



The United States Fish and Wildlife Service Cultural Resources CCC History Project The CCC A Brief History

The era of the Civilian Conservation Corps was a changing world. Men went from the roaring twenties where money was free flowing after the end of World War I to an economic depression. The causes of this depression were the dust bowl, the stock market crash of Black Tuesday, and the reliance on credit instead of cash.

The creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps

Greatly affected by the ravages of the Great Depression on the United States, its new President Franklin D. Roosevelt, felt a duty to help put the pieces of his nation back together. Within the first hundred days of his Presidency, Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act, establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Corps was designed by Roosevelt himself as a type of peacetime army that would not only assist in the preservation of the United States' forest and wildlife, but would rejuvenate the economy by providing young men in dire straits the ability to provide for their families.

What made a C?

At first, enlistment into the Civilian Conservation Corps was restricted to U.S. citizens, young men between the ages of 18-25, who could pass a physical, unemployed, unmarried, and would donate the majority of their \$30 a month paycheck to their families. Throughout the years the rules would expand to include Military Veterans and Native Americans. An initial separation of the Caucasian Americans and African Americans was not surprising in those days, due to segregation laws. The enrollment period was for six

months with an option to reenlist. The C's gave young men the opportunities to learn skills that could translate into job opportunities once they served their enrollment period. Similar to the Military, it brought young men from all over the country and gave them a family type of structure, filled with discipline and reward for an honest day's work.

The C's on Wildlife Refuges

In 1933, the same time the Civilian Conservation Corps was being established, legislation for the purchase of lands that would become Wildlife-Refuges was being written. Over 8 million acres of land was acquired for the beginnings of the National Wildlife Refuge system that distributed the ten million acres of land across 257 refuges. Much of the land needed care and improvement to turn it into a refuge that could support wildlife. Forty-four out of the 257 Refuges were established singlehandedly by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The focus of the C's on Refuges was to improve administrative facilities and improve wildlife habitats. This included construction of water control devices such as dams and dikes, shelters like shelterbelts were created to protect wildlife, trees were planted, and food was planted to give the wildlife a self-sufficient environment. Refuge infrastructure was created by constructing housing, trails, bridges, fire towers/lookout towers, utility buildings, and telephone lines for the employees to manage their vast new land holdings.

You may contact Mr. Eugene Marino (eugene_marino@fws.gov), USFWS Archaeologist at 703-358-2173 for more information about the USFWS Cultural Resources program. You may also visit <http://www.fws.gov/historicpreservation> for additional information on the USFWS museum property program.