

Human Resource Work Programs on the Lolo National Forest 1972 – 1982

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This narrative is based on my own recollections. Updates, corrections, or additional remembrances are welcome. Edits are gladly accepted. I mention a few names in this note but there are many, many more individuals who were instrumental in facilitating the Lolo Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) between the years of 1971 – 1982.

I began my Forest Service career on the Seeley Lake Ranger District in June of 1966 and thereafter worked a minimum of three months each year for the remaining 47 seasons and worked full-time from 1974 to January 1st 2013. While completing my undergraduate academic training at Carroll College I was employed for 5 seasons on the Seeley Lake District of the Lolo National Forest from 1966 through 1970. During my 1966 season Dave Minister was the ranger and during my remaining four seasons Bill Magnuson was the ranger. In the spring of 1971, I applied to the Missoula Ranger District and was accepted as a member of the saw crew in the reforestation section. The second season on the Missoula Ranger District I was hired on as the saw crew foreman. I worked seasonally and part-time on the Missoula Ranger District while working on my Forestry Master's Degree between 1971 and 1974. I obtained my Master of Science Degree in Forestry from the University of Montana in late 1974.

When I first showed up on the Missoula District in 1971 Jack Large was the Forest Supervisor, Don Stevenson was the Missoula District Ranger, and Paul Martin was in charge of the Recreation and Resources programs on the district. The ranger district and Forest Supervisor's offices were both located in the same building /warehouse complex at 2801 Russell Street in Missoula. The Missoula YMCA is now located to the east of the former Lolo National Forest/Missoula Ranger District office complex. This building also housed the Department of Labor, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) programs.

In the summer of 1973 I began working in the recreation/resources section of the ranger district. Paul Martin headed this section with Ed Deschamps handling the range and wildlife programs. The coordination and direction for the human resource programs were under the District recreation and resources section.

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During this time period the Lolo Forest and ranger districts had “personnel sections” These sections were supervised by a Forest Personnel Officer. The Forest and Ranger District Personnel Offices handled employee recruitment, time reporting, payroll, staffing, position classification, and other employee Relations specialties. In the area of personnel management the names of Arnold Nelson, Nita Rogers, and Jack Burton come to mind. There were many other individuals but I will leave it to the “personnelists” of this time period to fill in the other names and job functions. Later on as the Forest Service management terminology evolved the term “Personnel” became “Human Resources”. However, during the mid-1970’s Human Resources referred to a collection of various Dept. of Labor programs hosted by the Forest Service. These programs were set up under the authority of the national Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Participants could be employed under various nationally funded programs including the Job Corps, the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC), and the “Older American” - Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Many of these Department of Labor programs were hosted and supervised by the Forest Service.

In the spring and summer of 1973 I recall seeing Robert ‘Lid’ Hill (Missoula District warehouseman) entering the vehicle compound driving one of two flatbed, one ton Forest Service trucks. These trucks had been outfitted with crew-hauling enclosures that had seats mounted in places located along the inside perimeter (similar to the “5-ton duce and half” military troop trucks of World War II). Each truck carried 10 to 12 occupants. This was the primary field transport for the CETA crews. Also, included in the program was the “Red Star” all woman crew. Many of the CETA crews were engaged in tree planting and brush disposal operations.

Also during this time period in 1972 the Lolo Forest began hosting two Youth Conservation Programs (YCC). In the beginning there was a 24 participant program on the Missoula Ranger District and a 12 participant program operated on the Ninemile Ranger District. In both programs the participants were all young women aged 15 through 18. The program was “non-residential” with the enrollees returning to the ranger district each evening Monday through Friday. The program ran for 8 weeks from mid-June through mid-August when the area high schools would resume instruction. The YCC program was structured to include 6 hours of

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resource related work and 2 hours of environmental education. It was decided that it would be more productive to have 4 days working eight hours (Monday through Thursday) and then devote all 8 hours of Friday to environmental education (EE). This environmental ed. included Forest Service employees organizing and making presentations (both classroom and field oriented) on Fridays. The sessions included presentations on forest soils, silviculture, reforestation, fire prevention, orienteering, wildlife management, and forest landscape planning among other topics. Also, most summers, during the last week of camp in August, there would be a four day back pack through the Great Burn/ Fish Creek country.

