



A New Deal Body Politic

Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps

Neil M. Maher

In late April of 1933, a shirtless and sunburned young man named John Ripley climbed a solitary pine tree atop the Massanutten mountains in George Washington National Forest, ten miles west of Luray, Virginia. After catching his breath on the uppermost branch, which bowed menacingly under his own weight, Ripley took a short-handled ax and with awkward strokes chopped the top off the slender pine. He next attached a rope and pulley to the tip of the tree, shimmied from his perch, and began working his way down the trunk of the thirty-five foot evergreen, hacking off branch after branch until the young tree stood straight and bare. Near the bottom, Ripley wiped his brow before tying the other end of the rope to an American flag. Several colleagues, whose upturned faces, arms, and torsos had also been reddened from working shirtless outdoors for several days in the sun, then pulled on the rope and hoisted Old Glory high above "Camp Roosevelt," the first Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC] camp in the nation.¹

While the conversion of a pine tree into a flagpole by young CCC enrollees may be disconcerting to contemporary environmentalists, it nevertheless hints at a number of important historical changes set in motion by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Most obvious was the transformation of the natural landscape, in this case a mountaintop pine grove, which the young men in the Corps altered through their work. Such manual labor had other repercussions as well; working out-of-doors in the Massanutten mountains had sunburned the bodies of the CCC boys stationed in George Washington National Forest, many of whom came not from the surrounding countryside but instead from the nation's cities. And finally, hovering above it all literally high overhead, was an American flag where none had flown before. The events at Camp Roosevelt in April of 1933, then, were more than a quirky patriotic act by the country's first CCC enrollees. They suggest as well that from the very outset the Corps was linking landscape, labor, and politics in new ways during the New Deal.

Although numerous reporters attending the Camp Roosevelt flag-raising ceremony wrote articles about it for newspapers across the country, scholars have paid

far less attention to the CCC in particular, and to the environmental history of the New Deal era in general. Focusing their efforts on either the conservation movement of the Progressive period or on post-World War II environmentalism, environmental historians have tended to leapfrog over the period in between, when the conservation movement underwent dramatic transformations. Until recently these same scholars have likewise shied away from incorporating work, such as that performed by CCC enrollees at Camp Roosevelt, into their scholarship unless such work degraded the natural environment. In an attempt to sidestep such declensionist narratives, and to find a more productive place for labor within environmental history, Richard White has persuasively argued that work has always intersected with the natural world and in doing so has historically imparted knowledge about nature to laborers. Central to this process is the human body. "We cannot come to terms with nature," White concludes, "without coming to terms with our own work, our own bodies, our own bodily knowledge." Re-examining the history of the CCC with this in mind can help environmental historians span the great divide between progressive-era conservation and postwar environmentalism while simultaneously strengthening the bonds between environmental and labor history.²

This essay is one block in this bridge-building process. It illustrates how the work performed by the more than three million young men who joined the Corps between 1933 and 1942 transformed both the bodies of these enrollees as well as the American landscape. Moreover, it shows how these two sets of interrelated changes in turn altered American politics in two fundamental ways. First, the physical changes affecting both the young men joining the CCC and the natural landscapes upon which they labored influenced New Deal politics by raising public support for Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to expand the modern welfare state during the 1930s and early 1940s. At the same time, the bodies and landscapes reconfigured by the Corps also reshaped the politics of conservation in the United States in ways that broadened both the movement's composition and its concerns. This essay argues, then, that the legacy of the CCC involved more than the creation of jobs in a sometimes misguided effort to conserve the country's natural resources. Instead, it concludes that in transforming both the natural and corporeal terrain of places like Camp Roosevelt, the Corps was in fact altering the nation's political landscape as well.

Landscape and Labor

The transformation of a pine tree into a flagpole was only the first landscape change orchestrated by the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps. Numerous others followed. After clearing a small portion of the forest and erecting sleeping quarters, a mess hall, and latrines, the two hundred young men from Camp Roosevelt went on to "improve" more than two thousand acres of timbered land, and to construct dozens of miles of dirt roads to protect George Washington National Forest from fire. A few years later, Camp Roosevelt enrollees also developed the forest for outdoor recreation by building hiking trails, campgrounds, and visitor

comfort stations. As the Corps explained in a statement released to the press in April of 1936, such conservation work by the nation's first CCC enrollees "greatly increased the value of the forest and added to its usefulness to the public."³

Similar to the labor performed by enrollees stationed in Camp Roosevelt, the physical work undertaken by Corps enrollees nationwide during the 1930s and early 1940s likewise transformed the American landscape. Throughout the program's nine-year existence, the more than three million young men in the CCC planted more than two billion trees, slowed soil erosion on forty million acres of farmland, and developed eight hundred new state parks. They also constructed more than ten thousand small reservoirs, forty-six thousand vehicular bridges, thirteen thousand miles of hiking trails and nearly one million miles of fence, while simultaneously stocking America's rivers with one million fish and eradicating almost four-hundred thousand predatory animals from the nation's forests, farmlands, and prairies. Such efforts were only the tip of the iceberg. All told, conservative estimates indicate that Corps work projects transformed more than 118,000,000 acres, or an area approximately three times the size of Connecticut. As CCC Director Robert Fechner explained in his 1939 annual report, through its conservation work the Corps had "constructively altered the landscape of the United States."⁴

This transformation of the natural landscape took work, and, not surprisingly, human labor was central to the mission and daily operation of the CCC. Franklin Roosevelt stated as much in his congressional address of 21 March 1933, in which he asked legislators to establish the Corps. "The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving private or public relief," explained the president, "would infinitely prefer to work." When Congress passed the bill creating the CCC just ten days later, labor was likewise of primary importance. According to the bill, the federal government established the Corps "for the purpose of relieving the acute condition of widespread distress and unemployment now existing in the United States." Young men expecting their stint in the CCC to be a so-called "walk in the park" would be sorely disappointed. Labor, not leisure, was at the heart of this work-relief program.⁵

Another indication that work was vital to the newborn CCC was President Roosevelt's decision to assign responsibility for recruiting enrollees to the Department of Labor. According to the department's guidelines, enrollment in the Corps was restricted to the unemployed; enrollees had to be jobless and willing to send between twenty-two and twenty-five dollars of their thirty-dollar monthly paycheck back home to their families, who were required to be receiving public assistance. Those wishing to join the CCC also had to be single and eighteen to twenty-five years of age. Most importantly, enrollment throughout the New Deal program's nine-year existence was restricted to men, despite pleas from American women for admittance to the Corps and Eleanor Roosevelt's attempts to establish CCC camps for females. The bodies performing Corps work during the 1930s and early 1940s, and thus altering the American landscape, were therefore young and male.⁶

Along with ensuring that young men joined the CCC, the Department of Labor's selection criteria also influenced the character of work these males performed, and

thus the types of landscape changes caused by their labor. The Corps' own census indicated that less than one-third of the more than 350,000 enrollees in 1937 had received on-the-job training of any sort prior to joining the CCC, let alone training that provided them with technical know-how for conservation work. To accommodate such inexperience, as well as to keep costs down while ensuring enough work for those flocking into the New Deal program, the Corps rarely used machinery and instead planned and undertook conservation projects in forests, parks, and fields that could be completed with unskilled labor. Because of this, explained Corps educational advisor Frank Hill, the great majority of CCC enrollees "work with their hands."⁵

