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## Tomorrow's Stewards: Engaging Youth with Environmental Volunteerism

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Tomorrow's Stewards: Engaging Youth with Environmental Volunteerism

Miriam L. Nelson

Environmental Studies Capstone

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## Abstract

Environmental volunteers are of great value to their host organizations, the environment, the economy, and civil society. The Friends of Acadia (FOA) Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program hosts volunteers who complete an assortment of tasks in Acadia National Park.

However, this program has no regular youth volunteers. Engaging youth volunteers is critical for program effectiveness, civic engagement, generativity, and increasing personal development.

Drawing on survey data collected from FOA volunteers and College of the Atlantic students, this paper analyzes volunteer motivations and interests, and barriers to participation. I conclude with suggestions for how FOA can recruit more youth volunteers.

## Introduction

Environmental volunteering provides benefit to the host organization, the natural environment, and the volunteers themselves. Individuals may choose to act individually or as part of an established program with organized projects. Parks and national resource management areas commonly benefit from acts of environmental volunteerism.<sup>1</sup> Multiple national parks maintain strong volunteer groups through partnerships with non-profit organizations. These collaborations between non-profit organizations and the National Park Service have aided in boosting volunteering capacity and management.<sup>2</sup> Although there are a variety of volunteer tasks, stewardship volunteers are immersed in the outdoors, interacting with people of similar interests. Environmental volunteer activities are critical in environmental conservation activities,

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<sup>1</sup> Chen Ding and Michael A. Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?," *Sustainability* 12, no. 17 (2020), <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/17/6802>. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Joe Follman, Maria Cseh, and Jeffrey L. Brudney, "Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-Managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 26, no. 4 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21206>.

particularly in national parks that experience high visitation. This paper utilizes the definition of environmental stewardship by Bennett et al. 2018:

Local environmental stewardship is the actions taken by individuals, groups or networks of actors, with various motivations and levels of capacity, to protect, care for or responsibly use the environment in pursuit of environmental and/or social outcomes in diverse social-ecological contexts. In this definition, stewardship actions hinge on three central elements—actors, motivations and capacity—that are influenced by the social–ecological context and that converge to produce both environmental and social outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Stewardship projects are important as they provide engaged volunteers with the opportunity to see tangible results and the associated ecological benefits from their work in the natural environment.<sup>4</sup>

Youth participation is beneficial for the recipient organization, older volunteers, and society at large. Older volunteers make up a substantial portion of total volunteer hours recorded in the United States. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Although its volunteer rate was about the same as that of the total population, the older population accounted for median annual hours of volunteering that were close to double the median for the total population ages 16 and

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<sup>3</sup> Nathan J. Bennett et al., "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework," *Environmental Management* 61, no. 4 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-017-0993-2>. 599.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Ryan, Rachel Kaplan, and Robert Grese, "Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programs," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 44 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09640560120079948>, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227619383\\_Predicting\\_Volunteer\\_Commitment\\_in\\_Environmental\\_Stewardship\\_Programs](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227619383_Predicting_Volunteer_Commitment_in_Environmental_Stewardship_Programs). 632.

over.”<sup>5</sup> As will be discussed later, generativity—concern for future generations—is a primary motivating factor for older volunteers, where engaging with youth may provide a more satisfying volunteer experience.<sup>6</sup> Practically, promoting the interactions of young adult and older volunteers may lead to an increase in social capital, expose each group to new ideas, and provide guidance to the younger generation. The host organization has a critical role in bringing the generations together as “active collaborations between youth and adult volunteers are vital to the long-term success of community development efforts.”<sup>7</sup>

Getting young adults involved in volunteerism is a critical aspect of civic engagement and practicing citizenship.<sup>8</sup> “Volunteer service [...] provides opportunities to, at one and the same time, do good for other people, for society, and for oneself.”<sup>9</sup> Without active citizenship, young people may miss out on opportunities to contribute their insights to public problems or through “directing discontent into constrictive channels.”<sup>10</sup> Further, personal and psychological benefits can be gained by young adults through volunteering. These “include fulfillment of the

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<sup>5</sup> "Making Volunteer Work Visible: Supplementary Measures of Work in Labor Force Statistics," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020, accessed September 9, 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2020/article/making-volunteer-work-visible-supplementary-measures-of-work-in-labor-force-statistics.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?."

<sup>7</sup> Rosemary V. Barnett and Mark A. Brennan, "Youth Volunteers: Effects of Influences, Motivations, and Receptivity on Volunteerism," *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* 25, no. 1 (2008), [https://www.ijova.org/docs/IJOVA\\_barnettbrennan.pdf](https://www.ijova.org/docs/IJOVA_barnettbrennan.pdf). 39.

<sup>8</sup> Constance Flanagan and Peter Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood," *The Future of Children* 20, no. 1 (2010), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27795064>. 160; Jessica Washington, "Becoming Active Citizens: Motivations to Volunteer among Undergraduate Students in a Liberal Arts College" (Nonprofit Studies University of Richmond, 2018), <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=spcs-nonprofitstudies-capstones>. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Elaine Suk-ching Au Liu, Michael J. Holosko, and T. Wing Lo, *Youth Empowerment and Volunteerism : Principles, Policies and Practices* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2009), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=6119150>, <https://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9789629374662>. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Flanagan and Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood." 160.

human need to belong and to feel that life has a purpose beyond the pursuit of individual gain.”<sup>11</sup> As U.S. college students are of voting age, volunteering may also correlate with political activity. Participating in nonpolitical civic activities increases the likelihood that people “will obtain the means, motive, and opportunity, to become politically active.”<sup>12</sup>

Schools can play a significant role in increasing youth engagement in volunteerism.<sup>13</sup> In particular, service-learning components of high school and college programs provide pathways for students to become engaged in volunteer work early.<sup>14</sup> These opportunities may be required (for instances such as scholarships or recording hours through the school) or simply encouraged. Colleges and universities are increasing expectations for students to engage in volunteer work, which may suggest the importance of these institutions in directing attention to various nonprofits and other organizations with volunteer opportunities.<sup>15</sup>

### *Research Question*

This paper addresses the question, how can Friends of Acadia (FOA) and Acadia National Park (ANP) attract more young volunteers to the Drop-In Stewardship Program? I suggest that Friends of Acadia can utilize strategies that directly engage young adults on Mount Desert Island in order to increase community engagement and foster connections between adult and youth volunteers. Recruitment strategies are investigated through surveys of regular and returning FOA drop-in stewardship volunteers and currently enrolled College of the Atlantic

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<sup>11</sup> Flanagan and Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood." 160.

<sup>12</sup> Casey A. Klofstad, *New Advances in the Study of Civic Voluntarism: Resources, Engagement, and Recruitment* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2016). 3.

<sup>13</sup> Scott C. Stevenson, *Youth Volunteers: How to Recruit, Train, Motivate and Reward Young Volunteers* (Sioux City, Iowa: Stevenson, Inc., 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118703755>.

<sup>14</sup> Barnett and Brennan, "Youth Volunteers: Effects of Influences, Motivations, and Receptivity on Volunteerism." 40.

<sup>15</sup> Flanagan and Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood." 168.

students. This paper aims to contribute to the relatively sparse literature on youth engagement in environmental volunteering—particularly in the National Park System—to better understand differences in older adult and young adult motivations, perceived barriers to volunteering, and young adult interests in environmental volunteering.

## **Background**

### *Acadia National Park, Friends of Acadia, and the Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program*

Acadia National Park is located on Mount Desert Island (MDI) off the coast of Maine (See Image 1). The land has been inhabited by the Wabanaki people—“People of the Dawnland”—long before the first French colonizers (amongst them, Samuel de Champlain) in 1604.<sup>16</sup> Samuel de Champlain named the island “Isles des Monts Déserts” for its ‘bare and rocky’ appearance. Following a mission by French Jesuits in 1613 (which was disrupted by the British), the island became a point of great importance for seaman for over 150 years.<sup>17</sup> “In 1759, after a century and a half of conflict, British troops triumphed at Quebec, ending French dominion in Acadia. With Native Americans scattered and the fleur-de-lis banished, lands along the Maine coast opened for English settlement.”<sup>18</sup> From that point, settlers increasingly located to MDI, primarily attracted by logging and ship building prospects. In the mid 1800s, MDI was popularized by artists who had come to paint the stunning scenery and life on the island.<sup>19</sup> Along with an influx of tourists came the wealthy elite of New England to set up large estates.

