



A
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WITH A
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**The New York State Conservation Corps Revives
the Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps.**

By: Brian Burns, Karen Trush and Ann Harrison-Kravis



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Corps members put finishing touches on a handicapped-accessible fishing platform in Allegany State Park.

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Take a drive anywhere in New York State and you will see the fruits of their labors: scenic highways along the Hudson River, reforested hillsides overlooking fertile valleys in Cortland County, and great state park systems with names like Allegany, Green Lakes and Clarence Fahnestock. The impact of the hard work of millions of young men in the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps is well known. Now these same men looking back upon 50 years of experience are witnessing the generation who must deal with the ecological crisis of the mid 21st century.

"There was nothing. No food, no work, nothing. I have seen tough times and I hope you

never see them," Leo Downey, a veteran of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, told a gathering of New York State Conservation Corps members. "We did something for the environment in the Civilian Conservation Corps...it was constructive."

Mr. Downey spoke to the heirs of the Civilian Conservation Corps legacy at the 1990 convention of the New York State Conservation Corps held at Letchworth State Park last August. Present-day corps members had come from all over New York State to participate in work projects, meet youngsters from other areas and be honored with veterans of the Civilian Conservation Corps as part of Governor Cuomo's Declaration of August 22 as Conservation Corps Day in New York State.

At the convention, 17-year-old Kulbinder Hoonjan, a resident of Monroe County, described his

experience with the New York State Conservation Corps this way, "It does not pay very much but what you get in return is far greater than what you get paid."

The Civilian Conservation Corps is the model upon which the New York State Conservation Corps is based. To the Civilian Conservation Corps basic idea of young men improving the environment, the framers of the New York legislation added insights gained from the Earth Day movement of the 1970s, the federal conservation corps programs, and the long-standing youth service corps operated by other states and various counties and municipalities within New York State. The first contingent of young men and women began work in the New York State Conservation Corps during the

(Facing page) Tired, more than a little dirty, but smiling, this worker embodies the spirit of the new NYS Conservation Corps.

