

**Managing the New Deal: Administration of the
Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942**

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the management and organization of the CCC, the relationship between the participating federal departments, and the development of the administration in the Fourth Corps Area, defined as the geographical region of the southeast from North Carolina to Louisiana. Using the Corps Area and the mid-level administration as the central units of analysis challenges the notion that the CCC was a completely cohesive and cooperative organization. The dissent and complex relationships between the federal departments, Using Agencies, and Army are best evident in mid-level administration, among those employees who the CCC tasked with carrying out the projects, policies, and procedures of the program. This research examines the intricacies and issues surrounding the inception, development, and demise of the CCC through issues of mid-level administration, labor, and federal departmental cooperation.

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List of Abbreviations

CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
ECW	Emergency Conservation Work
NPS	National Park Service
SCS	Soil Conservation Service
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service

Introduction

Wallace Edmond White, born on August 24, 1889 in Hart County, Georgia, served his country as a First Lieutenant during the First World War. When he returned home to Atlanta, he found employment utilizing his certified public accountant's degree; he had fifteen years of experience in banking, worked eleven years for the Georgia Cotton Growers Cooperative Association, and spent three years as an auditor for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). White, his wife, Julia, and their three children, Wallace, Anna, and Julia, lived a fairly comfortable middle class life until the elder Wallace's job prospects, like those of thousands of other Americans', dissipated in the face of the Great Depression.

White wrote to his sister and father on April 15, 1938 to inform him of his recent enrollment into the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), stating "If nothing bobs up to prevent I am going on CCC duty about the 4th of May for a six-months period. Have already had my application approved, stood the physical examination and had it approved by the Corp Area surgeon, and am just waiting for the next vacancy which will be open May 4th."¹ The following day, White sent a letter to his father, in which he admitted, "I didn't try to get on CCC except as the last resort. I had proved pretty thoroughly that I couldn't locate either a full time job or enough accounting engagements to make a go of

¹ Wallace White to his family, Atlanta, Georgia, April 15, 1938, Holman Family Collection, Wallace White Papers, Record Group 57, The Wiregrass Archives, Troy University-Dothan, Dothan, Alabama, hereafter referred to as TWA.

it and had walked off a considerable quantity of shoe leather proving that the insurance thing wouldn't work from a cold start, before I tried for this."² Finally, he resignedly confessed, "Papa, I didn't mention it in my letter yesterday but I had been planning, if it could possibly be arranged, to come up to see you before I went to CCC, but with the orders coming for next Wednesday, and so much to do to get off it will be impossible."³ At that point, White left behind his Georgia roots to begin what became his nearly four year tenure in the Civilian Conservation Corps.



Figure 1. Captain Wallace Edmond White. Courtesy of the Holman Family and The Wiregrass Archives.

² Wallace White to his father, Atlanta, Georgia, April 16, 1938, TWA.

³ Ibid.

When White joined the CCC, he joined a six-year old agency. The Civilian Conservation Corps was a federal agency mobilized during the Great Depression to provide jobs to young men aged 17-25. The agency likewise employed a substantial number of Spanish-American War and World War I veterans. Men worked on National Parks, National Forests, Soil Conservation Service projects, and other activities under the auspices of the Departments of Agriculture or Interior. These projects were delegated to individual federal agencies, known in CCC terminology as Using Agencies. These included the National Park Service (NPS), United States Forest Service (USFS), Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and other agencies that contributed work projects to the CCC. As outlined in the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act, the Using Agencies and participating federal departments—the Departments of War, Labor, Interior and Agriculture—were to work cooperatively under the umbrella of the CCC. In practice, however, the cooperation was less evident. In a letter from Robertsdale, Alabama, Captain White complained that “It certainly is a job breaking in a company that comes in from another district as all the reports and records are a little different, just enough in most cases to [sic] gum things up for them.”⁴

White’s banking and accounting experience, in addition to a friend’s recommendation, helped him earn employment in the CCC first as a Company Officer and later as a District level Inspector-Instructor.⁵ In his various roles throughout his

4 Wallace White to his wife and kids, Robertsdale, Alabama, July 22, 1940, TWA.

5 Robert Pasquill, Jr., *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942: A Great and Lasting Good* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 16; Wallace White to his family, Evergreen,

nearly four years in the CCC, White interacted with many different camps in the Fourth Corps Area's Districts C, D, G, and H. By virtue, he also interacted with a large number of the district's officers, those who carried out the orders and instructions of the CCC program. White's correspondence is instructive on the diversity, range, and quantity of officers on the Corps Area and District levels. In between the two extremes—Washington bureaucrats on one end and hardy enrollees on the other—fit the mid-level administrators who carried out the implementation of work projects on the Corps Area and District levels; the Civilian Conservation Corps got its true impetus between the office of the CCC director and the company commander.

This thesis explores the management and organization of the CCC, the relationship between the participating federal departments, and the development of the administration in the Fourth Corps Area, defined as the geographical region of the southeast from North Carolina to Louisiana. Using the Corps Area and the mid-level administration as the central units of analysis challenges the notion that the CCC was a completely cohesive and cooperative organization. The dissent and complex relationships between the federal departments, Using Agencies, and Army are best evident in mid-level administration, among those employees who the CCC tasked with carrying out the projects, policies, and procedures of the program. This research examines the intricacies and issues surrounding the inception, development, and demise

Alabama, August 4, 1940, TWA; Wallace White to W.T. Johnson in the Office of Chief of Finance, Evergreen, Alabama, October 5, 1940, TWA; Wallace White to Julia White, Citronelle, Alabama, June 19, 1941, TWA; Wallace White to his family, Atlanta, Georgia, April 16, 1938, TWA.

of the CCC through issues of mid-level administration, labor, and federal departmental cooperation.

This thesis is organized into three parts. The first chapter details the program's overall administrative organization from Washington through the camp level. The final chapters discuss how the program operated in practice. While chapter one provides overall administrative context, chapter two introduces the concept of Using Agencies and intra- and interdepartmental cooperation between the agencies and the Army. This is essential to understanding the tasks that fell to Corps Area officials, which highlights their importance to the overall administration of the program. Finally, chapter three examines the work of administration in the Fourth Corps Area. Using the letters and experience of Captain Wallace White, this section provides a concrete example of the work involved for mid-level administrators.

In his role as a district administrator, White interacted with a broad range of CCC personnel, ranging from Director James McEntee who visited the Munford, Alabama camp in April 1940 to the Ashland, Alabama enrollee accused later that same month of engaging in an illicit affair with a local girl. White's interactions both with the executive leadership and the footsoldiers of the CCC demonstrate his importance on the district level. He and his District and Corps Area colleagues provided the essential link in the chain of command that carried out the mandates of Washington while simultaneously maintaining a rapport with the men who comprised the CCC's masses. Without mid-level administrators like White, the CCC would have disintegrated. Despite this group's

importance, CCC historiography largely disregards these individuals and their crucial role.

The Civilian Conservation Corps has drawn interest amongst those concerned with New Deal scholarship. Specifically, this thesis addresses and contributes to the body of works relating to the Civilian Conservation Corps. Much of these works highlight the nature of the program from the ground up—that is, from the perspective of the CCC enrollee—or from the top down in examining issues of executive leadership from Washington. They are missing the Wallace Whites of the CCC that connect the enrollee to Washington and, by carrying out the mandates of Washington, affected the lives of enrollees nationwide. Many historians have tried to establish an authoritative and comprehensive national story of the CCC. However, these works often neglect the Corps Area officials whose work choreographed the implementation and completion of the various work projects in the camps. The progression of the historiography, from the first scholarly attempt to more recent works, provides insight into how historians' perception of the CCC has changed, but likewise offers a window into how present research can benefit by the examination of mid-level administrators.

Much of the present historiography explores the important role of the CCC enrollee or focuses on the agency's statewide effectiveness. Historians have also considered the CCC as a mechanism by which the government provided jobs to alleviate impending juvenile delinquency. While this model works in some respects, since a great majority of this workforce was indeed the day laborer aged 17-25, to adopt this stance is

to make a sweeping generalization that all of the workers who came to work in the CCC posed a threat to social stability. By examining the district level leadership, this concept no longer applies: the CCC served a multitude of Americans who sought work, many of whom were veterans of the Spanish-American War and World War I. To understand the CCC without acknowledging both the interior and exterior factors that affected how mid-level administration enforced the mandates of the CCC is to disregard how this unique New Deal program developed, evolved, and ultimately ended.

One of the major themes of the CCC historiography is the attempt to relay a national story of the program. Perhaps the first authoritative work that provided an analytic approach to the study of the CCC was John Salmond's 1967 work, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*. In this work, Salmond mobilizes a limited collection of primary and a considerable array of secondary sources to craft a narrative focused on the CCC's executive leadership. Though touting that he would not attempt to write a comprehensive narrative, essentially, that is what emerges from Salmond's work. His examination of the "central organization" of the CCC begins with Roosevelt and the inception of the CCC in 1933 and ends with McEntee and the termination of the CCC in 1942. Salmond's work is useful because it offers the first glimpse into understanding the managerial experience within the Civilian Conservation Corps. While he alluded to individual regions and the Using Agencies more broadly, Salmond focused primarily on Fechner and his function as Director. Ultimately, his work is the benchmark from which future works took their cues.

Following Salmond, Leslie Alexander Lacy's 1976 work, *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* reflects a dual nature: first, it offers a response to Salmond's elision of the "grass-roots" story, but it also came at a time when a reinvigoration of the CCC seemed like a plausible option in the economic climate of the 1970s.⁶ Lacy's work truly capitalized on the grassroots narrative, crafting his work more as a novel, driven by numerous first-hand accounts from enrollees and stories from individual camps. By focusing on more localized, camp level efforts, Lacy's work helps to embed the enrollee narrative into the accepted canon of historiography on the CCC. Works like Lacy's interpret the CCC through a too narrowly focused lens and omit the struggles of the mid-level administration.

Perry Merrill in his 1984 work, *Roosevelt's Forest Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, likewise contributed a national story of the CCC, seeking to fill the gap Salmond left in telling the story from the grassroots level. Merrill states that he has "omitted from this publication all references to the interdepartmental differences between the departments of government and members of the Advisory Council and also Mr. Fechner," moving on to argue "The real history of the CCC is wrapped up in the heads of former CCC enrollees, officers, and technical personnel."⁷ With this, he suggests that those assigned to individual camps are the only

6 John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), v; Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* (Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Company, 1976), ix.

7 Perry Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* (Montpelier, VT: Published by the author, 1981), ix.

personnel whose experiences relay the nature of the CCC.

Here, Merrill's work misses an opportunity to fully understand the program. First, to understand Fechner and the interdepartmental differences is to understand the work of the enrollee. The work of the enrollee is strengthened by the great struggles for cooperation that defined the monumental work CCC enrollees performed. One point of interest in Merrill's work is his examination of state level statistics that highlight the CCC's accomplishments in individual states. Ultimately, however, Merrill's work fails not only to surpass Salmond's in general effectiveness of understanding the program, but also fails to provide sufficient scope to or shed new light on the program.

One of the more recent attempts at a comprehensive narrative, Neil Maher's *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (2008), presents a return to Salmond's approach. Maher's work is unique because he explored preliminary connections between the enrollee and executive leadership in Washington. Maher challenged the traditional understanding of the program by placing it in a national environmental context, linking nature to politics through analyzing "in detail how one conservation program altered the landscape while helping the president to promote policy."⁸ His work presents a clear shift in the historiography to linking the enrollee to Washington. Even so, Maher's intent to illuminate how the work of the enrollee affected how people thought of conservation and the federal government likewise glosses over the regional structure of the program.

⁸ Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

Ultimately, then, his work does not distinctly make the interior connection between enrollees and Washington, leaving open the opportunity to pursue further research.

In essence, CCC historiography establishes the nature of the program on a national scale, while seeking to fill the gaps Salmond purposely omitted. Others have essentially continued to focus on the grassroots level narrative. Linking enrollees to Washington through the mid-level administration would provide greater purpose, both literally and figuratively, to the efforts of the program. The mid-level administrators' stories illuminate the working dynamics of the program that have gone unexplored as part of the national story; in terms of on-the-ground successes, their stories provide a missing dynamic to truly understanding how, and through what circumstances, the individual projects came to each camp.

Capitalizing on the literature's grassroots momentum, state-level narratives have likewise proliferated. Salmond claimed in 1967 that he would not "examine the Corps at the grassroots level to any great extent," opening the door for future CCC works to do just that. These state-level works began to emerge in the 1970s, but more recent scholarship has continued to prioritize the state level history of the CCC, with only Neil Maher attempting to view the CCC more holistically. None of these works, however, have examined the CCC at the Corps Area level. Works that use the state as the unit of analysis reflect more a history of the individual state than they do a history of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Though the state level narratives have generally existed in masters' theses and

doctoral dissertations since the 1960s, the field experienced an upsurge in interest in the CCC on the eve of its 75th anniversary. Richard Melzer's *Coming of Age in the Great Depression: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in New Mexico, 1933-1942* (2000) follows the same progression as previous works, first detailing the dire circumstances of the Great Depression that initiated the need for the CCC, proceeding through public perception of the program, and finally detailing how enrollees experienced camps within the context of New Mexico.⁹ His work relies on extensive primary and secondary source research, drawing on a group of self-gathered oral histories.

In 2006, Robert J. Moore's *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Arizona's Rim Country: Working in the Woods* and Joseph M. Speakman's *At Work in Penn's Woods: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Pennsylvania* also joined the state level historical interpretations. Moore follows in the style of others like Melzer and Lacy, who emphasize the company unit and the state by extension. By profiling individuals, however, he gives the prominent voice to the enrollee. Speakman provides a more analytic approach to his study by interpreting the issue of race within Pennsylvania camps, but the format of his work assumes the familiar scheme as other state histories of the CCC.¹⁰

Much of these works detail the nature of state level projects in the Northeast,

⁹ Richard Melzer, *Coming of Age in the Great Depression: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in New Mexico, 1933-1942* (Las Cruces, NM: Yucca Tree Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Robert J. Moore, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Arizona's Rim Country: Working in the Woods* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006); Joseph M. Speakman, *At Work in Penn's Woods: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Pennsylvania* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

West, and Midwest, but works on the South are more limited. Robert Pasquill's work, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942: A Great and Lasting Good*, generally follows the prescribed methodology of similar studies, but with a slight variation. Pasquill delivers a condensed version of the CCC's existence in Alabama and devotes the majority of his work to examining the various types of camps in Alabama. In this way, he provides highly detailed accounts of individual camps. Because he relies heavily on newspaper accounts, however, those camps and projects that were of more importance or located near cities that had a more active newspaper garner much of the attention in Pasquill's work.

Tara Mitchell Mielnik's 2011 book, *New Deal, New Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina's State Parks*, offers a crucial addition to the discussion of the CCC in the New Deal South. While Mielnik makes an effort to consider the effects of state parks' establishment on southern tourism, ultimately, her work reverts to the typical state level history narrative. Mielnik suggests "Relatively little is known about the individual daily life of the young men enrolled in the CCC camps. Many of the historical studies of the CCC are primarily bureaucratic or celebratory in nature, focusing on the accomplishments of the CCC as a whole, rather than the individual experience of the enrollees."¹¹ While the literature can certainly be considered celebratory, most works inherently focus on the enrollee. With published accounts like Frank Davis's *My CCC Days*, and the focus on enrollees in Lacy and

¹¹ Tara Mitchell Mielnik, *New Deal, New Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina's State Parks* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 30.

Merrill's works, for example, Mielnik's suggestion neglects some of the central narratives in CCC literature. Further, sources on the nature of enrollees' work are abundant, and many state level works draw upon these narratives.¹²

Essentially, the literature on the CCC serves three purposes: it establishes the general nature of the program as an organization, elaborates on the role of camps through the perspective of enrollees, and details the contributions of the CCC in individual states. These interpretations leave much for the historian to explore. While there were executive leaders in Washington and a mass of young men laboring in camps nationwide, ultimately, it was not Fechner who directly choreographed work projects. Fechner relied on a cadre of district level officials who corresponded with Washington and relayed messages to various camps. Mid-level administrators connected work on the ground with Washington bureaucrats and truly made the program thrive. By using the state as the unit of analysis, historians neglect the lynchpin of the program's success, interdepartmental cooperation.