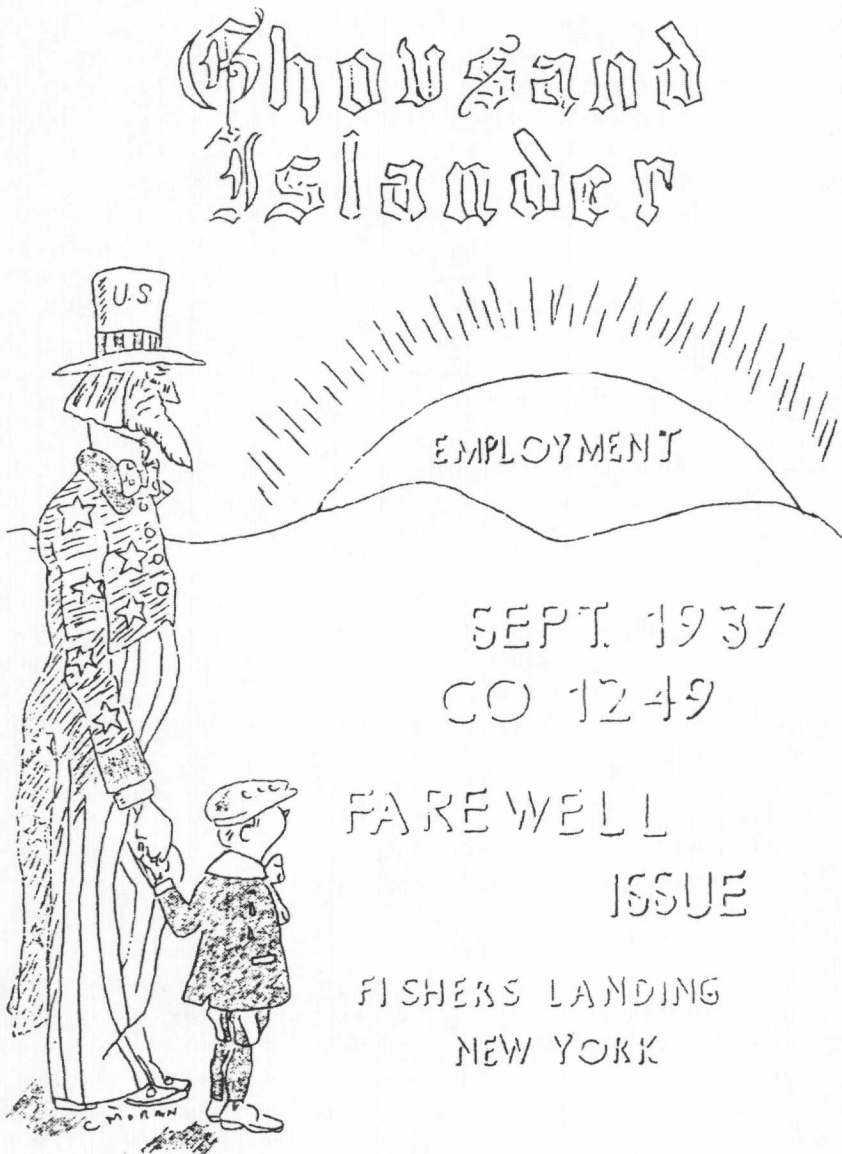
During the New Deal era, CCC enrollees performed an enormous amount of this manual labor. The Corps expected enrollees to work eight hours a day, five days a week, for a total of forty hours per week. If inclement weather such as intense rain or severe temperatures prevented the young men from laboring Monday through Friday, they made up the lost time on Saturday. Each year individual enrollees thus worked 2,080 hours, meaning that between August of 1936 and mid-1937, when the New Deal program reached its peak strength of 520,000 enrollees, the CCC supervised more than one billion hours of enrollee labor. Overall throughout the Corps' nine-year history the young men in the program performed approximately 4.5 billion hours of work, the overwhelming majority of it being physical labor. Such figures do not include overtime work undertaken during emergency activities such as fire fighting and flood control.⁶

From the moment Congress established the CCC, then, labor and landscape change guided the New Deal program. While labor influenced which department oversaw recruitment, who enrolled in the Corps, and even what sort of work CCC enrollees performed, this work in turn altered the nation's forests, farms, and parklands. Yet the physical labor of Corps enrollees did more than merely transform the American landscape. By working long and hard in nature, many of the more than three million young men who joined the CCC during the New Deal era also began to physically transform themselves.

From Boys to Men

The majority of the young men in the Corps were in poor physical condition prior to joining the New Deal program. By their own accounts, expressed over and over again throughout the 1930s, enrollees saw their bodies physically deteriorate from the deprivations of the Great Depression. "Due to insufficient food and worry, I was run down and not at all well," wrote enrollee Thomas Scott from his camp near Zanesville, Ohio. While frequently using terms such as "scrawny," "weak," and "poorly developed" to describe their physiques before joining the Corps, these youths were not merely underweight; they felt unhealthy as well. Enrollee Paul Stone, for instance, complained from his camp in northern California's Redwood State Park that "when I joined I was gaunt and undernourished," and James Jensen likewise explained that "when I entered camp I was a rank tenderfoot, inclined to

Figure 1. Uncle Sam cartoon, *Thousand Islander* camp newspaper, Fishers Landing, N.Y.



Thousand Islander, September 1937, cover, Official File, #268, CCC, Folder: CCC Periodicals, August-September, 1937, FDRL.

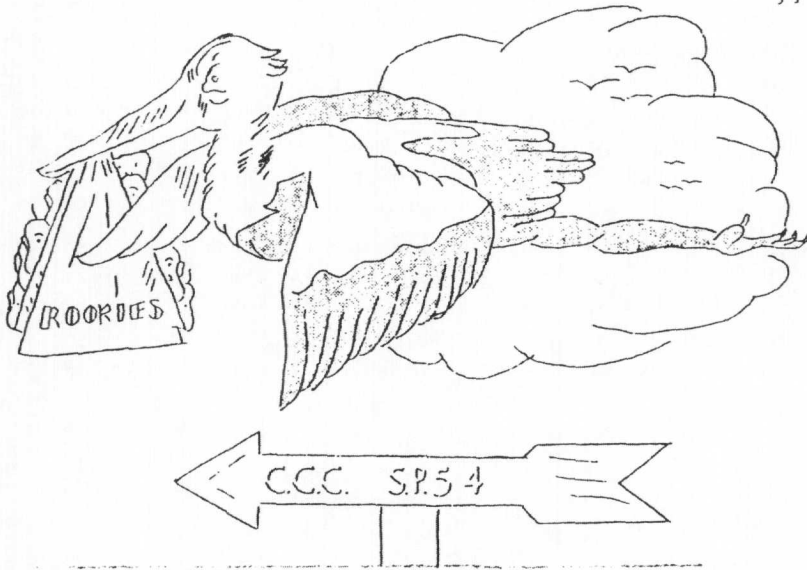
get colds and sicknesses easily." An enrollee stationed near Rushville, Illinois, could have described the experiences of many young men joining the CCC when he wrote in 1934 that "upon enrollment I was almost a physical wreck."⁹

Corps enrollees blamed the Great Depression for the thin, malnourished, sickly bodies with which they joined the CCC. First and foremost they cited joblessness prior to enrolling as having sapped much of their corporeal strength. "Driven like a hunted dog through four years of unemployment," wrote enrollee James Kidwell of his search for work throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico during the early 1930s, my "undernourished body [was] utterly without purpose in life." Although extreme, Kidwell's situation was far from unique. According to data compiled by the Corps in 1937, the typical enrollee had been jobless for nearly seven months prior to joining the CCC. In this respect Charles Hiller was lucky. After graduating from high school and looking for employment to help his financially strapped family, Hiller became despondent. "In two months, I began to feel hopeless," he explained in March of 1934. "Ill with worry, worn out in body, I was rapidly going to pieces." A few weeks later Hiller enrolled his unemployed, worn-weary body in the CCC, which assigned him to a camp in a state park near Clifton Forge, Virginia.¹⁰

Many of the young men enrolling in the Corps did not fault joblessness alone for draining them of bodily vigor; they also lamented the unhealthy environments in which many were forced to live while unemployed. Enrollees from cities were especially apt to emphasize the deleterious effects of the urban setting on their physical health. Between unsuccessful job searches in a central Pennsylvania industrial town, Charles Billmyer spent most of his free hours "with the pool room gang," which resulted in "a condition of habitual deviation from moral rectitude" accompanied by acute physical degradation. "I soon found myself," Billmyer added, "in an environment not very desirable." James Danner was more forthright in deriding the urban environment, describing his fellow enrollees in 1936 as "thin, hollow-chested, sharp-faced products of our big cities' slums with the threat of tuberculosis hovering over them."¹¹

The underdeveloped bodies with which enrollees joined the Corps led many of these young men to question openly their masculinity prior to joining the CCC. Enrollees often expressed such insecurities in camp newspapers such as the *Thousand Islander*, published by a Corps company located in Fishers Landing, New York. On the illustrated cover of the paper's September 1937 edition stood a child-like enrollee in a CCC cap who held Uncle Sam's hand while looked longingly at a sunset labeled "EMPLOYMENT" (see Figure 1). Another cartoon in the same issue similarly questioned enrollee manhood by depicting a stork delivering a blanket-full of baby-faced rookie recruits to the New York camp (see Figure 2). Those joining the CCC often stated outright what the *Thousand Islander* suggested. "I enrolled as a boy, unsteady, groping, unsure," wrote Robert Miller from his camp near Pine Grove, California. "I had doubted my right to call myself a man." Physically frail and unable to put in an honest day's work, many young men felt both emasculated and infantilized before enrolling in the CCC.¹²

Figure 2. Stork cartoon, *Thousand Islander* camp newspaper, Fishers Landing, N.Y.