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<sup>16</sup> “Wabanaki Heritage, Culture & Craft,” National Park Service, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/historyculture/wabanaki.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> “Colonization and Settlement,” National Park Service, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/historyculture/colonization-and-settlement.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> “Colonization and Settlement.”

<sup>19</sup> “Art, Rusticators & Early Tourism,” National Park Service, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/historyculture/rusticators-tourism.htm>.

“Wabanaki people, resilient in the face attempted genocide, adapted and marketed basketry and other crafts to tourists as they continued to be pushed off of their native land by the growing European population.”<sup>20</sup> Beginning in the early 1800s, through civic groups, many of the original wealthy residents came together to manage development and later form Acadia National Park. Multiple wealthy residents built impressive trail systems across the island, and John D. Rockefeller constructed the carriage road system beginning in 1913.



Image 1: Top left, historic carriage road bridge. Top right, carriage road near Bubble Pond. Bottom, ungrooved carriage road in the winter.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Art, Rusticators & Early Tourism."

<sup>21</sup> Miriam Nelson, 2022.

The growing carriage road and hiking trail systems were accompanied by a motor road system in 1922, along with other infrastructure “including bridges, campgrounds, picnic areas, ranger stations, and administrative facilities.”<sup>22</sup> ANP was established as a National Monument in 1916 by Woodrow Wilson and was given National Park status in 1929. Seen in the image below, while not entirely located on MDI, ANP preserves over 50,000 acres of land.<sup>23</sup>



Image 2: Depicts Acadia National Park. The green is ANP property.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> "Building Acadia National Park," National Park Service, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/historyculture/building.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Foundation Document: Acadia National Park, (National Park Service, 2016). 3; Image 1.

<sup>24</sup> Foundation Document: Acadia National Park.

The purpose statement of ANP is as follows:

Acadia National Park protects ecological integrity, cultural history, scenic beauty, and scientific values within the Acadia archipelago and Schoodic Peninsula and offers visitors a broad range of transformative and inspiring experiences among the park's diverse habitats, glacially sculpted mountains, and bold, rocky coastline (see Image 2).<sup>25</sup>

The park is significant for its natural resources (the tallest mountains on the eastern seaboard, visible geological features, and variety of habitats), cultural resources (the carriage road system, and being the first park created from private lands gifted to the public), and socioecological landscape (home of the Wabanaki people).<sup>26</sup> ANP now maintains 158 miles of trails and 45 miles of carriage roads for millions of visitors each summer, with the assistance of its nonprofit partner Friends of Acadia.

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<sup>25</sup> Foundation Document: Acadia National Park. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Foundation Document: Acadia National Park. 6.



Image 3: On left, view from Acadia Mountain in Acadia National Park. Top right, waves off of Schoodic Point. Bottom right, beach on Isle au Haut.<sup>27</sup>

Friends of Acadia (FOA) is the official nonprofit partner to Acadia National Park, incorporated in 1986 by a group of individuals seeing a need for a citizen organization to support the park.<sup>28</sup> In 2017, the organization's membership surpassed 5,000 individuals.<sup>29</sup> FOA's guiding principles are Stewardship, Civic Engagement, Advocacy and Education, Collaboration, and

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<sup>27</sup> Miriam Nelson, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> "History," Friends of Acadia, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://friendsofacadia.org/about-us/history/>.

<sup>29</sup> "History."

Leadership.<sup>30</sup> “A strong partnership among Friends of Acadia, Acadia National Park, and the surrounding communities is needed to achieve ground-breaking progress on the key challenges and opportunities affecting Acadia’s future, such as climate change, visitor experience, and youth engagement.”<sup>31</sup> The four strategic priorities of FOA are Wild Acadia (working to combat climate change), Tomorrow’s Stewards (engaging teachers, families, and youth through programming and employment opportunities), Acadia Experience (collaborating on public transit for the park as well as reducing barriers that make park visitation a challenge for some), and Trails and Carriage Roads (with the first endowed trail system in the nation and hosting a volunteer program).<sup>32</sup> Within Trails and Carriage Roads, FOA assists making the carriage roads and some trails ADA-compliant.<sup>33</sup> FOA provides funding and volunteers to this aim. Involving volunteers is a clear priority of FOA. “Friends of Acadia founders were already volunteering their time on Acadia’s trails when the organization was formed in 1986, and from the earliest days to the present, the trails and carriage roads have been a central focus of Friends of Acadia’s work.”<sup>34</sup> Because of this, Friends of Acadia hosts a volunteer program, open to all.

FOA hosts an established Stewardship Volunteer Program co-managed by ANP. In 1997, FOA hired their first field crew leader to lead volunteer projects.<sup>35</sup> Aside from the summers of 2020 and 2021 (due to COVID-19), volunteers have actively been working in Acadia National Park since this time. During the summer of 2022, I was employed as a Stewardship Assistant for

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<sup>30</sup> "Our Priorities and Principles," Friends of Acadia, accessed September 1, 2022, <https://friendsofacadia.org/about-us/our-priorities-principals/>.

<sup>31</sup> "Our Priorities and Principles."

<sup>32</sup> "Our Priorities and Principles.;" "Trails and Carriage Roads," Friends of Acadia, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://friendsofacadia.org/our-impact/trails-carriage-roads/>.

<sup>33</sup> "Exploring Trails & Carriage Roads," Friends of Acadia, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://friendsofacadia.org/our-impact/trails-carriage-roads/exploring-trails-carriage-roads/>.

<sup>34</sup> "Trails and Carriage Roads."

<sup>35</sup> "History."

Friends of Acadia, co-leading all aspects of the volunteer program. The program consists of three parts, 1) Volunteer Service Groups 2) Acadia Winter Trails, and 3) the Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program (DISVP). The service groups (predominantly youth summer groups), volunteer on Acadia National Park trails and carriage roads for one to five sessions during a week.<sup>36</sup> The Acadia Winter Trails volunteers groom historic carriage roads in the winter for skiing. The DISVP involves both returning and new volunteers during “drop in” sessions, which are open to the public. These are held on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays—with volunteers meeting at Acadia National Park Headquarters—from 8 am to noon aside from occasional events that require signing up prior to their occurrence. The drop-in sessions are organized (and led) by the FOA Volunteer Coordinator and two Stewardship Assistants, while trained volunteers in the role of Volunteer Crew Leaders may sign up to lead particular projects. To become a Volunteer Crew Leader (VCL), a volunteer must attend ten drop-in sessions, lead under a mentor (another VCL) for five sessions, and attend two four-hour long trainings.

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<sup>36</sup> "Stewardship Volunteers," Friends of Acadia, accessed October 13, 2022, <https://friendsofacadia.org/get-involved/volunteer/stewardship-volunteers/>.



