

THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Work and Hope in the Desperate Years

Weathering the "Perfect Storm" of the Great Depression

It was clear to President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s—the economic despair of the Great Depression and environmental crises such as the Dust Bowl had to be tackled together. He created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of his "New Deal" in record-setting government speed—the 1st man was enrolled 35 days after FDR's inauguration in 1933.

New enrollees disembark the train at Apex, MT.



Relaxing in the barracks

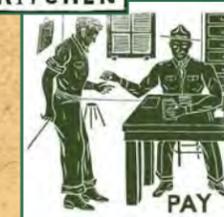
"\$1 a Day, 3 Hots, and a Flop"

With a national unemployment rate of 25%, men arrived in droves at the CCC enrollment lines. The requirements: they had to be 18-24 years old, unmarried with no criminal record, and from families in a federal welfare program. They were paid \$30 each month but had to send \$25 home to their families. They were also rewarded with three meals and a bed, all gratefully accepted.



Conserving a Nation's Resources

Camps took hold in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (3 here on the former Beaverhead National Forest) and employed 3.5 million men. Their work conserved our natural resources while bolstering human resources in an era of gloom and hopelessness. As the collective spirit lifted, a potentially lost group of men began to recast themselves as part of the "Greatest Generation."



LEMS (locally employed men) served as instructors for many topics and skills such as woodblock printing (block examples shown above).

As one enrollee put it:

"We knew what we had and why we had it—support to send home and a chance to keep our pride."

Roosevelt's Tree Army

Although the CCC boys performed a variety of work, one of their greatest legacies may be the 3 billion trees planted. That's enough to cover Yellowstone National Park 12 times with a tree every 20 feet.

"I planted trees in my sleep many a night."

(Karl Blakney, CCC in Oregon)

The CCC is recognized as the greatest conservation program in America's history, a legacy of resource treasures that still serves us well today.



Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Caring for the Land and Serving People