Thousand Islander, September, 1937, cover, Official File, #268, CCC, Folder: CCC Periodicals, August-December, 1937, FDRL.

The Corps was acutely aware of the poor physical state of the young men joining the New Deal program. Corps Director Robert Fechner made this immediately clear in his first annual report, in which he stated that "thousands of under-weight . . . and unhealthy youths signed up last spring or early summer for the CCC camps." Corps administrators reached a similar conclusion regarding the health of those in the CCC. According to a survey of 100,000 enrollees conducted during the late 1930s by the Army's Office of the Surgeon General, approximately 75 percent of the young men entering the Corps fell below what the Army considered an acceptable weight and were therefore more prone to, or were already suffering from, physical ills such as tuberculosis, hookworm, and nervous exhaustion. "Thousands of these 'light-weights,'" as the Army called them, "possess[ed] well developed or incipient ailments which—within a few months to a few years—would have produced total permanent disability or death."¹³

The CCC also echoed its enrollees in attributing the sickly bodies of those joining the Corps to conditions created by the Great Depression, namely a lack of work combined with unhealthful surroundings. According to CCC directors, the young men enrolling in the program were sickly not only because "economic pressure" left them "undernourished," but also because unhealthy physical "quirks" had been "engendered by bad environments." "The great bulk of CCC enrollees came from homes and from environments which, as a result of the depression, furnished an effective bar to development, social stability, or economic opportu-

nity," explained one CCC administrator in 1942. Not surprisingly, the CCC reserved its harshest criticism for the American city. The nation's young men, explained a promotional article on the Corps written for *Forestry News Digest*, had to be rescued "from city streets, poor food, insufficient clothing and unventilated and unsanitary living quarters."¹⁴

Finally, the CCC shared enrollees' concerns that frail physiques, not to mention the lack of employment and the unhealthy environments that caused them, threatened the masculinity of those joining the New Deal program. The second of the CCC's two directors, James McEntee, admitted to such insecurities in his 1940 book on the Corps, which he proudly titled *Now They Are Men*. After explaining that "many of the boys who make application for CCC enrollment have not had enough of the right kinds of food, and clearly not the right kinds of exercise, to build up their bodies," McEntee further questioned enrollee masculinity on the grounds that many had never worked prior to joining the Corps. "They would never become capable men," he wrote, "if they were unemployed, at home, supported by their fathers' meager earnings or relief allowances." By reconditioning the young bodies joining the Corps, the New Deal program hoped to alleviate these threats to enrollee manhood. "Our purpose is not only to rebuild forests and lands," explained CCC Director Robert Fechner, "but to build men."¹⁵

The insecurity of Corps administrators and enrollees regarding the bodies of the young men joining the New Deal program reflected a broader cultural crisis involving gender roles during the Great Depression. The roots of this anxiety went back to the turn of the century, when many middle-class Americans began worrying that American men had become overcivilized, overly cultured, and physically soft—in a word, effeminate. To counteract what he called this descent into "slothful ease," in 1899 Theodore Roosevelt began urging his fellow countrymen to adopt "the doctrine of the strenuous life," which entailed a "life of toil and effort, of labor and strife." With the onset of the Great Depression, as American men lost their jobs in increasing numbers, this masculinity crisis resurfaced with renewed vigor and forced many Americans to question again American manhood. A host of sociological studies conducted during the 1930s and early 1940s with titles such as "The Unemployed Man and His Family: The Effects of Unemployment Upon the Status of Men" attest to this widespread concern that male joblessness had threatened male status. As these contemporary studies indicate, and as scholars of the New Deal era have argued since, manhood during the Great Depression was inextricably bound to both the flagging economy and the sagging physiques of American men.¹⁶

The Corps' curative for the masculinity crisis affecting its enrollees was work in nature. Only hard, manual labor out-of-doors could reverse the physical deterioration caused by the unemployment and unhealthy environments of the Great Depression, and the Corps promoted it at every opportunity. Franklin Roosevelt first emphasized the physically rejuvenative character of outdoor work in March of 1933 when he asked Congress to create the CCC in order to "take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings." Corps administrators followed the president's lead throughout the 1930s. In 1937, for instance, CCC educational adviser Samuel Harby described enrollee labor as "vigorous outdoor work" that "makes

muscles strong and hard," while James McEntee argued that enrollee bodies would be restored through "healthful work in the outdoors, out in the forests, parks, and soils of this country." By replacing joblessness with labor and sickly urban environments with a healthier setting in nature, the Corps hoped to rebuild enrollee bodies and in turn transform CCC boys into men.¹⁷

The Corps succeeded, at least in the minds, and bodies, of the young men who joined the New Deal program. And while much of the evidence for this corporeal rejuvenation comes from statements written by enrollees at the behest of the CCC, additional material from newspaper reports, personal letters and reminiscences, as well as medical data on the health of these young men supports the notion that work in nature dramatically transformed enrollee bodies. The physical change first noticed by the young men usually involved their muscles, which being underdeveloped prior to joining the Corps quickly became sore after a few days of laboring. "The first weeks on work detail remain to me still a black void of aching muscles and the sheer misery of exhaustion," explained enrollee James Danner in 1941 of his work building a stone wall in a state park near Euclid, Ohio. "I could barely drag myself the one-hundred yards from work truck to bed" at the end of each day. After a few weeks in camp, however, Danner's body showed signs of adjusting to both manual labor and the natural setting in which it took place. "Slowly the wall grew, and slowly strength and health imperceptibly flowed back into my body," Danner wrote. "Suddenly, the first bitterness of toil had lessened, and I began to notice the beauty of the forest." Danner was not alone; enrollees from camps across the country continually described how "sore" and "stiff" muscles became "stronger" and more "developed" from working outside on conservation projects in forests, parks, and fields.¹⁸

By developing their muscles, enrollees working outdoors for the Corps also increased their body weight. The gains experienced by the young men joining the CCC, however, had less to do with converting body fat into muscle tissue than with the enormous amount of food the Corps fed its enrollees. Because of this copious menu, the young men joining the Corps gained on average between eleven and fifteen pounds after spending three to four months in camp, a bodily change upon which they commented more than any other. Enrollee Joseph Weigel, for instance, proudly stated that he had gained sixty pounds during his stay in a camp near Toft, Minnesota, while James Bennett bragged of putting on twenty-five pounds by eating plentiful meals at his camp located thirty-five miles from Las Vegas, Nevada. Enrollees also grew taller while in the Corps than they would have under non-CCC conditions.¹⁹

As they tightened their muscles and loosened their belts, enrollees laboring out-of-doors in forests, parks, and fields also experienced bodily changes involving their skin. When young men joining the Corps first arrived in camp they often described themselves as "pasty-faced," "pale," and "without good color at all." During the next few weeks, however, the skin tone of CCC enrollees often turned from white to red, much as it did for the young men stationed at Camp Roosevelt. "Most of them are working without shirts," explained one visitor to a CCC camp located in a national forest near Riverton, Virginia, "and their skins are reddened" by the sun. Hands that

had been soft and smooth before joining the Corps also changed as blisters arose on skin unused to manual labor. Yet as enrollees continued to work outside their chameleon-like skin changed colors yet again, and blistered hands likewise became less painful. "I'd strip right down to a pair of pants and shoes and I'd get all tan after a while," explained Robert Buchanan, an enrollee stationed in a New Hampshire camp. Others proudly described themselves as "burned a deep brown," "brown as a berry," and "as brown as Indians."²⁰

Finally, in causing many of these physical transformations, manual labor in nature bettered the overall bodily health of the young men joining the CCC. This was the conclusion of the Army's 1937 study of 100,000 enrollees. While 75 percent of those joining the Corps had been so underweight and malnourished as to be either highly prone to disease or already afflicted, upon discharge the picture was quite different. After working out-of-doors and eating three square meals a day in the Corps for several months, the percentage of "light-weights" tumbled from 75 to 40, and incidents of tuberculosis among CCC enrollees dropped to about one fifth that of similarly aged young men in the general population. The Army's survey also found that as a result of the physical, outdoor labor performed on Corps conservation projects, enrollees were more physically fit than the citizenry at large. Enrollee statements supported such findings. Lawrence Lescisco, stationed in a camp near Landisburg, Pennsylvania, described the experiences of many enrollees when he wrote during the mid-1930s that by working in nature he "gained weight, good firm flesh, and a more healthy, vigorous feeling."²¹

