

History of the CCC and WPA and other Depression-Era Programs in Region 6 of the USFWS

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The Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt

The economy of the states encompassed by USFWS's Region 6, in the 1920s and 1930s was primarily based on agricultural production and stock ranching. A wet-cycle in the 1900-1910s led to a boom period for settlers who began moving into more agriculturally marginal areas. Indicators of a National economic slow-down were beginning to show by the late 1920s when several years of drought created conditions unfavorable for agriculture.

Associated with the drought were years of poor agricultural practices. Farmers had stripped off the protective native prairie grasslands setting up a destructive chain of events that lifted the light top-soil, leaving behind fields that were unproductive. Over-grazing around small natural lakes removed protective vegetation from water sources. These agricultural practices and the unfortunate coincidence of drought conditions fundamentally changed the natural ecosystem of the plains. Floods and wind erosion caused further deterioration of the plains ecosystem. As much as one-third of North Dakota was affected by drought and failing farms (Hendrickson 1981).

The stock-market crash of October 1929 did not, at first, affect the mid-western states because most farmers were not heavily invested in the Stock Market. The secondary wave of bank closures, decrease in available capital for equipment and supplies, and shrinking market prices caught many farmers and ranchers by surprise. In the wake of falling land values, acute drought conditions, and a lack of a safety net the plight of America's farmers turned desperate as the Nation entered the 1930s. By the election year of 1932 between 12 and 15 million people were unemployed (Cohen 1980:2).

The election of Franklin Roosevelt as President in 1932 unleashed a host of programs aimed at stemming the depression cycle and building the nation's infrastructure to support the failing economy and overhauling the methods that had led to the disastrous conditions. Roosevelt was a strong advocate for conserving natural resources and felt strongly that the Federal government should take an active role in the nation's economy. To a greater extent than perhaps any other President, Roosevelt felt that action should be taken by the Federal government for the benefit of the public. His somewhat romantic sentiment was turned into several broad brush executive orders to create work programs with a strong central conservation ethic. The programs were never ratified as permanent departments within the government structure, but they operated with a great amount of power and influence during his administration.

The first 100 days of Roosevelt's term were extremely productive, especially with the support of Congress, many emergency relief programs were created. Some of these programs continue to protect citizens even today, such as, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Federal

Communications Commission (FCC), Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and the Social Security Board (SSB) (Cohen 1980:2). Roosevelt walked a narrow line between upholding democratic principles of independence and initiating federal programs to rescue a nation from the brink of disaster.

The Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

Five days after taking the oath of office, President Roosevelt called a conference with the secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, and War, along with several others to discuss his ideas for recruiting 500,000 men to work in the nation's forests and eroded farmlands. Roosevelt's vision was to provide work opportunities, primarily for young men to repair the land from decades of poor management and over-use. The final bill went through several changes, but on March 31, 1933 Congress passed the Emergency Conservation Work Act (Public Law No. 5, 73d Congress). On April 5, 1933 the President signed Executive Order No. 6101 creating the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program. Two weeks later, the Departments of Agriculture, War, Labor, and Interior once again convened to define the program and start implementing the new executive order (Paige 1985). The ECW was more popularly known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or 3 C's and the name was officially changed to the CCC in 1937 (Salmond 1967).

The ECW's purpose was to create work opportunities that would not interfere with normal employment and were specifically directed toward conservation of natural resources. With this rather vague goal, Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner as the Director of the ECW to organize the existing four departments into an Advisory Council for the ECW and establish tasks for each department (Merrill 1981:6-7). The Labor Department oversaw the recruitment with stations set up in counties across the nation. The local Labor Department made the selection of the recruits until 1939, when that function was taken over by the federal Labor Department. The War Department administered the camps, physical training, transportation, and camp construction. The Agriculture and Interior Departments were in charge of finding work projects for the men that emphasized natural resource conservation. By using the strengths of each of the agencies, Roosevelt was able to develop a program without stigma of a military forced labor camp or competition with employed men. Only 37 days after signing the executive order, the first enrollee was signed on, and by July 1933, 250,000 boys were enrolled. The Army had successfully undertaken the largest peacetime mobilization of men the United States had ever seen, had built more than 1,300 camps, and had installed recruits in all of them (Salmond 1967:45).

Funding for the program was to be spent primarily on labor costs rather than equipment or machinery. Thus, the emphasis on hand-labor in the CCC. This was one of its strong points and also a weak point, as critics of the program derided the use of 100 men shoveling dirt to create a road rather than using a road grader. Yet, by the later years of the CCC, heavy equipment was being used and operating the machinery became an important learning opportunity for the young recruits (Cutler 1985).

