

Security, Service
and Legacy for
our Veterans and
our Resources

NOAA/CCC Veterans Corps Fishery Program

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:

Adult & juvenile fish
identification
Downstream migrant
trapping
PIT tagging
White water safety
Snorkeling techniques
Radio & vehicle usage
Instream flow monitoring
Fish passage & refugia
assessment

Excel & Access
databases

Seining

Data recording

Habitat & spawner
survey training

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS HAVE MOVED TO CIVILIAN JOBS WITHIN:

Minnesota Department
of Natural Resources

U.S. Army

California Conservation
Corps

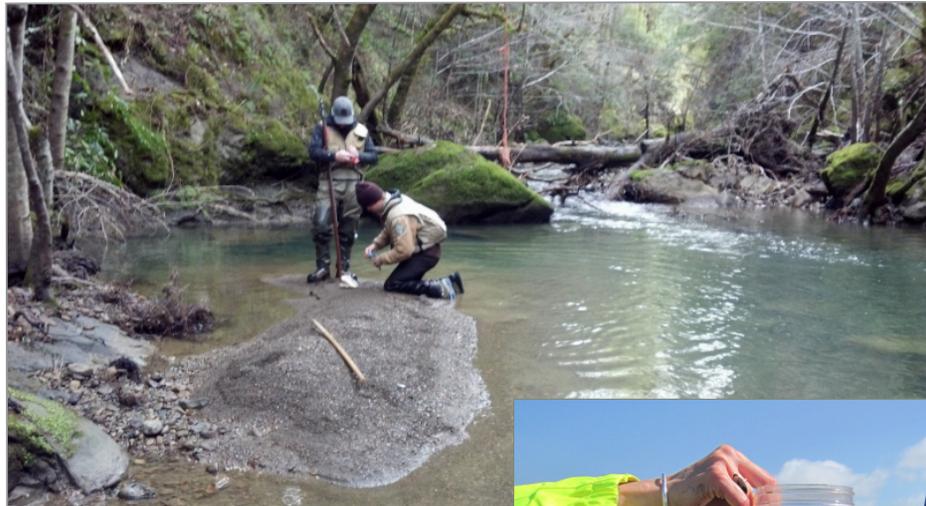
South Dakota
Department of Fish and
Wildlife

Information Technology
Firm

U.S. Forest Service

CAL FIRE Firefighter

A partnership between the California Conservation Corps, NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Forest Service, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Left: Veterans collect data on a salmon spawning survey.

Below: A veteran with a Resource Conservation District partner holding coho found in the newly restored Salt River Project.

Photos provided by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.



PROGRAM VISION

The NOAA Fisheries/CCC Veterans Corps Program gives post-9/11 veterans new opportunities to build their skills and work experience by restoring habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead and conducting fisheries research and monitoring. The program contributes directly to salmon and steelhead recovery in ways that NOAA Fisheries could not otherwise afford given current funding and staff levels.

The Veterans Corps program effectively combines two important national priorities: 1) supporting and promoting new job opportunities for veterans, and 2) protecting and restoring endangered species. Veterans in the program also develop lasting skills and expertise in natural resources management.

Since the program began in 2012, approximately 12 veterans have received training and on-the-ground experience with fisheries biologists and other experts, positioning them to compete successfully for permanent employment in environmental and natural resource fields. Seven veterans employed by the program have subsequently secured jobs in related fields.

As of March 2015, veterans in the program have completed 43 habitat restoration projects, surveyed more than 283 stream miles for juvenile and adult fish, and more than 1,338 stream miles for spawning adult fish.

HOW IT WORKS

“The NOAA/CCC Veterans Corps Fishery Program supports two of our nation’s most valuable resources – our veterans and the environment.

By providing the training and skills necessary to pursue a career in the natural resources, this program helps young veterans transition to civilian life and continue serving our country in a way that also fills a critical need for improving our fisheries and watersheds.

The NOAA/CCC Veterans Corps Fishery Program is changing lives.”

Representative
Jared Huffman,
California 2nd
District

Veterans receive intensive training in fish identification and other skills during their first few weeks on the job as they are introduced to the technically and physically demanding work ahead. Then they work closely with mentors from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the U.S. Forest Service to implement high priority habitat improvement projects identified in NOAA Fisheries’ salmon and steelhead recovery plans, learning about the habitat needs of fish and the logistics of undertaking complex habitat restoration projects.

For example, in the Klamath region, Veterans Corps employees worked in collaboration with the Six Rivers and Klamath National Forest, CDFW, Mid-Klamath Watershed Council, Karuk and Yurok Tribal staff to:

- Estimate the number of naturally spawning fall Chinook and coho salmon in major Klamath River tributaries upstream of the Trinity River confluence including the lower-Salmon River;
- Determine the age composition of the Klamath River fall Chinook and coho;
- Determine the timing and distribution of spawning of Klamath River fall Chinook and coho salmon;
- Recover coded wire tags from adipose fin-clipped salmon in order to determine hatchery contribution and straying rates; and
- Locate and quantify spawning redd locations.

Veterans gain skills by developing real-world experience in natural resources fields, positioning them to compete for job opportunities with a variety of agencies and organizations. By the time they complete the program, their experience encompasses fisheries biology, habitat restoration, project development, and many other areas. In addition, veterans in the program are eligible to receive college tuition and a \$5,000 AmeriCorps education award.