Not all works have completely neglected the work of administration, however. Two studies that most directly address the issue of management and administration are Charles Price Harper's 1939 work, *The Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps* and John Jacob Saalberg's Cornell University dissertation, "Roosevelt, Fechner,

¹² Mielnik suggests on page 72 that in the Fourth Corps Area, "The NPS and the TVA supervised the majority of the Southern Region's projects." While forestry projects certainly accounted for the vast majority of CCC projects, Mielnik fails to note the substantial presence of the Soil Conservation Service and overstates the role of the NPS in the region.

and the CCC – A Study in Executive Leadership.”¹³

Charles Harper’s work is essential in that it began the work of examining the mid-level administration and cooperation among Using Agencies, the federal agencies tasked with CCC work. Harper’s book, while useful, reflects on the program without sufficient perspective. In general, however, Harper is more effective than Salmond at understanding the overall workings of the program and recognizing, even in 1939, the importance of the Using Agencies to the CCC. While his work is generalized, Harper is still integral to comprehending some of the broader, more basic issues inherent within the administrative structure including a general perception of the regional administration and inspection hierarchy.

While Harper’s work focused on the administrative issues, his work paved the way for John Jacob Saalberg’s Cornell University dissertation, which examined the program through the lens of Washington bureaucracy. His work surely informed the course of Salmond’s work, but Saalberg is clear in his intent to exclude other levels of administration. His work on the administrative cooperation with the Army, however, remains instructive. To understand the involved Using Agencies, Saalberg’s interpretation is essential to appreciating the inter-program cooperation that was often the Achilles heel of the entire program. Harper and Saalberg both recognize the importance of administration to the CCC, but even so, their works both neglect to speak to the mid-

13 Charles Price Harper, *The Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Clarksburg, WV: Clarksburg Publishing Co., 1939); John Jacob Saalberg, “Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC – A Study in Executive Leadership” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1963).

level or Corps Area official.

Though offering a more national examination of the CCC, John Salmond echoed Charles Harper's assertion that the CCC was not as cohesive as other sources have suggested. In discussing administration, Salmond reinforces the national level narrative and merely mentions that Corps Area level administrators' "chief function was to interpret the voluminous messages from Corps area headquarters to the individual camps."¹⁴ This assertion speaks volumes about the expectations and responsibilities thrust upon this group of employees, but Salmond fails to investigate this point at any great length. His analysis on the nature of administration ultimately falls short.

Salmond's focus within this one section of his larger work is on the Washington level administration, leaving much to question about the nature of Corps Area administration.

Just as state level histories have isolated individual camps and states, the integral work of the Using Agencies has likewise been cordoned off into individual agency histories. As such, this literature is not fully reflective of their operations within the CCC. In practice, the program interacted daily among the various departments. For the literature to not reflect this collaboration denies the program's efforts, though sometimes strained, at establishing desired interdepartmental cooperation. It also misses the mark on capturing the essential element to understanding why the program was not as cooperative or cohesive as has been previously thought.

John Paige's *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*,

14 Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 84.

1933-1942: An Administrative History presents a NPS-centered work on the agency's evolution during its involvement with the CCC. This work is essential in a few ways. First, it elaborates the range of officials involved in administration. Second, it connects these officials to work in both National and State Parks, but also to the work of the CCC. Finally, it illuminates the great advancements effected by the NPS's involvement with the CCC. What it does not do, however, is analyze NPS involvement with other Using Agencies, though it clearly operated in this capacity. Douglas Helms' work on the Soil Conservation Service highlights the interaction between the SCS and the USFS in their CCC work, but fails to illustrate further interactions between the other agencies or the Army. Alison Otis, William Honey, Thomas Hogg, and Kimberly Lakin's collaborative effort on the Forest Service's involvement with the CCC, *The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942*, is similar to Paige's work on the NPS in that it focuses primarily on the USFS, isolating the program and examining its involvement with the CCC virtually in a vacuum. The problem with these approaches is that they fail to capitalize on the true nature of the program. While interdepartmental activity among the Using Agencies is best evident at the national level in regards to the Advisory Council, the problems and struggles are best defined at the Corps Area level.¹⁵

Historians have focused most prominently on the Army's involvement in the

15 John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1985); Douglas Helms, "The Civilian Conservation Corps: Demonstrating the Value of Soil Conservation," NRCS, available at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/about/history/?&cid=nrcs143_021393 accessed November 28, 2011; Alison Otis, et. al., *The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942* (USDA Forest Service, 1986), available at http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/ccc/ccc/chap9.htm, accessed April 5, 2011.

CCC. Charles Johnson is perhaps the most prolific of the contributing historians, having written extensively on the nature of the Army and the ways in which race affected the Army's involvement, evident in his 1972 article, "The Army, the Negro, and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942." His work is also the most effective at beginning to make the interdepartmental connections between Using Agencies, but his efforts, too, are ultimately insufficient. Just as the Using Agency histories isolate those agencies, historians likewise have cordoned off discussion of the Army.¹⁶

The available literature suffers from a few glaring omissions. By examining either the Washington administration or the "grass-roots," the projects seem to be completed by Fechner's decree—but it is much more complicated than that. Except for Harper and Saalberg, the intricate web of intermediary officials is mostly discounted. Additionally, connecting these mid-level administrators to the vital work of the Using Agencies has, much as Merrill himself blatantly admitted, mostly been disregarded.

Perhaps the discount of the mid-level administrators is reflective of the proliferation of state level histories. By examining individual states and prioritizing the camps, the focus is inherently on the enrollee and the camp management. By isolating individual states, the overlap between Corps Areas and Districts is lost; these works take the program completely out of context. To truly understand what was happening at the state level, the best unit of analysis becomes the Corps Area. Projects moved in and out of states just like young men moved in and out of Corps Areas. To remove the Corps

¹⁶ Charles Johnson, "The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942," in *Military Affairs* 36 (October 1972): 82-88.

Area is to remove the mid-level administrator. Ultimately, the state level histories limit full comprehension of a complicated program that relied on intra- and inter-Corps movement. The fundamental unit of the CCC is not the state, the camp, or the nation—it is essentially the Corps Areas and districts that truly provide the insight that illuminates the complicated nature of the CCC.

Studies have mostly discounted the work projects in the southern area in favor of operations in the northeast and southwest.¹⁷ This study investigates the regional nature of the southeastern Fourth Corps Area, placing the Civilian Conservation Corps into context of New Deal South. Other works on the CCC in the South are more limited in their investigation of overall New Deal context. Anthony Badger described in *New Deal/New South* the nature of southern New Deal programs as empowering the state or the district. Though southerners, in Badger's estimation, felt a "local hostility" to relief, the desperate times of the Great Depression called for southerners to concede to federal governmental intervention.¹⁸ Surely southerners justified this intervention because localities ultimately held the power within the New Deal program structure.¹⁹ This reminiscent structure replicated in the Civilian Conservation Corps, highlighting the real nature of New Deal

¹⁷ Of notable exception are Robert D. Gunnels, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama*, Masters thesis, Auburn University, 1990; Jennifer M. Horn, "History and Historical Resources Survey of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Cheaha State Park and Surrounding Talladega National Forest," Masters thesis, Jacksonville State University, 2002; Tara Mitchell Mielnik, *New Deal, New Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina's State Parks* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011); and Robert Pasquill, Jr., *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942: A Great and Lasting Good* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Anthony Badger, *New Deal/New South: An Anthony Badger Reader* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 31, 37, 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

programming more broadly. Interpreting the nature of the New Deal and accounting for the southern context, this study will provide an example of how future works can proceed. Studying the Corps Area maintains the individuality sought by state level histories, but provides the understanding of the program found in national narratives.

Though the Corps Area is a broadly conceived unit, ultimately, individual people drove the implementation of work projects in these regions. In a letter to his family, Captain White wrote from his camp in Auburn, Alabama about the camp-level administrators with which he worked and interacted on a daily basis: “Have been grinning to myself all day about getting old Sally Rand in my sub-district. With him, Forrest Mathews (Educational Adviser here) Lt. Phillips and Major Lewis, I really have a bunch of hot shots.”²⁰ Rand, Mathews, Phillips, and Lewis, all camp officers, relied on White and others like him to provide essential information from the Fourth Corps Area headquarters, by way of its individual districts. In a February 24, 1940 letter from Guntersville, Alabama, White declared “Verily, life in the CCC is one thing after another and is always interesting.”²¹ This remark, though mostly true, reflects White’s very tongue-in-cheek perspective on the program. Establishing interdepartmental cooperation, managing the workload and expectations of the mid-level administrators, and informing the nature of the work of enrollees certainly provided for, in White’s words, an “interesting” environment. The addition of the mid-level administrator narrative will provide an essential dynamic to truly understanding the CCC and will expand the

20 Wallace White to his family, Auburn, Alabama, February 12, 1940, TWA.

21 Wallace White to his family, Guntersville, Alabama, February 24, 1940, TWA.

traditional CCC narrative.

Chapter 1

“That high character”: The Administrative Structure of the Civilian Conservation Corps

In practice, Captain White dealt with the realities of an administrative structure that was quickly devised and evolved constantly over its nine-year existence. The administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps appeared one way in the written mandates governing the program but developed in response to unique situations and scenarios. White’s experiences certainly illuminated some of the inherent tensions between the Army and the Using Agencies, many of which were intensified within the regional and local organization.

Director of the Emergency Conservation Work Robert Fechner, a former labor leader, compiled a report in 1935 detailing the course of the Civilian Conservation Corps over its two-year existence. This publication, comprised of reports from the representatives on the Advisory Council, highlighted the positive impact that the CCC had on the landscape, the workforce, and the participating departments. In this composition, Colonel Duncan Major, representative of the Department of War, stated:

Too great a tribute cannot be paid to the officers and enlisted men of the Regular Army who with grand enthusiasm, energy and loyalty initiated the work of organization, the occupation of the first work projects and successfully met the difficult problems of administration and supply then obtaining to give that high character to the Civilian Conservation Corps that has since stamped the whole endeavor, and to the officers of the Reserve Corps who have so inspiringly carried on.¹

¹ Report by Colonel Duncan K. Major, Jr. to the President on the Army’s Participation in Emergency Conservation Work, in “Two Years of Emergency Conservation Work, April 5, 1933 – March 31, 1935,” 5.

This intricate web of administration—particularly at the Corps Area level—characterized the true nature of the CCC as a program. As Colonel Major acknowledged, “The organization of the corps areas to meet the task varied according to their facilities and their problems of supply, but in all the execution in the field rested upon wide decentralization of authority and responsibility.”² In this way, Major recognized the essential role of Corps Area officials, who were intimately aware of their individual district’s specific needs in carrying out the monumental tasks of implementing the CCC nationally.

Historians have paid much attention to the CCC’s national and local organization, but fail to note at any length how mid-level administration that brought these two groups together. In order to understand the issues developed by this delegation of authority, it is important to first comprehend the program’s structure. This chapter details the organization of the Emergency Conservation Work in order to better explain the importance of the Corps Area and District level administration. Ultimately, interpreting the range of responsibilities and interdepartmental relationships will demonstrate the importance of mid-level administration to the CCC.

Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps operated on three basic levels. Washington administration included the President, Director, and the Advisory Council. With Fechner’s decentralization of the CCC, each region maintained a range of Corps Area and District level officials. Where possible, the chapter discusses the roles and

² Report by Col. Duncan Major to the President, 5.

responsibilities of these individuals. Camp level administration included company commanders, project supervisors, and enrollees. The most integral of these was the Corps Area. As even Advisory Council representative Colonel Major suggested, the fate of the CCC rested not in the minds of the Washington bureaucracy but in the hands of this group of Corps Area officials.

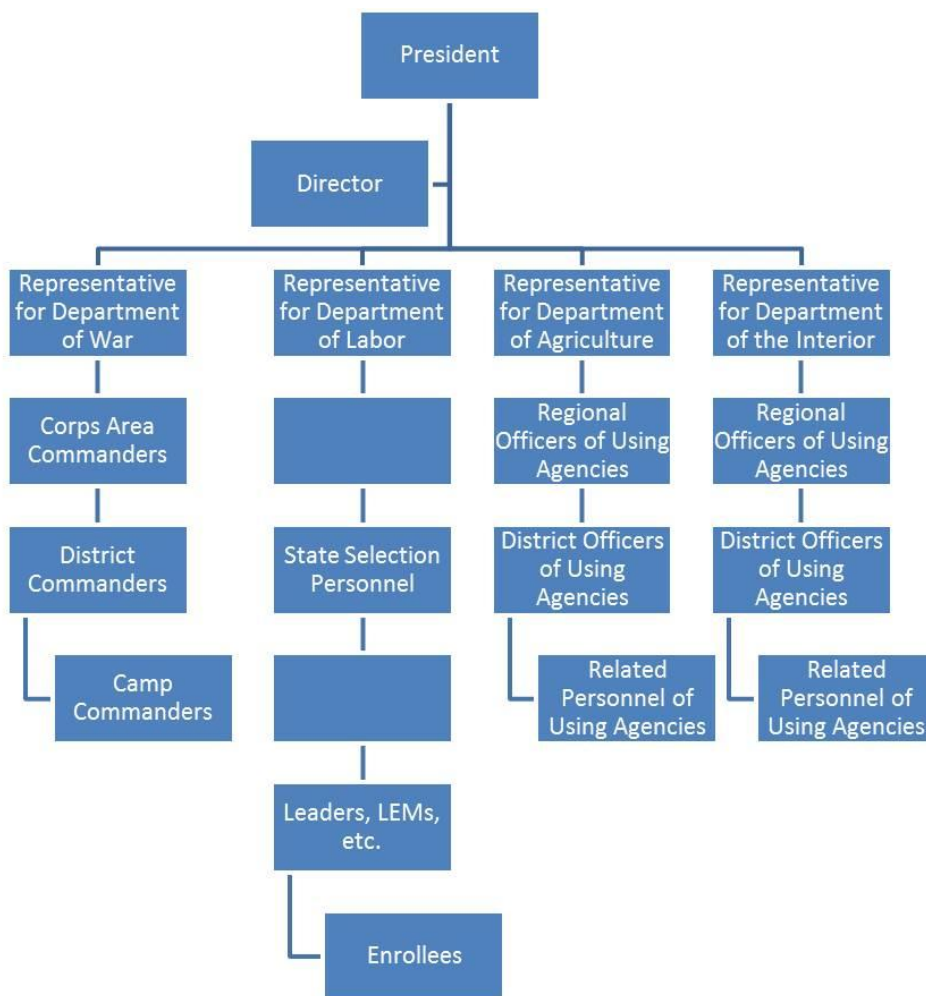


Figure 2. Basic Organizational Chart of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

President Roosevelt presented the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act in the early days of his administration on March 21, 1933.³ By March 31, The 73rd Congress passed the act and in early April, the first enrollee reported for work in Virginia’s George Washington National Forest. Though most of the policies and procedures that navigated the course of the program came to be developed in the days, weeks, months, and even years ahead, the general layout and organization of the program was established in these first days—in the ECW Act and in the President’s Executive Order 6101.

Officially, the Emergency Conservation Work, which later in 1937 officially became known by the colloquial moniker of Civilian Conservation Corps, was developed “for the purpose of relieving the acute condition of widespread distress and unemployment now existing in the depleted natural resources and the advancement of an orderly program of useful public works.”⁴ The Act provided for the role of the President and the program’s basic organization. Executive Order 6101, which the President issued days later, outlined the most integral component of the program. In the Order, he first laid out the structure of administration, which he established by combining the efforts of the Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture, and the Interior. Each of these federal Departments was integral to the future of the CCC. It was, as historian Charles Harper suggested, “evident from the first that the project would not and could not be given to any one of the ten executive departments for administration, because its work logically

³ Robert Fechner, “What About the CCC?,” 1.

