
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Steven Bradford, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular

Bill No: SB 936 **Hearing Date:** March 29, 2022
Author: Glazer
Version: February 7, 2022
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: SJ

Subject: *California Conservation Corps: forestry training center: formerly incarcerated individuals: reporting*

HISTORY

Source: Author

Prior Legislation: SB 170 (Skinner), Ch. 240, Stats. 2021
SB 804 (Glazer), vetoed in 2021
SB 94 (Comm. on Budget and Fiscal Review), Ch. 25, Stats. 2019
AB 278 (McCarty), Ch. 571, Stats. 2019
AB 1668 (Carrillo), Ch. 587, Stats. 2019
AB 2126 (Eggman), Ch. 635, Stats. 2018
AB 864 (McCarty), Ch. 659, Stats. 2017

Support: Allweather Wood LLC; Anti-Recidivism Coalition; California Municipal Utilities Association; California Public Defenders Association; East Bay Municipal Utility District; Humboldt Redwood Company LLC; Humboldt Sawmill Company; Initiate Justice; Mendocino Forest Products; Mendocino Redwood Company; Rubicon Programs

Opposition: None known

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bill is to require the California Conservation Corps (CCC), in partnership with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), to establish a forestry training center in Northern California and to require that formerly incarcerated individuals are enrolled.

Existing law establishes the CCC in the Natural Resources Agency and requires the CCC to implement and administer the conservation corps program. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14001.)

Existing law directs CCC program activities, including the management of environmentally important lands and water, public works projects, facilitating public use of resources, assistance

in emergency operations, assistance in fire prevention and suppression, energy conservation, and environmental restoration. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14300.)

Existing law provides that corps members serve for one year with the possibility of an extension. Requires the CCC, in conjunction with the Employment Development Department (EDD), to place an emphasis on developing and executing plans to assist corps members in obtaining employment following their participation in the CCC. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14302.)

Existing law provides that the director may employ special corpsmembers without regard to their age so that the corps may draw upon their special skills which may contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the program. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14303.)

Existing law authorizes the director to recruit and enroll corps members and special corps members to contribute to the objectives of the program. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14306, subd. (a).)

Existing law authorizes the director to adopt criteria for selecting applicants for enrollment in the corps program, including criteria for individuals convicted of a crime described in the California Uniform Controlled Substance Act. Requires the director to take into account, when adopting this criteria, the health, safety, and welfare of the public and the corps, program participants, and staff. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14306, subd. (b).)

Existing law authorizes the director of the CCC to select applicants who are on probation, parole, post release community supervision, or mandatory supervision. Requires the director of the CCC to consider an applicant's overall fitness to join the corps, which includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of the following: any potential impacts the applicant may have on public safety as well as the safety of other members of the corps, whether the applicant is required to register as a sex offender, and whether the applicant is on lifetime parole. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14306.5.)

Existing law provides that fire prevention, fire suppression, and disaster relief are a major emphasis of the program. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14307.)

Existing law establishes the Forestry Corp Program and specifies the following program objectives:

- Develop and implement forest health projects;
- Establish forestry corps crews;
- Provide assistance to corps members to obtain forestry and forest technician degrees and certificates;
- Train corps members to operate forestry equipment; and
- Create pathways from the corps to degree programs and jobs. (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 14410, 14411.)

Existing law authorizes the director of the CCC to pursue partnerships with community colleges, trade associations, forest and timber industries, vocational education institutions, and apprenticeship programs to provide training and experience to members of the corps. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14411.)

Existing law authorizes the director of the CCC to establish the Education and Employment Reentry Program within the corps and provides that the program may enroll formerly incarcerated individuals who successfully served on a CCC program crew and were recommended for participation as a program member by the Director of CalFire and the Secretary of CDCR. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14415.1.)

Existing law requires the CCC to submit an annual report to the Legislature of specified education and employment outcomes of corps members following their participation in the CCC. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14424.)

Existing law establishes CalFire to oversee and administer programs related to forest health and fire prevention and response. (Pub. Resources Code, § 701.)

Existing law establishes the CCC program to be operated by CDCR in conjunction with CalFire to provide for training and use of incarcerated individuals assigned to the camps to perform public conservation projects including, but not limited to, forest fire prevention and control, forest and watershed management, recreation, fish and game management, soil conservation, and forest and watershed revegetation. (Pub. Resources Code, § 4951.)

This bill requires the director of CCC, upon an appropriation, to establish a forestry training center in Northern California in partnership with CalFire and CDCR on or before December 31, 2024. Requires the training center to provide enhanced training, education, work experience, and job readiness for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs.

