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**Military vets to help rebuild northern California fisheries**

*NOAA partners with California to offer training and employment in habitat restoration; space still available for veterans to apply*

Veterans will get a chance to train and work on habitat restoration and fisheries monitoring through a project funded by NOAA and administered in partnership with the California Conservation Corps and California's Department of Fish and Game.

During the yearlong program of paid training and hands-on experience, veterans will spend part of the time on habitat restoration and will also receive training and experience in firefighting and reducing fire hazards.

"This is a win-win for everyone," said Eric Schwaab, NOAA's assistant administrator for fisheries. "Military veterans have tremendous skills to offer, and by helping to restore fish habitats they will be supporting the important role of commercial and recreational fishing in the economy. Restoration jobs pay dividends twice, first because they put people to work immediately, and then because restoration benefits our fisheries, tourism, and coastal communities for years to come."

Veterans will start the program by taking courses in how to collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of coastal and marine habitat restoration. By mid- to late October, they will begin monitoring several river restoration sites in Humboldt, Del Norte, and Mendocino counties that were designed to increase spawning and rearing habitat for populations of endangered coho salmon in accordance with the recovery plan developed under the Endangered Species Act. The restored habitat should also help boost populations of Chinook and steelhead trout as well as improve environmental quality generally.

"We're excited about the new veterans' fisheries crew getting underway," said David Muraki, director of the California Conservation Corps, a state agency that provides employment and training for youth ages 18 to 25. "We've had success with other veterans' crews that focused on firefighting and energy technology. This will be our first foray into using military veterans for habitat restoration."

"Our veterans have earned our thanks and our support," said California Department of Fish and Game Director Charlton H. Bonham. "California's ocean and river resources are part of our national heritage, and we are privileged to be able to offer some of these veterans jobs in restoration and conservation."

By providing meaningful training and work experiences in conservation, the project aligns with several Obama Administration initiatives, including the Veterans Job Corps Initiative and America's Great Outdoors, which calls for the development of a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps to help protect, restore, and enhance the outdoor environment. It is also part of NOAA's effort to implement the National Ocean Policy, which calls for establishing a coastal conservation corps network. The program also works toward the same goals as Joining Forces, a comprehensive national initiative of First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden to mobilize all sectors of society to give our service members and their families the opportunities and support they have earned.

Veterans interested in joining the fisheries crew should contact the California Conservation Corps' Tina Ratcliff at 916-341-3123 or [tina.ratcliff@ccc.ca.gov](mailto:tina.ratcliff@ccc.ca.gov) before training begins on Monday, September 17.

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