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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Choctaw Youth Conservation Corps Members Complete Program**

CHOCTAW, Miss. – (Friday, July 1) – Fourteen members of the Choctaw Youth Conservation Corps (CYCC) have completed their 4-week program of conservation work at the Nanih Waiya cave mound. One project the participants worked on is a walking trail that was originally created by the first conservation corps in the 1970s. More work on the trail was done through an Education through Cultural and Historical Organizations (ECHO) grant in the early 2000s. The CYCC members, all of whom are high school students, participated in hands-on activities in the mornings and natural resources profession oriented classes in the afternoons. The participants also learned about Choctaw culture with the help of the Department of Chahta Immi's Cultural Affairs program.

“The Choctaw Youth Conservation Corps is an exciting, comprehensive youth work program that is designed to mold these young students into becoming devoted tribal stewards of our natural resources, while also developing responsible and ethical work habits,” said Mitzi Reed, Director of the Choctaw Wildlife and Parks Department. “Activities were geared to promote personal growth, positive attitudes, team unity, self-esteem through personal challenges, and an appreciation of the outdoors.”

Reed says that the ultimate goal of the Corps is to create tribal leaders that would return to the Choctaw Indian Reservation after pursuing higher education and expand upon existing Tribal programs in natural resources.

“I wanted to do this program because it let me do something different this summer. I got to do things that I wouldn't have done at home,” said CYCC participant Isias Joe. “I wish the program was longer so we could have done more to the trail.”

The \$100,000 two-year grant for the CYCC program was funded by the RESTORE Act (created as a result of the offshore oil spill in the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2010).

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*The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, under the leadership of Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson, has an enrolled membership of more than 10,000 people and is the only federally recognized tribe in the State of Mississippi. Headquartered in Choctaw, Miss., the Tribe has emerged as a leader in economic development. The tribe provides a range of governmental services including schools, a hospital, medical clinics, police and fire protection, courts, and a center for the elderly, among many others. Phyliss J. Anderson serves as the first female Chief in Mississippi Choctaw history.*





