

Hard Work,
Low Pay,
Miserable
Conditions
and **More!**

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the California
Conservation
Corps can do

CCC BUILDS A BETTER CALIFORNIA, TRANSFORMS LIVES

Hard work benefits young people while also helping our state

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON



“Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions — and more.” That’s the motto of the California Conservation Corps, a State of California program focused on preparing young adults for employment by paying them to do tough, physical work that conserves our natural resources such as forests, water and energy.

The CCC protects neighborhoods from wildfire, eliminates invasive plants, builds trails, restores habitats, installs solar energy conversions and helps complete community projects.

“We take for granted that our wilderness trails are safe or that there is a beautiful vista that we can enjoy,” says CCC Executive Director Bruce Saito. “It’s the work of Corpsmembers to not only build but to restore those projects so they can be enjoyed by all of us.”

During fire season, hundreds of Corpsmembers toil in California’s forests and wildlands in an important service to their state.

“They’re reducing the possibility of wildfire destroying people’s homes and lives,” Saito adds.

That requires commitment. “Chopping down dried out brush for eight to 10 hours in 92-degree weather; that takes a lot of stick-to-it-iveness,” Saito notes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCC also stepped up to help food banks and distribute meals to those in need. Its energy retrofit program saves state and other governmental agencies millions of dollars while also contributing to a cleaner environment.

That hands-on training also provides invaluable work experience. Individuals exit with newfound confidence and hope plus new skill sets. This goes beyond the individual Corpsmembers and reaches their families as well; this opportunity can break the cycle of poverty. As the CCC says, “We transform lives.”

Established in 1976 by former Gov. Jerry Brown, the CCC is the nation’s oldest and largest organization of its kind. It is open to residents age 18 to 25; most Corpsmembers serve nine to 12 months.

“I want to demystify the notion that we’re the best kept secret in the state.”

Bruce Saito

*Executive Director,
California Conservation Corps*

“The CCC has been around 44 years, but we still have to explain what it is,” Saito says. “I want to demystify the notion that we’re the best kept secret in the state.”

Saito started his long public service career as a CCC Conservationist in 1977. “The job has evolved, but it’s basically the same thing: Work in nature. It’s a tough job, but not a tough job to love.”

Since its founding, the CCC has helped young Californians find their life’s path while helping communities

throughout the state. Its programs are on-the-job training that can create and shape careers while also benefiting where we live.

“The California Conservation Corps is a call to service,” Saito says. “It feels good and it is good. At the same time, you’re benefiting people and the future of California. You’re doing something with purpose and a calling. It’s not just a job.”

Get the right tools

You are responsible for your own future — the California Conservation Corps gives you the tools and training to help you build it.

- The California Conservation Corps helps Corpsmembers become citizens with character, credentials and commitment to service.
- When you graduate, you will be on the pathway to becoming the person you want to be.
- Corpsmembers get training in fields that lead to good jobs like firefighting, forestry, energy conservation, construction and culinary arts.
- You’ll be paid monthly and receive free health insurance.
- You can earn your high school diploma while you’re in the program.
- If you like a challenge and like working outdoors, the Corps is the place for you.
- You will be part of a team that works together to make California an even better place for all.

CCC PUT HER ON UNEXPECTED PATH

From skills to scholarships,
California Conservation Corps
opens world of opportunities

BY ANNE STOKES

Like so many seniors, Alyssa Madrid wasn't sure what she wanted to do after high school. As graduation approached, a teacher recommended she look into the California Conservation Corps. She says her decision to join opened up a career path that she might otherwise have never taken.

"I had very little idea of what I wanted to do, but I knew I didn't want to go back to school immediately," she says. "I had never even been camping before I started working with the California Conservation Corps, so it definitely opened up a kind of different side of working outdoors for me."

As a Corpsmember from 2014 to 2016, Madrid worked with the CCC on projects across the state: Yosemite National Park plus Castle Crags and Plumas-Eureka state parks were a few of her favorites. In addition to learning how to fight fires, handle a chainsaw and forge trails, she also was able to develop leadership skills and earn certifications that helped her get a job with the U.S. Forest Service.

"I certainly wouldn't have been able to make it anywhere in the Forestry Service without the CCC," she says. "My favorite part was being able to work every day with the same group of people; I was friends with everyone on the crew, and I just liked getting dirty, working hard. It was really fun,

"I just liked getting dirty, working hard. It was really fun, totally different from anything I had ever experienced before."

Alyssa Madrid
Recruiter, California Conservation Corps



totally different from anything I had ever experienced before."

Madrid also earned a scholarship through the CCC that enabled her to go back to school to become an emergency medical technician, something she says she wouldn't have been able to do otherwise.

