



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

November 5, 2021

## **PERSONNEL BULLETIN 21-09**

**SUBJECT:** Departmental Policy on Public Lands Corps Hiring Authority

### **1. Purpose.**

This Bulletin supersedes Personnel Bulletin (PB) 17-03 and establishes the policy and procedures for providing former members of the Public Lands Corps (PLC) non-competitive hiring status for competitive service positions in the Department of the Interior (DOI). The primary focus of this re-issuance is to provide additional guidance and instructions for utilizing the hiring authority outlined in the Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005, P.L. 109-154; as amended in the National Park Service Centennial Act of 2016, P.L. 114-289; and as amended in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, Recreation Act of 2019, P.L. 116-9. This Bulletin also establishes the Indian Youth Service Corps within the Public Land Corps.

The PLC program expands youth services opportunities and serves important conservation and societal objectives. Individuals who are economically, physically, or educationally disadvantaged may receive preference for enrollment in the Corps.

### **2. Scope.** This PB applies to all bureaus and offices of the Department.

### **3. Authority.** Title 42 USC Sec 12591; Title 16 USC Sec 1721-1726; Public Law 109-154, Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005 (amends the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993); Public Law 114-289, National Park Service Centennial Act of 2016 (further amends Public Lands Corps Act of 1993); Public Law 116-9, John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, Recreation Act of 2019 (further amends Public Land Corps Act of 1993).

### **4. Definitions.**

- a. **Appropriate Conservation Project** means any project for the conservation, restoration, construction, or rehabilitation of natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, or scenic resources, in accordance with 16 USC 1722. For an appropriate conservation project to be creditable, it must have been accomplished by the participant through a qualified youth or conservation corps, including an individual placed through a contract or cooperative agreement, as approved by the Secretary.

- b. **Corps and Public Lands Corps** means the Public Lands Corps (PLC) established under section 1723 of title 16, United States Code. The Corps consists of individuals between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, and veterans age 35 or younger, who are enrolled as participants in the Corps by the Secretary for projects referenced in 16 USC 1723(d), and satisfy the requirements of section 1259l(b) of title 42. Corps members are not civil service Federal employees during their time of service in the Corps.
- c. **Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC)** is a program established within the Public Land Corps under 16 USC 1727b. IYSC enrolls participants between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, and veterans age 35 or younger, a majority of whom are Indians; to carry out appropriate conservation projects on eligible service land. IYSC is administered through an agreement between an Indian tribe and a qualified youth or conservation corps for the benefit of the members of the Indian tribe.
- d. **Eligible service lands** mean public lands, Indian lands, and Hawaiian home lands as defined by 16 USC 1722(3).
- e. **Qualified Youth or Conservation Corps** means any program established and administered by a State or local government, by the governing body of any Indian tribe, or a nonprofit organization that:
  - 1) Carries out appropriate conservation projects on or related to eligible service land;
  - 2) Is capable of offering meaningful, full-time, productive work for individuals between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, or veterans age 35 or younger, in a natural or cultural resource setting;
  - 3) Engages participants in a variety of work experience, basic and life skills, education, training, and support services;
  - 4) Provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their community and the United States; and
  - 5) Provides the individual with a living allowance, stipend, or wages.
- f. **Priority Projects** means an appropriate conservation project conducted on eligible service lands to further one or more of the purposes of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 USC 6501 et seq.) and other conservation and restoration initiatives as outlined in 16 USC 1722(9).
- g. **Former PLC Member** means an individual who meets the criteria of an Eligible Youth and has completed their service with the PLC or IYSC programs. An individual may serve in the PLC or IYSC multiple times – thus, they become a former member of the PLC or IYSC each time they complete their service within the PLC or IYSC.
- h. **Eligible Youth** means an individual who may be enrolled in the PLC or IYSC programs, having satisfied the following criteria as specified in Title 42 Section

12591(b), 16 USC 1723(b), and 16 USC 1727b(a):

- 1) Meets such eligibility requirements, directly related to the tasks to be accomplished, as established by the program;
- 2) Is selected by the program to serve in a position with the program;
- 3) Is between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, or a veteran age 35 or younger, at the time the individual begins the term of service<sup>1</sup>;
- 4) Has received a high school diploma or its equivalent, agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent (unless the requirement is waived based on an individual education assessment conducted by the program) and the individual did not drop out of an elementary or secondary school to enroll in the program; or is enrolled in or has completed a degree from an institution of higher education and is considered eligible for funds under section 1091 of title 20; and
- 5) Is a citizen or national of the United States or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States.