In the summer of 1973 the Missoula Ranger District program again hosted a camp consisting of 24 young women however the operation became a "residential" operation with the old Lolo Ranger District compound (17 miles up Lolo Creek) serving as the camp headquarters. The enrollees lived at the Lolo Ranger Station compound for all eight weeks during the summer. One of the residence houses was converted to a kitchen and dining hall. Also, the attached garage of this house was remodeled and incorporated a large combination walk-in refrigerator and freezer unit. As in the past the program included daily work assignments and the traditional Fridays devoted to environmental education. Names I recall are Bob Edgar (camp director) and a staff of Susan Schott, Mike Bird, Karen Eckels, and Delilah "Del" Loucka (cook).

The 1974 program was run much the same as the 1973 camp however the enrollee population became co-educational with 12 young women and 12 young men comprising the 8 week residential program. The staff size increased and the young men were housed on the station grounds in 4 twelve by fourteen, frame-supported and wooden-floored wall tents. The young women were housed in the former Ranger Station's two-storied administrative building. The building was modified to accommodate separate showers and bathrooms. Two outside fire escapes were added leading from the second floor. A summer vehicle fleet was set up on a nine week rental contract basis with 4 new, nine passenger, leased Chevrolet Suburban vans used to transport the crews during the field season. This was supplemented by other Forest Service vehicles as they were available.

In 1974 or 1975 Homer Bowles transferred to Missoula from the Bitterroot National Forest. Homer became the District Recreation/ Resource Staff Officer after Paul Martin left to become the District Ranger on the Ava Ranger District of the Mark Twain National Forest. As mentioned earlier, the human resource

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programs were coordinated by the District's Recreation/ Resources program. At this time Chuck Neal and I were members of the District Recreation program and Ed Deschamps headed up the associated range and wildlife programs. Within this District management framework the YCC program continued to operate each summer as a residential 24 – 30 person camp during the 1975, 1976 and 1977 summers. Ten years earlier in 1966 the Lolo Ranger Station had consolidated and then became part of the Missoula Ranger Dist. After that the site was known as the Lolo Work Center. Finally in the 1990's many of the original 1935 ranger station structures were removed and the site renamed the Earl Tennant campground and picnic area. However in the early to mid-1970's during the summer months Merl Gratton was the YCC camp director, Delilah "Del" Louka was the cook, and the enrollee work groups were supervised by Mike Bird, Russ Pilcher, Jim Weber, Jane Schmoyer, Mary Lori, Bruce Zinne, Wayne Beddow, and others.

As mentioned above, between the years of 1965 through 1967 the Bonita Ranger District, thirty-five miles east of Missoula near the mouth of Rock Creek, and the Lolo Ranger District, 17 miles up Lolo Creek were consolidated into the Missoula District and the two vacated ranger stations administratively became work centers. During the 1970's Don Stevenson was the Missoula District Ranger. In 1975 Jim Dolan became the Missoula District Ranger. Orville Daniels was the Lolo Forest Supervisor.

In October of 1977 the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) was created under further provisions of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). The Forest Service was to host select components of the program. The Lolo National Forest elected to coordinate and supervise a 60 person residential camp and also two non-residential 12 person programs. The residential program was to operate out of the Missoula Ranger District as was one of the 12 person non-residential programs. The other YACC non-resident camp was at the Ninemile Ranger Station. Early in 1978 I became the Director of the 60 person residential camp. Many planning meetings were conducted between January and the camp opening day of July 4, 1978. A residential camp was operated 24-7 , 365 days a year. The program provided room, board, and work details for the 60 enrollees year-round

Since the 60 person Lolo Residential Camp was to be operated on a year-round basis the first order of business was to determine where the camp would be housed. At the same time vehicles needed to be ordered, a staff assembled, operating

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supplies ordered and contracts for services negotiated and awarded. The Lolo Forest Supervisor, Program Officers, engineers, architects, contracting officers, district rangers and the Regional Office Human Resources group all conferred and coordinated regarding the implementation of the camp. Region 1 was also opening residential camps at Lakeside (Flathead National Forest) and the Shoshone camp in Wallace, Idaho (Idaho Panhandle National Forest). I believe these camps operated with an enrollee population of 100 enrollees. Also, there was a 60 person residential camp in Orofino, Idaho on the Clearwater National Forest.

