



BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS PROGRAM: FAQs

Is your age limit flexible?

Unfortunately, our age limit is not flexible. However, if you are currently within the age limit but will age out before the start of our program, and you are a California resident, you can join the traditional CCC program and then transfer to the Backcountry Trails Program from there. Otherwise, there are many other conservation corps across the country that may have different age requirements from our program, as well as entry-level state and federal trails and maintenance jobs. There are also many volunteer-based trail organizations that you can find by doing an internet search for volunteer trail work opportunities in your area.

Can I start late/end early?

Our program typically starts the last week of April and ends the last week of September. Unfortunately, the start and end dates are not flexible. Our five-month season is part of what makes our program unique, and we strongly believe that our longer program time helps our Corpsmembers grow and develop, both individually and as a community. Early and late start dates also present logistical problems for us, and would inhibit our ability to complete both the work we are contracted to do during the season as well as the number of AmeriCorps hours our Corpsmembers need to get their scholarships.

Can I attend school while in the program?

Due to the nature of our program, it is not possible to attend school while participating. Crews are stationed several miles out in wilderness areas with no phone or internet access, mail delivery can be intermittent, and we cannot accommodate Corpsmembers needing to leave and return regularly for school, both logistically and to preserve the experience of the program.

The program does run every year however, so if you would like to apply after you have graduated, we would love to see your application! And if you are planning to continue your education further, or if you have student loans, our program gives out a half-time AmeriCorps Segal Education Award to all participants upon completion of the season.

What do you look for/what certifications or training can I do to help me get selected?

Since we are a development and training program, prior experience and certifications do not have a strong influence on our selections. What we do look for are people who are mentally, emotionally, and physically capable of rising to the challenge of the program, and who have a strong personal desire and commitment to complete the program. Five months in the wilderness building trails and living closely with a diverse group of strangers is a lot! We want to make sure Corpsmembers are able to live and work well with others and are willing to push themselves to work hard, learn, and make the most of the experience.

How do I receive my stipend? Can I sign up for direct deposit?

Checks are mailed to Corpsmembers at their backcountry camps during the season. Direct deposit is not available for this position. Most Corpsmembers will mail their checks to a trusted person outside the program who can deposit it for them. If you have concerns about this, or you think it could be a barrier to you in applying for the program, let us know and we may be able to help you figure out a solution.

What is the work schedule? Do I get weekends off?

Corpsmembers work 40 hours per week (usually either eight hours for five days per week or 10 hours for four days per week), but due to the nature of the program free time is much more regulated than for a normal job. Corpsmembers are required to participate in camp chores before and after work, as well as educational and crew activities outside of work time. On weekends Corpsmembers are strongly encouraged to get out and explore their wilderness surroundings, but must remain in the backcountry and travel in groups of four or more. All program policies still apply outside of work hours and on weekends. For a more details, see the Typical Daily Schedule.

What are the living conditions like?

Program participants live and work in a wilderness setting for the duration of the program, so "housing" is in minimal outdoor backcountry camps, with no electricity or plumbing. Corpsmembers and staff all sleep in individual tents, and all other facilities, including kitchen and latrine, are packed in by mule and/or temporarily constructed at the crew's camp site. Bathing is by solar shower or creek/lake. Crews have a camp cook, and all food is provided (there is a deduction from each month's stipend to cover food costs).

How can I communicate with people outside the program?

Mail, food, and other supplies are delivered to camps once a week by mule or helicopter. Depending on weight and space concerns, mail may not be delivered every week. While mail is the only method of personal communication for Corpsmembers, crew supervisors will have radios, satellite devices, and cell phones (when in range) to keep in touch with staff and in case of emergency. Corpsmembers are not allowed to bring personal cell phones or satellite devices into the backcountry.

Where are the crews stationed?

Our locations vary, but common parks and forests that we work with include Yosemite, Kings Canyon, Inyo, Stanislaus, Klamath, and Shasta-Trinity. Crews usually start in a front-country location for a few weeks and then move to their backcountry location for the rest of the season. Crews may move camps multiple times during the season depending on their project locations, but most crews stay within a single park or forest.

Can I bring my personal vehicle?

We unfortunately cannot provide parking for personal vehicles. Most Corpsmembers either get dropped off or take public transportation to the orientation site at the start of the season (usually at the Placer CCC Center). We generally run a shuttle from the nearest major public transit locations to Orientation. After that, crews travel together in vans and trucks to their project locations.

If you are planning to drive a personal vehicle most of the way, you may consider looking into long-term vehicle storage options in the Sacramento area. Many airports and personal storage companies offer this service.

What gear do I need?

Refer to the Personal Equipment List on our website. Please note that we instruct our Corpsmembers not to make any purchases until after they have spoken to us and/or their Backcountry supervisors, so we can help them choose gear that will serve them best and last for the whole season. We are also now able to provide most gear for Corpsmembers who are unable or prefer not to purchase their own. Borrowed gear must be returned at the end of the season.