



The Civilian Conservation Corps In the Southwest

Introduction

Nicknamed “Roosevelt’s Tree Army,” the Civilian Conservation Corps, established by Congress in 1933, attempted to ameliorate the massive unemployment plaguing the United States in the Great Depression. By 1942 over three million men had served in the Corps. They had been sent to camps all over the country, from Virginia to New Mexico, and set to work planting trees, fighting forest fires, and building campgrounds. For the enrollees in the Corps, it proved to be an experience unlike anything most of them had ever known. One Texan who joined the CCC in 1933, Marshall Wood, was sent to the Los Burros Camp in the Sitgreaves National Forest in Arizona. Wood vividly remembered his first night in camp:

That first night they gave us a canvas cot, two wool blankets and a mattress cover and told us to fill the cover with pine needles because we would be sleeping out in the open. Many of us didn’t find time to gather pine needles before bedtime, and I soon discovered my error. I awoke during the night and began looking for anything I could put in that mattress cover—clothes or anything else. The cold had come right up through the ground and the half empty mattress, and was very uncomfortable. The next morning we found a covering of ice in the water buckets left out for face washing. That was in June (Moore 2000).

Living in a new environment, surrounded by strangers, and far from home could be a difficult adjustment for enrollees to make. But many men found their experience in the CCC to be a positive one. Enrollees learned valuable skills in the Corps and also were introduced to the concept of conservation—a new philosophy for many, particularly those from the urban working class.

The CCC not only changed the men who labored in the Corps but also the environment in which they worked. The millions of enrollees wrought tremendous changes in the public landscape of the nation. The Southwest was no different in this regard. Its forests, soils, and waters all felt the effects of Corps projects. The massive scale of CCC work did not proceed unchallenged. Wilderness advocates and members of the burgeoning profession of ecology often protested the recreational development and other projects, such as predator eradication, undertaken by the Corps. By introducing not only conservation to a broader public but also debates about the

OVERVIEW



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CCC workers planting trees in the Santa Fe National Forest, New Mexico.

nature of conservation, the CCC served as an important bridge between the interwar years and the environmental movement that developed after World War II (Maher 2008). Although most of the enrollees did not look farther than the fact that they were employed and getting a paycheck, their work would have a lasting effect long after the Depression ended.

The CCC

By 1933, the United States had been mired in the Depression for three years. Disgusted with the inability of the federal government to rectify the situation, voters had ousted Herbert Hoover in 1932 and replaced him with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Immediately, Roosevelt began enacting programs to bring relief to the unemployed. With 13 million citizens out of work, these programs were on a scale hitherto unseen in America. Roosevelt also was concerned about the condition of the nation’s environment as floods, soil erosion, and deforestation ravaged the countryside and the Dust Bowl covered the prairie states with dark clouds of dirt. Roosevelt hoped that the Civilian Conservation Corps, created by Congress on March 31, 1933, would help in solving both of these problems. Providing employment for young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, the recruits in the CCC would be put to work on conservation projects, such as flood control and the mitigation of soil erosion (Maher 2008).





PHOTO BY J. D. GUTHRIE, FSA#14494. COURTESY USFS

Building picnic tables at a CCC camp in the Carson National Forest, New Mexico.

Roosevelt referred to the purview of the CCC as lying in “simple work” that would not interfere with “normal employment,” yet over the nine years of its existence, the CCC transformed the landscape of America. The statistics practically speak for themselves. The Corps planted over 3 billion trees, treated 40 million acres of farmland for soil erosion, and constructed 9,800 small reservoirs among countless other conservation projects. Although initially the CCC was not involved with recreation, its association with agencies such as the National Park Service soon made this a key component of CCC work, and the Corps participated in developing 800 new state parks, over 13,000 miles of hiking trails, and additional recreation projects in national parks, national monuments, and national forests (Audretsch 2011; Maher 2008).

