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SCA Center for
Conservation Service
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STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, INC.



California Wildfire Recovery Project

“Helping Recovery Take Root”



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California Wildfire Recovery Project

“Helping Recovery Take Root”

I. PROJECT SUMMARY

Over the last 18 weeks the Conservation Interns and Staff of SCA’s California Wildfire Recovery Project (CWRP) have made a lasting impact on the communities and open spaces of southern California. CWRP coordinated 40 volunteer events at 18 different sites, working with 13 different project partners, including federal and state agencies, county and city parks, and non-profit groups. In addition to the many individual citizens who volunteered with us, we also worked with at least 23 different organized community groups, recruiting over 780 volunteers to help with restoration efforts and averaging almost 20 volunteers per event. Though we coordinated some events with over 100 volunteers, we also provided consistent weekly opportunities for volunteerism in addition to large events organized for special occasions like Earth Day and National Trails Day. All of our projects were focused on assisting the people of southern California in restoring parks and public lands destroyed by the 2002 and 2003 wildfires.

CWRP Snapshot

SCA Staff:	3
SCA Interns:	5
Duration:	18 weeks
Dates:	2/16/04 – 6/18/04
Home base:	Hemet, CA
Mission:	Mobilize volunteers to assist in fire recovery
Project range:	Over 100 miles
Project sites:	Natural areas affected by the 2002 and 2003 wildfires
Types of work:	Re-vegetation Trail maintenance Erosion control Park rehabilitation



CWRP was made possible by support from The Home Depot and The Earth Day Network

Facilitating Cooperation and Action . Using generous contributions from The Earth Day Network and The Home Depot, SCA’s California Wildfire Recovery Project served as a catalyst for linking land managers with willing volunteers. Three SCA staff and five SCA Conservation Interns worked closely with land managers to identify restoration projects of critical importance and recruit community volunteers to engage in direct service on these projects. SCA staff and interns recruited, trained and supervised volunteers on a variety of restoration projects, successfully linking charitable donors, land managers and volunteers, and making volunteerism on fire-damaged public lands a reality.

“In these times of limited budgets and staffing, we have tried to build partnerships with other agencies and non-profit groups to accomplish park projects. This current partnership with the SCA has been a perfect example of an agency, a non-profit organization and volunteers working together for a common goal.”

- Jeff Weinstein, Park Planner, San Bernardino County Parks

II. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Project Partners (13)

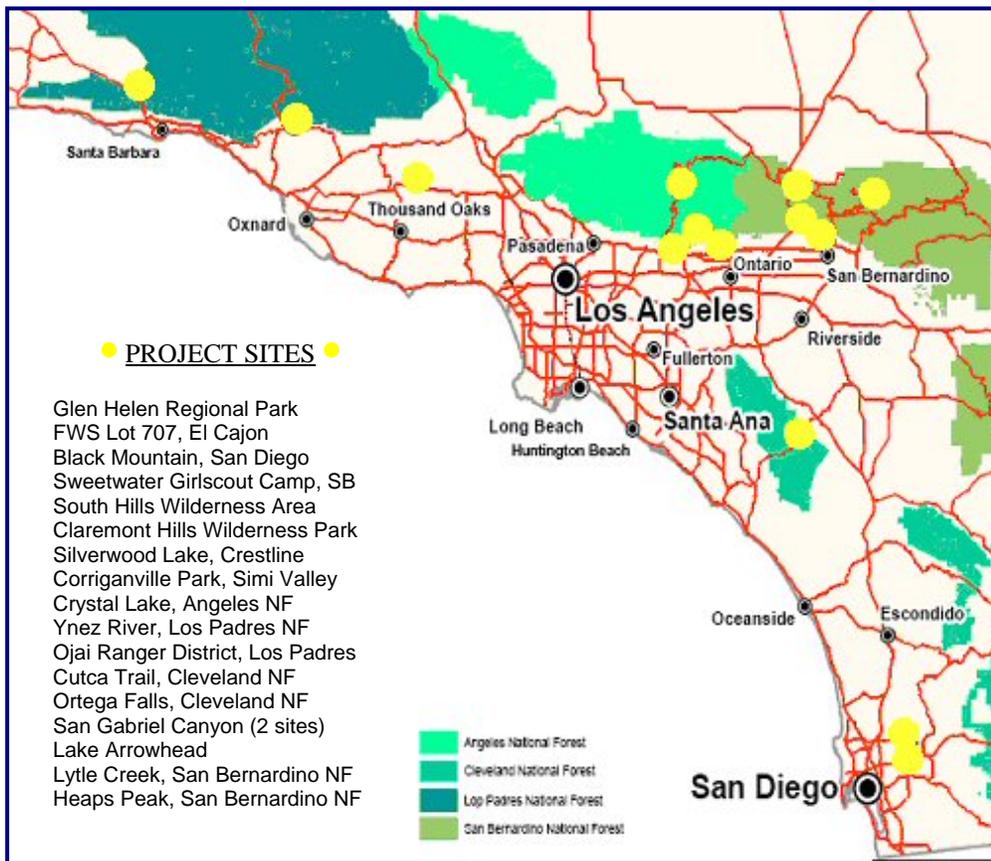
- San Bernardino County Parks
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- City of San Diego
- City of San Bernardino
- Girl Scouts
- City of Glendora
- City of Claremont
- California State Parks
- City of Simi Valley
- Angeles NF
- Los Padres NF
- Cleveland NF
- San Bernardino NF