The YACC was available to young women and men aged 16 through 23 years of age. They were eligible to remain in the program for one year. Approximately 10 percent of the enrollees who had completed a year could remain in the program as “enrollee leaders” for an additional year.

Numerous sites on the Lolo Forest were up for consideration including Camp Paxon on the Seeley Lake District, Bend Work Center on the Plains/Thompson Falls District, the Savenac Nursery on the Superior District, and the Bonita and Lolo Work Centers on the Missoula District. Since the YACC residential and non-residential programs at Missoula and Ninemile was bringing essentially 90 – 100 additional year-round field workers to the Lolo Forest it was desirable to have them available to do work projects on the most of the five ranger districts as logistically possible.. The enrollees could also provide supplemental help to field-going functions for Specialists at the Lolo Forest Supervisor’s Office and also to field operations at the ranger districts. A camp that was partially decentralized would be advantageous. One opportunity that helped facilitate the whole planning process for the Lolo camp was the awareness that the University of Montana had a residential dormitory named Duniway Hall that was not being fully utilized by the university. As the discussions with the university evolved the following elements were agreed upon. The university would make 40 existing dormitory rooms available on the ground floor of Duniway Hall. The presence of the Lolo YACC at the university would be during the winter/spring time frame between November 1st and the end of April. Also, GED remedial education opportunities would be also offered to interested enrollees and access to the cafeteria and recreational facilities would be included in the contract with the university. In essence the university would provide for six months of food, lodging, GED education, and access to the gym and physical fitness buildings. YACC crew vehicles could also be parked in the fenced university facilities/warehouse yard. This provided evening and weekend security for the vehicles, chainsaws, and other resource work field tools.

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It was determined that for the field season between May 1st and the end of October the camp population would split in half with 30 enrollees spending the summer on the Superior Ranger District at the Savenac Tree Nursery and the other 30 enrollees spending a portion of the summer at Lolo and the other portion at Bonita. The Superior Ranger District personnel were very instrumental in facilitating the operation of the Savenac Camp. Carole Johnson was always a consistent and reliable link to the ranger district management and program of work as was Jay Smith. During the summer field season of 1978 the building facilities and infrastructure at Savenac, Lolo, and Bonita were in the process of being upgraded. I believe it was in the neighborhood of \$850,000 that was available as a separate appropriation to provide for the start-up of the camp. This included funds to upgrade existing facilities at three sites. This entailed substantial engineering and architectural design time, and also the time and expertise of the contracting and purchasing staffs at the forest and regional office levels. Also, it included funding for the ordering of work related tools such as 40 chainsaws, utility trailers, and numerous hand tools. Facility improvements included converting a 1959 era three bedroom residential house at Savenac into a combination cooking/dining/recreation hall. Also, at Savenac, a new potable water system was developed and the sewer system was upgraded. The existing older cookhouse/bunkhouse was remodeled to accommodate a much larger bunkhouse with approved fire escapes and modern bathroom facilities.

In order to maximize geographic coverage and facilitate the mobility of the YACC workforce - three 12 foot by 60 foot specially constructed mobile homes were purchased. Two of the mobile homes were designed as twelve person bunkhouses. The third was a divided (custom built shower/restroom unit) with the front half containing showers and toilets for women and the partitioned back half had similar showers and restrooms for the young men. The front and back of each had separate entrances. To accommodate the three mobile units three concrete full-length parking pads were leveled and constructed. The three large trailer pads were at Bonita, Lolo, and Savenac and had county approved sewer/electrical/potable water and near-by fire department approved fire hydrants. The completed pads allowed for a local contracted trailer moving company to move the sleeping and showering facilities as needed between any of the three sites depending on where work for the season had been planned.