CCC camps were scattered across the nation. The Southwest had its share of CCC funding, and the impacts of the Corps were just as great here as they were across the nation. In Arizona, for example, the CCC built 5,700 miles of forest roads and installed 3,559 miles of telephone lines. The Army administered the CCC camps, but other agencies directed the work. A long list of federal agencies participated in the program, from the USDA Forest Service to the Fish and Wildlife Department to the Bureau of Reclamation. Five agencies oversaw the bulk of CCC projects in the Southwest: The Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Soil Conservation Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Division of Grazing (later called the U.S. Grazing Service and located in the Bureau of Land Management) (Maher 2008; Moore 2006).

Each CCC camp employed 200 men. Regulations stipulated that money should go towards hiring men and not towards

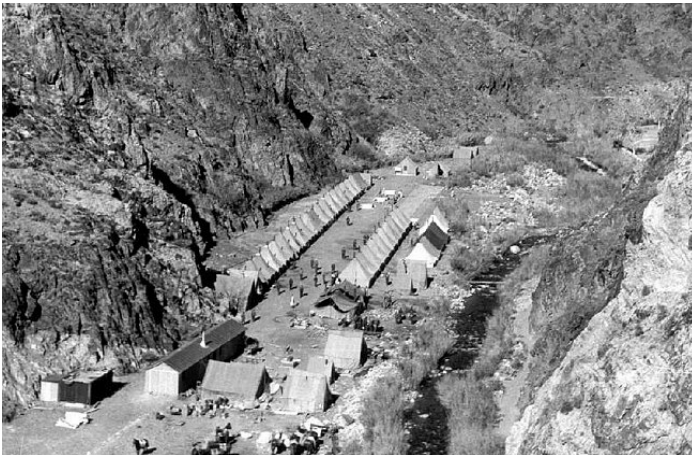
buying expensive equipment such as bulldozers. An amazing amount of the Corps’ work was completed by hand-labor. Each recruit received twenty-five dollars a month that he had to send home to his family and an additional five dollars that he could keep for his own personal spending money. Each state was assigned a quota of enrollees, based on population. The Corps also could hire a small number of older men, known as “Local Experienced Men” or LEMs, who possessed the necessary professional expertise to oversee projects. The CCC did undertake some work on private lands, but the majority occurred on public lands. Because the majority of public lands were in the West, and populations of Western states were substantially lower than Eastern states, many recruits from New York, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere in the East found themselves transported out West and deposited in the middle of a forest or on the brink of the Grand Canyon. Once in camp, the recruits were put immediately to work (Maher 2008; Hinton and Green 2008).

CCC Work in the Southwest

The National Park Service

At first, the National Park Service mainly used the CCC for forestry work, due to the Corps’ conservation mandate. It was not long, however, before the Corps began branching out into recreation development. Instead of decreasing during the Depression, tourism had grown—from 1934 to 1935 alone, national park visitation increased from 4 million to over 7.5 million. The CCC, with its millions of available workers, offered the Park Service the perfect chance to expand the infrastructure of the national park system. Beginning in the summer of 1935, the Corps became heavily involved in recreational development projects. The Park Service employed funding from other New Deal agencies, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA), to complete projects as well (Audretsch 2011; Maher 2008).

The National Park Service also began to expand into the arena of state park development. With CCC funding, the Park Service started the Branch of Recreation, Land Planning, and State Cooperation, headed by Conrad Wirth. Part of the duties of the new branch involved assistance for state parks. The Park Service started managing new areas as well, such as Lake Mead, with CCC funding. The 1930s witnessed a tremendous diversification and expansion of the Park Service. In 1937 the Park Service regionalized, changing its infrastructure so that regional headquarters could provide more direct oversight for the Park Service’s burgeoning responsibilities. Programs like the CCC provided the impetus for much of this expansion. And on the ground, within national parks and monuments, the work of the CCC changed the landscape (Maher 2008).



