



# **GREEN COLLAR CORPS & YOUTH WATERSHED STEWARDS**

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SHAPING SOLUTIONS:  
LEARNING THROUGH ACTIVE STEWARDSHIP

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# THE WATERSHED PROJECT



The Watershed Project's mission is to inspire San Francisco Bay Area Residents communities to understand, appreciate, and protect our local watersheds.

We envision a culture where support for watersheds and urban nature is deeply rooted, and where individuals feel a personal and shared responsibility for watershed health.

# What does a future with a deep rooted sense of responsibility for urban nature and our watersheds look like?

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A future where watershed stewardship is part of a regenerative economy in which the environmental sector of the workforce flourishes.

Green jobs are plentiful, well-compensated, and desirable.



# Our Approach

- Creating opportunities for connection & exploration
- Creating learning opportunities where they have not traditionally existed
- Provide solution oriented programming to address, empower, build hope, and employ youth



# TWP'S GREEN COLLAR CORPS

**9-month internship paid above minimum wage, 12-16 hours/week**

**Bonus for completing over 400 hours**

**Youth ages 17-24, with priority for underserved communities in Richmond**

Combines:

- Hands-on environmental work
- Career exploration & mentorship
- Professional development & final projects
- Community Building



# SPECIAL INTEREST PATHWAY MODEL



## Greening Urban Watersheds

creek restoration, green infrastructure, pollinator gardens, irrigation



## Community Outreach

environmental justice, event planning, public communication



## Environmental Education

environmental science teaching, field trip facilitation, youth engagement



## Water Quality Monitoring

water quality science, data collection, public education

# BENEFITS OF A SPECIAL INTEREST PATHWAY MODEL

Through these pathways we can:

- Integrate interns into every aspect of our work
- Provide meaningful career exploration opportunity
- Provide specialized training
- Maintain Engagement
- Provide a sense of belonging and responsibility within the organization
- Track progress towards personal and professional development goals
- Build strong relationships
- Offer a robust experience



# TWP's Workforce Development Model

## GCC Interns



### Focus:

- Greening Urban Watersheds
- Cleaning Urban Watersheds
- Climate Ready Communities
- Environmental Education
- Water Quality Monitoring

## Apprentices



### Focus:

- Greening Urban Watersheds
- Cleaning Urban Watersheds

## Field Crew



### Focus:

- Greening Urban Watersheds
- Cleaning Urban Watersheds

**MOVING THE GREEN COLLAR CORPS FORWARD**



# OUTREACH & REMOVING BARRIERS

- New outreach strategies
- Flexible schedules
- Tailored Programming
- Connective supportive services
  - Transportation
  - Food
  - Coaching
  - Mentorship



# INTERN TESTIMONIALS

*“Each pathway of the Green Collar Corps internship has its own pathways into so many different careers, each one with its own excitement. I am honestly considering going into entomology because of how exciting the BMI was”*

*“What I enjoyed most was getting to do different pathways at the same time. All the work I did was different, but it felt nice to do something real that felt like, ‘woah, I’m doing something with my life”.*

*Another one of my favorite projects was restoration. This included planting native trees along Rheem creek to help bring those ecosystems back to life. We didn’t just plant them, we also installed irrigation systems so that the trees could grow on their own without needing to be watered all the time. That work felt really purposeful. I could actually see how what we were doing would help that environment in the long run and, years from now, once it’s fully restored, I can say I had a hand in that”.*

# THE WATERSHED PROJECT'S YOUTH WATERSHED STEWARDS



Training the next generation of green  
infrastructure leaders

# BEGINNINGS OF YOUTH WATERSHED STEWARDS

- Collaboration between The Watershed Project, SFUSD, SFPUC, and Lotus Water Engineers
- Youth Watershed Stewards curriculum focuses on ways that GSI slows, spreads, and sinks rainwater runoff before it enters the Estuary
- High school students reactivate and maintain nature-based green infrastructure (GSI) on SFUSD campus
- Students build skills in design, construction, and maintenance of GSI



# YOUTH WATERSHED STEWARDS PROTECTS THE ESTUARY AND CONNECTS STUDENTS TO NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

- Rebuilds and revitalizes rainwater harvesting systems and rain gardens on SFUSD campuses
- Prevents flooding during rain events in San Francisco's combined sewer system
- Students develop skills and awareness for environmental stewardship
- Provides hands-on learning opportunities in real world projects
- Removes barriers by providing other entry points to conservation careers



# ADDRESSING DISTRICT NEEDS WHILE PROVIDING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- YWS provides needed maintenance work on rainwater harvesting systems and rain gardens while providing background information to students
- Client Schools: Repair projects are jointly identified with the district on priority list
- Positive impact on teachers and students through stewardship and mentorship
- Align green infrastructure maintenance tasks with construction pathway in SFUSD



# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



**Fall**

Partner with John O'Connell Technical High School and Galileo Academy of Science and Technology to deliver watershed conservation education



**Winter**

Rebuild and revitalize rainwater harvesting systems on client school campuses

Visit green infrastructure sites around San Francisco



**Spring**

Rainwater Action Day at client school campuses

# TRAINING THE GREEN WORKFORCE

- Introduce students to careers based in nature-based solutions: Green stormwater infrastructure
- Hand-on training: repairing rainwater harvesting systems and revitalization of rain gardens on SFUSD “client” school campuses
- Encourage a solutionist mindset for young people entering the workforce to tackle climate change challenges





# ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CLIMATE CAREERS

- The Watershed Project partners with Career Technical Education students in construction pathways as well as AP Environmental Science students
- Connect students to professionals who talk about their path into GSI industry
- Prepare students for green careers beyond traditional 4-year degree pathways
- Exposure to green careers in construction, landscaping, and urban sustainability



# PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

- **200+ students** exposed to green infrastructure careers
- **200+ students** trained in green stormwater infrastructure repair and maintenance
- **11 SFUSD** client campuses served in cistern repair and rain garden revitalization
- **CASQA 2025 award** recognition for innovative approach to educating high school students about stormwater management and design



# INVITING WATER (AND PEOPLE!) IN



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