## 5. Policy

- a. **Bureau Responsibilities.** It is the responsibility of every bureau to establish a Program Coordinator for their respective PLC and IYSC programs. The Program Coordinator will establish bureau procedures for administering the program. The Program Coordinator will serve as the bureau point of contact on the PLC and IYSC programs and be responsible for determining which qualified youth or conservation corps and appropriate conservation projects are creditable or meets service requirements. Bureaus may use the sample *Participant Work Hours Verification* (Attachment 1) and *Certification Memo for Non-Competitive Eligibility* (Attachment 2) or create their own documents. Bureau-created documents must include, at minimum, all the information on the sample forms provided. Each bureau Program Coordinator will ensure that participants are provided a copy of the *Participant Work Hours Verification*. Each bureau Program Coordinator, or their designee, will provide a *Certification Memo for Non-Competitive Eligibility* to participants who have satisfactorily completed all the service requirements and meet eligibility for non-competitive hiring status. A *Certification Memo for Non-Competitive Eligibility* may be issued following the completion of each term in which the participant completes a minimum of 640 hours on or in support of public lands.
- b. **Public Lands Corps Projects.** In accordance with 16 USC 1722 and 16 USC 1723, the Public Lands Corps can be used to carry out the following projects. Only these projects will be considered eligible for status as a PLC member:

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<sup>1</sup> 16 USC 1723(b), as amended by P.L. 114-289

- 1) Priority projects as defined above.
  - 2) Appropriate conservation projects which the Secretary is authorized to carry out under other authority of law on public lands; on Indian lands with the approval of the Indian tribe involved; and on Hawaiian home lands with the approval of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands of the State of Hawaii.
  - 3) Appropriate conservation projects and other appropriate projects to be carried out on Federal, State, local, or private land as part of a Federal disaster prevention or relief effort.
- c. **Crediting Time Served.** In accordance with Public Law 109-154, a former PLC member may use time served on an appropriate conservation project (where creditable) to count towards meeting OPM qualification requirements for Federal employment. Former PLC members who use time served to meet job qualifications requirements need to clearly state the duties performed under the PLC in their application(s) for Federal employment, so that they may be afforded credit at the appropriate grade level. Although time served in the PLC is creditable experience for qualifications purposes, it is not creditable for purposes of computations for retirement, time in grade, leave or Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Time served does not count towards the probationary/trial period or career tenure. Former PLC members do not accrue adverse action appeal rights based on PLC service.

If a participant also served simultaneously in an approved national service position as defined by 42 USC § 12511(3), the former PLC member shall be eligible to credit their PLC service toward career tenure. The former PLC member must have been enrolled in the national service position for a minimum of one (1) year.

d. **Implementation.**

- 1) **Eligibility:** In order to be eligible for PLC non-competitive status, a former PLC member must provide the *Certification Memo for Non-Competitive Eligibility*, as part of their application, verifying their eligibility and that they meet the following criteria:
  - a) Served as an eligible youth on an appropriate conservation project completing a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service that included at least 120 hours on eligible service lands;
  - b) Meet the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) minimum qualification standards and any other qualification requirement(s) stated in the vacancy announcement for the position for which they are applying; and
  - c) Completed their most recent PLC service, which provided them with a total of 640 hours, inclusive of 120 hours on eligible service lands as defined in 16 USC 1723(d), within the last two (2) years.
- 2) Appointments must be made within the two (2) year non-competitive eligibility requirement from the date of the individual's completed PLC project. The two