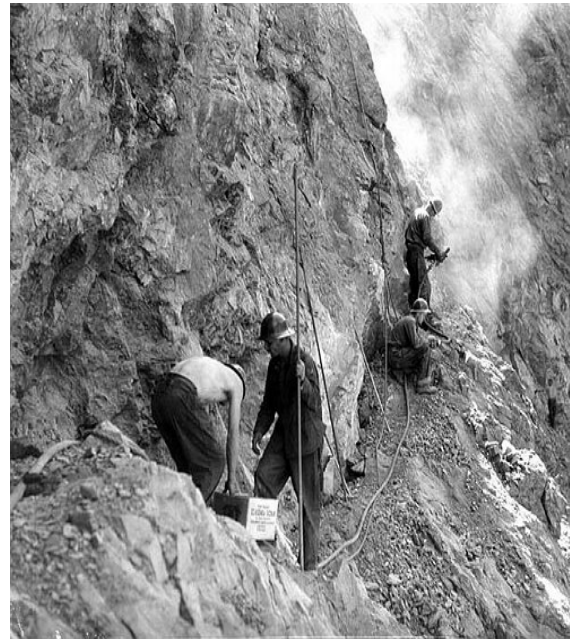
NPS PHOTO

A CCC camp in the Grand Canyon.

Grand Canyon National Park

Scarcely a park or monument in the Southwest failed to feel the impact of the CCC. The Grand Canyon, as one of the largest and most prominent national parks in the nation, received a great deal of CCC attention. Seven companies worked there between 1933 and 1942. The volume of work completed by the CCC and other New Deal agencies was unprecedented in the history of the park. South Rim Village housed two CCC camps, two were based on the North Rim, one at Phantom Ranch, and one on the eastern side of the park at Desert View. The Park Service had started constructing the elaborate Grand Canyon Village in 1930, and CCC funding and laborers allowed the work to continue. Over seventy buildings were constructed in the village. The CCC also worked on the stone guardwall along the rim of the canyon. For the most part, the CCC maintained the prevailing rustic style of architecture and landscape design in their work with the Park Service. At Grand Canyon Village, recruits carefully transplanted native trees and shrubs into the areas disturbed by construction in order to achieve a harmonious, naturalized landscape (Audretsch 2011; Carr 1998; Hinton and Greene 2008).

The experience of Company 819, which arrived on the South Rim at the end of May 1933 effectively demonstrates the amount of work a CCC camp could accomplish in six months, the length of an enrollment period. Company 819 improved the south entrance road, built a tennis court, constructed a stone wall and walks at Yavapai Point, developed the Shoshone Point area, installed a telephone line from the Grand Canyon Village to Grandview Point, and conducted a boundary survey, among other projects. One of the most spectacular projects completed by the Corps in the Grand Canyon was the construction of a two-mile length of the Colorado River Trail, connecting the Kaibab rim-to-rim trail with the Bright Angel Trail. Company 818, which completed the project, had to blast most of the trail out of solid rock, often on a cliff face hundreds of feet above the river (Audretsch 2011; Hinton and Greene 2008).



NPS PHOTO

CCC enrollees working on the Colorado River Trail in 1934.

Petrified Forest National Monument

Many of the structures built by the CCC exhibited a simple but serviceable architectural design. At Petrified Forest National Monument, the Corps worked on a more elaborate and impressive structure—the Painted Desert Inn. The building had served as a privately-managed restaurant and store during the 1920s, but by the 1930s it needed substantial renovations. The Park Service purchased the inn in 1936 and architect Lyle Bennett redesigned the structure into a beautiful example of the Pueblo Revival Style. The Corps put his plans into action.

The CCC quarried local stone, installed wiring and plumbing, and added several rooms to the building. The roof, modeled on that of a traditional pueblo, consisted of peeled logs topped by log crossbeams and aspen poles, all cut and prepared by the CCC workers. Most of the detail work was hand-crafted, from the light fixtures to the furniture. Two men painted the skylights with designs based on Mesa Verde pottery. Others scored the concrete floor and then painted Native American blanket designs onto the surface. At other sites in the Southwest, such as Bandelier National Monument and White Sands National Monument, the CCC completed similar structures that utilized hand-craftsmanship to great effect. Other noteworthy structures include the visitor center at Tumacácori National Monument and the Santa Fe Trail building in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which served as the National Park Service's Southwest Regional headquarters for many years (Hinton and Greene 2008).



NPS PHOTO

The hand-painted skylights in the Painted Desert Inn.

