

Kelly Kate Warren Application

Hello!

I found your website while searching for adventure scholarships and figured I'd shoot you an email! My name is Kelly Kate Warren, I'm 29-years-old, and have spent the last 5 years living and working in the backcountry of California as a trail worker and backcountry cook.

I started my career in trails as a corpsmember with the California Conservation Corps / Americorps Backcountry Trails Program. I spent 6 months living in the backcountry of the Klamath National Forest learning trail work, wilderness ethics, and how to live and work with a small community isolated in the backcountry. After my season I joined the CCC at the Los Padres center in San Luis Obispo, where I promoted to a Specialist, was chainsaw certified, learned flood-fighting, construction, and countless other job skills, worked on trail projects all over California, and worked with the Watershed Stewards Program as a field biologist. I promoted to a staff position and moved to Anza Borrego State Park where I supervised and cooked for 40 corpsmembers on an invasive species removal project. I lived in the desert for 6 months and fell deeply in love with backcountry cooking. I learned how to order food and supplies, how to manage a camp, how to cook elaborate meals in a primitive kitchen, and how to survive 75 mph winds, rattlesnakes, and heat and cold like nothing I'd experienced in the mountains. I finished my season in Anza Borrego, spent two weeks with my family in the San Francisco Bay Area, and moved to the Shasta-Trinity National Forest where I was a cook for the 2014 Backcountry Trails Crew. This last summer was my third as the backcountry cook for the Shasta-Trinity crew. I've spent the last 3 summers cooking Pad Thai and Al Pastor tacos for a crew of dirty trail workers in the middle of the Trinity Alps Wilderness. Our Wilderness and Trails program employees are like my family now, and even the mules who pack in our food and mail every Monday have become good friends. It's hard to imagine not returning to my home this coming summer, but I've wanted to hike the PCT since I was a little girl, and 5 years ago I promised myself I would turn 30 on the trail.

I'm now planning a not-quite-exactly thru-hike. I'll start and finish on the PCT, but will spend most of the summer visiting as many trail crews as possible to document the community we have built and the lives that we live. There is so little understanding of even where trails come from, let alone the people who leave their families and the comforts of civilization to live and work in the woods. I'll be visiting Backcountry Trails Program Corpsmember crews to teach cooking and nutrition classes, and to interview and photograph the young adults who're experiencing their first season of trail work. I'll also be cooking for the Women in the Wilderness Program, a program that provides wilderness experiences and job training to intercity women of color. I don't know what will happen with public lands in the next 50 years, but it's hard to imagine that supplies will still be packed into backcountry camps via a packstring of mules, or that we'll still do log outs using crosscut saws. I want to document and preserve the traditions of trail work and the stories of trail workers, wilderness rangers, packers, backcountry cooks, and corpsmembers.

I'm excited to experience the wilderness from a different perspective. I've been a resident and employee in most of the Forests and Parks I've spent time in, and to be a tourist will be an interesting change of pace and I'm overwhelmed with the thought of hiking through so many unfamiliar, unique ecosystems throughout the west coast. I'm an experienced hiker and backpacker, but a hike of this scope is like

nothing I've done, and I'm excited to redefine what I'm physically and emotionally capable of. The PCT has so much history, and such an incredible community of hikers that pass through it, and it will be a privilege to experience that first hand.

I have saved most of my trail money for this trip, and am pinching pennies and preparing backpacking food all winter. But that is all money that would otherwise go into my 401k and this trip, which is genuinely my attempt to give back to the trails community I've been welcomed into and the programs that got me there, will likely end with me stupidly broke. I'm fine with that, but friends have encouraged me to pursue scholarships and grants to help lessen the impact on me financially. They're right, I just hate the idea of asking for handouts. Regardless, I'm not sure what exactly you guys provide, but it'll help me finish the PCT strong and slightly less bankrupt than I've been planning, I'd be more appreciative that I can even express.

I've been using Instagram to share pictures of what my life is like in the backcountry, and to share my cooking! I'll have a website up and running by the time I start my hike, and plan to update both as I hike. My instagram account is: @thebackcountrycook. <https://www.instagram.com/thebackcountrycook/>

Sorry for the long email, my life can be difficult to explain. Thank you for honoring Ryan by encouraging others to get out and explore, it is something our culture needs more of and there aren't nearly enough programs to help people escape from civilization and spend time in nature. The world would be a better place if we could get more people into the woods, my life purpose is to encourage that in others.

- Kelly Kate Warren