The men were expected to complete a duty period of six months, and could re-apply for six

month stints, for up to two years. The enrollment periods were from June to September and October to March. Recruits were selected in the months of January, April, July, and October to fill vacancies. Applications could be made any time during the year (Paige 1985).

There were up to 300 types of work projects that were approved, including Astructural improvements (bridges, fire towers, service buildings); transportation (roads, trails); erosion control; flood control (dams); forest culture (planting trees, nursery work); forest protection (fire fighting); landscape and recreation (public picnic grounds); range (elimination of predatory animals, stock driveways, watering); wildlife (stream improvement, stocking fish, food and cover planting); and miscellaneous (emergency work, surveys, mosquito control)≡ (Merrill 1981:9). With these parameters the various agencies formulated jobs and calculated the time necessary to complete each task.

The CCC program was to consist of 300,000 unemployed young men, between the ages of 18 and 25, who were unmarried, and whose families were on relief roles (the age requirement was later extended to 17 and 28). All of the men who applied for the CCC had to have been unemployed for at least six months. No man on probation or parole was eligible. The original ECW bill included an anti-discrimination clause so that enrollees could not be selected based on race, color, or creed. In the northern states camps were integrated, but in the south, segregated camps were established. Nearly 200,000 blacks contributed to the CCC work program. There were also CCC companies composed of Native Americans located on reservations. These AIndian≡ CCC camps were operated by the BIA and the men lived at home rather than in camps. About 14,000 American Indians were enrolled in the program and primarily worked on soil erosion projects on reservations. Additionally, about 25,000 older men or Local Experienced Men(called LEMs) were enrolled who were chosen because of their experience or special skills to train the unskilled enrollees (Paige 1985). In 1933, because of demonstrations by War Veterans, an adjustment in the legislation was made to authorize the Amediate enrollment of about 25,000 veterans from the Spanish American War and World War I, with no age or marital restrictions≡ (Gormley 2002:5).

The majority of the CCC workforce was made up of young men, called Juniors. The Aboys≡ as they were commonly called, were first sent to a military-style conditioning camp where they received a physical inspection, inoculation shots, and clothing then they were assembled into units of about 200. The monthly salary for the CCC enrollee was \$30.00, of which the enrollee kept \$5.00 with \$25.00 sent to his family or placed in an account for him for distribution upon his leaving the CCC. The enrollees were provided living quarters, food, and clothing, as well as, medical care and transportation to the camps. The \$1 a day wage was opposed by labor organizations as too low, but it was retained throughout the years of the CCC (Cohen 1980:8). The money sent home was often the sole source of income for the family during the depths of the Depression. In all of the testimonials, the CCC enrollees remembered having enough money to buy the things they needed from the \$5.00 per month that they earned and they were proud of the help they were able to give to their families (Hill 1990; Lacy 1976).

After the men were assigned to a Company, they traveled to camps where they performed job duties. Camps were established in every state and even in territories such as Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The CCC camps housed 200 enrollees along with a small

contingent of military staff. Each company had a commander who was either a regular army or reserve officer, plus a junior officer and camp doctor. An educational advisor was added to the camps after 1935. The enrollees were deployed with a senior leader, leaders, and assistant leaders chosen from their ranks and who received slightly higher wages. The sponsoring agency such as the Biological Survey served as the Project Superintendent and if funds were available they would hire Local Experienced Men (LEMs) to serve as foremen for training the enrollees (Cohen 1980; Salmond 1967). Although in many cases the sponsoring agency provided the direct supervision of the enrollees.

The camps were organized by the Army and followed a regimented pattern. A flagpole and administration office were usually centrally located in the camp and flanked by the medical facility, education building, kitchen/mess hall, shops, and garages. Neat rows of barracks or tents provided shelter for the men with the shower/washroom and latrines nearby. Additionally, a camp might have a blacksmith shop and recreational building. Initially the enrollees bunked in tents and moved their camp to a warmer climate during the winter months. But, within the first year wooden bunkhouses were approved. In 1935 the CCC began using Aportable≡ buildings which were built in component pieces and bolted together allowing them to be dismantled, moved, and re-erected at a low cost (Otis et al. 1986). The CCC camps were built as temporary complexes with only rudimentary electrical capabilities and no insulation. The wood frame buildings were usually covered with tar paper or rolled sheeting. If needed smaller camps called Side Camps or Spike Camps were used if the travel time to work projects was too long. The Side Camps were usually just tent camps. When camps were terminated, all of the buildings were removed and the site was cleared of debris. In most cases the camp buildings and equipment were transferred to another camp, but in some cases the camp buildings and equipment were transferred to the sponsoring agency.

