

Soil Quality Monitoring
Soil and Water Improvements...Then and Now

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps to help Americans get through the Great Depression by putting them to work in Parks and Forests. Part of their work included projects to stop erosion and sedimentation on the Rio Grande National Forest. The photo below is an example of a water spreader in Cat Creek Park taken in August 1940.

~~CCC~~
Cattle
Grazing

File No. 2220
Temp. No. 438. Date of exposure 8/20/40
Rock spreader constructed by SCS-CCC in Cat Creek Park.



424805

On May 2nd, 2008, I was able to re-locate the structure shown in the photo. I tried to photograph it at the same distance and angle as the original photo.



Conclusions

There are a number of conclusions that can be seen between the photos.

- 1) The water spreader itself was partially successful. It acted more like a check dam and had accumulated 3 to 5 inches of topsoil on the uphill side. As far as it spreading water to plants over a wider area, it was not really successful as water was flowing in a channel through the structure and not being spread out.
- 2) Some structures were successful, even 68 years later. The check dam shown below is still functional in that it stopped gully cutting, allowed vegetation to partially stabilize the cutbanks, and has not blown out from natural or man-caused influences. Note that the check dams were keyed into the cutbanks...an important aspect to making them successful.
- 3) The greatest difference in the photos is a testament to improved range management. In the 1940 photo, considerable bare soil is evident. Plant species are forbs and annuals that really do not do a good job of keeping soils in place. This would be an early seral stage of an Arizona Fescue range site. You can see only a few residual Fescue plants at that time. After 68 years of management, the site has little bare soil, many more desirable plants such as the Arizona fescue and fewer forbs and annuals. It also proves that given proper management and time to heal, that low seral stage plant communities can advance toward potential/more desirables though it may take a number of decades to get there.
- 4) On the hillsides in the background, aspen-conifer mixed stands have moved more toward conifers. A few conifers have encroached into the grasslands.
- 5) Do you see the man sitting near the check dam? If you can't, you can find this photo in the historic proto files and zoom in.
- 6) The model of trucks have definitely changed from then to now!

Get out there and see it.....

John Rawinski, Soil Scientist, May 7, 2008

Welcome to our Civilian Conservation Corps: 75th Anniversary Website

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was the most popular of the New Deal programs created by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to provide relief and speed recovery from the Great Depression. From 1933 to 1942, the CCC put some two million young men to work on a massive building program in Americas' parks and forests. Roads and trails, campsites and social halls, amphitheaters and visitor centers numbered among the many features constructed by the CCC that provided the public with unprecedented access to the nation's natural and historic treasures. But the CCC was more than just a make work program. It offered the enrollees a renewed sense of dignity and hope for the future. They were not only earning a living, they were doing something important for their country, and they knew it.



In California, the legacy of the CCC can be found in our State Parks. The CCC developed the infrastructure for the young park system, from unique projects such as the reconstruction of Mission La Purísima Concepción, to planting trees and landscaping. It is with a profound sense of gratitude to the visionary government leaders and the hard working young men of the three C's that California State Parks commemorates the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and its contributions to our Golden State.

“It is time for each and every one of us to cast away self-destroying, nation-destroying efforts to get something for nothing, and to appreciate that satisfying reward and safe reward come only through honest work.”

From the radio address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 17, 1933

**Photo taken May 2, 2008 by J. Rawinski
A rock check dam installed in 1940 has helped stabilize a gully.**

