"For those of us who lived through the era of the New Deal, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the hero of the conservation movement... Never before [this book] has the performance of an administration with respect to the environment been appraised so diligently. This book not only gives us a fresh view of one of the most significant features of the age of Roosevelt, but also informs our understanding of the directions we should pursue in the twenty-first century." —William Leuchtenberg, from the Foreword

"Do you think that the environmental movement started in the 1960s? Think again. This book demonstrates that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a true environmentalist—and that his deep interest in conservation, and in environmental protection, continues to mark America’s identity today. Woolner and Henderson have assembled a wonderful collection of essays that should produce a rethinking of the nation’s environmental legacy."

—Cass R. Sunstein, University of Chicago Law School and author of The Second Bill of Rights: FDR’s Constitutional Vision and Why We Need It More Than Ever

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—Dan Farber, Director of the Environmental Law Program, University of California at Berkeley and author of EcoPragmatism: Making Sensible Environmental Decisions in an Uncertain World

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In the fall of 2002 the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, and Marist College hosted a remarkable conference entitled Recovering the Environmental Legacy of FDR. As the title suggests, the conference sought to reexamine the Progressive era conservation policies of the New Deal based on the principle that many of the programs and policies of this remarkable era stand at the root of modern environmentalism.

A conference of this intellectual scope and vigor could not have happened without the assistance of many individuals and the support of a number of key institutions. The inspiration for the conference came from Roosevelt Institute Co-chairs Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, granddaughter of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and William J. vanden Heuvel. Without their vision and dedication to the legacy of FDR such a conference would not have been possible. We are also grateful to Dr. Cynthia Koch, the director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum and to the staffs of the FDR Library and Roosevelt Institute for their kind assistance. Special thanks must also go to Marist College president, Dr. Dennis Murray, for his strong support, as well as to Marist’s dean of Liberal Arts and director of the Hudson River Valley Institute (HRVI) Dr. Thomas Wermuth, whose steadfast commitment to our efforts proved invaluable. Chris Pavlovski, the program director of HRVI, and Marist’s Director Special Events, Valerie Hall also deserve recognition for their help in organizing the event.

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On April 7, 1933, just two weeks after President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) into law, Henry Rich of Alexandria, Virginia became the first American citizen to enroll in the New Deal program. After spending ten days at Fort Washington, an army conditioning camp just outside the nation's capital, Rich and approximately two-hundred other young men boarded buses and traveled south through Luray, Virginia into nearby George Washington National Forest. After hiking through the forest up to a valley in the Massanutten mountains, the enrollees arrived at a site selected by the United States Forest Service. As dusk settled and the weather grew cold, the men ate a hot meal prepared from a make-shift kitchen and stretched out on the ground with blankets for the night. In the morning, before they began clearing the area of undergrowth and constructing their new living quarters, the young men took a vote and decided to name their camp, the first in the nation, after the president who created the Corps. By week's end these CCC enrollees had constructed an elaborate wooden sign, ten feet tall by ten feet wide, that announced "Camp Roosevelt" to all visitors.¹

Although the nation's first CCC enrollees named their camp in honor of Franklin Roosevelt, throughout the 1930s dozens of individuals laid claim to
having conceptualized what was often heralded as the New Deal's most popular program. British forester Richard St. Barbe Baker was perhaps the first of such claimants, arguing that he suggested the CCC idea to Franklin Roosevelt during a meeting in Albany just before the presidential election of 1932. Four years later in the fall of 1936, an unemployed electrician and father of two named Joseph Wilson also laid claim to the Corps idea, and drove from his home in Atlanta, Georgia to Washington, D.C. where he forced his way into the White House and demanded, unsuccessfully, to take the matter up with the president. Finally, a Brooklyn, New York resident named Major Julius Hochfelder wrote several letters to CCC headquarters stating that he was in fact the ideological creator of the Corps, and should therefore receive a job with the New Deal program. Such claims were nothing new to CCC director Robert Fechner. "We have letters from a large number of individuals...who feel they first conceived the idea of this organization," he wrote to one of the Hochfelder's supporters. "I merely point out these things so that you may know that Major Hochfelder is not alone in thinking that he was entitled to some reward for suggesting the CCC plan to the president."

Similar to the debate between these individuals, contemporaneous accounts of the Corps' genesis also differed. Articles and books written during the 1930s generally highlighted four influences behind the CCC's birth. One of the most common explanations concerned the essay titled "The Moral Equivalent of War," written by Harvard philosopher William James in 1906. According to James, "instead of military conscription" the United States should adopt "a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against Nature." Other accounts of the Corps written during the Great Depression emphasized as well the establishment after World War I of youth work programs in several European countries including Bulgaria (1921), Switzerland (1924), and especially Germany (1925), whose German Labor Service was most often compared to Roosevelt's CCC. Rising juvenile delinquency during the early years of the Great Depression was yet another cause often cited by newspaper reporters for the creation of the Corps. An article in The New Republic, for instance, stated that the president established the CCC "to prevent the nation's male youth from becoming semi-criminal hitch-hikers." And finally, commentators during the 1930s often portrayed Franklin Roosevelt's practice of conserving natural resources prior to becoming president as a major factor in his decision to establish the CCC.

During his presidency, Roosevelt did little to clarify this debate concerning the origin of the Corps. Not only did he claim that he had never read William James's essay, but he also failed to acknowledge the influence of other nations' youth work programs on his own thinking. Instead, Roosevelt repeatedly responded to queries concerning the ideological roots of the Corps by referencing similar programs he initiated while governor of New York that likewise put unemployed men to work in state parks and forests, thus pushing the origin question back in time rather than answering it. When forced to respond, as when Time magazine editor I. Van Meter personally wrote the White House in 1939 for a cover story on the CCC, Roosevelt was equally evasive. The president "cannot find that the idea of the Civilian Conservation Corps was taken from any one source," wrote Roosevelt's private secretary, Marguerite LeHand, to Time magazine. "It was rather the obvious conflux of the desire for conservation and the need for finding useful work for unemployed young men."

This conflux of desire and need resulting in the creation of the CCC is central to understanding the New Deal's impact on the American conservation movement. Not only does the Corps idea illustrate the president's unique brand of conservationist thinking during his first term in office. Perhaps, more importantly, it also suggests the New Deal ideologies that helped transform conservation as a whole during the Great Depression in ways that foreshadowed the post--World War II environmental movement. To fully grasp Franklin Roosevelt's environmental legacy, then, we must chart the intellectual geography of the Corps' creation.

In mapping the ideological landscape that gave rise to the CCC it is best to begin with the "congressional action" that created the New Deal program in March of 1933. Although Congress passed the bill establishing the CCC on March 31, 1933, the events creating it began several weeks earlier when on March 9 Franklin Roosevelt sketched out rough plans for putting 500,000 unemployed men to work on conservation projects throughout the country. Over the next few days the president fine-tuned his thinking, deciding to limit enrollment in the program to young men between the ages of 18 and 25 who were willing to spend 25 of their 30 dollar monthly pay home to their families, all of which had to be listed on state relief registers. Roosevelt also decided to house these "enrollees," as they were called, in 200 man camps located in national and state parks and national forests, and to run the New Deal program cooperatively. While the Department of Labor would coordinate enrollee recruitment and the Department of War would be responsible for the daily functioning of the CCC camps, the Department of Agriculture would supervise conservation projects in national forests while Interior overseen work performed in national and state parks. After outlining these ideas to brain truster Raymond Moley on March 14, the president asked the secretaries of War, Interior, Agriculture, and Labor to coordinate plans for putting the proposed program into operation and to report back to him. One week later on March 21, Roosevelt formally asked Congress to establish the CCC.

Because it represents his most developed thinking regarding the Corps prior to its creation, Roosevelt's March 21 congressional address serves as
a useful guide through the murky intellectual terrain surrounding the program’s origins. Titled “Relief of Unemployment,” the president’s address began by drawing attention to the most obvious crisis then gripping the nation: the fact that thirteen million, or one in four working-age citizens, remained jobless. “It is essential to our recovery program,” wrote Roosevelt, “that measures be immediately enacted aimed at unemployment relief.” After warning members of Congress that the “enforced idleness” associated with joblessness threatened the “spiritual and moral stability” of the nation, and reminding them that the “overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans . . . would infinitely prefer to work,” the president proposed three types of work-relief initiatives, one of which was the CCC. “I estimate,” he wrote to Congress regarding the proposed Corps, “that 250,000 men can be given temporary employment by early summer if you give me authority to proceed within the next two weeks.”

