

**Statement of
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United States Department of Agriculture
Before the
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension
Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety
United States Senate
Concerning
Job Corps Budget Shortfall: Safeguarding Workforce Training
for America's Disconnected Youth
March 12, 2013**

MR. CHAIRMAN, RANKING MEMBER ISAKSON, AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding the financial situation faced by the Job Corps.

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 1933 with Camp Roosevelt, the first Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp located on the George Washington National Forest, the Forest Service has had a long and vital association with youth and young adult conservation corps. Indeed, the Forest Service Job Corps Program, authorized by Congress in 1964, is modeled after the CCC of the 1930(s). From 1930-1938 over 3 million CCC enrollees worked in a diversity of boots-on-the-ground projects. Eighty years later, we commemorate the CCC's contributions to much of the earliest infrastructure for the Forest Service, and for the millions of seedlings they planted.

Job Corps is a national education and training program primarily administered by the Department of Labor (DOL). The Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (CCC) are operated on public land under an interagency agreement between DOL and USDA Forest Service. The Forest Service currently oversees or administers all 28 Job Corps CCCs throughout the country in 18 states. These centers provide training to youth in a natural environment. Students obtain work-based learning, including to conserve, develop, manage and enhance public national resources and public recreational areas, as well as to develop community projects in the public interest. The connection youth have to the Forest Service's conservation mission is unique and has sustained the Job Corps CCC program for almost 50 years.

FOREST SERVICE MANAGEMENT OF JOB CORPS CENTERS

Current authorization for the Civilian Conservation Centers within the Job Corps program is found in Section 147(c) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220).

The student capacity for a Forest Service Center ranges from 168 to 300, and, in total, the Forest Service serves approximately 6,200 students per year through the Job Corps program. Through the years, the Forest Service has learned that hands-on training has been the strength of the program and Job Corps CCCs have given back to the communities, and to the public, through community projects, natural resource work on National Forest System lands, maintaining public recreation areas, or fighting wildland fires.

USDA RESPONSES TO JOB CORPS PROGRAM YEAR 2011 AND 2012 FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

The Forest Service Job Corps Program is completely funded by DOL appropriations; DOL provides fund transfers on a quarterly basis to Forest Service prior to obligation or disbursement.

In response to DOL efforts to address Job Corps financial issues in Program Year (PY) 2011 and 2012, the Forest Service has implemented internal cost-cutting measures as well as DOL's mandated cost-saving measures. These cuts have been made at all 28 Job Corps CCCs as well as the National Office to ensure the sustainability of the program. The Forest Service efforts contributed to Job Corps' savings of over \$10 million in PY11 and over \$16 million in PY12, resulting in a total Forest Service budget of \$183 million in PY11 and \$180 million in PY12. A great deal of the savings achieved in PY11 was obtained by implementing DOL's requested spending plans and by not filling staff vacancies. In PY12, savings were obtained by implementing the DOL required cost cutting measures related to personnel, , clothing allowances, center vehicles, travel, conferences, training, and communications. In addition, based upon OJC's approved budget we did not fill more than 100 vacant positions, equating to more than \$5 million in salary savings.

CONCLUSION

The key to improving a young person's life tomorrow depends on what we do today. Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers have allowed youth to reclaim their lives and build careers for almost 50 years. Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers assist young men and women in becoming employable citizens, helping recover some of the billions of dollars in wages, taxes, and productivity that is lost when young Americans fail to complete their education.

Job Corps CCC students volunteer thousands of hours to help maintain the health and diversity of our national forests and grasslands. The Job Corps CCC program maintains a cadre of young people with skills and abilities who can be quickly mobilized to address national emergencies including wildfires, floods and hurricanes, Job Corps CCC students conduct work that enhances wildlife habitat, revitalizes wildfire-damaged landscapes, restores watersheds, and improves recreational resources for the benefit of all Americans. The stewardship projects Job Corps CCC students undertake are valuable, hands-on work experiences while providing exposure to career pathways in the areas of conservation, preservation, and resource management. These work experiences instill lasting and meaningful connections between the youth of America and the great outdoors. Through Forest Service Job Corps CCC, USDA is working across all boundaries, including in rural, economically challenged communities, to provide underserved youth with the training and the tools they need to enter today's economy. By integrating the

Forest Service mission with that of other USDA agencies, Job Corps CCC can work arm-in-arm to give underserved youth expanded opportunities and pathways to prosperity, target training for potential future employees, deliver services to USDA clients, and highlight USDA's leadership role in educating and training underserved youth and promoting rural prosperity.

Job Corps CCC is an invaluable resource that has produced past and present Forest Service leaders, including district rangers, forest supervisors, and regional foresters. The Forest Service is facing critical workforce shortages and Job Corps CCC is an ideal source from which to recruit and improve the skill and diversity of our permanent workforce.

The Forest Service intends to employ all the financial and programmatic resources available to continue providing services to our Nation's most vulnerable youth. Job Corps CCC is an integral part of the Forest Service's history and the work that occurs each and every day by our Job Corps CCC students and staff showcases our Nation's wise and continuing investment in the conservation of America's natural resources. . .not just our land, but the lives of young Americans.

Thank you for your time and attention and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.