

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3220

To establish a Restore Employment in Natural and Environmental Work Conservation Corps in the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 13, 2021

Mr. RUSH introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture, Energy and Commerce, and Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish a Restore Employment in Natural and Environmental Work Conservation Corps in the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Restore Employment
5 in Natural and Environmental Work Conservation Corps
6 Act” or the “RENEW Conservation Corps Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

3 (1) as a result of the Coronavirus Disease 2019
4 (COVID–19) pandemic, more than 40,000,000 peo-
5 ple in the United States have filed claims for unem-
6 ployment benefits since March 2020, which is a level
7 of unemployment not seen since the Great Depres-
8 sion;

9 (2) investments in fish, wildlife, and habitat
10 restoration and outdoor recreation infrastructure
11 generate as many as 33 jobs per \$1,000,000 in-
12 vested, as demonstrated by the American Recovery
13 and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–5;
14 123 Stat. 115);

15 (3) the outdoor recreation economy—

16 (A) generates \$887,000,000,000 in eco-
17 nomic activity each year, which is 2.2 percent
18 of the gross domestic product of the United
19 States, according to the Bureau of Economic
20 Analysis; and

21 (B) was 1 of the fastest growing sectors of
22 the United States economy before the
23 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID–19) pan-
24 demic;

1 (4) the demand for outdoor recreation has in-
2 creased dramatically during the Coronavirus Disease
3 2019 (COVID–19) pandemic;

4 (5) the Federal Government and State and local
5 governments and agencies have many “shovel-ready”
6 projects and green infrastructure maintenance back-
7 log projects that would—

8 (A) improve the quality of life and outdoor
9 experiences of people of the United States;

10 (B) make communities, especially commu-
11 nities that are traditionally underserved, more
12 resilient to climate change, natural disasters,
13 and wildfires; and

14 (C) provide access to outdoor recreation
15 opportunities to all people of the United States;

16 (6) many facilities and natural resources lo-
17 cated on dedicated conservation land are in disrepair
18 or degraded and in need of labor-intensive rehabili-
19 tation, restoration, and enhancement work that can-
20 not be carried out at existing staffing levels;

21 (7) enhancing and maintaining environmentally
22 and recreationally important land and waters
23 through the participation of unemployed individuals
24 in the United States in a conservation corps could—

1 (A) provide critical employment, education,
2 and skill development opportunities to the indi-
3 viduals;

4 (B) prepare the individuals for permanent
5 jobs in the conservation field; and

6 (C) benefit the economy and environment
7 of the United States; and

8 (8) existing networks of conservation corps are
9 in place but need additional resources in order to
10 scale up the activities of the conservation corps to
11 meet growing deferred maintenance needs on public
12 land.

13 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

14 (1) to employ, during the 5-year period begin-
15 ning on the date of enactment of this Act, a total
16 of 1,000,000 people in the United States in dedi-
17 cated conservation land projects to support the
18 growing backlog of deferred conservation land
19 projects;

20 (2) to expose Participants to public service
21 while furthering the understanding and appreciation
22 of the Participants of the natural and cultural re-
23 sources of the United States;

24 (3) to stimulate interest among Participants in
25 conservation careers by exposing the Participants to

1 conservation professionals in land management
2 agencies; and

3 (4) to build on the existing network of con-
4 servation corps organizations working across the
5 United States while providing for expanded partici-
6 pation in urban centers.

7 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act:

9 (1) CORPS.—The term “Corps” means the Re-
10 store Employment in Natural and Environmental
11 Work Conservation Corps established by section
12 4(a).

13 (2) COUNCIL.—The term “Council” means the
14 National Council on the Restore Employment in
15 Natural and Environmental Work Conservation
16 Corps established under section 6(a).

17 (3) ELIGIBLE AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION.—The
18 term “eligible agency or organization” means—

19 (A) a unit of local government;

20 (B) a land trust;

21 (C) a conservation nonprofit organization;

22 or

23 (D) a qualified youth service and conserva-
24 tion corps, including—

1 (i) an organization established
2 under—

3 (I) the National and Community
4 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501
5 et seq.);

6 (II) title I of Public Law 91–378
7 (commonly known as the “Youth Con-
8 servation Corps Act of 1970”) (16
9 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.); or

10 (III) the Public Lands Corps Act
11 of 1993 (16 U.S.C. 1721 et seq.), in-
12 cluding the Indian Youth Service
13 Corps authorized under section 210 of
14 that Act (16 U.S.C. 1727b);

15 (ii) the Urban Youth Corps authorized
16 under section 106 of the National and
17 Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (42
18 U.S.C. 12656);

19 (iii) a qualified urban youth corps (as
20 defined in section 106(c)(3) of the Na-
21 tional and Community Service Trust Act of
22 1993 (42 U.S.C. 12656(c)(3))); and

23 (iv) the Healthy Futures Corps estab-
24 lished under section 122(a)(2)(A) of the

1 National and Community Service Act of
2 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12572(a)(2)(A)).

3 (4) ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANT.—The term “eligi-
4 ble participant” means an individual who—

5 (A) is 16 years of age or older at the time
6 the individual begins the term of service as a
7 Participant; and

8 (B) is a citizen or national of the United
9 States or lawful permanent resident alien of the
10 United States.

