

**Letter to the Editor –  
March 8, 2006**

**Subject: Virginia CCC Member Recognition Day**

Between 1933 and 1942, the men of the public works program known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) accomplished projects that revitalized our natural resources and created outdoor recreational landmarks that still stand as a tribute. To commemorate the work of the CCC, the 2006 Virginia General Assembly created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Member Appreciation Day to be recognized every March 31.

The work of the CCC program is intertwined into our everyday lives in such a way that most of us aren't even aware of its presence. Although we may not start our day consciously thinking about the work of the CCC program, we would certainly be surprised at the look of our natural resource community if its work had never been accomplished. The work of these men complements our daily lives and enhances the essence of who we are as Virginians.

On March 31, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the legislation that laid the groundwork for "...relieving the acute condition of widespread distress and unemployment..." The Emergency Conservation Work Act served as a catalyst to employ nearly four million young men who had fallen prey to the economic stress of the Great Depression. Out of this chaos, rose the greatest conservation effort ever recorded in our nation.

The establishment of America's first camp, Camp Roosevelt in the George Washington National Forest, gave rise to the dawn of the modern conservation movement and set Virginia apart as the birthplace of the CCC. Virginia is dotted with landmarks and examples of conservation heritage made possible by the 107,000 men who served. Although final numbers are hard to determine, approximately 92 communities provided rail service to the needs of nearby camps. Many communities supplied several area camps and statistics indicate that the community received approximately \$5000 a month for the sale of related goods and services. Under the command of the War Department, enrollees received food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, and educational opportunities. Their income was \$30 a month and \$25 was sent home to their guardians via an allotment.

The CCC left us with beautiful mountain vistas, parks, recreational areas, and healthier natural resources. In the modern era, the use of these recreational landmarks and forests create economic opportunities that continue to support our communities just as they did during the 1930s.

For nine years the men of the CCC worked diligently to restore years of neglect and abuse to natural resources that had taken hold in the late part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, as we watch our "green space" fall into jeopardy let us be mindful of our responsibility to our natural resources and our conservation heritage.

Be curious. Find out about the heritage of the CCC in your community. Keeping the legacy of the CCC alive raises the awareness of the value of modern conservation and its continuing contribution to our communities.

Virginia would be a very different without the work of the CCC. Plan a project on March 31 that will commemorate your conservation legacy. The men of the CCC planted nearly three billion trees. Why don't you plan to plant a tree?

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