



# United States Department of the Interior


OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
Washington, DC 20240



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## Memorandum

To: Youth Coordinating Council

From: Rhea Suh, Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management, and Budget 

Subject: Guidance for Implementing the National Youth Conservation Corps Initiative

### Introduction

Secretary Salazar is committed to leading a robust National Youth Conservation Corps at the Department of the Interior to “employ thousands and thousands of young people to come and resurrect the treasures of America.” The Secretary hopes to create “the best 21<sup>st</sup> Century Youth Conservation Corps that the world has ever seen.”

In 2010, the Department received \$20.5 million to expand programs that engage, educate and employ youth from all backgrounds in exploring, connecting with, and preserving the shared natural and cultural heritage represented by the lands, waters, and physical assets of the Department. The Department aims to increase youth employment by 50% in 2010 by increasing its use of youth hiring authorities; leveraging our partnerships; using a proactive targeted recruiting approach to build new environments and engage a talented corps of young people; and providing hands-on, meaningful work experiences.

### Authorities

The Public Land Corps Act of 1993 (PLC) provides authority for agencies to utilize and expose youth to public service and the natural and cultural resources that are administered by the Federal government by hiring young adults (ages 16 to 25) to perform needed conservation activities and assist the Federal government with natural and cultural resources.

The Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1970 (YCC) establishes permanent programs within the Departments of Interior and Agriculture for young adults who have attained the age of 15, but not the age of 19, to perform specific tasks on lands and waters administered under jurisdiction of these Secretaries. The legislation also authorizes the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a joint grant program to assist States employing young adults on non-Federal public lands and waters throughout the United States.

The Secretary of the Interior Order No. 3286, Amendment No. 1 delegates to all bureau heads, through their relevant program Assistant Secretary, the authority to use the Public Lands Corps Act and the Youth Conservation Corps Act.

These authorities involve partnerships with organizations to provide work experiences and exposure and education in natural and cultural resources, but are not Federal employment programs.

### Hiring Through Partnerships

Although YCC and PLC hiring authorities utilize the Federal hiring system, these hires are not considered to be Federal employees. In many instances these hires are working on projects that are 80 hours or more in length either directly with a bureau or indirectly through a partner. Bureaus should work with current and new partnerships within the Department, with other Federal agencies, State, local and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses to further our goals, including leveraging Federal funds, creating a diverse workforce, and offering quality learning opportunities among our participating youth.

### Recruitment

Recruitment is not a magical process where people appear and sign up; rather, it is a critical aspect of workforce planning that must be planned and executed strategically. The purpose of effective recruiting in Federal employment is to attract strong applicants prepared to perform successfully on the job. Recruiting is an on-going process. It is not a phase, nor is it something we do only when we need applicants.

Targeted recruitment activities, i.e., actively reaching out to highly qualified candidates to solicit their interest in applying for a position, do not violate merit principles. Federal agencies are encouraged to actively engage in recruitment activities. Posting a job is not the same as recruiting for it. The Department of the Interior is facing a significant loss of experienced talent, the majority through retirements. This "Brain Drain" makes identifying, recruiting and retaining the next generation of public servants all the more urgent. We must implement effective targeted recruitment activities without delay or these losses could adversely impact delivery of services to the public.

The Department of Defense spends millions of dollars on highly-targeted marketing campaigns to recruit new uniformed military personnel, but when it comes to attracting young people to the civilian workforce, Federal agencies are ineffective. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees recognized this fact by providing \$600,000 in fiscal year 2006 to the Partnership for Public Service (Partnership) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for the *Call to Serve Recruitment Initiative*. The *Call to Serve* program is a joint OPM/Partnership effort to connect Federal agencies to the tremendous source of new talent graduating from colleges and universities. The network includes over 75 Federal agencies (Interior is a Partner) and over 650

colleges and universities who are doing more to educate young people about internship and job opportunities in the Federal government.

Use of the PLC and YCC authorities is part of a broader recruitment strategy to implement the Department's succession and talent management plans.

### Bureau Goals

Each bureau has a specific goal for increasing youth employment to contribute toward the Department's goal. The individual bureau goals were established using FY 2009 baseline employment data. The goals are as follows:

- Fish and Wildlife Service: 50%
- Bureau of Land Management: 35%
- Bureau of Reclamation: 40%
- U.S. Geological Survey: 35%
- Office of Surface Mining: 35%
- National Park Service: 60%
- Bureau of Indian Affairs: 100%
- Minerals Management Service: 35%

The goals are not requirements. We encourage every bureau to work with their HR and EEO officials to implement plans that are effective, efficient, and consistent with merit principles and the EEO statutes and regulations.

### The Employment Experience

The purpose of our efforts is to create the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders. We aim to provide meaningful work opportunities for thousands more young people so that they have a positive experience that directly contributes to conservation and that has a lasting impact on our Nation. We are seeking young people from all backgrounds with a special emphasis on communities in which the Department or Bureaus have not traditionally extended recruitment efforts, with the goal of increasing numbers of culturally diverse groups of young people.

The experience we are looking to provide:

- Well supervised.
- Work that advances our mission.
- Include some compensation—at least a stipend, preferably a salary.

- Long enough to be meaningful—at minimum of eighty (80) hours, ideally longer.
- Through partners using all opportunities and applicable authorities.

cc: Pam Malam  
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Youth Task Force