



Youth Conservation Corps

Southwest Region

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

What is YCC?

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) established by Public Law 93-408, is a summer employment program for young men and women, ages 15 through 18, who work, learn, and earn together on projects that further the development and conservation of the natural resources of the United States. The three objectives of the program are:

1. To accomplish needed conservation work on public lands
2. To provide gainful employment for 15- through 18-year-old males and females of all social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds.
3. To develop in participating youth an understanding and appreciation of the Nation's natural environment and heritage.

Who Administers the YCC Program?

The Youth Conservation Corps program is administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the national Park Service of the U.S. Department of Interior and the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

What Will Enrollees Do?

The YCC has work sites located throughout the United States on Federal and other public lands. The work is planned to provide enrollees with a better understanding of their environment and the management of our natural resources.

The work projects vary depending on geographic location and goals of the sponsoring agency. Projects may include constructing trails, building campground facilities, planting trees, collecting litter, clearing streams, improving wildlife habitat, office work, and many other worthwhile projects.



YCC enrollees finishing an RV structure on Sevilleta NWR for volunteer use. FWS Photograph

One of the primary concerns of the YCC staff is safety. Daily, the enrollees and staff analyze potential hazards presented by the job and ways to avoid or reduce them. Enrollees also receive instructions on the safe way to handle tools. Personal protective devices such as safety goggles, leg chaps, and hard hats are provided and worn when required by the work activity.

Work projects are planned, directed, and executed in such a way as to give the enrollees an understanding of their tasks and how to do them, their part in the overall management plan, and how their work contributes to the enhancement of the environment. YCC participants are given the opportunity to accept all of the responsibility they can assume in the completion of the project.

What are the Requirements for Enrollment?

The enrollee must

1. Be at least 15 years of age and not have reached 19 years of age during the term of employment.
2. Be a permanent resident of the United States or its territories or possessions.
3. Have a Social Security number, or have applied to obtain one.
4. Have a desire to work in the outdoors and become involved in the development and maintenance of the Nation's natural resources.
5. Have no history of serious criminal or anti-social behavior that might create safety problems.
6. Be able to participate in the various work and training projects of the YCC program.



A YCC enrollee collects seeds of native species for use in the Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR native habitat restoration program.
FWS Photograph

Youths with disabilities who with reasonable accommodations can perform the essential functions of the YCC program are also eligible.

7. Have a work permit as required under the laws of the state in which the program will be carried out.
8. Be able to obtain parental or legal guardian consent to enroll in the program.
9. Be able to provide the proper type and amount of work clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts, jeans, work boots.

Types of YCC Programs and Living Conditions

The YCC Program offers two types of participation opportunities: non-residential and a very limited number of residential programs. Since the Southwest Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service has no residential programs, only the non-residential program information is provided here.

In a non-residential program the participants reside at home and commute daily to a specific point. Enrollees are transported to the worksites to participate in the environmental work-learn experience. The enrollee may participate in spike camp for a few days where enrollees camp out together and work on a particular project.

The length of the programs may vary, although most camps operate for 8 weeks. All camps have rules that are strictly enforced for the health and safety of all enrollees.

What Will Enrollees Be Paid?

Enrollees will be paid the Federal minimum wage unless in states with a higher minimum wage, in which case they will be paid the higher rate. Enrollees spend 40 hours each week at their assigned sites; the week of activities consists of five 8-hour days. Enrollees will be paid for 40 hours each week with a focus on work projects that emphasize environmental awareness activities.

How Are Youth Selected?

Youth are chosen to participate in the program for each site by a random selection process. Youth are selected for nonresidential programs located within a reasonable commuting distance from their residences. In all cases, recruiting efforts aim at ensuring an equitable economic, racial and social mix, as well as a fair distribution of urban youth with those from small communities.

How May Youth Apply for YCC?

For YCC programs on wildlife refuges in the Southwest, applications should be obtained from a refuge that is within enrollee's commuting distance. Generally, YCC programs are advertised through local news media (newspapers, television, and radio), and directly through schools. The deadline for receipt of applications varies by site; however, most sites accept applications from February 15 through April 15.

Youth should remember that YCC provides only a limited number of positions and many applicants may not be selected to participate. In situations where there are insufficient applications for the enrollee positions, the Project Leader may utilize previous years enrollees who still meet the basic qualifications, but only after all first-year applicants and alternates have been contacted and offered employment. Also, each program may select one youth leader; who is generally an individual that participated in the program the previous year and who demonstrated leadership capability and skills; not all programs have youth leader positions, however, and participation in a previous year is no guarantee of selection.

For more information, contact the National wildlife refuge nearest you.



A YCC enrollee hard at work at Santa Ana NWR.
FWS Photograph