11 (5) ELIGIBLE PROJECT.—The term “eligible
12 project” means any of the following:

13 (A) A project to plant trees.

14 (B) A project for the restoration and man-
15 agement of wildlife habitat.

16 (C) A project to control invasive species.

17 (D) A project for the conduct of prescribed
18 burns, hazardous fuels reduction, or invasive
19 species removal.

20 (E) A project for the restoration of
21 streams, wetlands, and other aquatic eco-
22 systems, including the Great Lakes and coastal
23 areas.

24 (F) A project to monitor water quality in
25 streams and lakes.

1 (G) A project to assist with the conduct of
2 fish and wildlife surveys.

3 (H) A project for the construction or main-
4 tenance of trails, bridges, campgrounds, picnic
5 shelters, or other recreational amenities for use
6 by the public.

7 (I) A project for the construction or main-
8 tenance of parks and playgrounds.

9 (J) A project to restore brownfield sites
10 (as defined in section 101 of the Comprehensive
11 Environmental Response, Compensation, and
12 Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9601)) in
13 urban areas.

14 (K) A project to construct rain gardens,
15 grass waterways, pollinator gardens, or green
16 schoolyards.

17 (L) A project for the development of urban
18 gardens and farms.

19 (M) A project to plant native grasslands.

20 (N) A project to provide environmental in-
21 terpretation or outdoor education.

22 (O) A project to improve community resil-
23 iency to climate change and natural disasters,
24 such as the installation of bioswales and per-
25 meable surfaces.

1 (P) Any other project determined to be ap-
2 propriate by the Secretaries.

3 (6) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
4 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the
5 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
6 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

7 (7) OPPORTUNITY YOUTH.—The term “oppor-
8 tunity youth” means an individual who—

9 (A) is not younger than the age of 16 or
10 older than the age of 24; and

11 (B) is not enrolled in school or partici-
12 pating in the labor market.

13 (8) PARTICIPANT.—The term “Participant”
14 means an eligible participant enrolled in the Corps.

15 (9) PROGRAM PARTNER.—The term “Program
16 partner” means—

17 (A) a State or Indian Tribe administering
18 a program for eligible projects or a grant pro-
19 gram under subsection (a) or (b) of section 5,
20 as applicable; and

21 (B) an eligible agency or organization car-
22 rying out eligible projects under section
23 5(a)(3)(B).

1 (10) SECRETARIES.—The term “Secretaries”
 2 means the Secretary of Agriculture and the Sec-
 3 retary of the Interior, acting jointly.

4 (11) STATE.—The term “State” means each of
 5 the several States, the District of Columbia, the
 6 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and any other terri-
 7 tory or possession of the United States.

8 **SEC. 4. RESTORE EMPLOYMENT IN NATURAL AND ENVI-**
 9 **RONMENTAL WORK CONSERVATION CORPS.**

10 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the
 11 Department of the Interior and the Department of Agri-
 12 culture the Restore Employment in Natural and Environ-
 13 mental Work Conservation Corps program under which
 14 Participants shall carry out—

15 (1) eligible projects administered by the Secre-
 16 taries under this section; and

17 (2) eligible projects administered by Program
 18 partners under subsection (a) or (b) of section 5.

19 (b) PARTICIPANTS.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Corps shall consist of—

21 (A) eligible participants who are enrolled
 22 in the Corps by the Secretaries; and

23 (B) eligible participants who are enrolled
 24 in the Corps by Program partners.

1 (2) REQUIREMENT.—In enrolling eligible par-
2 ticipants in the Corps under paragraph (1), the Sec-
3 retaries and Program partners shall ensure that
4 Participants reflect the demographics of the area in
5 which the Participants are carrying out an eligible
6 project.

7 (3) WORK EXPERIENCE.—The Secretaries and
8 Program partners shall provide Participants—

9 (A) meaningful, full-time, productive work
10 in a natural or cultural resource setting;

11 (B) a mix of work experience, basic and
12 life skills, education, training, and support serv-
13 ices; and

14 (C) the opportunity to develop an ethic of
15 citizenship, community service, and environ-
16 mental stewardship through service to the com-
17 munity and the United States.