The bodily transformations experienced by CCC enrollees—from changes in muscle and skin tone to weight gain and improved overall health—altered these young men's relationship to the landscape on which they labored. This process began when Corps enrollees associated their renewed bodily health with the elimination of their unemployment. "The work is healthful," claimed enrollee John Goodspeed in 1934 from his camp near Kanosh, Utah. "The little aches and pains you experienced," added Herbert Junep, an enrollee stationed in California's Sequoia National Park, "were but in part payment for that magnificent physique and health which your work with this same gang has brought you." Yet gainful employment was not the sole key to corporal rehabilitation. To rebuild their bodies completely, many understood that such labor had to take place in healthful environments as well. "Not an artificial mechanical world like that of the modern city, but a world alive with beauty more lovely than I had ever known," wrote enrollee Paul Stone in the mid-1930s of the natural setting in which he worked. "It was in this country that my health was renewed." Enrollee Virgil McClanahan agreed, stating simply that enrollees felt healthier because "the average CCC boy is in an environment that keeps him in contact with nature." As manual labor out-of-doors transformed their bodies, CCC enrollees linked work in nature to the restoration of their physical health.²²

By rehabilitating their bodies through outdoor labor, many Corps enrollees also believed they had regained much of their masculinity. Over and over again those joining the Corps declared that the renewed physical strength they received from laboring in nature had transformed them into men. "I noticed my splendid physical

Figure 3. "But Wilbur Joined the CCC" cartoon, *The Cottonwood*, New Ulm, Minn.



Anonymous, "But Wilbur Joined the CCC—And After a Year," *The Cottonwood* (New Ulm, Minn.) 7 July 1939, Official File #268, CCC, Folder: CCC Periodicals, 1938-1939, FDRL.

growth and increases in weight," explained enrollee John McAdams while working for six months in the forests of central Pennsylvania. "I was a different boy, in fact I was really becoming a man." Enrollees from a camp located near New Ulm, Minnesota, depicted this transition from boyhood to manhood quite literally in their camp newspaper, *The Cottonwood*, which in its 7 July 1939 edition included a before-and-after cartoon titled "But Wilbur Joined the CCC—And After a Year" (see Figure 3). In the before frame, a thin, shoeless boy named Wilbur timidly asks his mother for permission to enroll in the Corps while the boy's father declares that Wilbur should not join the CCC because "he's pretty young and he's not so strong." The second frame shows a very different Wilbur returning home after a year in the Corps. Much to his parents' surprise, their son has gained weight, strides confidently into the room, and wears the trappings of an adult including a suit, tie, and shoes. Enrollees reading the camp newspaper undoubtedly understood the juxtaposition: CCC work in nature transformed thin, shy, boys into healthier, more self-assured men.²³

Body Politics

The corporeal changes experienced by CCC enrollees did more than merely remake broken-down boys into well-muscled men. By beefing up their bodies, the young men in the Corps also influenced national politics. Such political changes involving CCC physiques functioned on at least two different, yet related, levels. On the one hand, by rejuvenating their bodies through manual work in nature, Corps enrollees raised widespread public support for the New Deal and its various work-relief efforts. On a more particular level, the outdoor labor and physical changes experienced by these same young men also helped transform the politics of the American conservation movement. By replanting forests, halting soil erosion on farms, and constructing recreational amenities in national and state parks across the country, the renewed bodies of CCC enrollees transformed not only the country's natural landscape, but its political terrain as well.

The young men who joined the CCC during the 1930s and early 1940s were a diverse lot. While Department of Labor restrictions ensured that all Corps enrollees hailed from the working class, an amendment to the bill creating the CCC forbid the program from discriminating "on account of race, color, or creed." Thus even though the Corps placed African-Americans in segregated camps, and established separate camps for Native Americans on Indian reservations, those joining the New Deal program came from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Corps personnel commented frequently on this heterogeneity, as did the enrollees themselves. For instance, on 7 June 1933 an Army officer in charge of establishing a CCC camp in Beaverhead National Forest near Butte, Montana, met his company of new recruits as they disembarked at a nearby railroad station. "What a mob got off the train," he explained in a letter to his military superior, "they were large and small, Italians, Jews, and every other nationality." Kenneth Stephans, an enrollee stationed in Two Harbors, Minnesota, described his fellow campmates in similar

terms, writing in 1941 that he "worked and played side by side with young men from all walks of life, boys different in creeds and descent." Corps enrollees thus joined the New Deal program not only with bodies made weak by the deprivations of the Great Depression, but also with physical characteristics that often suggested ethnic and religious identities as well.²⁴

Working-class immigrants such as those joining the CCC were not foreign to the New Deal; in fact they were central to the president's politics from the very start. Partly because the immigrant restrictions of the 1920s had successfully quieted nativist alarms, the Roosevelt administration welcomed immigrants to the nation and encouraged them in word and deed to become full-fledged Americans. "We gave them freedom," Roosevelt claimed of the country's foreign born in a 1936 speech commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Statue of Liberty; "I am proud—America is proud—of what they have given us." They have bettered the American nation while becoming fully American, he declared, and they have come to "appreciate our free institutions and our free opportunity." Not surprisingly, Roosevelt also hoped to welcome these same immigrants, who had recently become a powerful voting bloc across the industrialized North, into the Democratic Party through participation in many of his New Deal programs. The president's political strategy paid off; of the six million Americans who went to the polls for the first time in 1936, five million voted for Roosevelt. During that election the incumbent also received 80 percent of the vote of the poorest Americans, and did especially well among ethnic minorities.²⁵

Recent immigrants and their subsequent Americanization became an even more powerful political weapon during the late 1930s, when congressional conservatives began attacking the New Deal for its radicalism. One of the most vociferous opponents of both the foreign born and the Roosevelt administration during this period was the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities. Established by Congress in 1938, the Committee was chaired by Texas representative Martin Dies, whose suspicion of all things "un-American" began in 1931, when he introduced a bill calling for a five-year suspension of immigration into the United States, and continued unabated into the mid-1930s, when he publicly blamed immigrants for the Great Depression. "If we had refused admission to the 16,500,000 foreign born who are living in this country today," Dies argued, "we would have no unemployment problem." The House Special Committee on Un-American Activities was thus the perfect vehicle for Dies to extend his suspicions concerning immigrants to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The chairman wasted little time, immediately criticizing as "un-American" several New Deal agencies including the Federal Theatre Project, the Works Progress Administration, and the National Labor Relations Board. The committee raised similar questions about a host of high-profile New Dealers, such as Department of Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, Department of the Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, and even the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. Because the Committee depended on the national media to publicize its proceedings, suspicions regarding the so-called subversive activities of both immigrants and the New Deal programs created to help them were front-page news for much of the late 1930s.²⁶

The CCC was not immune to such partisan politics. In fact, criticism of the Corps as un-American began in March of 1933, during congressional debates on the creation of the New Deal program, and continued throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. In general, such attacks were of two kinds, one from each side of the political spectrum. Concerned about the military's role in overseeing the daily operation of CCC camps, as well as the increasing popularity in Germany of Adolf Hitler, the American left accused the Corps of fomenting fascism. "[Corps] work camps fit into the psychology of a fascist . . . state," warned Socialist Party spokesman Norman Thomas. Father Charles Coughlin, the famed "radio priest," agreed, adding that the continuance of the CCC was "a certain step towards fascism." The right wing, on the other hand, branded the Corps a Bolshevik threat to the American political system. In June of 1937, for instance, a special commission reported to the Massachusetts State Legislature that "communists were creating dissatisfaction, unrest and class consciousness among the young men in the [CCC] camps," a contention reiterated by Jersey City Mayor Frank L. Hague. Several conservative newspapers throughout the country were also quick to label CCC camps "hotbeds of radicalism," and to report on the few instances in which Corps enrollees expressed communist beliefs. As one such critic complained, the CCC "was hardly conducive to the development of qualities and attitudes needed for life in a democratic society."²⁷

