



'Hard Work, Low Pay, Miserable Conditions'

By JOHN McNICHOLAS

Sentinel Staff Writer

The California Conservation Corps has been busy on the hillsides and in the creekbeds of Santa Cruz County, living up to their motto: "Hard work, low pay and miserable conditions."

The corps has been working in the county since Jan. 5 to clean up some of the devastation left by the killer storm.

"It will take years to clean the mess up," said Marc Groff, division coordinator for field operations at the CCC emergency center at the Seventh-day Adventist conference grounds on Old San Jose Road in Soquel.

Seven of 10 crews now here, which relieved the original crews nine days ago, have been clearing jams of logs and debris in streams and creeks. Three crews worked to restore water to the San Lorenzo Valley Water District.

Crews today are working in Aptos, Bean and Soquel creeks.

Groff and incident commander Patrick Crouch estimated "thousands" of cords of wood would be removed from county waterways. In Aptos Creek alone, a jam measures 600 feet long, Crouch said, 150 to 200 feet wide and 20 to 30 feet deep.

In some places, all the corps has been able to do is cut a channel through a jam to direct water away from eroding banks and get the stream flowing again. The streams may out flush themselves, Crouch said, but added that when emergency work is finished here, it would take several work projects to completely restore the waterway.

"The work will significantly reduce the threat of damage that may occur," said Crouch, but neither man could offer any guarantees.

Of some 50 areas marked as emergency sites, where flooding would endanger life, 25 are now cleared, they said. The work should be complete when the CCC pulls out of the county Saturday.

Crouch said 11,000 work hours were logged by Tuesday, with no major injuries, despite the rough work and dangerous conditions.

Both men take obvious pride in the CCC organization, its members, and their ability to do a tough job quickly, efficiently and with a minimum of red tape.

They are the "only state agency that has been able to respond immediately" to the disaster, said Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Monterey, in an interview during a small business conference here Tuesday. "There's no paperwork, there's just people, and they do the work other government agencies can't seem to do."

The emergency work is state funded, Farr said.

The CCC was begun by Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 1976. It is modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps, set up by then-president Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933.

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TOP LEFT — CCC crews (background) work among the rubble left by the Jan. 4 storm.

BOTTOM LEFT — A CCC member tosses a cut log.

TOP — Crews work amid burning debris along Aptos Creek.

LEFT — Glen Stanley uses a chain saw to attack a large downed tree.

Sentinel Photos
By Pete Amos

cuts — are unemployed men and women between the ages of 18 and 23. Women comprise about 30 percent of the membership.

Corps members are paid minimum wage, from which \$145 is deducted monthly for room and board.

Through all this, members develop "a real sense of pride in working harder and

for a slice of the ever-shrinking budgetary pie.

In addition to losing members, one center had to be closed this year, leaving 24, and other programs within the corps were discontinued because of federal and



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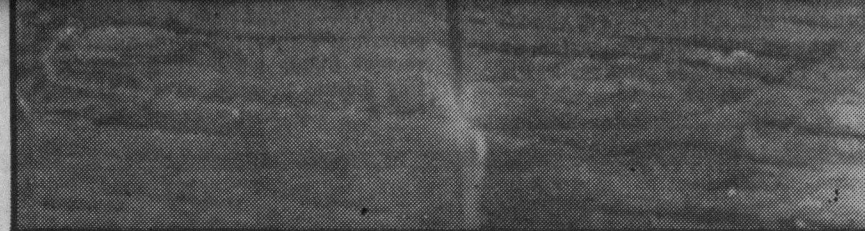
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Since its inception, the CCC "suffered some growing pains" in carrying out its goals of conserving the environment, restoring, enhancing and maintaining public lands, Crouch said.

In its three years of direction by the outspoken B.T. Collins, now Brown's chief of staff, however, the corps came together, he said, to carry out its mandate and "develop the character, competence and cooperation of young people. We are teaching them the work ethic."

An independent economic analyst recently determined that for every dollar spent, the state receives \$1.20 in work from the corps, according to Crouch.

Its 1,600 members — a decrease of nearly 600 since last year due to budget



cuts — are unemployed men and women between the ages of 18 and 23. Women comprise about 30 percent of the membership.

Many member have not finished high school, but some are graduates or college students. Most centers require crew members to pass a high school equivalency exam in the first six months of their one-year commitment. Job search workshop and other employment-related activities are also apart of the CCC program.

Corps members cannot be on probation, use drugs or alcohol, destroy government property or refuse to work, Crouch said.

The corps is sometimes confused with the California Youth Authority by the public, he said, "but a hoodlum wouldn't last five minutes."

Corps members are paid minimum wage, from which \$145 is deducted monthly for room and board.

Through all this, members develop "a real sense of pride in working harder and longer than anybody can reasonably expect. There's a real esprit de corps."

According to Farr, "There is no better employment development program in the state," although funding is a problem when every government agency is fighting

for a slice of the ever-shrinking budgetary pie.

In addition to losing members, one center had to be closed this year, leaving 24, and other programs within the corps were discontinued because of federal and state budget cuts.

Despite this, morale remains high, Crouch said. "It's the best youth leadership program in the United States for the past three years."

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