Although the congressional address suggested that the unemployment emergency was paramount in Roosevelt’s thinking, it was not the only crisis on his mind early in 1933. The state of nature also alarmed the president, and he expressed this as well in his March 21 message. After warning of the dangers posed by joblessness, Roosevelt’s address directed Congress’s attention to “the news we are receiving today of vast damage caused by floods on the Ohio and other rivers,” due in large part to deforestation along their banks. The president dismissed the notion that these disasters were natural and instead blamed human negligence, arguing that the floods occurred because “national and state domains have been largely forgotten in the past few years of industrial development.” To make up for such neglect, the federal government had to take action to “conserve our precious natural resources” located on these important public lands. The CCC was Roosevelt’s first step in this process. “I propose to create a civilian conservation corps,” he wrote to Congress, “to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects.”

As expressed in his message to Congress, in creating the CCC the president responded to two national crises, one involving unemployed youths and the other relating to a degraded natural environment. Yet although his congressional address helps identify these two strands of concerns, it does little to answer the more important question regarding how these ideological tributaries flowed together in Roosevelt’s early New Deal thinking. This is especially important considering that earlier in the century such concerns had been quite distinct. During the Progressive era, for instance, the conservation movement promoted the efficient use of natural resources such as timber, soil, and water, but rarely, if ever, concerned itself with how such increased efficiency might affect workers’ lives. Similarly, progressives interested in unemployment reform refrained from promoting conservation as a means of decreasing idleness in youth. How, then, did Roosevelt decide to fuse the needs of nature with those of young jobless men in March of 1933? Part of the answer lies in the evolution of Franklin Roosevelt’s ideology regarding both conservation and youth relief prior to becoming president, a period when these two strands of thought were anything but in conflux.

Franklin Roosevelt first experienced the deterioration of natural resources at a young age while growing up on his family’s estate in Hyde Park, New York. Located approximately halfway between New York City and Albany, the 1,200-acre parcel of land sloped steeply upward from the eastern bank of the Hudson River to a level bluff on top of which sat the family home. Although the Roosevelt family acquired the property, which they called Springwood, in the early nineteenth century, Dutch settlers had worked much of the estate’s land for over 200 years. This became all too obvious to Roosevelt when in 1910, at the age of 28, he took over management of the property from his mother, Sara. After learning from estate records that his ancestors had grown prize-winning corn at Springwood in 1840, Roosevelt became understandably concerned that 70 years later the property produced only half of what it had in the mid-nineteenth century. He also became alarmed at the large gullies that had formed and continued to widen down along the property’s steepest slopes, slopes that had been cleared decades before for cultivation. With every rain these gullies washed fertile topsoil off the property down into the Hudson River. The rest of the estate suffered similarly; yields of grain, pasturage, fruit, and vegetables were far below average because the rocky Hudson Valley soil had long since passed its peak. As Roosevelt put it, “I can lime it, cross-plough it, manure it and treat it with every art known to science, but it has just plain run out.”

Similar to his encounters with a deteriorating natural environment, Roosevelt’s experiences conserving natural resources also began early in life. In 1891 while vacationing with his family in Europe, Roosevelt bicycled through the countryside near Bad Hauheim, Germany, and encountered a small town with a large municipal forest on its outskirts. From discussions with local residents, the nine-year-old cyclist learned that the forested tract had been carefully managed for the last 200 years to yield an annual timber crop that offset the town’s expenses. “The interesting thing to me, as a boy even, was that the people in the town didn’t have to pay taxes,” remembered Roosevelt many years later. “They were supported by their own forest.” It was this type of thinking that Roosevelt brought back with him to Hyde Park.

Roosevelt began conservation efforts at Springwood when he took over the day-to-day operation of the estate in 1910. He first bought several adjacent farms, which had also been depleted by generations of poor husbandry,
and in 1911 asked foresters at the University of Syracuse’s State College of Forestry to develop a reforestation program for the enlarged estate “in the hope that my grandchildren will be able to raise corn again—just one century from now.”20 On the foresters’ recommendations, Roosevelt planted a few thousand trees in 1912 and continued an annual planting regimen until his death in 1945, at which time he had supervised the planting of more than half a million trees covering 556 acres. In 1933 alone, the year Roosevelt created the CCC, he planted 36,000 trees at Hyde Park. Thirty-two species were included in Roosevelt’s plantings, the most common being Norway and Canadian spruce, Scotch, Norway, and white pine, and Tulip poplar, which was his favorite tree. He introduced a number of exotics as well, such as European and Japanese larch, Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, and Western yellow pine.21 In light of this extensive effort, it is not surprising that each year when voting in Hyde Park Roosevelt listed his occupation as “tree grower.”

Although he referred to reforested plots similar to those at Hyde Park as “the most potent factor in maintaining nature’s delicate balance,” Roosevelt planted trees on his property for economic, not ecological, reasons. According to Nelson Brown, the Syracuse University forester who oversaw the plantings at Springwood, reforestation for Roosevelt was “not just a passing fancy or plaything—it is a very realistic and practical business endeavor” that often turned a profit. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Roosevelt did indeed make small returns by selling fuelwood and sawlogs locally, as well as crossties cut from his woodlots to the New York Central Railroad, which ran a train line along a narrow strip of land between the Hudson River and the Roosevelt property. Roosevelt’s most publicized foray into commercial forestry, however, began in 1926 when he planted the first of many plots of Norway spruce, which at the time were used widely as Christmas trees. Only nine years later he cut and sold 132 of these trees for a modest profit of 134 dollars and 55 cents, and in 1937 harvested 1,000 trees for a total of 480 dollars. All told, the Johnny Appleseed of Springwood sold several thousand Christmas trees worth almost as many dollars during the 1930s and 1940s.22 During the early years of the latter decade Roosevelt also harvested more than 2,000 mature hardwood trees that yielded 445,000 board feet of timber for a net gain of more than 60 dollars per acre.23 “He realizes,” explained Nelson Brown of Franklin Roosevelt, “that aesthetic considerations are in order about his home, but out in the forest, they play a very small—in fact, a negligible part.” According to Brown, Roosevelt continually inquired about the price of various forest products and weighed the relative merits of growing species for pulpwood, sawlogs, fuelwood, crossties, and Christmas trees. “He believes in taking advantage of favorable market conditions when available,” added the Syracuse forester.24

Just as he transported what he learned in Bad Hauheim, Germany, back to Hyde Park, Roosevelt brought the conservation knowledge he gained at Springwood with him to the New York State Senate when he began serving in that body in 1911. Because of his statewide reputation as a “tree grower,” Roosevelt’s first appointment was as chairman of the Senate’s Forest, Fish, and Game Committee. In that capacity he publicized a number of threats to the state’s natural resources and introduced eight bills aimed at conserving them, including legislative initiatives regulating fishing, hunting, and the development of water power.25 By far Roosevelt’s most intense senatorial battle, however, involved a bill he proposed in January of 1912 that would, among other things, allow the state to regulate timber harvests on private land. The Roosevelt–Jones Bill, as it was popularly called, arose in response to a disturbing trend then occurring in upstate New York’s Adirondack Forest Preserve. In 1895 when a state constitutional amendment created the preserve, the legislature in Albany delineated its geographical boundaries by “drawing” a “blue line” on maps around twelve counties in the Adirondack mountain region of upstate New York. The result was a 3.3 million-acre reserve comprising both state and privately owned land in nearly equal parts. Private individuals, associations such as the Adirondack Mountain Club, and numerous lumber companies, all owned large parcels of land within the boundaries of the state park. More alarming to Roosevelt was that although the constitutional amendment declared state-owned property within the preserve to be “forever kept as wild forest land,” the law did not apply to the park’s privately owned parcels, which during the first decade of the twentieth century became increasingly deforested.26 The Roosevelt–Jones Bill was aimed at regulating, not outlawing, this cutting on private lands in the Adirondacks and throughout New York.

