

Central Ohio Collaborative for Conservation

AmeriCorps Program Report

Fiscal Years 2023, 2024 & 2025



Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District
1404 Goodale Blvd, Ste 100
Columbus, OH 43212
(614) 486-9613



The AmeriCorps Pledge

I will get things done for America –

to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy, I will take action.

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.



Foreword

AmeriCorps (formerly known as the Corporation for National and Community Service) is an independent U.S. federal agency that was signed into public law from the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Its mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through national service and volunteerism. AmeriCorps aims to bring people together to tackle some of our country’s most pressing challenges for the following impact areas: Education, economic opportunity, disaster response, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military family support.

As one of many signature initiatives, AmeriCorps issues competitive grant funding to support AmeriCorps programs, which create national service volunteer opportunities for people—AmeriCorps members—to engage in sustained service in support of community needs. AmeriCorps members increase organizational capacity to “Get Things Done,” and in exchange for their service, they receive in-service benefits and a Segal AmeriCorps Educational Award. Since 1994, more than 1.25 million people have served in AmeriCorps funded programs across the country. Ohio specifically has had more than 40,000 AmeriCorps members contribute over 65 million hours of service to support our local communities.

ServeOhio, Ohio’s Commission on Service and Volunteerism, was established in response to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and is responsible for administering Ohio AmeriCorps funding in partnership with the federal AmeriCorps agency and the State of Ohio. In 2023, ServeOhio awarded Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District grant funding to help launch the Central Ohio Collaborative for Conservation, an environmental stewardship AmeriCorps program. Through partnerships with other nonprofit and local government organizations, the Collaborative “Gets Things Done” for conservation in Central Ohio.

Thank you to ServeOhio, our program host sites, and the Franklin County Board of Commissioners for supporting this program.

And of course, thank you to our AmeriCorps members for your dedication to service.



*Thank you to our AmeriCorps host site partners
for your support and collaboration
over the years!*



Grange Insurance
Audubon Center



Green
Columbus



Franklin Soil and Water
Conservation District



2023-2024 Members



Alejandro Ross (SEC)



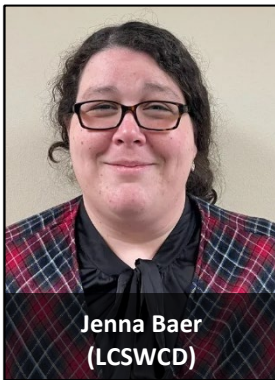
Chedo Milkovich
(Metro Parks)



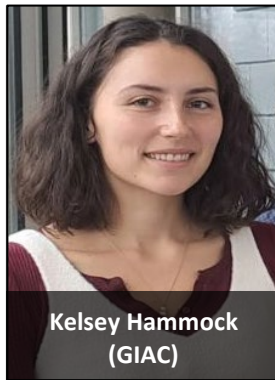
Grace Kleinhenz
(Green Columbus)



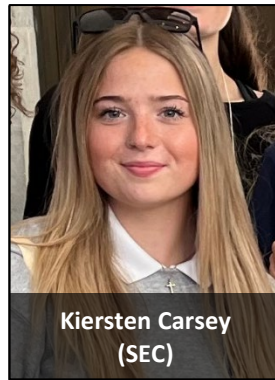
Gracyn Fulling
(GIAC)



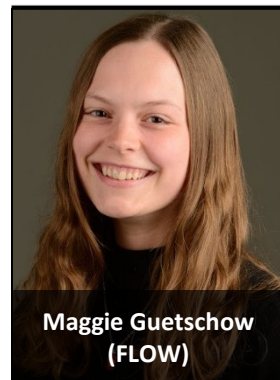
Jenna Baer
(LCSWCD)



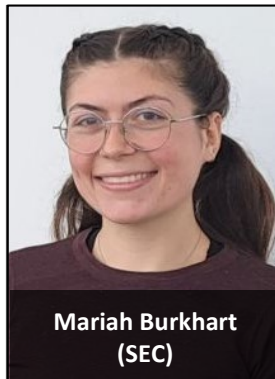
Kelsey Hammock
(GIAC)