This bill requires the training center to focus on forestry, and include counseling, mentorship, supportive housing, health care, and educational services.

This bill provides that the training center may include modules on the following activities: natural resources or land management projects; fuels reduction and vegetation management projects; proactively restoring forest health to reduce greenhouse gases; conserving, maintaining, improving, and developing natural resources in both urban and rural areas; assisting in fire prevention and assisting in disaster operations; protecting source watersheds from which the state's water supply originates; promoting the long-term storage of carbon in forest trees and soils; minimizing the loss of forest carbon from large, intense wildfires; and assisting departments within the Natural Resources Agency in developing, rehabilitating, and restoring parklands, recreational facilities, and historical resources.

This bill requires the director of CCC to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals at the training center and to prioritize enrollment for those formerly incarcerated individuals who have done either of the following:

- Successfully served on a CCC program crew and were recommended by the Director of CalFire and the Secretary of CDCR.
- Successfully served on a hand crew at the county level and were recommended for participation by county probation and county fire departments.

This bill authorizes the director of CCC to enroll corpsmembers and local community conservation corpsmembers at the training center if funding and resources allow.

This bill provides that successful completion of a training program at the training center constitutes qualifying experience for an entry-level forestry or vegetation management position at a state agency.

This bill requires CCC, beginning December 31, 2024, to include in its annual report to the Legislature, a reporting of the education and employment outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in corps programs or centers, including, but not limited to, the Education and Employment Reentry Program, the Ventura Training Center, the forestry training center, and any other centers or programs created by the corps.

COMMENTS

1. Need for This Bill

According to the author:

This legislation would create a center to train formerly incarcerated people in forestry management, thereby reducing the risk of deadly wildfires, while offering these qualified individuals a pathway to gainful employment. One way to reduce the devastation of wildfires is to proactively engage in forestry and vegetation management, including brush clearing. One of the greatest obstacles to this practice, however, is a lack of a trained workforce. This bill seeks to fill that void by establishing a program where graduates would be eligible for an entry-level forestry positions throughout the state.

2. California Conservation Corps

The CCC, established in 1976, is the oldest and largest state conservation corps program in the country. The CCC provides California residents who are between 18 and 25 years old with a year of paid service to the state. Approximately 3,000 corps members enroll each year, with nine months being the average length of stay. During their year of service, members work on environmental projects and respond to natural and man-made disasters. Corps members learn a variety of skills including forestry management, energy auditing and installation, emergency services management, and firefighting, and have the opportunity to complete their high school diplomas. The CCC operates two dozen residential and non-residential locations throughout the state. (<https://ccc.ca.gov/who-we-are/about/>)

3. Conservation Camp Program

CDCR, in cooperation with CalFire and the Los Angeles County Fire Department, jointly operates 35 conservation camps, commonly referred to as fire camps, located in 25 counties. The primary mission of the Conservation Camp Program is to support state, local and federal government agencies as they respond to emergencies such as fires, floods, and other natural or manmade disasters. All camps are minimum-security facilities and staffed with correctional staff. As of May 2021, CDCR reports that approximately 1,600 incarcerated individuals work at fire camps, and approximately 900 are fire-line qualified. Incarcerated individuals receive Forestry Firefighter Training via classroom and field exercises taught by CalFire instructors. An incarcerated person must volunteer for the fire camp program, and some convictions automatically make a person ineligible for fire camp assignment, including sex offenses, arson, and escape with force or violence. In addition to fighting fires, incarcerated firefighters perform conservation and community service projects, including clearing brush and fallen trees to reduce

the chance of fire, maintaining parks, sand bagging, flood protection and reforestation. (<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/conservation-camps/>)

4. Related Programs

Ventura Training Center

In an effort to expand employment opportunities for incarcerated individuals paroling from fire camps, the Ventura Training Center (VTC) was established. VTC provides parolees with an advanced firefighter training who have recently been part of a trained firefighting workforce housed in the fire camps or CDCR institution firehouses. (<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/facility-locator/conservation-camps/#CCPF>)

The CCC is the employer of record and provides base wages and benefits consistent with other corps members. CalFire is responsible for the administration of the facility, fire training, and certification. CDCR and CalFire jointly select participants for the program, and CalFire recommends individuals that are housed at fire camps while incarcerated. (Office of the Governor, *2018-19 State Budget*, available at <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2018-19/pdf/Enacted/BudgetSummary/PublicSafety.pdf>.)