Upon arrival at camp, enrollees were usually given two sets of clothing, a blue denim work or fatigue suit and a renovated Army olive drab uniform for dress purposes. In 1938, however, Roosevelt ordered that a special, spruce-green dress uniform be issued to all enrollees≡ (Salmond 1967:137) (Figure 2). The camps followed a military routine with reveille at 6:00 am, breakfast and inspection, then off to the job site by 8:00 am. Lunch was usually brought out to the men and they finished the work day at 4:00 pm. Supper was at 5:00 pm, following supper the evening hours were free time, but everyone was expected to be in bed by 10:30 pm for lights out (Merrill 1981:14). Most camps promoted team sports, hobbies, and reading to fill the evenings and many camps produced a newspaper. Enrollees were expected to keep camp clean and rotate through kitchen duties. Camps were rewarded for neat appearance and some groups went to great lengths to improve their camps with rock lined walks, swimming pools, and landscaping. The camps also hosted events such as open-houses for the community.

For many of the boys the experience of living in a camp with a strict routine was an entirely new experience. Also new for many was the first travel away from home. Although camps were created in every state, there was an abundance of enrollees in the east and many were transported to western states to fill the camps. "Most of the boys enrolling in the early days were underweight and undernourished. They gained an average of 11¼ pounds in their first three to four months in the CCC" (Cohen 1980:54). In South Dakota enrollees were interviewed by the State Department of Social Security after 1937 and their reports detail the individual responses providing a profile of the average CCC enrollee. "The average CCC enrollee in South Dakota was under twenty years of age, came from a family of four to five children, lived in a

town with a population of 2,500 or less, had not graduated from high school, had never been employed, and had a family income of under forty dollars per month" (Hendrickson 1980:6). The money provided by the CCC program, with \$25 of the \$30.00 allotment returned to the family was a substantial contribution. "The years between 1937 and 1941 marked the heyday of the CCC program in South Dakota" (Hendrickson 1980:17).

Many of the boys were illiterate and had little knowledge of daily sanitation routines. Upon completing their service with the CCC, most enrollees had learned to read and many had finished a high school equivalency degree. They had also learned to work together as a team, get along with a variety of personalities, and to take orders. Oral histories from the boys all center around the camaraderie with their camp-mates, working hard, learning new skills, and seeing new parts of the country. Enrollees usually relished the cross-country treks and enjoyed the beautiful areas where they worked. The work experiences and lifestyle taught in the CCC benefitted the enrollees for the rest of their lives. In fact, many boys found skills that they turned into careers when they left the CCC.

Each camp was designated with a letter and number. The letter designation reflected the agency who was sponsoring the camp, such as 'F' for National Forests. The Fish and Wildlife Service began as BF or BS for Federal Game Refuge (Biological Survey) under the Department of Agriculture. The number of camps was tracked for each state, as BF-1, BF-2, etc. The nation was divided into nine corps areas, most of the Midwestern states were in the Seventh Corps area (Otis et al. 1986:9). Each company that was formed was given a number. The numbering convention followed was to use the number of the Corps area first, followed sequentially after that. However, a company could be formed in one area, then move to another without changing the company number or companies could be terminated and reformed into new companies with a new number.

The CCC camps also tried to connect with the communities where they were located. Some communities were wary of a large camp of unemployed young men nearby, but their attitudes quickly changed by the service oriented nature of the work and close supervision of the men. The enrollees were especially useful as a source of manpower in natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and fires. In fact, many communities lobbied to have "their" CCC camp remain when camps were scheduled to close after finishing a work detail. There was also an emphasis on purchasing all camp supplies from local merchants and enrollees often spent their monthly earnings on recreation in the local community.

The length of time that a camp stayed in one location was affected by several factors, including the sponsoring agency, type of work, and need elsewhere. Political favoritism also contributed to the location of camps. The camps brought a boost to the local economy because of the purchase of farm products, fuel, lumber, hardware, and enrollees spending money in town. The CCC provided jobs for unemployed youth, but also created a much needed boost to production in other industries, for instance "in 1933 contracts were let for 500,000 pairs of shoes, 2,500,000 yards of denim, 700,000 pairs of trousers, 1,000,000 towels, 300 cars and 3,000 trucks (Cohen 1980:25).