Image 4: FOA Stewardship Coordinator (bottom left), seasonal Stewardship Assistants (two on the bottom right), Volunteer Crew Leaders, and Volunteers pictured after a full day specialty project cutting back brush on a trail on Isle au Haut, Maine.<sup>37</sup>

The FOA DISVP represents a collaborative program through working with ANP. Resources are provided by both actors, where primary leadership and organization of the program is hosted by FOA, yet ANP staff maintain a technical presence for aspects such as insurance, discipline, and coordinating park resources. More specifically, collaboration in the DISVP can be seen in aspects such as the shared office space of FOA and ANP volunteer managers, frequent meetings between FOA and ANP staff, FOA project planning in accordance with ANP maintenance schedules and needs, sharing of more technical tools, FOA use of

<sup>37</sup> Nikki Burtis, Friends of Acadia Stewardship Coordinator, 2022.

government vehicles, volunteer work in accordance with park guidelines and under occasional supervision of ANP Trails staff (Fieldnotes 2022). Drop-in volunteers are critical to the annual maintenance of ANP historic trails and carriage roads, and occasionally work on specialized projects. DISVP projects include resurfacing trails with gravel, widening trail corridors using loppers and hedge trimmers, weeding around the “coping” stones lining the edges of carriage roads, building bogwalks, clearing leaves out of trail and carriage road drainage systems, and other activities as ANP staff sees fit.<sup>38</sup> Through observations, it is clear that there are no returning youth or young-adult participants of the Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program (DISVP). As the volunteer participation in the program is critical for increasing visitor experience (and accessibility), decreasing tourism-related erosion, restoring ecosystems, and contributing significantly to Acadia National Park maintenance, ensuring a core of returning volunteers is necessary.

Uniquely situated less than five miles from the park is the College of the Atlantic (COA) (enrollment of roughly 400 students).<sup>39</sup> The College of the Atlantic was the first college to go carbon neutral and their approach to education involves “engaging students in a comprehensive, experiential educational approach to all aspects of sustainability and eliminating our reliance on fossil fuels.”<sup>40</sup> Students study human ecology while enrolled at COA, where each individual self-tailors their own major.<sup>41</sup> Human ecology allows students to examine many aspects of humans’ relationship with the natural world. “From the food we eat to the energy we consume, the courses

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<sup>38</sup> "Stewardship Volunteers."

<sup>39</sup> "College of the Atlantic," Data USA, accessed October 13, 2022, <https://datausa.io/profile/university/college-of-the-atlantic#:~:text=There%20were%20370%20students%20enrolled,SAT%20scores%20with%20their%20applications.>

<sup>40</sup> "Environmental Commitment," College of the Atlantic, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.coa.edu/about/environmental-commitment/>.

<sup>41</sup> "Academics," College of the Atlantic, accessed October 13, 2022, <https://www.coa.edu/academics/>.

we teach, and the community that we build together, our commitment to environmental and social justice is an effort that engages faculty, staff, and students in the intellectual and practical life of the college.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, the campus emphasizes a strong environmental commitment. Both the proximity and environmental academic focus demonstrate how COA students may provide FOA with an opportunity to recruit young adults to the DISVP. Recruiting college students from COA may aid in the College’s integration with the Mount Desert Island community, making connections with both year-round and seasonal residents.

### **Overview of Research on Volunteers**

Volunteers are critical to both organizational and non-organizational (such as independent citizen science) work in a multitude of fields. Data demonstrates the typical profile of a volunteer. The age bracket of 35 to 54 has the highest rates of volunteer service in the U.S, where those with a higher education level make up a greater percentage of the total volunteer sample.<sup>43</sup> For Maine specifically, the state is ranked 9th for percentage of the population engaged in some form of volunteer activity (38.7%).<sup>44</sup> Volunteer service in Maine is worth an estimated \$947.6 million where, “425,346 volunteers contribute 39.2 million hours of service” annually.<sup>45</sup>

In the early history of the environmental movement, volunteers played a critical role in the protection of the natural environment. As the movement expanded throughout the 1970s, the

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<sup>42</sup> "Environmental Commitment."

<sup>43</sup> College Board, "Percentage Distribution of Volunteers in the United States in 2017, by Age and Education Level," (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1121057/percentage-distribution-volunteers-age-education-level-us/>.

<sup>44</sup> "Volunteering in America: Rankings," AmeriCorps, Census.gov, accessed September 17, 2022, [https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Volunteering\\_in\\_America\\_Rankings\\_508.pdf](https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Volunteering_in_America_Rankings_508.pdf). 1.

<sup>45</sup> "Volunteering in America: States," AmeriCorps, Census.gov, accessed September 17, 2022, [https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Volunteering\\_in\\_America\\_States\\_508.pdf](https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Volunteering_in_America_States_508.pdf). 6.

urgency surrounding environmental degradation aided in increasing volunteer involvement.<sup>46</sup> As argued by Ryan, Caplan, and Grese 2001, “The environmental movement would not exist without the help of thousands of dedicated volunteers. Both public and private environmental organizations rely on unpaid volunteers to further the cause of protecting and helping the imperiled natural environment.”<sup>47</sup>

### *National Park Stewardship Volunteer Programs*

Collaborative volunteer programs in the National Park System are an important partnership for engaging people on public lands. Friends Groups are philanthropic partners to national parks, key in raising funds for park projects (although other National Park Service needs are driving different forms of nonprofit collaboration as well).<sup>48</sup> Friends of Acadia is one of the oldest friends groups in the country and co-hosts various volunteer opportunities in Acadia National Park.<sup>49</sup> Research by Follman, Cseh and Brudney 2016 found that “Co-management of volunteer programs led in each case to significantly more volunteers, volunteer hours, partners, and volunteer programming [...] The partners said collaborating led to greater ability to adapt to challenges and opportunities, leverage skills across fields, generate innovative ways to address complex issues, and compensate for gaps in government support.”<sup>50</sup> Collaboration can “vary by site and program, [...] is] multifaceted, and can manifest in joint planning, recruiting, cost-sharing,

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<sup>46</sup> C.L. Zinger et al., *Environmental Volunteers in America: Findings and Recommendations of the Steering Committee of the National Center for Voluntary Action's Environmental Project* (National Center for Voluntary Action, 1973). <https://books.google.com/books?id=UE9TARy2mWMC>.

<sup>47</sup> Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese, "Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programs." 629.

<sup>48</sup> Follman, Cseh, and Brudney, "Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-Managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations."; Joseph M. Follman, "Co-Managed Volunteer Programs at U.S. National Parks: A Multi-Case Study of Volunteer Partnerships" (The George Washington University, 2015) (3687557).

<sup>49</sup> "Acadia National Park: Our Partners," National Park Service, updated April 21, 2022, accessed September 1, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/acad/getinvolved/partners.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Follman, Cseh, and Brudney, "Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-Managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations." 459.

volunteer supervision, use of equipment, transporting volunteers, feeding and outfitting volunteers, logistical arrangements, writing grants, gathering data, training, report writing and submittal, recognizing volunteers and donors.”<sup>51</sup> However, challenges to these programs “related to power sharing, clashing cultures, communication, resistance to change, technical and logistical complexities, or sustaining relationships” can create significant tension between the park and their nonprofit.<sup>52</sup>

### *Environmental Volunteers*

A substantial pool of current literature exists on behaviors and motivations of stewardship volunteering.<sup>53</sup> Using a second definition from Bennett et al. 2018, “Stewardship motivations might be defined simply as the reasons or incentive structures that drive people to take action to care for the environment.”<sup>54</sup> The motivations of environmental volunteers may differ from general volunteers as their projects involve learning and visible results.<sup>55</sup> Further, environmental volunteering behaviors can range based on the activity undertaken. “Despite the diversity of these environmental behaviors, they share common characteristics [...]” such as providing benefit for the collective good.<sup>56</sup> In examining environmental volunteers' behavior and motivations, pro-environmental behavior has also been correlated with likelihood to be an

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<sup>51</sup> Follman, "Co-Coordinated Volunteer Programs at U.S. National Parks: A Multi-Case Study of Volunteer Partnerships". 183.

<sup>52</sup> Follman, Cseh, and Brudney, "Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-Managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations." 459.

<sup>53</sup> Bennett et al., "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework."

<sup>54</sup> Bennett et al., "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework." 601.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Bramston, Grace Pretty, and Charlie Zammit, "Assessing Environmental Stewardship Motivation," *Environment and Behavior* 43, no. 6 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916510382875>, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013916510382875>. 778.

