# The Trustees Outdoor Ambassadors 2026 Program Report
























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## Executive Summary

The Outdoor Ambassador program is a seven-week summer youth employment opportunity with The Trustees of Reservations. The program engages teens ages fifteen through eighteen from the Greater Boston Area in stewardship and conservation work, professional and career readiness development, community outreach, and environmental education opportunities. The body of work centers around key themes of environmental justice, climate change, community engagement, and equitable access to green and blue spaces. The program aims to foster a sense of belonging and connection with urban natural spaces, while instilling an understanding of the urgency of participating in environmental advocacy work.

The Outdoor Ambassador program plays a key role in the implementation of the priorities outlined in The Trustees 2025 strategic plan, *For Everyone, Forever: Trustees 2025-2030 Strategic Plan*, most notably pilar number four, "Welcome and connect people with nature to create a sense of belonging." Establishing diverse job training opportunities for high school students that offer employment, guidance, resources, and involvement in real-world conservation efforts is an organizational priority, and the long-term investment in youth development and outdoor education is reflected in a desire to expand the Ambassador program in the coming years to employ a larger number of Boston region youth and beyond. While reflecting on the successes of the 2026 program, we also look towards the development of the 2027 Outdoor Ambassador program, which will seek to engage two teams of youth and continue to expand access to environmental stewardship and conservation career pathways.

Throughout the 2026 summer term, this year's cohort of eight youth engaged in stewardship work on a diverse array of Trustees properties and partner sites. This work included contributing to long-term projects taking place at The Trustees Boston Community Gardens, connecting the Ambassadors' developing skill set in gardening and agriculture with an increased understanding of food justice, food pathways, and the role of urban green spaces in urban ecological resilience. Stewardship activities at partner sites included water quality monitoring, indicator species identification, hydroponic farm panel maintenance, street tree care and watering, and invasive species management, among others. Throughout the visits to partner sites and work in the Community Gardens, Ambassadors were also engaged in citizen science efforts, gaining exposure to and utilizing tools such as iNaturalist, Merlin, eBird, and EDDMapS (Invasive Species Mapping).



*During a visit to Boston City Hall, Ambassadors did a design problem-solving workshop after meeting with the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics.*



*Before kayaking on the Mystic River to remove invasive water chestnut, Ambassadors conducted water quality monitoring guided by the Mystic River Watershed Association staff.*

## Executive Summary

The 2026 Outdoor Ambassadors curriculum featured environmental job search and resume workshops, as well as research process skill-building through long-term independent research projects. These projects were self-directed, focused on environmental issues the youth identified as affecting their local communities, and covered topics ranging from equity of access to sustainable living choices to invasive species management in lower-income communities. Project work culminated in a final oral and visual presentation to program partners, friends and family, and Trustees staff members.

Additionally, this year's program continued to center opportunities for the Ambassadors to build connections and collaborate with peers with similar passions, while furthering the program's partner relationships with regional environmental organizations. The Ambassadors participated in stewardship workdays, mentorship sessions, and knowledge exchanges with programs such as the Mass Audubon Environmental Fellows and Climate Corp, Tree Boston, Worcester Regional Environmental Council, Tree Eastie, and the Boston University Institute for Global Sustainability. This component of the program highlighted the critical role youth climate advocacy plays in creating a more resilient, sustainable, and healthy future for the Greater Boston Area.

The youth cohort engaged with their local communities through tabling at local farmers markets and hosting an environmental education pop-up event at the East Boston Library. During visits to regional Trustees properties and representing the Trustees at these public-facing events, the youth grew in their understanding of land conservation work statewide and specifically in an urban context. By the end of the summer, the cohort departed having developed meaningful connections with each other and grown in their identities as stewards, students, and advocates for the green and blue spaces of the Greater Boston Area.