Roosevelt defended his bill in the Senate and across the state in the same manner he defended his conservation efforts at Hyde Park; he argued that it made good economic sense. “It is an extraordinary thing to me,” he wrote to one constituent concerning the lumbermen opposing his initiative, “that people who are financially interested should not be able to see more than about six inches in front of their noses.”27 By regulating logging on private property, Roosevelt argued, the Roosevelt–Jones Bill would reduce water runoff and soil erosion on adjacent state-owned land and thus assure the long-term financial security of the state’s forests. To help promote the bill, Roosevelt invited the well-known chief of the U.S. Forest Service Gifford Pinchot to lecture before the assembly in Albany. Pinchot illustrated his talk with two lantern slides of a valley in China: the first slide was of a painting from the year 1500 depicting a lush landscape covered with trees, crops, and numerous signs of human habitation while the second, a photograph taken four centuries later, portrayed the same landscape void of both vegetation and
humanity. The message was all too clear; poor land use was suicide. The presentation not only confirmed Roosevelt's belief in the economic necessity of conservation but made such an impression that he publicly referred to Pinchot's slides numerous times throughout the rest of his political career.29

Although the senator from Hyde Park justified the Roosevelt-Jones Bill on economic grounds, much as he defended his tree-planting practices at Springwood, during this political debate Roosevelt also began formulating a social component to his conservationist ideology. He first expressed this in March of 1912 while delivering a speech in support of the bill before the Troy, New York, People's Forum. Pointing to the country's founding fathers, Roosevelt told the crowd that the basic thrust of modern history had been the struggle and attainment of individual liberty. In the same breath, however, he warned that this "individual freedom was inevitably bound to bring up many questions that mere individual liberty cannot solve." One such question concerned the most efficient use of natural resources. To make this point Roosevelt described the lantern slides Gifford Pinchot had shown in Albany just weeks before, and told his audience in no uncertain terms that "this is what will happen in this very State if the individuals are allowed to do as they please with the natural resources to line their own pockets." To avoid such a fate, Roosevelt proposed what he called a new social theory that posited community cooperation as more economically efficient than individualism. "To put it in the simplest and fewest words," he explained, "I have called this new theory the struggle for liberty of the community rather than liberty of the individual." Communities, he argued, must have the freedom to protect their interests from short-sighted individuals such as Adirondack lumbermen. The Roosevelt-Jones Bill gave the "community" of New York residents this freedom, and only through its passage would the development and use of the state's natural resources "be put on the most economical and at the same time the most productive basis."30

Even though upstate timber interests disagreed with Roosevelt and successfully convinced the Albany legislature to strike that section of the 1912 bill permitting the state to regulate logging on private land, other individuals during the Progressive era were more sympathetic. As industrialization's devastating impact on the nation's water, soil, and timber supplies became increasingly apparent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reformers took concerted action to manage resources more scientifically for future use. This desire to produce natural resources rationally—what historian Samuel Hays has called "the gospel of efficiency"—was in fact the central tenet of the progressive conservation movement.31 The Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902, the creation of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905, and the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911, which provided for federal acquisition of private forest land, were only the most well-known attempts by conservationists to improve resource production. To these progressive reformers, nature was a collection of resources waiting to be efficiently developed.32

Unlike other reform efforts during the Progressive era, an emerging middle class in search of order did not orchestrate the conservation movement. Instead, a triumvirate of scientific professionals, government bureaucrats, and businessmen involved in resource extraction directed the reform effort from above.33 Perhaps no single individual better epitomized the movement, or its elite composition, than Gifford Pinchot. Born in 1865 to a wealthy Connecticut family, Pinchot grew up in Paris and Pennsylvania, graduated from Yale in 1889, and then traveled to France and Germany to study forestry. Upon his return to the United States in 1892 he began promoting the scientific management of the country's timber supplies, and practiced what he preached, first as timber manager at Biltmore, the Vanderbilt family estate near Asheville, North Carolina, and later as a forester for the federal government. Throughout his career, Pinchot viewed nature in strict utilitarian terms. For instance, in his autobiography he defined conservation as "the development and use of the earth and all its resources for the enduring good of men."34 To determine how best to produce and use these resources, Pinchot also developed a simple formula for the Forest Service to follow. In a 1905 memo written soon after becoming chief forester, Pinchot explained that when faced with conflicting interests regarding the production of a natural resource, such as the situation Roosevelt encountered in the Adirondacks, the question should "always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."35 This principle not only became the guiding philosophy of the Forest Service but of the great majority of progressive conservationists as well.36

While Pinchot served as the unofficial spokesperson for conservationists, the movement itself was suffering from growing pains during the Progressive era. Ruminations began surfacing during the late nineteenth century when another point of view concerning the natural environment emerged and gained adherents. The most well-known promoter of this alternative vision was John Muir, foremost lobbyist for the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1890, founder of the Sierra Club in 1892, and an indomitable outdoorsman whose nature writing propelled him to minor literary celebrity around the turn of the century. Muir's early life could not have been more different than Gifford Pinchot's. Born in Dunbar, Scotland in 1838 to overbearing Calvinist parents, Muir moved with his family at the age of 11 to a homestead on the central Wisconsin frontier. Unlike Pinchot, who studied at the best schools in America and abroad, Muir was a self-taught naturalist who attended the University of Wisconsin for only two years. Before leaving Madison, however, he encountered the writings of Wordsworth, Emerson, Thoreau, and a lesser-known minister named Walter Rollins Brooks. From that moment on
Transcendentalism influenced the Scotsman's philosophy regarding the natural world. According to Muir, natural objects were "the terrestrial manifestations of God," and nature itself was "a window opened into heaven, a mirror reflecting the Creator." Leaves, rocks, and bodies of water were "sparks of the Divine Soul." Wary of Gifford Pinchot's utilitarian view, Muir believed in preserving nature's beauty for its own sake as well as for the spiritual sake of humankind. And although Muir rarely used the term "conservationist" when describing himself, during the Progressive era his preservationist philosophy and Pinchot's utilitarian vision existed side-by-side in an uneasy alliance. While Pinchot embodied the mainstream, moderate, professional wing of conservation, Muir and his followers represented the radical amateur who served as the movement's conscience.

Muir and Pinchot first met in 1893 and became friends three years later while working and camping together as part of a federally sponsored survey of western national forests, which at the time were called "reserves." Members of the expedition were responsible not only for examining the reserves but also for recommending a federal policy for their management. During the trip the two men found much in common, and often left the camaraderie of the evening campfire to discuss their mutual love of the outdoors and the future of the nation's forests, which both agreed needed protection from private, unscientific development. Each morning, Pinchot recalled years later, "we sneaked back like guilty schoolboys" to camp to join the other members of the expedition. Yet when the survey members began preparing their report, the limits of the two men's common interest became apparent. Whereas Muir recommended that the federal government preserve the forests without provision for commercial use, Pinchot favored opening up all the reserves to scientifically managed economic development. This ideological divide widened first in 1897 when Pinchot publicly endorsed sheep grazing in the forest reserves, and became a chasm in 1905 when Pinchot, acting as newly appointed Forest Service Chief, supported plans to dam Yosemite National Park's Hetch Hetchy valley to create a reservoir that would quench the thirst of San Francisco's growing population. While Pinchot argued that the valley's high elevation in the Sierra mountains made it perfect for supplying both drinking water and electric power, Muir, whose Sierra Club had successfully opposed the Hetch Hetchy dam since San Francisco officials first proposed it in the 1890s, launched an eight-year nationwide campaign to protect the valley from development. In one of his most well-known statements regarding the controversy, Muir countered Pinchot's economic argument by emphasizing Hetch Hetchy's noncommercial attributes. "Dam Hetch Hetchy!," he wrote in 1912, "As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man." President Woodrow Wilson's decision in December of 1913 to approve the Hetch Hetchy dam was said to have broken the spirit of John Muir, who died less than a year later. Perhaps more importantly, it splintered what was already a fragile alliance within the conservation movement into conservationist and preservationist camps.

