

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Marilee Eckert
Executive Director
415-454-4554 ext. 278
meckert@conservationcorpsnorthbay.org

Fire Training Ignites a Passion and Purpose for North Bay Youth. by Darren Bresee, CCNB Corpsmember



For Immediate Release – The 2010 Corps Respond Program at Conservation Corps North Bay put their corpsmembers through the Marin County Fire Department Wildland Fire Academy, a comprehensive program training graduates in basic fire behavior, firefighting apparatus and suppression.

Corpsmembers who graduated from the eight day course used their newfound skills to assist the National Park Service Fire Crews from Point Reyes National Seashore with their controlled burns during the 2010 season. This opportunity sparked interest in many corpsmembers to pursue fire careers following the completion of their term in December.

The Wildland Fire Academy included five full days of in class instruction in Geronimo Valley and three days of practicing hose lays and direct assaults on live fire at St. Vincent's off of highway 101. During this intensive week, students were taught the basics of fire behavior including the effects of weather, topography and fuel types on wild blazes. After passing the exam for S-130, S-131, and S-190 students were able to put that knowledge to the test against live fire.

Green helmets stood out against the charred hillside as CCNB corpsmembers flew up the grassy hills of central Marin with 200 feet of fire hose on their backs. With absolute professionalism, they executed their hose lays and chased the flames up steep terrain until the threat had been extinguished. This experience alone was one that they would carry with them for years to come.

Whether it was executing prescribed burns in the headlands to study the effects of fire on the habitat of the endangered Mission Blue Butterfly, burning away fuels on Bolinas Ridge to protect Marin's water supply, or destroying the seed banks of invasive broom

species, CCNB was there working in concert with NPS Fire and other fire agencies from around California.

CCNB corpsmembers' true colors shined under pressure as they proved themselves competent and worthy of standing beside professional firefighters. It was the highlight of the year for many corpsmembers.

These opportunities were life-changing for some, including the author of this article. Many of the corpsmembers going through the program saw a possible future in fire services while on the flame-licked hillsides in Point Reyes. The work provided in-roads and valuable face time with multiple fire agencies in the area.

The Conservation Corps North Bay Crew's introduction to fire services ignited a spark that is sure to burn in the hearts of its corpsmembers as they look towards their next career.

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