



BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS PROGRAM: STAFF BIOS

Karlson Lewis Hubbard – Watershed and Wilderness Restoration District Director

Karlson Hubbard got his first introduction to the CCC in 1998 as an AmeriCorps V.I.S.T.A. with the San Diego CCC Center. In 2000, he was a member on the Klamath/Trinity Backcountry Crew. It was during this backcountry season he began to sharpen his love for trails and for community like a double-bit axe before a 20 mile log out run. Soon after, Karlson continued to work trails and work with the CCC/AmeriCorps Backcountry Trails Program as a sponsor for three years, representing the Weaverville Ranger District of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. In 2003, Karlson left the mainland, figuratively and literally, and went to islands of Samoa to build trails. Finally, in 2005, Karlson tried what would later turn out to be the first of ultimately five tries to have the perfect backcountry trails season. Karlson spent the 2005, 2006, and 2008 BC seasons in the Trinity Alps, and the 2007 in the Klamath National Forest, and lastly the 2009 season in Yosemite NP. In 2010 and 2011, Karlson served as the Relief Supervisor/Program Recruiter before becoming the Program Director in 2012. With the formation of the new Watershed and Wilderness Restoration District in 2022, Karlson is now serving as the District Director, heading both the Backcountry Trails Program and the Watershed Stewards Program.

Chelsea Saeland – Program Manager

Chelsea grew up in a small farming community of 500 in California's Central Valley. Her love of nature started when she would visit her uncles up in Oregon and they taught Chelsea and her siblings how to read a map and compass. In 2010, Chelsea joined the California Conservation Corps and had the opportunity to be part of the 2011 Kings Canyon Backcountry Crew. After her backcountry season, she was offered an internship to work with the 2012 backcountry crews in the San Jacinto Mountains in Southern California. For 7 months she helped with the food purchasing, packing and daily crew life of 4 different crews. From there it was time to leave the CCC. Chelsea went on to teach at a 6th grade outdoor school and do some traveling. By 2014, she came back as a supervisor for the Fortuna Center. During that time, the Backcountry Program was always in her mind, so she became a Backcountry Supervisor in 2017 in Yosemite, and again in 2018 in Kings Canyon. From 2019 to 2022, Chelsea served as the Backcountry Trails Program Coordinator, and she is now taking on the role of Program Manager in 2023.

Shawn McGrath - Program Coordinator

Shawn was born and raised in the suburbs just outside of Boston, Massachusetts, and after graduating with a degree in English, he spent several years as a caregiver – primarily to elders living with dementia. When the time came that he needed a change, Shawn looked for opportunities that would allow him to be outside, doing work that yielded tangible results, preferably with people his own age. This led him to join the Backcountry Trails Program as a member of the 2010 Trinity Alps crew, a decision that would largely define the next twelve years of his life. He spent two years running crews for the Texas Conservation Corps before returning west as a Forest Service sponsor for Backcountry crews in the Klamath National Forest (2013 and 2014). The next summer, Shawn took the plunge as a Backcountry supervisor for the first time – a position he would return to for five consecutive seasons (2015-2019). Following a summer working with the Forest Service (2020), and two years with the California State Parks Statewide Trail Crew (2021, 2022), Shawn is thrilled to have the opportunity to return to the Backcountry in a new and challenging capacity.

Julian Wischniewski -- AmeriCorps Coordinator

Julian came to the Backcountry Trails Program as the AmeriCorps Coordinator through many a trail and windy road. After immigrating to the U.S. from Germany, he spent most of his Army-brat childhood playing outside on the numerous military installations where his family was stationed. Being on the move was as normal as breathing for Julian, so it's no surprise he ended up in the Backcountry Trails Program in 2009 on the Trinity Alps crew. In 2010, he worked as a trail worker in the Stanislaus National Forest and was assigned to the sponsor team supervising a Backcountry crew. To say that he learned a lot from his crew and mentors that year is an understatement. After that pivotal season, Julian committed himself to working trails and leading crews for the next 12 years. He's since worked as a sponsor (2014, 2015), a Backcountry Supervisor (2013), and as a trail work lead in Kings Canyon, Zion, Big Bend, and Mount Rainier National Parks (2011–2022). He also supervised AmeriCorps crews for the Texas and Washington Conservation Corps (2012, 2018).

All this time on trails and many conversations with his peers inspired him to earn a Master's in Environmental Studies from the Evergreen State College in 2020, where he explored the nuances and challenges of how conservation corps crews and land agency project partners foster meaningful, inclusive community in the backcountry workforce. His experiences in the backcountry also influence his work as an artist versed in film and darkroom experimentation, stained glass, and painting. He likes heavy metal, lentil soup, and cuddling with his cat.

Cecilia Whitworth -- Program Assistant

Cecilia started down the path of conservation after graduating college in the middle of the recession with a degree in linguistics and no clue what she wanted to do with her life. She decided to try something completely different and joined the California Conservation Corps. It turned out to be the best decision she ever made. Cecilia spent two years at the Los Padres center as a corpsmember and then Crew Leader doing hard work for low pay in miserable conditions and much, much more, including the 2013 Australia Exchange, the Watershed Stewards Program, the San Jacinto trail project, and finally, the Backcountry Trails Program on the 2014 Yosemite I crew. After graduating the CCC, Cecilia went on to explore different kinds of conservation work for other organizations. She spent three summers with the NPS as a Crew Leader for the Yellowstone Youth Conservation Corps, two years as a Naturalist teaching school kids and the public about nature, a season collecting stream data on BLM land in Nevada, and even returned to school for a couple of degrees in science and conservation. While she has loved all of these experiences, she found her work with the CCC and YCC to be the most rewarding and was ultimately drawn back to the Corps world. As part of her desire to keep learning and get more involved in the programs that shaped her, she is finally stepping out of the woods and into the role of the Backcountry Trails Program Assistant.