Although Franklin Roosevelt was well aware of the difference between Muir and Pinchot's philosophies, his experiences at Hyde Park and his career as a New York state senator indicated that his thinking corresponded more with that of Gifford Pinchot. Roosevelt's desire to produce timber efficiently both on his Hyde Park estate and in the Adirondacks, as well as his reliance on experts including Nelson Brown of the Syracuse forestry school and Gifford Pinchot of the United States Forest Service, placed him squarely in the conservationist, as opposed to the preservationist, camp. Moreover, Roosevelt's "new theory" of placing community liberty above that of the individual, and his frustration with lumbermen who could not "see more than about six inches in front of their noses," echoed to a great extent Pinchot's philosophy of the "greatest good of the greatest number in the long run." And finally, unlike Muir's desire to preserve natural beauty for spiritual reasons, Roosevelt believed that "aesthetic considerations...play a very small—in fact, a negligible part." This is not to say that Roosevelt had no preservationist tendencies. For instance, while scientifically managing his tree plantings at Hyde Park he also ensured that a stand of old-growth forest located along the western edge of his property was left untouched so that it could be "preserved just as nature always has treated it." Although such openness to Muir's philosophy would become increasingly important to the CCC story as the Great Depression wore on, during the Progressive era Roosevelt was clearly a disciple of Pinchot's "gospel of efficiency," instead of Muir's transcendental church.

Franklin Roosevelt's inclination for Pinchot-style conservation was still very much intact when he became governor of New York in 1929, long after progressivism was said to be dead and buried. In his 1931 "Message to the Legislature," for example, Roosevelt noted the alarming rate of farm abandonment throughout the state and proposed a solution that reiterated his utilitarian notion of natural resources. "Every acre of rural land in the state," he explained, "should be used only for that purpose for which it is best fitted and out of which the greatest economic return can be derived." To help formulate this policy, the new governor also looked to experts, much as Progressive era conservationists had. He appointed Henry Morgenthau, editor of the American Agriculturist to the post of New York state conservation commissioner, and relied often on the advice of George Warren and Carl Ladd of Cornell's College of Agriculture, whose land-use studies advocated the removal of marginal and submarginal farmland from production. Yet perhaps most indicative of Roosevelt's persistent belief in Progressive era
conservation was his support of the Hewitt Amendment. Introduced by conservative senator Charles Hewitt in 1931, the amendment to New York’s constitution authorized the state to purchase abandoned farmland, reforest it, and scientifically manage it as production forests. Roosevelt encouraged Hewitt to introduce the amendment, enlisted his old friend Gifford Pinchot to campaign for its passage, and steadfastly supported it even when Al Smith, who continued to harbor presidential aspirations for 1932, openly criticized the measure as a “tree stealing” program. The amendment’s passage in 1931 not only indicated that Progressive era conservation continued to function throughout the 1920s, but it also helped propel Franklin Roosevelt toward the White House. As the New York Times reported in a front page article, the Hewitt Amendment represented a “victory for Governor Roosevelt and add[s] to his prestige as the titular leader of his party in the State and, for the moment the leading Democratic aspirant for the presidential nomination.”

Thus when Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to create the CCC in March of 1933, his thinking concerning the New Deal program had been greatly influenced by his involvement in the Progressive era conservation movement. His desire to “create a civilian conservation corps to be used in simple work . . . confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects” reflected the president’s experiences both managing his family’s estate in Hyde Park and serving in the New York State Senate, where he maintained close ties to Gifford Pinchot and expressed an affinity for the chief forester’s philosophy regarding the efficient production and use of natural resources. Moreover, Roosevelt’s actions as governor of the Empire State suggest that his belief in mainstream conservation, as opposed to the more radical preservationist beliefs of John Muir, remained with him even during the late 1920s, when other progressive reform efforts had faded away. Yet the deterioration of the nation’s natural resources was not the only crisis worrying Roosevelt when he asked Congress to create the CCC in March of 1933. Unemployment, particularly among young men, also concerned the president. Not surprisingly, Franklin Roosevelt had a long history with youth relief during and after the Progressive era that equally, if not to a greater extent, influenced his thinking concerning the Corps.

Franklin Roosevelt’s March 21, 1933 congressional address drew attention to the unemployment problem then facing the nation, and proposed work in the CCC as part of the solution. Roosevelt’s language throughout his message, however, suggested that the new president held specific notions concerning both those who were jobless and the type of jobs the Corps would provide. For instance, Roosevelt’s address incorrectly suggested that unemployment during the early years of the Great Depression was primarily an urban problem. “The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans,” he explained to Congress in his CCC address, “are now walking the streets.” Two months earlier Roosevelt had made similar remarks, telling a crowd “there are hundreds of thousands of boys who only know the pavements of cities and that means that they can take only those jobs that are directly connected with the pavements of cities.” Similarly, immediately after Congress established the CCC, the president invited representatives from 17 of the nation’s largest cities to the White House to both explain his plans for employing young men and to ask for their help in recruiting the Corps’ first 250,000 enrollees. And whereas the president viewed joblessness as an urban problem, he conversely envisioned its solution as taking place in the countryside, where he planned to locate CCC camps. Through the Corps, he wrote in his congressional message, “we can take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings.” Thus, while Roosevelt the conservationist saw the countryside’s natural resources as sickly and in need of scientific management, Roosevelt the unemployment reformer believed the countryside was also potentially rejuvenative, especially for young urban men.

This belief that the countryside was a curative for urban problems was not new to Roosevelt; it had informed much of his thinking during the early years of the Great Depression. In August of 1931, for instance, Governor Roosevelt gave a speech before the American Country Life Conference in Ithaca, New York, in which he painted a gloomy portrait of urban America. “In times of economic depression we expect to find a concentration of unemployed persons, and as a result a concentration of distress, in the cities,” he explained. Rural America, on the other hand, had surpluses of foodstuffs and other benefits as well. “The country has added advantages that the city cannot duplicate in opportunities for healthful and natural living.” Roosevelt told his audience in Ithaca. “There is contact with earth and with nature and the restful privilege of getting away from pavements and from noise.” As governor, it was Roosevelt’s responsibility to correct this demographic imbalance by promoting the migration of unemployed workers from New York’s urban areas to its rural regions where the materials for healthful living were cheap and abundant. “The task,” he concluded in his speech, “is to determine to what extent and by what means the State and its subdivisions may properly stimulate the movement of city workers to rural homes.”

As the Ithaca Country Life Conference indicated, Roosevelt was not alone in juxtaposing rural and urban America. During the early years of the Great Depression, a loose coalition of individuals and groups from across the political spectrum called for the resettlement of unemployed urbanites in the countryside. In the late 1920s Ralph Borsodi, a former advertising executive turned social critic, was the leading advocate of this antiurban, back-to-the-land movement. Borsodi left Manhattan in 1922 and moved to the countryside near Suffern, New York, where he and his family built a stone house on seven acres of land, raised domesticated animals, grew their own
food, and made their own clothing and furniture. Borsodi described his experiment in self-sufficiency in two best-selling books, *This Ugly Civilization*, published in 1929, and *Flight from the City*, written four years later.  
Other liberal writers followed Borsodi's lead, publishing what became a whole genre of do-it-yourself guidebooks devoted to explaining in detail how one could leave urban industrial society and survive on one's own in rural America. Edward Parkinson's "The Retreat from Wall Street" (1931), Louise Owen's "Escape from Babylon" (1932), Katrina Hinck's "A Home for $130" (1933), and Maurice Kains's *Fine Acres and Independence* (1935), which advised former clerks and factory workers how to operate a farm, were only a few of the best-known works written during the early years of the Great Depression in response to widespread urban unemployment.  