The Forest Service

The majority of CCC camps in the Southwest were located on Forest Service lands. Enrollees thinned forests, planted trees, and fought fires in the name of conservation. As outdoor recreation grew, and more people began looking to not just national parks but national forests for recreational opportunities, the Forest Service began employing the Corps in constructing shelters and campgrounds as well. Like the Park Service, the Forest Service also benefitted from other New Deal agencies like the CWA and WPA.

In Utah, the boys of the Duck Creek CCC Camp, located in the Dixie National Forest, arrived in June 1933. At the Duck Creek Campground the enrollees constructed fireplaces, stoves, and signs. Installing water lines and clearing roads also consumed recruits' working hours. At the Forest Service's direction, the Corps poisoned marmots and set out poisoned salt licks to kill porcupines. In Arizona, enrollees took it a step further and actively hunted porcupines, which the U.S. Biological Survey stated were "the greatest single enemy of the pine forests of northern Arizona." Near one camp, CCC workers killed seventy-five porcupines in one day. Predator and rodent control was a common activity for the CCC throughout the nation. Enrollees also undertook many disease and insect control programs in national forests. Road construction, usually for the purpose of fire suppression, indirectly supported recreation. Forest Road 64 in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona, for example, provided access to the inner reaches of the forest for firefighters and also allowed for the development of summer homes, a Boy Scout camp, and hiking trails (Hinton and Greene 2008; Moore 2006).

Other Agencies

As with the Park Service and Forest Service, CCC work with agencies like the Bureau of Reclamation and Soil Conservation Service was diverse and far-reaching. A camp

with the Bureau of Reclamation in southwestern Colorado cleared timber from a valley that was to be turned into the Vallecito Reservoir. Others worked on improving irrigation canals. Erosion, caused by years of deforestation and overgrazing, was a region-wide problem, and CCC workers constructed check dams, fences, and planted yet more trees in an attempt to reverse soil degradation. A camp at Eagle Creek, Arizona directly benefitted local ranchers. The Corps drilled wells and built stock tanks to help ranchers keep track of their cattle. They also built flood walls on Eagle Creek, which made the road passing along the river banks useable the entire year round. In New Mexico, the CCC helped to design the newly created Bosque del Apache wildlife refuge by draining swamps, leveling the land, and building dikes to hold back floods from the Rio Grande (Hinton and Greene 2008; Moore 2008; Melzer 2000).



PHOTO BY F. L. KIRBY, FSM286446, COURTESY USFS

CCC workers carrying rocks for erosion check dams, Tonto National Forest, Arizona

Camp Life

Ed Braun, a CCC recruit from Ohio, recalled his feelings on arriving at a CCC camp in the high desert of Utah. "It was situated 500 miles from Nowhere surrounded by Nothing. There wasn't a tree as far as the eye could see." Many recruits who came to camps in the Southwest from Midwestern or Eastern states had similar reactions to the strange environment. For some, it was the lack of trees, the dry air, and the high altitudes that discomfited them. Others, used to the open spaces of Texas or Oklahoma, found it difficult to cope with the dense mountain forests. The isolation of many camps could also be hard for recruits to handle. Marshall Wood, an enrollee at the Los Burros camp in Arizona, had arrived from Texas with other recruits. He remembered that "things were so bad those first few weeks that many of the guys couldn't take it. They just left and didn't come back" (Hinton and Greene 2008; Moore 2006).

Besides being located in environments that were unfamiliar to many of the men, CCC camps were often Spartan, primitive



PHOTO BY W. A. JACKSON, FSM325157, COURTESY USFS

The Perkinsville CCC camp on the Prescott National Forest, Arizona.

affairs. Suddenly faced with the prospect of housing hundreds of men, agencies like the Forest Service and Park Service scrambled to find adequate accommodations. Some camps used only tents for barracks, particularly if the camp was located at a high altitude and moved during the winter months. Fancier camps had tents with plywood walls and screen doors or hastily constructed wooden buildings. A Bureau of Reclamation camp in Colorado possessed sturdier structures, the walls painted in pastel shades with attractive trees, grass, and flowers planted around the camp. Still, the Corps had to be careful not to give the impression that tax dollars were being wasted on needless luxuries, and overall the camps had an austere atmosphere (Hinton and Greene 2008; Moore 2006).