⁴ Congress, *Emergency Conservation Work Act*, 73rd Congress, 1933.

involves more than one of them.”⁵

But even the President could not know the intricate web of administration that emerged throughout the course of the Civilian Conservation Corps’ existence. In addition to outlining the organization of the program and recognizing Robert Fechner as the director of the new Emergency Conservation Work, Roosevelt also provided for an Advisory Council to serve the Director. This Council was comprised of authorities selected as representatives from the four involved departments. Though Fechner was largely responsible for the course of the program, President Roosevelt maintained an overriding authority should conflict arise. Certain circumstances throughout the course of the CCC certainly provided for the appeal of several problematic situations to the President.

The interrelationship between the four departments manifested at the national level in the Advisory Council. At the outset of the program in 1933, Colonel Duncan Major represented the Department of War; Major Robert Y. Stuart, Chief of the US Forest Service, represented the Department of Agriculture (USDA); Horace Albright, Director of the National Park Service, represented the Department of the Interior; and W. Frank Persons represented the Department of Labor. By 1936, the original personnel had turned over by seventy-five percent. George Tyner became the representative of the War Department; Ferdinand Silcox, who had replaced Stuart as Chief of the US Forest Service, became representative for the USDA; and Arno Cammerer, who had replaced

⁵ Harper, *Administration of the CCC*, 29.

Horace Albright as Director of the National Park Service became representative for the Department of the Interior.

The purpose of this council of four was to act as a democratic cabinet in which the members, under Fechner's direction, established orders for the program. In a memorandum from the President to the Secretaries of the individual departments, he instructed on the creation of the Advisory Council, that among the responsibilities of the representatives would "include the necessity of checking up on all kinds of suggestions that are coming in relating to the public works of various kinds. I suggest that the Secretary of the Interior act as a kind of clearing house to digest the suggestions and to discuss them with the other three members for this informal committee."⁶ Though the President delegated a specific responsibility to the Secretary of the Interior, what ultimately emerged from this Advisory Council was a supposed failsafe for establishing cooperative practices among the agencies. That the group was supposed to consider suggestions collectively—though likely not always agreeably—offered a more structured way for the representatives to respond to concerns.

Director Fechner suggested in his report, "Two Years of the Emergency Conservation Work" that "In actual practice, these representatives have acted as liaison officers between the director and their respective departments."⁷ With Roosevelt holding

6 Memorandum from President Franklin Roosevelt to the Secretaries of War, Labor, Agriculture, and Interior, quoted in Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 74.

7 Report by Robert Fechner to the President on the Emergency Conservation Work, in "Two Years of the Emergency Conservation Work, April 5, 1933 – March 31, 1935," 2.

final authority, Fechner made administrative decisions for the program at large, leaving the Advisory Council representatives acting as liaison between the CCC and their departments, but also, their programs. The two major contributors to work projects, the USFS and the NPS, were the Advisory Council representatives of their respective Departments. In this capacity, they were more intimately aware of the Advisory Council's decisions and how to disseminate information through the channels of their preexisting organizational administrative structures on the district and local levels.

Upon the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, some of these agencies maintained a system of organization for their individual operations, whether well-established or not. The NPS, for example, developed a system of regions to better fulfill its responsibilities to the CCC. When the CCC was established, the participating agencies then had to adapt their preexisting practices—with varying degrees of success—to the needs of this new conservation workforce. As a decentralized organization, the Director divested authority in the hands of regional administration.⁸ Wallace White and others like him comprised the numerous mid-level administrators—including both district and Corps Area level officials—that linked work on the ground to mandates from Washington. The cooperation that was evident on the national scale, in something like the Advisory Council, became harder to duplicate on the regional level. Perhaps this was due to the level of authority that rested in the hands of this level of administration.

The CCC got its camp organizational structure from the military, but it also

⁸ Report by Colonel Duncan K. Major, Jr. to the President on the Army's Participation in Emergency Conservation Work, in "Two Years of Emergency Conservation Work, April 5, 1933 – March 31, 1935," 5.

implemented the Department of War's system of Corps Areas. As Charles Harper suggested, "Administration of most of the camps was given to the Army, because the other designated services were not especially trained and equipped for a task of so great magnitude."⁹ Though organized based on preexisting militaristic structure, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior and their corresponding agencies maintained similar systems of administration.

There were nine total Corps Areas nationwide, each one answering to an individual commanding officer for the region. The commanding officer for the Fourth Corps Area for the tenure of the CCC was Major General George Van Horne Moseley. Moseley provided an interesting dynamic to the CCC, particularly in his conception of the program and his stance on race within the Fourth Corps Area. John Jacob Saalberg recalled Moseley's efforts in calling for "a compulsory six month program for every able-bodied American combining military training and conservation work."¹⁰ Such an action would have fulfilled the popular belief of the CCC as a military institution.

Moseley was the final authority on the Corps Area level. An official like Moseley existed in each of the eight remaining Corps Areas. Moseley's personality characterized the ways in which the Fourth Corps Area responded to its CCC involvement. In general, his administration differed from that of Washington level administration. Instead of a third party official, like Fechner, overseeing the four representatives from the different departments, as the singular representative of the Department of War, Moseley held final

⁹ Harper, *Administration of the CCC*, 106.

¹⁰ Saalberg, "Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC," 161.

authority at the regional level. Though regional officers for the agencies existed, their authority over CCC projects was not as great as that of the Army officers.

Other officers who were employed specifically by the CCC in the Fourth Corps Area were the Officer in Charge of CCC Affairs, Educational Advisor, and Liaison Officer between the Using Agencies and the CCC, Burton M. Graham. Graham's interaction with the various Using Agencies was essential: whether he was mediating between the Army and the CCC or the Army and the Forest Service, for instance, Graham played a vital role in ensuring peaceful interactions in issues pertaining to the CCC. Essentially, Graham's role reflected in one individual the national structure of the Advisory Council. Whereas the Advisory Council reported to Fechner and disseminated information to their respective departments, Graham reported to Moseley and disseminated information among the various regional officers of the participating agencies.¹¹

Other civilians who played a co-equal part to the success of the CCC on the Corps Area level were the Using Agency officials. The involved advisors for the various Using Agencies in the Fourth Corps Area were Regional Forester for Region 8, Joseph Kircher; Regional Director for the National Park Service Region 1, Dr. Carl P. Russell; and Regional Conservator for the Soil Conservation Service, Dr. T.S. Buie. The combination of the Army officer, General Moseley, and the respective regional Using Agency officers define the Corps Area level executive council. Although interaction on the Corps Area

¹¹ Official 1938 Fourth Corps Area District D Annual, Civilian Conservation Corps (Baton Rouge: Army and Navy Publishing Company, 1938), from the Personal Collection of Robert Pasquill, Jr.

level seems to reflect the national system of cooperation in the CCC Advisory Council, in actuality, cooperation and coordination was often more strained.¹²

Within the Fourth Corps Area were nine additional Districts with their own administrative structure. District D in the Fourth Corps Area provides an instructive example of district level Army officers' roles. Though the presence of the USFS, NPS, and SCS is evident on the Corps Area level, corresponding positions on the District level are conspicuously absent. Mindful of this omission, the District level administration according to the 1938 District D annual consisted almost entirely of military officers occupying a variety of mid-level administrative positions. The singular exception in District D was the contract surgeon, Dr. Elwood E. Baird. Captain Wallace White, at the time of the publication of the 1938 annual, was yet neither company commander nor Sub-District Inspector-Instructor; however, many of those who are White knew personally or later interacted with those who occupied various District level positions.¹³

Many of the officers in District D were ranking Majors, Captains, First Lieutenants, or Lieutenants, but its highest ranking officers were Colonel John Lang, commanding officer, and Colonel Lee Dunbar, District surgeon. If General Moseley was the ranking military officer in charge of the Fourth Corps Area, Colonel John Lang occupied the corresponding position on the District level. In 1938, Colonel Lang came to the position, replacing Colonel George Baltzell, who had served as District D Commander since 1933. In 1938, there were twenty-eight District officers subordinate to

12 District D Annual.

13 District D Annual.

Colonel Lang.¹⁴

The most senior under-officer, Colonel Lee R. Dunbar, served as District D's Surgeon. White's interaction with Dunbar while at Company 4489 in Shuqualak¹⁵, Mississippi demonstrates the particular interrelationship between a company commander and a District level official.¹⁶ Proceeding through the hierarchy, the only ranking Major was the Executive Officer for District D, Major W.R. Mann.¹⁷ The ranking Captains of District D served in various capacities. White was both a Captain and, for the majority of his tenure in the CCC, a mid-level administrator, so his interaction with this group was more frequent. Because of this level of interaction, White developed friendships and working relationships with many of them. The nature of these relationships demonstrates the format, effectiveness, and efficiency of District level administration.

Working together and following prescribed lines of authority enhanced the administration's ability to carry out the work projects of the CCC. The ranking Captains in the district included Inspector-Instructors, mess inspectors, finance officers, transportation officers, medical supply officers, and assistant welfare officers. White's own experiences reflect the dynamics of both the Inspector-Instructor and mess inspector roles; however, some of the remaining ranking captains were men to whom White referred in his letters and with whom White worked closely in the day-to-day operations

14 District D Annual.

15 In an October 11, 1938 letter from Huntsville, Alabama, White tells his family that the name of this town is "(pronounced about like 'sugar-lock')."

16 Wallace White to his family, Shuqualak, Mississippi, November 11, 1938, TWA.

17 District D Annual.

of District D. Some of these officers, particularly Captains Scruggs and Brandenburg, continued to be major characters in White's letters and were men with whom White interacted throughout his four years in the CCC.

On November 21, 1939, Captain White wrote to his family from his camp in Auburn, Alabama. Auburn, in District C, was one of the areas White more frequently inspected and audited. On this particular day, White expressed concern over the issue of pay—checks had not yet reached them in their individual camps. He wrote “No check yet. Capt. Luton, here, hasn't received his yet either, so it may not get in for a day or two yet.”¹⁸ Auditor Captain James N. Luton assumed many of the same responsibilities as did White. As auditor, White operated out of a central camp in a Sub-District—in his case, Guntersville and Evergreen—and visited each camp in the Sub-District once a month. The number of camps for which Sub-District Inspector-Instructors and auditors were responsible ranged from ten to twenty, generally averaging around fifteen.

White's roles as Sub-District Inspector-Instructor and Auditor suggest that generally, the Sub-District Inspector-Instructor was responsible for inspecting more broadly, and those responsibilities could include auditing. For example, when White served in Sub-District 5 with Captain John M. Brandenburg, listed in the 1938 annual as an Auditor, White actually did the auditing, while Brandenburg accounted for mess inspections.¹⁹ Of the mid-level administrators with whom White interacted on a regular basis, Captain Brandenburg was one of the major influences on White's tenure in the

18 Wallace White to his family, Auburn, Alabama, November 18, 1939, TWA.

19 District D Annual.

CCC. Though White worked with Brandenburg directly in Sub-District 5, White had a longer interaction with Brandenburg that reached back to White's early CCC service. When White was Company Commander at Company 4489 in Shuqualak, Brandenburg had the connections that contributed to White's promotion to Sub-District Inspector-Instructor.

Captain James H. Walker, engineer, made an appearance in White's July 15, 1940 letter from Evergreen, Alabama. White wrote "Arrived all OK. ... Will leave shortly after dinner on the round. Capt. Scruggs told me Saturday to take Capt. Walker with me on this round to inspect the messes. He is one of the regular mess inspectors and had been down here taking my place in overseeing the organization of two comp nies [sic] to go to the west coast. However when I got here I found he had already taken off to g [sic] to the fort."²⁰ This fort was likely Fort Barrancas, Florida, military headquarters for District G in the Fourth Corps Area. Captain Walker's fluidity of position from 1938 to his interaction with White demonstrates the possibilities for mid-level administration. At the time of White's letter, White and Walker were to inspect the mess together. White's experience in Sub-District 5 sharing inspection responsibilities with Captain Brandenburg exhibited this same cooperation.

White likewise interacted at great length with Captain Edward P.—White called him E.P.—Scruggs. White's December 6, 1940 letter from Brewton, Alabama illuminates

²⁰ Wallace White to his family, Evergreen, Alabama, July 15, 1940, TWA.

Captain Scruggs's role as Judge Advocate in District D.²¹ In this letter, White wrote "Capt. Brandenburg pulled a regular blitzkrieg on some of my Alabama camps. He [Brandenburg] rated one Irishman named Murphy unsatisfactory—not Murphy personally but his camp and Murphy promptly went to headquarters and told Capt. Scruggs all about it...and that he wanted Capt. Scruggs or the Colonel to come inspect his camp."²² Brandenburg held a certain level of authority as an auditor and sometime Inspector-Instructor. That the company commander, Murphy, would lobby for Captain Scruggs or the Colonel (supposedly Colonel Lang) to review Brandenburg's evaluation implies a hierarchy in which Brandenburg ranked lower than both Scruggs and Lang.

The third tier of ranking officers in management on the District level consisted of Lieutenants and First Lieutenants. For the most part, these officers filled assistant and supervisory roles, rather than the authoritative responsibilities of their superior Captains and Colonels. Some of the roles of this third tier included adjutants, assistant transportation officers, quartermasters, signal officers, personnel adjutants, assistant district surgeons, and district and sub-district chaplains.

Though this aforementioned organization reflects the nature of the Army's involvement on the Corps Area and District level, these officers interacted daily with officials from the participating Using Agencies. Just as the Army utilized employees on CCC projects—usually individuals who were already serving in the areas—so too did the Using Agencies utilize their preexisting workforce on CCC projects.

²¹ District D Annual.

²² Wallace White to his family, Brewton, Alabama, December 6, 1940, TWA.

Administration on the Corps Area and camp level expose problems with cooperation between the Using Agencies as mandated by the ECW Act. As the executive leadership in Washington, CCC Directors Fechner and McEntee oversaw the CCC Advisory Council, comprised of leaders from the individual participating Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture, and Interior. On the Corps Area level, this structure appeared similar, with the Commanding Officer representing the Department of War; the Regional Forester representing the USDA; and the Regional Director of the National Park Service representing the Department of the Interior.

Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps began in Washington with an idea generated from the minds of the President and Director. Under Fechner, the program was decentralized, leaving much of the authority of the program in the hands of the district level officials. After all, these officials were in tune with the unique needs of their individual districts. As such, the nature of the nine Corps Areas varied nationwide. In contrast, however, the organization of the camps was consistent across Corps Area lines.

Captain White's experiences likewise provide an instructive example of company organization and function. Before his promotion to Sub-District Inspector-Instructor, White served three months as Company Commander of African-American Company 4489, a Soil Conservation Service project in Shuqualak, Mississippi. Before embarking on this new adventure, White wrote his last letter home from his assignment as Company Officer of a veterans' camp in Moulton, Alabama. An excited White first told his family of his new assignment, then commented on his true feelings about his move to

Shuqualak: “You might be interested to know that the company is composed of colored juniors. They evidently have in mind giving me a varied line of experience, moving from white veterans to colored juniors.”²³

White’s arrival at Shuqualak coincided with an inspection visit, and he lamented that “Practically nothing had been done here.”²⁴ White, responsible for the wellbeing of this camp, found that upon his arrival, still needing attention were “[the] ceiling, painting, building settees, chairs, [while still] going around checking up to see how much has been done.”²⁵

White’s major concern as Company Commander was preparing his Company for inspections and making mandated improvements. For inspections, the camp had “five days after an inspector leaves...to make a report to Hq of the corrections made. This gives us a list of what to do to get set for the next inspection.”²⁶ Not only was White to improve the inspectors’ corrections, but these came “in addition to all the things that Capt. Wood had put on his Improvement Program list, Col. Dunbar, the District Surgeon, gave us another list yesterday afternoon, and Capt. Brandenburg and Capt. McCormick gave us another one apiece today. I don’t see how in heck we are going to get around to

23 Wallace White to his family, Huntsville, Alabama, November 11, 1938, TWA.

24 Wallace White to Julia White, Shuqualak, Mississippi, October, 20, 1938, TWA.

25 Wallace White to his family, Huntsville, Alabama, October 11, 1938, TWA; Wallace White to Julia White, Shuqualak, Mississippi, October, 20, 1938, TWA; Wallace White to Julia White, Shuqualak, Mississippi, November 18, 1938, TWA.

