



Frequently Asked Questions

AmeriCorps NCCC Forest Corps

- **What are the dates of the Forest Corps program?**

- Nov 1, 2023 – Feb 29, 2024: Team Leader application period
- Dec 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024: Corps Member application period
- March 31, 2024: Application Deadline for Forest Corps Members
- Feb 2024 – April 2024: Member Selection Notification
- Invitations started in February and will go out bi-weekly until the end of April
- June 4, 2024: Team Leaders Arrive
- June 2024: Team Leader Training in Sacramento, CA
- June 26, 2024: Corps Members Arrive
- June 2024: Corps Training Institute in Sacramento, CA
- Late June – April 2025: Service Projects (could be anywhere nationwide)
- April 2025: Closure in Sacramento, CA
- April 2025: Graduation and Corps Members Depart
- April 2025: Team Leaders Depart

• **What are the general eligibility requirements for Forest Corps?**

- To serve as a Corps Member, you must be between 18-26 years old.
- To serve as a Team Leader, you must be 18 or older (no upper age limit). You may apply at age 17 if you will turn 18 before arriving on campus.
- Must be a U.S. Citizen.
- Must pass an initial drug screening test upon arrival to the program. A positive test on a drug screen for any substance (including marijuana) at any time during service could result in dismissal from the program.
- Team Leaders must have a valid driver's license, as they will be expected to drive the team vehicle.
- Must be available for the duration of the Forest Corps commitment, willing to participate in full-time service consisting of extensive travel.
- Must pass the US Forest Service's pre-service health screening processes (please see more information below)
- **Must pass a job-related Work Capacity Test to meet minimum fitness qualifications. See below for details.**

PLEASE NOTE: Forest Corps work is field based and rigorous. You must be prepared to handle hiking long distances while carrying a heavy pack, uneven terrain, carrying tools, and be able to complete trail work, surveys, prescribed fire burns, planting seedlings, and other labor-intensive outdoors projects. Please carefully weigh these considerations before applying.

• **Is Forest Corps set up like the other NCCC programs?**

- For the most part, yes.
- Forest Corps is a new AmeriCorps NCCC partnership with the US Forest Service. Forest Corps participants will pursue the same NCCC mission of “strengthening communities and developing leaders through service.” As with all other NCCC programs, members will participate in pre-service training and serve on teams. NCCC teams will have US Forest Service project sponsors, US Forest Service site supervisors, and address a US Forest Service and community-identified priority.

- Members will be subject to the policies of the [NCCC Member Handbook 2023](#), including the Code of Conduct and content outlined in “AmeriCorps NCCC Policies”.
- There will be circumstances when a policy provision in the Handbook is specifically designed for our 1700-hour service programs and cannot be applied to Forest Corps. Members will be made aware of such situations during the Corps Training Institute. Despite the overall similarities, there are differences (see below). Other differences may arise as the program is further developed.

- **Are the benefits to Members the same as other NCCC programs?**

- For the most part, yes.
- The benefits made available in NCCC’s other programs are highlighted on our [webpage](#). Forest Corps participants receive food, lodging, a modest living allowance, uniforms, and program-related travel expenses (including from your home of record to the training site, from there to your project, and home again after graduation), all of which are all covered by NCCC.
- All you need to provide is a positive attitude, teamwork, flexibility, and enthusiasm to serve!

- **What are the major differences between Forest Corps and Traditional and FEMA Corps?**

- Differences in the Forest Corps program include but are not limited to the following:
 - All Forest Corps invitees must submit an electronic US Forest Service Health Screening Questionnaire to the US Forest Service. Based on the responses to the medical questions, US Forest Service will require some invitees to visit a medical provider and get an in-person medical exam to get medically cleared. US Forest Service will pay for this medical provider visit.
 - The pre-service training will be offered in coordination with the US Forest Service. Certain forestry and grasslands-related certifications are available.