Partly in response to such criticism, the Roosevelt administration promoted many of its New Deal programs as having an Americanizing influence on the general public, particularly on recent immigrants. Since the CCC was one of the President's most popular projects, it quickly rose to the forefront of this publicity campaign. Not surprisingly, the Corps put forth enrollee labor, enrollee bodies, and American nature as central to assimilating ethnic enrollees. "The [CCC] camps are civic melting pots in which youths from widely varying backgrounds . . . are taught the old-fashioned virtues of hard work," argued Corps Director Robert Fechner in his annual report of 1939. As important as enrollee labor were the corporeal transformations experienced by the youths joining the New Deal program. Because of their new-found bodily knowledge, explained the CCC's second director, James McEntee, "[t]hose men knew within themselves, that this is a great nation, a good nation, worth working for." Yet labor and the physical changes it caused did not on their own Americanize Corps enrollees. According to the CCC, it was specifically the natural environment in which such work took place that served as catalyst in this assimilation process. As McEntee concluded in 1942, it was precisely because enrollees "helped to build America, reforest its barren spots, [and] keep its soil from washing away" by laboring out-of-doors, that "Americanism, democracy, and a real love of country are not simply phrases or catch words to men who have served in the CCC." The Corps, therefore, not only tried to make unhealthy boys into virile men. More particularly, and in direct opposition to the protestations of the Dies committee, the CCC promoted manual labor in nature, and the bodily changes such work engendered, as a means of transforming Italian, Polish, and Jewish boys into American men.²⁸

Corps enrollees often stated outright what CCC administrators suggested; the rejuvenation of their own bodies through work in nature strengthened their sense of

citizenship. Central to this process was the belief that manual labor in American nature made enrollees more American. "Above all, I know what the word 'Americanism' means," wrote enrollee Kenneth Stephans in June of 1941 of his experiences in the Corps. "This spirit is instilled in a person by work and toil such as we do in our protection and reproduction of our National Forests." Other enrollees were more forthright in linking their own physical transformation while in the Corps to their assimilation. After explaining that he and his fellow campmates had gained weight and become recognizably stronger while working outdoors in the CCC, enrollee James Danner argued "it is not only physically that the CCC has been benefiting the youth of the nation." According to Danner, in strengthening their bodies through labor in nature "second generation Poles, Slovaks, Italians, Hungarians, all are . . . finding a new pride in saying, 'We are Americans!'" Enrollee Joseph Jurasek perhaps put this newfound patriotism most succinctly when he wrote from his camp in Coram, Montana: "I just love to work in the sun, getting a fine tan, building up one's body and yet doing a service to our country." Franklin Roosevelt's desire to draw recent immigrants into both the nation and New Deal politics paid off; enrollees not only felt healthier as they labored outside in parks, forests, and on farms across the country, they felt more American as well.²⁹

As the Corps promoted its role in Americanizing enrollees, and as the young men joining the New Deal program in turn embraced this patriotic identity, the national media began publicizing the idea that CCC work in nature created not only better bodies but better Americans as well. Much like the publicity garnered by Martin Dies' Special Committee on Un-American Activities, the coverage of the Corps' role in assimilating immigrant enrollees was extensive. For instance, in a *New York Times* article titled "The Forestry Army that Lives By Work," reporter Dorothy Bromley described both the physical labor performed by CCC enrollees in the nation's forests as well as its effect on their bodies. "The work that they are doing . . . whether it is chopping trees, digging out rocks, or building trails, looks hard, almost backbreaking," she explained in July of 1933. The bodily changes shared by these young men while working together outdoors, Bromley then went on to suggest, helped them overcome many of their ethnic and religious differences. "They are one-hundred percent American," she concluded. Even newspapers historically opposed to Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression responded positively to the Corps' publicity campaign, helping in effect to muffle criticism like that from the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities. "Of all the New Deal agencies, the CCC has probably attracted the most attention," admitted the *Houston Post*, a conservative newspaper from Martin Dies's home state. "Democrats and Republicans, Socialists and Share-the-Wealthers," the paper went on to explain, "have joined in praising its objectives and accomplishments."³⁰

While the Corps influenced New Deal politics by counteracting criticism of, and raising public support for, the Roosevelt administration and its policies, the CCC also began influencing the politics of the American conservation movement, which had cohered into a viable political force during the Progressive Era. Thanks in no small part to the work of Samuel Hays, who himself spent time working outdoors in a former CCC camp used to house conscientious objectors during

World War II, environmental historians are in surprising agreement regarding the shape and scope of this progressive reform effort. Although Richard Judd has identified a rural grass-roots contingent of New England conservationists, scholars posit the great majority of these reformers as originating from a narrow circle of scientific professionals, government bureaucrats, and wealthy businessmen, all of whom became alarmed at the wasteful ways of industrial America and promoted as a corrective "the gospel of efficiency," namely the rational use of timber, soil, and other natural resources. To turn their gospel into political action, conservationists relied on their personal connections within both state and federal governments, and here is where Gifford Pinchot is traditionally trotted out. Born to a wealthy New York family, educated in Europe as the first professionally trained American forester, and incredibly well-connected politically—he served as governor of Pennsylvania and personal adviser to both Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt—Pinchot masterfully used his political clout to secure passage of a host of conservation measures, including the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902, the creation in 1905 of the United States Forest Service, and the Weeks Act of 1911. Rather than relying on American citizens for political support, these early conservationists thus promoted their agenda through an elite political network.³¹

Because of its highbrow politics, the philosophy and practice of the Progressive Era conservation movement remained unknown to the majority of young men flocking into the CCC during the 1930s and early 1940s. Of the less than 1 percent of enrollees who had attended college prior to joining the Corps, few had taken courses in fields such as forestry, agronomy, and hydrology, or pursued a graduate degree in any of what the CCC called "the land sciences." Most enrollees openly admitted such ignorance. James Cordes wrote from his camp near Galeton, Pennsylvania, that "before my enrollment, I knew very little about forest conservation," while enrollee Joseph Swezey was even more forthright, explaining that before joining the Corps he had "absolutely no knowledge or interest in the natural resources of this country and nature in general." The CCC's conservation work, including the planting of trees and the halting of soil erosion, was thus as foreign to the young men joining the New Deal program as the muscles that would soon be bulging from their biceps.³²

Corps administrators were well aware that CCC enrollees knew little about the conservation of natural resources, and as a remedy promoted informal learning through labor in nature. As the Corps saw it, one unfortunate side effect of the formalization of the American educational system was a growing "separation between the content of education and the workaday world, a separation between learning and doing." The academic, the Corps warned throughout the New Deal era, had been set off from the practical with the result that "work without thought and study" had become "drudgery." To correct this imbalance, and to supplement the more formal classes on conservation available to enrollees each night after work, the CCC placed several conservation professionals in each Corps camp to oversee work projects, to teach enrollees the necessary labor skills to undertake such projects, and to instruct enrollees in the theoretical underpinnings of their conservation efforts. In camps located in national and state forests such professionals

included mostly trained foresters, while work projects situated in national and state parks involved an experienced engineer, several trained landscape men, and often wildlife technicians. The on-the-job instruction these professionals gave to enrollees, argued the CCC's second director James McEntee in 1940, represented "a new kind of education," one that he called "a scholarship in work experience." This on-the-job training in nature's classroom, hoped CCC Director Robert Fechner, would instill in Corps enrollees a "conservation conscious."³³

The work training program of the CCC achieved its intended results; under the supervision of government professionals Corps enrollees informally learned about conservation while they labored on work projects in forests, parks, and field. Numerous enrollees who before joining the Corps had little or no knowledge of natural resource conservation soon began lauding it after laboring for several months on CCC projects. "Our work is very interesting," wrote enrollee James Brandon in 1935. "Being out in the open most of the time, we learn more about nature and the natural resources we are striving to conserve." While the conservation of trees was a favorite topic of enrollees, the CCC did not limit its on-the-job training to forestry; Corps agronomists working with the Soil Conservation Service also instructed enrollees while they labored about the causes and dangers of soil erosion and the various means of halting it. "The days work in the field is not all cream," admitted Frederick Carlsen, an enrollee stationed near Marion, Iowa. Yet because of instruction by CCC professionals, "I have learned a lot about soil erosion and how to prevent it." Most importantly, the Corps' on-the-job training made numerous converts to the conservationist cause. "The work we do in the Great North woods gives us a greater understanding of what the word 'Conservation' really meant," wrote enrollee Fred Harrison in the mid-1930s. "I am now a firm believer that conservation is necessary for the preservation of our forests." For the first time in American history, then, working-class citizens from American cities began joining elites like Gifford Pinchot in embracing the conservation movement.³⁴

