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Military Veterans Join Nevada Conservation Corps as Part of Public Lands Partnership

(Las Vegas, NV - Sept. 26, 2015) – Today, five Veterans Conservation Corps members were joined by community volunteers, Congresswoman Dina Titus and Councilwoman Debra March and other elected officials and representatives from partnering organizations to launch the “From Military Service to Green Service” partnership at Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, near Henderson, Nevada.

Ryan Richards of Reno, Nevada, left the Marine Corps after four years of service and decided to become involved with environmental work through service with the Nevada Conservation Corps. There he learned about a new partnership that provides young military veterans opportunities to work outdoors as part of a Veterans Conservation Corps—building trails, improving habitat and protecting Native American cultural resources—at Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, near Henderson.

“This is a great opportunity for newly separated military veterans to gain work experience and training in a new career field,” said Richards. “I am happy and thankful for all of the participating organizations that are sponsoring this partnership.”

NV Energy Foundation provided a \$75,000 grant to the Conservation Lands Foundation to support the Veterans Conservation Corps and partnership. Additional partners include the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), City of Henderson, Nevada Conservation Corps, and volunteers with Friends of Sloan Canyon.

“Our support of the Veterans Conservation Corps is an extension of our commitment to honor the men and women who have served our country,” said Paul Caudill, NV Energy President and Chief Executive Officer. Caudill is also Chair of the NV Energy Foundation. “Not only will this program provide employment to local veterans, it will make a positive lasting impact on Sloan Canyon and the benefits it provides to the local community.”

The Veterans Conservation Corps will work at Sloan Canyon until December 17, constructing trails, installing new signs, and protecting habitat and cultural resources. Staff from BLM will provide the Corps with project planning, professional mentoring and additional training. The Veterans Conservation Corps will also train volunteers with the non-profit Friends of Sloan Canyon to monitor trails conditions and assist BLM with trail stewardship.

“Not only do the veterans receive pay and job experience,” says Jim Stanger, President of Friends of Sloan Canyon, “but they’re training our supporters in trail monitoring and maintenance so we can volunteer and assist BLM well into the future.”

Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area is a popular running, hiking, dog-walking and mountain bike destination for residents of Henderson and the Las Vegas Valley. It is part of BLM’s National Conservation Lands—31 million acres of the most ecologically and culturally important public lands in the West. This system of protected public lands—America’s newest—has joined the ranks of our national parks and wildlife refuges as guardians of our heritage and drivers of the country’s \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy.

Sloan Canyon is nearly 48,500 acres of unspoiled desert landscape, wildlife habitat and one of the most significant cultural resources in southern Nevada; archaeologists say more than 300 rock art panels with 1,700 individual design elements were created by native cultures in the region, from the Archaic to historic era. The area also factors in to the City of Henderson’s Open Space and Master Trail plan.

“We are incredibly grateful to NV Energy Foundation for supporting this partnership,” says Brian O’Donnell, Executive Director of the Conservation Lands Foundation. “Everyone wins. Veterans receive jobs, training and work experience, while the BLM and Friends of Sloan Canyon team up to restore and protect these beautiful public lands for future generations of southern Nevadans.”

“From Military Service to Green Service” is an on-going program of the Conservation Lands Foundation, a non-profit organization with a mission to protect, restore and expand the National Conservation Lands. In Nevada, other places that are part of the National Conservation Lands include Red Rock Canyon, Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area, Basin and Range National Monument, and many Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas.

September 26 is National Public Lands Day, America’s largest single-day volunteer effort for public lands. Last year, 175,000 volunteers worked in more than 2,100 locations and in every state.

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Conservation Lands Foundation is the only organization in the country dedicated solely to protecting, restoring and expanding the National Conservation Lands so they will endure from generation to generation. The National Conservation Lands are 31 million acres of protected public lands and waterways, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, that have joined the ranks of our national parks and wildlife refuges as guardians of our nation’s heritage and drivers of the country’s \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy. www.ConservationLands.org

The Nevada Conservation Corps harnesses the energy and idealism of youth to meet the needs of Nevada public lands and communities. As a federally-funded AmeriCorps program, the NCC promotes ecological literacy through field research and direct conservation service. By uniting environmental resources from federal, state and county agencies, the NCC provides students and young professionals opportunities to make meaningful contributions toward protecting and conserving Nevada’s natural heritage, while also gaining valuable work experience in the natural resource management field.

Friends of Sloan Canyon is an all-volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area. The group gives educational programs about wildlife and desert ecosystems to school groups, provides information about the area to the public at various expos, trade shows and fairs, and partners with the Bureau of Lands Management on stewardship and restoration activities. www.friendsofsloan.org