*Ambassadors built bee boxes and installed them at Joe Ciampa Community Garden, a Trustees' property in East Boston, filling them with wood suitable for burrowing bee species.*



*In partnership with Tree Boston, Ambassadors spent a day of stewardship watering and tending to street trees in Dorchester.*



*Ambassadors removing invasive water chestnut from the Mystic River on kayaks, guided by the Mystic River Watershed Association staff.*

## Program Curriculum Overview

The 2026 Outdoor Ambassador program prioritized connecting the participating youth with Boston's green spaces and waterways through stewardship projects, educational experiences, and public facing community engagement. Additionally, as outlined as a organization-wide strategic priority for The Trustees, the program centered exposure to pathways into environmental careers and higher education opportunities. The curriculum was designed around key themes that guided each week of work, as well as acting as through-lines tying together the learnings from the entirety of the program. Among these themes were environmental justice and food access, nature-based climate solutions, inspiring climate hope, belonging and inclusion, and civic engagement and outdoor exploration. The curriculum incorporated opportunities for youth to develop leadership, communication, organization, and networking skills through event planning, exposure to a diverse set of working professionals in the environmental field, and a leadership model featuring three Outdoor Ambassador Leader positions. This group of youth attended regular leadership meetings and took lead in planning Ambassador event content.

The 2026 Outdoor Ambassador program sought to prepare youth for future environmental workforce opportunities, and instill a sense of ownership, belonging, and advocacy for urban green spaces and waterways. The program educated and inspired a future generation of climate and land conservation leaders who left a summer of employment having grown wholistically as environmental advocates, students, and young people.

### Program highlights included:

- Food system learning at Powisett Farm and GreenRoots Freight Farm. Harvesting produce for CSA distribution, planting beet seeds, and cooking a shared meal using freshly harvested garden ingredients.
- Stewardship work at Nightingale Community Garden, City Natives Nursery, and Leatherbee Woods Urban Wilds, all of which are Trustees' properties.
- Research mentorship session with PHD students from the Boston University Institute for Global Sustainability and workshops on resume building, mock interviews, and informational interviews.
- Introduction to migration pathways, eBird and citizen science platforms, and bird watching at Belle Isle Marsh in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- Field-based water quality monitoring and invasive species removal by kayak on the Charles and Mystic Rivers.





- Meeting with Senator Liz Miranda at the Massachusetts State House to discuss youth participation in environmental advocacy and policy, and a visit to Boston City Hall Offices of Climate Resilience, Food Justice, and New Urban Mechanics.
- Coastal ecology experiences: a camping trip at Crane Beach, a Trustees property in Ipswich, MA, biofouling at Stone Living Lab at UMass Boston, excursions to the Boston Harbor Islands.

- Culminating events: Youth-led and organized environmental education pop-up event at the East Boston Library and Youth Final Research Presentations.



*Ambassasdor facilitating a DIY birdhouse making station out of recycled materials at the "Meet the Ambassadors" Pop-Up event.*



Ambassadors celebrating the completion of the program after presenting their final research projects to their friends, family, and program partners.

## 2026 Outdoor Ambassadors By the Numbers:

- 8 youth staff participated in the program
- Youth came from across Greater Boston, representing East Boston, Dorchester, South End, Mattapan, Cambridge, Everett, Revere, and Chelsea
- 37.5% of youth identified as Black or African American, 25% as White, 25% as Hispanic/Latinx, and 12.5% as Asian
- 75% of youth identified as female and 25% as male
- Ages ranged from 15 to 18, with 25% at age 15, 25% at age 16, 25% at age 17, and 25% at age 18

## 2026 Outdoor Ambassadors By the Numbers:

Core elements of the weekly program interwove: stewardship work, ecology-focused education experiences, youth collaboration, leadership and professional development, metacognitive reflection, marketing and communications presence, and public engagement.