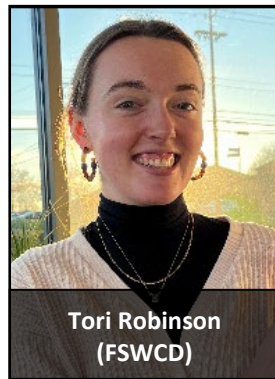
Kiersten Carsey
(SEC)



Maggie Guetschow
(FLOW)

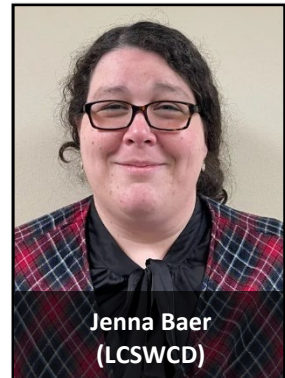
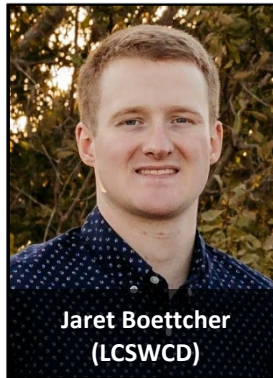
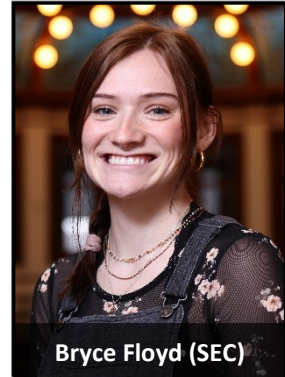
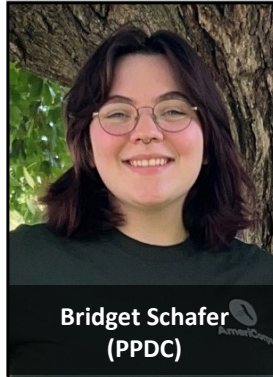
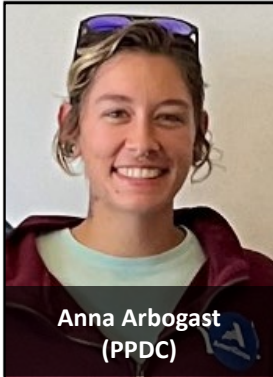


Mariah Burkhart
(SEC)



Tori Robinson
(FSWCD)

2024-2025 Members



2025-2026 Members



Adam Willis (MTSO)



Annie Stimmel (SEC)



Brendan Stalf (SEC)



Bryce Floyd (SEC)



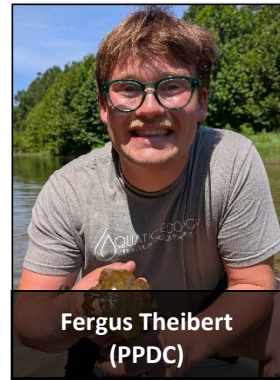
Ciara Matos (PPDC)



Cierra Clark (GIAC)



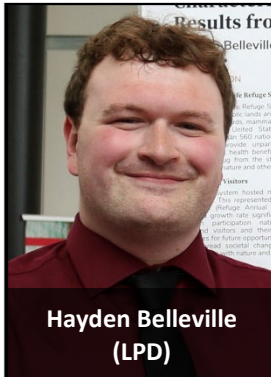
Ethan McCullough (SEC)



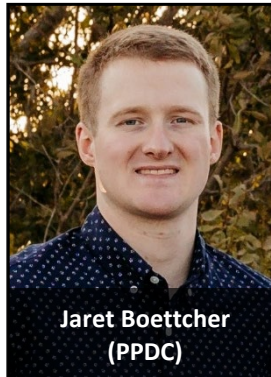
Fergus Theibert (PPDC)



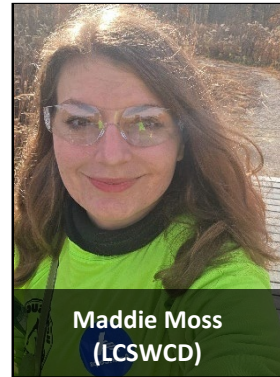
Gwyn Hagerty (MTSO)



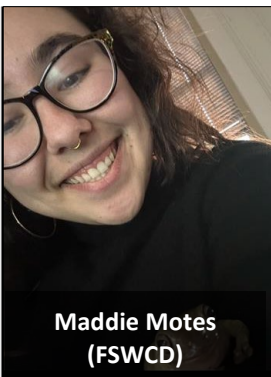
Hayden Belleville (LPD)