"In addition to helping the natural resources and preserving the beauty of California, it's just as important for everybody here that we help the Corpsmembers ... have that opportunity to have a fair shot at going to school or start a career somewhere else," she says. "I thought it would be difficult to get the scholarship so I could go to school, but it was easier than I expected."

Now a California Conservation Corps recruiter, Madrid helps new Corpsmembers find direction through hard work and open up career paths they might have never considered.

"Having that sense of pride that you've helped fight a fire, that sense of accomplishment that you just built this trail that's now wheelchair-accessible, those aren't things you can always get working in an office," she says.

Alyssa Madrid has worked on CCC projects across the state.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALYSSA MADRID



Corpsmember qualifications

With the California Conservation Corps (CCC), **you can create a better life for yourself and make an impact on your community and California.** Corpsmembers get paid to learn skills and create career opportunities for themselves while conserving California's bountiful natural resources.

ALL CORPSMEMBERS MUST BE:

- A California resident between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age (U.S. veterans are eligible through age 29).
- Able to pass a physical exam and training.
- Willing and able to work outdoors in all types of weather and conditions.
- Able to pass background, fingerprint and drug tests (applicants with a criminal conviction or pending charges for felony or violent crimes may not be eligible).
- Willing and able to participate in CCC education programs.
- Willing and able to respond to emergencies or be assigned to a center for two weeks or longer.

For more information on what it takes to join the California Conservation Corps and how to apply, visit www.ccc.ca.gov/how-to-join or call a recruiter at 1-800-952-5627.

BACK ON TRACK

Corpsmember gets help — and a paycheck — while earning high school diploma

BY ANNE STOKES

In March 2019, Maria Solano needed help getting back on her feet: A job, a place to live and the chance to go back to school and earn her high school diploma. She found all three at the California Conservation Corps.

“I had actually dropped out of high school at the age of 17 (when) I was in 11th grade,” she says. “I had nothing to eat and nowhere to live. It was more important to have a job than finish school.”

Through her service with the CCC, Solano has undergone training, earned certifications and gained hard skills like how to use a chainsaw and operate heavy machinery, as well as soft skills like leadership that she can put to good use in any industry. And despite working long, hard hours building and maintaining park trails and more, she’s nearly finished earning her high school diploma.

“I thought I was really going to struggle with this, but I actually didn’t. The teacher here from John Muir Charter School, he was able to work with everybody. If you needed a one-on-one session, he would do that with you,” she says. “Before I went into the CCC, I went to adult school and it was more like, ‘Here’s the book, do the work.’ That type of situation was hard for me because you have to show me how to do it. ... That hands-on work really pulled me through it. I don’t think I would have done it without them.”

Not only has she been cheered on by her teachers, but Solano says there’s also a culture of support and positivity throughout the CCC program shared by peers, leaders and supervisors.

“There was a lot of, ‘We’re going to get this done,’” she says. “I got support from both sides, which really makes you happy to be doing what you’re doing.”

Solano says she hopes to continue her education and pursue a career as a park ranger, something she says she’ll be able to accomplish with the help of the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award and CCC Brad Duncan Scholarships she was awarded through her service with the CCC.

“Because CCC offers the scholarship, I know I’ll have no excuse not to do it because I have the scholarship to help me,” she says.



Corpsmembers learn by doing and are prepared for a wide range of future careers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CCC

“I don’t think I would have
done it without them.”

Maria Solano
California Conservation Corpsmember

Finish your high school diploma in the CCC

An important step to future success: Earning a high school diploma. Not only does the California Conservation Corps provide hands-on job experience and certifications in multiple fields, but it also enables Corpsmembers to earn their diploma while serving, opening the door to many other future career opportunities.

- Instructors at John Muir and Urban Corps charter schools provide customized curriculum.
- Corpsmembers can spend as many as 12 hours a week on classwork.
- After a year of service, graduates are eligible for scholarships through the CCC Brad Duncan Scholarship and the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award to continue their education or pay off college debt.
- In 2018, 200 Corpsmembers earned their high school diploma through the California Conservation Corps.

For more information on educational opportunities through the California Conservation Corps, visit www.ccc.ca.gov/life-in-the-corps or call 1-800-952-5627 to speak with a recruiter.

Corpsmembers build a trail in a California state park.
PHOTO COURTESY OF CCC

'THEY COMPLETELY CHANGED MY LIFE AROUND'

Corpsmember finds new
career path through service

BY ANNE STOKES

Growing up, Jessica Ramirez wanted to go into the medical field. But once she got to college, she realized it wasn't the right career path for her. After graduating from Humboldt State University in 2018, she decided to take a chance and join the California Conservation Corps before heading to graduate school.