While CCC labor, and the on-the-job training in nature that went along with it, helped broaden conservationists' political base, the bodily changes experienced by the young men in the New Deal program began altering the political philosophy behind the movement as well. Similar to their Progressive Era counterparts, Corps administrators were openly alarmed at the wasteful use of natural resources, and even went so far as to blame such waste for helping cause the Great Depression. Yet unlike progressive conservationists, the CCC extended its concern about degraded resources such as timber, soil, and water to the bodies of the young men in the New Deal program. In other words, Corps administrators often expressed their anxiety that unemployment and unhealthy environments had weakened male bodies, and thus emasculated male youths, by directly comparing the physical deterioration of the young men joining the CCC to the material degradation of the country's natural resources. The first step in this process was equating enrollees *with* natural resources, which the CCC did often, as when Director Fechner explained that "the young men come to the Corps as a raw material from the cities or the country." That the Corps viewed the sickly, undeveloped bodies of these youths as analogous specifically to *degraded* natural resources is also evident in the CCC's portrayal of

enrollee Stanley Watson, who after tramping for months across the Great Plains found his body "sick and weak" from lack of food and shelter. Watson's trials and tribulations, the Corps concluded, were an all too common form of what it called "human erosion." The CCC thus saw the atrophied bodies of those joining the program much as it viewed cutover forests and eroded soils: as a degraded natural resource in dire need of conservation.³⁵

Corps enrollees further redefined the progressive conservationist philosophy by equating their own physical rehabilitation with the restoration of once-degraded natural resources. Yet rather than comparing their sickly bodies to cutover forests and eroded fields, as they had done prior to joining the Corps, enrollees working in CCC camps for several months soon began associating their manly physiques with restored trees and soils. "I am sure that the word 'conservation' means more than the conserving of forests," explained Robert Ross after laboring for several months on a CCC work project near Crystal Springs, Arkansas. "It means the saving of the young manhood of America!" Enrollee Carl Stark likewise noted this alternative form of conservation in his essay titled "Conservation of Men in the CCC From My Own Experiences." "First of all, we are engaged in useful conservation work which will accrue to the benefit of both the present and future generations," Stark explained in 1941. "But secondly and far more important is the conservation of the individual." The CCC, he concluded, "was truly an organization that works for the conservation of the man as well as our natural resources." Corps administrators agreed, often describing the physical rehabilitation of the young men joining the New Deal program as an example of "human conservation."³⁶

Franklin Roosevelt's CCC thus not only influenced New Deal politics and the rise of the modern welfare state. Corps labor out-of-doors, and the physical changes experienced by the young men performing such work, also greatly influenced the politics of the American conservation movement. While CCC outdoor work, and the on-the-job training in nature that went along with it, helped to broaden the base of the movement by introducing the conservation of natural resources to working-class enrollees, the bodily alterations experienced by young men while laboring in the New Deal program helped to expand the movement's philosophy from a narrow concern with timber, soil, and water to an interest in human resources as well. By both broadening the composition of the movement to include working-class Americans and by redefining conservation to take into account human as well as natural resources, Franklin Roosevelt's CCC, and the bodies of the young men joining the program, helped to radically transform the progressive conservation movement during the New Deal era.

New Deal Conservation

Although Congress abolished the Civilian Conservation Corps in June of 1942, the CCC continued to influence its enrollees long into the post-World War II era. In an effort to capitalize on the conservation education they gained while in the Corps, for instance, many CCC enrollees took jobs in conservation-related fields during

the postwar period. The University of Idaho experienced an increase of three hundred students, almost all former Corps enrollees, in its forestry college after the war. Scores of young men who had served in the New Deal program flocked to jobs in the United States Forest Service, the National Park Service, and other federal conservation agencies. "In camp I took some conservation courses," wrote former CCC enrollee Chuck Krall, who was stationed at Camp Nine Mile in Alberton, Montana. "I credit the CCC experience as the main reason for my thirty-year career in the Soil Conservation Service." Former Corps enrollees also went on to create their own conservation organizations, including Citizens for Conservation and Trustees of the Earth, the American Conservation Enrollees, and the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni, whose motto today proudly proclaims that "Before There Was Earth Day, There Was The CCC."³

The Corps' success in educating its enrollees was in fact part of a larger effort by the Roosevelt administration aimed at teaching Americans about conservation. Like the CCC, which continually promoted its activities in newspapers, magazines, films, and radio broadcasts across the country, a host of New Deal agencies went out of their way during the 1930s and early 1940s to educate ordinary citizens about the federal government's conservation work. The Soil Conservation Service, for example, published a magazine called *Soil Conservation*, sponsored numerous contour plowing and field terracing contests, created hundreds of cooperative soil conservation districts, and even established 175 soil conservation "demonstration areas" to teach local farmers about the program's soil-saving techniques. The Tennessee Valley Authority did likewise, not only publicizing its conservation efforts to the general public through traditional media outlets, but also by working directly with a variety of educational institutions from primary schools to university graduate programs to teach the nation's youth about conservation. It was New Deal educational campaigns such as these that helped introduce the concept and practice of conservation to the wider American public.³⁴

Environmental historians have for the most part refrained from examining these New Deal conservation efforts and their impact on both the American landscape and American politics. This omission is all the more unsettling considering the history of the CCC, which suggests that it was during the Great Depression in particular that conservation not only influenced New Deal politics but also underwent transformations of its own that both expanded the conservation movement's composition beyond Progressive-era elites and broadened its concerns to include human as well as natural resources. This historiographical gap is also worrisome because the result of these transformations—a more grass roots movement active as well on human-centered issues involving bodily health—points toward a better understanding of postwar environmentalism. Thus scholars interested in the origins of the modern environmental movement may want to begin searching for clues further back in time, before Earth Day 1970, the Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969, or even the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. One fertile place to look might include New Deal landscapes like Camp Roosevelt, where in April of 1933 a group of young men, sunburned and sore from working long and hard out-

doors, used a pine tree flagpole to hoist an American flag high above the Massanutten mountains in George Washington National Forest.

Neil Maher is an assistant professor in the Federated Department of History at the New Jersey Institute of Technology—Rutgers University, Newark, where he teaches environmental history. This article is part of his dissertation, Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement, 1929-1942. He also is currently working on an environmental history of NASA and the space race.

Notes

I presented earlier versions of this essay at the 2002 American Society for Environmental History Conference, "Producing and Consuming Natures," held in Denver, Colo., as well as at the "Industrial Environments: Creativity and Consequences" seminar conducted during the 2001-2002 academic year at the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis in New Brunswick, N.J. I am grateful to the participants of both events for their helpful comments. I also would like to thank Elizabeth Cohen, Donald Worster, Adam Rome, and the anonymous reviewers for *Environmental History*. All contributed in their own way to making this essay stronger.

1. There are several accounts of the establishment of the nation's first CCC camp. See especially, Erle Kauffman, "Roosevelt—Forest Camp No. 1," *American Forests* (June 1933): 251; Captain Leo Donovan, "The Establishment of the First Civilian Conservation Corps Camp," *Infantry Journal* (July-August, 1933), 245; and William Train, Jr., "Building Camp Roosevelt . . . The First Civilian Conservation Corps Camp in the U.S.," *National Association of CCC Alumni (NACCCA) Journal* (November 1992): 6.
2. The only scholarly book written on the CCC, John Salmond's *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), is primarily an administrative history. The few environmental historians who have written books on the 1930s have tended to focus on the Dust Bowl. See, for instance, Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Douglas Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981); Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979). On the abundance of declensionist narratives in environmental history, especially concerning the New Deal period, see, William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History*, 78, (March 1992): 1347-1376. Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?: Nature and Work," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 173.
3. Emergency Conservation Work, Office of the Director, Washington, D.C., "Memorandum for the Press, Release to Morning Papers, Friday, April 17, 1936," Printed Materials Collection, Civilian Conservation Corps, Press Releases, FDRL, 2-3.
4. On the total acreage affected by CCC conservation work from 1933 to 1942, see James McEntee, *Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, April 1933*

