

[Big Sur Land Trust](#) May 2010

Land Trust and Conservation Corps Team Up for Day on the Land



A special Earth Day collaboration between the Land Trust and the California Conservation Corps brought two dozen local young people to Mitteldorf Preserve to work on habitat conservation. The CCC is a state agency that hires young men and women, 18 to 25, for a year of natural resource and emergency response work. BSLT has received a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game to conserve the Williams Creek fisheries habitat, a tributary to Steelhead-bearing San Jose Creek which flows into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The Corps members spent the Monday before Earth Day clearing trails and road access to erosion control treatments, which, once put in place, will decrease the input of sediment into Williams Creek.

According to Todd Farrington, BSLT's Community Affairs Manager, the CCC is a great program that puts youth and the environment together to benefit both.

"This is another way we can engage with young people and connect them to the outdoors," Farrington says, "and while they are working with us they learn about conservation, caring for the land, and the value of what they're doing."

Farrington adds that the CCC workers ask a lot of questions about the natural features of Mitteldorf. "Many of them have never been outside the urban environment of their hometowns. Working on the land sparks learning, curiosity and connection. Collaborating with the CCC is a natural fit for The Big Sur Land Trust's focus on inspiring stewardship and connecting people to the land." By working with the CCC, young men and women, many from underrepresented populations, engage in meaningful work that provides valuable skills and experience and assists

them in becoming responsible and engaged citizens, while protecting and enhancing the environment.



The group working at Mitteldorf consisted of two teams, one from Watsonville and one from Salinas. For Junior, 18, born and raised in Salinas, this is more than just a job. “I was doing construction,” Junior says, “I loved working outdoors. Then I worked at SPCA as an animal handler. I loved the animals but missed working outdoors. Also, I needed more money, more hours. I’m working to help out Mom. She’s struggling. We’re struggling and have to move. Soon as I get my check, half goes to Mom for the mortgage.”

Junior adds that working at Mitteldorf was inspiring. “It’s a life-changing experience,” he says. “Working for the community is something for me that’s life-changing. We’ll see where it takes me. For now, it’s like, YES!”

Yumayra, 20, who has lived in Watsonville, Castroville and Salinas, says, “When we climbed to the top of the mountain, it was like, WOW! I want to work here more. To be here more. I wish I’d brought my camera.”

Caesar, the Salinas crew supervisor, has worked with the CCC for several years. “I’m trying to get these kids to change their negative behaviors and to build up their self-confidence,” he says. “I tell them, ‘You’re only here for one thing, to change your life around. Give back to your community and give back to your family.’”

The work the crews performed that day contributes to the Land Trust’s ongoing road and trail restoration at Mitteldorf, enabling better access to its upper watershed and preventing erosion and sedimentation in its waterways. Meanwhile, the young men and women of the CCC look forward to working again on BSLT properties. Yumayra, one of only two women out of two dozen workers that day (the other was a supervisor), is eager to work on the back country crew, a specialized program of the CCC. “I’m trying to be independent,” she says. “I want to work hard. I want to work outside.” The Land Trust is committed to ensuring greater opportunities for Junior, Yumayra, and for every other person, of any age, community or background, who seeks to deepen their connection to the land.