"I always wanted to explore more outdoorsy careers, but I had committed myself to the medical field," she says. "In college, I found myself becoming more and more disinterested in it. Finally, when I had that gap year and I joined CCC, I realized I don't have to do that if I don't want to."

In the 18 months she was with the CCC, Ramirez not only found a new career she was passionate about, but she also got the hands-on training and skills to make that career possible, including HAZWOPER certification for emergency operations, S-212



Jessica Ramirez found her passion
while working in the CCC.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA RAMIREZ



"I decided to go
with my dreams."

Jessica Ramirez
Former California Conservation Corpsmember

Wildland Chainsaw use, firefighting and leadership training.

"It's very hard to find that kind of information and the CCC does an amazing job of showing you your options and how to get training," she says. "I learned that one of the biggest things is communication. ... As a crew leader, you have to figure out a diverse way to teach people how to use hand tools properly, how to do the job, how to follow instructions; you have to be flexible."

Ramirez says that without her training and experience with the CCC, she wouldn't have been able to actualize her new career.

"I just got a position on a trails crew in State Parks, so I'm going to spend some time with them," she says. "My end goal is to be with the Forest Service, hopefully get a job as an environmental scientist."

Even though she decided against medical school, Ramirez

has still been able to continue her education. Through her service with the CCC, she received both the CCC Brad Duncan Scholarship and AmeriCorps Segal Education Award.

"I do plan on taking some courses, I do want to get my EMT certification," she says. "The EMT certification would be very good for fires, ... especially out there in such a dangerous environment."

Ramirez says the CCC can offer Corpsmembers opportunities in competitive fields, even those who already have a degree.

"They completely changed my life around. ... It's not where I imagined myself two years ago," she says. "I decided to go with my dreams."

For more information on how joining the California Conservation Corps can help you build a career, visit www.ccc.ca.gov or contact a recruiter at 1-800-952-5627.

First step to a career

Working with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) provides hands-on experience and certifications that can give graduates a solid foundation for a future career. CCC partners with state and

federal agencies such as CAL FIRE, the U.S. Forest Service, Caltrans, state and national park departments, the Bureau of Land Management as well as private construction and energy companies, some of which hire Corpsmembers after their service.

CCC also offers a culinary training program that enables Corpsmembers to earn

ServSafe Food Handler and Food Manager certifications needed to work in commercial kitchens.

In addition, CCC helps Corpsmembers with career development including career research, resume and interviewing skills and employment applications to help them land industry jobs with:

- Firefighting departments
- Forestry departments
- Construction companies
- Transportation departments
- Fish and wildlife departments
- Energy conservation companies
- Land management companies
- Commercial kitchens in restaurants, catering companies and hotels

For more information on career development available through the California Conservation Corps, visit www.ccc.ca.gov or call a recruiter at 1-800-952-5627.

Corpsmembers get the opportunity to work outdoors on such tasks as trail building.
PHOTO COURTESY OF CCC

CORPS BELIEFS

CCC changed the lives of two young people who were looking for direction

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

The California Conservation Corps — or “the C’s,” as its members call it — has the motto: “Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions and more.”

Which is another way of saying it teaches hard-won skills that can lead to a wide range of career choices at a long list of agencies, including CAL FIRE, the Department of Food and Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Those jobs typically entail backcountry trail-building, fire prevention, environmental farming, disaster response and more — all requiring unique capabilities.

“I think the C’s made me the person I am today — the work, the responsibilities, the chance to make lifelong friends,” says Skylar Clark, 21.

At 18, she was working in a grocery store in Escondido, feeling aimless and “needing something important to do,” she says. She decided on “something outdoors to help communities and the environment, and to better myself.”



When Clark signed up with the CCC she “knew right away I wanted to be a crew leader and prove to myself and my peers I could do the work,” she says. “By my second year, my goal was to help and teach (novice) Corpsmembers. I wanted to see people grow and know that I’d helped them. It really was an honor.”

Clark did become a crew leader, and much more. She’s OSHA-qualified in hazardous waste operations and emergency response, is certified to operate a chainsaw in a wildland fire scenario, is trained in CPR and holds a commercial driver’s license. She joined a CCC wildland fire crew for a season and “helped set up a fuel burn for CAL FIRE,” she says.

When she graduated, she found a job at San Diego Parks and Recreation, “carrying out the same traits I learned in the C’s,” she says.

Her next goal is to “gain outside experience and return to the C’s as a Grade 1 Conservationist,” she says.

While Clark is a two-year CCC veteran, Geomar Pavia, 21,

only became a Corpsmember in February, but already has a post-grad goal: “I’m looking to get into the state park field,” he says.