At the Lolo site the YACC director asked Delilah "Del" Louka the YCC cook if she would consider beginning work earlier than usual in late April at Lolo for the

YACC and then continue with the YCC in mid-June and finally to continue with the YACC when the enrollees returned to Lolo from Bonita. The cooking would be concluded by the end of October when the camp returned to the university campus. Del accepted my proposal and under this arrangement she cooked for the YACC from May 1st until the middle of June when the Youth Conservation Corps enrollees came and then after that 8 week YCC program she then switched back to the YACC from mid- June until the end of October. During the first summer of 1978 at Savenac the kitchen and dining room had not been remodeled. Some Savenac Nursery buildings were being re-purposed and the 1959's three bedroom home on the site became a commercial kitchen/dining hall with a basement evening recreation area. The attached garage was converted to contain a very large walk-in cooler and freezer. During this construction summer we contracted with Roberta, the owner of the "Atom Haven" café in Deborgia, to provide breakfast, a sack lunch, and a sit-down dinner for 40 people each week-day at her café. The café was approximately three miles away in Deborgia. This contract was for meals between mid-July and the end of October 1978. We made the most of the existing facilities and knew that by the following summer in 1979 all of the facilities would be new and upgraded to a nice standard and fully available at the Savenac site.

The residential program staff evolved and changed over the three years of operation but most of the individuals and position assignments remained fairly stable with Patrick Cortis as overall Program Director, Bill Oelig the Work Program Director, Karen Raymond Residential/Recreation and Leisure Time Director, Muriel "Micki" McCorkle Business/Finance Manager, Crew Supervisors/Leaders were Joe Kipphut, Jean Bryant, George Regan, Wendell Brave, Henry Standing Rock, Jere Hightower, Sharon Mitman, and Leonard Smith. Joe, Henry, George, and Sharon were with the program as work leaders for the full three year operation of the camp. On the Recreational/Evening/Weekend supervision portion of the Program Karen Raymond was the Supervisory Group Leader with Assistants Nan Hawthorne, Claire O'Connell, Paula Waide, and the night watchman was Chuck Hagen. At Savenac Joe Darage from Coeur 'd Alene, Idaho was the cook during the week and Kevin was the assistant cook who worked weekends.

Many work projects were completed over the years, most having to do with natural resource management but others were designed to benefit the local communities. Projects that come to mind are trail work that included reconstruction of the Wilkes Cr. and Packer Cr. trails on the Superior District. Trail relocation and heavy

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maintenance on the Ranch Cr. trail in Rock Cr. on the Missoula Ranger District and two, ten day hitches spent at the very end of the South Fork of Lolo Trail on the Missoula District just over the Bitterroot Divide from Bass Creek. The trail was raised and relocated around numerous wet and boggy spots.

There were always post and pole fence construction projects. Sites for fencing were at the Valley of the Moon, Fort Fizzle, Blue Mountain, Ranch Cr., and Grizzly Creek. During the winter months both the non-residential and the residential YACC programs worked primarily out of the Missoula area. The Ninemile non-residential crew worked mainly on the Ninemile District.

In the winter months two crews would work a few miles up Lolo Cr. from the Lolo Hot Springs. This site was at Mud Creek. There was an extensive stand of lodgepole pine located there. This stand was thinned over the three years and all 3 and 4 inch diameter, 18 foot long lodgepoles were set aside, peeled with draw knives, and then transported and stacked for storage and drying down at the Lolo Work Center. Tree thinning was also conducted at Mittour Gulch off of Marshall Canyon near Missoula, and at Tyler Cr. near Beavertail Hill. Many enrollees became skilled chainsaw operators.

Physical Fitness trails were constructed using Missoula Equipment Development Center (MEDC) technical specifications. These trails included exercise stations such as sit-up benches, chin-up bars, and stair-steps. Many of these ¼ mile trails were constructed at various sites including Lolo Work Center, Savenac, University of Montana, Superior, and a few local school grounds. During the winter when the snow became deeper, a partial crew was assigned to the Fort Missoula Museum to build indoor storage shelves, cabinets, and archival sorting tables. Another ten person crew usually went to the heated warehouse at Bonita to prepare picnic table tops and benches for re-installation at the many campgrounds up Rock Creek. These had been removed at campground sites in the late fall and would after sanding and re-painting, be carefully stacked and dried at Bonita. In the early spring they would be loaded up and replaced at the various Rock Creek and Pattee Canyon campgrounds and picnic areas before Memorial Day.