- through June 30, 1942, RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special, and Final Reports, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), 104-109. Robert Fechner, *Annual Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps: Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1939*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 7.
5. Franklin Roosevelt to Congress, 21 March 1933, as reprinted in Edgar Nixon, comp. and ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Conservation, 1911-1945* (Hyde Park, New York: FDRL, 1957), 1: 143. United States Congress, "An Act for the Relief of Unemployment Through the Performance of Useful Public Work, and for Other Purposes" (approved 31 March 1933), as reprinted in Nixon, *FDR and Conservation*, 1: 146.
 6. For a description of the Department of Labor's selection criteria see, Robert Fechner, "First Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work: For the Period April 5, 1933, to September 30, 1933," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA. On Eleanor Roosevelt's attempt to establish CCC camps for women see, "Women's Forest Work Camps May Be Set Up If Enough Ask Them, Says Mrs. Roosevelt," *New York Times*, 24 May 1933, 1; Lillian Sire, "Camps for Women," letter to the editor in *The New York Times*, 24 May 1933, 5; and "Forest Camp For Women Opens in New York," *American Forests* (July 1933), 321. The only CCC-style camp for women in the country, Camp Jane Addams in New York's Bear Mountain State Park, was state-run and trained women in domestic skills rather than conservation work.
 7. This CCC census was discussed in Robert Fechner, "Annual Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work: Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1937, RG: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 45 & 5. Frank Ernest Hill, *School in the Camps: The Educational Program of the Civilian Conservation Corps* (New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1935), 71. On the unskilled and manual character of Corps work see also, Michael Sherraden, "The Civilian Conservation Corps: The Effectiveness of the Camps," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979), 192.
 8. On enrollee work per day and week see, Robert Fechner, "Second Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work: For the Periods April 5, 1933, to September 30, 1933, and October 1, 1933, to March 31, 1933," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 4. Overall hours of CCC work was calculated by taking the total number of enrollees joining the Corps over its nine year life span (more than three million) by the average number of weeks each enrollee remained in the CCC (thirty-nine weeks) and then again by forty hours of work per week. For the average number of weeks enrollees remained in the Corps see, Robert Fechner, "Annual Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work: Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1937," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 5; and Salmond, *The CCC*, 135.
 9. Enrollees Thomas Scott and Paul Stone are quoted in Leslie Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* (Radnor, Penn.: Chilton Book Company, 1976), 130 & 126. For examples of CCC enrollees using the terms "scrawny," "weak," and "poorly developed" see the following: James Danner, "What the CCC Taught Me," *Rotarian* (September 1941), clipping in Official File: #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc. 1941, FDRL; Gerald Street, "Wisdom From the Trees," *American Forests* (January 1934), 24; and Morelee Frazier, "CCC Camp S-56-Pa.," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Benefit Letters From CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received from the Corps, NARA. The enrollee stationed in Rushville, Illinois is James Kidwell, "A Task, A Plan and Freedom," *American Forests* (January 1934), 23.

10. James Kidwell, "What the CCC Has Done for Me," *American Forests* (January 1934), 23. Robert Fechner, "Annual Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work: Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1937," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 5. Charles Hiller, "It Taught Me One Way to Be Happy," *American Forests* (March 1934), 121.
11. Charles Billmyer, "What The CCC Has Done For Me," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. James Danner to President Roosevelt, 21 September 1936, OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc. July-September 1936, NARA, 2.
12. Cartoon illustrations by C. Moran, *Thousand Islander* (Fishers Landing, New York), September 1937, 1 & 11, OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: CCC Periodicals, August-December 1937. Robert Miller, "It's a Great Life," RG 35: CCC, Division of Planning and Public Relations, "Success Stories, 1936-1941," Box no. 2., NARA.
13. For an exceptional examination of the role of CCC administrators in both identifying enrollee bodies as unhealthy and in promoting enrollment in the Corps as a curative, see Bryant Simon, "'New Men in Body and Soul': The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Transformation of Male Bodies and the Body Politic," in *Gender and the Southern Body Politic*, ed. Nancy Bereaw (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000): 131-154. Robert Fechner, "First Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work: for the Period April 5, 1933, to September 30, 1933, RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 5. The CCC's second director made a nearly identical statement in 1939, see, James McEntee, *Now They Are Men: The Story of the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: National Home Library Foundation, 1940), 58. On the Army's health survey, see James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps: April, 1933 through June, 1942," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 55; and McEntee, *Now They Are Men*, 57-58.
14. James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency, Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, April, 1933 through June 30, 1942, RG: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 51. *The Forestry News Digest* (July 1933), Folder: American Forestry Association Publications, Vertical Files, FDRL.
15. McEntee, *Now They Are*, 57-58. Robert Fechner, "Fechner Clarifies Civilian Status of CCC," *American Forests* (October 1939), 511.
16. On this masculinity crisis see Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books Publishing, 1994). The Theodore Roosevelt quote comes from, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: 1905), 7-8, as quoted in David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 201. For Depression-era examples of sociological studies linking unemployment, physical deterioration, and the loss of male authority see, Mirra Komarovsky, *The Unemployed Man and His Family: The Effects of Unemployment Upon the Status of the Men in Fifty-Nine New York Families* (New York: Dryden Press, 1940), 92-101; Roger Angell, *The Family Encounters the Depression* (New York:

- Scribner's, 1936); and Ruth Shonle Cavan and Katherine Howland Raick, *The Family and the Depression* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1938).
17. Franklin Roosevelt to Congress, 21 March 1933, as quoted in Nixon, *FDR and Conservation*, I: 143. Samuel Harby, *A Study of Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps Camps of the Second Corps Area, April 1933-1937* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1938), 206. McEntee, "Final Report," 42.
 18. During the 1930s and early 1940s the CCC asked enrollees to write so-called "benefit letters" to both assess the New Deal program and to promote it to the American public. In an effort to balance out the obvious bias of such sources, I have also examined magazine articles quoting CCC enrollees, personal letters written by the young men to their families and friends, personal reminiscences of Corps enrollees regarding their experiences in the New Deal program, and medical records. James Danner, "What CCC Taught Me," *Rotarian* (approximately September 1941), clipping in OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc. 1941, FDRL. For "sore" and "stiff" muscles see, Battell Loomis, "With the Green Guard: Beginning a Tenderfoot Forester's Impressions of Life in the CCC Camps," *Liberty Magazine*, 14 April 1934, 53. On becoming "stronger" see, Arthur Dilgado to whom it may concern, 17 December 1935, RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters of Commendation from CCC Boys, NARA. And on developing physically see, Jacob Paslawsky, "What the CCC Has Done For Me," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA.
 19. While in the Corps enrollees had a substantially higher caloric intake than the average Depression-era American. On the average weight and height gain of CCC enrollees see, James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps: April, 1933 through June, 1942," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 55. Joseph Weigel, "Material Value of the CCC," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters From CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received While in the Corps, NARA. James Bennett as quoted in "Looking and Listening with Vann Kincannon," clipped from *Tupelo Journal* (no date), RG 35: CCC, Division of Planning and Public Relations, "Success Stories, 1936-1941," Box 110, 1: Alabama-Wyoming, NARA.
 20. On "pasty-faced" new enrollees see, Walter Woehlke, "Mutiny in a 3-C Camp!: A Lively Chronicle of Ups and Downs Among 300,000 Young Americans Who Are Learning to Be Men," *Liberty Magazine*, 21 April 1934, clipping from OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: March-July 1934, 52. For descriptions of "pale" enrollees see Editorial, "Evolution of an Enrollee," *The Trumpeter* (enrollee newspaper from Moormans River, Virginia), 2. And on enrollees having no "good color at all" see, James Newton as quoted in Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army*, 102. Enrollee sunburns are described by William Carson to Franklin Roosevelt, 20 May 1933, OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: Miscellaneous, March-May, 1933, FDRL; and by Dorothy Bromley, "The Forestry Army That Lives by Work," *New York Times*, 23 July 1933, sec. VIII, p. 2. On enrollees' blistered hands see, anonymous enrollee, "How I Have Benefited," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters 1934-1942, Folder: Misc. Benefit Letters, NARA; and Paul Briggs, "My Opportunity in the CCC," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters 1934-1942, Folder: Letters From CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. Robert Buchanan as quoted in David Draves, *Builder of Men: Life in the CCC Camps of New Hampshire* (Portsmouth, NH: P.E. Randall, 1992), 125. For similar descriptions of enrollees' brown skin see, Freeman Bishop, "Remembered Men: The Civilian Conservation Corps—Who and What