Education and Employment Reentry Program

AB 1668 (Carrillo), Chapter 587, Statutes 2019, authorized the director of CCC to establish the Education and Employment Reentry Program and to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals who successfully served on a CCC program crew and were recommended for participation as a program member by the Director of CalFire and the Secretary of CDCR in the program. Program participants are generally required to engage in the following activities: natural resources or land management projects; fuels reduction and vegetation management projects; proactively restoring forest health to reduce greenhouse gases; conserving, maintaining, improving, and developing natural resources in both urban and rural areas; assisting in fire prevention and assisting in disaster operations; protecting source watersheds from which the state's water supply originates; promoting the long-term storage of carbon in forest trees and soils; minimizing the loss of forest carbon from large, intense wildfires; and assisting departments within the Natural Resources Agency in developing, rehabilitating, and restoring parklands, recreational facilities, and historical resources. The program is intended to accomplish the following objectives: develop, partner with, and create opportunities for the forestry corps program objectives; collaborate with the EDD to provide access to workforce services; collaborate with nongovernmental organizations dedicated to providing access to counseling, mentorship, supportive housing, health care, and educational opportunities; and employ collaborations and partnerships available to the corps. Because implementation of the program is contingent upon an appropriation, this program is not yet operational.

5. Governor's Veto

SB 804 of this legislative session would have required the CCC, in partnership with CalFire and CDCR, to establish a forestry training center in Northern California and required that formerly incarcerated individuals were enrolled. The text of that bill is nearly identical to the language in SB 936. Governor Newsom vetoed SB 804 stating:

I am returning Senate Bill 804 without my signature.

This bill would direct the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to establish a forestry training center providing training in Northern California for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs and prioritizing the enrollment of former conservation camp crew members, in consultation with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

As California continues to face unprecedented fire seasons, California has worked to expand our firefighting force. In 2020, I was proud to sign AB 2147 (Chapter 60, Statutes of 2020), which allowed for incarcerated individuals to serve as firefighters following their release. Additionally, in October 2018, CDCR, in partnership with CAL FIRE and the CCC, began a Firefighter Training and Certification Camp in Ventura County. The pilot program was established to expand employment opportunities for incarcerated individuals with the intention of preparing them for entry-level firefighting jobs following release.

I applaud the efforts laid out in this bill and encourage the author to work through the budget process to advance efforts related to the expansion of a Northern California center.

The Governor's veto message reflects an agreement reached via the budget process last year to consider approving the center through the 2022-23 state budget. This commitment is documented in the Assembly Budget Committee's analysis packet for AB 170/SB 170 in the following Supplemental Reporting Language:

Forestry Management Training Center. Includes SRL as follows: The Legislative Analyst's Office shall consult with CalFire and other appropriate stakeholders, including the California Conservation Corps, to develop options for the Legislature to consider for creating a forestry management training center in Northern California. It is the intent of the Legislature to consider approving the center during the budget process for the 2022-23 state budget.

(<<https://abgt.assembly.ca.gov/sites/abgt.assembly.ca.gov/files/Analyses%20Packet%20%20%2009.07.21%20%20updated.pdf>>, p. 28)

6. LAO Report

The Supplemental Report of the 2021-22 Budget Act required the LAO to consult with CalFire and other stakeholders, including the CCC, to develop options for the Legislature to consider for creating a forestry management center in Northern California. (Legislative Analyst's Office, *Options for a Forestry Management Training Center in Northern California* (available at <<https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2022/4487/forestry-mgmt-010422.pdf>>.) The report first explored the intended policy goals of a new training center. The author has indicated that the primary goal of the establishment of the training center is to reduce recidivism through a reentry program that provides formerly incarcerated people with meaningful job training. The remainder of the report posed several questions about the design, funding, and operation of the center. The report concluded with a discussion of alternatives to the creation of a new training center, including expanding existing programs such as the VTC. Detailed responses from the author regarding

questions raised in the report pertaining to the design, funding, and operation of the center are outlined in the analysis prepared by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water for the Committee's March 8, 2022 hearing.

7. Effect of This Bill

This bill requires the director of CCC to establish a forestry training center in Northern California in partnership with CalFire and CDCR on or before December 31, 2023, contingent upon an appropriation. If the training center is established, it would be required to provide enhanced training, education, work experience, and job readiness for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs. The training center modules can include training on the same activities delineated for the Education and Employment Reentry Program. The director of CCC would be required to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals at the training center and to prioritize enrollment for those formerly incarcerated individuals who have done either of the following: successfully served on a CCC program crew and were recommended by the Director of CalFire and the Secretary of CDCR; or successfully served on a firefighting crew at the county level and were recommended for participation by county probation and county fire departments. The bill specifies that successful completion of a training program at the training center constitutes qualifying experience for an entry-level forestry or vegetation management position at a state agency. Finally, the bill requires CCC to include education and employment outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in corps programs or centers in its annual report to the Legislature.

-- END --