The kitchen and mess hall were important features of every camp. Receiving plentiful, regular meals was a highlight of the Corps for recruits, many of whom enlisted with nutritional deficiencies caused by poor diets. A typical menu for a day consisted of bacon, eggs, and oatmeal for breakfast; Swiss-fried steak, gravy, baked corn, peas, bread, and blackberry pie for lunch; and pork, beans, stewed tomatoes, cornbread, and apple pie for dinner. The combination of good food and hard work caused many men to substantially increase in weight and muscle mass. Cartoons printed in the ubiquitous camp newspapers, written by the enrollees, highlighted the physical changes many experienced by depicting a young man returning home after his work with the CCC and his parents failing to recognize him. The canteen was also a popular location in camp where men could purchase candy bars and soda pop (Melzer 2000; Moore 2006; Hinton and Greene 2008).

An important feature of every camp was the education program. Classes were offered to enrollees in the evenings and on weekends, although the men did not have to attend. Vocational courses in subjects such as carpentry or welding

were often included, and more advanced students were given the option of enrolling in local colleges if their camps were located close enough to the campus. Few CCC boys attained this advanced level; in fact, many of the enrollees were illiterate and some could not even sign their own name. An Arizonan camp newspaper reported that “fifty men raised their hands when Mr. Share, Education Advisor, asked how many of those present had not gone farther than the third grade.” Charlie Pflugh, an enrollee at an Arizonan camp, remembered that “there were a few boys in camp that came to me and asked me to write letters home for them.” Instructors taught basic reading and writing skills to thousands of enrollees (Melzer 2000; Moore 2006; Hinton and Greene 2008).



PHOTO BY E. R. WELLINGTON, COURTESY USFS

Mathematical instruction at a CCC camp in the Cibola National Forest, New Mexico.

Corps administrators and supporters of the CCC often tied the physical and mental transformations experienced by the enrollees into ideas of conservation and masculinity. Unemployment and unhealthy conditions had taken their toll on the nation’s youth, they claimed. Just as the CCC rehabilitated degraded environments, it also rehabilitated the young men. Concepts of masculinity also were highlighted in Corps propaganda—by saving a man’s health and spirit, his masculinity was preserved. Central to this concept was the notion that work was integral to a man’s identity. The CCC was very much a masculine enterprise. Although millions of women were also out of work, enrollment was restricted to men. As one historian states, “New Dealers, like presidential administrations before and since, viewed men’s labor as an inalienable right to be protected, if necessary, by federal action. Women’s work was seen more as a family necessity or choice and therefore lay outside the purview of national social reform” (Maher 2008).

Despite the emphasis on a socially normative masculinity, CCC camps could foster an environment conducive to more



PHOTO BY E. L. PERRY, FS#461597, COURTESY USFS

Monjeau Fire Lookout, built by the CCC in 1940, Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico.

fluid conceptions of gender. With no women in the camps, men had to undertake tasks traditionally associated with women, such as cooking or cleaning. Along with baseball games and wrestling matches, many camps held drag shows and all-male beauty contests. And the camps also provided a setting for gay men to meet and socialize with each other. Although the homosocial and homosexual aspects of the CCC were often hidden behind innuendo and colored with misogynistic and homophobic overtones, the CCC, much like the army, was an all-male environment that allowed gay men to explore their identities in ways they had not been able to in their hometowns (Johnson 2007).

The CCC was not only a gender-segregated enterprise but a racially segregated one as well. Although the CCC legislation stated that discrimination on a basis of “race, color, or creed” would not be permitted, in practice discrimination still occurred. African American recruitment remained below permitted levels due to racism in recruiting offices and an atmosphere of racial intolerance. Those African Americans who did enroll often were placed into segregated camps. In 1935 the de-facto segregation became law by order of the War Department. Locals near a Utah CCC camp staffed by a crew of black New Yorkers told the recruits to stay away from local church services, and similar responses occurred throughout the nation (Maher 2008; Hinton and Greene 2008).