All SCA programs share four core elements: environmental stewardship, public outreach and education, service learning, and leadership development. CWRP presented unique opportunities to integrate these elements in new ways by linking an organized outreach campaign with direct service to accomplish stewardship objectives. The results of this approach were substantial.

Together with agency personnel and volunteers, the CWRP team was able to complete a wide variety of restoration projects in 4 primary categories: re-vegetation, erosion control, trail restoration, and rehabilitation of park infrastructure. Our work covered a broad range of tasks from planting and watering seedlings, to building new trails, to rebuilding park benches and constructing sandbag walls. In each case, land managers determined the most urgent need at each project site and CWRP moved quickly to mobilize volunteer involvement in the project.

Volunteers Count

Volunteer events:	40
Total Volunteers:	781
Home Depot Volunteers:	96
Volunteer hours:	2781
Organized groups:	26
Average vols/event:	19.5



In all, CWRP completed work at 18 project sites for 13 different project partners. Project sites are identified on this map as yellow dots and are located in 6 counties: Ventura, Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

The Work

This table is a compilation of the work completed at all 40 volunteer events, including Earth Day, National Trails Day and the Take Pride in America Kickoff.

4,046

Number of hours
SCA Conservation
Interns invested in
CWRP projects over
18 weeks

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	AMOUNT OF WORK
Re-vegetation	Seed Planting	0.5 acres
	Seedling Planting	900 seedlings
	Tree Planting	101 trees
	Seedling watering	1500 seedlings watered
	Tree Watering	141 trees watered
	Shade cards	1500 seedlings protected
	Tree tubes/protect.	40 trees protected
	Invasive plant control	1.25 acres cleared of invasive plants
	"Firesafe" garden prep.	0.25 acres cleared
Erosion Control	Sandbag walls	323 feet (2200 sandbags)
	Rock drains	12 drains
	Water bars	7 water bars
	Drainage dips	19 dips
	Check dams	700 ft (rock)
	Retaining wall	120 ft ²
	Road drainage	50 ft
	Road repair	200 ft ²
	Rock removal	4 yards ³
Trail Restoration	New trail	2100 ft
	New tread	4100 ft
	Light tread repair	2400 ft
	Brushing	12,930 ft
	Rock steps	6 steps
	Universal access trail	1150 ft ² with decomposed granite surface
Park Rehab	New benches	4 @ 10 ft each and 1 prefab. bench
	Trash pickup	181 bags (7240 gallons)
	Fire break maintenance	45,000 ft ² of fire break cleared
	Graffiti removal	300 ft ²
	Metal debris removal	40 yards ³
	Brush composting	80 yards ³
	Metal gate removal	1 gate
	Fence replacement	96 ft
	Burned brush removal	15,200 ft ² brush cut and chipped
Trail signs	4 installed	

"These trails would not have been reconstructed had it not been for this effort. It was a pleasure having the SCA members do this project. They are very energetic and really enjoy the work they do. This enthusiasm spread to the volunteers and Forest Service employees."

- Marty Dumpis, US Forest Service



Special Events

In addition to our weekly volunteer opportunities, CWRP was involved in three special volunteer events marking Earth Day, the Take Pride in America Kickoff and National Trails Day.