- As noted above, Forest Corps work is field based and rigorous. You must be prepared to handle hiking long distances while carrying a heavy pack, uneven terrain, carrying tools, and be able to complete trail work, surveys, prescribed fire burns, planting seedlings, and other labor-intensive outdoors projects. Please carefully weigh these considerations before applying.
- Forest Corps members will receive additional food and living allowance due to the moderately rigorous nature of the work. The member compensation package for Forest Corps members includes all transportation, lodging, clothing, the food and living allowance, a health benefit and more.
- Like other NCCC programs, Forest Corps experiences will help you grow professionally, and you will develop leadership skills and have a professional resume written by the end of the program. One main difference is that the US Forest Service is actively seeking graduates of the ten-month NCCC Forest Corps for federal entry-level positions. NCCC staff will guide and connect you with the right people within US Forest Service if you are interested in this career path.
- Independent Service Projects (ISPs) are service activities performed by a member in addition to his/her/their Team-assigned U.S. Forest Service project, conducted with community or faith-based organizations, local or national non-profits, schools, local, state or regional municipalities, parks, and/or Native American tribes. Time spent performing ISPs will be reduced for Forest Corps members and members will not be given time off during a U.S. Forest Service project to arrange for or serve on an ISP. Similarly, “specialty roles” for members will have a more limited role in Forest Corps to maintain the focus and commitment to the US Forest Service.
- Other differences may arise as the program is further developed and will be communicated during the Corps Member Training Institute.

• **Is there a pre-service health screening process for NCCC Forest Corps?**

- Yes!
- Wildland field work requires active teams of healthy individuals to safely perform work in challenging environmental conditions.

In addition to NCCC health screening processes, US Forest Service requires that all Forest Corps members meet certain health criteria prior to arrival to NCCC's regional campus in Sacramento.

- All Forest Corps invitees must submit an electronic US Forest Service Health Screening Questionnaire to the US Forest Service. NCCC will ask you for permission to share your email address with US Forest Service so that US Forest Service can email you the Health Screening Questionnaire.
 - Based on your responses to the Health Screening Questionnaire, US Forest Service will require some invitees to visit a medical provider in their communities and obtain an in-person medical exam to get medically reviewed.
 - US Forest Service will pay for this medical provider visit. Payment process details will be shared later.
- **What happens if I don't pass the health screening process?**
 - If US Forest Service informs NCCC and you that you did not pass the health screening, NCCC will ask you if you would like to serve on a NCCC Traditional team at NCCC's Southern Region campus in Vicksburg, Mississippi.
 - Service with a Traditional Team does not require the additional US Forest Service health screening, described above.
 - If you would like to serve with NCCC in another capacity, you will be assigned to a NCCC Traditional team and you will travel to Vicksburg in July 2024 to begin your NCCC service (instead of travel to Sacramento for NCCC Forest Corps in June 2024).
 - **Is there a fitness test for NCCC Forest Corps?**
 - Yes!
 - Wildland field work demands a high level of fitness to safely perform arduous, day-long work in difficult environmental conditions, including steep terrain, extreme temperatures, altitude, and smoke, and to meet unforeseen emergencies. When prolonged hard work is involved, fitness is the most important factor in work capacity. Work capacity is a composite of fitness, acclimatization, nutrition, skill, experience, motivation, and intelligence. Fitness is the most important factor. Fitness has two components, aerobic and muscular strength.
 - The US Forest Service will administer a Forest Service Work Capacity Test soon after you arrive to Sacramento.

Some positions, such as NCCC Forest Corps, require passing this job-related Work Capacity Test to meet minimum qualifications. Such tests help ensure that NCCC members have the capacity to perform work without undue fatigue and without becoming a hazard to themselves or other workers.