26 Wallace White to his family, November 13, 1938, TWA; Wallace White to Julia White, Shuqualak, Mississippi, November 18, 1938, TWA.

all of it by the time they expect us to.”²⁷ Even so, White remained confident that he could improve the Shuqualak camp, writing, “We don’t feel that we did so badly under the circumstances but we are going to pull it up.”²⁸ While these types of officers concentrated their responsibilities to the camp alone, they relied on superior officers to determine whether the camp structure functioned effectively.

With the Company Commander corresponding to the Corps Area Commander on the regional level and to Director Fechner on the national level, the supporting personnel within the camps varied according to project type, particularly with respect to the Using Agency personnel. Answering to the Company Commander were officials, including company officers and leaders, who both White and the CCC termed subalterns. Local experienced men (colloquially known as “LEMs”), project supervisors, and enrollees (also known as “juniors”) performed the hands on work of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Depending on the camp’s project, they worked forty hours a week on conservation projects ranging from forestry to fishery. Corresponding officials for the Using Agencies varied from camp to camp.

The responsibilities of these subalterns are relatively unknown. However, Wallace White’s early CCC experience provides an instructive example of a subaltern’s responsibilities. As his first official appointment in the Civilian Conservation Corps, Captain White was a company officer at the veterans’ camp in Moulton, Alabama, a camp

27 Wallace White to his family, November 13, 1938, TWA; Wallace White to Julia White, Shuqualak, Mississippi, November 18, 1938, TWA.

28 Ibid.

working on a Tennessee Valley Authority project. White described his typical day as a company officer in a May 19, 1938 letter home:

I don't see where my time goes here. I fall out of bed at 5:30 in the morning, shave and dress and get down to the mess hall in time to look the breakfast over and...come on up to the office and we are ready for work by 6:30. Then during the morning I check yp[sic] with Shorty Day, the Exchange Steward, and take in his cash and coupons and make all the entries for the preceding day's business, some days make the inspection for the Capt., some days I witness the 'turn over' that is see the men turned over to the Forestry Service at 7 o'clock; study on regulations and mess around generally and it is night before I know it.²⁹

The work of the enrollees, and their immediate supervisors—the local experienced men and camp leaders—have been well documented not only in the literature on the program, but across the countryside in the nation's forests, national and state parks, farms, fisheries, and numerous other arenas that contributed to this relief conservation agency. Their cooperative spirit reflected the desired course of the program, but the struggles, conflicts, and sometimes incomprehensible bureaucracy that characterized the mid-level administration, both in the Army and in the Using Agencies, have gone unnoticed. Coordinating these regions and establishing cooperative practices between disparate agencies informs the efforts of these individuals.

²⁹ Wallace White to his family, Moulton, Alabama, May 19, 1938, TWA.

Chapter 2

“A real partnership between the Army and the Using Services”?:
Federal Agency and Army Cooperation in the Civilian Conservation Corps

By January 1939, Captain Wallace White had been promoted twice. While serving in his new role as sub-district inspector-instructor, White wrote to his father in a letter from Quitman, Mississippi on April 19, 1939: “Am spending the night in my new camp tonight. Don’t remember whether I have written you much about this camp so may be repeating former letters.”¹ This camp, according to White, “Was occupied until about a year ago by a company helping develop the Park here. This camp mis [sic] just inside the park area. However the company that is to come in will be doing fire prevention work and, possibly, some soil conservation work, and will not be working on the park at all.”² White’s experience with this camp illustrates the interaction between Army-managed companies and corresponding Using Agency supervisors. Each agency and the Army interacted daily with one another and worked to establish cooperative practices. However, this cooperation was hard fought and won.

A contemporary publication, *The CCC—Recommendations of the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education*, suggested “It is an administrative miracle that so disjointed an organization [as the CCC] has functioned as well as it has. It has been able to function only by the constant formulation of precise agreements among

1 Title quote from District D Annual, 31; Wallace White to his family, Quitman, Mississippi, April 19, 1939, TWA.

2 Ibid.

cooperating agencies.”³ President Franklin Roosevelt bound these agencies together to form the infrastructure of the Civilian Conservation Corps. As a collective, agencies experienced dynamic and sometimes conflicting responses in their involvement with the CCC. Present scholarship has yet to fully consider these inextricable linkages of Using Agency and Army employees in establishing cooperative practices in their CCC work. Examining how individual departments or agencies responded to each other highlights the complicated nature of the CCC. Large-scale decentralization of the program deferred decision-making to the mid-level administration and affected the ways in which the CCC operated.

³ *The CCC—Recommendations of the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education*, 20-21; Education—Administrative Organization of CCC Educational Program, Records Relating to the CCC Educational Program, 1933-42; Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Record Group 35, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.



Figure 3. Map of the Fourth Corps Area and Using Agency Regions in the Southeast. By the author.

The Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture, and the Interior were responsible for coordinating and managing the Civilian Conservation Corps’ work force. The Department of Labor led enrollment; the Department of War headed the overall organization of camps; while the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior oversaw individual camp projects. The enrollees, and more specifically, the CCC’s administration and management dealt with what were called in CCC terminology “Using Agencies.” Among these Using Agencies were the United States Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and other agencies of the Departments of Agriculture or the Interior that sought to address myriad issues plaguing Depression-era America. Though the Army was a major participant in overall CCC operations, in

practice, it remained separate and was not deemed a Using Agency. For purposes of this work, the Army will not be included or referred to as a Using Agency.

With rare exception, historians have yet to interpret cooperation within the CCC's mid-level administration. Existing works discuss the various departments involved and relay general organizational structure, but they fail to either incorporate multiple agencies or fully elaborate on issues of administration at the Corps Area level. While the actual work and accomplishments of the enrollees are infinitely important, understanding how management carried on the mandates from Washington and distributed these charges onto the districts and ultimately, camps, reflects the complicated nature of the CCC.

By isolating individual Using Agencies, historians have yet to fully understand how the CCC operated. The CCC did not just operate within states, nor did the camps operate independently of one another. Likewise, individual Using Agencies and the Army did not, as the current historiography suggests, operate in isolation from one another. Each agency brought something different and unique to CCC work. Previous issues that existed between the agencies, the sense of agency identity or ownership, and the perceived need or desire to collaborate more efficiently or effectively with other agencies to further its own goals dismantle the notion that the CCC was a completely cohesive and cooperative agency. Much of this illuminates the monumental task that confronted Corps Area and district officials.

One must look critically at the multiple states and districts that comprised each of the nine Corps Areas and respective Using Agency regions to understand how a Corps

Area operated; simply examining one state truncates the effects of the CCC's inter- and intradepartmental working dynamics. Examining CCC Corps Areas is essential to understanding how the nine Corps Areas developed and interacted with the federal agencies that oversaw CCC operations. To explain the CCC without understanding the administrative and managerial impact, influence of and interaction between the various Using Agencies, and the policies enforced by employees of the individual agencies is to disregard how this unique New Deal program developed, evolved, and ceased to exist.

This chapter examines the administrative relationship between the United States Army, United States Forest Service, National Park Service, Soil Conservation Service, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and their work—particularly in the Fourth Corps Area—with the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1933-1942. Using specific examples that best illustrate broader themes will illuminate agency interaction in the CCC. Providing individual perspectives of each agency involved in the CCC and investigating how its management practices affected the CCC and, conversely, how the CCC affected individual participating Using Agencies highlights the managerial aspect of this New Deal program. This work largely focuses on the agency as a unit. However, understanding that people ultimately operated these agencies and brought to their involvement individual perspectives gives life to this administrative narrative.

Three major issues affected the level of cooperation between Using Agencies. The first involved the various perspectives agencies held about other participating agencies upon entering CCC work. Second, agencies maintained differing levels of

agency identity or ownership that affected their CCC interactions. An agency's perceived need or desire to engage more willingly with another one likewise affected optimum cooperation. Essentially, cooperation was the central theme guiding the responses of individual agencies in their CCC involvement.⁴

The presence of a cooperative spirit among the Using Agencies and the Army was integral to CCC operations. For several of the agencies, involvement in the CCC reignited long standing interdepartmental and inter-Agency issues and kindled fires of resentment in their CCC involvement. This conflict, while issuing from all levels of administration, was most acute at the Corps Area level. Efforts to find a delicate balance between regular operations, CCC operations, and managing the responsibility of a varied, complex, and overlaid group of agencies complicated the desired cooperation of the CCC as an agency. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior had a long and difficult past, and individual agencies, particularly on the regional level, bore the brunt of some of this history.⁵ This existing sentiment carried over into the CCC work. The ways agencies approached their CCC work reflected these preexisting issues and account for the varying degrees of cooperation throughout in their nine year partnership.

4 Agencies are discussed interchangeably to further illuminate the inextricable linkages between these agencies and their work on CCC projects.

5 For more information about the conflicts between the Departments of Agriculture and Interior through the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service, see Hal Rothman, "A Regular Ding-Dong Fight": Agency Culture and Evolution in the NPS-USFS Dispute, 1916-1937," *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 20 No. 2 (May 1989): 141-161.

Certainly, NPS involvement embodies a longer administrative struggle. Its past unveils key conflicts, particularly with the USFS, that affected the NPS's outlook on the CCC. Even though the NPS made great strides during the New Deal period and with the CCC, the NPS had long been the subject of contentious debate. Previous struggles between the Department of the Interior, where the NPS was housed, and the USDA were a factor in how the NPS approached its work with the CCC.

The roots of the NPS's establishment are readily apparent from the early part of the nineteenth century. The desire to foster a uniquely American culture extended to the recognition and preservation of a uniquely American history, one that could rival the sites and artifacts of its European counterparts. Inherent in this desire for a uniquely American past was the development of the American landscape, which involved proving the importance and "American-ness" of the natural features of the United States.⁶ The NPS as an organization was not established until 1916; in comparison to its rival Using Agency, for example, the USFS was designated a federal agency eleven years earlier in 1905.⁷ Upon its formal creation, the NPS included twenty national monuments and fourteen national parks, formerly under the auspices of the Department of the Interior.⁸

6 Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1, 11.

7 Runte, *National Parks*, 41; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 17.

8 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 17.

The CCC led the NPS to develop and modify its existing administration. Stephen T. Mather, the first director, was “expansionist” in ideology: that is, Mather believed in maintaining a small headquarters to allow the parks to service the people, as was the NPS’s original intent.⁹ This ideology was engrained in Mather’s protégées, a group that became the second, third, and sixth NPS directors. The evolution of the NPS directorship under Mather, Albright, and Cammerer led the Park Service to develop as a decentralized authority headed in Washington, D.C.

Unlike the NPS, the Tennessee Valley Authority was an agency developed in the throes of the Depression. As an agency, it maintained an alternative perspective upon its entry into CCC work. Though long championed in Congress most prominently by George Norris but also by others since the early twentieth century, the Tennessee Valley Authority was, like the CCC, a New Deal program. Developed to provide relief to a southern environment, the TVA reacted to the opportunities for dam construction and to the devastation in the Tennessee Valley area caused by soil erosion.¹⁰ The TVA—a “Rooseveltian device to create hope”¹¹—was, unlike many of the other Using Agencies, initially developed as a relief agency. Though the others, particularly the NPS and the SCS, experienced changes to their respective administrative structure as a result of their

9 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 14.

10 Leslie Mowitt Headrick and Daniel Schaffer, “A Peace Time Army: The Tennessee Valley Authority Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942,” Division of Land and Forest Resources, Office of Natural Resources, Tennessee Valley Authority: 1983, 1.

11 Edwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 22.

involvement in the CCC, the TVA was fundamentally a New Deal program. The TVA was established to develop the Tennessee River for the purposes of flood control and the generation of hydroelectric power.¹²

Conversely, the Army's involvement in the CCC incorporated a different perspective. Upon the creation of the CCC in 1933, the Department of War undertook full management, both financially and managerially, for the state of the CCC. The Department of War's intimate involvement is evident in many of the operational procedures of the CCC, including procedural manuals, inspection reports, management of Corps Areas (and the adoption of the Corps Area as the national unit of CCC division) and districts. Originally dubbed Emergency Conservation Work, the CCC was originally established as a temporary agency to last for a six-month period. Though the organization became semi-permanent, the six-month enlistments persisted and came to characterize CCC employment. At the time, the Army was the organization best equipped to handle such a quickly devised program. In fact, in the first three months of the CCC's existence, the Army "enrolled, conditioned, and transported to camps more men than mobilized during the first three months of America's participation in the World War [I]."¹³

12 Headrick and Schaffer, "A Peace Time Army," 1.

13 Harper, *Administration of the CCC*, 27.

As the organization best equipped to mobilize quickly, President Roosevelt bestowed administrative powers on the Army.¹⁴ A willing, yet hesitant Army was then the primary provider of infrastructure to the new CCC. The Army's involvement concerned many; labor leaders, including the vocal president of the American Federation of Labor, William Green, feared CCC camps would become militaristic training facilities. Immediately, two factions emerged within the office of the Army itself—those like Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur, wished to accomplish the task “with as little interference as possible to the Army's routine functions.”¹⁵ Others, like Colonel Duncan Major, representative of the Department of War on the CCC Advisory Council, “fully accepted Army participation.”¹⁶ These rifts compounded when added to the growing differences between Fechner and the CCC, and in the Army's deferral of project supervision to the Using Agencies. The presence of the Army in CCC activities suggests that the Army's role was somewhere between what MacArthur wanted, what Major supported, and what Green could tolerate.

Average Americans also expressed concern about the depth of Army participation in the CCC. Jeanette Keith argued rural southerners had favored neutrality during the

14 Saalberg, “Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC,” 142.

15 Ibid., 144.

16 Ibid.

First World War and drew their antimilitarism from populist and socialist movements.¹⁷

Based on class and social conflict, these same southerners opposed a standing army in favor of the National Guard, a more localized manifestation of military power. Their support of a quasi-“states’ rights” agenda supports the New Deal mentality of localized operations. Contemporary pamphlets, manuals, and manifestations of the CCC in public sought to quell concern over the Army’s involvement. For instance, the Department of Public Welfare was responsible for the selection of enrollees in Alabama. In the Public Welfare Manual, the composers of the manual felt it necessary to state, “A man does not enlist in the Army when he enrolls. The CCC enrollee remains a civilian throughout his entire term of service; he receives no military instruction nor does he become liable to military law.”¹⁸

Despite southerners’ suspicion of militaristic involvement, the perception of Army participation with the CCC is evident in other parts of the country. In the California State Relief Administration’s “Typical Questions and Answers,” they reassure families that their sons do not enroll for the military upon CCC enrollment. They defend that “The Civilian Conservation Corps is not a military organization. There is neither military

17 Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2, 7, 22-23, 198.

18 Public Welfare Manual, page 24-25; Procedural File State Procedural Manual Division on Selection for Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, State Procedural Manuals, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Record Group 35, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

training nor discipline.”¹⁹ This suggests that though the South had responded to the military in specific ways throughout its past, the fear of Army involvement in the CCC was not limited to the South. Though the Army obviously assumed full responsibility for the administration, infrastructure, and organization of the program, in popular mentality, the Army’s substantial involvement sometimes overshadowed the work that the Using Agencies supervised.

As with the struggle to establish the National Park Service, the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service once again incited tension between the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. Historian D. Harper Simms, in *The Soil Conservation Service*, suggested that essentially, America had dealt with soil erosion prevention since its inception as a nation. These early and often sparse activist efforts succeeded in minor yet incremental ways until Hugh Bennett’s arrival at the Bureau of Soils in 1903.²⁰ Heading what Simms called a “one-man crusade,” Bennett made a name for himself in lobbying for a national program devoted to soil conservation.²¹ In 1928, he produced a defining piece of literature, the so-called Circular 33 entitled “Soil Erosion, A National Menace.”²² The impact of this publication, taken in tandem with the onset of the Dust Bowl and the

19 California State Relief Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, “Typical Questions and Answers” (Sacramento: State Relief Administration, c. 1936), 1-4, in William F. Deverell and Anne Hyde, *The West in the History of the Nation Volume 2* (Boston: Bedford/St Martin’s, 2000), 184.