- **12 workdays in community gardens**, **Boston's Urban Wilds**, and **waterways** focused on invasive species removal, composting, weeding, produce harvesting, and tree care.
- **11 site visits and fieldwork experiences** at local research institutions, wildlife sanctuaries, and Trustees properties.
- **4 workdays of collaboration** and networking with local youth partner programs including TreeBoston, Worcester Regional Environmental Council, and Mass Audubon.
- **2 visits to local policymaking and legislative bodies**: Boston City Hall and Massachusetts State House.
- Staff facilitated **resume building**, **informational interviewing,** and **mock interview workshops**.
- **3 Youth Ambassador Leaders**, a youth-led and executed **community engagement event**, and presence at local farmers' markets with tabling materials and youth-facilitated nature play activities.
- Professional networking opportunities with **68 professionals in environmentally related careers**.
- **30 hours** devoted to developing **individual research projects** and culminating presentations.
- **7 weekly journaling opportunities** to reflect on learning goals and individual development alongside daily reflective share-out conversations with cohort.
- **3 blog posts** featuring youth journal reflections published on The Trustees website and **8 Instagram story takeovers** featuring "A Day With the Ambassadors" on The Trustees statewide Instagram account, Trustees Boston Resiliency Initiative Instagram account, and Trustees Boston Community Gardens Instagram account.
- **3 public-facing tabling, outreach, and educational events** attended: East Boston Farmers' Market, The Trustees Mobile Adventures Lunch & Learn at the Trustees' Allen C. Haskell Public Gardens, Meet the Ambassadors Pop-Up Event at the East Boston Public Library.





*During a visit to the Boston Public Library, Ambassadors spent time at the Leventhal Map Center, learning about how maps can be great environmental story telling tools.*





*At Powissett Farm, Ambassadors weeded an entire field of young rasberry shrubs together with the youth from WorcesterREC's YouthGrow program.*

## The Themes by Week

### Week 1. Orientation and Grounding

The opening week of the program sought to introduce the 2026 Ambassador Cohort to the mission of The Trustees, alongside important community norm setting conversations and staff onboarding processes. Ambassadors participated in foundational knowledge workshops centered on environmental justice and an introduction to conservation, alongside an environmental justice walking tour of East Boston. The group received a Know Your Rights training led by Maria Rodriguez Ortega, Urban Outdoors Program Coordinator. By the end of the week, Ambassadors were also introduced to The Trustees network of Boston Community Gardens. The youth toured Nightingale Community Garden and mulched blueberry bushes, turned compost, and weeded the orchard meadow space led by Urban Grower Lacey Berg and Steward Paul Franceschi. To wrap up the orientation and grounding work, the group participated in a Director of Diversity, Belonging, Inclusion, and Equity (DBIE) workshop on inclusion and belonging in natural spaces facilitated by Lynn Murray, Director of DBIE Programs and Partnerships at The Trustees. Finally, the youth traveled to Spectacle Island, where they dug into the environmental history of the Boston Harbor Islands and enjoyed an afternoon of hiking and swimming.

### Week 2. Environmental Justice and Food Access

During week 2, Ambassadors learned about the intersections between environmental justice, climate resilience, and civic engagement. The week started with a trip to Boston City Hall, where the cohort met with the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement, Office of Climate Resilience, Office of Food Justice, and Office of New Urban Mechanics. Ambassadors were introduced to the Climate Ready Boston report and the strategies the city is pursuing to increase climate resilience and sustainability in its most vulnerable neighborhoods. The Ambassadors participated in a problem-solving and design process workshop, identifying pressing issues that make it difficult to live in Boston, and brainstormed design-oriented solutions. Youth were able to connect their conversations from the Office of Food Justice to their experience tabling and engaging the community at the East Boston Farmer's Market, where they helped distribute CSA produce with The Trustees Mobile Market and engaged community members. The team also visited two of the city's blue spaces: the Mystic River to test water quality and remove invasive water chestnuts while onboard kayaks, and Belle Isle Marsh, where the group was introduced to the Department of Recreation and Conservation's management of parks and properties while observing an exciting diversity of shorebirds and songbirds on eBird and iNaturalist.