In September 1935, enrollment peaked at 502,000, organized into 2,652 camps" (Pfaff 2001:32). Riding on the success of the first two years, recommendations were made to expand the mission and number of camps of the ECW. Director Fechner promoted the extension of

work projects, noting the great work of the program especially in National Parks and Forests. With the renewal and expansion of the program, there was a growing movement to include education into the camp routine (*Happy Days* in *NACCA Journal* 2001, 24(2):11). Congress battled over the inclusion of education into the camps curriculum, many arguing that there wasn't enough time to complete projects as it was. The stalemate ended with a compromise that educational classes would be offered in the evenings, after the regular day's work was completed. Educational advisors and teachers were then assigned to each of the camps to set up programs for reading, finishing high school classes, and learning trade skills.

In October 1935, two years after its inception, the minimum age for CCC enrollees was lowered to 17. "A reduction in the age limits for CCC junior enrollees will substantially increase the number of families removed from public relief rolls thru the enrollment of a son in the CCC" (*Happy Days* in *NACCCA Journal* 2000a, 23(9):11). At least 40,000 youths were eligible immediately with this change in the age requirement. Also in 1935, President Roosevelt was beginning to suggest that the CCC could be made into a permanent department (*Happy Days* in *NACCCA Journal* 2000b, 23(9):11). Instead of converting the CCC into a permanent department, Congress voted to extend the program to March 31, 1937. Between 1935 and 1937, President Roosevelt worked toward expanding the CCC, hoping to double its size.

The CCC, as a temporary agency, had to be re-authorized every couple of years, which caused problems for long-term planning. In 1937, President Roosevelt lobbied strongly for making the CCC a permanent agency with an annual budget. This very popular program had grown and developed from an emergency relief opportunity to a multi-purpose educational and service organization. The President suggested that the new agency could be smaller than the current level, consisting of 300,000 young men and war veterans along with 10,000 Indians and 7,000 enrollees from U.S. territories (Paige 1985). But, in June 1937, Congress merely extended the program, officially renaming it the Civilian Conservation Corps. When the vote to make the CCC permanent failed, it was felt to be a direct blow to President Roosevelt who, many politicians believed, had too free a hand in spending the Nation's money. Although supporters of the CCC wanted more camps and programs in their home districts, they failed to support the expenditure on a Nation-wide basis. The failure to make the agency permanent is somewhat baffling. It was a very popular program that contributed greatly to the Nation's youth and country's natural assets (Salmond 1967). Disappointed by the Congressional action, President Roosevelt began reducing the number of enrollees and closing camps in order to reduce costs.

In 1939 another attempt was made to establish the CCC as a permanent agency and again it failed. With war looming abroad, the President moved to consolidate all the federal relief programs and placed the CCC under the Federal Security Agency (Paige 1985). The number of CCC camps nationwide was again reduced, until by April 1939 there were only about 1,500 (Pfaff 2001). On December 31, 1939, Director Robert Fechner died of complications from a heart attack. The Assistant Director, James L. McEntee was appointed to replace him (Cutler 1985).

McEntee took over a program that was suffering from low moral, camp closures, and an uncertain future. The war in Europe was escalating and by the summer of 1940, President Roosevelt proclaimed a limited national emergency. CCC camps were allowed onto military bases for the first time and a more overt military work and training program commenced (Paige 1985).

In 1939 and 1940 the educational program again drew criticism, this time by those who complained that the military was overtly influencing the curriculum. And, in 1941 there was a greater emphasis placed on defense related programs such as radio operating, welding, aircraft maintenance and auto mechanics. In January 1941, a slight revision to the pay scale was allowed. The CCC enrollee could receive \$8 in cash per month, with another \$7 per month placed in a savings account until he was discharged. The remaining \$15 was sent to his dependents (Paige 1985).

Six weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, Director McEntee ordered the reorganization of the CCC in response to the war. He directed the termination of all CCC camps as quickly as possible unless they were involved in war-related construction activities or in the protection of war-related natural resources (Pfaff 2001:36). "Although President Roosevelt urged continuance of the CCC as a means of accomplishing critical defense work, Congress sealed the fate of the program on June 30, 1942 when it voted to liquidate the CCC and allocated \$8 million to help cover closing costs" (Pfaff 2001:36). "When the United States entered World War II, former CCC men provided a great pool of trained manpower for the armed services" (Cohen 1980:116).