20 D. Harper Simms, *The Soil Conservation Service* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 6.

21 Ibid., 8.

22 Ibid.

Great Depression, earned Bennett a platform to champion a national soil conservation program.²³

In 1933, Bennett saw the first results of his tireless efforts when the Soil Erosion Service (SES) was established as a temporary agency.²⁴ In fact, the first of these projects conducted in tandem with the CCC was located in the Fourth Corps Area in Clayton County, Alabama.²⁵ Tensions between the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior intensified as the two departments struggled to determine which department would house this new agency.²⁶ Initially, this temporary program was established under the Department of the Interior.²⁷ A territorial skirmish ensued; Simms provides an interchange between the Secretaries of the individual departments, writing that “Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace earnestly reminded Secretary Ickes that the control of erosion was, after all, ‘fundamentally an agricultural problem.’”²⁸ Ultimately, the temporary SES became the permanent Soil Conservation Service in 1935, under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture. Emerging contemporarily with the Civilian

23 Simms, *The Soil Conservation Service*, 10-11.

24 Ibid., 11.

25 Helms, “Demonstrating the Value of Soil Conservation.”

26 Simms, *The Soil Conservation Service*, 12-13.

27 Ibid., 11.

28 Ibid., 12.

Conservation Corps, the SCS established 150 CCC camps performing uniquely SCS projects.²⁹

By the onset of the New Deal, the United States Forest Service was already a well-established organization. Like the NPS, however, the USFS had its share of struggles in establishing itself as a distinct federal agency under the Department of Agriculture.³⁰ President Theodore Roosevelt established the USFS in 1905 under the direction of Gifford Pinchot. The USFS entered its CCC work with preconceived notions about its new colleagues. The USFS's past interaction with the NPS and the Army is evident. The USFS had already had a tumultuous past with the NPS in its establishment as a federal agency. Much the same as the Army, the USFS maintained its vital importance to the CCC program, resulting in conflict between the two entities. The documentation of USFS officials from the Fourth Corps Area, or USFS Region 8, displays the USFS's regard for the CCC through how it responded to regular activities. Understanding the terms under which each agency assumed CCC work provides essential context to interpreting the complexities of reaching the cooperative spirit ideal.

These entities' pasts and preconceived notions about another program affected their perspective on CCC work. Another major factor that affected cooperation was the presence or lack of a sense of agency identity. Agency identity refers to the protection of

29 Simms, *The Soil Conservation Service*, 14.

30 James G. Lewis, *The Forest Service and the Greatest Good: A Centennial History* (Durham: Forest History Society, 2005), 13.

an Agency's or the Army's individual operation practices, the maintenance of individuality in their work with the CCC, and more subjectively, the sense of pride each agency exhibited. Hal Rothman, who explored earlier strains of conflict between the USFS and the NPS referred to this agency identity as a "degree of territoriality."³¹

Sharing CCC responsibility was supposed to be nearly equal between the departments—the contemporary publication by the American Youth Commission elaborated on the mandated textbook quality of the programs: "The Departments of Agriculture and Interior were likewise brought in to organize the work projects because of their special experience and facilities. Officials of these departments still take the enrollees early in the morning, work them on the project during the day, and return them in the late afternoon to the War Department officials at the camp."³² Though this suggests easy transitions and willing cooperation, in practice, the Using Agencies responded across a broad spectrum, ranging from full to reluctant cooperation. For example, the USFS did not change its program because of its involvement with the CCC; rather, the CCC conformed its involvement to the USFS. This type of agency identity affected the ways in which each agency and the Army engaged in CCC work.

The NPS's sense of agency identity exhibited the cooperative spirit suggested by much of the CCC literature, while simultaneously exercising its own sense of agency

31 Hal K. Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Identity and Evolution in the NPS-USFS Dispute, 1916-1937," *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 20 No. 2 (May 1989), 142.

32 *The CCC—Recommendations of the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education*, 19.

ownership in its CCC participation. Upon the creation of the CCC, the NPS Director was Horace M. Albright; shortly after the CCC's inception, the third director, Arno Cammerer assumed the helm and held the position from 1933-1940, throughout the majority of the CCC's existence. This shift in directorship from one of the NPS's visionary progenitors, in what Rothman termed "ineffectual succession," affected the identity of the NPS in CCC work.³³

The process for establishing NPS work projects highlights its interpretation of agency identity. In order for a project to be established on NPS grounds, the requesting agency—the CCC—had to prove that the work aligned with the overall mission of the Corps. While doing so, they not only furthered the agenda of the CCC, but also the long-term agenda for the NPS. Ultimately, its involvement in the CCC altered the nature of the Park Service administratively because it gained the essential regional structure, centralization, and bureaucratic organization that came to the NPS. In a sense, the NPS fully developed its agency identity through its work with the CCC.

Two Using Agencies that found themselves in the least likely position to exercise a sense of agency identity were the Soil Conservation Service and, as it related to the Fourth Corps Area, the Tennessee Valley Authority. The SCS was unlike TVA in that, while established concurrently with the CCC and the TVA, it was not a New Deal agency. SCS was not in an ideal situation to flex its agency muscle; it instead found itself in the

³³ Rothman, "'Ding-Dong Fight'," 160.

midst of the same interdepartmental struggle between the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior. The SCS cooperated well with the farmers on whose land they worked. However, the complex organizational structure, overlaid onto the CCC's organization, produced tensions between the SCS and the CCC and reinvigorated interdepartmental tensions. Intradepartmental cooperation within the USDA agencies, however, was readily obvious.

Finding itself by way of its involvement in the CCC, the SCS's resulting administrative structure at first appeared strikingly similar to the preexisting structure of other Using Agencies. As a standalone agency, the SCS initially operated with an Administrator in the Washington office, and in 1937, it established eleven regions nationally that governed the states within its boundaries.³⁴ These regions, in turn, maintained state coordinators, district conservationists, and area conservationists in the effort to provide relief to farmers. The Southeast Region, whose Regional Conservator worked in cooperation with the CCC Fourth Corps Area, included Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Similarly, the TVA's "place in the federal firmament of competing agencies, especially in the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, was not clear."³⁵ In many respects, the development of TVA administration reflected the development of the CCC

34 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 55.

35 Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth*, 23.

itself, marking a distinction of New Deal programming in general. From the beginning, this regional federal, yet highly decentralized organization developed administratively through what Hargrove termed “ad hoc improvisation.”³⁶ Created with the best of intentions in the context of New Deal relief programming, questions of how the new agency might operate were left for others to discern. The TVA’s directorship included three co-directors, a format unique to the TVA. The President chose A.E. Morgan, and left Morgan to select his co-directors; he chose Harcourt Morgan and David Lilienthal to fulfill this TVA “triumvirate.”³⁷ As a sister agency, the TVA likewise felt itself in an unlikely position to barter for or participate in the struggle for Agency hegemony.

The interaction and perception of the Army towards other Using Agencies and with the CCC reflects one of superiority and power. Inspection reports provide insight into the mid-level administrative position, as much documentation emanated from that level. The inspection reports also imply how other Using Agencies deferred to the Army, as one inspection question asks “Is Superintendent doing everything possible to interest Army in work being done by the Forest Service?”³⁸ Inspection protocol called for the inspector to score individual camps based on their “cooperation with Army” or “co-

36 Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth*, 22.

37 Ibid., 23-24; Trent Booker, review of Edwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), for H-Tennessee (October 2002), available at <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=6846>, accessed February 19, 2012.

38 ECW Supervision Inspection Report, Weekly Record, Forms; General Correspondence Plans—Program Inspection, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

ordination with Army,” but none of the other Using Agencies, asking only if “Forest Service employees and Army [are] cooperating effectively.”³⁹ The Army, though initially recruited for CCC work, considered its participation to be the most vital to the survival of the organization.

The USFS likewise exhibited a strong sense of agency identity, and USFS inspection reports from the Fourth Corps Area reflect this idea. Various types of inspections occurred on Forest Service property, including normal USFS inspections, Army directed inspections of individual camps, and inspections by federally appointed inspectors called Special Investigators. With multiple inspections, some overlap ultimately developed in the CCC’s military minded inspections and the Forest Service’s individual inspections.⁴⁰ Though essential to coordinate activities with the Army, the USFS approached its involvement as an extension of its regular activity. Instructions for the general inspection of the CCC camps under the USFS suggest, “The inspection of CCC camps will be correlated with the supervisor’s inspection of all Forest Service work,

39 Emergency Conservation Work General Inspection Report and ECW Supervision Inspection Report, Weekly Record, Forms; General Correspondence Plans—Program Inspection, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

40 Inspection Standards and Reports; Records, Forms, AL, Semi-Annual; General Inspection Forms, General Correspondence Camp Inspections, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

and not projected as a separate undertaking, since the management of the camps must now be considered as a regular Forest Service activity.”⁴¹

Additionally, the lines of authority described in these inspection reports suggest the superiority of the USFS. The USFS defended itself as a program and as an integral component of this New Deal program. In the December 1941 inspection of Alabama National Forest, the inspector stated, “In forest camps all matters and correspondence are routed through the district ranger’s office. The rangers take an active part in camp administration. It is the policy for the project superintendent to consult the rangers relative to field purchases other than gasoline.”⁴² By this mandate, the USFS exercised its control over how Forest Service camp administration operated, granting the obvious upper hand to the protection of its own agency identity.

Examining the CCC in Alabama, which operated in the Fourth Corps Area, Robert Gunnels describes the structure of USFS management on CCC projects: “The state forester was the administrative head of state and private land projects. The state was divided into four regions headed by regional foresters. Regions were further divided into ranger districts. Technical personnel were under the authority of the state forester, rather

41 Inspection Standards and Reports; Weekly Records, Forms, AL, Semi-Annual; General Inspection Forms, General Correspondence Camp Program Inspections, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

42 Inspection Report of Alabama National Forest, December 1941, p. 3, CCC Inspection Reports, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow Georgia.

than the district ranger, as set up in the national forests.”⁴³ Though Gunnels recognizes the nature of regional administration, ultimately, his interpretation focuses on the USFS specifically. Perhaps this interpretation is due to the structure implemented for the operation of CCC camps reflects the regular course of USFS activity. USFS officials fit the CCC projects into the USFS’s preexisting administrative structure. As a well-established agency, the USFS welcomed the CCC on work projects in USFS Regions but incorporated and molded the workforce into regular USFS activities. That agencies sought to preserve a sense of their own identity, while still striving for cooperation further complicates the obstacles confronting regional officials.

An Agency’s or the Army’s display of need for CCC work likewise affected cooperation. As nascent agencies, both the SCS and the TVA exhibited a greater need for CCC work because of the potential benefits for each developing agency. The SCS’s work exhibits the scale of cooperation that existed both between the CCC and with another Agency. In the CCC Fourth Corps Area’s District D, which was comprised of areas of central Alabama and eastern Mississippi, maintained seventeen SCS camps. Each of these represented the “outposts of this far-flung battle front,” surely a reference to the devastation of soil erosion in the southeast.⁴⁴ Soil Conservation Service projects brought together support from local farmers, CCC enrollees, SCS officials, and technical personnel in achieving the agency’s goals. The SCS and the CCC worked together in

43 Gunnels, “CCC in Alabama,” 24.

44 District D Annual, 33.

establishing cooperation agreements with individual farmers, who, in turn, established and facilitated the work the CCC could provide in that area.⁴⁵ Many of these first projects were transferred from the USFS.⁴⁶

For example, in an ongoing cooperative agreement with farmer R.D. Cantrell, from Cartersville, Georgia, both “cooperator” and agency worked collaboratively on Cantrell’s farm. The “Cooperator,” that is, Cantrell, agreed to “construct terra ces [sic] on 13.0 acres,” while the District “furnish[ed] 6 man hours of labor to sow seed and apply phosphate.”⁴⁷ The SCS and the individual farmers understood their responsibilities, and they likewise understood that the CCC would provide the manpower to complete the helpful and crucial work towards the management of these devastated farmlands. It was this intimate cooperation that provided much needed relief to farmers devastated by the Great Depression.

Though cooperation indeed existed, the SCS’s development in conforming to CCC standards is evident in the regional administration. The role of state coordinator, later the state conservationist, emerged as one of utmost importance within the SCS administrative structure. Most policy decisions in the Fourth Corps Area occurred at the

45 District D Annual, 33.

46 Simms, *The Soil Conservation Service*, 17.

47 Cooperative Agreement between CCC SCS Camp No. 13 and R.D. Cantrell, Fall 1939 and 1940, Cooperative Agreements, SCS CCC Camp No. 13 Cartersville, Georgia; Records of the CCC, 1933-42, Camp No. 13, Cartersville, Georgia; Records of the Soil Conservation Service, Record Group 114, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

state level, even though the Area employed a regional conservator in Dr. Thomas Stephen Buie. Correspondence emanated from all three levels of administration, from state coordinator to Administrator Hugh Bennett (bypassing Dr. Buie), from Area conservationist to state coordinator, and from district conservationist to area conservationist. Conspicuously absent from any correspondence is the regional conservator; however, the CCC employed another official whose job it was to facilitate SCS work on CCC camps.

Dr. Buie's role as regional conservator was not the only attempt to maintain an SCS regional presence on par with the other Using Agencies. Just as the CCC maintained a district level liaison, the SCS also employed an official responsible for coordinating interchanges between itself and the CCC. This officer for Region 6 was the Chief of Regional CCC Operations for the Soil Conservation Service, Alva B. Gross, headquartered at Spartanburg, South Carolina. This position, maintained by each SCS region, facilitated SCS work on CCC projects. In this capacity, Gross corresponded with State, District, and Area conservationists on such issues of delegation of camps to remain on CCC projects, the boundaries of these projects, transfer of personnel, and coordination with the remaining Using Agencies.⁴⁸ However, the dearth of interaction between Gross

48 Alva B. Gross to S.L. Jeffords, Area Conservationist, Spartanburg, SC, May 16, 1942; Alva B. Gross to A.F. Ruff, Area Conservationist, Columbia, SC, January 30, 1940, Cooperative Agreements SCS-CCC Camps, South Carolina—Inspection Reports; Memorandum of Understanding Camps, South Carolina 1941-42; Records of the CCC, 1933-42, Records of the Soil Conservation Service, Record Group 114, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

and Dr. Buie with the state, district, and area conservationists indicates a lack of interaction among SCS administrators within the CCC structure.

More broadly, the cooperation between two USDA Using Agencies was established through cooperative agreements, similar to those entered into with local farmers. Because SCS received multiple CCC projects from USFS concessions, SCS-USFS cooperation was perhaps above others the most important and most cooperative interaction. In order to establish the boundaries of each agency, then, the SCS, USFS, and the USDA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement outlining the responsibilities and expectations of the participating cooperators. A Memorandum of Agreement dated August 8, 1939, highlighted the purpose of cooperation, stating:

The object of the cooperative work herein outlined is to provide for the use of Civilian Conservation Corps labor in the Forest Service Camp F-16 on the Arnichee National Forest in executing the types of work authorized by the Civilian Conservation Corps on farms under cooperative agreement with the Coosa River Soil Conservation District, and under the supervision of the Soil Conservation Service.⁴⁹

These two agencies were perhaps best equipped in the context of the CCC to capitalize on the system of cooperation mandated and expected from the program.

The Agreement clearly outlines the expectations of both the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service. The Forest Service would provide such assistance as

⁴⁹ Memorandum of Agreement between Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and United States Forest Service, August 8, 1939, Memorandum of Understanding, SCS CCC Camp No. 13 GA A-1 102.1 Cartersville, Georgia; Records of CCC, 1933-1942, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

supervisors, crew, and gasoline in performing work projects as requested, so long as “they can be spared from their regularly planned Forest Service work.”⁵⁰ Soil Conservation Service expectations are likewise clearly outlined, including that SCS must “furnish all necessary plans and technical supervision for the field work of the above specified projects and of the above mentioned crews.”⁵¹ Finally, this Memorandum details the mutually agreed terms between the two Agencies, citing that “The provisions of this agreement shall be known to and clearly understood by all who are responsible for fulfilling said provisions.” Responsible parties included “officers of both cooperating agencies and of the Army.”⁵² Though the Memorandum was to affect only the USFS and the SCS, the agreement clearly places the Army in an elevated role.