*Ambassadors learned from the Department of Conservation and Recreation site managers about how the parks and property conservation while exploring trail accessibility and signage at Belle Isle Marsh in East Boston.*



*Mulching and weeding blueberry bushes planted by the 2024 Outdoor Ambassador cohort at the Trustees' Nightingale Community Garden.*

### Week 3. Nature-Based Solutions

During week 3, the Outdoor Ambassadors continued to connect their learnings about climate-resilient infrastructure and mitigating the effects of climate change in urban areas with the stewardship work they engaged with throughout the week. A highlight of the week was a visit to the Stone Living Lab at UMass Boston, where post-doctoral researcher Aly Putnam presented her research on the effects of a warming climate on coastal invasive marine species, and the lab's living seawalls on Boston's shorelines. Ambassadors participated in biofouling species monitoring activities, identifying organisms under microscopes, and taking field notes. The team spent the rest of the week honing their stewardship skills: watering street trees alongside youth from Tree Boston, picking up trash and pulling invasive garlic mustard at Leatherbee Woods and the D. Blakeley Hoar Sanctuary, and continuing their work on the orchard space at Nightingale Community Garden. The team also spent some time working on their research projects and planning their pop-up event at the East Boston Library. These activities connected the roles that both environmental research and environmental stewardship play in creating climate-resilient urban environments, while exposing the Ambassadors to future formal environmental education pathways beyond their summer at The Trustees.

### Week 4. Inspiring Climate Hope

Week 4 took the Ambassadors to new green spaces outside of the city, diversifying their understanding of conservation of Special Places at The Trustees and building their connections with others who share a passion for environmental work. The cohort visited Powisset Farm, where they hosted youth from Worcester Regional Environmental Council's YouthGrow program. Here, youth shared a day of knowledge exchange while continuing their learnings about local food systems and sustainability. They prepared harvested produce for CSA distribution and weeded the farm's raspberry fields. The Ambassadors spent another day of collaboration with Mass Audubon's Climate Fellows and Climate Corp at the Fruitlands Museum, taking part in workshops focused on indigenous knowledge systems and how relationships between natural histories, cultural histories, and land use are reflected in museum spaces. The week culminated in the Meet the Ambassadors Pop-Up event, where youth facilitated tabling materials, a create your own birdhouse activity, a nature themed read aloud corner, and a "Where Does Your Fruit Come From" food web activity geared towards younger learners. By building connections with peers and community members, the youth realized that they were not alone in this work - and that coalition building and outreach is central to protecting and caring for our natural and cultural resources.



*Visitng the research facilites at UMass Boston and Stone Living Lab while identifiying biofouling organisms found on the dock outside the campus.*



*Posing for a group photo alongside the YouthGrow youth and Trustees' Powisset Farm staff after a shared day of farm work.*

### Week 5. Belonging, Inclusion, and Access to Nature

This week highlighted for the Ambassadors what it means to have equitable and inclusive access to natural spaces, and what it means to feel belonging in the outdoors. The Ambassadors visited The Trustees Discovery Trail at Copicut Woods, taking part in a discussion about what accessible hiking trails require so that all can enjoy them. Ambassadors helped facilitate nature play programming for local youth and families at Haskell Gardens in collaboration with The Trustees Mobile Adventures Summer Lunch and Learn series. The cohort continued developing their community engagement skills by teaching a hands-on environmental activity curriculum that seeks to increase access to outdoor education for young students. The fifth week also featured a visit to the New England Aquarium, which began with a guided harbor walk and lesson on Chapter 91, and ended with a Q & A marine science career panel with staff from the research department at the aquarium. Ambassadors tackled work on their research project topics and built pollinator boxes at Joe Ciampa Community Garden. The programming wove together a complete picture of accessibility to green and blue spaces in urban and rural areas, and Ambassadors gained an understanding of what type of work creates a sense of belonging for everyone in nature.