157
Number of
volunteers attending
the Corriganville
Park Earth Day
Event

Earth Day, April 24th

CWRP worked in cooperation with the Ranch Simi Recreation and Park District and the Rancho Simi Trailblazers to help 157 volunteers plant 500 oak seedlings in Corriganville Park, which was severely damaged by the Piru Fire in 2003.



Take Pride in America Kickoff, May 15th

A broad coalition of agency partners, volunteer groups, and concerned citizens, together with CWRP, engaged in 22 projects in four National Forests and one National Recreation Area. CWRP helped plan and run eight of these projects with enthusiastic help from SCA's Desert Restoration Corps.

Organized Groups at CWRP Events (26)

The Home Depot
Fountain of Life (youth group)
SCA Alumni
Citibank
Take Pride in America
United Four Wheel Drive Association
US Fish and Wildlife Service Volunteers
Latter Day Saints (youth group)
San Bernardino Mayor's Youth Council
San Bernardino Public Schools
San Bernardino Blight Busters
San Bernardino County Bridges Program
Girl Scouts
Boy Scouts
Hesperia Unified School District
Boeing Corporation
Cub Scouts
Rancho Simi Trail Blazers
Kiwanis Club
San Gabriel Mountain Trail Builders
US Forest Service Volunteers
Cal Poly Pomona Engineering Students
South Coast Karate Club
Habitat Works
Tree People
Glendora Trails Committee



78

Number of hot dogs,
hamburgers and
veggiburgers
consumed at the
National Trails Day
volunteer barbecue



National Trails Day, June 5

CWRP Interns organized a National Trails Day volunteer event at the South Hills Wilderness Area in Glendora, where 21 volunteers, including the Boy Scouts, Home Depot, and the Glendora Trails Committee, worked nearly 90 cumulative hours to open 600 ft of trail overgrown and damaged by the Padua Fire in 2003.

"You guys did an awesome job at including everyone and making this an open and fun experience."

*- Home Depot Volunteer,
Sweetwater GSC*

III. OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

“Give me an H...H!, give me an O...O!, give me an M...M!, give me and E...E!, give me a D...D!, give me an E...E!, give me a P...P!, give me an O...O!, give me a T...T!”

96

Number of Home Depot employees who volunteered on CWRP projects

“What’s that spell!?”
“HOME DEPOT!!!”
 “And what are we going to do??”
“KICK ASS!”



This cheer echoed across the burnt hills of Southern California many times this spring. It was not the sound of CWRP interns celebrating their new tools, but the sound of

dozens of Home Depot employees coming out to volunteer at CWRP events and to help restore the public lands impacted by the recent wildfires. Proudly wearing their orange shirts, they arrived at projects with unparalleled intensity, grabbed the nearest very familiar tool and hit the trail running. For CWRP, it was encouraging to see some of the many faces behind a large corporation, and see them come out in droves to volunteer. Some *Team Depot* members even drove 2 hours to CWRP events to volunteer a second or third time, often with friends and family. And like most CWRP volunteers, they left with a better understanding of SCA, conservation, and how to get involved to help make a difference.



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Dick Swinney of the Glendora Trails Committee is a middle school science teacher who built the Kaiser Trail (shown here at CWRP event) as a Boy Scout at age eleven.

For the CWRP Interns and Staff, this aspect of the program illustrates the difference between a purely field based experience, and one that involves public outreach and education. While it is difficult to quantify because it can’t be boiled down to feet of tread or number of rock steps, education and outreach turned out to be one of the most rewarding parts of the program. At volunteer events, press conferences, presentations, farmers markets, career fairs and professional meetings, the CWRP team took advantage of many opportunities to talk about SCA, wildfire recovery and conservation service. In communities that have been impacted by wildfires, many people want to help but don’t know how or where to start. Is that volunteer the woman who noticed the pulaski at the SCA booth and reminisced about her days in the California Conservation Corps? Is he the father who brought his kids to the park and happened upon a chance to water seedlings? Is she the OHV enthusiast who read about SCA in an email and decided to check out the event? Using outreach and education to bring people together for the good of the land was at the heart of the CWRP.

GETTING OUT Presentations, Meetings & Displays

California Conservation Corps
 San Diego Fire Recovery Network
 San Diego River Park Foundation
 Take Pride in America Committee
 San Diego/Imperial Counties VOAD
 San Diego Harbor Kiwanis
 Forest Service Regional Volunteers
 Claremont Hills Wilderness Park
 Redlands Farmers Market
 Acacia Middle School, Career Fair

“With very limited assets, the Girlscout Council would not have been able to accomplish the fire restoration without the assistance of SCA. The project will continue forward due to the efforts of SCA and Home Depot, and the group made a lasting impression on the kids from the Mayor’s Youth Council and the younger students of the Blight Buster Program. What great role models to have for the youth in our community.”