18 (c) TERMS AND COMPENSATION.—

19 (1) TERM.—Participants shall serve for a term
20 of at least 12 weeks, but not more than 1 year.

21 (2) COMPENSATION.—

22 (A) WAGES.—Participants shall be com-
23 pensated at a wage rate that is appropriate for
24 the type of work performed by the Participant,
25 but not less than \$15 per hour (to be increased

1 each year based on increases in the Consumer
2 Price Index for the year).

3 (B) EDUCATIONAL CREDIT; TUITION AS-
4 SISTANCE.—If a Participant completes at least
5 1 year of service in the Corps, the Participant
6 shall be eligible for—

7 (i) an educational credit that may be
8 applied toward a program of postsecondary
9 education at an institution of higher edu-
10 cation that agrees to award the credit for
11 participation in the Corps; and

12 (ii) not more than \$5,500 in tuition
13 assistance to the Participant for purposes
14 of continuing education.

15 (d) TRAINING; APPRENTICESHIPS.—The Secretaries
16 and Program partners shall—

17 (1) ensure that 20 to 50 percent of the term of
18 a Participant in the Corps is dedicated to education,
19 training, and workforce readiness activities; and

20 (2) provide curricula to Participants that im-
21 prove the future job prospects of Participants, in-
22 cluding through making available to Participants
23 registered apprenticeships and other professional li-
24 censes or certifications.

1 (e) ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF
2 PROGRAM PARTNERS WITH RESPECT TO OPPORTUNITY
3 YOUTH.—A Program partner that enrolls Participants
4 that are opportunity youth—

5 (1) shall provide to the opportunity youth—

6 (A) supervision and training;

7 (B) adult mentoring; and

8 (C) education, which may include—

9 (i) basic instruction and remedial edu-
10 cation;

11 (ii) language instruction for individ-
12 uals with limited English proficiency;

13 (iii) secondary education services and
14 activities, including dropout prevention and
15 tutoring; and

16 (iv) other activities that are delivered
17 in conjunction with project-based service-
18 learning to the maximum extent prac-
19 ticable; and

20 (2) may provide to the opportunity youth—

21 (A) services to assist in the preparation
22 for, and access to, postsecondary education op-
23 portunities, including—

24 (i) counseling; and

1 (ii) assistance with applying for stu-
2 dent financial aid;

3 (B) employability training, which may in-
4 clude—

5 (i) development of basic skills, such
6 as—

7 (I) arriving on time to work;

8 (II) being prepared to work;

9 (III) following directions;

10 (IV) working independently;

11 (V) working with others;

12 (VI) working safely; and

13 (VII) demonstrating a commit-
14 ment to produce high-quality work;

15 (ii) career counseling and job search
16 assistance; and

17 (iii) pathways to family sustaining
18 jobs; and

19 (C) supportive services, which may in-
20 clude—

21 (i) health care, including mental
22 health care, such as drug and alcohol
23 abuse counseling;

24 (ii) child care; and

25 (iii) transportation.

1 (f) CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION.—The Secretaries
2 shall provide each Participant with a certificate of comple-
3 tion bearing the signature of the Secretaries on the com-
4 pletion of a term of service in the Corps.

5 **SEC. 5. STATE, TRIBAL, AND LOCAL FUNDING PROGRAM**
6 **FOR ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.**

7 (a) APPORTIONMENT TO STATES.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—For each fiscal year, subject
9 to paragraphs (2) and (3), of the amounts made
10 available for apportionment to the States for that
11 fiscal year under section 7(a)(2), the Secretaries
12 shall apportion—

13 (A) $66\frac{2}{3}$ percent among States based on
14 the proportion that—

15 (i) the number of unemployed individ-
16 uals in each State, as determined based on
17 the most recent data available; bears to

18 (ii) the total number of unemployed
19 individuals in all States as so determined;
20 and

21 (B) $33\frac{1}{3}$ percent among States based on
22 the proportion that—

23 (i) the population of each State; bears
24 to

25 (ii) the population of all States.

1 (2) MINIMUM APPORTIONMENT.—No State
2 shall receive an apportionment under paragraph (1)
3 for a fiscal year in an amount less than
4 \$42,000,000.

5 (3) USE OF FUNDS.—Of the amounts appor-
6 tioned to a State under this subsection for a fiscal
7 year—

8 (A) 50 percent shall be used by the State
9 to administer a program for the conduct of eli-
10 gible projects by Participants enrolled in the
11 program by the States; and

12 (B) 50 percent shall be used by the State
13 to administer a grant program in the State
14 under which the State provides grants to eligi-
15 ble agencies or organizations in the State for
16 the conduct of eligible projects by Participants
17 enrolled by the eligible agencies or organiza-
18 tions.