### Week 6. Civic Engagement and Outdoor Exploration

The penultimate week of the summer tied together themes of food access, political advocacy, and outdoor skill building. Ambassadors visited the GreenRoots Inc., where they were fascinated by hydroponic farming technology. The team focused on the garden-to-table food cycle: planting rows of beet seeds in the outdoor garden boxes, harvesting ready-to-eat produce from the garden, and ending cooking a meal together with the fresh veggies they collected. Youth spent a memorable day at the Massachusetts State House, meeting with Senator Liz Miranda to discuss policy work that focuses on the intersection of public health and the environment. After an inspiring day of learning about civic engagement, the Ambassadors shifted to the long-awaited overnight camping trip on the Crane Estate. Sleeping in a tent, cooking meals on a camp stove, and making a bonfire were first-time experiences for the eight Ambassadors. There, group also enjoyed kayaking in the brackish water of the Castle Neck River estuary and identifying phytoplankton species collected with Valerie Perini, Regional Education Manager at The Trustees. Week 6 brought together impactful exposure to the policy sphere of environmental advocacy and an immersive outdoor experience that imbued Ambassadors with the motivation to seek out new opportunities to connect with and protect nature in their home city and state.



*The Ambassador's campsite at Crane Estate, a Trustees' property. The first time Ambassadors learned to set up tents and build a campfire*!



*Ambassadors propagating plants for sale at City Natives nursery alongside Trustees CEO Katie Theoharides, and members of Trustees Employee Resource Groups.*

### Week 7. Closing and Key Takeaways

The final week of the program was a culmination of Ambassador's hard work throughout the summer, both professionally and personally. The group shared a final workday at City Natives Nursery with Boston Region Trustees staff, Trustees Employee Resource Groups—Trustees Pride and Conservation in Color—and propagating plants over conversation with Katie Theoharides, Trustees President and CEO. The youth demonstrated their newly developed networking prowess, while gaining insight into the career pathways of Trustees staff members. At the end of week 7, Ambassadors presented their summer research projects to friends, family, and Trustees staff. Topics ranged from environmental impacts of generative AI to the affordability of sustainable living practices, and included results from community surveys, data analysis, and an educational video skit produced by the youth. The group spent final days reflecting on the summer together while exploring Georges Island and returning to Spectacle Island. The 2026 Outdoor Ambassadors closed out their summer having grown into environmental advocates, stewards of their local green spaces, and students with renewed gusto for environmental science studies. The leadership and camaraderie built by this cohort were memorable and exciting to witness, and week 7 was a rewarding display of the diligent efforts the team put into their roles as Outdoor Ambassadors with The Trustees.

## Key Skills Gained Through Participation in the 2026 Outdoor Ambassador Program

### Gardening, Stewardship, Outdoor Skills

- Invasive weed identification and removal
- Raised garden bed care
- Street tree care and watering
- Compost maintenance
- Plant propagation and preparation for sale
- Vegetable canning
- CSA produce preparation and distribution
- Tent setup, propane stove usage, safe campfire practices

### Professional Development

- Resume building and LinkedIn
- Cover letter writing
- Interview preparation
- Job interview preparation, networking, and informational interviews

### Research and Project Design

- Independent research topic development
- Natural species identification using dichotomous keys
- Wetland ecosystem ecological monitoring & surveying
- Primary and secondary source identification
- Public speaking and presentation skills

### Leadership and Community Engagement

- Event planning
- Environmental education activity development & implementation
- Tabling and visitor engagement

## The 2026 Outdoor Ambassadors shared these reflections on their experience:



### Isabella Murillo, age, 16, from Chelsea

"This summer, I became so much more knowledgeable about the green and blue spaces of Boston. The community gardens we worked in helped me understand how hard it actually is to garden and to have fresh fruits and vegetables. Those spaces also showed me that people who grow food there really enjoy coming together and making a change. My favorite part of working in the community gardens was being able to connect with others who are a part of the local communities and learning from them. After this summer as an Ambassador, I am more inspired to keep learning about different environmental career paths and colleges that would resonate with what I want to do when I'm older. "