Ultimately, the exercise of authority at the state coordinator level later eliminated the need for the intermediary position of regional conservator, making the fifty state conservationists the next authority to the Administrator. The work of the SCS in the CCC served as a precedent to the modification of SCS regional structure. The work of the SCS was well defined in the 1938 District D annual: “For each of these enrollees, after his brief period of enrollment is over, whether he returns to a farm home or some other field of activity, will go forth in the world imbued with the point of view of a conservationist

50 MOA between the USDA, USFS, and SCS, August 8, 1939.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

as well as a practical knowledge of conservation methods.”⁵³ Through their time in the CCC, enrollees who worked on SCS projects learned the value of conservationist ideology, reinforcing historian Neil Maher’s assertion about the CCC transforming the way Americans thought about conservation. But the enrollee was not the only entity to emerge changed from its involvement in the CCC. The SCS emerged from this grand experiment a changed agency.⁵⁴

Thrust in to cooperating with the numerous other Agencies likewise engaged on CCC projects, the TVA, much like the SCS, understood its position as a developing agency. Headrick and Schaffer, writing about TVA involvement in the CCC, juxtapose the two experimental New Deal Agencies, the CCC and TVA—one established to simultaneously reinvigorate a depleted landscape and workforce, and the other established for the development of natural resources for the purpose of rural uplift—and suggest that for Roosevelt, the work of these two agencies were an ideal match for each other from their inception.⁵⁵ The fledgling agency exhibited the cooperative spirit sought after in the administration of the CCC, a quality less evident in other Agencies. Some of the TVA’s projects were outside the scope of TVA work itself and included soil erosion prevention, reforestation, creation of state parks, and generally fulfilling its initial goal of developing the Tennessee Valley Region to provide hydroelectric power to the rural

53 District D Annual, 35.

54 Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, v; Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*, 6-7.

55 Headrick and Schaffer, “Peace Time Army,” 2.

South. It was to be, as Edwin Hargrove suggested, “an example for the nation in the union of agriculture, forestry, and flood prevention.”⁵⁶

The NPS capitalized on its CCC experience to actualize agency change. The NPS was a relatively new agency at the beginning of its CCC involvement. The thrust of responsibility onto the NPS, however, initiated the immediate need to develop a working relationship with its new Using Agency colleagues and provided the opportunity to solidify many evolutions brought on by its CCC involvement. The NPS benefitted greatly from the CCC; from the NPS’s perspective, their involvement in the CCC was one of collaboration. Conrad Wirth, who became the Department of the Interior’s representative on the CCC Advisory Council and led the development of the state park system, remembered, “We got great satisfaction in providing jobs for others.”⁵⁷

The year 1937 was pivotal for the CCC, as it evolved from the temporary Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) to become a permanent organization, but it was likewise pivotal for the Park Service. In order to better administer the CCC, the NPS developed regions for the first time in the organization’s existence, modeled on the organization of the USFS and the Army.⁵⁸ Cammerer, though a student of the Mather school, established an organization of the NPS where “functions were structured,

⁵⁶ Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth*, 20.

⁵⁷ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 71.

⁵⁸ Paige, *CCC and the NPS*, 51-52.

management was orderly, and growth came to the Headquarters office; decentralization occurred throughout Cammerer's directorship."⁵⁹ What developed as a result of Cammerer's structure, then, was the division of the United States into four regions: Region 1, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, administered camps in the Fourth Corps Area, which encompassed the entire southeastern United States from North Carolina to Louisiana. Dr. Carl Russell was the NPS advisor for Region 1 and the Fourth Corps Area.⁶⁰

At the heart of the creation of this regional organization was the development of state parks, especially in the southern region. Before the CCC, many states, including several in the Fourth Corps Area, did not have or had very few state parks. The CCC invigorated the push for state parks, and under the direction of the NPS Chief Planner Conrad Wirth, the NPS fully engaged in the mission of creating state parks and establishing a state park program.⁶¹ The district offices managed the state parks in collaboration with the Washington Office.⁶² Wirth was integral in developing of not just the state parks, but the CCC, as well. With new regions, a reorganized administrative department, and the evolution of the state parks, the NPS came into its own during the New Deal period.

⁵⁹ Olsen, *Administrative History*, 14.

⁶⁰ District D Annual, 16.

⁶¹ Paige, *CCC and the NPS*, 39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 42.

Existing state parks and those areas wishing to be state parks went through an application process.⁶³ Wirth remembered “The problems we were faced with in the Park Service, however, were almost insurmountable, especially since we had to establish from scratch a working relationship with the state park people.”⁶⁴ Even so, there was still much to be done to establish a real working relationship with the state parks system. As such, the NPS assumed a great deal of responsibility at a time when it was still developing as an agency and building a new state park program. Once each district cleared a state park’s creation, they then had to work collaboratively with the CCC to administer the state parks and to establish work programs for the enrollees.⁶⁵ Much of this work was then bestowed upon the enrollees, who were largely responsible for the development of the state parks system and for its quick and eloquent creation.

At the end of the Civilian Conservation Corps program, Conrad Wirth reflected on his experiences with the Corps in a final memorandum to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. Wirth suggested that “after the death of Mr. Fechner, the Corps, due to the assumption of administrative authority by the Director, steadily lost its cooperative spirit and, consequently, its effectiveness as a joint conservation enterprise undertaken by the several agencies of the Federal and State governments,” and that “What McEntee was trying to do finally became so evident that it was necessary to report to the secretary of

63 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 105.

64 *Ibid.*, 103.

65 *Ibid.*, 105.

the interior the state of the Civilian Conservation Corps as the technical agencies saw it.”⁶⁶ The Corps started out decentralized under Fechner; the NPS, at the beginning of the New Deal era, was decentralized with its locations out west. As the CCC progressed and McEntee assumed leadership, it became more centralized; as the NPS progressed under Cammerer, it remained decentralized. Though the CCC taught valuable lessons and established important concepts in the NPS, the Park Service developed in ways that remained with the program.⁶⁷

Overlapping regions hindered establishing a balance between managing CCC Corps Areas and USFS Region 8. Captain Wallace E. White recalled this interaction in an October 1941 letter writing that “Every district has different policies on many matters and different methods of keeping each kind of record so when a company or an officer gets in a new district they have to learn all over again.”⁶⁸ The USFS operated in a nine region organizational structure. The USFS’s Southern Region, Region 8, then, was comprised of three different Corps Areas, including the entirety of the Fourth Corps Area, which provided “for the operation of 112 forestry camps...18 TVA camps and a new camp

66 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 137, 140; Conrad Wirth, “A Report to Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior: Civilian Conservation Corps Program of the United States Department of the Interior, March 1933 to June 30, 1943,” January 1944.

67 Olsen, *Administrative History*, 14-15.

68 Wallace White to his family, Dadeville, Alabama, October 10, 1941, TWA.

for the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine in Florida.”⁶⁹ Region 8 Regional Forester Joseph Kircher had regular USFS activities to maintain and supervise, but also dealt with three different sets of military officials across three Corps Areas with whom he had to disseminate orders and coordinate plans as part of USFS involvement with the CCC. There was frequent inter-Corps movement between the Fourth, Seventh, and Eighth Corps Areas, as areas assumed more or lost available projects.⁷⁰ The power lay with Regional Forester Kircher as to which camps were to close, which camps could remain in use, and which projects to assign to certain camps. As regional forester, his authority extended over a broader area and established greater responsibility on the part of the USFS in managing its projects in three CCC Corps Areas.

The impact of USFS work in its CCC operations is evident. For CCC Fourth Corps Area/USFS Region 8, accomplishments included “approximately 36 national forests or purchase units had been established in the region.”⁷¹ This was quite a success, since states like Alabama had only one named national forest at the onset of the CCC program.⁷² Even though the USFS made great strides as a result of the work force the

69 Fred Morrell to Regional Forester, June 17, 1939, General Correspondence, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

70 Joseph Kircher, Region 8 Regional Forester, to USFS Chief Silcox, June 1, 1939, General Correspondence, Records of the United States Forest Service, Record Group 95, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast, Morrow, Georgia.

71 Otis, et. al., *The Forest Service and the CCC*.

72 Pasquill, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama*, 35.

CCC provided, the interaction of USFS officials on CCC projects demonstrates USFS superiority in regards to the CCC. Though the USDA was not as fiscally responsible for the CCC as the Departments of War or the Interior, the program would not have functioned without the effective communication and relationship between the two Agencies.

The Army, too, considered itself to be of vital importance, and this idea of superiority is evident in its involvement. The CCC was undoubtedly a militaristic organization. Army officials considered their CCC work secondary to the Army, lending to John Saalberg's description of the CCC as a "conservation agency modeled upon the Army, which the military leaders sought to operate without interference from any department or agency."⁷³ The cooperation exhibited within a fledgling organization like the SCS, for instance, is not evident in the Army's involvement with the CCC.

As an Army official, Wallace White often juxtaposed the Army and civilian Using Agencies in his correspondence. His correspondence illuminates the administrative intersection of the Army and the CCC and documents tensions evident in Washington between the Army and Using Agencies. White's perspective is unique in that he brought to his CCC experience an extensive background in both military and civilian endeavors.

White's desires to be on active duty in the military and his growing disdain for his CCC employment was at first a low rumble, but by 1940, this tension erupted into more

73 Saalberg, "Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC," 146.

vocal concerns about obtaining active military duty. Frequently, White alluded to the greater pay should he capitalize on his certificate of capacity and earn his promotion to major. He additionally expresses his frustration with the CCC, such as in the May 29, 1941 letter from Citronelle, Alabama, when he wrote, “It gets my goat to be messing around in the CCC when all my friends in the reserve are getting on active duty.”⁷⁴

White consistently considers his reserve military duty above his work for the CCC.

Beginning in 1940 and persisting until the onset of American involvement in World War II, White’s letters reveal his preference for the military. In a May 1940 letter from White, this preference is evident when he expresses that “I have been in this CCC’ing for so long now that there isn’t anything much new to tell about it. As I write this a considerable portion of the Regular Army is passing the camp on its way to the big maneuvers in Louisiana and Texas.”⁷⁵

This juxtaposition reappears in letters from September and October 1940 from Vredenburgh, Alabama. White substantiates his preference by noting the increase in pay he would receive in the Army: “Have lost two more officers to the army, making a total of three company commanders and four subalterns so far. Wish I could get in it – I could use that extra pay” and that he “still incline[d] to the idea of active duty in the Army rather than this job.”⁷⁶ Not only does White enter the CCC with reluctance, it was after

74 Wallace White to his family, Citronelle, Alabama, May 29, 1941, TWA.

75 Wallace White to his family, Clanton, Alabama, May 9, 1940, TWA.

76 Wallace White to his family, Vredenburgh, Alabama, September 28 and October 28, 1940, TWA.

he had sought work with his civilian, not military, training. When confronted with the structural and physical similarities of the Army to the CCC, White's favoritism for the Army emerges. White's experience and response reflects the popular belief of the Army's involvement in the CCC, as well as the dual stance of executive leadership in Washington.

Though strained, the coordination between the USFS, Army, NPS, and other Using Agencies allowed the Civilian Conservation Corps to develop in the manner that it did. The CCC was a relief agency established to alleviate the devastation on the workforce, misused farmlands, and woodlands nationwide. The program helped change the physical environment as well as the minds, bodies, and wallets of a downtrodden America. Through its nine year existence, the CCC constantly had to coordinate these massive changes among four federal departments, with much success, but these successes did not come without great struggles between the various Using Agencies. The overall organization of the CCC is reflective of its inception—it was a quickly devised program, so CCC leaders had to develop processes and procedures for the program as the program was simultaneously operating and evolving. Each Using Agency approached involvement with the CCC program differently, resulting in unique outcomes for each program.

In comparison to other Using Agencies, the National Park Service was a fairly nascent agency at the onset of the Great Depression and the New Deal. The NPS had a

long tumultuous past with the USFS, and when the NPS was established in 1916, it faced many challenges in the years ahead in developing the organization. As a result of its involvement with the CCC, the National Park Service developed and refined its organizational, administrative, and operational structures. Because of the needs imposed by the CCC, the NPS developed regions for the first time and established the state park program, headed by Conrad Wirth. The NPS welcomed their involvement with the CCC, and as a result, made great strides for the future of the program.

The Soil Conservation Service was likewise an agency greatly affected by its cooperation with the CCC. Developed concurrently with the experimental New Deal Agency, the SCS adopted CCC practices, particularly with respect to the regions. The SCS cooperated efficiently and effectively in its work with both the CCC and other Using Agencies, affecting change on a wide swath of depleted farmland. The importance of the regional administration to the SCS in its work with the CCC is evident in its development of eleven nationwide regions during the course of its CCC involvement. Though these regions were eliminated in the 1950s, this sheer act illuminates the importance of the region to both the CCC and to the Agencies involved. Similarly, the TVA was immersed in not only finding its identity as a New Deal agency but likewise as a participating Using Agency within the CCC. As such, it cooperated willingly with the other Agencies in working not only to develop the Tennessee River, but on state parks, in forests, and in soil erosion control. Of all others, these agencies exhibited most concretely the cooperative spirit suggested in CCC literature.

The United States Army approached its involvement in the CCC as a mandate—the President had assigned to the Army the management and creation of camps, for it was the only existing program with the infrastructure to undertake the massive responsibility involved with the implementation of a program on the scale of the CCC. Though the Army’s involvement was thrust upon it, the pervading mentality called for the Army to establish itself as the most important agency, seeking “absolute control,” taking care that “the work of enrollees in camp on military reservations ... [was] supervised by military officers not by representatives of the other technical services—the Departments of Agriculture or Interior.”⁷⁷ The Army’s cooperation with the CCC worked to their benefit in the post-program, as many enrollees left the highly militaristic CCC straight for enlistment in the military for service in the Second World War.

The United States Forest Service, next to the Army, is perhaps the program most associated with the CCC. The CCC brought together the USFS to work with the other Using Agencies. Though the USFS’s work projects were of integral importance to the success of the program, the USFS treated the CCC’s projects as regular USFS activity and maintained superiority over the work projects. The USFS was already a well-established program; juxtaposed with the Army Corps Areas, the USFS was then responsible for a wider swath of activity, imposing more work on the Regional Foresters. Finding a balance of supervisory authority was yet another issue. The USFS maintained

⁷⁷ Saalberg, “Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC,” 145.

the perspective of the CCC's subordinate nature, and subsuming its activities into regular USFS work reflects the mentality of the USFS towards the CCC. The CCC affected great change in the program; for the Fourth Corps Area, many national forests were developed, giving states like Alabama a viable national forest system. Ultimately, the USFS emerged from its involvement with the CCC and resumed regular activities, taking back former CCC camps for continued use in service to the USFS.

Understanding the administrative relationships between these and other Using Agencies demonstrate the dynamics of CCC operations. Young men went to work on public and private lands, in forests, and in parks, but it was not that simple. Sorting through the bureaucracy and determining lines of authority illuminate administrative practices of New Deal programs, how those practices reflected the existing agencies, and how the CCC adapted to modern administrative practices. Charles Harper posited that when “camp and project administration are considered it is difficult, if not impossible to decide which had the most important and the hardest problems to solve. Each is a necessary adjunct to the other and both are important features of Civilian Conservation Corps administration, as are the Emergency Conservation Work organization and the governmental selection machinery.”⁷⁸ Through its nine-year existence, the CCC developed, conditioned, and preserved not just forests, farms, and fisheries, but an entire generation of men. Conflict among the Using Agencies certainly affected management

⁷⁸ Harper, *Administration of the CCC*, 77-78.

operations. More importantly, however, each Agency and its cooperative spirit played a vital role in the success of the program that brought relief to a people and a nation in a time of great need.