Jaret Boettcher (PPDC)



Maddie Moss (LCSWCD)



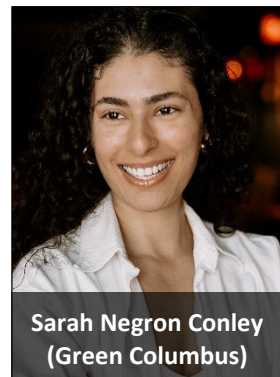
Maddie Motes (FSWCD)



Percy Neff-Friel (LCSWCD)



Robin Brick (FLOW)



Sarah Negron Conley (Green Columbus)

Program Overview

The Central Ohio Collaborative for Conservation is an environmental stewardship AmeriCorps State program that receives funding from ServeOhio as part of the federal AmeriCorps agency State and National initiative.

Our mission is to develop a workforce of environmental leaders who increase Central Ohio’s capacity to improve the quality of natural resources and educate and engage the public in responsible land use and stewardship.

We realize our mission through our AmeriCorps member services. Our AmeriCorps members perform direct land treatments and provide the public with technical assistance and education to help people implement conservation projects on their own. They also educate schools and the broader public on environmental topics so that people may be motivated to commit to a lifestyle of continued environmental stewardship. Finally, they engage volunteers to join these activities and train them to take ownership in leading such efforts in their own neighborhoods. Of course, our mission would not be complete without a strong emphasis on fostering experiences that enable our members to grow as environmental professionals and leaders.



Our AmeriCorps member services can be organized into the following five focus areas:

(1) Conservation Implementation

Members support on-the-ground conservation services that result in direct improvements to natural resources and the quality of our local environment.

- Invasive species removal & management
- Native plantings, seeding & reforestation
- Ecosystem restoration
- Rain & pollinator garden establishment
- Litter cleanups

(2) Environmental Stewardship

Members support other conservation-oriented activities, oftentimes to supplement or segue into a greater conservation implementation effort.

- Sustainable & regenerative agriculture
- Native plant nursery management
- Tree giveaway administration
- Stormwater management assistance
- Biotic & habitat surveys
- Field monitoring & data collection
- Natural resource data analysis & mapping

(3) Environmental Education

Members support scientifically informed and community-sensitive initiatives that increase public awareness and knowledge of environmental topics and their relevance to Central Ohio.

- Program development & facilitation
 - School, after school, library & youth programming
 - Camps, field trips & tours
 - Teacher workshops
 - Adult education programs
- Community & event outreach
- Public communications

(4) Volunteer Engagement

Members perform organizational support services to leverage volunteers in activities that support our program mission.

- Volunteer activity coordination & oversight
- Citizen science planning & execution
- Volunteer management
- Public outreach to build volunteer support & spirit

(5) Member Development

Our program encourages members to try new experiences and develop their skillset. We provide resources that enable them to build upon their existing interests, as well as explore different environmental opportunities and careers.

- Professional development coordination
- Field equipment experience
- Career support
- ServeOhio programming



Fiscal Year Overview & Service Impact

Fiscal Year 2023 marked the first year of the Collaborative. Our program hosted **10 AmeriCorps members** across **7 host site organizations**. We are grateful to our former AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, Emily Fouts, for getting our program off the ground, and to Abby Thiel for taking lead in April 2024.

Fiscal Year 2024 was a year with changes. We grew slightly to host **12 AmeriCorps members** across **7 host site organizations**. We did not continue our host site partnership with Metro Parks, but we did start a new partnership with Preservation Parks of Delaware County. This program year was also a year of unprecedented events; in April 2025, federal funding cuts terminated nearly 80% of AmeriCorps programs early. We are incredibly fortunate that our program was not affected by these early terminations, and our members were able to complete their entire term of service as originally planned.

Fiscal Year 2025 was a year with even more growth. We expanded our program to host **16 AmeriCorps members** across **9 host site organizations**. We continued our established host site partnerships, and we added Licking Park District and Methodist Theological School in Ohio to our program.

