



BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS PROGRAM: THE WORK AND EXPERIENCE

The Backcountry Trails Program (BCTP) is an incredibly strenuous and highly structured work program where its Corpsmembers hike deep into the backcountry for five and a half months to repair and build trails while cooperatively fostering an intentional and inclusive community. Since 1978, the BCTP has helped Corpsmembers gain invaluable skills as trail workers, community leaders, and wilderness explorers, many of whom who have gone on to work for federal, state and non-profit conservation organizations.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- **Performing Trail Work (40%):** Corpsmembers are required to safely perform extremely physically demanding and repetitive trail work for 40 hours a week for more than five months. Hikes can range up to 30 miles a day over steep mountainous terrain to various project sites, while carrying up to 60 pounds of gear and heavy tools. The work ranges from cutting out downed trees from trail corridors, brushing overgrown trails, re-building trail surfaces from extensive erosion damage, re-routing trails away from sensitive ecosystems, to building an array of trail structures out of stone and timber using only the most elementary of tools – hammers, rock bars, handsaws, axes, shovels, and one’s own mind-body connection. Corpsmembers will learn to work around stock animals, apply partner agency standards of work quality, and will conduct job hazard analyses. Above all, the BCTP is a work program – Corpsmembers should be ready to work!
- **Engaging in Crew Community Development and Personal Development (25%):** Corpsmembers are required to participate in the development of a safe, inclusive, well-functioning crew community; participate fully in the program curriculum, community meetings and activities designed to facilitate crew and personal development; write in a personal journal daily; engage in activities designed for personal reflection; prepare and teach one or more classes to the crew; develop

and participate in additional extracurricular activities outside of program curriculum; participate in an ongoing individual development plan (IDP); and follow all rules, policies and guidelines set forth by the BCTP.

- **Managing and Maintaining a Backcountry Camp (25%):** In order to maintain a professional public image, Corpsmembers are expected to help out in all aspects of camp life and cleanliness, including set up and break down; twice-daily chores; keeping an orderly and clutter-free camp; adhering to industrial food safety, sanitation, and hygiene standards; helping the backcountry cook staff prepare meals and organize food inventories; and adhering to Leave-No-Trace principals and wildlife safeguards.

SECONDARY FUNCTIONS

- **Engaging in Wilderness Exploration (5%):** Explore the surrounding wilderness areas in groups through planned backpacking trips in accordance with all rules, policies and guidelines set forth by the BCTP and land management agencies.
- **Develop Good Public Relations and Promote the Backcountry Trails Program (5%):** Represent the program in a positive and professional manner while engaging with members of the public as well as land management officials. Work with volunteers on public service projects and events.

REQUIREMENTS OF POSITION

Physical Requirements:

- Corpsmembers must be able to perform the essential functions of the position, which includes hiking up to 20 miles a day at three miles per hour over steep, uneven, rugged terrain in adverse weather conditions while carrying 40 to 60 pounds at elevations ranging from 2,000-14,000ft.
- Pass a pre-enrollment medical examination.

Mental and Emotional Requirements:

- Possess high levels of drive, self-discipline, integrity, and emotional maturity to be present in all aspects of the regimented program structure provided by the BCTP.
- Ability to function and thrive under many strict rules and policies governing personal conduct and deal with very little personal free time and alone time.
- Strong desire to remain sober while in the program.
- Preparedness to have very infrequent communication with loved ones outside of the program through hand-written letters.
- Understanding that no personal cell phones or electronics are allowed.
- Commitment to respecting fellow crew mates' diverse backgrounds ranging from race, ethnicity, gender-identity, sexual orientation, political view, education level, socio-economic status, religion, and maturity level.
- Willingness to learn and expand one's limits in an environment of constructive criticism in the following critical areas:
 - Safety in all aspects of work, camp, and wilderness exploration activities
 - Understanding emergency communication and response times
 - Applying work skills and methods taught by staff and land agency partners
 - Working cooperatively on difficult and complex trail work projects
 - Maintaining a focused and intense work pace throughout the season
 - Personal conduct and professionalism around the public
 - Community development and conflict resolution with peers and staff
 - Managing a camp kitchen and food supplies
 - Abiding by Leave No Trace and backcountry stewardship principles

PUBLIC AND INTERNAL CONTACTS

Backcountry Corpsmembers will work, learn, and live alongside their crew of fellow Corpsmembers under the supervision and guidance of a Backcountry Supervisor, Land Management Agency Trail Foreman, professional trail

workers and backcountry cook. Corpsmembers will interact with land management employees, including but not limited to rangers, packers, and professionals in other job fields, as well as the general public, including volunteers, hikers and tourists.

PROGRAM WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Corpsmembers will live and work in remote, isolated backcountry settings far from immediate medical services. Emergency communications are limited, delayed, and contingent upon getting to a physical location to receive signal. Personal communication with people outside of the program (friends, family, spouses/partners, etc.) is extremely limited and infrequent. Mail is the only means of personal communication with those on the outside and it is received and delivered on an irregular basis.

Members will be exposed to the following adverse environmental conditions while in the program: rain, snow, extreme heat (90+ degrees Fahrenheit), extreme cold (32 degrees Fahrenheit and colder), dry weather, lightning, high amounts of dust, camp and forest fire smoke, elevations ranging from 2,000-14,000ft. Risk of wildfires, avalanches, falling trees, and rockslides are present and will be mitigated. Risks with wildlife include rattlesnakes, ticks, spiders, scorpions, mosquitoes, bears, mountain lions, and rodents.

Members will live and work around horses and mules that are responsible for bringing in their supplies (tools, equipment for work projects, education components, and crew camp equipment). However, Corpsmembers will be required hike in their own personal backpacking gear as listed on the *Personal Equipment List*.

Members live in backcountry camps with 13-20 other people with sparse amenities. There are no modern conveniences or luxuries (e.g. warm showers, beds, laundry machines, indoor bathrooms and plumbing, etc.). Personal electronics such as music/video players, Garmin or Spot devices, and cell phones are not permitted while in the program. Members will sleep in a personal tent on the ground. Members will be required to sleep in a kitchen tent to protect foodstuffs from wildlife once or twice monthly. Daily bathing

and adhering to other personal hygiene standards are required. All food will be provided, but members may be required to cook for their crew for long periods of time and will be required to cook for themselves on the weekend.

Members will live and work under very regimented and structured conditions with many rules and policies that regulate personal conduct, work performance, personal development. The work week can vary between eight and ten hours on the trail daily. Additionally, Corpsmembers are required to perform daily morning and evening chores in camp and participate in evening curriculum programs. Members will have very little personal free time to themselves throughout the season. To ensure safety and situational awareness, members will be required to follow a very strict “buddy system” at all times.

CONSEQUENCES OF ERROR AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS

Errors in judgment and/or failure to comply with the safety regulations and rules/policies of the Backcountry Trails Program and partner land management agencies could lead to:

- Injury of individuals
- Damage to state or federal property
- Negative impact of the public opinion and reputation of the CCC, Backcountry Trails Program, and Land Management Agencies
- Financial loss or penalty to the program.

Corpsmembers found in violation of the Backcountry Trails Program rules and regulations are subject to a system of corrective action that can lead up to and include self-resignation from the program and/or from the CCC.