

Date of Hearing: August 19, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

SB 804 (Glazer) – As Amended May 20, 2021

Policy Committee:	Natural Resources	Vote:	11 - 0
	Public Safety		8 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Conservation Corps (CCC), in partnership with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), to establish a forestry training center in northern California for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the director of CCC (Director), upon appropriation, on or before December 31, 2023, in partnership with CalFire and CDCR, to establish a forestry training center in northern California to provide enhanced training, education, work experience and job readiness to prepare formerly incarcerated individuals for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs.
- 2) Requires the training center to focus on forestry and include counseling, mentorship, supportive housing, health care and educational services.
- 3) Requires the Director to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals at the training center and prioritizes enrollment for those formerly incarcerated individuals who have done either of the following:
 - a) Successfully served on a CCC program crew and received recommendation from CalFire and CDCR.
 - b) Successfully served on a hand crew at the county level and received recommendation for participation by county probation or county fire departments.
- 4) Authorizes the Director to enroll corps members and local community conservation corps members at the training center if funding and resources allow.
- 5) States the 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.
- 6) Requires, commencing December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter, the CCC to include, in an existing annual report, information related to the training center established by this bill, the existing Ventura Training Center (VTC) and other programs used to exclusively serve formerly incarcerated individuals.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CCC estimates one-time capital outlay costs of about \$65 million (General Fund or bond funds) to construct a new residential training center. If an existing facility is renovated, renovation costs are estimated to be between \$20 million and \$30 million and annual lease costs are projected to be between \$250,000 and \$450,000.
- 2) CCC and CDCR estimate combined ongoing annual costs of approximately \$9.4 million (General Fund) to operate a new residential training facility that supports 80 corps members. An estimated \$1 million in contract funds per year (General Fund) will be necessary to provide the additional social services required by the bill.
- 3) Annual ongoing CCC costs of approximately \$800,000 (General Fund) for six positions to support the training center at the same level of service provided to corps members at other locations, and an additional \$35,000 for data gathering services to meet the additional reporting requirements.
- 4) CalFire reports there will be no additional costs associated with this bill.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, the purpose of this bill is to train formerly incarcerated individuals in forestry management to provide a pathway to gainful employment and increase the availability of a trained workforce to reduce the devastation of wildfires.
- 2) **Corps.** The CCC, established by Governor Brown during his first term in 1976, is the oldest and largest state conservation corps program in the country. It is modeled after the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC's motto is "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions ... and more!"

Although the CCC was originally conceived as a labor source for trail maintenance and restoration, it has since evolved to a workforce development program. Corps members now learn skills such as forestry management, energy auditing and installation, emergency services management and firefighting. Many corps members also receive their high school diplomas and industry certifications at the conclusion of their service. More than 120,000 young men and women have participated in the CCC, with approximately 3,000 hired each year.

The CCC has provided over 11 million hours of emergency response for nearly every major California natural disaster including floods, fires and earthquakes. Across California, the CCC operates 24 centers; nine are residential where corps members live on-site. CCC's residential centers house more than 600 corps members. Corps members must be California residents between the ages of 18 and 25.

- 1) **Ventura Training Center ("VTC").** CalFire, CCC, and CDCR created a firefighter training and certification program at the VTC in Camarillo. Trainees are people on parole who participated in the Conservation Camp Program. VTC provides firefighter training, certifications and job readiness support to create a pathway for formerly incarcerated individuals to compete for entry-level firefighting jobs with state, federal and local agencies. VTC participants are trained and available to assist in fire suppression, emergency incident

response and to perform fire prevention and resource management work. Onsite counselors help participants develop skills to successfully reintegrate into the community. Services include employment skill assessments, money management, technology training, tutoring, career planning and searching and applying for jobs.

A maximum of 80 cadets are housed at VTC at any one time. The program enrolled 21 cadets in the first year and 45 in the second year. The average age was from 32 to 34 years old. The CCC and its VTC partners have not yet released outcomes data for this program.

- 2) **Is This Bill Necessary?** The CCC has broad authority to enroll formerly incarcerated people as regular corps members or in its programs. AB 2126 (Eggman), Chapter 635, Statutes of 2018, established the Forestry Corps, which already has crews in northern California. In addition, AB 1668 (Carrillo), Chapter 587, Statutes of 2019, created the Education and Employment Reentry Program to train formerly incarcerated people. Other committees have pointed out that the CCC could create a training center in northern California without this bill. However, if this bill is enacted and funded, the Legislature will ensure this training center will be established.