Some enrollees assisted the Supervisor's Office resource specialists with mapping and data entry projects. Other enrollees groomed cross country ski trails, snowmobile trails, and shoveled building roofs at Lolo Pass. On the Seeley Lake District at Lake Alva the Forest Landscape Architect and engineers had the crew

provide winter beach lake profiles. The lake bottom depths were taken on a very large 25 foot grid spread over one acre on the ice. The many holes were drilled in the lake ice. The depths were then measured with large plumb bobs and recorded. The data then assisted with designing and locating of future boat launch and swimming area locations. This was all part of the design phase for this new Lake Alva campground in 1979. Also, on-site hazard trees were felled.

During the summer four log bridges for snowmobile and hiking use were put in place over Lolo Creek, East Fork Lolo, Lee Creek and Packers Meadow. Some bridges were 30 feet long. Crews were trained and certified in wildland fire fighting and were dispatched to various fires during the summer. Some enrollees assisted at the Newman Ridge Rocky Mountain Research site to help record data from research plots. Also numerous building structures at Bonita, Lolo, Lolo Pass, and Savenac were wire brushed, scraped, sanded, and painted. Also picnic tables and outhouses at numerous campgrounds were maintained at many sites around the entire Lolo Forest.

I am hesitant to name individuals who helped with the YCC and YACC between 1972 and 1982 however being aware of the risks I will list a few knowing full-well that I will not have mentioned many others who were also very instrumental. I ask help for this part of the narrative since I will need other readers to “fill in the names” I have missed. I will not try to list all of the District Rangers, Forest Program Officers, Resource Specialists, Contracting Officers, Personnel employees, Budget Managers, Engineers, and many, many others. Listed here are a few that come to mind:

Missoula Ranger District – Jim Dolan (District Ranger), Homer Bowles (Recreation/Resource Forester), Ed Deschamps (Range and Wildlife), Betty Hanson and Muriel “Micki” McCorkle –Tourtlette.(Budget and Finance), Tom Reese (Fire Prevention/Lookouts), Jane Schmoyer-Weber, Jim Weber, Chuck Neal (Recreation), Robert “Lid” Hill (Warehouseman). Kathy Elzig and Marcia Hogan(Timber and also YACC non-residential program), Tom Klabunde Timber and YACC non-residential coordination.

Superior Ranger District – Carole Johnson (Recreation, Trails, and Human Resource Programs including the “Older American SCSEP programs) Jay Smith (Reforestation), Charles D. “Coon Dog” Schroeder (Fire Suppression and

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year-round Savenac east house resident and winter caretaker), Frank Ehrenberger (Engineering), Liz Gupton (Engineering)

Ninemile Ranger District – the Human Resource YCC/YACC Coordinators.

As a brief aside - during the 1970's I believe the Missoula District's timber harvest program was approximately 24 million board feet per year and the Superior and Plains Ranger districts were each averaging 30 to 35 million board feet per year. Also, each ranger district had a land use planning team. Kent Nelson and Steve Solem and others worked on the Missoula District's Petty Mountain Planning Unit Plan. During this time period each ranger district on the Lolo had 4 or 5 identified Resource Management Units (RMU's). This was prior to the advent of Forest Planning (NFMA). Each ranger district had its own land use planners and they were anticipating writing four or five district unit plans over the course of 10 to 12 years. In 1976 the "National Forest Management Act" changed the emphasis and the directions provided for under provisions within the 1960 "Multiple- Use Sustained Yield Act". The "National Environmental Policy Act" of 1969 helped to reformulate resource management thinking and in the process various Lolo ranger district planners became integrated into the larger Lolo 1979 Forest Management Planning program. This change would now entail the writing of the first National Forest Management Plans. Nationwide 10 National Forests were selected to write their own Forest Plans. An overall Forest Plan had never been written so each forest was basically conducting an experiment. Forest Supervisor Orville Daniels eventually oversaw the evolution of ultimately three revisions of the very first 1980 Lolo plan. The refinement of the first and second plans culminated in the publishing of the 1986 final "Lolo Forest Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement".

As for the human resource programs, when the new national administration under President Regan took office in early 1981 most of the existing human resource programs were directed to disband. By fall of 1981 only the YCC remained but it was not funded by the Department of Labor but rather it was to be funded through financing within the regular Forest Service budget process.

On display at the Historic Savenac Nursery in Haugan, Montana there is a two volume set of colored pictures with captions and notations taken during the Lolo National Forest, Young Adult Conservation Corps years of operation between May of 1978 and May of 1981.