<sup>56</sup> Robyn E. Gulliver, Kelly S. Fielding, and Winnifred R. Louis, "An Investigation of Factors Influencing Environmental Volunteering Leadership and Participation Behaviors," *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221093799>. 3.

environmental volunteer.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, self-efficacy has been found to be a prominent variable in determining environmental volunteer leadership and participation.<sup>58</sup> Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and the capacity to act are primary components of stewardship.<sup>59</sup> Intrinsic motivations are those actions which bring personal satisfaction whereas extrinsic are those that come with benefits that are outside of oneself.<sup>60</sup>

It has been noted that volunteer motivations are multifaceted, however, within the literature on environmental volunteerism and motivations, some motivations appear to be more prevalent.<sup>61</sup> Table 1 provides identified motivations in literature, which I believe may also be relevant to the FOA stewardship volunteers.

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<sup>57</sup> Corinne Handelman, "Natural Area Stewardship Volunteers: Motivations, Attitudes, Behaviors" (Master of Science in Environmental Science and Management Portland State University, 2013) (1058); Melanie Randle and Sara Dolnicar, "The Characteristics of Potential Environmental Volunteers: Implications for Marketing Communications," *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* 22, no. 3 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14486563.2014.976848>. 13.

<sup>58</sup> Gulliver, Fielding, and Louis, "An Investigation of Factors Influencing Environmental Volunteering Leadership and Participation Behaviors." 16.

<sup>59</sup> Bennett et al., "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework." 600.

<sup>60</sup> Bennett et al., "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework." 602.

<sup>61</sup> Randle and Dolnicar, "The Characteristics of Potential Environmental Volunteers: Implications for Marketing Communications."; Kathleen L. Wolf, Weston Brinkley, and Dale Blahna, "Civic Environmental Stewardship: Aligning Organizational and Participant Motivations," *Cities and the Environment* 14, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.15365/cate.2021.140203>. 15.

Table 1: Motivations of Environmental Volunteers in Literature.

Motivation	Literature
<b>Learning about surroundings</b>	Bramston 2011, 785; Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese 2001; Takase 2019; Wolf 2021
<b>Helping the environment</b>	Bruyere and Rappe 2007, 511; Ding and Schuett 2020, 11; Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese 2001; Takase 2019; Wolf 2021, 15-17
<b>Helping others</b>	Wolf 2021
<b>Getting outside</b>	Bruyere and Rappe 2007, 512
<b>Concern for future generations</b>	Ding and Schuett 2020, 12-13; Wolf 2021, 15-17
<b>Working on well-organized projects</b>	Gulliver, Fielding, and Louis 2022; Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese 2001

Understanding the motivations and factors that predict recruitment and retention is critical for volunteer program managers to create a more positive, satisfying, and enriching experience for volunteer participants.<sup>62</sup> Seen in Bruyere and Rappe 2007,

It is important for the volunteer manager to consider all of these volunteer motivations.

Every volunteer has a different motivation; as a volunteer manager it is important to

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas Measham and Guy Barnett, "Environmental Volunteering: Motivations, Modes and Outcomes," *Australian Geographer* 39 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049180802419237>; Valentine Seymour and Mordechai Haklay, "Exploring Engagement Characteristics and Behaviours of Environmental Volunteers," *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice* 2, no. 1 (August 24, 2017), <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.5334/cstp.66>, <https://theoryandpractice.citizenscienceassociation.org/article/10.5334/cstp.66/>; Kenneth E. Silverburg, "Understanding American Parks and Recreation Volunteers Utilizing a Functionalist Perspective," in *Volunteering as Leisure/Leisure as Volunteering: An International Assessment*, ed. R.A. Stebbins and M. Graham (CAB International, 2004); Gulliver, Fielding, and Louis, "An Investigation of Factors Influencing Environmental Volunteering Leadership and Participation Behaviors."; Randle and Dolnicar, "The Characteristics of Potential Environmental Volunteers: Implications for Marketing Communications."; Kayleigh Winch et al., "Diversifying Environmental Volunteers by Engaging with Online Communities," *People and Nature* 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10147>.

remember that not every motivation will be met in every project, but by incorporating variety in the projects and by acknowledging the volunteers and the work they do, it is possible to provide a positive and satisfying experience.<sup>63</sup>

Other tactics for environmental volunteer program managers (and their organizations) have been addressed in literature in order to provide a positive volunteer experience. In communicating with volunteers, volunteer managers should aim to explain the significance of program projects, while also recognizing their efforts, in a group setting in order to connect people of similar interests.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Harrison 2017 emphasizes how volunteer program managers should utilize the strategies of reciprocity and responsibility, in order to increase volunteers' feelings of involvement within a program.<sup>65</sup> In understanding the variation of volunteer motivations to recruit volunteers, "marketing communications messages should explicitly emphasise the environmental mission of the organisation and the positive impact of its activities on the natural environment, as these messages are likely to be motivating for individuals with strong pro-environmental attitudes."<sup>66</sup> Further, communications should emphasize both altruistic and egoistic elements of volunteering to appeal to.<sup>67</sup> In project planning, it is critical for volunteer coordinators to understand that committed volunteers may feel a strong connection to where they

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<sup>63</sup> Brett Bruyere and Silas Rappe, "Identifying the Motivations of Environmental Volunteers," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 50 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09640560701402034>, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227619852\\_Identifying\\_the\\_motivations\\_of\\_environmental\\_volunteers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227619852_Identifying_the_motivations_of_environmental_volunteers). 514.

<sup>64</sup> Bruyere and Rappe, "Identifying the Motivations of Environmental Volunteers." 514.

<sup>65</sup> Virginia S. Harrison et al., "Calling All Volunteers: The Role of Stewardship and Involvement in Volunteer-Organization Relationships," *Public Relations Review* 43, no. 4 (2017), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.06.006>. 879.

<sup>66</sup> Randle and Dolnicar, "The Characteristics of Potential Environmental Volunteers: Implications for Marketing Communications." 13-14.

<sup>67</sup> Randle and Dolnicar, "The Characteristics of Potential Environmental Volunteers: Implications for Marketing Communications." 14.

work, contributing to the creation of local environmental advocates.<sup>68</sup> Through this and the identified motivator of “helping the environmental,” projects should be aimed at directly helping the environment.<sup>69</sup> Volunteers also value learning about their surroundings, signifying program coordinators should find ways to provide learning opportunities to retain volunteers and provide a full volunteering experience.<sup>70</sup> Taking into account volunteer motivations may lead to the satisfactions of “appreciation for the sponsoring organization, a sense of positive impact of event participation, and interactions with other volunteers.”<sup>71</sup>

### *Youth Volunteers*

Intergenerational working of adults and youth is an important aspect of involving youth in “conservation and outdoor recreation,” or in citizen science programs.<sup>72</sup> A study by Ding and Schuett 2020 demonstrated the importance of generativity—or the concern for future generations—in their study of environmental volunteer motivations. They define generativity as “the desires of making contributions to future generations, passing on skills and knowledge, personal growth, and leaving a legacy.”<sup>73</sup> In their research they found that older volunteers “are not only concerned about using their expertise for their own personal fulfillment, but want to

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<sup>68</sup> Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese, "Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programs." 643.

<sup>69</sup> Bruyere and Rappe, "Identifying the Motivations of Environmental Volunteers." 513; Table 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese, "Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programs."; Yui Takase, Akhmad Arifin Hadi, and Katsunori Furuya, "The Relationship between Volunteer Motivations and Variation in Frequency of Participation in Conservation Activities," *Environmental Management* 63, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-018-1106-6.42>.

<sup>71</sup> Wolf, Brinkley, and Blahna, "Civic Environmental Stewardship: Aligning Organizational and Participant Motivations." 17.