19 (b) TRIBAL PROGRAM.—For each fiscal year, the
20 Secretaries shall apportion, in accordance with a formula
21 established by the Secretaries, amounts made available
22 under section 7(a)(3) to Indian Tribes to administer a
23 program for the conduct of eligible projects by Partici-
24 pants enrolled in the program by the Indian Tribe.

1 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—Of the amounts provided to a
2 Program partner for the conduct of eligible projects under
3 this section, the Program partner—

4 (1) may use not more than 20 percent for ad-
5 ministrative costs of administering and carrying out
6 eligible projects (including costs of recruiting and
7 hiring individuals to carry out eligible projects);

8 (2) may use not more than 14 percent to pro-
9 vide continuing education to individuals admin-
10 istering or carrying out eligible projects;

11 (3) may use not more than 8 percent for the
12 cost of equipment and supplies for eligible projects;
13 and

14 (4) shall use the remainder of the amounts for
15 the costs of salaries of individuals administering or
16 carrying out eligible projects.

17 (d) REALLOCATION.—Any funds made available to a
18 State or Indian Tribe under subsection (a) or (b) that are
19 not obligated by the State or Indian Tribe at the end of
20 the third fiscal year beginning after the fiscal year during
21 which the funds were made available shall be withdrawn
22 from the State or Indian Tribe and reallocated by the Sec-
23 retaries to other States and Indian Tribes on the basis
24 of need, as determined by the Secretaries, and in amounts

1 that the Secretaries determine would best accomplish the
2 purposes described in section 2(b).

3 **SEC. 6. NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE RESTORE EMPLOY-**
4 **MENT IN NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL**
5 **WORK CONSERVATION CORPS.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of the Interior,
7 the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce,
8 the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agen-
9 cy, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality,
10 the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Chief
11 Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and
12 Community Service, and the Assistant Secretary of the
13 Army for Civil Works, through the execution of a memo-
14 randum of understanding, shall establish a National Coun-
15 cil on the Restore Employment in Natural and Environ-
16 mental Work Conservation Corps.

17 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Council shall be com-
19 posed of—

20 (A) the Director of the Bureau of Indian
21 Affairs;

22 (B) the Director of the Bureau of Land
23 Management;

24 (C) the Commissioner of Reclamation;

1 (D) the Chief of the Natural Resources
2 Conservation Service;

3 (E) the Director of the United States Fish
4 and Wildlife Service;

5 (F) the Director of the National Park
6 Service;

7 (G) the Administrator of the National Oce-
8 anic and Atmospheric Administration;

9 (H) the Director of the Office of Surface
10 Mining Reclamation and Enforcement;

11 (I) the Chief of Engineers;

12 (J) the Chief of the Forest Service;

13 (K) the Director of the Office of Personnel
14 Management;

15 (L) the Administrator of the Environ-
16 mental Protection Agency;

17 (M) the Chair of the Council on Environ-
18 mental Quality;

19 (N) the Chief Executive Officer of the Cor-
20 poration for National and Community Service;
21 and

22 (O) other members that the signatories to
23 the memorandum of understanding under sub-
24 section (a) determine to be appropriate for
25 membership on the Council, including—

- 1 (i) the Secretary of Labor;
- 2 (ii) the Secretary of Education;
- 3 (iii) the Secretary of Health and
- 4 Human Services;
- 5 (iv) the Secretary of Housing and
- 6 Urban Development;
- 7 (v) the Secretary of Transportation;
- 8 and
- 9 (vi) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

10 (2) CHAIR.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Council shall select
 12 a Chair of the Council from among the mem-
 13 bers of the Council described in subparagraphs
 14 (A) through (M) of paragraph (1).

15 (B) TERM.—The Chair of the Council
 16 shall serve for a term of 1 year.

17 (c) ANNUAL MEETING.—The Chair of the Council
 18 shall convene annual meetings of the Council during which
 19 the Council shall conduct an assessment of—

- 20 (1) the Corps; and
- 21 (2) eligible projects carried out by the Corps.

22 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appro-
 24 priated to carry out this Act \$55,800,000,000 for the pe-
 25 riod of fiscal years 2021 through 2025, of which—

1 (1) 37.5 percent shall be made available to the
2 Secretaries to carry out eligible projects under sec-
3 tion 4(a)(1);

4 (2) 57.5 percent shall be made available to the
5 Secretaries for apportionment to States under sec-
6 tion 5(a); and

7 (3) 5 percent shall be made available to the
8 Secretaries for apportionment to Indian Tribes
9 under section 5(b).

10 (b) MATCHING FUNDS WAIVER.—Any otherwise ap-
11 plicable matching funds requirements, including under
12 section 212(a)(1) of the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993
13 (16 U.S.C. 1729(a)(1)), shall be waived for projects car-
14 ried out using amounts made available under this Act.

○