With so many camps closing and men generally leaving to join the war effort, the difficult task of disposing of camp equipment, including the automobiles, trucks, buildings, furnishings, and tools was left to the sponsoring agencies. Often the resources of a camp were moved wholesale to a nearby military facility. Other camps were reused to house conscientious objectors, Japanese internees, or even Prisoners of War (Paige 1985; Speulda 1997; Wilson 2001). All CCC camps were closed by June 1942.

Works Progress/Projects Administration

The Works Progress Administration began, as with the ECW, in the first few months of President Roosevelt's administration. The WPA was created by executive order and designed to increase the purchasing power of persons on relief by employing them on useful projects. This innovative program provided funding for a variety of activities rather than simply doling out relief payments which Roosevelt felt would mean "spiritual and moral disintegration destructive to the national fibre" (Rauch 1944:158). The WPA philosophy was to put the unemployed back to work in jobs which would serve the public good and conserve the skills and the self-esteem of workers throughout the U.S. The WPA employed out of work laborers, along with artists, writers, and musicians. The agency was headed by Harry L. Hopkins until 1938. The WPA's diversified activities included the Federal Art Project, the Federal Writers' Project, and the Federal Theatre Project. The WPA also supervised the activities of the National Youth Administration (NYA) program. At its peak the WPA employed about 3.5 million persons and was the largest of the New Deal programs (Adams and Goldbard 1995).

Work projects were submitted in an application to the State Works Progress Administrator of the state wherein the project was located. Projects could not compete with private construction. And, at first farmers were not eligible for WPA projects. However, in the Mid-western states, it was the farmers who were suffering the most from the drought conditions, thus by the end of 1935 farm workers were approved for WPA projects (Hopkins 1936:51 in Karsmizki 1993:58).

The WPA program usually selected men from the local community who were on county relief rolls. The WPA paid workers to labor on a variety of tasks including: building fences, cleaning up and salvaging materials from abandoned farms, building roads, digging ditches, building water control structures, and constructing administration buildings. The number of men working on a WPA projects varied widely. One of the disadvantages of the WPA, was that the men were independent of the organization and could choose to work or not, making it difficult to calculate construction schedules.

The labor force of the WPA was primarily middle-aged to elderly men who were without a means of supporting their families. The work projects were similar to the CCC efforts but were not as widely publicized, because the elderly men in overalls did not have the same appeal as the fresh faces of the CCC. There are not as many records, photographs, or fanfare associated with the accomplishments of the rural WPA workers, even though they achieved many of the same tasks as the CCC. Another reason that not as much is known about the work of the WPA is that most of the men were middle-aged when they took part in the program and have since passed from the scene. The relief rolls that might identify them are, in many counties, restricted to researchers.

By 1939, the WPA was drawing criticism for socialist/communist connections reflected by the financing of artists and musicians. After several Congressional investigations it was declared that "the government should get out of the theater business." The agency responded by changing course with a new name, Works Projects Administration, and focusing more directly on construction work projects rather than on theater. Mr. Hopkins quit, leaving Col. Frances Harrington, formerly of the WPA's Administrative Manual Division, in charge. The re-tooling of the agency also gave greater authority to the states to suggest projects and even to sponsor projects (Adams and Goldbard 1995; Rauch 1944).

Congress began cutting appropriations for WPA activities in 1939. By 1941 the private sector job market was improving substantially, and with World War II looming, the need for the agency was questioned. In June, 1943, the agency officially went out of existence (Adams and Goldbard 1995).

National Youth Administration

In the summer of 1935 there were still more than four million people between the ages of 16 and 24 unemployed nationwide (Hendrickson 1981:22). To address this problem, the National Youth Administration (NYA) was established on June 26, 1935 under the auspices of the WPA as the second major relief program for young people. "Fifty million dollars of the WPA appropriation was earmarked for NYA operations, and Aubrey Williams of Texas was named administrator of the agency" (Hendrickson 1979:133).

The objectives of the new agency were to: "provide part-time employment for needy students in high school and college, and to provide youth not in school with relief work that would be of benefit to them, their families, and their communities" (Hendrickson 1979:134). The NYA was primarily for boys and to be eligible for the school relief program, a student had to be from a

relief family, be between 16 and 24, and be fully enrolled and in good academic standing in school. There was always a long waiting list (Hendrickson 1979:136).

