

## S. 2414, the REVIVE the CCC Act

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a work relief program that provided millions of jobs on environmental projects during the Great Depression. During its nine years of existence, the CCC planted more than three billion trees and constructed trails and shelters in more than 800 parks nationwide. These infrastructure accomplishments endure and support our economy nearly a century later.

A revitalized CCC will play a key role in responding to the challenges our country is facing today. These challenges – climate change, food access, economic instability and racial injustice – are deeply intertwined and therefore demand solutions that are equally interconnected and complementary. The Restore Environmental Vitality and Improve Volatile Economy by the Civilian Conservation Corps Act, or the REVIVE the CCC Act, will establish a revitalized Civilian Conservation Corps that will both support our workers, as well as create conservation jobs to protect and restore our waterways, our public lands and the health and resiliency of our rural and urban communities. Additionally, this revitalized CCC includes meaningful reforms to prioritize frontline communities for investment and address environmental injustice.

Further, farmers can play a critical role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, but often need additional support to implement conservation practices. Agricultural conservation and best management practices on private lands can offer significant public benefits by improving water quality, sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The REVIVE the CCC Act will ensure that farmers can serve as hosts for Corps members while also expanding their own ability to implement conservation on the land.

Through a revitalized Civilian Conservation Corps, the REVIVE the CCC Act will provide thousands of jobs, restore our public waterways and lands and invest in sustainable agricultural practices—all while creating the next generation of conservationists, farmers and leaders committed to taking on the climate crisis and protecting and enhancing our shared natural resources.

Specifically this legislation would:

### **Establish a Civilian Conservation Corps to Create Federal Conservation Jobs**

- Authorizes the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) to administer a Civilian Conservation Corps (Corps)
- Addresses widespread unemployment and economic distress in the United States by placing unemployed and underemployed individuals conservation positions
- Through these federal positions, supports natural resource protection, climate change mitigation, future farmers and environmental justice.
- Individuals who are unemployed, underemployed are eligible for participation, including recent high school or college graduates and returning citizens
- Corps jobs pay \$15/hour, which is fully reimbursed by the federal government.

### **Ensure CCC Projects Reflect Local Conservation Goals and Economic Conditions**

- As conservation needs vary by location, directs the Corporation to partner with eligible host entities who design the details of the project and directly host the Corps members
- Eligible host entities with eligible worksites can receive grants to administer the program at the local level
  - o Eligible entities may include: the board in charge of a local conservation district; a state or local office of the Cooperative Extension system; an individual farmer; a State agency with

jurisdiction over agriculture or natural resources; a land trust, a forest or environmental consultant; the sponsor of an apprenticeship program; an entity that hosts a Corps member under national service laws; a local agriculture, conservation, watershed or wildlife nonprofit organization; a state park or forest foundation; or another appropriate entity, as determined by the Corporation

- Directs the Corporation to partner with the state and federal agencies that have the scientific and technical expertise to support project design
- Allows existing service sites to enroll as eligible host entities in order to expand existing conservation projects that are already responding to local needs
- Establishes the Corporation Advisory Council to study the operation of the Corporation, the impact of grants awarded and the outcome of participants in the program

#### **Invest in Conservation Jobs on Private and Public Lands**

- Authorizes eligible host entities to implement Corps projects on public and private lands
- Ensures that projects on private land provide public conservation benefits, including State or local conservation objectives, land conservation priorities, climate resiliency, watershed protection and support for agricultural best management practices.
- Includes on-farm opportunities to support agricultural conservation practices, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the next generation of farmers, foresters and ranchers
- Authorizes the use of Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) to be used on Corps projects on private land when relevant, and adjacent public land when relevant to the project

#### **Support Skill Development, Training and Continued Education**

- Directs the host site to provide training, technical instruction and education related to Corps service positions, including through partnerships with agencies, organizations, community colleges and institutions with relevant expertise
- Includes workforce preparation opportunities for returned citizens and justice involved youth, including training and post service education
- Provides Corps participants with an apprenticeship award to support participation in continued education and training
- Authorizes an on-farm apprenticeship program, including incentives for experienced farmers to participate and host a Corps member

#### **Prioritize Conservation Jobs and Benefits for Underserved Populations**

- Requires the Corporation to prioritize applicants residing in an underserved community of a proposed worksite for related Corps projects
- Authorizes an earn-while-you-learn career pathway subprogram for returning citizens, including justice-involved youth, to provide an accessible pathway into long-term careers in the conservation field
- Ensures proposed projects in environmental justice communities are responsive to public input and have demonstrated an ability to provide health and equity benefits, such as reductions in hazardous air pollutants, improvements in water quality and increased access to green space and outdoor recreation, food and safe housing.
- Requires State Commissions to establish Environmental Equality Resource Centers to screen and identify environmental justice areas
- Requires State Commissions to establish a Community Advisory Board to provide dedicated technical assistance and support for projects in environmental justice communities, including coordination, management and capacity building