– Peggi Hazlett, Assistant to the Mayor, City of San Bernardino

THE SCHEDULE : A Day in the Life of a Volunteer

Time	Activity
9:00am	Sign-in Welcome, meet and greet volunteers Introductions to SCA Interns, Staff and agency personnel
9:10am	Project Briefing Including information about CWRP, SCA, EDN, Home Depot, the project partner, the project site, the specific project and its significance.
9:20am	Safety Briefing Including environmental hazards, like rattlesnakes and poison oak, and medical hazards, like dehydration, as well as tool use and safety. Group cheer. Split up into work groups and head out to work sites.
9:30am to Noon	The Project Project training on site. Work on projects.
Noon to 12:30pm	Who's Hungry? Lunch or snack break with snacks and drinks provided by SCA.
12:30pm to 2:00 pm	More Work Work on projects
2pm	Wrap up Thank you to all volunteers. Gift of SCA water bottle and T-shirt. Cheer and photo. Pack up tools and equipment.
2:30pm	Barbecue? Some special projects, including National Trails Day, concluded with a volunteer appreciation barbecue.



Meet the Press

On April 1st, 2004, the SCA CWRP team traveled into the heart of Beverly Hills to join Tree People, The Home Depot and the Earth Day Network for a press conference to celebrate the kick off of the California Wildfire Recovery Project. In attendance were many famous faces including Ed Begley Jr., Josh Jackson, and Amy Smart, as well as California Environmental Protection Agency Director Terry Taminen and local school children telling their stories of the fires. SCA's Kevin Hamilton acknowledged the widespread support for the recovery project: "We pursue recovery together because we are strongest when we work in

partnership." Belief in this comment resulted in action, as contacts made with the Tree People resulted in joint events and trainings in May and June. Actor, activist and emcee Ed Begley, Jr. donned an SCA tee shirt and hailed SCA volunteers in attendance, telling them, "You're the ones who are out there making a difference." It was a day of celebration and appreciation for all involved.

IV. SERVICE LEARNING

Throughout these past four months, the California Wildfire Recovery Project interns went through a series of experiences to both achieve the program goal of providing volunteer opportunities and gain the skills they needed to become leaders and stewards of the land. These experiences were presented with the philosophy that learning, doing, and then teaching can be the most effective way to truly understand and know a skill.

Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.

- Corporation for National and Community Service

Outdoor Skills

- Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics
- Camping
- Menu planning
- Camp cooking
- Backpacking
- Trip planning
- Knots
- Backcountry travel

Learning. Throughout the first two weeks the interns engaged in hands-on trainings and workshops to learn the basic skills needed to run safe, effective volunteer events. This training included brainstorming on professionalism, skills to understand volunteer management, presentations on proper tool use and safe body mechanics, as well as lessons on *Leave No Trace* outdoor ethics. Independent instructors were brought in to teach flood fight techniques for erosion control, CPR/AED, and Wilderness First Aid. Over the next few months the interns attended different workshops and events to sharpen their skills. This included Wildland Fire Safety and Survival with the California Department of Forestry and Fire, as well as seminars to learn the scientific background of wildfire impacts, including the impacts of the bark beetle and fire suppression on fire ecology.



Training for CWRP interns included:

- Wilderness First Aid, Aerie Backcountry Medicine
- CPR/AED and First Aid, Heartsavers of Temecula Valley
- Flood Fight Training, California Department of Water Resources
- Wildland Fire Fighting Safety and Survival, Riverside County Fire
- FireScape Workshop, UC Davis
- Environmental Round Table Series on Fire Policy, Harvey Mudd College,
- Cedar Fire Seminar, Lakeside Fire Department
- Intern Presentations on: native plants, the effects of fire on animals, the effects of fire on ecosystems, fire behavior, and salvage logging in burned areas
- Workskills training in planting and re-vegetation, restoration ecology, trail maintenance and construction, fire break maintenance, and erosion control
- Training in volunteer safety and management, risk management, event management, and professional development

Doing. With training under their belts, it was time for interns try a hand at their newly acquired skills. They spent days on end in the office on the phone and email recruiting volunteers, acquiring donations of trees and seeds for replanting, and preparing the tools, equipment and food necessary to run volunteer events. They went on countless site visits to meet with the agencies, and check out the projects. In only four months, these five interns ran 40 successful events, at 18 different sites, working with nearly 800 volunteers. In addition to volunteer management skills, twice a month the interns were offered the opportunity to participate in backcountry trips visiting national parks in their time off, including Joshua Tree NP, Death Valley NP, and Channel Islands NP. On these trips they were able to practice their outdoor and LNT skills.