	# Host Site Partners by Program Year		
	FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026
Delaware County	1	2	3
Franklin County	5	4	4
Licking County	1	1	2
Total	7	7	9

	# Members Hosted by Program Year		
	FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026
Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks (Metro Parks)	1 FT	-	-
Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD)	1 FT	1 FT	1 FT
Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW)	1 FT	1 FT	1 FT
Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC)	2 FT	1 FT	1 FT
Green Columbus	1 TQT	1 FT	1 FT
Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District (LCSWCD)	1 TQT	2 FT	2 FT
Licking Park District (LPD)	-	-	1 FT
Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO)	-	-	2 FT
Preservation Parks of Delaware County (PPDC)	-	2 FT	2 FT, 1 TQT
Stratford Ecological Center (SEC)	3 FT	4 FT	4 FT
Total	10	12	16

**FT = Full Time member position requiring at least 1700 hours of service

**TQT = Three Quarter Time member position requiring at least 1200 hours of service

(1) Conservation Implementation Impact

		FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026*
Unique # Acres of Land Treated		13	1,240	157
Unique # Acres of Land Improved		13	800	37
Total # Acres of Land Treated	All Land Treatment Types	13	1,625	502
	Invasive Removal	13	763	303
	Native Planting & Seeding	-	519	192
	Rain & Pollinator Gardens	-	6	2
	Litter Cleanups	-	156	3
	Misc. Restoration	-	181	1
	Agricultural Services	-	-	1

*FY25 data only includes activities from September 2025-October 2025.

From the conservation implementation data above, here are more impact highlights:

- Of the “Total # Acres of Land Treated” for FY24 and FY25...
 - **1,220 (FY24) and 443 (FY25)** were located in **Delaware County**
 - **404 (FY24) and 58 (FY25)** were located in **Franklin County**
 - **1 (FY24) and 1 (FY25)** were located in **Licking County**

- “Unique # Acres of Land Treated” **increased dramatically** from the FY23 to FY24 program year due to improved program data collection methods.

- 64 native plantings occurred in FY24 that resulted in the planting of...
 - **2,235 bareroot** trees and shrubs
 - **989 containerized** trees and shrubs
 - **239 ball and burlap** trees

- Members led or participated in **4 (FY23), 20 (FY24), and 4 (FY25) litter cleanups** that resulted in the removal of more than **5,580 (FY24) and 116 (FY25) pounds of litter**.

- Members established **4 new pollinator gardens** and **1 new rain garden** in FY24.

(2) Environmental Stewardship Impact

		FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026*
Tree Nurseries	Total # Trees Started	-	300	-
	Total # Trees Distributed	-	1,920	2,259
	Total # People/Groups Distributed To	-	998	306
Agriculture	Total # Pounds of Crops Harvested	-	-	667
	Unique # People/Groups Distributed To	-	-	45
Data Collection	Total # Samples Collected	-	58	-
	Total # Sites Visited	-	22	-

*FY25 data only includes activities from September 2025-October 2025.

From the environmental stewardship data above, here are more impact highlights:

- In FY25, **300** of the “Total # People/Groups Distributed To” for Tree Nurseries were in **historically underserved communities** (i.e., areas with low canopy coverage).
- In FY24 a **comprehensive Stream Quality Monitoring process** (including Full Habitat Index, Water Chemistry, and Macro Sampling) was conducted for Mill Run in Delaware.

(3) Environmental Education Impact

		FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026*
Unique # Individuals Reached		11,373	21,274	2,965
Unique # Individuals with Increased Knowledge as a Result of Their Participation in EE Programs		9,571	6,923	1,342
Total # Activities Facilitated	Public Programs	124	58	39
	School Programs	132	165	31
	Tabling & Outreach Events	64	25	15
Total # People Reached	Public Programs	2,457 <i>1,320 adults 1,137 children</i>	13,619 <i>11,654 adults 1,965 children</i>	1,529 <i>680 adults 849 children</i>
	School Programs	8,916 <i>493 teachers 8,423 students</i>	8,350 <i>1,083 teachers 7,267 students</i>	1,738 <i>101 teachers 1,472 students</i>
	Tabling & Outreach Events	9,868 <i>6,065 adults 3,803 children</i>	3,357 <i>2,304 adults 1,053 children</i>	1,423

*FY25 data only includes activities from September 2025-October 2025.