This Depression-era back-to-the-land sentiment also gained credibility on the political right from a group of southern intellectuals who became known as the Nashville Agrarians. Centered at Vanderbilt University, members of this informal group included English professors, literary critics, poets, historians, and economists, such as Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Frank Owsley, Robert Penn Warren, and Andrew Lytle. The Agrarians' central theme, put forward most succinctly in their 1930 collection of essays titled *I'll Take My Stand*, centered around what they believed to be an unavoidable conflict between industrialism and agrarianism. According to the Vanderbilt intellectuals, industrialism represented everything antitraditional, immoral, and deadening, while agrarianism stood for all that was stable, moral, and spiritually uplifting. Together they viewed urban society as repugnant, and eulogized life in the countryside. "A city of any sort," wrote John Crowe Ransom, "removes men from direct contact with nature, and cannot quite constitute the staple or normal form of life for the citizen."  
Joining the Agrarians on the right during the early 1930s was the Catholic Rural Life movement. Centered in the Midwest rather than the South and led by Fathers Luigi Ignutti, John Rawe, and W. Howard Bishop, this coalition promoted economic independence and family unity by encouraging widespread ownership of farms. It accomplished this by funneling financial support to rural parishes and by establishing "rural-life bureaus," directed by priests, to facilitate the "colonization" of rural regions. The return of Depression-era families to the land, wrote Howard Bishop in *Landward*, the Catholic Rural Life movement's official bulletin, symbolized "the foundation for a real civilization upon which an enduring Christian structure can be found."  

The antiurban, pro-rural sentiment expressed by Roosevelt and others during the late 1920s and early 1930s was only the newest incarnation of a much older movement whose ideological roots went back at least to Thomas Jefferson and more recently to Henry David Thoreau. Much of this sentiment crystallized during the Progressive era when concern over the deleterious effects of industrialization, urbanization, and what Alan Trachtenberg has called the "incorporation of America" was at its peak.  
While some Americans accepted these changes, others resisted by joining unions, embracing populism, and becoming active in a whole host of progressive reform efforts aimed at insulating the working class from urban dangers.  

Before the turn of the century these reformers, most of whom hailed from the middle and upper classes, practiced what historian Paul Boyer has termed "coercive moral reform," meaning they attempted to stamp out urban vices such as prostitution, alcohol consumption, and gambling, through moral persuasion and legal repression. During the first decade of the twentieth century, however, a new strategy of social control linked to advances in behavioral psychology emerged to compete with these coercive reform efforts. Called "environmentalism" by its adherents, this novel approach shared the underlying moral assumptions and aims of coercive efforts but differed fundamentally on how to achieve these goals. Instead of overtly repressing urban vices, environmentalist reformers hoped to create an urban setting where objectionable behavior would not be practiced and would thus wither away.  
Summing up this new philosophy, John Dewey wrote in 1908 that the most effective social control was not based on the legal enforcement of strict behavioral standards, but rather on "the intelligent selection and determination of the environments in which we act." Those involved in environmentalist efforts such as the city beautiful movement, city planning, housing reform, settlement work, and even urban sanitation, thus believed not in good and bad people, but rather in good and bad surroundings. The progressive definition of environmentalism was therefore radically different from the term employed during the post–World War II period to describe the movement that would identify itself with Earth Day.  

Progressive era environmentalists believed their reform strategy was particularly effective in influencing young adults, who many viewed as malleable putty ready to be sculpted into model citizens. Landscape designers such as Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles Eliot, and George Kessler, for instance, promoted the city park as a "harmonizing and refining" influence "favorable to courtesy, self-control, and temperance," especially for the city's younger generation. As Kessler put it, the "green turf" and "waving trees" of urban parks produced "innocent, joyous" youngsters instead of "dirty, white-faced, and vicious gamins" prone to "immorality and vice." Another park enthusiast agreed, noting that when city dwellers "have Nature at hand, evil seems weakened ... the souls of children become fresherened with joy." The playground movement, led by Henry Stoddart Curtis of the Playground Association of America, was similarly concerned with youth. In Curtis's 1917 classic, *The Play Movement and Its Significance*, he depicted urban youth as
prone to congregate on street corners "where drinking and the sex lure are the main enticements." For Curtis the answer lay not in repressing such activities but in creating "a different environment" as an alternative to the vice-ridden streets. The playground was one such alternative.62

Along with creating "different environments" within the metropolis, progressive environmentalists were also interested in the healing potential of the nonurban setting. This belief in the rejuvenative power of the countryside was part of a larger trend that gripped middle- and upper-class Americans during the early decades of the twentieth century. Called "antimodern" by Jackson Lears, "a search for the simple life" by historian David Shi, and a "wilderness cult" by Roderick Nash, this progressive nature craze had three main elements: a country life movement similar to the back-to-the-land sentiment of the early depression years, a wilderness fad that focused on preserving and experiencing life in the wild, and finally an outdoor fresh air movement best exemplified by country vacations and summer camps.63 The most vociferous promoter of this outdoor rage was Theodore Roosevelt, who during the last decade of the nineteenth century became increasingly convinced that urban American was becoming an "overcivilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues." To counter this descent into "flabbliness" and "emptiness," in 1899 Roosevelt began urging Americans to adopt what he called "the doctrine of the strenuous life," which entailed a "life of toil and effort, of labor and strife."64 Central to this sort of living was direct contact with nonurban nature.

Progressive environmentalist reformers enthusiastically embraced Theodore Roosevelt's call for a more strenuous life, and went to great lengths to transport young urbanites beyond city limits to more bucolic surroundings. This was especially true during the summer months, when many urban youths were out of school but unable to find employment. Edward Bok, editor of the Ladies Home Journal, was a leading proponent of so-called Fresh Air Funds, and helped establish several in eastern cities to subsidize country vacations for out-of-work city-bred adolescents. According to Bok and his associates, the urban environment's "filth, its weary working conditions, and its general enervating influence could be overcome by spending a Few weeks in the "simplicity and sincerity of nature."65 Similar beliefs underwrote the youth camping movement, which became a fad in its own right during this period. For those "who cannot afford yachting trips and the like, and whose ideas of summer recreation are not attuned to the string band of a 'summer hotel,'" explained one youth camping advocate, "there is nothing that returns so much for the expenditure of strength and money as plain American camping."66

One of the foremost promoters of the youth camping movement during the Progressive era was the Boy Scouts of America. Although Lieutenant General Sir Robert Baden-Powell officially founded the Boy Scouts in England in 1907, the Boer War hero borrowed heavily from a number of similar organizations already established in the United States. One such group was the Woodcraft Indians, founded by popular nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton. In a series of articles appearing in Edward Bok's Ladies Home Journal in 1902, Seton described how his new group organized boys into tribes, taught them games based on Indian legend and ceremony, bestowed awards for good conduct, and most importantly took them out of the city to camp in the countryside. Alongside Seton's Indians, Daniel Beard founded the Sons of Daniel Boone in 1905 as a circulation booster for an outdoor recreation magazine. Yet whereas Seton relied on native American history and symbols to encourage young boys to take to the outdoors, Beard employed the pioneering heritage and focused on teaching survival techniques such as fire building, map reading, and shelter construction. When a coalition of New York City youth reformers officially established the Boy Scouts of America in 1910, focusing enrollment in the program on adolescents and young men between the ages of nine and twenty, it not only incorporated these organizational forerunners but found jobs for both Seton and Beard, with the former acting as Chief Scout from 1910 to 1915 while Beard served as National Scout Commissioner of the United States from 1910 until his death.67

The philosophy of the Boy Scouts of America reflected the beliefs of Progressive era environmentalists, and it is no wonder that scouting was an integral component of their reform efforts.68 This affinity was perhaps best expressed in the Boy Scouts' first Handbook, which Seton wrote in 1910. A century ago, the Handbook began, American boys lived close to nature, but since then the nation had experienced "unfortunate change" marked by industrialization and the "growth of immense cities." The result, Seton warned, was "degeneracy" and an urban population that was "strained and broken by the grind of the over-busy world." As with other environmentalist efforts, the Boy Scouts' solution was not to destroy urban dangers but rather to introduce scouts to "outdoor life . . . nearest to the ground" so that these boys could "live the simple life of primitive times." The Scout Handbook also provided instruction in woodsmanship and camping in an effort to urge city boys to spend at least one month each year in the countryside away from urban civilization.69 To foster this, soon after its creation in 1910 the Boy Scouts of America began establishing campgrounds on the outskirts of metropolitan areas throughout the country.