Above: Seining the newly restored Salt River channel.

Photo provided by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Left: Weighing fish caught in a downstream migrant trap.

Photo provided by the U.S. Forest Service.



Above: Veteran Bryan Souza finds a spawned out salmon carcass on a Klamath River tributary spawner survey.

Photo provided by the U.S. Forest Service.

“I would like to share my wonderful news that I have been hired with the Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources.

I am extremely pleased to tell you all about my position, it would not have been possible without the opportunity you provided.

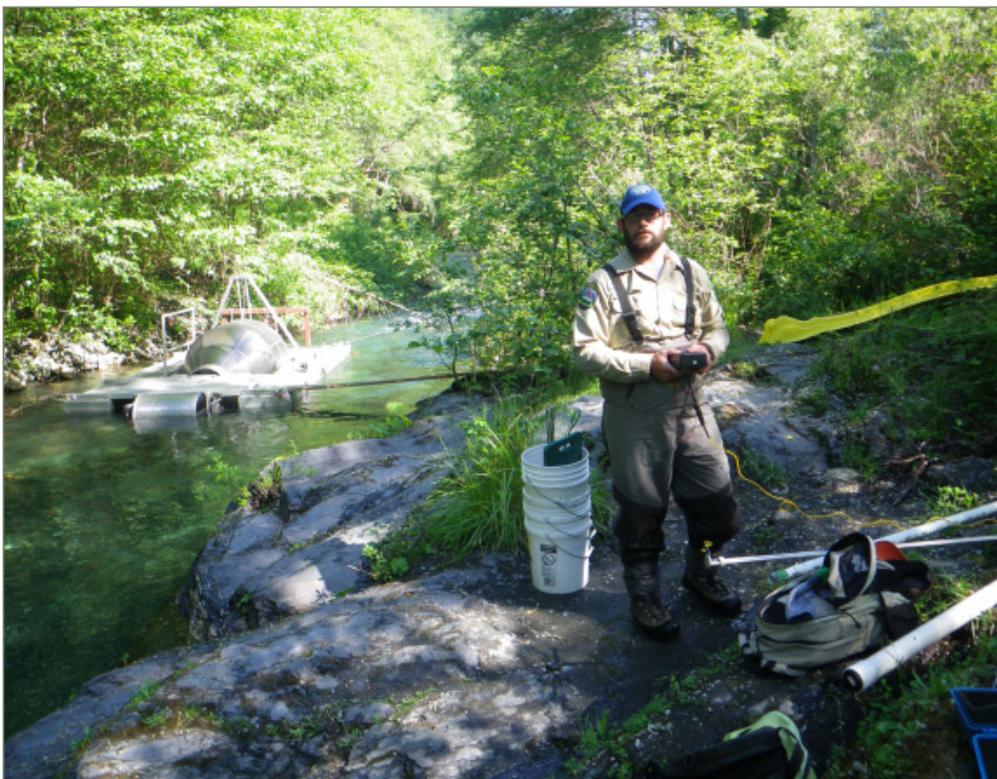
The experience and opportunity to work with the best has allowed me use the life and work skills to obtain employment with the DNR.”

Participant, NOAA/
CCC Veterans
Corps Fishery
Program



MULTIPLE BENEFITS

The NOAA Fisheries/CCC Veterans Corps program provides support for significantly more high-priority recovery actions and fish monitoring than NOAA Fisheries could otherwise undertake. As of March 2015, veterans in the program have completed 43 habitat restoration projects including constructing temporary fishways at the mouths of 20 tributaries to allow threatened salmon access to cold water within the Klamath River, and helping construct off channel habitats on Camp Creek to provide crucial overwintering habitat for coho salmon. This monitoring helps guide future management and restoration decisions that will pave the way for species recovery.



On this page: Veterans monitor fish populations on Camp Creek using a downstream migrant trap.

Photos provided by the U.S. Forest Service.

The work of veterans in the program helps NOAA Fisheries fulfill its mandated fishery management and conservation goals. For example, veteran monitoring of salmon in the Klamath River assists NOAA Fisheries and its partners in fulfilling of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which requires sustainable management of the nation's fisheries. Klamath River fall Chinook is a significant stock for commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon fisheries in northern California and southern Oregon. The adult abundance data for this stock collected by the Veterans Corps supports an ocean harvest model that forecasts the number of Klamath River fall Chinook in the coming season to inform the design of ocean and river fisheries management and opportunities.

On this page: A veteran records stream temperatures while conducting a spawner survey in the Eel River.

Photos provided by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.



PROGRAM SUPPORT

Since NOAA and the CA Conservation Corps partnered in 2012 to start the Veterans Corps program, NOAA has provided \$380,000 that has been matched 1:1 by the CA Conservation Corps to implement over 43 habitat restoration projects.

This cost-effective program has not only assisted NOAA in implementing priority recovery actions for ESA-listed salmon and steelhead, but has provided veterans the opportunity to develop real-world skills and ultimately secure jobs in the natural resources field.

NOAA and the CA Conservation Corps are seeking partners to continue the program in order to establish a long-term legacy for our veterans and resources. If you are interested in learning more or becoming a partner on this important program, please contact Larry Notheis, 707-725-5106, larry.notheis@ccc.ca.gov

