

Offutt Johnson  
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**OUTLINE "CCC" ADDRESS 11/05/11**  
**Committee for Maryland Conservation History**

1. At October 11<sup>th</sup> -- day dreaming -- need profound statement.
2. My thoughts interrupted – booming voice: “If it had not been for the CCC, Maryland’s state forests and parks would have been only one-fourth as magnificent as they are today!” Statement made in 40s and 50s at a time before we had benefits of POS which doubled Maryland forests and parks.
3. The quote was from Fred Besley, Maryland’s first State Forester, and was repeated by Kirk Rodgers.
4. So true. Tremendous loss to not have Maryland’s CCC forest and park areas. Give names – 18 separate sites.
5. The CCC, “Roosevelt’s Tree Army,” or “Emergency Conservation Work” – great effort. FDR told the boys: You are evidence that this nation, in spite of the depression, is still strong and broad enough to (1) look after its citizens and (2) repair its natural lands.
6. Days of getting something for nothing were gone. The CCC will graduate fine group – strong, cleanliving young men, well trained, disciplined and willing to work and find joy in the work they do.
7. CCC Alumni said, “CCC turned us in the right direction and gave us a legacy of restored national and state forests and built-to-last national and state park facilities. And all for the price of \$3 billion

in 1930 dollars. CCC also did projects on Army and Navy bases and projects for Department of Agriculture.

8. The program ran 9 years (1933-1942). Congress would not extend beyond 1943.

### **THE PROBLEM**

9. The 1929 Wall Street crash and unforgiving depression of 1930s. The Nation in bankruptcy. Willing workers lost jobs. No money for young people looking to start colleges. By 1932, 5 million were roaming the country looking for jobs or were on welfare. Regrettably, some turned to crime.

10. If money problems weren't enough, nation also faced a depletion of valuable natural resources.

- Forests over harvested and forest fires damaged future growth.
- The nutrient in farm lands was worn out and soil was eroding, silting waterways
- "Dust Bowl" in mid-west
- Floods were rampant in communities along streams and rivers
- Mosquito infestations rampant in coastal plains
- Limited tourist opportunities. State and National parks had few facilities. Access by dirt roads. Dawn of 1930s far from happiest of times.

11. January 20, 1933 FDR elected the 32nd President by offering American's a "New Deal." Within 37 days of taking office, Congress approved and FDR started emergency programs to stimulate economy and provide jobs. "WPA," "TVA," "CCC"

12. March 4, 1933 FDR took office --- March 6<sup>th</sup> strategy meeting -- secretaries of War, Agriculture and Interior, Budget Director, and support staff to establish CCC. FDR experimented with concept as Governor of New York. His vision, “Every young man should spend 6 months in the woods in a structured camp setting. A growing experience that teaches life time skills and builds self-confidence.”
13. The CCC boys would live in Army camps in the great outdoors and do conservation work not interfering with normal employment, focused on reforestation, preventing soil erosion, flood control and park development. “I will put 500,000 unemployed to work improving state and national parks, forests and range lands and military bases and agricultural experiments stations,” said FDR.
14. The camps would be run by the US Army in cooperation with the National Park Service, the US Forest Service, state forestry departments and state park authorities. The Army would administer camps and host agency would plan the projects and train and supervise the “Boys.”
15. Boys would be well fed, clothed, given health care, and schooled and paid. 3 square meals and \$1 a day = \$30 month. Twenty-five dollars sent home, \$5 to CCC boy for canteen and Saturday night in town.
16. March 31, 1933, Congress approved “Emergency Conservation Work.” Thirty seven days after FDR took office, first enrollee,

Henry Rich of Alexandria, Virginia, was sent to Camp Roosevelt, near Luray, Virginia. A miracle of bureaucratic cooperation had started what was to become perhaps the greatest conservation and public park development effort in history. CCC became the official title and ECW was dropped.

17. Boston labor leader and FDR friend, Robert Fechner, first director. Respected and capable administrator. Died in 1940. F.W. Besley ordered a monument placed at Herrington Manor in his memory. His assistant, James J. McEntee, became director until CCC ended in 1942.

### **Accomplishments**

18. FDR said, "Honest work must be the new spirit of the American Future. You in the CCC are the vanguard of that new spirit." So the boys worked on projects built to last. Even some temporary camp buildings are in use today, 75 years later. CCC structures are now on Historic Preservation List.

19. Over 4,000 CCC camps were built throughout US and territories, 21 camps were in Maryland. Three million CCC boys built the following projects:

Telephone Lines Laid	89,000 Miles
Fire Lookout Towers	3,400
Fighting Forest Fire	More than 6 million man-days
Fire Breaks	68,000 Miles
Public Campground Development	52,000 Acres
Range Re-vegetation	814,000 Acres
Stocking Fish	972 Million

Foot Trails	13,000 Miles
Stream and Lake Bank Protection	154 Million Square Yards
Historic Restoration	3,980 Structures
Mosquito Control	248,000 Acres
Timber Estimating	35 Million Acres
Trees Planted	More than 2 billion

FDR said, "It is a means of creating a future national wealth. Generations yet unborn will enjoy the public lands reclaimed and improved by the CCC."