### Andrea Sarinana, age 17, from East Boston

"I feel like I grew significantly this summer--I certainly grew when it came to my leadership abilities. This opportunity allowed me to come out of my shell, especially when meeting new people and organizations. I also learned how to introduce myself professionally, how to describe my work at The Trustees, and how to stay engaged with new people by asking questions. I've also gained the courage to actually ask about ideas that fascinate me. I think this summer truly solidified my passion for environmental science, and now I have the confidence to pursue it in university."



### Ava Morris, age 18, from Revere

"I feel more connected to the outdoor spaces in Boston because this program introduced me to many new places I didn't know about before. Learning the history of these special places made me feel much more empowered to keep coming back to them. A memory that will continue to stick with me is when we traveled to the Fruitlands Museum. I had so much fun that day learning about that property with my fellow Ambassadors and learning about the indigenous history of the land. I'm inspired to keep learning more about the green spaces near my home and how I can steward them better."



## Anthony Pogue-Sorenson, age 15 from Cambridge

"This summer, I enjoyed teaching adults and kids about The Trustees, trying to spread awareness about conservation work, and trying to get people involved in what the Ambassadors do. One of my biggest takeaways from this summer is that there are so many people making changes that are small, though a lot of work goes into each change they are working towards. Whether it's contacting the state to get the right permissions to build a boardwalk, or learning the skills needed to build that boardwalk and make it accessible to people in wheelchairs or strollers, each piece of a project like that takes a lot of effort. I learned that there are so many people putting in work behind the scenes to make conserved land a better experience for all people."



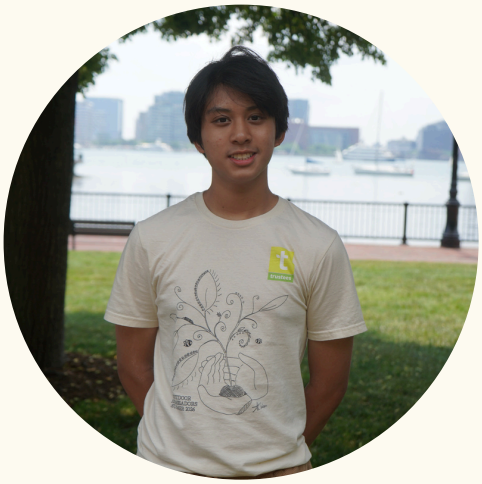
## Lena Morris, age 15, from Revere

"I feel like I grew this summer by becoming better at public speaking, and I became a lot more connected to nature around me through working in and learning about green spaces in Boston. A memory that will stick with me beyond this summer is our camping trip to Crane Beach. It took me out of my comfort zone and was a great new experience. After being an Ambassador this summer, I'm inspired to learn more about how the environment and art intersect."



## Pauletta Johnson, age 18, from the South End

"This summer, I embraced my reliability, attention to detail, and willingness to learn. I feel that I approached activities with a hands-on mindset, became more confident in taking initiative, and learned more about the value of being someone others can depend on. I already feel connected to nature, but regularly visiting green and blue spaces throughout the summer helped strengthen that connection. I also enjoyed building relationships and having meaningful conversations with people in the communities and places we visited. I developed a greater appreciation for environmental work and the people involved in it, and this experience inspired me to seek out possible volunteer opportunities in environmental spaces in the future."



### Kevin Pham, age 16, from Everett

"I grew as a prospective environmentalist through learning the importance of making connections and putting yourself out there.  Through this program, I've gone to meet real people and expand my passions beyond just a hobby. I am now more inspired to commit to learning and growth and a potential profession in this field. A memory that will stick with me beyond this summer is birdwatching at Belle Isle Marsh. Getting into a wild area and seeing so many species that I'd hoped to see was an extremely fun and rewarding experience.  Overall, I am most proud of the stewarding we did in the community gardens and farm spaces - we could physically see our work coming to fruition as it happened!"