From the environmental education data above, here are more impact highlights:

- **89 (FY23), 79 (FY24), and 29 (FY25) unique schools** were reached from school programming.
- Of the unique schools reached...
 - **3 (FY23), 15 (FY24), and 7 (FY25)** were located in **Delaware County**
 - **70 (FY23), 41 (FY24), and 15 (FY25)** were located in **Franklin County**
 - **16 (FY23), 23 (FY24), and 7 (FY25)** were located in **Licking County**

(4) Volunteer Engagement Impact

	FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026*
Unique # Volunteers Engaged	405	779	252
Total # Volunteer Hours from Unique Volunteers	10,940	10,839	2,296
Total # Volunteers Engaged	2,008	2,061	437
Total # Volunteer Hours Leveraged	-	15,773	979

*FY25 data only includes activities from September 2025-October 2025.

From the volunteer data above, here are more impact highlights:

- “Unique # Volunteers Engaged” **increased by 92%** from the FY23 to FY24 program year.
- Of the 2,061 “Total # Volunteers Engaged” for FY24...
 - **1,281** were associated with **conservation implementation services**:
 - Invasive removal (298 volunteers)
 - Native planting & seeding (371 volunteers)
 - Rain & pollinator garden establishment (94 volunteers)
 - Litter cleanups (518 volunteers)
 - **272** were associated with **native plant nursery management**
- Of the 437 “Total # Volunteers Engaged” for FY25...
 - **247** were associated with **conservation implementation services**
 - **154** were associated with **environmental education programs**
 - **36** were associated with **agricultural services**
- Of the 15,773 “Total # Volunteer Hours Leveraged” for FY24...
 - **4,891** were associated with **conservation implementation services**:
 - Invasive removal (1,473 hours)
 - Native planting & seeding (1,314 hours)
 - Rain & pollinator garden establishment (172 hours)
 - Litter cleanups (1,932 hours)
 - **687** were associated with **native plant nursery management**

(5) Member Development Impact

	FY 23 2023-2024	FY24 2024-2025	FY25 2025-2026*
# Trainings Attended with Certifications	22	23	1
# Awarded Certificates	25	49	1
# Hours Reported as Training in Timesheets	1,470	2,167	683

*FY25 data only includes activities from September 2025-October 2025.

Looking Forward

Our program has learned a lot since 2023. We have refined our programmatic structure so that members can more effectively meet our program goals, and we have improved our reporting methods to get a more accurate picture of our impact. We will continue to put the member experience and host site collaboration at the center of our approach to program administration and future growth.

For the member experience, we plan to prioritize environmental workforce development. This will include more targeted efforts to recruit people who would particularly benefit from a year of service with our program, as well as creating more individualized professional development support pathways for our members. We will also continue to revisit member benefits annually.

For host site collaboration, we intend to amplify the work of our program partners and foster regionwide support for environmental stewardship service. To achieve this, we plan to both continue partnerships with current host sites and identify new channels of collaboration. We will also explore more service opportunities for members to collaborate across different host sites, as well as big-ticket projects that would benefit from entire cohort involvement.

2023-2024 Cohort Event Highlights

- December **12/8** Bareroot tree planting at FSWCD's Hellbranch Meadows restoration site.
12/18 Service Speaks session led by Mariah Burkhart (SEC AmeriCorps member) at Stratford Ecological Center.
- January **1/30** Maple tree tapping at Stratford Ecological Center.
- March **3/6** Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) landfill tour led by Kim Chapman.
3/12 Training on chainsaw safety, operation, and maintenance by Chris Roshon and Lauren Richards (PPDC).
3/16 AmeriCorps Week project: Invasive removal and litter cleanup at FLOW's Worthington Tree Nursery.
- May **5/9** National Day of Service project: Bareroot tree planting at Bank Run Metro Park.
5/11 Containerized perennial planting at Glen Echo Ravine with Friends of the Ravines.
- June **6/29** Seed packing at FSWCD.
- July **7/24** Pesticide demonstration led by Chris Roshon (PPDC).
- August **8/29** GIS training led by Josh Garver, Aaron Hebert, and Abby Thiel (FSWCD).
- September **9/6** Professional development and Life After AmeriCorps training by Abby Thiel (FSWCD).
9/28 Birding at GIAC led by Gracyn Fulling (GIAC AmeriCorps member).