The participants lived at home in most cases, the exceptions were a few resident center programs. The NYA was administered through the WPA between 1935 and 1939. "In 1939, the NYA became an autonomous organization under the aegis of the Federal Security Administration, and it functioned independently until 1942" (Hendrickson 1981:22).

Between 1939 and 1942 the NYA "reached its greatest heights of popularity and achievement, characterized by a great deal of local participation and decision making" (Hendrickson 1979:134). During the years 1935 to 1941, an average of 5,732 high school students and 952 college students per month received aid in the form of part-time jobs. High school students received \$6.00 per month, while college students received \$15 per month. The small amount of the scholarships belies the important contribution this made to keeping students in school (Hendrickson 1979; 1981).

The out-of-school work program began more slowly than the school work project. Communities had to be prepared to accept it; local cosponsors had to be located for each project; projects had to be planned; and the weather had to be reckoned with (Hendrickson 1979:137). Much like the work projects of the CCC, the NYA projects could not compete with local workers or private industry. The youth had to be 18 to qualify for the out-of-school program. "They were allowed to work a maximum of 46 hours per month at a rate of pay equal to one-third the rate for WPA workers doing similar tasks. Each project was to have a local cosponsor who was required to supply materials, supplies, and supervisory personnel" (Hendrickson 1979:138).

The work projects often drew criticism for being inconsequential and producing poor results because the NYA included uneducated students with few work-related skills. The task of educating and developing a productive work program was difficult and had a tendency to create simple, less skillful projects. The "make-work" or non-skilled work jobs were boring and often seen as unproductive. However, there were many success stories once the program was accepted into a community. The job skills taught were primarily focused on vocational skills. Several resident camps were established to house youth while they attended classes and worked on projects.

By 1941 the drought in the Midwest was over, providing more agricultural related jobs for youths, and in 1942 with full-scale entry into World War II, the NYA program changed direction. The goals of the NYA were revised to train individuals in defense related skills and the requirement for low family income was nearly eliminated. "Specifically, it was decided that such skills as woodworking, sewing, sheet metal working, welding, radio repair, automotive repair, and foundry working were skills that would be in great demand for national defense and should therefore be encouraged" (Hendrickson 1979:146). With this fundamental shift, the resources of the NYA were directed more toward the out-of-school, technical training and less on in-school scholarships. For example, "an important resident center was located at Sand Lake, a remote area northeast of Aberdeen (South Dakota). An abandoned CCC camp, it was acquired without cost. The camp taught automotive and welding classes" (Hendrickson 1979:144).

In 1942 Congress debated the need for the NYA, but retained the program to be used "entirely devoted to training and production for the war effort" (Hendrickson 1979:148). Reflecting this

change in direction, in September 1942, control of the NYA was transferred to the War Manpower Commission. This administrative modification caused the abolishment of the state administration of the program and the program was operated on a regional level. "Within each state, administration was further streamlined with the creation of War Production Training Centers" (Hendrickson 1979:148). The NYA was dismantled between 1942 and 1943, and terminated in the summer of 1943.

Camps for Unemployed Women (CUW)

By 1934 there was a push for women CCC camps. The goal of the women's program was for a limit of 50 camps with 5000 girls between the ages of 18 and 25. The program was placed under a more general relief agency of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and called Camps for Unemployed Women (CUW). The CUW existed from 1934 to 1937 with a total of 86 camps operating. There were about 6,400 women who participated in the program (Van Wormer 2003:15). As reported, "The girls in the camps will get \$5 per month for their personal needs and will work out their subsistence by doing from 56 to 70 hours work per month on camp work projects. They will have the status of NYA project employees, and must be eligible for NYA employment in order to be selected for the camps" (*NACCCA Journal* 2000, 23(2):12).

The CUW "camps" were usually located on campuses or YWCA buildings. The women usually participated for about a month. "The camps stressed academic classes and home economic skills such as health education, home nursing, sewing, basketry, and painting" (Van Wormer 2003:16). The focus of the program was not to prepare women for the work force or teach them vocational skills, but to reinforce their domestic roles within the family.

Development of the Fish and Wildlife Service and Depression-era Programs

The first refuge, Pelican Island, was created by Presidential authority by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. In 1905 the Bureau of Biological Survey was established under the Department of Agriculture to supervise the growing number of wildlife refuges. In 1913 the Migratory Bird Act was passed, enabling the agency to protect migratory birds. This Act and the accompanying treaty with Canada and later Mexico were powerful tools for preserving habitat for wildlife. During the 1920s a few additional refuges were created including large areas to protect elk and bison (Reed and Drabelle 1984).

