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Forest Service Manual 1800 – Volunteers and Service Program

Chapter 1820 - Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Program

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Approved by: Tina Johna Terrell, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

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Responsible Staff:

Explanation of changes: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

Posting Instructions: Amendments are numbered consecutively by title and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this title was 1800-2013-2 to FSM 1820.

Revises chapter in its entirety, changes are listed:

1820: Changes chapter title from “Public Lands Corps” to “Public Lands Corps and Resources Assistants Program.” Removes obsolete gender language regarding Public Lands Corps (PLC) and Resource Assistants; and, adds direction on labor needed to support Forest Service mission due to existing personnel levels, including accomplishment of high priority projects.

1820.1: Updates authority section to clarify Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 as part of The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, to include purpose of the act; PLC is created in the Department of the Interior; Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005, clarifies authorizations for the Secretary to provide provisions to Public Lands Corps Participants and Resource Assistants.

1820.2: Updates objective section to include Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Program and removes direction completing projects in a cost-effective manner; gendered language; exposing participants to conservation professionals working in land managing agencies.

1820.3: Adds veterans work in terms of natural resources and land management, resource protection, 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and associated Forest Service programs, of Administratively Determined status, hiring eligibilities for Public Lands Corps and the Resource Assistants Program; utilizing of appropriations other than Forest Service to operate programs; and removes obsolete description of “Resource Assistant” as “Intern.”

1820.4 – 1820.44: Updates responsibility section with both Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Program.

1820.5: Adds new terminology and removes obsolete definitions.

1821: Changes section title from “Direct Operation of Public Lands Corps Programs” to “Program Operations” and adds participant criteria synonymous to both Public Lands Corps Participants and Resource Assistants.

1821.2: Conservation Centers direction moved from 1822 to this section, under Public Lands Corps Program Operations. Reformatted to describe establishment and use, logistical support, and use of military installations regarding conservation centers in terms of the Secretary of Agriculture’s authority.

1823: Changes section title from “Public Lands Corps” to “Partnerships” and sets forth direction.

1825: Changes section title from “Funding” to “Funding and Cost Sharing” and sets forth direction.

1827: Changes section title from “Annual Accomplishment Reporting” to “Certification and Verification” and sets forth direction.

1828: Establishes code, caption, and direction for “Performance Accomplishments Monitoring and Reporting.”

1829: Establishes code, caption, and direction for “Miscellaneous.”

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The Forest Service is authorized to provide community service, National service, work experience and training to individuals, including veterans, who may be interested in natural and cultural resources careers or conservation stewardship. These include low-income, unemployed, underemployed, or underrepresented persons.

1820.1 - Authority

1. Public Lands Corps Act of 1993. (The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, Public Law 103-82, Stat. 107, 848 of 1993). This act creates the Public Lands Corps within the Department of Agriculture and Department of the Interior. This action amends the Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1970 (16 U.S.C. 1701-1706) as Title I - Youth Conservation Corps and establishes a new Public Lands Corps (16 U.S.C. 1721-1729) as Title II of the Youth Conservation Corps Act.

a. Purpose of the title:

- (1) Perform, in a cost-effective manner, appropriate conservation projects on eligible service lands where such projects will not be performed by existing employees;
- (2) Assist Governments and Indian tribes in performing research and public education tasks associated with natural and cultural resources on eligible service lands;
- (3) Expose young men and women to public service while furthering their understanding and appreciation of the Nation's natural and cultural resources;
- (4) Expand educational opportunities by rewarding individuals who participate in National service with an increased ability to pursue higher education or job training; and
- (5) Stimulate interest among the Nation's young men and women in conservation careers by exposing them to conservation professionals in land managing agencies.

b. Preference for Certain Projects. In selecting appropriate conservation projects to be carried out under this title, the Secretary may give preference to projects which:

- (1) Provides long-term benefits to the public;
- (2) Instills in the enrollee involved a work ethic and a sense of public service;
- (3) Will be labor intensive;
- (4) Can be planned and initiated promptly; and

(5) Provides academic, experiential, or environmental education opportunities.

c. Special considerations for tribal engagement:

(1) Appropriate conservation projects may also be carried out 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; and

(2) No cost sharing must be required in the case of any appropriate conservation project carried out on Indian lands or Hawaiian home lands.

2. Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005 - Public Law 109-154. The act amends the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 (Public Law 91-378, 16 U.S.C. Chapter 37 §1721-1730) to:

a. Authorize the Secretary or delegated authority to provide participants in the Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Program the following:

(1) A living allowance determined by the Secretary.

(2) Credit for time served which may be used toward future Federal hiring.

(3) Noncompetitive hiring status for a period of not more than two years after participants meet eligibility requirements.

b. Prioritize projects that apply to one or more of the purposes of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.):

(1) Reduce wildfire risk to a community, municipal water supply, or other at-risk Federal land;

(2) Protect a watershed or address a threat to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, wildfire suppression and support activities;

(3) Address the impact of insect or disease infestations or other damaging agents on forest and rangeland health; and

(4) Protect, restore, or enhance forest ecosystem components to promote the recovery of threatened or endangered species; improve biological diversity; or enhance productivity and carbon sequestration.

c. For purposes of entering into contracts and cooperator agreements the Secretary may give preference to qualified youth or conservation corps located in a specific

area that have a substantial portion of members who are economically, physically, or educationally disadvantaged to carry out projects within the area.

d. In carrying out priority projects in a specific area, the Secretary shall, give preference to qualified youth or conservation corps located in that specific area that have a substantial portion of members who are economically, physically, or educationally disadvantaged, to the maximum extent practicable.

e. Authorize appropriate conservation projects to be carried out on Federal, State, Local, or private land as part of a Federal disaster prevention or relief effort.

f. Authorize the Public Lands Corps and the Resource Assistants Programs. Both programs provide paid opportunities for youth and adults, including veterans, to work with land management agencies to further understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural resources, and at the same time benefit the Nation's economy and its environment. The Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Program can be carried out on any Forest Service unit, office or project that supports Forest Service priorities.

(1) Public Lands Corps (PLC). This program engages young adults 16-30 years old, inclusive, and veterans age 35 and younger, in crews and internships on natural and cultural resources projects located on eligible service lands that are in disrepair or degraded and in need of labor intensive rehabilitation, restoration, and enhancement work, and other activities that enable the accomplishment of essential work, which cannot be carried out by the Forest Service at existing personnel levels.

(2) Resource Assistants Program (RAP). This program engages individuals ages 17 and older on internships to carry out research, forest and recreation management, or resource protection activities in support of the Forest Service mission. Preference shall be given to the selection of individuals enrolled in- or are recent graduates of an institution of higher education, with particular attention given to ensure full representation of women and participants from historically black, Hispanic, and Native American schools.

g. Establish and use Conservation Centers operated by the Secretary for use by the Public Lands Corps and to conduct appropriate conservation projects and training such as on Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers and permits the Secretary and/or the delegated authority to:

(1) Provide services, facilities, equipment, and supplies necessary for the Conservation Center;

(2) Establish basic standards of health, nutrition, sanitation and safety;

(3) Enter into contracts, agreements, or other appropriate arrangement with a State or local Government agency, tribal group, public or private organization to provide for the management of a Conservation Center; and

(4) Provide any services, facilities, equipment, supplies, technical assistance, oversight, monitoring, or evaluations that are appropriate to carry out the Public Lands Corps.

3. National Park Service Centennial Act (Public Law 114-289) amends the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 (Public Law 91-378, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1721 et seq.) to:

a. Change maximum age component of qualified youth or conservation corps definition from “25” to “30;”

b. Change maximum age of Public Lands Corps Participants from “25” to “30;” and

c. Extend Public Lands Corps noncompetitive hiring authority eligibility extended from “120 days” to “2 years.”