The Hispanic population of the Southwest enrolled in the Corps in large numbers. Hispanics did not face such blatant discrimination as African Americans—Anglos and Hispanics usually served on the same crews—but racial tension still existed. Richard Thim, an enrollee at an Arizonan camp,

remembered an incident when one of his fellow enrollees became drunk. “He got the idea that he was going to fight the ‘Mexicans.’” A contingent of Hispanics from Texas was housed in their own barracks and the inebriated enrollee “got a butcher knife and went over to the [common] wash area. One of them saw him coming and hit him in the side of the head with an empty metal bucket. The fellow came back to our barracks and showed us what the kid had done. He talked a bunch of guys into going to the tool shed and getting picks and going over to their barracks to even the score.” Although nothing came of the incident, racial intolerance was not uncommon in the CCC (Melzer 2000; Moore 2006).

The CCC-Indian Division

Like African American and Hispanics, for whom the Depression worsened an already grim economic situation, Native Americans also found themselves in dire financial straits. In 1933 the per capita income for Native Americans in the Southwest was only eighty-one dollars. Indians had been granted citizenship in 1924, and a survey report by the Department of the Interior stressed the need for an increase in local responsibility and an end to federal paternalism. These developments, situated in the long history of the federal relationship to Native Americans, which alternated between calls for greater oversight and paternalism to an emphasis on assimilation, influenced Roosevelt’s decision to create a separate division within the CCC for Native Americans. Created on April 27, 1933, the CCC-Indian Division (CCC-ID) was managed by the Office of Indian Affairs, not the War Department, and provided for the operation of seventy-two camps, with forty-three of those in New Mexico and Arizona (Hinton and Greene 2008).



PHOTO BY W. H. SHAEFFER, FS#383655, COURTESY USFS

CCC workers receiving on-the-job instruction as they build a culvert in a road in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona.

The CCC-ID differed in other ways as well. Enrollees did not have to be single and there was no age limit. White men married to reservation residents were sometimes admitted, and whites often occupied supervisory positions. Although some boarding camps were constructed, many workers lived at home. For short-term projects, temporary family camps were sometimes established. Enrollees followed a schedule similar to other CCC camps: rising early, working a full day, with regular meals provided. As with other CCC recruits, many Native American enrollees suffered from poor nutrition. Some enrollees on the Navajo reservation collapsed when they began working, and the camp director ordered a special diet of brown rice, whole wheat bread, tomatoes, and dried fruit to be served to the sick men (Hinton and Greene 2008).

An educational program also existed within the CCC-ID, but it was not administered as regularly as that within the CCC. Many camp directors turned the educational money into a slush fund for projects, and due to high-turnover rates and the lack of permanent boarding camps, it was difficult to establish consistency in the programs. As with the CCC, vocational training was popular, and recruits took courses in tractor operation, telephone and radio communication, and first aid. More paternalistic programs also were common. Social workers and teachers performed cooking and sewing demonstrations for recruits' families and organized recreational programs. These programs, which paid scant attention to cultural differences, often were met with disdain by recruits (Hinton and Greene 2008).

As within the CCC, the CCC-ID recruits worked on conservation projects related to soil erosion, reclamation, and forestry. Within the Park Service, CCC-ID enrollees completed projects at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Navajo National Monument, Chaco Canyon National Historical Park, and Aztec Ruins National Monument. At Aztec Ruins, a mobile crew of twenty-five workers completed stabilization work by waterproofing ceilings, removing old roofs, and raising the masonry of the outer wall of the ruins. They also installed sunken tile drains in many of the rooms in an effort to improve drainage problems. In 1946, several years after the CCC had been discontinued, this crew was brought back as a formal part of the Park Service—the Regional Stabilization Unit—and they traveled to archaeological sites throughout the Southwest, stabilizing and repairing prehistoric structures. The unit existed until 1978 (Hinton and Greene 2008).

Conservation and Controversy

The CCC altered the public landscape of the nation. Building roads, planting trees, digging reservoirs—all these activities wrought substantial changes in the environment. Given its massive scale, the work of the CCC did not proceed without controversy. Many questioned whether CCC projects actually



PHOTO BY E. O. BUHLER, FSA#12397, COURTESY USFS

CCC workers planting trout in Cave Creek, Tonto National Forest, Arizona.

benefited the environment as proponents claimed. Complaints about the CCC fell into two general camps—one that protested the inroads the CCC made into previously undeveloped wilderness areas and another that raised concerns about the ecological ramifications of CCC projects.