<sup>72</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?" 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?" 14.

share what they know, and do with others now and into the next generation.”<sup>74</sup> In the environmental context, they found volunteers drew connections between their actions in the environment and generativity.<sup>75</sup> Fulfilling generativity as a motivation can aid in increasing the effectiveness and commitment of volunteers.<sup>76</sup> Recognizing generativity also has the possibility to aid in youth environmental volunteer involvement. When youth volunteerism was supported by adults and community organizations, “youth were more likely to choose to become active.”<sup>77</sup>

The motivations of youth environmental volunteers, although similar to those of adults, have slight differences. In research by Holdsworth, the author found “Few students expressed what might be regarded as purely ‘altruistic’ reasons for volunteering, though most respondents were conscious of how volunteering impacted on themselves and their beliefs.”<sup>78</sup> In another study, youth volunteering was found to entail employment-related motivations.<sup>79</sup> This finding resonates considering the stage that youth and young adults are at in their educational and career journeys. Holdsworth also found that students who cited employment-relative motives generally were looking to acquire specific skills through volunteering.<sup>80</sup> Some students acknowledge the learning possibilities from volunteer activities, including learning from “other people’s experience.”<sup>81</sup> In terms of young adult characteristics, McDougle found that students who

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<sup>74</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?." 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?." 12-13.

<sup>76</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?." 14.

<sup>77</sup> Barnett and Brennan, "Youth Volunteers: Effects of Influences, Motivations, and Receptivity on Volunteerism." 46.

<sup>78</sup> Clare Holdsworth, "Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations for Student Volunteering," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 58 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2010.527666>. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Peggy O. Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations," *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing* 21, no. 2 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495140802528658>. 150.

<sup>80</sup> Holdsworth, "Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations for Student Volunteering." 10.

<sup>81</sup> Holdsworth, "Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations for Student Volunteering." 11.

exhibited more pro-environmental behaviors and had a general proclivity to volunteering were more likely to have volunteered for an environmental organization.<sup>82</sup> Consistent with the employment related motivations cited above, they found that young adults who volunteered for egoistic reasons were more likely to volunteer for greater periods of time with environmental organizations.<sup>83</sup> Through identifying the motivations of young adults, Shields recommends for nonprofits to begin recruiting volunteers in college, as college students understand the benefits associated with their work.<sup>84</sup>

Young adult volunteer interests are important to understand in order to increase communication and the numbers of youth in environmental volunteerism. As a concern, Shields 2009 found political and environmental volunteer programs saw less interest from young volunteers. “Political and conservation issues would face a more difficult challenge recruiting aid from this market [youth volunteers] and should employ targeted efforts focusing on defined themes to make the volunteering activity more relevant to the young adult volunteer.”<sup>85</sup> In contrast to this, Measham 2007 and Winch et al. 2020 found cases where the demographic profile of environmental volunteers appears to be becoming younger.<sup>86</sup> In line with this finding, McDougle 2011 argues young adults who already volunteer or exhibit pro-environmental behaviors “may not prove to be overly burdensome” for environmental organizations to recruit.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Lindsey M. McDougle, Itay Greenspan, and Femida Handy, "Generation Green: Understanding the Motivations and Mechanisms Influencing Young Adults' Environmental Volunteering," *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 16, no. 4 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.431>. 336.

<sup>83</sup> McDougle, Greenspan, and Handy, "Generation Green: Understanding the Motivations and Mechanisms Influencing Young Adults' Environmental Volunteering." 337.

<sup>84</sup> Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations."

<sup>85</sup> Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations." 152-153.

<sup>86</sup> Measham and Barnett, "Environmental Volunteering: Motivations, Modes and Outcomes."; Winch et al., "Diversifying Environmental Volunteers by Engaging with Online Communities." 27.

<sup>87</sup> McDougle, Greenspan, and Handy, "Generation Green: Understanding the Motivations and Mechanisms Influencing Young Adults' Environmental Volunteering." 338.

This is particularly relevant to the College of the Atlantic as each student is enrolled in the academic program of human ecology.<sup>88</sup> In recruitment and communications, Handelman 2013 found that many student volunteers in their study “heard about volunteering through classes, such as those focused on sustainability, where they were required to participate in a service project.”<sup>89</sup> As with adult volunteers, nonprofits should take into account student motivations in order to increase recruitment.<sup>90</sup> An effective marketing strategy may incorporate messages on helping others and maintaining socially beneficial relationships or personal development.<sup>91</sup> In this the recognition that some young adult motivations differ from those of retiree volunteers is important.

There are various suggestions in existing literature for how to more effectively recruit youth volunteers. “Given the need to engage youth and retain older volunteers, recruitment communications of agencies (e.g., program webpage, Facebook page, or word of mouth) should emphasize the benefits to both organizations and volunteers so the message gets out to the most appropriate volunteer age groups.”<sup>92</sup> In these messages, it is critical to present success stories of youth leading by example while appealing to their personal consciousness.<sup>93</sup> FOA should work towards becoming recognizable for students, as familiarity is a significant factor in young adults’ volunteering inclinations. “To entice those willing to volunteer for a nonprofit organization,

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<sup>88</sup> "Academics."

<sup>89</sup> Handelman, "Natural Area Stewardship Volunteers: Motivations, Attitudes, Behaviors". 60.

<sup>90</sup> Washington, "Becoming Active Citizens: Motivations to Volunteer among Undergraduate Students in a Liberal Arts College". 37.

<sup>91</sup> Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations." 156.

<sup>92</sup> Ding and Schuett, "Predicting the Commitment of Volunteers' Environmental Stewardship: Does Generativity Play a Role?." 14.

<sup>93</sup> Barnett and Brennan, "Youth Volunteers: Effects of Influences, Motivations, and Receptivity on Volunteerism."; Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations." 151.

recruitment must first focus on awareness and then build subsequent interest.”<sup>94</sup> In some collaborative projects such as the DISVP, “Long-term and higher-level volunteers are treated much like employees (with job applications and descriptions, interviews, and benefits), while one-time and drop-in volunteers are not.”<sup>95</sup> FOA could directly present the opportunity for leadership positions (in the form of Volunteer Crew Leaders), as a way for COA students to develop both personal and technical skills.

Aside from the clear benefits of civic engagement, volunteerism provides tangible benefits to young adult volunteers. Regarding physical and mental health, “Volunteering 1–9 hours per week appeared to be protective for feelings of depression.”<sup>96</sup> In a circular fashion, with better mental health, young adults may be more likely to volunteer.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in participating in volunteer activities, students are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines.<sup>98</sup> This arguably seems to stand out for volunteer opportunities in the outdoors as many trail maintenance projects involve significant physical effort (while enjoying time in the outdoors).<sup>99</sup> A negative health finding of volunteer work for volunteer coordinators to be aware of is “as volunteer hours increased poorer sleep and feelings of being overwhelmed intensified. This may also be related to students’ attempts to balance multiple responsibilities.”<sup>100</sup> Volunteering may also aid in young adults discovering interests, career advancement, resumé building, making

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<sup>94</sup> Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations." 151.

<sup>95</sup> Follman, Cseh, and Brudney, "Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-Managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations." 464.

<sup>96</sup> Alyssa Lederer et al., "The Impact of Work and Volunteer Hours on the Health of Undergraduate Students," *Journal of American College Health* 63 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2015.1015028>. 405.

<sup>97</sup> Lederer et al., "The Impact of Work and Volunteer Hours on the Health of Undergraduate Students." 405-407.

<sup>98</sup> Lederer et al., "The Impact of Work and Volunteer Hours on the Health of Undergraduate Students." 405.

<sup>99</sup> Table 1.

<sup>100</sup> Lederer et al., "The Impact of Work and Volunteer Hours on the Health of Undergraduate Students." 405.

connections, and possibly working for their host organization in the future.<sup>101</sup> “As the transition to adulthood lengthens, community volunteer work may allow youth to become more relaxed about finding the ‘right job,’ at least ‘right away,’ and may help them to re-evaluate what they are looking for in a job.”<sup>102</sup> Research suggests liberal arts students are particularly prepared to be valuable community members, emphasizing the importance of non-profits recruiting college volunteers.<sup>103</sup>

### *Importance of Volunteers*

The benefit of volunteers is both widespread and well-documented. For non-profits such as FOA, retaining volunteers is beneficial to the nonprofit organization and the individuals themselves who are already trained and may be knowledgeable of the area in which they work. In retaining volunteers, a stronger connection may be formed between the organization and individuals.<sup>104</sup> Environmental volunteers provide substantial benefit to the natural environments in which they work.<sup>105</sup> Physical labor allows for restoration of vulnerable environments, heavily trafficked areas, and contributes to biodiversity and natural resource management.<sup>106</sup> This is particularly important due to increased visitation of national parks following COVID-19.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Shields, "Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations." 157.