- You must meet minimum levels of fitness requirements for the type of duties to be assigned as a NCCC Forest Corps member.
- There is one test that is required for all Members to serve with Forest Corps, the Arduous Pack Test, which is a 3-mile hike with 45-pound pack in 45 min. This level of the test is required to receive the certifications necessary to be qualified for the work of the program. Please note: This information was updated on Jan. 24, 2024. You can train for this test before arrival, please see below.
- The Forest Service Work Capacity Test Brochure: www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Work-Capacity-Test-brochure.pdf

• **What happens if I don't pass the Work Capacity Test?**

- If you do not pass the Arduous Pack Test in Sacramento, NCCC will make another program available to you.
- As soon as feasible, NCCC will transfer members who did not pass the test from Sacramento to the Southern Region campus in Vicksburg, Mississippi. These members will be assigned to a NCCC Traditional team and must decide before they travel, whether they would be interested in serving on a Traditional team in Vicksburg.
- Although Southern Region does manage specialty teams that work with US Forest Service, all members serving with US Forest Service must pass the Arduous Pack Test to participate on those teams, also.
- There is no guarantee that any member who transfers from Sacramento to Vicksburg will be re-tested in Vicksburg or assigned to a Specialty Team to work with US Forest Service.

• **When I do pass the test, what will I do as a NCCC Forest Corps member?**

- NCCC Forest Corps teams will work on the following activities:

- Wildfire Risk Mitigation: Projects focus on planning, implementing, and monitoring hazardous fuels reduction with the goal of mitigating wildfire risk to communities, restoring fire resilient landscapes and ecosystems, and/or protecting threatened and endangered species habitats. Activities may include, but are not limited to, burn preparation, prescribed burning, and fire effects monitoring.
- Reforestation: Projects support reforestation and stand improvement activities on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and/or provide training for nursery work and forestry careers. Activities may include seed and cone collection or processing; nursery services to support growing seedlings and seed stock for formally managed orchards, reforestation needs assessments, planning, implementation, and monitoring/survival rates of trees; stand improvement and site preparation for natural regeneration; tree improvement area maintenance, measurements, data collection, and capacity.
- Resource Management: Projects support recreation management (infrastructure and trail maintenance), timber marking, vegetation management, ecosystem management, wildlife surveys, wetland restoration, boundary line/land line maintenance and marking, geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, resource monitoring, and conservation education.
- Wildfire Suppression Incident Response: When needed, teams comprised of members who have successfully passed a fitness test called the Pack Test and has received other USFS certifications through the pre-service training, may be deployed for wildfire suppression or disaster response and recovery efforts.

• **What will training be like?**

- On arrival day, NCCC staff will meet incoming members at the airport and help them get settled on campus. During in-processing, members will receive their room assignment, a Sacramento campus tour, and their uniform. Training sessions, conducted by NCCC staff in coordination with US Forest Service staff, will prepare members to serve safely, effectively, and collaboratively with their teammates.

- **Do we get to choose our project, and how will we get there?**

- Projects are developed and selected by US Forest Service staff, in close coordination with NCCC staff, and will be assigned to teams in a way that most effectively meets the needs of the US Forest Service sponsors. After training is complete, all teams will deploy to their projects in NCCC vehicles. Teams are typically 8-10 members but can vary in size.
- The length of your team's road trip will vary depending upon the location of your assigned project. If your drive will take more than one day, modest hotel accommodations will be planned and provided by NCCC. Come ready with playlists, travel games, and get-to-know-you questions for your teammates!

- **Where will we live when we get to our project?**

- Upon arrival at your project site, your team will move into the lodging provided by the US Forest Service sponsor hosting your team. Accommodations can vary significantly, from a shared house or cabin to a church basement, to camping. Housing for the team must include sleeping quarters, kitchen access, bathroom/showers, and cleaning supplies.
- Your team will work together to shop for groceries using your team's food budget and will share cooking and cleaning duties. Any necessary tools or supplies will be provided by NCCC or your project sponsor. Come to NCCC ready for adventure, and an amazing experience will be waiting for you!

