



The United States Fish and Wildlife Service Cultural Resources CCC History Project The CCC A Brief History

The era of the Civilian Conservation Corps was a changing world. Men went from the roaring twenties where money was free flowing after the end of World War I to an economic depression. The causes of this depression were the dust bowl, the stock market crash of Black Tuesday, and the reliance on credit instead of cash.

The creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps

Greatly affected by the ravages of the Great Depression on the United States, its new President Franklin D. Roosevelt, felt a duty to help put the pieces of his nation back together. Within the first hundred days of his Presidency, Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act, establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Corps was designed by Roosevelt himself as a type of peacetime army that would not only assist in the preservation of the United States' forest and wildlife, but would rejuvenate the economy by providing young men in dire straits the ability to provide for their families.

What made a C?

At first, enlistment into the Civilian Conservation Corps was restricted to U.S. citizens, young men between the ages of 18-25, who could pass a physical, unemployed, unmarried, and would donate the majority of their \$30 a month paycheck to their families. Throughout the years the rules would expand to include Military Veterans and Native Americans. An initial separation of the Caucasian Americans and African Americans was not surprising in those days, due to segregation laws. The enrollment period was for six

months with an option to reenlist. The C's gave young men the opportunities to learn skills that could translate into job opportunities once they served their enrollment period. Similar to the Military, it brought young men from all over the country and gave them a family type of structure, filled with discipline and reward for an honest day's work.

The C's on Wildlife Refuges

In 1933, the same time the Civilian Conservation Corps was being established, legislation for the purchase of lands that would become Wildlife-Refuges was being written. Over 8 million acres of land was acquired for the beginnings of the National Wildlife Refuge system that distributed the ten million acres of land across 257 refuges. Much of the land needed care and improvement to turn it into a refuge that could support wildlife. Forty-four out of the 257 Refuges were established singlehandedly by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The focus of the C's on Refuges was to improve administrative facilities and improve wildlife habitats. This included construction of water control devices such as dams and dikes, shelters like shelterbelts were created to protect wildlife, trees were planted, and food was planted to give the wildlife a self-sufficient environment. Refuge infrastructure was created by constructing housing, trails, bridges, fire towers/lookout towers, utility buildings, and telephone lines for the employees to manage their vast new land holdings.

You may contact Mr. Eugene Marino (eugene_marino@fws.gov), USFWS Archaeologist at 703-358-2173 for more information about the USFWS Cultural Resources program. You may also visit <http://www.fws.gov/historicpreservation> for additional information on the USFWS museum property program.



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The CCC at Work on the Refuges

Minorities and Veterans CCC

Out of all the Civilian Conservation Corps Camps in the Refuge system, only three of those were segregated African American Camps. During the 1930's the Jim Crow Laws which emphasized the segregation of African Americans and Caucasian Americans was standard practice. In the early years of the CCC, some camps were integrated, but after public opinion and local complaints, in 1935 Robert Fletcher, the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps deemed segregation was the best option. Even with the African Americans at segregated camps, they still received equal pay and housing. Out of the 143 CCC segregated Camps, 3 of them are on the refuge systems: Bombay Hook, White River, and St. Marks (no information available).



Figure1. Men of Bombay Camp

Bombay Hook

Bombay Hook's C Enrollees focused on cleared

wood swamps, dike, causeway to separate Shearneck and Finis pools, created three freshwater impounds, planted trees, headquarters buildings, boathouse, marine railway, observation tower, and manager and patrolman's houses. Bombay Hook was the only segregated unit in Delaware.



Figure 2. White River's Floating Camps.

White River

While set apart from other Refuge CCC Camps as a segregated camp, White River was also the only CCC Camp that was a floating camp. Floating camps were created by using former Corps of Engineers quarterboats and having the CCC Enrollees man them throughout the Rivers surrounding the Refuge. This was the easiest way for the C Enrollees to maneuver over the refuge and have access to sites Inaccessible by land.