<sup>102</sup> Flanagan and Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood." 168.

<sup>103</sup> Washington, "Becoming Active Citizens: Motivations to Volunteer among Undergraduate Students in a Liberal Arts College". 34.

<sup>104</sup> Handelman, "Natural Area Stewardship Volunteers: Motivations, Attitudes, Behaviors". 6.

<sup>105</sup> McDougale, Greenspan, and Handy, "Generation Green: Understanding the Motivations and Mechanisms Influencing Young Adults' Environmental Volunteering."

<sup>106</sup> Bramston, Pretty, and Zammit, "Assessing Environmental Stewardship Motivation."; Takase, Hadi, and Furuya, "The Relationship between Volunteer Motivations and Variation in Frequency of Participation in Conservation Activities." 33.

<sup>107</sup> Annette McGivney, "Everyone Came at Once: America's National Parks Reckon with Record-Smashing Year," *The Guardian* 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jan/01/national-parks-us-tourism-crowds-busy>.

Follman, Cseh, and Brudney found collaborative volunteer programs may provide aid to areas in which the NPS lacks capacity.<sup>108</sup> Further, as stated by Ryan, Caplan, and Grese 2001:

“Volunteer stewardship activities create a reciprocal relationship between people and the environment with significant impacts for both partners. The environment is improved and the volunteers receive many benefits. This is a self-reinforcing relationship. Volunteers are transformed in their outlook toward the environment, becoming more likely to landscape with native plants, more apt to want to protect natural areas and more attached to local natural areas.”<sup>109</sup>

Students involved in volunteer work gain the opportunity to learn outside the classroom from the community, interacting with people they may not otherwise see. Importantly, “[...] due to the reciprocal nature of these relationships, institutions and community organizations benefit from the students’ contributions (e.g., service provision and educational outcomes).”<sup>110</sup>

### *Barriers*

Barriers to volunteering must be addressed in order to provide a more welcoming space for all potential participants. From a study by Barnett and Brennan 2008, two barriers were found to be significant in inhibiting youth volunteerism. These include 1) youth being unable to vote (in program functions) and 2) and a lack of recognition of volunteer contributions.<sup>111</sup> Another possible barrier to participating in volunteer work is economic. “By its nature, outdoor recreation

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<sup>108</sup> Follman, Cseh, and Brudney, "Structures, Challenges, and Successes of Volunteer Programs Co-Managed by Nonprofit and Public Organizations."

<sup>109</sup> Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese, "Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programs." 644.

<sup>110</sup> Washington, "Becoming Active Citizens: Motivations to Volunteer among Undergraduate Students in a Liberal Arts College". 34.

<sup>111</sup> Barnett and Brennan, "Youth Volunteers: Effects of Influences, Motivations, and Receptivity on Volunteerism." 46.

requires a certain amount of disposable income and leisure time.”<sup>112</sup> Interpreted in relation to my research, college students have limited time outside of studies, work, and extracurriculars, this may inhibit their participation in volunteer programs.

Removing barriers to youth in volunteerism is also necessary alongside adapting recruitment efforts to increase participation. Literature suggests welcoming youth into the decision-making process of volunteer programs and recognizing their contributions (such as through becoming Stewardship Program Volunteer Crew Leaders).<sup>113</sup> Further, practicing anti-racism through telling “the stories of everyone who contributed to the historic character of the land.”<sup>114</sup> For FOA and ANP, this can be in the form of a land acknowledgement and history of indigenous peoples from Mount Desert Island. The DISVP may also benefit from having a pick-up location near the college, in order to increase participation. Reducing barriers is critical as getting people involved in stewardship volunteerism is one pathway to involve people in promoting sustainability.<sup>115</sup>

## **Methods**

### *Samples*

For this research, two sample groups were involved. The first was the regular and returning volunteers for Friends of Acadia’s Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program. The co-hosted program by FOA and ANP is housed at ANP’s headquarters. The second was enrolled

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<sup>112</sup> "Here’s How National Parks Are Working to Fight Racism," National Geographic, 2020, accessed September 5, 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/national-parks/article/more-diversity-how-to-make-national-parks-anti-racist>.

<sup>113</sup> Barnett and Brennan, "Youth Volunteers: Effects of Influences, Motivations, and Receptivity on Volunteerism." 46.

<sup>114</sup> "Here’s How National Parks Are Working to Fight Racism."

<sup>115</sup> Bennett et al., "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework." 609.

students at the College of the Atlantic, a small, private, liberal arts college in Bar Harbor Maine. I received approval from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University's Institutional Review Board, the College of the Atlantic's Ethical Research Review Board, and the Volunteer Coordinator for Friends of Acadia. FOA's Volunteer Coordinator and a Professor at COA distributed my informed consent letter and surveys through email within their respective organizations. The survey link was open for two weeks from the date they were distributed. Friends of Acadia had 19 respondents and the College of the Atlantic had 13 respondents.

### *Surveys*

The Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) survey instrument by Clary et al. 1998 was modified in Bruyere and Rappe 2007 to apply to environmental volunteers.<sup>116</sup> The version from Bruyere and Rappe was adapted in my surveys to both the COA and FOA sample groups. The survey to the COA students utilized an adapted survey question from Shields 2009, which involved ranking the focus areas of non-profit organizations of whom the respondent would be most likely to volunteer time. The two surveys were drafted and structured in order to match the experiences (and age differences) of each group. The goal of the survey to FOA volunteers was to understand the stewardship volunteers' motivations, what they see as perceived barriers to participation in the Drop-In Program, and how they believe the program can attract younger participants. The goal of the survey to COA students was to understand students' volunteer interests (specifically environmental volunteering), their motivations to participate in

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<sup>116</sup> E. Gil Clary et al., "Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers: A Functional Approach," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74 (1998), <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1516>; Bruyere and Rappe, "Identifying the Motivations of Environmental Volunteers."

environmental volunteerism, and their knowledge of local environmental volunteer opportunities.

### *Data Analysis*

I used simplified methods rather than the data analysis methods employed by Bruyere and Rappe 2007. The strengths of motivations from the survey instrument were determined by identifying the highest mean on a scale of 1-7. Similarly, means were calculated for the volunteer organization interest survey instrument from Shields. The open-ended questions were coded through identifying themes and patterns for each response. The respondents' identified barriers to participating in volunteering and suggestions for increasing youth engagement are further examined in my recommendations for FOA and ANP in the discussion.

## **Results**

### *College Volunteer Interests*

61.53% of COA respondents have participated in volunteer work during their time in college, though only one individual currently volunteers off campus. 61.53% of respondents also answered that they had volunteered for an environmental organization (where 46.15% of respondents who had volunteered listed they had volunteered for more than one environmentally-related organization). 84.61% indicated that they had “an interest in becoming an environmental volunteer in the future” and 15.38% answered “maybe.” In ranking the topics of nonprofits organizations with whom they would like to work, of the nine available answers, three tied as the most selected—the environment or ecology, animals, and children (mean answer of 3.38 [1 being most likely to donate time to and 9 being least likely]).

### *Motivating Factors*

The adapted Bruyere and Rappe 2007 survey instrument identified the most common motivators for the FOA and COA samples to participate in environmental volunteerism.

