

Strengthening Partnerships. Creating Opportunities.

USDA Forest Service Resource Assistants Program



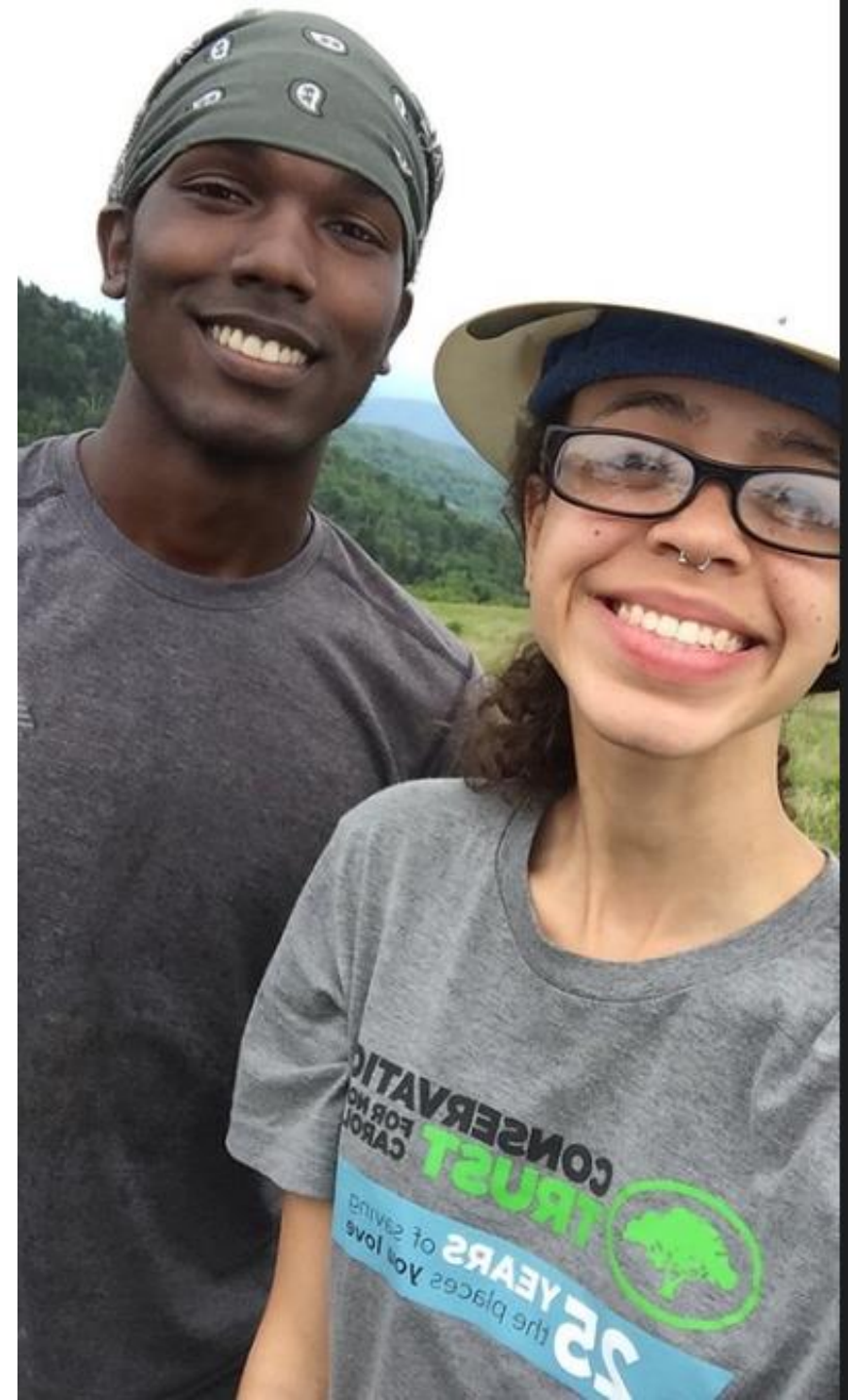
Mary Biggs
Resource Assistants Program Liaison
Washington, DC



For the group:

What internship or career pathway programs do you / your agency work with?

What value do you see these programs adding?