[CWRP Intern](#)
[Research Projects](#)

- Fire history
- Native plants
- Firescaping
- The effects of fire on wildlife
- Fire science
- Fire policy

Teaching. At each event, the day began with a welcome, a safety talk and a session on how to use tools. For example, interns had many opportunities to teach volunteers how to use a pulaski, why replanting seedlings with genetic integrity is important, and how a sandbag check dam helps stop erosion. They taught boy scouts and grandmothers, trail builders and Home Depot employees. Another component of their teachings was a research assignment where they each chose a wildfire related topic, became the resident expert, and then presented their knowledge to the CWRP team. Topics ranged from fire science, to the affects of wildfire on wildlife. The interns also taught other SCA interns how to plan and run volunteer events when the Desert Restoration Corps came to help for the Take Pride in America kick-off event.



Overall this process of learning, doing, and teaching allowed CWRP interns to expand their knowledge and skills through direct service and experience. Without the visit of a bear in camp, the interns would not have understood the importance of Leave No Trace. Without the practice of building a rock drain, they would not have been able to teach that skill to a volunteer. Without the interest of a concerned citizen, they would not have thought through and discussed the importance of planting native plants when firescaping homes. Without a homeowner bringing the crew a tea party in thanks for cutting a fire break behind her home, they would not have understood how they were affecting change in the community. While completing thousands of hours of service, the interns learned and practiced the skills that would help them become conservation and community leaders.

V. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The California Wildfire Recovery Project provided interns a chance to develop their leadership skills in a capacity different from many other SCA internships. CWRP interns were asked to not only plan fire restoration projects, but also to recruit volunteers, train and supervise them in the field, and complete all necessary paperwork for these events. To accomplish this, a *project leader*, *logistics coordinator*, and *volunteer coordinator* were responsible for each project site. Each position had distinct responsibilities, with the overall responsibility for the project belonging to the project leader. This team approach allowed interns to develop special skills for each role, and to work on peer leadership, which can present a unique challenge in itself. Each project site had different teams, and often a single intern was simultaneously responsible for different roles at different sites. Confidence increased over the course of the internship and feedback from staff helped each intern be more effective in their leadership style and role. Volunteer recruitment, training, and supervision required enthusiasm and diligence. As the interns' confidence improved, their success in engaging volunteers prior and during events also improved. What was a timid group at the first event in Glen Helen Regional Park, became a directive, articulate team by our final project at the same location.



Professional Development

Communication! Interns were asked to communicate with all types of people: SCA staff, peers, community members, adult volunteers, youth volunteers, and members of federal, state, county, and city agencies. They met, phoned, faxed, and emailed all of these groups and had to explain not only our program, but also the mission of SCA. Each intern showed vast improvement in their ability to be effective and professional, not only in their communication styles, but also in many other skills beneficial to future careers and study.

FEEDBACK

Mid-term and self evaluations rated each intern and their improvement in the following areas:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| •Work skills | •Communication with interns | •Project planning and coordination |
| •Work ethic | •Communication with staff | •Initiative |
| •Understanding of conservation | •Communication with agencies | •Leadership |
| •Judgment | •Communication with vols | •Risk Management |
| •Interpersonal relationships | •Organizational skills | •Ability to work independently |

“I was thoroughly impressed with the SCA folks. Each was well-trained, cheerful, focused, professional and a joy to work with. I would recommend this group to anyone who needs help with any type of environmental or conservation project. Their value is incalculable.”

- Colleen Janssen, Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District

Site Visits

Interns in the project leader role were challenged with many site visit situations. Interns cold-called the agency contact, arranged the visit, and found the site, often in tricky locations. In a short amount of time, interns needed to glean project information and produce a concise timeline, while developing a working relationship with agency personnel. Interns used a planning template to cover the main points of project management, and the first few visits were a question-and-answer period between intern and contact. Often the staff helped foster a good relationship with agencies, filling uncomfortable silence with natural history inquiries and project questions. By mid-April, a marked improvement in the comfort level and ease of these situations was clear. The worksheet became a reference instead of a guide, and interns ran site visits as fluid conversations, asking questions in appropriate context and winning the agency over with personality and professionalism.