In 1933 when the ECW began, the Fish and Wildlife Service was divided into two small agencies: the Biological Survey within the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Fisheries housed under the Commerce Department. The Biological Survey administered about 62 stations nationwide including game preserves and waterfowl areas (Reed and Drabelle 1984). In early 1934, President Roosevelt appointed a special committee to study the problem of diminishing wildlife populations, particularly migratory waterfowl. One member of the committee, Jay N. Darling, was a champion for wildlife, a political cartoonist, and well connected in Washington, D.C. Darling helped to pass the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, known as the Duck Stamp Act, which provided money from the sale of federal hunting stamps for use in establishing and maintaining federal waterfowl refuges. Based on the results of the special

committee, Roosevelt decided to upgrade the Biological Survey to the status of a Bureau and appointed Darling as the first Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey. Darling appointed J. Clark Salyer to the new post of Chief of the Division of Wildlife Refuges within the Bureau of Biological Survey. Salyer was Chief of the Division of Wildlife Refuges from 1934 until 1961 (McCormick and Quivick 1989:7-9; Schweigert et al. 1992a:60).

Between 1933 and 1942, an unprecedented number of 134 refuges were established because of the Duck Stamp Act that provided a steady source of funds for buying land. Coincidentally, the price of land dropped during the Depression because of the drought conditions and many refuges were established as a buy-out program for failed farms. Salyer directed the acquisition of thousands of acres during the Depression as the concept of a "system" was truly realized.

Not only was the refuge system taking on a more cohesive structure as an agency, but scientists began to understand the crucial needs of migratory birds to have protected nesting and resting locations along their flyways. "Darling and Salyer believed the Souris River valley in North Dakota to be the best opportunity to reestablish nesting and resting habitat for waterfowl. . . Nesting habitat would be created by impoundment of river water in a series of reservoirs behind low dams" (McCormick and Quivick 1989:8-9; Schweigert, et al. 1992a:60-61). The work on the Upper Souris between 1937 and 1939 was very successful and the number of ducks frequenting the refuge "increased over 150%" (Schweigert, et al. 1992b:22). The CCC boys also assisted with wildlife conservation efforts, caring for sick waterfowl and in some cases even rescuing ducks (Figure 3).

In North and South Dakota nearly all of the refuges were established during the Depression. For instance, "of the approximately 300,000 acres of North Dakota land presently in the system today, more than eighty percent was acquired and developed between 1932 and 1940" (Hafermehl 1999:3).

In 1935 Darling was replaced by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson as the Chief of the Biological Survey. In 1939 the agency was reorganized and the Bureaus of Biological Survey and Fisheries were transferred from the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, respectively, to the Department of the Interior (Reed and Drabelle 1984). This programmatic shift did not affect the CCC program on refuges, which continued until 1942 when the program was terminated.

Salyer visited many of the refuges while the CCC camps were in place, touring the work projects and offering advice on everything from building proper bird shelters to directing the construction of large water impoundment structures. Salyer's dynamic and energetic style brought consistency and order to the system. Salyer hired Bernie Maurek to head a regional office in Minot, North Dakota. Maurek was almost constantly in the field looking for opportunities for land purchases and overseeing the developing refuges.

The coincidence between the funding for purchasing property for refuges, low prices caused by the drought, and access to cheap labor through the ECW and WPA programs was a boon to the newly developing refuge system. The records indicate that the CCC and WPA crews did not normally work together. The WPA were the only work force on five of the stations in Region 6 including Bowdoin, Creston, Red Rock Lakes, Lake Ilo, and Long Lake. The first WPA program in Region 6 on a refuge was at Fort Niobrara NWR in 1934, this was a long term program that continued until 1941.

The first CCC camp in Region 6 was established at Fort Niobrara in October 1933. Seven camps were established in the spring of 1935 as the new refuges were beginning to take shape. Most of the camps remained at the refuge from between 2 and 5 years; the longest duration camp was at J. Clark Salyer NWR. In 1941 it was reported that, "36 camps continued development work designed to improve wildlife habitat and to provide essential facilities for administration on 34 National and 1 State wildlife refuge in 25 States" (*CCC Annual Report 1941:458*). But in 1942 the shift towards war and closing of the CCC program was evident as, "existing camps have been or are being converted as rapidly as possible from work on the refuge areas to more important essential war work in order to furnish the greatest possible aid to our war effort" (*CCC Annual Report 1942:261*).