### Amelia Depina, age 17, from Mattapan

"I grew this summer by gaining an understanding of the amenities that are available to the public because of Chapter 51, and all the work that happens behind the scenes at certain labs and spaces, such as the Stone Living Lab, the New England Aquarium, Mass Audubon properties, and Trustees properties. It was inspirational to see all the work that happens in these spaces and how interesting the species and the people that work there get to study. I feel I also grew a lot personally this summer, making a lot of connections with the other Outdoor Ambassadors and creating so many memories even when we weren't on the clock. Overall, I grew in friendship, experience, and knowledge. "

# Meet Our 2026 Outdoor Ambassadors Staff



## Maria Rodriguez Ortega, Urban Outdoors Program Coordinator

“Being a part of the Outdoor Ambassadors program is always such a rewarding experience. This is my third year with the program, and it’s been amazing to see year after year just how meaningful this experience is for young people. I’m so proud of our 2026 cohort and everything they accomplished this summer. They worked incredibly hard on their research projects, participated in hands-on stewardship and urban resiliency work, and even planned and hosted their own youth-led ‘Meet the Ambassadors’ pop-up event.

One of my favorite parts of the program is the variety of experiences and opportunities we’re able to offer, while still giving the Ambassadors space to bring their own ideas, interests, and voices into the work. My personal highlight from this summer was our overnight camping trip at Crane Beach. It was such a special experience to spend that time together outdoors and see the Ambassadors experience nature as a group. Seeing their confidence grow, watching them take ownership of their projects, and seeing everything come together at the end of the summer has been incredibly rewarding. I’m so proud of this group and everything they brought to the program this summer!”



## Juwaria Jama, Outdoor Ambassador Program Coordinator

"Co-leading the Outdoor Ambassador program this summer was such an incredible experience! It was so heartwarming to watch the Ambassadors gain confidence, connection, and community throughout their 7 weeks with us. Some of my favorite memories include watching the Ambassadors facilitate the Pop Up series- I was so impressed by their creativity, and they did a great job engaging with younger audiences. I really enjoyed our camping trip and seeing the Ambassadors work together to build tents, make dinner, and start fires. Lastly, watching their curiosity blossom into a completed research project was amazing, I learned so much from them and feel confident they will take their skills and knowledge from this summer to make a greater impact on the world!"



## Julia Beyer, FAO Schwarz Fellow

"It has been an incredibly gratifying and fulfilling experience co-leading the Outdoor Ambassador program this summer. This group of young people was exceptional - smart, funny, driven, passionate, and curious about their communities and environment. The best part was watching them grow throughout the summer, both as learners and as people. It was fantastic to see them come into their own and speak about their work eloquently to groups of people they had never met before - which would have been an intimidating task the first week of the program.

A highlight was watching the group present their final research presentations, which was a culmination of diligent work put in over the course of the 7 week program. It's my hope that they continue to be inspired by their research findings as they move into the next school year, and I'm certain they will stay involved with the work The Trustees does beyond this summer's session. The 2026 Ambassadors left a tangible impact - on their friends and families, community members, and the green and blue spaces of the Greater Boston Area that they stewarded this summer."

## Looking Ahead

As planning begins for the summer of 2027, **the Outdoor Ambassadors program will build on the successes and achievements of the 2026 cohort.** The program will continue to employ motivated youth who are passionate, driven, and curious about conservation and climate-resilient community building. The 2026 Ambassadors emerged from the program as strong leaders seeking to continue work and education in the environmental sphere, having grown strong connections with the outdoor spaces they worked, learned, and explored in. They experienced firsthand the role that access to gardens, locally grown food, forests, marshes, farmland, and waterways play in fostering care for the environment. Through their seven weeks of work, the youth developed an understanding of what it means to work towards a future in which everyone feels a sense of belonging and ownership in those spaces.

