

# Santa Cruz Sentinel

## Watsonville

### California Conservation Corps prepares to fight floods

Posted: 12/08/2009 11:00 PM



WATSONVILLE -- If filling sandbags isn't exactly an art, there is a science to it.

The latest class of California Conservation Corps members from Watsonville learned the how to's of flood protection Tuesday at Sunset State Beach.

The lesson may come in handy. Two years ago, Corps teams from Watsonville were first on scene when the San Joaquin River threatened the Central Valley town of Firebaugh.

"They saved the town," said Rick Burnett, flood fight specialist for the state Department of Water Resources.

So what is the best way to sandbag?

Burnett, who started his state career in the Corps in 1977, said most people fill the bags too full. The water resources department protocol calls for filling 18-by-30-inch burlap bags about a third full, and folding the remaining flap at a 45 degree angle. The next two bags are placed atop the flap to form an overlapping wall.

"It makes for a very strong, watertight structure," Burnett said.

While Corps members normal duties include projects ranging from home weatherization to trail construction, they are one of the state's crucial emergency response forces and

are actively involved in fighting fires and floods each year. Since the program's inception in 1976, members have filled more than 3.5 million sandbags, according to the Corps.

The program is open to men and women, 18-25, willing to commit to working a year for minimum wage.

For information, visit [www.ccc.ca.gov](http://www.ccc.ca.gov).