- **What if I've never done anything like this before?**

- Forest Corps project sponsors will be ready to train your team how to do critical work tasks, as well as why those tasks are important to their National Forest or Grassland, their organization and the community. No prior training is necessary! Be prepared to try new things, learn from your sponsors and teammates, and gain new skills and experiences while serving.

- **Will I get any days off?**

- Your project schedule will be determined by the sponsoring organization.

Many projects will operate on a typical full-time, Monday-Friday schedule, but there are often exceptions, and you won't know your specific schedule until you are assigned to your project. Serving in a hot climate? Your project may start early in the day and end early or build in a break during the heat of the day, to maximize your team's safety and wellbeing. Serving with an organization that needs support on the weekend? You may work a Tuesday-Saturday schedule.

- In a few cases, you may be deployed to an immediate disaster response project and could be asked to serve longer days with fewer days off while helping to meet urgent needs in that situation.
- Members are permitted to take sick days if they aren't feeling well and can be granted emergency leave on an as-needed basis. Participants will receive time off for federal holidays.

- **For those who have served previously in NCCC, are we eligible to participate in Forest Corps?**

- In many cases, yes!
- Eligibility requirements for participation are addressed with the typical restrictions in place for serving in consecutive AmeriCorps NCCC terms, regardless of whether those terms are Traditional Corps, FEMA Corps, Summer of Service, or Forest Corps. Due to legislative restrictions, if you have served consecutive terms in both Class 28 and Class 29 in any NCCC program, you would not be eligible to serve in Forest Corps, which is considered part of Class 30.

- **For currently serving NCCC members (including Team Leaders), how can we participate in Forest Corps?**

- NCCC's Fall 2023 classes are set to graduate on 7/18/24 (Southwest Region) and 7/29/24 (Pacific Region). Current Pacific and Southwest members who are interested in serving in Forest Corps may have the option to graduate early, exit and re-enroll as a Forest Corps participant. In order to graduate early and go directly to Forest Corps, any current serving Fall 2023 members will need to meet these two requirements: Complete their 1700-hour service requirement with Traditional-NCCC on or before June 23, 2024, and receive a positive recommendation to serve in a second service year from their current Region Director.

Traditional Members fulfilling the requirements for Forest Corps would serve with their current class through June 25, 2024, and begin Forest Corps in Sacramento on June 26th.

- **What about health and safety precautions for COVID?**

- The Forest Corps program will adhere to all NCCC's current [COVID-19 health and safety guidance](#).
- Vaccinations Required:
 - Up-to-date Tetanus vaccine, and 2 doses of the MMR
 - Up-to-date on the COVID-19 vaccine
- To request a reasonable accommodation, please complete the [Reasonable Accommodation Request Form](#) in its entirety and click submit at the end of the second page. If you would like to request a Reasonable Accommodation verbally, you may do so by calling 202-360-8082.

- **I have asthma. Can I serve in Forest Corps?**

- Perhaps. NCCC's Health Service Unit will work with each applicant to identify potential limitations or barriers to service. Additionally, US Forest Service will be screening each candidate for health suitability, as noted above.

- **How can I train to pass the Work Capacity Test?**

- Ideas for training are included in this US Forest Service brochure: www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Work-Capacity-Test-brochure.pdf

- **Will NCCC offer the opportunity to serve with a friend to members in the Forest Corps?**

- NCCC currently offers Serve with a Friend for Summer of Service and we are also offering it for Summer Traditional Corps for the first time in 2024. We are using the Summer Corps to test this approach and see if it allows more Americans an opportunity to serve their nation through NCCC. If we see the results are positive, we are committed to learning from the experience and how it might impact service in other Traditional Corps, FEMA Corps, and Forest Corps programs in the future.

- **Who can I contact if I would like more information about Forest Corps?**

- Before and during the application process, please contact: ANCCC@AmeriCorps.gov.
- Once you have accepted the conditional invitation to join the Forest Corps program, please reach out to Pacific Region: NCCCPacific@AmeriCorps.gov.

2.29.2024