

Date of Hearing: June 23, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Luz Rivas, Chair

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

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: California Conservation Corps: forestry training center: formerly incarcerated individuals: reporting

SUMMARY: Requires the Director of the California Conservation Corps (CCC), upon appropriation and on or before December 31, 2023, in partnership with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR), to establish a forestry training center in northern California to provide enhanced training, education, work experience, and job readiness for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CCC in the Natural Resources Agency and requires the CCC to implement and administer the conservation corps program.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Authorizes the director to recruit and enroll corps members and special corps members to contribute to the objectives of the program, including the Energy Corps, the Backcountry Trails Program, the Veterans Corps Fishery Program, the Watershed Stewards Program, and the Forestry Corps Program.
- 4) Requires the CCC to establish a Forestry Corps Program. Specifies the following as Forestry Corps Program objectives:
 - a) Develop and implement forest health projects;
 - b) Establish forestry corps crews;
 - c) Provide assistance to corps members to obtain forestry and forest technician degrees and certificates;
 - d) Train corps members to operate forestry equipment; and,
 - e) Create pathways from the corps to degree programs and jobs and 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 accomplish program goals.
- 5) Requires the CCC to establish four forestry corps crews in specified areas.

- 6) Establishes, upon appropriation, the Education and Employment Reentry Program within the CCC and authorizes the director to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals, as specified.

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires the Director of CCC (Director), upon appropriation and on or before December 31, 2023, in partnership with CAL FIRE and DCR, to establish a forestry training center in northern California to provide enhanced training, education, work experience, and job readiness for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs.
- 2) Requires the training center to focus on forestry and include additional specified supportive 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 were recommended by CAL FIRE and DCR; or,
 - b) Successfully served on a hand crew at the county level and were recommended for participation by county probation and 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) 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.
- 6) Requires, commencing December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter, the CCC to include in an existing report specified information related to the training center that could be established by this bill, the existing Ventura Training Center (VTC), and other programs used to exclusively serve formerly incarcerated individuals.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) CCC estimates one-time capital outlay costs of about \$65 million (General Fund or bond funds) to construct a new residential center.
- 2) CCC estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$5.8 million (General Fund) annually to operate a new residential facility. The CCC notes that \$5.8 million is the cost to operate a typical residential center that supports 80 traditional corps members.
- 3) DCR estimates ongoing costs of roughly \$2 million annually (General Fund), which is the cost for DCR activities at the VTC. DCR notes that as the program is developed, its Division of Adult Parole Operations may identify additional fiscal impact, and that costs are still largely unknown and dependent on program size.
- 4) Unknown costs, likely in the low millions of dollars annually (General Fund), for CAL FIRE to support the new training center. CAL FIRE stated that it is not analyzing this bill and that no CAL FIRE costs have been identified at this time. However, staff notes that the state

budget provides CAL FIRE with \$2 million annually (General Fund) to support the VTC, which is the model utilized for the training center in this bill. Staff believes that the costs of this bill for CAL FIRE would be similar to that of its costs related to the VTC.

- 5) Unknown, likely significant ongoing costs (General Fund) for CCC to meet the additional reporting requirements.

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

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) **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!" Since the CCC creation, it has provided over 11 million hours of emergency response for nearly every major California natural disaster including floods, fires, and earthquakes.

Although the CCC was originally conceived as a labor source for trail maintenance and restoration, it has evolved to a workforce development program. Corps members 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. The CCC provides health care (including mental health) to all of its members. More than 120,000 young adults have participated in the CCC. Approximately 3,000 corps members apply each round for the 1,529 available corps member slots. 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.

- 3) **Ventura Training Center.** CAL FIRE, CCC, and DCR 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 32-34. The CCC and its VTC partners have not released outcomes data yet for this program.

- 4) **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. Like this bill, AB 1668 was upon appropriation, but never received an appropriation and therefore has not trained anyone. Rather than create yet another program at CCC it may make more sense to expand one of the existing programs or provide the CCC more funding through the budget process to do so. In addition, the CCC uses its broad authority to provide workforce development and education services to formerly incarcerated individuals and is exploring other opportunities to create training centers for this population in other areas of the state. The CCC could create a training center in northern California without this bill.
- 5) **Double referral.** The bill has also been referred to the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Forest Foundation
East Bay Municipal Utility District
Humboldt Redwood Company, LLC

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Michael Jarred / NAT. RES. /