In the summer of 2027, we hope to expand our impact to serve a greater number of young people through the **expansion of the Outdoor Ambassador program to two youth cohorts**. The ability to provide a transformative summer employment experience for more youth in the City of Boston is an exciting and ambitious goal and will require the continued strong support and generosity of our partners. **These two teams of twelve youth will focus on long term urban environmental resiliency stewardship projects contributing to the conservation goals of the Boston Region Teams at The Trustees, while connecting with future career pathways in conservation and the environment**.

In the coming year, we will seek to reimagine the Outdoor Ambassador program structure in a way that allows **youth to connect deeply with a more consistent outdoor workspace**. Continuing to lean into a place based, experiential learning curriculum that builds both field work skills and provides future environmental leadership pathways, we will guide youth in **learning what it means to steward a Special Place over a longer period of time.** Curriculum design will target the introduction of culminating stewardship projects that will demonstrate to Ambassadors how conservation work can build more climate-resilient, healthy communities in urban areas.

In this next iteration of the Outdoor Ambassadors, **we will continue to foster connections and coalition building between youth and strengthen our cross-program collaboration.** Prioritizing opportunities for the Ambassador cohort to interact with youth from partner programs across the region will provide continued peer-to-peer learning experiences while collectively empowering the next generation of conservation and climate leaders. This will include programming alongside local youth environmental education and interchanges with **youth partners from The Trustees Urban Outdoors Initiative: Worcester Regional Environmental Council, Nuestras Raíces in Holyoke, and Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust (PPLT).** Moreover, we will strive to provide opportunities for Ambassadors to connect with other youth employed at The Trustees in other regions of the state.

Alongside an expanded employment team model, we aim to develop the Ambassador leadership and long-term engagement pipeline, by both **intentionally engaging the Ambassador alum network throughout the scholastic year and encouraging returning Ambassadors to take on Ambassador leader positions in 2027**. We will continue to build-in more opportunities for the youth to take the lead on creating or facilitating future programming and encouraging peer-to-peer leadership and mentorship within the program.

**Alongside our partners and supporters, we are committed to building a program that strengthens youth development pathways towards conservation careers, inspires passion for environmental stewardship, and continues to connect the youth of Boston with the green and blue spaces around them.**

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

The 2026 Outdoor Ambassador program encountered a few challenges that will inform the 2027 planning and implementation process of the program. Flexibility to increase time allocated to produce meaningful and complete individual research projects proved helpful and will be taken into consideration for future division of schedule time throughout the program. A schedule that involved multiple trips and travel to distinct locations each day proved exciting and fulfilling, although highlighted the importance of more consistency of programming sites to facilitate deeper connection to place-based knowledge building and skill development. Retention and consistent attendance of all program participants for the entire 7 weeks of the program proved difficult, with youth balancing work and family responsibilities as well as learning workplace accountability. Balancing teaching responsibility and empathy for circumstances youth may be facing is a continued priority. Moving forward, keeping an engaged waitlist of hiring candidates during the opening weeks of the program will be important when expanding teams of youth, as well as a comprehensive hiring process that includes a reference request for youth candidates.

## Conclusion and Thanks

The Trustees are immensely grateful to the generosity of the Copeland Family Foundation, the Saquish Foundation, and our corporate partners at TD Bank, Wells Fargo, and Converse. This funding made the 2026 Outdoor Ambassador summer season a memorable and impactful 7 weeks of stewardship, leadership development, and educational discovery possible. The eight incredible young people who served as Outdoor Ambassadors left the natural spaces of the Boston region more resilient than when they first encountered them. They will continue forward as the environmental leaders of our shared future thanks to the generosity and support of our sponsors and program partners.

Check out our program recap video for a glimpse into the experiences, partnerships, and memories that made this summer so special. Simply scan the QR code below to watch!




**SCAN HERE TO WATCH!**

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