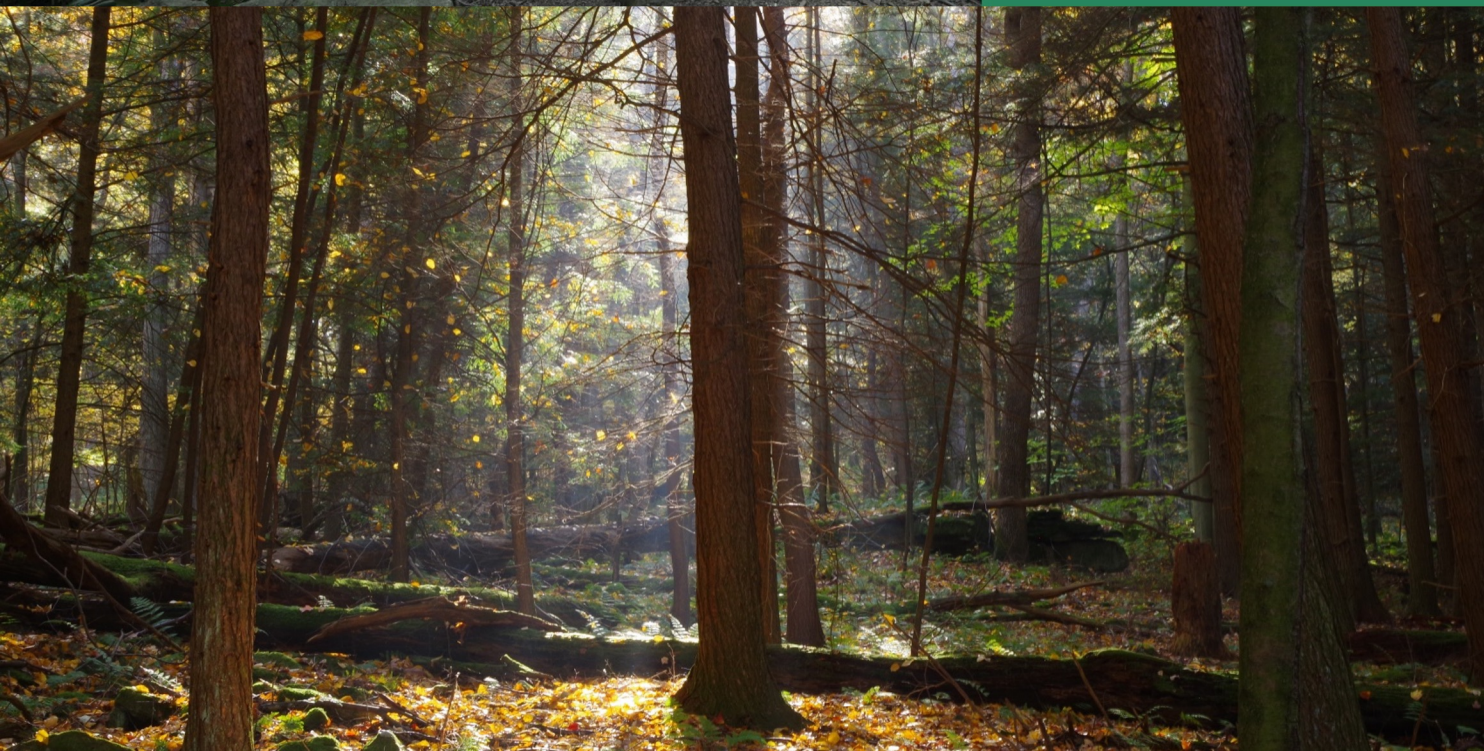




Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Young Naturalists




YOUNG NATURALISTS PROGRAM MISSION


To build a learning community that connects teens who are interested in nature with peers and mentors and provides experiences that provoke and scaffold inquiry, provide service-learning opportunities, and spark aspirations to future science learning and green careers.




About the Program

- STEM focus: Environmental Science
 - Paid 5-week summer internship for high school students
 - Learn about the plants, animals, fungi, etc. of our region
 - Work outdoors to improve the health of our greenspaces
 - Meet environmental professionals and learn about possible education and career pathways
 - Meet other teens join a community of people who are passionate about the outdoors and the environment
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Program Participants

- Recruit from partner schools: PPS and charter schools serving youth of color and high economic need
 - Schools participate in High School Urban EcoStewards, a multi-visit school year program
 - Students may apply directly or be nominated by a teacher
 - Share program application materials widely with area science teachers and like-minded community organizations, **emphasizing that we encourage application from students who may not have had this kind of experience before**
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Program Successes

- Started in 2014 with 5 students; since 2018 have served 10-12 students/year, including students from Western Pa School for the Deaf
 - >50% non-male students and representation of LGBTQ youth
 - Most recent year's data show significant shifts in students' perception of the traits of scientists, from relatively fixed traits (e.g., "smart") to those that are more reflective of a growth mindset ("curious," "hardworking," "innovative")
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Program Challenges

- Stable/decreasing proportion of applicants of color; increase in applicants from private schools
 - Working on more consistent alumni engagement and intentional pathways from other PPC programs
 - Open to any student completed 9th-12th grade – students in very different places in their academic lives
 - Struggle with record-keeping and documentation during intense summer program season
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