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The United States Fish and Wildlife Service Cultural Resources CCC History Project The CCC at Work on the Refuges

Valentine National Wildlife Refuge Nebraska

CCC work on refuges took many forms. Here are some examples of how the CCC left their mark on Refuges. Valentine NWR located in Nebraska was the location of a Civilian Conservation Corps Camp that was established in 1935. While there the CCC created lodging quarters, a service building, a laboratory building at Hackberry, an equipment shed, barn, a tuber cellar, pump house, fur shed, Pony Lake Barn, Pony Lake Machine Shed, Newman Barn, Hackberry Lookout Tower, Pony Lake Lookout Tower, Gordon Dam, control nurseries, and a winder bird house/duck hospital. The Dad's Lake Recreation Area was created entirely by the CCC for the public's recreational use on the Wildlife Refuge. All these structures are still standing and can be seen on the premises (*Photos Courtesy of USFWS*).



Figure 1. CCC Enrollees Constructing a house at Wichita Mountain NWR.



Figure 2. Aerial view of CCC Camps at Wichita Mountain.

Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge Nevada

Of the many CCC structures that were created on Sheldon very few remain. The Portal or entrance to the CCC Camp Sheldon is still standing. The one shop building, a boathouse/ laundry structure, and the remains of Camp Sheldon can be seen along the walkways and corners of the housing platforms. An interesting fact for the camp is that enrollees at Camp Sheldon only stayed during the spring and summer months. In the winter months the Camp moved to Boulder Canyon Refuge.

Wichita Mountain Oklahoma

Wichita Mountain is the refuge with the largest number of CCC structures still standing. They were built by the three CCC Camps that were located on Wichita Mountain: The Elm Island Camp, Panther Creek Camp, and Buffalo Springs Camp. The Camps were stationed there between 1933 to 1941 when all CCC Camps shut down due to the pending entrance

of the United States into World War II. Over twenty buildings from residences and garages to office, storage, and horse barn type buildings are still visible on the landscape today. At least 29 dams, 19 of which are major dams are still visible. Additionally trails and over fifty miles of Big Game Fences have lasted to this day.



Photo of CCC Camp 859 "Panther Creek" at Wichita Mountain National Wildlife Refuge.

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The CCC at Work on the Refuges

Seney National Wildlife Refuge Michigan

CCC work on refuges took many forms. Here are some examples of how the CCC left their mark on Refuges. The site of Seney NWR is located in the Upper Peninsula in Seney, Michigan and was established in 1935 as a Migratory Bird Refuge. At Seney, Camp Germfask was originally established and comprised of White Men from Hamtramck and Detroit. The enrollees spent most of their time building warehouses, a bridge, a semi-trailer unit, a portable camp, and more permanent structures such as the wigwams, log cabins and stone buildings. The C's also created fences, inlets, and water control structures. The wigwams, log cabins, and stone buildings are still located on Seney and in good condition.



Figure 1. A log cabin at Seney NWR build by the CCC.



Figure 2. Photo of CCC Camp at Malheur NWR.

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Oregon

Malheur hosted two CCC Camps and a Spike Camp. The Sod House Camp was located in the Visitor's parking lot and relocated in 1936 to the east of the old Headquarters building. They constructed the center patrol road, ponds, bridges crossing the Blitzen River, boundary fences, offices, a warehouse, a barn that was created by quarrying local rock, cutting to size and hand placing it. Buena Vista was the second CCC camp located on Buena Vista Lane. The C's also constructed a white shop building, the house at Buena Vista, and second equipment storage barn that mirrored the shop. The CCC Spike Camp was called Five Mile Camp. A spike camp is a temporary camp site for a forestry crew that is accessible from the main camp. The focus on Five Mile was the P Ranch area. Improvements were made to the house at P Ranch, and on the addition to the French Glen Hotel. Other projects were the Center Patrol Road, along Blitzen Road, structures at Benson Pond, bridge across Benson Pond outlet, a stone structure, four refuge towers, (two wood, two metal), all bridges across Blitzen River within the Refuge, Ram Ditch, Stubblefield Canal, East Canal and West Canal. These structures are still visible at Malheur today

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