- They Are as Told by One of Them," *American Forests* (August 1933), 380; and John Guthrie, "With The Texas Forest Army," *American Forests* (December 1933), 576.
21. On the Army's health survey, see James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps: April, 1933 through June, 1942," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 55; and McEntee, *Now They Are Men*, 57-58. Lawrence Lescisco, "My Life in the CCC's," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA.
 22. John Goodspeed to M.H. Welling, 31 October 1934, OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc. October-December, 1934, FDRL. Herbert Junep, "Farewell to the CCC," as quoted in Ovid Butler, *Youth Rebuilds: Stories from the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Forestry Association, 1934), 168. Paul Stone as quoted in Leslie Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* (Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Company, 1976), 126. Virgil McClanahan, "The Advantages of the CCC," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received While in the Corps, NARA. Many enrollees used identical language in describing the influence of a more natural environment on their health. See especially, Robert Burns to Franklin Roosevelt, 31 August 1935, OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc. July-October 1935, FDRL; and Valentine Bilovsky, "CCC Life," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA.
 23. John McAdams, "Experiences in a CCC Camp," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. Enrollees wrote dozens of similar letters linking their new physiques and work outdoors to manhood. See especially, Pablo Albert, "How the CCC Has Helped Me Improve Myself," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA; Bob Eddy, "What I Have Gained From CCC Life," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollees re: Benefits Received While in the Corps, NARA; and Farran Zerbe II, "What the Greeks Meant," and Robert Ross, "The Revelation," both as quoted in Ovid Butler, *Youth Rebuilds: Stories from the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Forestry Association, 1934), 122 & 48. Anonymous, "But Wilbur Joined the CCC—And After a Year," *The Cottonwood* (New Ulm, Minnesota), 7 July 1939, OF: #268 (CCC), Folder: CCC Periodicals, 1938-1939, FDRL.
 24. For a thorough examination of this amendment see, John Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," *Journal of American History*, 52 (1965), 76; Olen Cole, "African-American Youth in the Program of the Civilian Conservation Corps in California, 1933-1942," *Forest and Conservation History*, 35 (July 1991), 121; Calvin Gower, "the Struggle of Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942," *Journal of Negro History*, LXI, no. 2 (April 1976), 123. Colonel Duncan Major to Colonel Louis Howe, 14 August 1933, Official File: #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc., June-Aug 1933, FDRL. Kenneth Stephens, "My Personal Opinion of the CCC," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-1942, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA.
 25. Franklin Roosevelt, "Address at Roosevelt Park," New York City, October 28, 1936, in Public Papers, 5:544-55, as quoted in Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 138. On 1920s immigration restrictions and the New Deal's subsequent embrace of recent

- immigrants see Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 129, 138-139, 150 & 154. Gerstle discusses Roosevelt's success in the election of 1936 in *American Crucible*, 150.
26. The quote by Congressman Martin Dies can be found in the Congressional Record, May 10, 1935, 7319-20, as quoted in Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 160. For background information on the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities see Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 158-160; and William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 280-281.
 27. Norman Thomas, *Literary Digest*, CXV (15 April 1933): 6. Father Charles Coughlin, *New York Times*, 5 February 1934, 2. Massachusetts State Legislature special commission and Mayor Hague as quoted and cited in Salmond, *The CCC*, 192. On conservative newspapers reporting on CCC enrollee communist activity, see Elmo Richardson, "Was There Politics in the Civilian Conservation Corps?" *Forest History*, 16, no. 2 (July 1972), 13. On the CCC not being conducive to a "democratic society" see, "Appraising the Civilian Conservation Corps," *The School Review*, XLII (September 1935), 488, as quoted in Dubay, "The Civilian Conservation Corps," 357.
 28. Although Bryant Simon does an excellent job linking physical changes in Corps enrollees to their Americanization, he refrains from examining the central role of the natural environment in this Americanization process. See Simon, "New Men in Body and Soul," 137-138. Robert Fechner, "Annual Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1939," 8. James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, April 1930 through June 30, 1942," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), 63.
 29. Kenneth Stephans, "My Personal Opinion of the CCC," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-1942, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. James Danner to President Franklin Roosevelt, 21 September 1936, Official File, #268 (CCC), Folder: Misc., July-Sept 1936, FDRI., 2. Joseph Paul Jurasek, "The Joy of Living," in Ovid Butler, ed., *Youth Rebuilds: Stories from the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Forestry Association, 1934), 67.
 30. Dorothy Bromiley, "The Forestry Army That Lives by Work," *New York Times*, 23 July 1933, sec. viii, p. 2. The *Houston Post* as reprinted in *Happy Days: The Official Newspaper of the Civilian Conservation Corps*, 26 December 1936.
 31. See especially, Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*; Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); and Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993). Richard Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
 32. On the education level of CCC enrollees see, Hill, *The School in the Camps*, 71; and Robert Fechner, "Summary Report of Director, Fiscal Year 1936," RG 35: CCC, Entry 3: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA, 24. On the use of the term "land sciences" see, "President Considering Educational Program for the CCC," *American Forests* (December 1933), 561. James Cordes, "Material Aids of a CCC Camp," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. Joseph Swezey, "Benefits Derived from the Civilian

- Conservation Corps," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA, 2.
33. "The Corps' views on education were expressed most succinctly by United States Commissioner of Education, John Studebaker, "Editorial Comment," *The Phi Delta Kappan: A Journal for the Promotion of Research, Service and Leadership in Education*, Special Number: Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps (June 1937), 298. McEntee, *Now They Are Men*, 47. Robert Fechner, an address before the Star Radio Forum, 24 October 1934, Printed Material Collection, Civilian Conservation Corps, Press Release, FDRL. For a detailed analysis of this on-the-job training see, Salmon, *The CCC*, 87.
 34. James Brandon, "To the Fourth Corps Area," 7 December 1935, RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. For other examples of CCC enrollees linking their work to a newfound appreciation of conservation see, Rossiter Jones, "Benefits Derived from the CCC," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Misc. Benefit Letters, NARA; and James Kidwell, "A CCC Fighter," RG 35: CCC, Entry 101: Success Stories, 1936-1941, Folder: Misc. Prize Winning Stories, Box no. 2, NARA. Frederick Carlsen, "What the Three C's Mean to Me," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. Fred Harrison, "What the CCC Has Done for Me," RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA.
 35. Robert Fechner, "Fechner Clarifies Civilian Status of CCC," *American Forests* (October 1939), 511. Watson's experiences are discussed in McEntee, *Now They Are Men*, 6. Corps administrators used such language frequently. For a description of unemployment in youths leading to "moral erosion" see, Robert Fechner, "Fechner Clarifies Civilian Status of CCC," *American Forests* (October 1939), 511. See also, Scott Leavitt, "The Social and Economic Implications of Conservation," *The Phi Delta Kappan: A Journal for the Promotion of Research, Service and Leadership in Education*, Special Number: Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps (June 1937), 326.
 36. Robert Ross, "The Revelation," as quoted in Ovid Butler, *Youth Rebuilds*, 48. Carl Stark, "Conservation of Men in the CCC From My Own Experience," 3 June 1941, RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Benefit Letters, 1934-42, Folder: Letters from CCC Enrollee re: Benefits Received From the Corps, NARA. There are numerous examples of CCC administrators using this particular phrase and similar language in their annual reports located at RG 35: CCC, Entry 99: Annual, Special and Final Reports, NARA. See especially, Robert Fechner, "Two Years of Emergency Conservation Work, April 5, 1933-March 31, 1935," 35; Robert Fechner, "Annual Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1939," 69; James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency Annual Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1942," 13; and James McEntee, "Federal Security Agency Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, April, 1933 through June 30, 1942," 39 & 67.
 37. On increases in forestry classes at the University of Idaho and the University of Mississippi see CCC administrator Guy McKinney to U.S. Forest Service employee Mr. Charles Randall, 1 February 1935, RG 35: CCC, Entry 2: General Correspondence, File 400: University of Mississippi, NARA. On enrollees pursuing careers in conservation after 1942, see Camp P-51, Jefferson, Maine, 24 February 1939, RG 35: CCC, Entry 101: Success Stories, 1936-1941, Miscellaneous Prize Winning Stories, Box 2, NARA; "A CCC Recruit Finds a Career in the Forest Service," RG 35: CCC, Entry 56: Success

Stories, 1939; Folder: Success Stories Letter of Instruction Number 66, Quarterly Report, 1/12/39, Box 1, NARA; and "Extra Duty Marks Beginning of Long Climb From Enrollee to Park Service Official, Oklahoma Section, *Happy Days* (CCC camp newspaper), 9 July 1938, RG 35: CCC, Entry 101: Success Stories, 1936-41, Success Stories, *Happy Days*, Box 2, NARA. Charles Krall as quoted in Perry Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* (Montpelier, VT: Perry Merrill, 1981), 93. On the Citizens for Conservation and Trustees of the Earth see Barrett Potter, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in New York State: Its Social and Political Impact" (Ph.D. Diss., State University of New York at Buffalo), 240. Director of American Conservation Enrollees Neil Metcalfe to President Franklin Roosevelt, 5 April 1938, Official File, #268 (CCC), Folder: Miscellaneous, April-June 1938, FDRL. The National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni still exists, is located in St. Louis, and publishes a newspaper titled the *NACCCA Journal*.

38. On the CCC's efforts to teach Americans about conservation see, Neil Maher, "Planting More Than Trees: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement, 1929-1942" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001), chapter 5. On similar efforts by the Soil Conservation Service see, R. Burnell Held and Marion Clawson, *Soil Conservation in Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). And on educational efforts by the Tennessee Valley Authority see Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study of Politics and Organization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 39.