2024-2025 Cohort Event Highlights

- September **9/9-9/10** Member orientation.
- 9/25** Red Cross Adult & Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED certification for 1st half of the cohort.
- October **10/1-10/2** Master Rain Gardener certification led by Madison Wisniewski (FSWCD).
- 10/4** Rain garden installation at the Eagle Pavilion at Rotary Lake led by Tori Robinson (FSWCD AmeriCorps member) followed by a litter cleanup.
- 10/10** AmeriCorps 30th Anniversary event hosted by ServeOhio.
- November **11/16** Honeysuckle Hack Fest service day at PPDC's Emily Traphagen Park.
- 11/22** Training on chainsaw safety, operation, and maintenance by Chris Roshon (PPDC).
- December **12/6** GIS training led by Josh Garver, Aaron Hebert, and Abby Thiel (FSWCD).
- 12/13** Removing tree guards at FSWCD's Hellbranch Meadows restoration site.
- 12/17** Red Cross Adult & Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED certification for 2nd half of the cohort.
- January **1/28** Maple tree tapping led by Mariah Burkhart (SEC AmeriCorps alum) and Service Speaks session led by Anna Arbogast (PPDC AmeriCorps member) at Stratford Ecological Center.
- February **2/10** Training on the winter salt's effects on water quality and Salt Watch. Presentations by Brooke Frusher (FSWCD), Maggie Guetschow (FLOW AmeriCorps alum), and Petra Schmalbrock (Scioto Watershed Action Group). Removing invasive plants and overgrown grapevine at the Bill Moose Run Conservation Easement in coordination with FLOW volunteers Mike Sapp and Bob Fletcher.
- March **3/15** AmeriCorps Week project: Tire amnesty collection led by FLOW.
- 3/10** AmeriCorps Week member celebration: Service Speaks session followed by Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) training and landfill tour led by Kim Chapman.
- May **5/12** Training on professional development and Life after AmeriCorps by Abby Thiel (FSWCD).
- June **6/3** Spring BioBlitz training led by Fiona McCarthy (GIAC).
- 6/19** Rumpke Recycling and Resource Center facility tour led by Sandra Crocker.
- 6/21** National Day of Service project for ServeOhio Day: Rain garden installation at LCSWCD, with project planning completed by Jenna Baer and Jaret Boettcher (LCSWCD AmeriCorps members). Service Speaks session led by Anna Arbogast (PPDC AmeriCorps member).
- July **7/25** Fox sedge seed collection and distribution at FSWCD's Hellbranch Meadows restoration site led by David Reutter (FSWCD).
- August **8/1** Del-Co Water Company, Inc. facility tour led by Fred Milan.
- 8/14** Summer BioBlitz training led by Fiona McCarthy (GIAC).
- 8/18** Training on invasive plant identification and management, pesticide application, and review of chainsaw safety. Presentations led by Jennifer Finfera and Steve Herminghausen (Ohio Invasive Plants Council) and Chris Roshon (PPDC).



2025-2026 Cohort Event Highlights

September **9/8-9/10** Member orientation.

9/9 Gray headed coneflower seed collection and distribution at FSWCD's Hellbranch Meadows, with presentations by Kyle Wilson, David Reutter and Annabel Spranger (FSWCD).

October **10/7** Stormwater Awareness Week streamside cleanup around the Scioto Audubon boat launch.

10/20 Training on plant identification, invasive plant management, and pesticide application. Presentations led by Kori Sedmak (FSWCD), Jennifer Finfera and Steve Herminghausen (Ohio Invasive Plants Council), and Lauren Richards (PPDC).

November **11/17** Red Cross Adult & Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED and Bloodborne Pathogen certifications.

December **12/5** Litter cleanup at the Franklin County Children Services conservation easement.

12/10 Training on the winter salt's effects on water quality, Salt Watch, and winter tree identification. Presentations by Brooke Frusher (FSWCD), Petra Schmalbrock (Scioto Watershed Action Group), and Mort Schmidt.

12/15 Training on chainsaw safety, operation, and maintenance by Lauren Richards and Chris Roshon (PPDC).



Thank you again to everyone who has supported this program in some shape or form. We are so grateful for your collaboration and passion for AmeriCorps and national service, and we hope to continue this great work for the benefit of our beloved Central Ohio!