"I have been very impressed with the SCA Staff and Interns. Their organizational skills, their enthusiasm and the quality of their work at our Regional Park have been outstanding."

- Jeff Weinstein, Park Planner, San Bernardino County Parks



AGENCY PROFILE

John Seales, OHV manager for the US Forest Service in Angeles National Forest, is an alumnus of SCA's Wilderness Work Skills Program.

Leadership and Residential Programs

Unique leadership challenges abound in residential programs. On a daily basis, interns are required to interact with peers not only in a professional setting, but in a social and residential capacity as well. When opinions clash, each member of the community is affected and solutions to different styles and personality interactions are not always apparent. The CWRP interns had the additional challenge of working many hours from a home office and had to resist the urge to come to work in their pajamas! Staff provided resources and advice to help mediate problems, encouraging interns to deal with each other directly and professionally. In one case a tricky spot backing up a trailer served as the foundation of a relationship for two interns who otherwise had little in common. They communicated with calmness and trust, and helped each other out of a jam. Weeks later, these Interns who once kept their distance were helping each other prepare a community dinner, a twice per week event that brought the 'family' together for a meal and celebration of the week's accomplishments. The result was an outstanding stromboli and stronger friendships.



When asked, "Do you feel the residential nature of this program helps achieve the program's goals?" on a final program evaluation, CWRP interns average response was 4.5 (out of 6 possible) and indicated it was the most challenging and rewarding part of the experience.

Take Pride In America, May 15th

The Southern California Take Pride in America Kick-Off Event provided many opportunities for CWRP interns to demonstrate their leadership skills. The four Southern California forests (Cleveland, Angeles, San Bernardino, and Los Padres) hosted a dozen service projects with hundreds of volunteers. CWRP had a presence at eight of these events, and enlisted the help of the Kernville-based SCA Desert Restoration Corps as additional crew leaders. Not only did we run eight safe and fun events, but we also had a chance to connect with other interns in the region.

To prepare the DRC interns for this event, CWRP interns each prepared and taught a 30-minute training component covering one of the following topics:

- Event management, including schedule, safety, pace, and wrap-up.
- Professionalism
- Volunteer management with role-playing activities
- Fun + Safety + Conversation + Education = Good Volunteer Day



After the training, CWRP interns went their own directions with their new crew, set up a base-camp, met with Forest Service personnel, and supervised volunteers during the project. This was an ultimate culmination of training and experience, combining the roles of project lead, volunteer coordinator, and logistics coordinator into one. The CWRP crew successfully hosted an educational, fun weekend, including a 2-hour Ultimate Frisbee Challenge.



LYTLE CREEK **A Chance to Take Pride in America**

With eight unique sites and experiences, it is hard for one situation to capture our success! The Lytle Creek Seedling Protection project hosted a myriad of volunteers, including groups from a juvenile boot camp, a drug/gang prevention group, the California Conservation Corps, and SCA. All of these groups worked together, shading newly planted seedlings from the relentless Southern California sun, with hopes that at least a few hundred of the 3000 seedlings would make it to replace the once ancient stand of Ponderosa Pine. Everyone had a great time, ate lots of burgers, toured the fire engine, and expressed a true desire to help the forest recover.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Few internships can rival the intensity and reward of an SCA residential program. Over the course of 18 weeks, 8 complete strangers came together to live and work together for a common cause: mobilize volunteers to help restore natural areas impacted by catastrophic wildfires. In that time, we met hundreds of people, saw beautiful open spaces and felt a deep connection with the communities we served. While we faced many challenges during our time in California, the work and friendship we shared will remain a common bond between us.

The California Wildfire Recovery Project would not have been possible without the generous support of The Home Depot and The Earth Day Network. We would also like to thank the many project partners and agency personnel who facilitated our work and the work of many volunteers. Within SCA, David Critton and Rick Covington were instrumental in the program's success, and Steve Hester and the Desert Restoration Corps were a tremendous and enthusiastic help with our Take Pride in America effort. Above all, we would like to thank the 781 volunteers from all over southern California who donated their time and energy to worthy cause.



THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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changing lives through service to nature