

Date of Hearing: July 13, 2021
Counsel: Nikki Moore

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr., Chair

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

SUMMARY: 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 provide job readiness for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs for formerly incarcerated individuals. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that, upon appropriation by the Legislature, on or before December 31, 2023, CCC, Cal Fire and CDCR shall 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) Establishes that the training center shall focus on forestry, and include counseling, mentorship, supportive housing, health care, and educational services as identified in accordance with the CCC Education and Employment Reentry Program (“CCC Reentry Program”).
- 3) Provides that the training center may include training modules on the activities identified in as priorities for the CCC Reentry Program.
- 4) Requires the CCC director to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals and prioritize 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 the Director of Cal Fire and the Secretary of CDCR. Cal Fire or the Secretary of CDCR may designate a person from the respective department to make this recommendation.
 - b) Successfully served on a hand crew at the county level and were recommended for participation by county probation and county fire departments.
- 5) Authorizes the director to enroll corpsmembers and local community conservation corpsmembers at the training center if funding and resources allow.
- 6) States that successful completion of a training program at the training center shall constitute qualifying experience for an entry-level forestry or vegetation management position at a state agency.
- 7) Requires, commencing Dec. 31, 2023, and annually thereafter, the CCC to include, in the report required pursuant to this section, a reporting of the information related to formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in corps programs or centers established to serve formerly

incarcerated individuals, including, but not limited to, the CCC Reentry Program, the Ventura Training Center, the forestry training center, and any other centers or programs created by the corps to exclusively serve formerly incarcerated individuals.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CCC in the Natural Resources Agency and requires the CCC to implement and administer the conservation corps program. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14001.)
- 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. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14300.)
- 3) 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.)
- 4) Provides that the director may employ special corps members 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.)
- 5) 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).)
- 6) 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).)
- 7) 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.)
- 8) Provides that fire prevention, fire suppression, and disaster relief are a major emphasis of the program. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14307.)
- 9) 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.)

- 10) 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.)
- 11) 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.)
- 12) Provides that the CCC Reentry program shall accomplish all of the following objectives:
 - a) Develop, partner with, and create opportunities for the forestry corps program objectives, as specified.
 - b) Collaborate with the EDD to provide access to workforce services.
 - c) Collaborate with nongovernmental organizations dedicated to providing access to counseling, mentorship, supportive housing, health care, and educational opportunities.
 - d) Employ collaborations and partnerships available to the corps consistent with this division. (Pub. Resources Code, § 14415.4.)
- 13) 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.)
- 14) Establishes CalFire to oversee and administer programs related to forest health and fire prevention and response. (Pub. Resources Code, § 701.)
- 15) Establishes the CCC program to be operated by CDCR in conjunction with CalFire to provide for training and use of inmates 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.)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Author's Statement:** 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) **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 (“VTC”):** Cal FIRE, 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 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. Other committees have pointed out that the CCC could create a training center in northern California without this bill.

However, according to the author:

“According to CalFire, in 2020 alone an estimated 4.3 million acres burned due to wildfires. These fires damaged over 10,000 structures and caused 33 fatalities. This

comes after the 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons, which were the deadliest and most destructive in state history.

“Recognizing that the dangers of wildfires were only increasing, the Senate created the Wildfire Working Group to plan, and introduced a budget framework that prioritizes fire prevention and response efforts. As part of that legislative blueprint, the working group identified four key goals for reducing the risk and impact of wildfires: training and deploying a fire resiliency workforce; implementing modern-day vegetation, forest management, and community hardening plans; expanding consumer access to the homeowners’ insurance market; and developing short and long-term funding.

“SB 804 accomplishes several of the goals laid out by the working group. As a collaboration between the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Conservation Corps and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, this center would accomplish the goal of expanding the workforce and implementing a vegetation and forestry management plan. Thus, this program would be a proactive approach to our state’s goal of reducing the toll of wildfires that are increasingly common due to the effects of climate change.

“Further, the center would also reduce recidivism rates by creating a pathway to gainful employment for those who have completed confinement in local jails or state institutions.

“The incarcerated and formerly incarcerated already play an essential role in California’s emergency response. Since 1945, CDCR has safely assigned thousands of inmates to fire camps. These individuals provide vital services for the people of California including wildland firefighting. They perform approximately 3,000,000 hours of firefighting work and approximately 7,000,000 hours of community work each year. Additionally, similar programs for the established in Southern California focus on firefighter training for the formerly incarcerated.

“This center would complement the firefighter training center by training a much-needed workforce to decrease fuel loads and improve forest health to achieve our climate and wildfire reduction goals. Therefore, funding this center would an initial step in furthering California’s commitment to preventing and reducing the devastating impact of wildfires.”

- 5) **Argument in Support:** According to *Rubicon Programs*, “Rubicon’s mission is to transform East Bay communities by equipping people to break the cycle of poverty. No one service can address the many challenges people living in poverty face — we believe that success comes from participation and achievement in four areas: Assets, Income, Wellness, and Connections. Much of our work is focused on helping formerly incarcerated people successfully reenter the community and find stable, meaningful employment.

“According to CalFire, in 2020 alone an estimated 4,257,863 acres burned due to wildfires. These fires damaged over 10,000 structures and caused 33 fatalities. This comes after the 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons, which were the deadliest and most destructive in state history.

“Recognizing the dangers of wildfires were only increasing, the Senate outlined four key goals for reducing the risk and impact of wildfires: training and deploying a fire resiliency

workforce; implementing modern-day vegetation, forest management, and community hardening plans; expanding consumer access to the homeowners' insurance market; and developing short and long-term funding.

"SB 804 (Glazer) accomplishes several of these goals. As a collaboration between the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Conservation Corps and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation this center would accomplish the goal of expanding the workforce and implementing a vegetation and forestry management plan. Thus, this program would be a proactive approach to our state's goal of reducing the toll of wildfires that are increasingly common due to the effects of climate change.

"Further, the center would also reduce recidivism rates by creating a pathway to gainful employment for those who have completed confinement in local jails or state institutions.

"The incarcerated and formerly incarcerated already play an essential role in California's emergency response. Since 1945, CDCR has safely assigned thousands of inmates to fire camps.

"These individuals provide vital services for the people of California including wildland firefighting. They perform approximately 3,000,000 hours of firefighting work and approximately 7,000,000 hours of community work each year. Additionally, similar programs for the established in Southern California focus on firefighter training for the formerly incarcerated.

"This center, in contrast, would train a much-needed workforce to decrease fuel loads and improve forest health to achieve our climate and wildfire reduction goals. Therefore, funding this center would an initial step in furthering California's commitment to preventing and reducing the devastating impact of wildfires."

- 6) **Related Legislation:** AB 278 (McCarty) authorizes the executive director of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and, in certain circumstances, a school district or county office of education that operates a conservation corps to select an applicant for enrollment in the corps program who is on parole. This bill is currently on the Assembly Appropriations suspense file.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Forest Foundation
California Public Defenders Association
East Bay Municipal Utility District
Humboldt Redwood Company LLC
Rubicon Programs

Opposition

None

Analysis Prepared by: Nikki Moore / PUB. S. / (916) 319-3744