Pavia was unsure what to pursue after high school, and “college didn’t go well,” he says. “Then I realized how much I love the outdoors and wanted environmental work to be my passion job.”

He took online courses in wildlife preservation and forestry before discovering the CCC, where he “found a golden opportunity,” he says.

“No two days are the same here, so it feels like a constant adventure,” says Pavia, who works out of the Greenwood Center near Auburn. “The best part is meeting and overcoming the challenges. Every time something new comes my way, there’s the mentality of, ‘Get through it.’

“I definitely feel like I’ve grown a lot,” he adds, “and I’ve got so many opportunities for a full-fledged career.”



“I think the C’s made me the person I am today — the work, the responsibilities, the chance to make lifelong friends.”

Skylar Clark
Corpsmember

Geomar Pavia, far left, and Skylar Clark found new direction via their service in the California Conservation Corps.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEOMAR PAVIA AND SKYLAR CLARK

NOT JUST A JOB, BUT THE START OF MUCH MORE

Programs build wildland firefighting, forestry, energy and culinary skills

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

In the wake of the COVID pandemic, the California Conservation Corps has added appeal: Jobs plus preparation for future careers.

“Now more than ever, there’s a greater need,” says CCC Executive Director Bruce Saito, “not just for public service and conservation work, but also to enable young people who have been laid off or can’t find work to embrace the Corps’ mission – provide opportunities for young people while doing work around the state.

“Do you want to flip burgers when the restaurant economy is down?” Saito adds. “Maybe it’s time to rethink your future and make the switch. Do good things and help build a career in something you like. You can have a career, not just a job.”

Reflecting the state’s needs as well as the CCC’s values, the CCC offers several career-track programs, explains Amy Cameron, CCC’s chief deputy director.

Cameron has a longtime personal connection with the CCC. Her father, LeRoy Chatfield, served as its second appointed director during the late 1970s.

“My favorite thing about the Corps is having all these young people come together for a different way of life,” Cameron says. “Every background, every religion, working and living together in the Corps; it’s beautiful to see. The inclusiveness of the Corps and Corpsmembers feels so positive. It’s an example of what’s possible. It brings out the best in everybody.”

Trail building in California’s state parks, beaches and wilderness areas ranks among the most visible CCC programs.

As a hiker, Cameron is in awe of the CCC’s generations of trail builders. “I did not realize how much work goes into building a trail,” she says. “Now, I realize a Corpsmember placed every rock there.”

Trail building also impacts Corpsmembers, Cameron adds. “I’ve had several say to me, ‘I never saw the ocean until I joined the Corps.’ Not only are they seeing the ocean, but they found that pride (in themselves) that they were able to add their own footprint.”

Working and learning outdoors are part of the CCC’s draw. Among its most popular programs are wildland firefighting and forestry.

“As part of our fire program, we staff 12 crews with 15 to 17 Corpsmembers per crew, working directly with CAL FIRE to fight fires,” Cameron says. “It’s such important work for Cali-

fornia and also for Corpsmembers building their careers.”

CCC also gives young people, especially women, the opportunity to try something they may not have otherwise experienced such as how to safely operate chainsaws or heavy equipment.

“The inclusiveness of the Corps and Corpsmembers feels so positive. It’s an example of what’s possible.”

Amy Cameron
Chief Deputy Director, California Conservation Corps

Forestry goes beyond firefighting into overall forest management. Three crews tackle reforestation, landscaping, removal of invasive plants and other aspects of forest management to create healthier forests.

While helping our state fight climate change, the CCC’s energy program teaches electrical skills as it retrofits buildings with energy-efficient lighting and other updates. Graduates of this program leave the CCC with certification and sought-after technical know-how.

Also in high demand are graduates of the CCC’s culinary program. Graduates of this program learn by doing – feeding fellow Corpsmembers.

“All of our residential centers have a culinary program, cooking for staff and Corpsmembers,” Cameron says. “They get instant feedback; 75 other people are eating that meal they prepared. They learn all aspects of running a big institutional kitchen, from inventory to how to plan and prepare nutritious meals. They learn how to follow directions while being part of a team. People may think they’re interested in a career in food; after this program, they know their passion is real.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CCC




California Conservation Corps
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 CA, 95816

HOW TO BECOME A CORPSMEMBER

- 1. Apply online.** Once you submit your application to join, a CCC Recruiter will reach out and guide you through the steps below.
- 2. Attend** an Information Session in person or online.
- 3. Schedule** and attend an interview with your Recruiter.
- 4. Receive** a CCC Center assignment.
- 5. Attend** your pre-training meeting.
- 6. Complete** Corpsmember Orientation, Motivation, Education and Training (COMET).
- 7. Enroll.**

Get started at ccc.ca.gov
800-952-5627