Table 2: Top Motivators of FOA Volunteers and COA Students to Participate in Environmental Volunteerism

Friends of Acadia Volunteer Motivations	Average Score	College of the Atlantic Volunteer Motivations	Average Score
<b>To live closely to my values</b>	2.67	<b>Help restore natural areas</b>	2.70
<b>Help preserve natural areas for future generations</b>	2.80	<b>See improvements to the environment</b>	2.70
<b>Protecting natural areas from disappearing</b>	2.78	<b>Protecting natural areas from disappearing</b>	2.70
<b>Be part of a well-organized project</b>	2.84	<b>Learn about the environment</b>	2.90
<b>Do something for a cause that is important to me</b>	2.84	<b>Do something for a cause that is important to me</b>	2.90
<b>See improvements to the environment</b>	3.00	<b>Help preserve natural areas for future generations</b>	2.90

Averages are calculated on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1=strongly important and 7=strongly unimportant

Of the COA respondents, only one responded to the open-ended question regarding if there were motivators to participate in environmental volunteering not present in the survey instrument question prior. The response was “Kind of in line with making us feeling better, I believe when we heal the environment, we are healing ourselves. By reconnecting with the life that is all around us, and acting like it not only matters, but is sacred like us, we are reconnecting to one of the most central things to life.” Among the open response motivating factors of FOA volunteers,

the most prominent included giving back to a place in which they spend a lot of time (including for recreation), worked in, used to vacation in, and/or now call home (36.84%). Other motivating factors, spending time outside, using leadership and program-related skills, and concern (or leaving behind a legacy) for future generations.

### *Barriers to Participation*

COA Students found that the primary barriers to volunteering included 1) a lack of knowledge of available opportunities (38.46%), 2) limited available time (30.76%), and 3) no transportation (opportunities must be within walking distance (30.76%). Consistent with a lack of knowledge of available opportunities, 30.76% indicated that they knew of environmental opportunities near themselves. In listing the organizations, many were on-campus, and Friends of Acadia was not among the answers. This is interesting, especially considering the close proximity of the DISVP to COA. Those who addressed a lack of time also cited the need to focus on self-care. Similarly, some respondents (30.76%) indicated an interest in volunteering, but wanting to get “acclimated” to this first semester before possibly volunteering during the spring. Other barriers to volunteer, included physical disability and concern over gender pronouns being not as respected in off-campus opportunities.

FOA respondents provided almost entirely different potential barriers to participating in the DISVP. Among these included systemic factors such as disinterest in supporting the natural environment, “Corporate greed, self-interest, and religious and philosophical thought supporting the idea of human exceptionalism”, and that “political expediency, greed, and even displays of power, government agencies will not be allowed to continue their work of maintaining open and available parklands, shared recreation spaces, and outdoor educational opportunities.” Only one

respondent included COVID-19 as a barrier. Age and health were commonly referenced in the responses. Among this, a current barrier included the physical inability to participate in work, and future barriers including the aging out of the Volunteer Crew Leaders—limiting space for participants in the program. Another commonly referenced barrier is a lack of publicity and outreach, which are impacting attendance and types of participants. Relating to youth participation, one respondent seemed to comprehensively address the primary barriers to youth participating in the DISVP. “For persons my age (80) who are relatively fit there are no barriers. For college-age volunteers there are significant barriers associated with transportation and the cost of living on [MDI] or near the location of Acadia National Park.” Other addressed barriers relevant to youth include access to transportation (and the price of gas), available time, timing of programs, youths’ peers are not engaged, and the potential for youth to not be interested in working with older volunteers.

From my experience of working with FOA and ANP, I witnessed a few barriers in line with the survey results. The first is the distance between Park Headquarters and the College of the Atlantic. Although it is a short drive (or quick but physically rigorous bike ride) away, walking may be less feasible and adds considerable time to the program’s 8 am to 12 pm timeframe. Secondly, the program runs from April to October, where only short periods overlap with the spring and fall semesters of COA. Thirdly, due to broad-based recruitment (through newspaper ads, billboard postings at campgrounds, and occasional social media highlights) there is a high likelihood that COA students are not aware of the DISVP’s existence.

Table 3: Commonly Identified barriers to Participation in Environmental Volunteerism.

Friends of Acadia Volunteers	College of the Atlantic Students
Systemic factors: lack of opportunities and disinterest in supporting the environment	Lack of knowledge about the volunteer program
Age and health (and COVID-19)	Lack of available time
Lack of publicity of the DISVP Program	No transportation
Timing of the volunteer work sessions	Wanting to become acclimated to college first
Transportation availability and gas prices	Concerns about off-campus treatment due to identity or disability

### *Suggestions for Recruiting Young Volunteers*

FOA survey respondents provided various suggestions for how the DISVP could attract more young volunteers. The three most common being, 1) an increased use of and presence on social media by FOA (42.10%); 2) develop programs to have specific ones tailored to youth and others where they can work with older volunteers (31.57%); and 3) advertising in and reaching out directly to schools, colleges, youth summer programs, and places where young people gather (26.32%). Other suggestions included provision of external incentives for youth program participants and schools and institutions may create “working multi-day breaks,” where students could be paid for working in the park. These are with the intention that youth will enjoy themselves and return later. Within their suggestions, multiple respondents acknowledged that barriers such as timing of program sessions and available time of students, may be addressed by FOA—yet is also up to the individual interested in volunteering to take on a job with hours that will fit with the schedule of the DISVP.

## Discussion

### *Important Findings from the Surveys*

A majority of college students showed a general interest in volunteering and having volunteered in the past. It is also clear that the COA sample showed a particular interest in environmental volunteer efforts, seen through 1) their interest in nonprofits with focuses on the environment or ecology and animals, and 2) a vast majority interested in “becoming” an environmental volunteer. The top six motivators between the COA and FOA samples share some similarities. This includes “Protecting natural areas from disappearing,” “Help preserve natural areas for future generations,” “Do something for a cause that is important to me,” and “See improvements to the environment.” This emphasizes the possible role of generativity in motivating both older and younger volunteers. Further, the results suggest that each group holds a common concern for the environment and are willing to volunteer to protect and preserve the natural environment.

Perceived barriers to volunteering for COA students emphasized a lack of resources in the forms of knowledge, time, and transportation. These three barriers were also suggested by the FOA sample, including barriers provided by a lack of resources (such as the personal restraints of the COA respondents and program capacity). However, FOA volunteers’ perceived barriers encompassed a wider range of factors, relating to societal and systemic aspects, a lack of targeted advertising to summer visitors, age and health, and timidity in group settings. The results suggest that barriers to participating in environmental volunteerism change over time, and that understanding and addressing these barriers could aid in increasing volunteering participation.

### *Limitations and Further Research*

The study was limited by the small number of survey responses, particularly from College of the Atlantic students (N=13). The response rate may in part be due to the survey being sent around the timeframe of typical midterm exams. However, the lack of engagement in the survey could allude to the student body's unwillingness to assist with environmental volunteer activities or that many saw the survey's subject and did not feel inclined to respond as they had not participated in environmental volunteerism. Further, the generalizability of this study is restricted due to the unique spatial closeness of Acadia National Park Headquarters to COA, and the environmental focus of COA. This research exposed multiple areas that could benefit from further research. These include: 1) the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of college-aged volunteers to participate in environmental volunteerism, 2) studies on youth volunteers within the National Park System, 3) how the environmental perspectives of youth relate to their environmental behaviors (in relation to volunteerism), and 4) how involving youth and older individuals in environmental volunteer projects could aid in building civic engagement and fostering action on the climate crisis.

### *Implications for Recruiting Young Volunteers*

The surveys provided insight on how Friends of Acadia may develop the Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program and adjust advertising and recruitment strategies to work more closely with College of the Atlantic students. From the experience I received as a Friends of Acadia Stewardship Assistant over the summer of 2022, and from being a stewardship volunteer myself, I now provide recommendations for Friends of Acadia in order to increase the quantity and engagement of young people in the DISVP.