Similar to his cousin Theodore, who became the Boy Scouts' first Chief Scout Citizen in 1912, Franklin Roosevelt was deeply involved in the scouting movement. The younger Roosevelt's experiences with the Boy Scouts began in 1921, when he accepted the chairmanship of the organization's
Greater New York City Council. The following year Roosevelt helped centralize the scouting movement in and around the city by creating the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, which coordinated the work of the five borough councils that had previously maintained independent relationships with the Boy Scouts of America's national leadership. According to Roosevelt, such centralization would put the organization on a more "uniform and practical basis." In 1922 he became president of the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York and remained in that position until he resigned in 1937.

Throughout his 16-year involvement with the Boy Scouts, Roosevelt aggressively promoted a progressive environmentalist agenda. This became only too clear at a Boy Scout dinner in March of 1929, during which he emphasized the role of the physical setting in shaping the development of young urbanites. "The records show," Roosevelt told the audience gathered in New York's posh Metropolitan Club, "that the question of environment is important." At a similar Boy Scout event a few years later he expressed the belief, also shared by Progressive era environmentalists, that urban surroundings were particularly dangerous for city youths, especially those from working-class families. For "the city boy living in crowded conditions," Roosevelt explained, "artificial interests have been substituted. Normal, natural growth is threatened." He likewise promoted the other side of the environmentalist coin, namely that the countryside was a potential curative for the problems afflicting urban youth. When transported to the countryside the urban boy "discovers that the woods, the birds, the fields, the streams, the insects speak a language he understands," Roosevelt wrote in a 1928 article on the Boy Scouts for the New York Times. "His new environment takes on the aspect of a vast nature-lure museum which beckons to him to enter its great domain of study and to discover for himself."

For the Boy Scouts, and for Franklin Roosevelt in particular, the means of introducing city boys to the benefits of the nonurban environment was through camping in the countryside. When Roosevelt became chairman of the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York in 1922, the organization maintained 18 scout campgrounds in the Bear Mountain section of the Palisades Interstate Park, which was located on the western bank of the Hudson River approximately halfway between New York City and Roosevelt's Hyde Park estate. Reputed to be the largest camping facility for scouts in the world, the Bear Mountain camps varied in size and together accommodated, at any given time, approximately 2,200 young men, most of whom spent three weeks in the park. Yet while more than 6,000 boys camped at Bear Mountain during the summer of 1922, two-thirds of New York City's 20,000 scouts were unable to do so because of a lack of camping space.

As the Foundation's annual report for 1922 lamented, "thousands of the New York City Scouts have not had the privilege of attending" the Bear Mountain camps. Franklin Roosevelt was especially concerned, stating years later that "we realized then that our camping facilities were inadequate."

As president of the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, Roosevelt responded to this dearth of camping opportunities for urban unemployed youths by initiating a campaign to increase the number of scout campgrounds throughout the state. He began the effort as early as 1921. "It is probable that next year we will increase our capacity so that we can take care of as many as 3,000 boys daily," wrote Roosevelt to a Boy Scout backer, "and I would not be surprised if within the next three to five years we would have as many as 5,000 to 10,000 boys in camp at one time." During the next several years Roosevelt raised funds in hopes of acquiring land in upstate New York for campground purposes, and in 1929 began developing a 10,600-acre tract located about 100 miles north of New York City in Sullivan County, where he estimated that 100,000 scouts could experience outdoor living each summer.

As the Boy Scouts of America's national leadership reported that year, experience in camps such as the one in Sullivan County "includes many outdoor activities which bring Scouts closer to nature."

Just what the Boy Scouts of America meant by "closer to nature" was evident in the daily operation of scout camps nationwide during the early years of the organization's history. With its roots in both Seton's Woodcraft Indians and Beard's Sons of Daniel Boone, the Boy Scouts understandably promoted outdoorsmanship and woodcraft in their campgrounds rather than nature study. Scoutmasters regularly taught the young boys how to pitch tents, blaze trails, and build fires, but rarely how to appreciate or understand the countryside around them. In fact, the Boy Scouts' official camping program included only one test among many that involved the identification of trees and animals. This desire to dominate or subdue nature was perhaps best epitomized by the Boy Scout hatchet, which the organization sold to the boys in such numbers that early on it became a standard addendum to the Scout uniform. The teaching of trailblazing, the use of wood for rustic bridges and fences, and the continual search for firewood in and around Boy Scout campgrounds, all encouraged a slash-and-burn style of outdoor living. Each year, for instance, scouts visiting the Bear Mountain camps stripped back from birch trees as high as they could reach, often while posing for publicity photographs. Such young men were obviously ignorant of the conservation efforts underway 50 miles upstream on Franklin Roosevelt's Hyde Park estate, or 100 miles north in the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

The Boy Scouts of America thus had much in common with Franklin Roosevelt's CCC. Both were concerned with unemployed male youths and associated this problem with the urban setting. Each also promoted the relocation of young city dwellers to camps in the countryside as a curative.
In doing so, the Boy Scouts and the Corps were only the most recent in a long line of environmentalist efforts begun by Frederick Law Olmsted, Theodore Roosevelt, and Edward Bok, which continued during the early years of the Great Depression by such back-to-the-landers as Ralph Borsodi, the Nashville Agrarians, and Father Howard Bishop. Yet as the Boy Scouts’ camping program indicates, the conservation of natural resources was not an integral component of the organization’s philosophy. Rather than teaching their charges how to efficiently use timber, soil, and water, scoutmasters allowed, and often promoted, the wasting of such resources. How, then, did the idea to conserve natural resources become linked, in Franklin Roosevelt’s mind to the notion of rejuvenating urban male youths?

Franklin Roosevelt first suggested the idea of introducing the ideology and practice of conservation to scouting soon after he became president of the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York in 1922. In a letter that year to Foundation member George Pratt of Brooklyn, Roosevelt expressed his desire to correct the Boy Scout camping program’s wasteful natural resource practices. “I shall do everything possible,” explained Roosevelt of his new duties as Foundation president, “to expand what might be called the better understanding of nature by these city-bred boys.”81 That same year Roosevelt asked members of the Boy Scout camping committee to investigate the possibility of enlarging the study of forestry at the scout camps already in existence. He also asked the Palisades Interstate Park Commission if it would be possible to secure a small tract of land near the Boy Scout camps in the Bear Mountain section of the park “to be scientifically forested by the boys this summer.”82 The response of the Palisades Park Commissioners fit well with Roosevelt’s conservationist ideology, which as noted above was centered around the desire to efficiently use and develop natural resources. Such a reforested tract, the Commission replied, would “imbue the coming generations with a knowledge of forest conservation” and “[teach] business, not sentimental theory.”83 It would seem that as soon as Franklin Roosevelt became involved with the Scouts, the days of the boys’ overactive hatchet were numbered.

Roosevelt expanded his effort to promote conservation within the Boy Scouts in 1923. Rather than merely adding forestry study to the camping program already in existence, Roosevelt helped establish new scout camps, also in the Palisades Interstate Park, dedicated specifically to the teaching and practice of natural resource conservation. The Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York established the first of such camps in 1923, and another the following year. Known collectively as the “Franklin D. Roosevelt Conservation Camps,” each could accommodate approximately 60 campers and accepted only older scouts no less than 15 years of age, many of whom had trouble finding employment during the summer months.84 Instead of pitching tents, building fires, and stripping birch bark, as was taught at the regular scout campgrounds, boys attending these special conservation camps would perform work such as cutting fire breaks, fighting forest fires, and planting trees. As one forester involved in the new program put it, the conservation camps would “appeal to the older scout,” “give him expert training . . . and familiarize him with one of the biggest economic problems of the day—Forestry.”85 In 1929 Roosevelt decided to expand the scout conservation program yet again by including forestry work in the development plans for the Boy Scout Foundation’s new 10,600-acre campground in Sullivan County, New York.

