teachers wear masks, and frequent hand washing throughout the day. Each child is assigned a WisCorps Nature Play Kit for their own use during the camp. This kit includes equipment for nature exploration such as magnifying glasses and a bug catching box.

Unfortunately, since there has been an increase in COVID-19 cases every day in the La Crosse area this past week, we have decided to cancel the summer day camps for next week, the week of June 29 – July 3. We hope to be able to continue the summer day camps after this closure. We will make decisions about the continuation of our summer day camp programs on the Wednesday of the week before the following week.



Grants & Donations

WisCorps Needs Your Support!

Like many other non-profit organizations across the country, WisCorps' operations have been directly impacted by COVID-19. We are estimating a loss of approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 so far this year. The lost revenue is due to the cancellation of all of our EE programs from March through late May, the cancellation of our conservation projects that were supposed to occur early in the spring, and the closure of the Myrick Park Center which resulted in the cancellation of all events that were scheduled from March through May. Unfortunately, the revenue that would have been generated would have been used to meet operational expenses for the rest of this calendar year.

If you are able, we hope that you will consider making a gift to WisCorps during this difficult time. This past week, COVID-19 cases began to increase in La Crosse County which has resulted in the closure of our summer camp and the Myrick Park Center building into the beginning of July. We are taking these steps to ensure the safety of community members and of our staff. Unfortunately, this will result in additional lost revenue for our organization. Please visit our website, www.wiscorps.org to make a gift online or send your check, made payable to WisCorps, to 789 Myrick Park Center, La Crosse 54601. We deeply appreciate your consideration and support.



Myrick Park Center Update

We are currently in Phase II of our reopening. Due to the La Crosse County Health Department now listing our community in the "Severe Risk" category for COVID-19 spread, we are closing the facility to reservations through July 5. WisCorps is closely monitoring the situation of COVID-19 and evolving our prevention and response plan as the situation unfolds. For full details on Myrick Park Center updates due to COVID-19 and COVID-19 FAQ's about Reservations, visit myrickparkcenter.org.

The Dunes Crew

The Wetland Restoration Crew is based in Indiana Dunes National Park. The crew works directly with the head botanist as well as other park employees to restore the wetlands to their natural state. The Cowles Bog restoration project has been taking place for over 20 years and WisCorps has been providing an annual crew for 6 years. The restoration efforts involve removing invasive species, planting, seed collecting, and removing beaver dams to ensure a steady flow of water. WisCorps crews have specifically made huge efforts to remove the invasive hybrid cattails from Cowles Bog. This plant spreads rapidly and leaves little room for native plants to grow. Because these plants are so aggressive, WisCorps crews spend several weeks spraying herbicide in both summer and fall. This task is tough, but over the years, several bird species, pollinators, and even frogs have begun to appear after being absent for several years. This project really shows the crew what it takes to restore land as well as gaining a professional experience by working with the National Park Service.

This year's crew is led by Lia Landowski and Samuel Hyde, and includes members Sara Mikkelson, Veronica Bauer, and Bree Schabert. For more information on the Cowles Bog restoration project go to: <https://www.nps.gov/indu/learn/nature/great-marsh-restoration.htm>



WisCorps Health & Risk Management AmeriCorps Member Providing Crew Support



Sara Remes has been hired as the Health and Risk Management AmeriCorps member for this summer's conservation project crews. With the experience that she gained from working for WisCorps, and Minneopa state park in Minnesota, Sara has learned a lot about risk management in relation to field work and has been able to apply that knowledge to this new position for WisCorps. Additionally, her experience as a ski school director for 3 seasons, helped her gain skills in risk management overseeing a team of 60+ employees while also supporting other departments. From assessing and implementing risk management processes, to training staff/instructors about risk awareness, the director position improved her knowledge and understanding of risk management and the importance of it in all fields!

In her current role, Sara provides support to crews around issues related to COVID-19. She answers crew members questions about the WisCorps COVID-19 policies and procedures that are in place and explains how to follow them in different settings such as in camp, in public, and on project sites. Each day, Sara reviews the information from the health checks that are submitted daily by each crew member and will provide needed follow-up support and direction when a crew member does not feel well.