1. Developing advertising and recruitment materials and strategies is critical for increasing youth engagement. As suggested by Stevenson, a group should review their volunteer recruitment information and materials and

Make sure it mentions that volunteering allows an individual to: Favorably impact a community's quality of life; Gain recognition; Learn or develop skills; Receive free or discounted perks; Gain work experience; Strengthen leadership skills; Socialize; Build self-esteem and confidence; Meet new people; Enjoy cultural, educational and/or recreational opportunities; Feel needed and valued; Make a difference in someone's life; Express gratitude for help received in the past from an organization.<sup>117</sup>

Because of the importance of the FOA Stewardship Volunteers for maintaining places for their environmental integrity and for the use of the public, these factors should be stressed in communicating with students. Advertising materials should portray young adults working with older volunteers to appeal to generativity and community engagement. The materials should also emphasize the potential to develop life and career skills, as well as the fact that volunteering is also beneficial to a resumé.

2. FOA should offer a pick-up location at COA prior to heading out to the worksites. To ensure students time to socialize with other volunteers prior to leaving for individual projects, volunteers could be picked up and dropped off by a Stewardship Assistant. This would greatly increase the accessibility of the program for students.
3. FOA should work to partner with COA—either as an institution, with individual classes, or on campus organizations—to establish themselves as a place for students to gain

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<sup>117</sup> Stevenson, *Youth Volunteers: How to Recruit, Train, Motivate and Reward Young Volunteers*. 19.

leadership skills, engage with the community, and benefit the environment.<sup>118</sup> This should include the development of a service-learning requirement for some COA classes, fulfilled by volunteer work for Friends of Acadia. This contributes to the interdisciplinary of a human ecology academic focus, increasing personal growth and civic engagement, fortifying the FOA volunteer program, and potentially providing students with modest academic benefits.<sup>119</sup> Other related forms of collaborative engagement include the establishment of short-term internships, and encouraging students to work towards becoming Volunteer Crew Leaders. FOA should seek out possible opportunities to go to the campus and engage directly with interested students.

4. To further incentivize study participating, FOA and COA should collaborate on a form of recognition.<sup>120</sup> This could be in the form of an award given to the student who completes the most volunteer hours as part of the DISVP. As part of the award, FOA could provide a free park pass for a certain duration of time or a yearlong FOA membership.
5. The FOA Stewardship Program should provide specialized projects for just COA students a few times throughout the year. These could occur both inside and outside the DISVP season to align with when students are present on campus. This would be beneficial as one-time events may increase students' interest in further volunteering opportunities with FOA.<sup>121</sup> The events could emphasize environmental protection (possibly in the form of restoration projects), which may be attractive to the environmental focus of the students and institution.

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<sup>118</sup> Stevenson, *Youth Volunteers: How to Recruit, Train, Motivate and Reward Young Volunteers*. 38.

<sup>119</sup> Amy Strage, "Long-Term Academic Benefits of Service Learning: When and Where Do They Manifest Themselves?," *College Student Journal* 38, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>120</sup> Stevenson, *Youth Volunteers: How to Recruit, Train, Motivate and Reward Young Volunteers*. 9.

<sup>121</sup> Stevenson, *Youth Volunteers: How to Recruit, Train, Motivate and Reward Young Volunteers*. 9.

Working to engage youth in the Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program is important for care of the environment, increasing civic engagement and generativity, and for ensuring the program continues in the future. These suggestions can help ensure the associated benefits of having youth and young adult volunteers persist, and simultaneously may provide guidance to other nonprofit organizations in a similar position.

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**Appendix:**Survey for Friends of Acadia Drop-In Stewardship Volunteers

How long have you volunteered for Friends of Acadia?

- Less than 1 season
- 1 to 5 seasons
- 6 to 10 seasons
- 11 to 15 seasons
- 16 or more seasons

How important or accurate on a scale of 1 to 7 are each of the following to you and your volunteer work? [1=strongly important, 7=strongly unimportant]

1. To live closely to my values
2. Be part of a well-organized project
3. Have fun
4. Learn about the environment
5. Allow me to work on an area where I visit
6. Explore possible career options
7. Help restore natural areas
8. Feel needed
9. Work with a good leader
10. Work with friends
11. Learn about specific animals
12. Enhance the activities I enjoy doing
13. Get a foot in the door at a place where I would like to work
14. Do something for a cause that is important to me
15. To express my values through my work
16. Help me succeed in chosen profession
17. Help preserve natural areas for future generations
18. Feel better about myself
19. See familiar faces
20. Concern for the environment
21. Make contacts that might help my career
22. Ensure future of natural areas for my enjoyment
23. Learn about specific plants
24. Experience will look good on resume
25. Enrich my future recreation experiences
26. Meet new people
27. Observe Nature
28. Know what is expected of me
29. Protecting natural areas from disappearing
30. See improvements to the environment

Are there other motivating factors for your participation in volunteer work?

No

Yes

If you answered “yes” to the previous question, what else motivates you?

[open response]

What do you see as possible barriers to participating in the Drop-In Stewardship Volunteer Program?

[open response]

How do you think the program can attract younger people?

[open response]

*Demographic Questions*

What is your age?

[open response]

Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Transgender

Non-binary

Prefer not to answer

Are you retired?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

How far do you live from Acadia National Park Headquarters?

1-5 miles

6-10 miles

11-15 miles

16-20 miles

Greater than 20 miles

Prefer not to answer

Are you a year-round resident of Maine?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

Have you made financial donations to Friends of Acadia?

Yes

No  
Prefer not to answer

Survey for College of the Atlantic Students

Have you participated in volunteer activities or service work during your time in college?  
Yes  
No

Do you currently volunteer off-campus?  
Yes  
No

If you answered “yes” to the previous question, where do you volunteer?  
[open response]

If you do not currently volunteer off-campus, what is stopping you from volunteering?  
[open response]

Please rank the nonprofit topics in order of who you would be most likely to volunteer time to  
(1=most likely, 9= least likely):

Children  
Homeless/Abused  
Elderly  
People with Disabilities/People with Illness  
People living in poverty  
Animals  
Environment/Ecology  
Political issues  
Political candidate

Have you ever volunteered for an environmental organization?  
Yes  
No

If you answered “yes” to the previous question, who did you volunteer for?  
[open response]

Do you have an interest in becoming an environmental volunteer in the future?  
Yes  
No  
Maybe  
I am currently a volunteer for an environmental organization

How important or accurate on a scale of 1 to 7 are each of the following to you and your volunteer work? If you have not volunteered before, how important would each of the following be to you? [1=strongly important, 7=strongly unimportant]

1. To live closely to my values
2. Be part of a well-organized project
3. Have fun
4. Learn about the environment
5. Allow me to work on an area where I visit
6. Explore possible career options
7. Help restore natural areas
8. Feel needed
9. Work with a good leader
10. Work with friends
11. Learn about specific animals
12. Enhance the activities I enjoy doing
13. Get a foot in the door at a place where I would like to work
14. Do something for a cause that is important to me
15. To express my values through my work
16. Help me succeed in chosen profession
17. Help preserve natural areas for future generations
18. Feel better about myself
19. See familiar faces
20. Concern for the environment
21. Make contacts that might help my career
22. Ensure future of natural areas for my enjoyment
23. Learn about specific plants
24. Experience will look good on resume
25. Enrich my future recreation experiences
26. Meet new people
27. Observe Nature
28. Know what is expected of me
29. Protecting natural areas from disappearing
30. See improvements to the environment

Are there other motivating factors for your participation in volunteer work?

No

Yes

If you answered “yes” to the previous question, what else motivates you to volunteer?

[open response]

Are you familiar with any opportunities to volunteer for an environmental organization near you?

Yes

No

If you answered “yes” to the previous question, what organization(s)?  
[open response]

*Demographic Questions*

What year in school are you?

- First year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer

Which race or ethnicity best describes you?

- Native American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Latinx or Hispanic
- White/Caucasian
- Multiple Ethnicity or Other
- Prefer not to answer

What is your area of study?

- [open-ended]
- Prefer not to answer