Chapter 3

From “‘hollering’ distance of Hartwell” and Beyond: The Work of Administration in the Fourth Corps Area

“Jack Griffin, the driver,” began Wallace White in a January 19, 1940 letter from Heflin, Alabama, “has just [sic] come in and reported that the area [sic] is still frozen up so we may not get to the fort [McClellan] at all today.” After a night of freezing temperatures, White and his colleagues waited for vehicle #1155 to “warm up sufficiently to run” so they might make their appointment at Fort McClellan. White’s personal concern over the weather was double fold. He was concerned about making his meeting, but more importantly, this was one of the rare occasions where White could visit his family in Atlanta. White then stressed that the weather “may keep me from getting home or, if I go at all I may have to go from Anniston, wearing my nice new spruce green uniform! Wouldn’t that be something, to have to make a visit home in this monkey suit which looks like a bus driver’s outfit?”¹

White further elaborated on the day’s proposed agenda:

This is a brand new camp, 18 miles from pavement, tight back up in the Talladega National Forest, and the Choccolocco Wild Life Preserve. The buildings are set all arou [sic] around on the sides of the mountains with the officers and the using service quarters right on the highest point, and the water tank between them. It will be a beautiful camo [sic] when they finish getting it all cleared off and get bermuda grass set out on the ountain [sic] sides to prevent the ground washing away, now that it’s cleared off.²

1 Wallace White to his family, Heflin, Alabama, January 19, 1940, TWA.

2 Ibid.

White's letter from Heflin is instructive on a few levels. First, his experience with the weather introduces a condition that was unique to each individual Corps Area. Like other areas, the southeastern Fourth Corps Area dealt with a range of temperatures and climatic conditions, as the area spanned from the Appalachians to areas along the Gulf Coast.

Additionally, White's daily interactions with Fourth Corps Area geography further suggest issues confronting mid-level administrators like White. He reflects over the course of his correspondence on the isolated nature of camps within the Fourth Corps Area and the deficiencies of the inter- and intrastate roadways. Though the Progressive era Good Roads Movement of the 1910s made some advancements in the South, many of the roads White used had not yet been reached by the road reforms sweeping the region. CCC camps in the South were numerous, but the vast range of territory in the area meant camp locations were less concentrated. The same did not apply in a region like the First Corps Area in New England, where total camps were fewer, but more densely concentrated because of the smaller geographical region.

Finally, the new camp in White's letter recalls the issue of soil erosion and the Soil Conservation Service, the agency responsible for the third most camps in the Fourth Corps Area. The Civilian Conservation Corps and other New Deal era conservation agencies like the SCS sought to answer "the specific questions of the Depression

decade.”³ These questions included those of weather, roads, and the land that concerned White, as well as the broader issues of relief and recovery of the workforce. In the South, a particular tradition of poverty existed, and rural poverty rested in the hands of these two problems that New Deal programming sought to rectify.

In *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*, Sarah Phillips argued New Dealers believed that “farmers’ low living standards helped trigger the Depression” and if farmers could earn an “‘American standard of living,’ they would be able to purchase manufactured goods and maintain employment for industrial workers. Industrial recovery, in other words, was initially assumed to depend on the revival of *agricultural* purchasing power.”⁴ As was evident by the myriad New Deal programs focused on the rehabilitation of farms and forests and availability of electricity in the rural countryside, the success or failure of rural America informed the nation’s economic wellbeing. Policymakers could avoid future depressions not just by ensuring a healthy Wall Street but also by uplifting rural America.

This sentiment was certainly evident in the South, a predominantly rural area. Historian Paul Mertz wrote that “Widespread poverty has been one of the distinguishing features of the South’s historical experience, setting the region apart in a nation which has usually enjoyed material adequacy.”⁵ As a response to this poverty, Mertz further suggested, “As the depression deepened, the federal government tried to bolster

3 Rothman, “‘Ding-Dong Fight’,” 161.

4 Sarah T. Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

5 Paul Mertz, *New Deal Policy and Southern Rural Poverty* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1978), xi, 15.

agriculture and relieve the unemployed.”⁶ The South, a region long devastated by agricultural poverty and similarly affected—like the rest of the nation—by soil erosion and economic depression, welcomed many of the New Deal relief reforms. Such was its embrace of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the efforts the CCC contributed to the region.

Decentralization of the CCC under Fechner exposed various factors that made each Corps Area distinctive. Duncan Major, representative for the Department of War on the Advisory Council, recognized the importance of Corps Area administration to the CCC. In a report to the President, Major suggested “It is evident that a different solution would obtain in the First Corps Area in New England from that in the Ninth Corps Area with its great embrace of territory in the Far West.”⁷ Even Washington bureaucrats recognized the importance of the Corps Area to the CCC. As such, this chapter recognizes a few universal themes that related to the ways each region approached their work, focusing specifically on the Fourth Corps Area’s responses. Arguably, the external factors Corps Area officials had to consider ultimately characterized each region’s development.

This chapter details the social, geographic, and climatic considerations of the southeastern Fourth Corps Area. First, this chapter will address racial relations in the South. African-American enrollment into the CCC remained a cause for concern for

⁶ Mertz, *New Deal Policy*, xi, 15.

⁷ Report by Colonel Duncan K. Major to the President on the Army’s Participation in Emergency Conservation Work, in “Two Years of Emergency Conservation Work, April 5, 1933 – March 31, 1935,” 5.

Fourth Corps Area officials. As an area long consumed with racial strife, the Fourth Corps Area's responses reflect the authority of Corps Area officials to defer to local custom.

Next, the types of CCC projects placed in the New Deal South illustrate the region's complexities and unique features. For the South, private and national forest projects under the United States Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service projects accounted for the majority of camps in the region. Additionally, understanding the presence of a national, yet regionally based, agency in the Tennessee Valley Authority captures the ability of the CCC to capitalize on the available resources of an area in bringing relief to that area. Combining this concept with the numbers and types of camps further inform the uniqueness of region.

Finally, the experience of Wallace White highlights the unique geographic and climatic characteristics of the Fourth Corps Area and the resulting issues that complicated the execution of his responsibilities. Through his experiences emerge specific factors that influenced his working conditions in the South, including geography, roads, automobiles, weather, and clothing.

Ultimately, this chapter will demonstrate how geography and climate needs and types of projects were not mutually exclusive of one another. Together, the nature of the region, specific focus of each participating Using Agency, and decentralization of the CCC highlights the importance of Corps Area officials in carrying out CCC projects. Further, this section provides a model for future works on examining the CCC in the

eight remaining regions, as this is not intended as a finite or case study of the CCC in the South. Because the administration of each region called for different responses, each region, in turn, emerges as unique. In this way, the South is no different.

Socially, the CCC dealt nationwide with the enrollment of minorities into the program. In the West, that included Native Americans, who were placed into segregated camps in the Indian Division (CCC-ID). While the official CCC policy was to prohibit discrimination based on race, creed, or other affiliation, segregation was practically law. In the South, CCC Director Robert Fechner ordered that ““Complete segregation of white and colored enrollees is directed. Only those in states where the colored strength is too low to form a company unit will mixing of colored men in white units be permitted.””⁸ Administration of this New Deal agency mirrored other efforts in the South. Anthony Badger argued “the New Deal left the basic economic, social, racial, and political structure of the region largely untouched.”⁹ Because of the localized implementation of the programs, a generally accepted practice of deferring to local custom emerged, and the CCC was no different.

Issues with enrollment emerged almost immediately. Fechner—and other Washington administrators, for that matter—ultimately came into conflict with the CCC’s National Selection Director, W. Frank Persons, who pushed for equal enrollment of African-Americans into camps. As a result, the CCC adopted a ten percent enrollment

⁸ Robert Fechner, quoted in Olen Cole, *The African American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Tallahassee, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 26.

⁹ Badger, *New Deal/New South*, 31-32.

quota to reflect the percentage of African-Americans nationwide. However, Fechner and his like-minded colleagues ultimately prevailed in the integration debate. This policy, like the anti-discrimination clause in the ECW Act, was a cause for much frustration in the regional and local organization of the CCC.

Douglas MacArthur, in a letter to Col. Louis McHenry Howe, suggested that employing African-Americans in the CCC “would not be to the best interests of the Civilian Conservation Corps, even were it possible or practicable to do so.”¹⁰ Relying on the segregated nature of the Army, MacArthur further expressed his position by juxtaposing the practices of the Army with the Using Agencies, writing, “It is understood that the technical advisers of the Park and Forestry Services on duty with the Civilian Conservation Corps are, with one individual exception in the Park Service, all white. The appointment of these officials, of course, is not a responsibility of the Army.”¹¹ In this way, MacArthur separated himself and the Army from the Using Services and from what he believed would be the outcome of African-American participation in the CCC. To MacArthur, if one of the Using Agencies was responsible for the placement of an African-American leader, obviously, that agency had contributed to a failure of the CCC.

Harold Ickes countered this opinion and defended the Department of the Interior’s position in a letter to Fechner. Ickes wrote, “I am quite certain that Negroes can function

10 Gen. Douglas MacArthur to Col. Louis McHenry Howe, March 30, 1934, Washington, D.C., Records Relating to the CCC Educational Program, 1933-1942, Educational Advisors (Negro Appointments), Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Record Group 35, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

11 Douglas MacArthur to Louis McHenry Howe, March 30, 1934.

in supervisory capacities just as efficiently as can white men.... I can see no menace to the program that you are so efficiently carrying out in giving just and proper recognition to members of the Negro race.”¹² Roosevelt and Fechner ultimately accepted existing local practice and capitalized on the remote nature of many of the USFS and NPS projects to place the African-American companies that had already formed and could not disband.¹³

On the regional level, Fourth Corps Area Commanding Officer Major General George Van Horne Moseley worked to establish and maintain African American camps in the Area. Charles Johnson notes Moseley’s work in “The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942,” suggesting that Moseley was somewhat of a champion for African-American camps. When Moseley encountered difficulty in establishing some of these camps, Johnson argues that it was “not because they were Negro, but because they had come from other states.”¹⁴ Johnson’s argument complicates the issue of race within the southern context.

African-American camps such as the one Wallace White commanded in Shuqualak, Mississippi faced not only segregation in enrollees, but also in their leadership. As historian Calvin Gower notes, African-Americans “found themselves segregated from the white enrollees, but then commanded by white officers and

12 Harold L. Ickes to Robert Fechner, September 26, 1935, Washington, D.C., Accessed February 3, 2012 at <http://newdeal.feri.org/aacc/aacc06.htm>.

13 Saalberg, “Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC,” 181.

14 Johnson, “The Army, the Negro and the CCC,” 83.

leaders.”¹⁵ One exception, however, was in education, where a nationwide movement to instate African-Americans in leadership positions was emerging. Sam Thompson, an African-American enrollee serving in Florida, remembered that “In the beginning, there was a white educational advisor, but as it went, then a black educator. . . . So that was one black man. In the beginning, always the assistants were the blacks. . . .”¹⁶ White’s camp 4489 was another such company that employed an African-American educational advisor. Shuqualak’s educational advisor, a man White called “Prof,” was the only African-American individual in power at Shuqualak.

The CCC endured problems with minority enrollment, but a specific example from the Fourth Corps Area exhibits how these difficulties were compounded as local government became involved. The debate between National Selection Director Persons and Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia illustrates how a regional non-CCC official interjected on the issue of race. When the Georgia state selection director, H.D. DeLaPerriere refused to enroll the prescribed ten percent of African-Americans, a series of negotiations ensued between Persons and Talmadge.¹⁷ Talmadge deferred to DeLaPerriere who cited a litany of reasons for Georgia’s deficient enrollment of African-Americans, including venereal disease and general disinterest in the program.¹⁸ Talmadge’s false assurances and Persons’ persistence continued until Persons’ pressure

15 Gower, “The Struggle of Blacks,” 127-28.

16 Sam Thompson with Willie O’Neal, Interview by Ben Houston, June 19, 2000, Samuel Proctor Oral History Project, University of Florida, available at <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00006402/00001>.

17 Saalberg, “Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC,” 174-75; Calvin W. Gower, “The Struggle of Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1976), 125-26.

18 Saalberg, “Roosevelt, Fechner, and the CCC,” 174-75.

resulted in the enrollment of three percent of Georgia's African-American population. Largely, other southern states also conformed to the practice of what was locally acceptable and maintained their preexisting local segregation practices.¹⁹ This was possible because of the authority vested in the hands of Corps Area officials through decentralization of the CCC. For example, Mississippi, with an African-American population of over fifty percent, only had a total African-American enrollment of 1.7%.²⁰

Even with some activist effort and the availability of advancement opportunities, ultimately segregation prevailed in the South. Already noted for his stance regarding African-Americans in the CCC, Douglas MacArthur suggested, "The first consideration is the success of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and nothing that might jeopardize the successful administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps companies should be undertaken."²¹ Local and regional custom informed the ways in which the mid-level administration made decisions. The social equilibrium that existed nationwide—and in the South, with interest to the Fourth Corps Area—was far too powerful to actualize the equality suggested in the ECW Act.

The types of projects in the South also relay the Fourth Corps Area's unique managerial responses. While the various Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture and the Interior were involved with the CCC in various ways nationwide, highly regionalized

19 In "The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps," Charles Johnson notes that of South Carolina's 45% African-American population, 35% were enrolled in 1934 (82).

20 Gower, "Struggle for Leadership," 126; Cole, *African American Experience*, 13-14, 25; John A. Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (June 1965), 77, 79.

21 Ibid.

federal programs also emerged in this period. These programs existed in other Corps Areas, but in the South, the Tennessee Valley Authority represented one such agency. Though developed federally as a New Deal program, in practice, it affected a wide range of Tennesseans, Alabamians, Carolinians, and Virginians in obtaining hydroelectric power. Edwin Hargrove wrote “Public hydroelectric power was justified in this vision as a means for decentralization of industry in which the hydro capacity of the river would be the skeleton for areawide planning,” concluding that the TVA was to be a “model for the nation in how to organize and plan for the use of natural resources.”²²

The presence of this agency in the South informs the distinctiveness of region. David Lilienthal, co-director of the TVA, knew that it was important for the success of the program to garner support for this regional agency within the region itself. TVA had to “show tangible results early in its fight for existence so that local leaders would support it no matter what happened in Washington.”²³ Headrick and Schaffer suggest that through its interpretation of plans, the TVA “assumed a role similar to that of the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, common to Corps activities outside the Tennessee River Basin. This setup, unusual because of TVA’s unique regional status, did not inhibit the agency from cooperating with other Federal and State organizations.”²⁴ In fact, as illustrated previously, the TVA accepted its role and cooperated effectively with the CCC’s remaining Using Agencies that completed work projects within the Fourth

22 Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth*, 20.

23 *Ibid.*, 52.

24 Headrick and Schaffer, “A Peace Time Army,” 8.

Corps Area.

Though the TVA was a unique program specifically designed to fit the needs of the Tennessee River Basin area, agencies working in other parts of the nation were likewise represented. Among various camps in the Fourth Corps Area, spanning territory from North Carolina to Louisiana, the most numerous type of camp were those projects conducted on private land. USFS projects comprised the second most numerous camps in the area, and the SCS maintained the third. That these agencies's projects were most numerous reflect the particular needs of the Fourth Corps Area. Further, they exemplify the necessity of an individual region to determine where its specific needs were and establish camps that might address those issues. That the National Park Service did not have as many projects as the other agencies in this region is reflective of the state of NPS relations in the area.²⁵

Beyond the preexisting social mores of the South and the interjection of a federally significant program, the experience of Captain Wallace White further suggests some of the unique situations facing officers in the Fourth Corps Area. One obvious concern was with the sheer expansiveness of the Fourth Corps Area region itself. Encompassing an area from North Carolina to Louisiana, east of the Mississippi, the Fourth Corps Area was the largest geographically and contained the largest total number of camps. The disparate terrain posed a problem for White and other regional officers—not just because of the varied types of geography of the area, but also for the

²⁵ Master list of national CCC camps

administration of such a broad swath of territory.

