



The CCC: “We Can Take It!”



During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Work Projects Administration programs provided jobs and hope to people across the U.S. The CCC is an example of this, and the work done by its participants can still be enjoyed in Saguaro National Park.

The Civilian Conservation Corps

The Emergency Conservation Work Act was proposed in 1933 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to fight vast Depression-era unemployment and degradation of public lands. Popularly known as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the program was formally named the CCC in 1937. The Emergency Conservation Work Act was passed in a matter of days during an Emergency Session of Congress, and the program was mobilizing young men across the country in little over a month after the President’s proposal.

The CCC was facilitated and administrated by a combination of federal agencies: the Departments of War, Agriculture, Interior, and Labor, and the National Park Service and Forest Service.

Enrollees were transported from East Coast urban areas to public lands across the U.S. by the Army. Army expertise was also utilized in the establishment of CCC camps. The Corps was ruled by its own Advisory Council and a presidentially appointed National Director. No rule book was written for the Advisory Council in an effort to cut down on bureaucratic red tape.

The CCC remained popular with Congress and the public until it ended in 1942. With the U.S. entry into World War II, the program was deemed unnecessary and funding was redirected to the war effort. A large number of young men were drafted into the Army at this time, reducing the number of people eligible to work in the CCC. Jobs in the Defense Industry also opened up, lowering the unemployment levels across

Serving Their Country

When the CCC began, it was almost twice the size of the Army. It enrolled unemployed single young men between the ages of 18 and 25. Americans of all backgrounds served; some camps were segregated but all received equal pay and housing. As time went on and the program proved successful, it was expanded to include American Indians, Local Experienced Men who trained new members, and veterans of the Spanish American War and World War I. The age limit for young men was changed, allowing ages 17 to 23 to serve.



A CCC enrollee pauses during his work.

An educational program was begun in 1934, improving literacy and teaching valuable work skills. Some earned high school diplomas during their service. Enrollees earned \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent back to their families, spreading the much needed money across the nation.

Participants performed over 100 types of work during their service. Camps were established in all 48 states, the Alaska and Hawaii territories, and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Work included tree planting, dam building, road and bridge construction, fire fighting, disaster relief, habitat protection, telephone and power line installation, and recreational facility construction. Their slogan was “We can take it!” and they vowed to “lick Old Man Depression.”

CCC in Tucson Mountain District

"We've been working in the CCC, All the live long day. We've been working on the marshes, just to pass the time away...Boys, this is the life, Working in the CCC." - a Camp song from Delaware

In 1933, the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park had not yet been established, but the area was managed by the Tucson Mountain County Park. Camp Pima was established in the County Park, but when the men arrived the camp was not completed. The enrollees lived in tents and helped construct a permanent camp of adobe and wood structures. Before the camp closed in 1941, the enrollees constructed Ez-Kim-In-Zin, Signal Hill, Sus, Cam-Boh, and Mam-A-Gah picnic areas, and 13 dams. The dams were designed for flood

control and water storage for wildlife. Repairs were made to King Canyon Road to prevent erosion, and a horse trail was completed to Wasson Peak. All that remains of Camp Pima are foundations; these remnants are protected within Park boundaries and can still be viewed. The picnic areas are still in use, and many of the dams can be seen while hiking in washes in the Park. Bathroom facilities built by the CCC at the picnic areas are no longer in use; some may house snakes and bees, so these are best viewed from a distance.

CCC in Rincon Mountain District

In 1934, University of Arizona President Shantz named a 10 square mile area owned by the school the Saguaro Forest State Park and applied for CCC aid. Today this area is at the western end of Saguaro National Park's Rincon Mountain District. Camp Tanque Verde was established in 1935. The crew wasted no time in beginning their work of razing old squatter settlements, filling

mine shafts, removing litter, destroying old picnic areas, and covering old roads and trail scars on the land. They constructed dams, a visitor contact station, a road to Observatory Hill, and a skyline loop road. The dams were later altered by cattle ranchers, and the visitor contact station was taken down in the 1970s. The loop road is still visible today.

Legacy of the CCC

The CCC allowed young men to travel to areas of the country they had never seen before, and some chose to settle down and start families in the towns or cities near their camps. Public lands on the national, state, county, and city level were improved upon and maintained by dedicated camps. Public works built by the Corps are still in use in communities across the U.S. today. Inclusion of veterans, Local Experienced Men, and American Indians spread the monetary relief provided by the program to local towns and cities and to Indian Reservations.

The CCC is considered the most popular of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs. Today's federal agency wildland fire suppression crews are modeled after the fire-fighting crews of the CCC. It also inspired the formation of the California Conservation Corps in the 1970s, a program with the goals of conservation and youth development, and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps in the 1980s, a network of state and local conservation programs that provide training and mentor opportunities to young men and women ages 16 to 25. AmeriCorps is a federally funded program begun in the 1990s that provides volunteer services in conservation, disaster relief, and education. Among its programs is the National Civilian Conservation Corps, a full-time residential volunteer program for men and women



A CCC crew hard at work. Photo by Carl Mydans from Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI.