

History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado

"Save the Soil, Save the Forests, Save the Young Men."

During the Great Depression of the 1930's, the Seventy-third Congress by Public Act No. 5, March, 1933, authorized the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program. The continuation of this function was provided for in the Congressional Act of June, 1937, which also officially changed the name of the ECW to its more popular designation, the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The CCC was one of several federal relief programs which sought to alleviate distress caused by the massive unemployment of the 1930's. The program achieved this through the establishment of camps where young men worked on forest and conservation projects throughout the country. Colorado had numerous CCC camps throughout its undeveloped and forested land.

Franklin Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner as the first Director of the Emergency Conservation Work program and arranged for the Departments of War, Interior, Agriculture, and Labor to cooperate with the Director in establishing and operating the proposed system of forest camps. The War Department was responsible for the building of the camps and for providing food, clothing, medical care and transportation for the enrollees. The Interior Department provided educational programming for enrollees, supervised work done in the National Parks and other federal lands, and cooperated with the states on work done in the state parks. The Agriculture Department supervised work in connection with soil conservation, reclamation, wild-life protection, and other conservation projects. The Labor Department was in charge of enrollee selection upon the recommendation of state relief agencies.



Lunch Time at Colorado National Monument, Grand Junction, Colorado

Technical agencies supervised and planned the specific work projects in the camps. The U.S. Forest Service employed CCC men to protect timbered areas from fire, insects, and disease. The Soil Conservation Service established areas of soil erosion control by employing practices such as strip cropping, artificial reseeding, contour cultivation, terracing, furrowing, corrugation, and pasture management. The stabilization of irrigation systems and the construction of gully plugs, diversion dams, and diversion ditches were also emphasized under the SCS.

The U.S. Division of Grazing instituted projects which stopped injury to the public grazing lands through erosion and mismanagement. This work included the development and conservation of water through the construction of tanks and stock reservoirs; the digging of wells; dam construction; revegetation; eradication of poisonous weeds; rodent control; flood control; waterhole development; and the building of bridges, fences, truck trails, driveways, and range corrals.

The Bureau of Reclamation supervised the rehabilitation of existing storage and irrigation systems; the development and construction of supplemental storage facilities for areas affected by drought; and the construction of recreational facilities at irrigation reservoirs.

Work for the National Parks and Monuments and State Parks included building or enlargement of campgrounds and picnic areas, extending nature trails, constructing parking areas, and opening new park sections. This work was aimed at the protection and conservation of the scenic, historic, archaeological, and geological resources of the National Parks and Monuments.

The camp name designated the type of work carried on at the camp, the project number, and the camp location. The "SCS" in Camp SCS-7-C, for instance, indicated that it was a Soil Conservation Service project with an identification number of "7". The "C" meant that the camp was located in Colorado.



SCS-7-C, Castle Rock, Colorado

At the national level, the CCC was divided into nine major organizational areas which corresponded to Army Corps of Engineers districts. Colorado was in the 8th regional area with headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. Within this Colorado-Wyoming region 30-35 companies were formed. More than 40 would be established by the time Congress eliminated the CCC program on June 30, 1942.

In 1935 the Colorado CCC was divided into two districts with headquarters at Grand Junction for Western Slope camps and Fort Logan for camps east of the Continental Divide. In October, 1935, the Colorado-Wyoming Headquarters at Fort Logan moved to Littleton.

Within each state the Labor Department had the authority to delegate an established state relief and welfare agency to implement the selection process. Acting through its local representatives, this selection agency had the task of receiving and investigating thousands of CCC applicants each year. When

vacancies existed, the Department of Labor issued a requisition to each state for enrollees needed. Young men were taken in four times a year in January, April, July, and October.

In Colorado, the Official Colorado State Relief Committee (later known as the Colorado State Relief Administration) was the first agency at the State level to handle CCC enrollee selection. It was created on May 11, 1933 by an Act of the General Assembly. It consisted of 7 persons appointed by the governor to administer emergency relief measures, including the CCC program.

The Colorado Works Progress Administration also had responsibilities in connection with CCC enrollment. It was designated to act as the State selection agency in July, 1936 until the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare took over in December of that same year. The State WPA office publicized the CCC program and sent information concerning forthcoming enrollments to various State welfare agencies and to the newspapers. Local WPA employment offices were in charge of accepting and filing enrollment applications and interviewing young men for CCC positions.

Following the brief six month period of Colorado WPA control, the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, under the directorship of Earl Kouns, managed the State CCC enrollment process for the next six years. Kouns was appointed by the seven-member Board of Public Welfare to head the CSDPW. As part of its duties, the CSDPW supervised and coordinated the efforts of the county selection agencies; evaluated the work of such agencies; provided consulting services; and prepared printed material for State agencies concerning the CCC.

A CCC representative, or supervisor, prepared CCC rules, procedures, and policies; handled correspondence; and generally supervised CCC enrollee selections. Genevieve Affolter/Griffith was Supervisor of CCC Selection from 1936-1942. Beneath her in the organizational hierarchy were the District Supervisors who interpreted the State CCC policies and procedures to the County Directors. The County Directors were then responsible to the CSDPW for taking applications; certifying applicants in accordance with the rules and regulations transmitted to them by the State Supervisor of CCC Selection; presenting selectees to the Army authorities for enrollment and complying with regulations and instructions issued by the CSDPW.

The CCC was open to young men primarily between the ages of 17 and 23 whose families were in special need. The enrollees had to agree to allot the majority of their pay to their families. The usual enrollment was for a six month term while the maximum term of service was two years.



Swimming Pool at Camp SCS-8-C, Wellington, Colorado

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