Overview

1 My perspective

2 USDA Forest Service Resource Assistants Program

3 How we implement the program

4 What the program contributes

5 Some program challenges

6 Some lessons I've learned

My Perspective

February 2016

I am hired as a Resource Assistant with the Forest Service Volunteers & Service team



August 2017

My term is extended, this time as the RAP Liaison

My current duties include:

- Fostering RA community, national and local
- Providing program guidance and resources
- Talking about the program! Spreading the love!





Resource Assistants Program – What is it?

“A rigorous and immersive, paid work and learning experience for individuals who are interested in conservation, natural and cultural resources, environmental management, research and development, or other career opportunities with land management agencies.”

- RAP Guide

16 U.S. Code Chapter 37, Subchapter II

Program Goals



Engage **highly motivated candidates** through internships under the supervision and coaching of Forest Service staff.



Instill stewardship values in the **next generation** of natural and cultural resource management professionals through career exploration and professional development.



Expand and enhance the **capacity** of the Forest Service to accomplish mission-critical work and high-priority projects.



Attract and retain a **diverse and inclusive** workforce to support the Forest Service's mission to "sustain the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."



Program Outcomes (so far)

311



TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

227,241

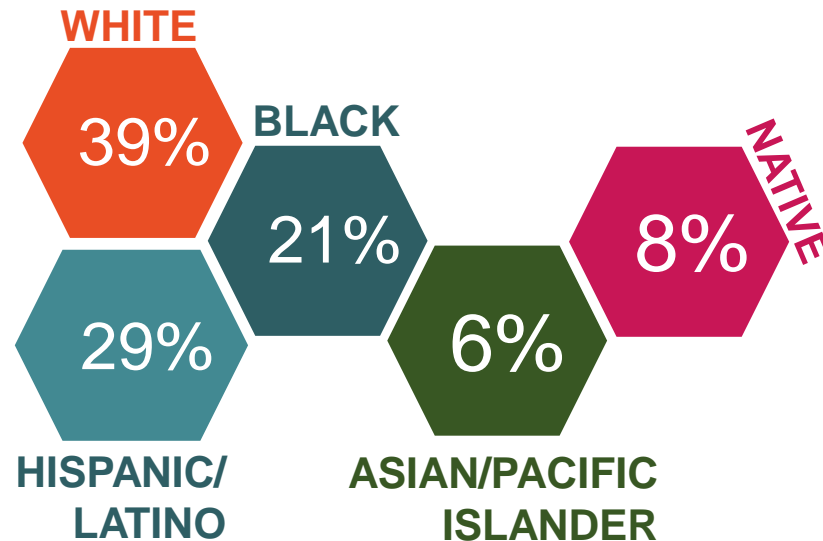


HOURS OF SERVICE

27



AVERAGE AGE



181 Female

128 Male

1 Genderqueer



ASSOCIATES
or higher

185
BACHELOR
39
GRADUATE



And...how does that happen, exactly?

*“The US Forest Service will **implement the RAP through partner organizations.** Agreements will be established with partners who have demonstrated success with recruitment and outreach practices and administrative capacity.”*

- Resource Assistants Program Design

Win...Win...Win!

The Forest Service gains...

Stronger partnerships
New connections to underserved communities

The partners gain...

Stronger partnerships
Additional offerings for participants

The RAs gain...

RAP noncompetitive hiring authority
Experience and connections
Community and networks



Case in point: Juan Lazo Bautista



USDA Forest Service Washington Office
Conservation Education





Case in point: Juan Lazo Bautista

“Juan has opened doors to insight and knowledge in a meaningful, sincere and focused manner, which supports the FS mission of seeking to engage people where they are, and in a way that is relevant and comfortable, while gaining and building trust that has been historically eroded...[He] has been successful in moving the needle in a positive direction surrounding a national-level expansion of a youth/community engagement program, the Woodsy Owl Conservation Corps, that embeds the important role of Conservation Education in people’s lives.”

- *Tamberly Conway*

Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, Conservation Education

Like any great idea...

- *Large agency, large program!*
- *Variability in partner & participant experience*
- *Different organizational models*
- *Need for hiring manager buy-in*





For the group:

Do you have experience implementing internships with partner organizations?

Have you faced similar experiences? How have you worked through them?

What I've learned:

- *Humility*
- *Intentional listening*
- *Asset mapping*
- *Flexibility*





Questions?

Discussion!

How to implement collaborative programs that are also standardized?

What are the most compelling aspects of this program? What would you like to know?