



News Release



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Veterans gain job skills while reducing wildfire risk ***Partnership aims to help veterans access Forest Service careers***

San Diego, Calif. – California Conservation Corps Director David Muraki, and Forest Service officials today visited a crew of military veterans who are preparing for future employment while they're helping to protect rural communities from wildfire.

The veterans were hard at work clearing and piling brush on lands that are potentially in danger from wildland fires within, and adjacent to the Cleveland National Forest and San Diego Country Estates. The main focus of the veterans' work is reducing hazardous fuels near communities.

"The Forest Service is a great partner and it's a privilege to join with them to help veterans prepare for resource management careers through work on important forestry projects," said Muraki.

The program provides veterans the opportunity to gain work experience that can help them make the transition to civilian employment. Crew members range in age from 19-26, and represent every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

"The Veterans Green Corps program is a win-win for everyone," said Will Metz, Forest Supervisor of the Cleveland National Forest. "It provides training and jobs for veterans and accomplishes much needed ecological restoration projects, including fuels reduction work."

The CCC, a state agency, hires young men and women for a year of natural resource work and emergency response. The program now in its 35th year, was created by Governor Jerry Brown in 1976, and since that time there have been more than 115,000 participants.

In 2008, the CCC, in partnership with Veterans Green Jobs, began developing an initiative to involve recently returned veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan in a CCC program providing a transition from military service to civilian life. In the Forest Services' Pacific Southwest Region, three crews were recruited to provide critical forestry work in the Cleveland, Lake Tahoe Basin and Sierra National Forests.

The crews help the Forest Service get work done on the ground. Additionally, the Forest Service gains a pool of well-qualified applicants for future job opportunities with the agency.

Before beginning work, the crew went through training, which included wildland firefighting and timber-cutting (sawyer) skills, followed by work alongside experienced Forest Service crew members. Their jobs have included clearing brush, thinning vegetation and preparing and burning prescribed fire units. The crew will work on the Cleveland National Forest through early next year.

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