During the early years of the Great Depression, there were signs that the conservation program that Roosevelt initiated in the Palisades camps was influencing Boy Scouts throughout the nation. In 1930, for instance, the Boy Scouts of America launched a five-year reforestation program known as the “Nut Seed and Tree Planting Project.” After gathering nuts from trees in Mount Vernon’s Arlington National Cemetery and at Theodore Roosevelt’s grave in Oyster Bay, Long Island, the organization dispersed them to scouts throughout the country for planting as memorial trees. Boy Scouts in Emmet County, Iowa conducted the project’s first tree-planting demonstration, and other troops followed, with scouts planting nearly 50,000 seedlings in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 20,000 in Leominster, Massachusetts, and 4,700 in Massillon, Ohio. Troops from Roosevelt’s home county of Dutchess, New York, planted 4,500 seedlings and received in return “that satisfaction that comes from planting trees.”86 All told, the Boy Scouts of America hoped to plant more than five million trees during the five-year project. More importantly, the conservation of natural resources had finally been wedded to environmentalist youth reform in the mind of Franklin Roosevelt.

When the stock market crashed in October of 1929, Governor Roosevelt applied what he had accomplished with the Boy Scouts to the economic and environmental problems of the Empire State. Just a few months after black Tuesday, Roosevelt asked the state legislature for an appropriation to fund a tree-planting program, similar to that initiated by the Boy Scouts, to provide jobs for New York’s growing unemployed population.87 In August of 1931 the governor greatly expanded this sort of relief work when he established the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), which along with providing food, clothing, and shelter to those in need, also created jobs, many in the field of forestry. As already noted, earlier that year New Yorkers had voted in favor of the Hewitt Amendment, which authorized the state to purchase abandoned farmland for reforestation purposes. The forestry jobs created by TERA provided the labor necessary to physically convert these farmlands into forests. Roosevelt named Harry Hopkins, former head of New York’s Tuberculosis and Health Association, executive director of TERA...
and directed him to coordinate the program’s forestry work with Conservation Department commissioner Henry Morgenthau, Jr. 88

Under Roosevelt’s close supervision, TERA began its forestry relief work early in 1932. “We have lately undertaken a new project using our State relief funds in forestry work,” explained the New York governor to Ovid Butler, executive secretary of the American Forestry Association. “On this project we are now employing 100 men in Central New York on a somewhat experimental basis to find out to what extent we can profitably use men from the lists of the unemployed to improve our existing reforestation areas.”89 The “experiment,” as Roosevelt called it, proved so successful that TERA immediately created more than 10,000 conservation-related jobs for out-of-work New Yorkers.90 Not surprising given Roosevelt’s contemporaneous involvement with scouting, TERA’s forestry work initiative shared numerous traits with the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York’s conservation program. For example, TERA laborers performed work such as the cutting of fire lanes, the clearing of dead wood, and the planting of seedlings, that was nearly identical to that done by Boy Scouts in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Conservation Camps. Moreover, TERA conducted much of this work in the Palisades Interstate Park, literally a stone’s throw from the Boy Scouts’ conservation campgrounds. All told, by the end of 1932 Roosevelt’s forestry work-relief program was aiding more than 25,000 unemployed New Yorkers.91

The forestry relief work undertaken by TERA not only reflected the practices of Franklin Roosevelt’s Boy Scouts of Greater New York, but also foreshadowed the birth of the CCC. For instance, both TERA and the CCC housed their workers in camps located on public lands, and each program provided its participants with food, shelter, and an allowance in exchange for labor. In TERA’s case this pay came to 12 dollars a month, about half what the Corps provided. TERA also acted as selection agent for CCC enrollees in New York state from 1933 until 1937.92 Most importantly, however, the TERA conservation program soon went national, much as the CCC would in March of 1933. Although President Herbert Hoover showed his affinity for Governor Roosevelt’s forestry relief initiative by allocating funds for similar work in National Forests in January of 1931, it was in November of that year that state officials from across the country began praising New York’s TERA.93 “I saw in the paper your plan . . . in regard to relieving unemployment and perpetuating forest growth,” wrote an admiral from Mississippi to Roosevelt, “and I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you on this wonderful forward advancement and I am hoping that our state and a great many other states will follow in your footsteps.”94 Numerous states did. The Great Lakes states of Michigan and Indiana, others in the south such as Mississippi and Virginia, and Oregon and Washington state in the Pacific northwestern, among others, all established forestry work-relief programs based largely on TERA.95 Even California’s forestry relief efforts, often cited as the most advanced program in the country, began six months after Roosevelt asked the New York state legislature to establish TERA. In addition, when the Golden State’s forestry relief camps began closing in May of 1933, it was the CCC camps that replaced them.96 Thus rather than being the ideological source of the Corps, as many have posited, TERA was more an intermediary step on the state level between Roosevelt’s municipal Boy Scouts conservation initiative and his federal CCC program.

As Franklin Roosevelt’s pre-presidential experiences indicate, the Corps idea honored by the nation’s first CCC enrollees, who named their camp near Luray, Virginia “Camp Roosevelt,” was indeed a conflux of desire and need. Roosevelt’s desire to conserve the nation’s natural resources in light of the disasters occurring along the Ohio and other rivers was the first tributary in the ideological stream that ultimately led to the creation of the CCC. This desire was influenced by the future president’s involvement in the Progressive era conservation movement both while managing his family estate in Hyde Park, and while acting as New York state senator and governor in Albany. Roosevelt’s conservationist ideology was likewise shaped by Gifford Pinchot, chief forester of the U.S. Forest Service. Unlike John Muir, who believed in preserving nature for its aesthetic and spiritual properties, Roosevelt and Pinchot promoted the rational development and use of natural resources through scientific management. The work performed by the CCC, which Roosevelt defined narrowly in his congressional address as “forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects,” was thus partly the offspring of the conservation movement’s preoccupation with rational production.97

This conservationist stream, however, accounts for only one tributary flowing into the CCC’s ideological origin. Franklin Roosevelt’s experiences with youth relief also shaped the Corps’s genesis. Through his involvement with the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, Roosevelt came into contact with reformers who like himself viewed the urban setting as threatening and the countryside as potentially rejuvenative. Similar to Frederick Law Olmsted before them, progressives including Ernest Thompson Seton, Edward Bok, and Theodore Roosevelt, all proposed strenuous stints in the great outdoors as a curative for city ills. Franklin Roosevelt made such experiences a reality for tens of thousands of New York City adolescents by increasing the number of Boy Scout campgrounds in the metropolitan region. He did the same when asking Congress in March of 1933 to create a conservation corps that would “take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings.” Along with the Progressive-era conservation movement, then, President Roosevelt’s thinking concerning the CCC was also shaped by progressive environmentalist reform.
In relying on his past experiences with both conservation and progressive environmentalism, Franklin Roosevelt was more of a synthesizer of existing ideologies than a creator of new ones. The president was original, however, in his desire to combine the conservation of natural resources with the conservation of young men. He initiated this process by establishing the Franklin D. Roosevelt Conservation Camps in New York’s Palisades Interstate Park, and furthered it when as governor of New York he created forestry relief work under TERA. Because of such actions, in August of 1933 the newly elected president could confidently announce to thousands of scouting scouts that “this Spring, because of my scout training, I took a leaf out of the notebook of scouting” and “started the CCC in this country, modeling it to a large extent after scouting.”

The conflux of desire and need resulting in the Corps had implication for the conservation movement during and after the Great Depression. As stated above, during the first two decades of the twentieth century the conservation movement experienced internal divisions that pitted amateur preservationists such as John Muir against professional conservationists led by Gifford Pinchot. Muir’s spiritual wilderness sat in direct opposition to Pinchot’s utilitarian timber. Yet in creating the Corps, Franklin Roosevelt altered this equation by adding environmentalist thinking to this conservationist-preservationist paradigm. As a result no longer would Gifford Pinchot and the ghost of John Muir battle alone over conservation controversies like Hetch Hetchy. Instead during the New Deal era, conservation and preservation would be joined by a third ideology, promoted by the likes of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boy Scouts, which viewed Nature as a healthful rejuvenator of urban youths. This intellectual addition would help transform the conservation movement after World War II in ways that fostered environmentalism. 

NOTES


11. For a more detailed account of the events of this week, see Salmond, *The CCC*, 10-12.

12. The other two legislative initiatives proposed in Roosevelt's March 21, 1933 congressional address would grant aid to states for relief work and establish a broad public works labor-creating program similar to the Works Progress Administration. The address is reprinted in its entirety in Nixon, *FDR and Conservation*, 1: 143.