For White in particular, traversing the expansive Fourth Corps Area to administer Districts C, D, G, and H highlights issues of geography and the state of roads and travel in the South. Depending on the camps in a specific region, White had to visit these camps twice per month, keeping him on the road constantly. Sub-district inspector-instructors like White were expected to travel to anywhere from ten to twenty camps within a sub-district. These officers were to ensure the proper implementation of regulations within this experimental agency. In some ways mirroring Sarah Phillips's suggestion for the restoration of rural life, Good Roads Movement proponents of the 1910s believed that in order "to stem the tide of rural Americans leaving the farm for the city was to improve rural life, and one means to accomplish this was to upgrade the public roads."²⁶

The South—rural by nature—had for decades relied on local citizen's monthly volunteer work in the upkeep of roads. Progressive ideologues invested in this sort of improvement, individuals whom Howard Preston called "highway progressives," shattered this tradition because they believed that the reform of roads would lead to an uplift of rural society. Therefore, this movement emerged in an effort to amend the "deplorable roads," what Preston termed "one of the South's most visible deficiencies."²⁷

The Good Roads Movement made great strides during the 1910s, but upon the onset of the Great Depression, the state of southern roads was still in turmoil. The Dixie

26 Howard Lawrence Preston, *Dirt Roads to Dixie: Accessibility and Modernization in the South, 1885-1935* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 12.

27 Ibid.

and Bankhead Highways characterized some of the Good Roads Movement's greater achievements, but "rutted rural paths" continued to be the status quo for most of the region.²⁸ Several New Deal agencies capitalized on the gains of the Good Roads Movement—including the Civilian Conservation Corps—but many of these gains were too little, too late, for the demands the program required with such immediacy. Preston suggested that "as late as the mid-1930s, good roads progressivism had failed to influence meaningful reforms."²⁹

This unsatisfactory system of roads posed a problem for Civilian Conservation Corps mid-level administrators traveling on these inadequate roads. Armed with Army issued automobiles, the geography, roads, and in some cases, the weather complicated the job tasked to White and other Corps Area administrators. As opposed to their enrollee counterparts, the actual work and efforts of mid-level administrators has not been documented in any detail. Roads and automobiles were often for White what shovels and forests were for enrollees. Reflected in the correspondence of Wallace White is his actual daily work. While enrollees altered their physical surroundings, mid-level administrators enforced the completion of camps' respective projects.

In a letter from the Andalusia, Alabama camp on June 21, 1940, White wrote that he had "made one round of my 8 camps and will try to get back around to all of them again next week on a 'check-up' trip, just checking on the deficiencies noted on the first

28 Corey T. Llesseig, *Automobility: Social Changes in the American South, 1909-1939* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 21, 69.

29 Preston, *Dirt Roads to Dixie*, 159.

round.”³⁰ Consistency of travel and constant interaction with the various camps was paramount in the administration of individual districts. White shared responsibilities during the period of this letter with his colleague Captain John Brandenburg, but when White administered other districts, he was the lone administrator assigned to that particular task. During those periods, he was responsible for more work per camp while he was still also responsible for managing the distances between individual camps. Traveling to each of these camps was time consuming, difficult, and expansive. White’s particular experiences dealt with camps from the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in north Alabama to the Gulf of Mexico.

For instance, on December 2, 1940, White wrote in a letter from the southwestern town of Evergreen, Alabama that “I finished up at Philadelphia [Mississippi] yesterday and left about 2 in the afternoon and we rode about 211 miles, all but 40 or 50 of it over muddy dirt roads, arriving here about 8 last night. We could have come back over pavement but would have had to go way around by either Mobile or Montgomery to do it, 50 or 100 miles further.”³¹ During this time period, proper paved roads centered around large metropolitan areas, leaving many of the remote locations of White’s CCC camps still served by insufficient roadways. Reaching this southwest town via coastal Mobile or central Montgomery posed an obvious logistical concern to White in carrying out his normal day-to-day responsibilities.

Historian Corey Lesseig suggested, “Rough roads and the unpredictability of their

30 Wallace White to his family, Andalusia, Alabama, June 21, 1940, TWA.

31 Wallace White to Julia White, Evergreen, Alabama, December 2, 1940, TWA.

mechanical conveyance, motorists might at any time confront disaster.”³² This was certainly the case for White in April 1938. Not only did southwestern Alabama and southeastern Mississippi present complexities for White, navigating the northeast corner of Alabama likewise caused concerns. In a letter from Moulton, Alabama on April 24, 1938, White recalled that he “left Ft. McClellan at 1:00, stopped in Anniston a little while, stopped at Leeds and had a tire patched, stopped in Birmingham and had a spring ‘rib bolt’ replaced and got to Moulton about 9 last night.” Even after these automobile issues, problematic roads further compounded White’s situation. He wrote that he had:

Originally intended to go around the other route but was told that some of the road was in bad shape so came by Birmingham instead. I want to state that the road from Birmingham to Decatur, the last town before Moulton, is the crookedest stretch of road I ever saw, considering the length of it—87 miles. I don’t believe there was a quarter of a mile at any point without at least one curve, hill or bridge sign on it. Most of the road from Anniston to Moulton is through country, while not exactly mountain country, certainly approaches that definition.³³

Frequent relocation of officers within districts of the larger Corps Area systems forced these individuals to reorient themselves not just with typical scheduling issues, but also with understanding various logistical complications. With the particular geography of the Fourth Corps Area, even individual districts looked markedly different than another district in the same Corps Area.

The problems with roadways and geography did not just affect White’s ability to perform his regular CCC duties—they also hit particularly close to home. His CCC

³² Lesseig, *Automobility*, 15.

³³ Wallace White to his family, Moulton, Alabama, April 24, 1938, TWA.

responsibilities frequently kept him away from his family for long periods of time; occasions on which he was able to travel home were rare. Problematic southern roads further complicated the frequency of these trips for White. Before a June 1940 transfer to a new sub-district, White wrote to his family that “I hate to lose this bunch of companies but worst of all is that no matter where they move me I will be further away from Atlanta than I am now.”³⁴ White frequently lamented the limited time he was able to spend with his family in Atlanta, and White notes in that same letter that he was “very much afraid I’ll get the sub-district in the northern half of Mississippi as that is just as far from home as I can get and stay in District ‘D’.”³⁵ The Fourth Corps Area consisted of Districts A through I, and the size of District D further informs the disparity of camps in the region. The district’s expansiveness also reinforces the complicated and complex nature of the mid-level administration’s ability to properly administer such remotely located camps.

In addition to the geography of the South, White discussed the weather, another concern facing Fourth Corps Area officials. Even within the same Corps Area, a wide range of climatic concerns existed. Because the Fourth Corps Area encompassed an area from Louisiana to North Carolina, a number of distinguishing features compounded the effort to issue a uniform mandate. In a March 27, 1940 letter from Piedmont, Alabama, the coalescence of geography and weather posed an issue for White:

³⁴ Wallace White to his family, Ashland, Alabama, May 13, 1940, TWA.

³⁵ Ibid.

Have ridden about 500 miles and have inspected 6 camps since Sunday morning. Sunday I was to go from Guntersville to Cullman, but on account of wet weather and roads under construction, went around by Huntsville and Decatur. It was raining when we started and soon turned to snow, so I had the novel experience of seeing snow on Easter Sunday. The ground was white when we got to Huntsville. When we got around to Decatur the trees had a thin coating of ice, over green buds. That is unusual, too. Papa, don't be sorry for me having to cover territory, etc.³⁶

The already problematic nature of southern roads became even messier—both literally and figuratively—when typical climatic conditions acted on these substandard roadways. For White, instead of traveling a more direct route, he instead had to reroute, extending his time on the road and time he needed to carry out his job.

Though the rain and snow sometimes complicated White's ability to travel within the Fourth Corps Area, sunshine, humidity, and other spring and summer conditions of the Fourth Corps Area did, as well. In a letter from March 9, 1941, White wrote about his son, Wallace's, visit. White wrote that he was "planning to leave here [Foley] early Tuesday morning for Niceville, Fla., going through Pensacola."³⁷ Pensacola, Florida was the location of Fort Barrancas, the military headquarters for District G. On this particular trip, White mentioned that he "Was especially glad to make the arrangements for Wallace [Jr.] to go with me on this part of my trip, while I am around the Gulf of Mexico and there is more for him to see. He has been delighted with the camp and park here. This is a state park camp, developing 'Gulf Shores Park' right on the Gulf."³⁸ This type of geography is markedly different than the cooler, hilly region of northeast Alabama, and

36 Wallace White to his family, Piedmont, Alabama, March 27, 1940, TWA.

37 Wallace White to his family, Foley, Alabama, March 9, 1941, TWA.

38 Ibid.

likewise had a different set of climatic conditions of which White needed to be aware in carrying out his administrative responsibilities.

White's letter from Foley further described some of the unique characteristics of District G. He wrote, "This afternoon we rode up to the Canal (Intercoastal Waterway) about three-fourths of a mile from camp to see boats, etc., up there and got to talking to an old man who works on a shrimp fishing boat. He said the weather has been a little rough and they don't expect to go out tomorrow but that they do expect it to be all right by Tuesday..."³⁹ Surely "rough" weather on the Gulf Coast was of a different type than inclement weather in other of White's regions. In a letter from Forest, Mississippi, White recalled this particular experience, stating that "The weather was rough and he didn't get to make it but when we got back within 25 miles of Foley (at Robertsdale) the weather had calmed down sufficiently for a trip."⁴⁰ Understanding, preparing for, and navigating coastal Florida and cool north Alabama presented both climatic and geographic logistical issues.

The weather also influenced White's wardrobe. As a mid-level administrator, he was to maintain a clean and presentable appearance, often despite the weather. He wrote in a July 21, 1940 letter from Robertsdale, Alabama, "This is undoubtedly a warm location. I simply melt one shirt after another. Thank goodness I have 7 of them now, bought 5 this year and had 2 left over, so I am hoping to get by. Had to buy another pair [sic] of trousers the other day, as I think I wrote you. May have to get another pair of

39 Wallace White to his family, Foley, Alabama, March 9, 1941, TWA.

40 Wallace White to his family, Forest, Mississippi, March 20, 1941, TWA.

them. The [sic] cost \$1.98 at Penny's in Andalusia."⁴¹ Warm southern summers sometimes afforded enrollees the opportunity to perform their work without a complete uniform. Their superiors, like White, were not as fortunate. Dress wear was the standard, and maintaining this appearance—despite the cost to the individual—was paramount.



Figure 4. Captain Wallace White in CCC Regalia, Courtesy Holman Family and The Wiregrass Archives.

41 Wallace White to Julia White, Robertsedale, Alabama, July 21, 1940, TWA.

White accepted a certain responsibility for his appearance, but like the enrollees, White, too had superiors to whom he had to answer. On one occasion, White wrote in a letter from Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia that he would have to replace a jacket that he had been wearing in fulfilling his duties. White's preference was to wear a specific leather jacket, one in which he was frequently photographed. He wrote "I find I am going to have to buy a blouse (coat, in plain English) as they [sic] do not permit the use of leather [sic] jackets in stead of the blouse. So many officers [sic] have gone to the army lately that I am trusting to be able to buy a second hand one and not have to pay \$25 or \$30 for a new one!"⁴² Though White attempted to take some latitude with his wardrobe, ultimately, his superiors ensured White maintained a certain appearance in his elevated role as mid-level administrator. Additionally, that White was financially responsible for ensuring that his wardrobe reflected his position was an issue that did not concern enrollees. Though certainly enrollees had to maintain mandated attire in social situations, their work attire was more flexible.

Whether clothing or the weather, it was incumbent upon the Corps Area officials to fully understand the specific needs of their individual regions. The decentralization of the CCC placed a higher authority on Corps Area officials to determine the best course of action for camps. With the issue of race in the southern context, the preexisting local system prevailed. Though for the South the most visible racial issue was with African-Americans, other areas were likewise concerned with minorities, including Native

⁴² Wallace White to Julia White, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, October 15, 1941, TWA.

Americans and Mexican-Americans, to name a few.

Understanding the geography and environmental needs of the South were also important for the mid-level administration. That most of the projects in the Fourth Corps Area were more or less in forests and on SCS projects reflects the nature of the region itself. The lack of presence for some agencies, like the NPS, further exemplifies the mid-level administration's role in implementing projects that catered to the specific area. As an area that came into the Great Depression and New Deal with few National Parks and a weak conglomeration of state parks, it is understandable that there would not be as many of this type of camp in the region. Likewise, each Corps Area looked different both geographically and climatically. Even within the same Corps Area, as discussed, the issues varied. For the Fourth Corps Area, a lagging system of roadways, a range of geographical areas, and varying climatic conditions affected the ways in which mid-level administrators were able to carry out their work.

Regardless of the problems that confronted White as a sub-district inspector-instructor, he took the opportunity for work and made the best of it. In a letter from Evergreen, Alabama, White reflected "One good feature of this CCC'ing, and especially as a rambling brass hat, is that I make lots of acquaintances and think a lot of most of them."⁴³ Rambling brass hats like White in the Fourth Corps Area managed not just the camps under their care, but they did so with a regard for a variety of issues. Without individuals like White and his superiors, the work of the enrollees in camps would not

43 Wallace White to his family, Evergreen, Alabama, November 16, 1940, TWA.

have been as successful. Paramount to this success was the careful coordination between Corps Area officials, both of Using Agencies and the Army.

Conclusion

Wallace White's December 7, 1941 letter home expressed concerns about family, laundry, and finances. Not far from his mind, though, was his looming belief that the war in Europe would make its way to America. In a letter from Monroeville, Alabama on April 5, 1941, White claimed:

The US is doing the only things that could be done to keep us out of it, helping Great Britain with materials and then getting ourselves in a state of readiness so, if the Nasties do whip Britain maybe they will hesitate to take us on. However, I don't believe they are going to whip England with the help we are giving her. Looks like little old Jugoslavia stepped into the breach, too, and gummed up Hitler's plans.¹

Since the war began, White, as a reserve duty officer, was preoccupied with the war's implications for himself and his family. In the previous year and a half, White was convinced that his placement on active duty in the Army would alleviate some of his family's problems, both financial and otherwise. Just as December 7, 1941 signaled a transition for America, White's letter on that day highlighted a personal transition. On February 20, 1942, he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died. American involvement in World War II contributed to the end of the New Deal, and with it brought effective change or dissolution to many of its influential programs like the CCC. White did not live to see the end of the program that had been so beneficial to him and his family in a time of such dire circumstances. But just like American society emerged from its involvement in World War II changed and reinvigorated, so, too, did the American

¹ Wallace White to his family, Monroeville, Alabama, April 5, 1941, TWA.

landscape from the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

As illustrated, however, the majority of the CCC's work, now recognized in state and National Parks across the United States, exalts the work of the enrollee. Most assuredly, their work deserves the credit it has received. CCC enrollees provided much more than a body of work on the landscape—they reinvigorated communities, established a working state parks system, and willingly entered into service during World War II, providing a well-trained and conditioned group of men prepared for the rigors of military life.

What has been missing from this narrative, however, is an understanding of what conditions governed their work. Due consideration to those officers who have been ignored for so long now have a historical voice, but there is much more to be said. Certainly a variety of situations, both preexisting and those developed during the course of the CCC's existence, affected the ways that the boys in the C's were assigned to camps, received their projects, and generally experienced the program. There was not an omniscient power that arranged for the coordination of the work of the CCC. The administration of the CCC, like the enrollees who diligently dug ditches, built roads, and planted trees, had names, faces, and pasts. The story of mid-level administration is key to understanding the work of the CCC.

For a program developed for relief, based in recovery, and focused on cooperation, the stakes were high for the administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps. To actualize these sweeping reforms that came to a wide range of Americans, it

was imperative that an effective administrative infrastructure exist. Through decentralization, mid-level administration emerged as the most integral component of the program. Mid-level administrators like White brought a variety of beneficial assets and past conflicts to their CCC experiences, further illuminating the complicated nature of the tasks confronting them. As a group, they overcame departmental and agency differences. They ensured that camps operated and did so with a regard for a variety of geographical, climatic, and social issues. Perhaps most importantly, they understood the needs imposed by their individual districts in carrying out the promise of relief to a nation plagued by rampant unemployment and natural distress.

Wallace White closed his December 7, 1941 letter by confessing to his wife “Do pray things will get better for you and that I can get active duty—or something—that will let me do more for you, dearest.”² The Civilian Conservation Corps directly provided an income to the White family in Atlanta. More broadly, New Deal reform programs like the CCC uplifted families from all regions, classes, races, and creeds to ease the transition between the devastation of the Great Depression and post-World War II prosperity.

² Wallace White to Julia White, Munford, Alabama, December 7, 1941, TWA.

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