For starters, Robert Fechner called for 250,000 boys to be enrolled by July 1, 1933. Young men who were unmarried, between 18 and 25, and whose families were on relief, were invited to enroll." They were processed at Army Training Centers and sent out to remote camps in out-of-the-way places that they never knew existed like Swallow Falls, New Germany, and Gambrill State Parks. Many desperate, homesick, young lads who lied about their ages to get in a CCC Camp, wondered if they would ever find their way out and back home. It was a sobering experience, when they found themselves in snow deep in the Swallow Falls or Savage River State Forest and living in a tent. Yes! With the speed of establishment, the Army first created "tent camps" and, it's no picnic to tent camp in April and May in Garrett County. Next, the CCC Boys would start their first project -- creation of permanent camp structures with heated buildings, electric, running water, screens and flypaper.

20. April 22, 1933. Request out for 24,000 L.E.M. These were skilled out-of-work older men. Lumbermen, carpenters, school teachers, plumbers, electricians, road builders, and automotive mechanics.

The forest and park staff from state and federal governments supplied engineers, foresters, administrators and managers for project planning and oversight of projects.

### Camp Life

21. A CCC company consisted of 150 and 200 CCC boys with hardy appetites. Lots of food was needed to fuel their pick and shovel, rock breaking, log sawing, work days. Many enrollees CCC boys' motto was **"We can take it."** Physical conditioning had a two-fold advantage – hardy workers for CCC and physically conditioned soldiers for WWII who were accustomed to being away from home and were familiar with Army camp life.
22. Food was plentiful. Here is an incident regarding a meat delivery at Potomac State Forest CCC Camp. (Show as high as telephone poles – relate story.)
23. Another 1936-37 snow shoveling account told to me by Will Shuelman from the New Germany CCC camp is quite humorous. The road between New Germany State Forest Recreation Area and Grantsville needed to be opened. (Relate story.)
24. Regimented camp life left little time for mischief. Safety was of primary importance.
  - Each camp had either a medical reserve officer or a local contract physician. Dentists circulated amount camps.
  - Boys were inoculated against typhoid fever and

smallpox, and any potential illness was treated quickly to prevent its spread.

- The Boys had to shower at least once a week, clean teeth daily, keep hair short, keep fingernails short and clean, and keep bedding and clothing clean.
- Enrollees took first-aid training because accidents were always a serious problem. About half of the fatal accidents involved vehicles. Other major causes of death were drowning, falls, falling objects, railroad incidents and firefighting. The accident rate was cut over the years due to intense safety training. (Tell of loss of life – Pepper Creek Fire in Pennsylvania.)
- Leave time was flexible. An enrollee could make two trips home during a six-month enrollment period and he could leave camp on weekends.
- Religious services were conducted in most camps, either by Army chaplains or civilian religious leaders and enrollees were welcomed in community churches.
- The camps held dances, plays, and musical programs. Sports were encouraged. Leagues were formed among camps for many indoor and outdoor sports. Also, many different arts, crafts and recreational skills were taught in the evenings and on weekends.
- Many a CCC veteran has proclaimed his wonderful

experience in Roosevelt's Tree Army saying, "We had everything but money and it was some of the best days of my life."

25. Vocational Training was necessary. Many CCC boys were school dropouts. When the work changed from a pick and shovel to more technical which required reading, math, and science skills, schooling became important.

### **CCC Camps in Maryland**

26. Over the nine years, there was an average of twenty-one CCC Camps operating in Maryland at any one time: 13 State Forest Camps, 2 State Park Camps, 3 Animal Industry and 3 Agricultural Engineering Camps at Beltsville, 3 Military Camps, 1 Naval Base Camp, 3 Soil Conservation Service Camps, and 2 Mosquito Control Camps. Of the 13 State Forest Camps, 7 were located in Garrett County.

27. In 1937 the president proposed to make CCC permanent. The Senate approved, the House voted no. However, the program was extended to June 1943.

28. **Camp needs and supplies boosted local economy.** For example, in 1933 contracts were let for:

- 500,000 pair of shoes
- 2,500,000 yards of denim
- 700,000 pair of trousers



1,000,000 towels

300 cars

3,000 trucks

12 to 15 million people directly benefited from the enrollees' monthly checks

More than \$700 million was set home to families

29. After distinguishing themselves in World War II, the CCC alumni took their place in industry, in government and in the community. Some became elected officials, Boy Scout leaders, and some even returned to conservation work as national or state rangers and forest and park superintendents, while others worked in parks and recreation positions at the city and county levels. Throughout their lives they retained the CCC spirit of "we can do it." Show me the project you need and we will make it happen. These returning veterans were confident because they had experienced "on-the-job" training in the CCC who proudly built projects to last.

30. The statue is placed here at Gambrill where the CCC boys have met for many annual reunions. Today, we dedicate this handsome statue of one CCC boy so that future generations will know something of this special CCC program that reclaimed both young people and the prime natural resources of this nation.