

The National Park Service and GroundworkUSA® have teamed up to engage urban youth with their local National Parks, as part of their participation in the GW Green Team Program. Here's what's happening...



Color Me Colorado



GW Denver Visits Rocky Mountain National Park for Service and Fun

When most people think of Colorado, they think of skiing, mountains, and open plains, but for many Denver youth, Colorado is concrete, skyscrapers, and poor air quality. With support from the National Park Service, the Groundwork Denver Green Team recently visited Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) for two days of discovery, service, and fun.

The trip was many team members' first visit to a national park and first time camping. A ranger taught the Green Team about RMNP's history, geology, wildlife, and ecosystems during their first day. They hiked in the Moraine Basin where they examined the

bones of an elk, smelled the butterscotch fragrance of ponderosa pines, and tasted pine needles and wild currants. A few Green Team members were certain they spotted a bear through their binoculars, but the ranger wasn't convinced! After the park tour, the team headed up Trail Ridge Road for a hike above tree line at about 12,000 feet. The air was cold and thin, but everyone reached the top for a long, wide view of the beautiful Rocky Mountains.

The next day, the Green Team met with NPS staff for a half-day of service. They

learned about exotic plant control at the park's greenhouse, where native plant species are grown for

"This camping trip was one of the best experiences of my life. My favorite part was taking the tour with the ranger. I have learned more about our Rocky Mountains and I hope to come back one day."

- Ian Thomas

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restoration purposes. Exotic plant species are often accidentally transferred to RMNP from city gardens and can take over native plant species, eliminating food and habitat for indigenous bugs, birds, and other wildlife. The team set off to clear the invasive Musk Thistle in an off-trail aspen grove, a place few visitors get to go. They removed seed heads as NPS employees followed to chop down the plants.

Soon the Green Team had eradicated every one of the purple thistle flowers they could see and continued to remove even more during the walk back to camp. NPS staff members were grateful for the team's assistance in completing this somewhat daunting task. The Green Team was glad for the chance to explore their local national park and play an active role in protecting it. 



"This was the most fabulous experience in my life. It was a camping trip that I will never forget because the park looked so good and has so many wild animals"

- Abdul K. Kamara

GW Denver Green Team Update

By: Ian Thomas, GW Denver Green Team Member and Dyrell Willis, GW Denver Green Team Youth Leader

also partnered with Denver Water's Keep it Clean Campaign. We also had the chance to go to Rocky Mountain National Park to work and camp. Our hope is that the community benefits from our work. 

We are the Groundwork Denver Green Team. The Green Team is an environmental group that works to improve our community and quality of life. This summer we are also learning about the neighborhood on the community level, which includes resident and police relations as part of our partnership with Youth Development, a local organization that mentors youth. We have also partnered with Denver's Wastewater Reclamation District and went to the Waste Water Treatment Plant to learn about the recycling of our water. Other activities included working with Denver Digs Trees, City Park, Community Gardens, and Neighborhood Associations. We did lead poisoning outreach programs for elementary school children and adults in the community. Our Green Team has