- (2) year appointment timeframe cannot be extended.
- 3) A *Certification Memo for Non-Competitive Eligibility* may be issued by the bureau Program Coordinator, or their designee, following the completion of each term in which the participant completes at least 640 hours of service, including a minimum of 120 hours on or in support of public lands.
  - 4) Selectees will be subject to a probationary/trial period consistent with other competitive or excepted service positions.
  - 5) This authority may be used for General Schedule and Federal Wage System positions.
- e. **Appointment.** Appointments under this authority must be effective within 2 years of the candidate's completion of PLC service. The candidate must provide a copy of the *Certification Memo for Non-competitive Eligibility*, signed by their respective bureau Program Coordinator or designee, to be considered under this authority. Servicing Human Resource Offices (SHRO) must also ensure that agency and interagency career transition programs are appropriately cleared prior to appointment. Candidates selected under this PLC appointing authority will be appointed under the authority of P.L. 109-154. Such appointment will be in accordance with requirements governing appointment to the competitive service. All appointments will be subject to DOI Reemployment Priority List, Career Transition Assistance Plan, and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan provisions.
- Appointments are subject to DOI's Reemployment Priority and Special Selection Priority Lists, Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP), and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) provisions. Appointments may be made to permanent, temporary, or term positions.
- f. **Legal Authority Code.** The servicing Human Resources Offices must use "ZLM" as the primary legal authority code and reference P.L. 109-154 as the legal authority description.

Any Department employee seeking further information concerning this policy may contact their Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO) for additional assistance. SHROs may contact the Department's [Office of Human Capital](#) concerning questions related to this memo.

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Jennifer A. Ackerman  
Director, Office of Human Capital  
Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer

## Attachments

## Attachment 1: PLC Participant Work Hours Verification Form (Sample)

Each section and data field of this form must be completed and certified by the responsible party. It is the responsibility of the bureau Program Coordinator to contact the Partner Organization to verify accuracy of information provided.

### Program Participant

DATA FIELD	DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION REQUIRED
Participant Name	Provide legal full name.
Primary Organization	The organization that pays the Participant.
Phone Number	The best phone number at which a Participant can be contacted after their current position ends.
Email	Provide personal, current email address
Address	Participant's permanent resident where they receive mail
I certify the information provided is accurate and true. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Program Participant Signature	

### Project Supervisor of Partner Organization

DATA FIELD	DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION REQUIRED
Task Agreement #	List the associated Task Agreement number
Partner Organization	Provide organization name and address of partner organization
Project Supervisor Name and Title	Name, position title, phone, and email address
Start and End Dates of Project	Start Date of Project: The first day the Participant started accumulating hours for this project. End Date of Project: The last workday for this project
PLC Project: Did this project take place on or in support of public lands or Indian lands? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Location of Project	Name, city, and state where work was completed on or in support of. If this project was conducted on more than one Federal or tribal site, list all locations.
PLC Project Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation <input type="checkbox"/> Construction <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration <input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation
Project Duties	Describe project duties details. List the main work duties and how the project relates to an appropriate conservation project.
Hours Completed on or in support of Public or Tribal Lands	PLC Hours: number of work hours participant completed on or in support of Federal or Tribal lands during this project.
Total Hours of Project	Total number of work hours participant completed during this project, including hours completed on or in support of public or Tribal lands.
Was the Member's Performance Satisfactory?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Provide details and justification of participant's performance.
I certify the information provided is accurate and true. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Project Supervisor's Signature	

**Attachment 2: Sample Certification Memo for Non-Competitive Eligibility**

[Bureau Letterhead]

[DATE]

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find below the requested certification of service for federal hiring under the Public Land Corps Act. The Public Land Corps (PLC) program engages individuals between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, and veterans age 35 or younger, in appropriate conservation projects.

This is to certify that [PARTICIPANT NAME] has satisfactorily served as a Public Land Corps member for a minimum of 640 hours on an appropriate conservation project, that included at least 120 hours on or in support of eligible service lands, for the term of service indicated below:

**Start Date of Service:**

**Completed Date of Service:**

**Hours Completed on Public Lands:**

**Total Hours Completed:**

**Partner Organization:**

I certify the former PLC member is eligible for noncompetitive hiring for a period of two (2) years after the date of completion of the individual's last PLC project indicated above, in accordance with the Public Land Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005, P. L. 109-154.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [PHONE] or [EMAIL] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Bureau Program Coordinator]