Forester Robert Marshall spearheaded the critique of the CCC from the standpoint of wilderness advocates. When the Park Service seized the opportunity presented by the CCC to begin developing many national parks and monuments for visitors by installing roads and structures, Marshall protested, arguing that large areas of national parks needed to be left undeveloped. The backlash against the CCC contributed to the founding of the Wilderness Society in 1935 by Marshall and others involved in protesting CCC projects. After World War II, the Wilderness Society would be at the forefront of the effort to obtain formal protection for wilderness, culminating in the 1964 Wilderness Act (Maher 2008).

While wilderness advocates criticized the recreational development projects of the CCC, others protested the Corps' conservation projects. Aldo Leopold, a scientist and pioneer in the field of wildlife ecology, was one of the most well-known. Leopold argued that activities such as poisoning predators and rodents or draining wetlands proceeded from incomplete ecological knowledge and often did more harm than good. Erosion control projects where the CCC planted aggressive species like salt cedar in the Southwest or kudzu in the South also were viewed with skepticism by some scientists. Although ecology was a developing discipline at the time, Leopold and others argued that some natural processes should be allowed to proceed undisturbed and that a more holistic perspective on the environment was needed (Maher 2008).



PHOTO BY G. D. RUSSELL, FS#330242, COURTESY USFS

Sign for a CCC camp in the Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico, 1936.

Both the wilderness and ecological critiques of the CCC introduced these concepts to the public consciousness. The national media publicized the debates and soon terms such as ecology entered the public discourse. Beyond the controversy aroused by the CCC, the Corps' work also introduced many people to the concept of conservation itself. Whether for men working in the CCC or people living near CCC camps who witnessed the Corps in action, conservation became meaningful to their daily lives. Because the CCC was tremendously popular—one of the most successful of Roosevelt's New Deal programs—conservation also gained greater public support. Historian Neil Maher argues that by introducing concepts of conservation to the public, building grassroots support for conservation, and also by catalyzing ecological and wilderness critiques, the CCC led directly to the postwar environmental movement. In the postwar era, grassroots support for environmentalism was critical to the success of the movement. The CCC served as an important link in the development of environmentalism in the United States (Maher 2008).

Conclusion

There Is a Camp in Arizona

There's a camp in Arizona
By the banks of the river Blue
Where I will spend the winter;
And perhaps my whole life through,

Mother nature has all done it
she has carved with mighty hand
all that is in Arizona
Which is made of rock and sand

All in all it's just a dandy
And I think it's just a fine
Everything it's just a beauty
In this famous camp of mine

So I'll stay in the tree army
In this camp I love so true
In that camp in Arizona
Near the banks of the river Blue

Poem by Felipe Villanueva, enrollee in a CCC camp in Arizona by the Blue River (Moore 2000)

By 1941, as war raged in Europe, support for the CCC began to diminish. Industrial jobs increased as wartime demands galvanized the economy, and enrollment dropped as men left the CCC to enlist in the army. Although the Corps had been careful never to provide military training to recruits, it ended up preparing men for army service. Hard work, discipline, and communal living experienced in the CCC were similar to what men found in the army.

In 1942 the CCC was discontinued, but the legacy of the Corps remained in the discourse of conservation. Many of the men who had worked in the CCC also stayed invested in conservation principles, and they found employment in agencies such as the Forest Service after the war. The CCC's legacy remained on the landscape as well. In the Southwest and nationwide the effects of the Corps' work remained visible for decades and in many cases can still be seen: sections of a forest where the trees have grown taller and thicker due to thinning undertaken by the Corps; clusters of salt cedar, spreading out from where CCC workers originally planted it to help with erosion; structures and roads in national parks that still serve visitors; scattered stones and timbers, the remnants of old CCC camps, still hidden in the far reaches of national forests. The landscapes we encounter in our daily lives and travels owe much of their existence and shape to events in the past, and for the Southwestern landscape, one of the most important agents of change in the twentieth century was the Civilian Conservation Corps.

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Note: All USFS photos were found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/about/history/sfe/index.htm>