

California Conservation Corps Youth Help Clean Up Lake Berryessa Lands



The crew takes a break to talk about their mission at Lake Berryessa.

The motto of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) – “Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions ... and more!” – pretty much sums up the 40-hour workweek for 19 young men and women, ages 18-25, who are helping clean up federal lands on the west side of Lake Berryessa in Napa County, Calif.

Lake Berryessa is part of the Bureau of Reclamation’s Solano Project, managed by the Mid-Pacific Region, Central California Area Office. The cleanup work is being funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and ties into the Department of the Interior’s “Youth in the Great Outdoors

Initiative” to employ, educate and engage young people from all backgrounds in exploring, connecting with and preserving America’s natural and cultural heritage.

In hard hats and safety glasses, the three women and 16 men are cleaning up tons of debris left by previous concession contractors, much of it old concrete-filled tires that had been used years ago to build retaining walls to keep the lake’s hillsides from sliding into the water. Although a recently acquired jackhammer helps, the crew continues to break up the concrete using only sledgehammers.



Alexandrea Henderson, Shiffon Rollins, and Monet Allen show off the newly acquired saw.

A state agency created by Governor Jerry Brown in July 1976, the CCC is the oldest and largest state conservation corps program in the nation. The program hires young adults for a year of service that includes natural resource and emergency response work to help them become stronger workers, citizens and individuals. Modeled after the original federal Civilian Conservation Corps created in 1933 by President Franklin Roosevelt, some 110,000 young people have joined the CCC since 1976, with about 3,000 hired annually.



Jeff Taggart displays exceptional sledgehammer form.

The corps members help not only the public by their work, they help themselves by learning new skills and advancing their education: since 2008, more than 4,000 CCC members have earned their high school diplomas, and many then continued their schooling using either the CCC Scholarship or the Corps Networks AmeriCorps Education Award. When the Berryessa crew was asked what they would be doing if they weren’t in the CCC, the answers ranged from unloading trucks to working customer service jobs to playing video games.

The CCC members on the job at Lake Berryessa – differentiated by their hat color (blue for corps members, green for specialists, red for crew leaders and yellow for supervisors) – are Monet Allen, Cruz Castro, Daniel Davidson, Fred Freeman, Alexandria Henderson, John Lenhard, Justin Leon, Dereck Loring, Joshua Musgray, Patrick Perry, Michael Peterson, Mason Rising, Shiffon Rollins, Ruben Simi, Dantrell Stevens, Miles Stranzl, Jeff Taggart, Justen Tatum and Daniel White. Their on-site supervisors are Miguel Garcia and Daniel Debolt.



Patrick Perry works the jackhammer.