By 1942 relief programs began focusing more on civil defense and preparing young men for war. "The only relief work projects operating in Burleigh County are closely connected with national defense, one being construction of a large airport and the other an Alien Internment Camp" (*Long Lake NWR Annual Narrative 1942*).

The NYA program began in 1937 on several of North Dakota's easement refuges. "The work of these boys on the North Dakota easement refuges, . . .has been almost indispensable to the Biological Survey. Careful supervision and coaching by the Survey fieldmen and County NYA supervisors has resulted in a series of records concerning the projects which could not have been gotten otherwise" (*WPA Narrative Report for North Dakota February, 1938:8*). The projects developed for the NYA boys included "recording nesting records and bird populations at various seasons; conditions of dams and other structures; repairing of signs and fences; the propagation of duck food and cover plants; the propagation of shrubs and trees; the collection of surplus seeds and plants; the patrolling of the areas during hunting seasons; the destruction of predators; and the collection of animals for laboratory work (*WPA Narrative Report for North Dakota February, 1938:8*).

As far as the records show, the NYA program was not implemented at refuges in any other state except North Dakota in Region 6. The NYA program that was created at Arrowwood Lake NWR appears to be an unusual experience. The Arrowwood Lake NWR, Refuge Manager, Lynn A Griner, reported that:

as a result of considerable effort on the part of the State NYA officials and the refuge personnel, a Cooperative NYA Farm Camp was established on the Arrowwood Refuge on April 10, 1939. This NYA Camp is established on the basis of an educational Farm Work Project for certain selected NYA boys in the State of North Dakota. . . .the NYA will employ between fifteen and twenty young men, the majority of which will come from rural homes. These young men will devote half of their time to work projects on the refuge, which will include, assistance in maintaining buildings, trails, fences, and firebreaks, decreasing of fire hazards, the suppression of fire, making nesting record studies, cover mapping, patrol, assistance in office work, recreational development, field planting of trees, shrubs, and any other types of vegetation deemed to be desirable, and any other type of work which may be necessary from time to time. . . .The remaining half of their time will be spent in farming activities and farm educational programs. The NYA boys are being permitted to farm, on a share-crop basis, approximately 400 acres, graze five head of

stock per month, and keep some poultry to help defer their expenses
(*Arrowwood Lake NWR: Quarterly Narrative Report Feb/March/April 1939:12-13*).

The share-cropping by the NYA youth was on a 50-50 basis, the refuge furnished the land, part of the equipment (all but harvesting equipment), and part of the seed. The NYA furnished the labor and the remaining seed and equipment that was necessary for the program. Farming tracts of land on a National Wildlife Refuge may seem incongruous by today's standards, but in the 1930s growing crops for feeding wildlife and birds was deemed as one of the more important tasks undertaken by the refuge. And, most of the boys working in the NYA program were from farms, so continuing to learn the skills of farming, even during the drought was an important aspect to the success of the program.

At Arrowwood Lake NWR one of the old farm houses acquired by the refuge was renovated and used as a residence by the NYA boys. "Two new sets of tables and benches have been built, and several pieces of furniture were salvaged from the evacuated CCC camp and have been repaired and placed at the disposal of the NYA. The NYA boys have cleaned their farmstead site and are keeping it in good condition" (*Arrowwood Lake NWR: Quarterly Narrative Report Feb/March/April 1939:13*).

The supervision of the boys was accomplished by a combined effort of the NYA, who are furnishing a project leader from the State Agricultural College. The refuge staff supervised all of the work that the boys do on and for the refuge. The NYA supervisor directed the work of the farm projects and supervised the education program. He was also responsible for the actions of the boys both on and off the refuge. The highlight for the boys must have been at the end of each week when, the "boys were taken to town for their weekly recreational period" (*Arrowwood Lake NWR: Quarterly Narrative Report Feb/March/April 1939:14*).

The success of the NYA program at the refuge is indicated by the support it received from the community and the Forest Service. "We have been able to obtain considerable cooperation from the townspeople of Kensal, . . .the camp has received as a gift from the Kensal people a refrigerator, and the majority of their kitchen supplies. . .We have recently received word from the Forest Service that they are willing to aid the project by planting a shelterbelt around some of the crop land that is being used by the NYA boys. The Forest Service will furnish all trees, materials, and labor, if the boys will cultivate the plantings" (*Arrowwood Lake NWR: Quarterly Narrative Report Feb/March/April 1939:15*).

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