18. Franklin Roosevelt to Hendrik William Van Loon, February 2, 1937, President's Personal File, FDRL.


21. Roosevelt planted trees at Hyde Park every year except five, 1919-1923, during which he was serving as secretary of the Navy in Washington or recovering from polio. For good accounts of FDR's tree-planting efforts at Hyde Park, see Nelson Brown, "The President Practices Forestry," *Journal of Forestry* 41, no. 2 (February 1943); Nelson Brown, "President Has Long Practiced Forestry," *New York Times*, April 30, 1933, sec. vii, 1; and Patton, "Franklin Roosevelt and ESF," 397-98.


27. For a good history of the Adirondack Forest Preserve, see Philip Terrie, *Forever Wild: A Cultural History of Wilderness in the Adirondacks* (Philadelphia: Temple

38. Muir biographer Stephen Fox traces this "amateur" tradition throughout the history of the American Conservation Movement. See especially Fox, The American Conservation Movement, chpt. 10. Environmental historians disagree over Muir’s relationship to the conservation movement of Gifford Pinchot. Some scholars, such as Samuel Hays, do not include Muir in their examination of Progressive era conservation while others, including Stephen Fox, portray Muir as the driving force of the movement. This dissertation portrays Muir’s beliefs as a minority voice, albeit one growing in strength during the New Deal era, within the conservation movement.

39. Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 103, as quoted in Fox, The American Conservation Movement, 112. As late as 1901 Muir was writing that “state woodlands [should] not be allowed to lie idle,” but are made to “produce as much timber as is possible without spoiling them.” John Muir, Our National Parks, 365.


41. Numerous environmental historians have identified the Hetch Hetchy controversy as a critical event in the splintering of the conservation movement into conservationist and preservationist camps. See especially, Fox, The American Conservation Movement, 111–13; Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 135–38; Penick, “The Progressives and the Environment,” 125–26; Williams, Americans and Their Forests, 413–14 and 456; and Gottlieb, Forging the Spring, 24–28.

42. As quoted in Patton, Forestry and Politics, 398.

43. The great majority of scholarship on progressivism defines the Progressive era as drawing to a close sometime around 1920. For a discussion of this periodization, see Daniel Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” Reviews in American History (December 1982): 113.

44. Franklin Roosevelt, “Message to the Legislature,” January 26, 1931, as reprinted in Nixon, FDR and Conservation, 1:79.


47. Franklin Roosevelt Speech File, #600, FDRL; also printed as “Return of Jobless From City to Farm is Roosevelt’s Aim,” New York Times, January 17, 1933.
48. The meeting was held on April 5, 1933. Perry Merrill, Roosevelt's Forest Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942 (Montpellier, Vermont, 1983), 11.


68. According to Paul Boyer, the Boy Scout movement was an integral part of the Progressive era positive environmentalist effort. See Boyer, *Urban Masers*, 359, no. 61.


70. I have found no historical literature pertaining to Franklin Roosevelt’s experiences with the Boy Scouts. The quote is from Franklin Roosevelt to Conrad Chapman, June 15, 1925, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Federation of Greater New York, Correspondence: A–C, FDRL; other facts were pieced together from the following material: Colin Lingsherr to Franklin Roosevelt, May 16, 1921, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Federation of Greater New York, Correspondence: D–M, FDRL; Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, “Annual Report, January 1923,” FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Federation of Greater New York, Correspondence: N–W, FDRL; and “Roosevelt Quits Presidency of Boy Scout Unit,” *New York Herald Tribune*, July 22, 1937, Clipping from Presidents Personal File, #4241, Boy Scout Federation of Greater New York, FDRL.


72. Franklin Roosevelt, “Magnitude and accomplishment of the Boy Scout movement,” address given over radio station WJZ at the Luncheon of the Boy Scouts Foundation in New York City, April 8, 1932, Speech File #471, FDRL.


75. Franklin Roosevelt, “Magnitude and accomplishment of the Boy Scout movement,” address given over radio station WJZ at the Luncheon of the Boy Scouts Foundation in New York City, April 8, 1932, Speech File #471, FDRL. According to historian David Macleod, during the 1910s and 1920s the Boy Scouts nationwide were plagued by a lack of campground sites. See, Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 239.

76. Franklin Roosevelt to James Forbes, August 1, 1921, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Federation of Greater New York, Correspondence: N–W, FDRL.

77. For a description of the Sullivan County Boy Scout campground, see “Roosevelt Sees Problem of Boys Aided by Scouts,” *New York City Evening World*, March 2, 1929, np; and “Scouting Solves Juvenile Crime, Says Roosevelt,” *Brooklyn New York Eagle*, March 2, 1929, np; both found in clipping file, FDR: Papers as Governor of New York State. Series 1: Correspondence, Boy Scouts of America, FDRL.

78. Boy Scouts of America, “Fifteen Million American Boys Call to You . . .” (1929), clipping found in FDR: Papers as Governor of New York State, Series 1: Correspondence, Boy Scouts of America, FDRL.


80. Ibid., 245. For a general description of the destructive character of Boy Scout camping, see Macleod. Ibid., 140 and 239.

81. Franklin Roosevelt to George Pratt, September 6, 1922, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, Correspondence: N–W, FDRL.

82. Roosevelt’s request was mentioned in the following letter: Louis Howe to H.A. Gordon, July 13, 1922, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, Folder: FDR Conservation Camps, FDRL.


84. For a good description of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Conservation Camps, see Chairman, Camp Committee, Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York to Louis Howe, nd, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout
Foundation of Greater New York, Folder: FDR Conservation Camps, FDRL. For promotional literature on the conservation camps, see "Scout Camps: F.D. Roosevelt Conservation Camps, Harriman Section, Palisades Interstate Park," pamphlet found in FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, Folder: FDR Conservation Camps, FDRL.

85. Fay Welch to Edgar Nixon, April 18, 1955, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, Subject File: Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, Folder: FDR Conservation Camps, FDRL. On Roosevelt's desire to include a forestry program at the Boy Scouts Sullivan, County, New York camp, see Arthur Proctor to Guernsey Cross, August 26, 1930, FDR: Papers as Governor of New York, Series 1: Correspondence, Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, FDRL.

86. On the Dutchess County, New York project, see Walter Forse to Franklin Roosevelt, December 16, 1931, FDR: Papers as Governor of New York State, Series 1: Correspondence, Boy Scouts of America, FDRL. On the Boy Scouts nationwide "Nut Seed and Tree Planting Project," see "Boy Scouts are Undertaking Wide Tree-Planting Project," New York Times, April 20, 1930, sec. IX, 8; and "Boy Scouts are Embarked on Tree-Planting Campaign," New York Times, June 1, 1930, sec. viii, 12.

87. Franklin Roosevelt to the New York State Legislature, March 25, 1930, as reprinted in Nixon, FDR and Conservation, 1: 71.

88. Governor Roosevelt established TERA as part of the Wicks Act of September 1931. For background information on the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), see Bellush, Franklin D. Roosevelt as Governor of New York, 141-49; Potter, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in New York State," 25; and John Gibbs, "Tree Planting Aids Unemployed," American Forests (April 1933): 159-61.

89. Franklin Roosevelt to Ovid Butler, August 15, 1932, as reprinted in Nixon, FDR and Conservation, 1: 122.


91. On TERA conservation work and the 25,000 unemployed men aided by the program, see Gibbs, "Tree Planting Aids Unemployed," 161 and 159. In 1932 TERA employed approximately 1,000 New York City men in the Palisades Interstate Park. See, "Thousand New York City Men Given Work in interstate Park," press release from the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park, 1932, Bear Mountain State Park Archives, Bear Mountain, New York.


94. F.A. Anderson, Executive Committee, Mississippi Forestry Association to Franklin Roosevelt, November 5, 1931, as reprinted in Nixon, FDR and Conservation, 1: 99.

95. For an overview of these states' forestry work-relief programs, see G.H. Cellingswood, "Forestry Aids the Unemployed," American Forests (October 1932): 550. Other states that helped unemployed families by allowing them to collect cordwood and other wood products from state-owned land include New Hampshire, North Carolina, Connecticut, Louisiana, Utah, Idaho, and Colorado.


97. On the Progressive era's link to the history of production, see Hays, Beauty, Health, and Permanence, 13.