4. The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act (S.47 - John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, Title IX. Sec. 9003) amends the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 (Public Law 91-378, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1721 et seq.) to:

a. Include a definition for institution of higher education;

b. Extend age eligibility of Public Lands Corps Participants 16 and 30, inclusive, to veterans up to age 35;

c. Include a definition for veteran; and

d. Expand Public Lands Corps participants definition: Participants shall satisfy criteria specified in paragraphs (1), (2), (4), and (5) of section 12591(a) of title 42.

e. The Secretary of Agriculture may provide funding for transportation to and from appropriate conservation project sites, to Public Lands Corps participants who reside in their own homes.

f. The Secretary of Agriculture may appoint a qualified resource assistant directly to a position for which the candidate meets Office of Personnel Management qualification standards. The Secretary of Agriculture may appoint, without regard to the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 33 of title 5 (Examination, Certification, and Appointment), other than sections 3303 (Competitive Service; recommendations of Senators or Representatives) and 3328 (Selective Service registration) of such title, a qualified former resource assistant directly to a Forest Service position for which the

candidate meets Office of Personnel Management qualification standards. This applies to a former resource assistant who has:

- (1) Completed a rigorous internship with a land managing agency, such as the Forest Service Resource Assistants Program;
 - (2) Successfully fulfilled the requirements of the internship program; and
 - (3) Earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education.
- i. The Secretary of Agriculture may provide a Public Lands Corps participant with an educational credit that may be applied toward a program of postsecondary education at an institution of higher education that agrees to award the credit for participation in the Corps.
- j. The Secretary of Agriculture shall coordinate with the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Commerce to:
- (1) Carry out activities authorized under the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act;
 - (2) Implement and issue guidance on eligibility for Public Lands Corps noncompetitive hiring status; and
 - (3) Coordinate data collection and reporting requirements to submit to the Corporation of National and Community Service, including:
 - (a) The number of participants enrolled in the Corps and the length of the term of service for each participant;
 - (b) The projects carried out by Corps participants, categorized by type of project and Federal agency;
 - (c) The total amount and sources of funding provided for the service of participants;
 - (d) The type of service performed by participants and the impact and accomplishments of the service; and
 - (e) Any other similar data determined to be appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service or the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce.

4. Programs under Non-Federal Legislation. The Forest Service may host programs resulting from State or Local legislation that are supported by appropriations of State and Local Governments, including new programs that may not be specifically named, but are allowable under existing authorities and which meet the definition of a Public Lands Corps and/or perform work on projects which meet the definition of Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005 (PLC HFRA) projects.
5. Programs Administered by Non-Profit Organizations. The Forest Service may host programs created, funded, and administered by non-profit entities which carry out workforce development, conservation stewardship or National service priorities. Such entities may receive funding from Federal or State Governments. See FSM 1810, Service Programs.

1820.2 - Objectives

1. Perform appropriate conservation projects for Public Lands Corps and coordinate the Resource Assistants Program on eligible projects, in support of public lands with units where such projects will contribute to the accomplishment of agency goals and objectives.
2. Assist Governments and Indian Tribes in performing research and public education tasks associated with natural resources and land management on eligible service lands.
3. Expose individuals to public service while fostering an understanding and appreciation of the natural resources and land management.
4. Expand educational opportunities by rewarding individuals who participate in national service with an increased ability to pursue higher education and/or job training.
5. Stimulate interest in conservation careers to participants by exposing them to natural resources and land management work.
6. Facilitate natural resources and land management service and training for emerging professionals and others in support of agency cultural transformation and workforce development goals.

1820.3 - Policy

1. The Forest Service will provide youth, young adults, veterans, and others with opportunities to conserve and develop natural resources that enhance and maintain environmentally important lands and waters and carry out research, forest and recreation management, or resource protection activities through enrollment in the Public Lands Corps and the Resource Assistants Program.

2. The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) is inclusive of the Public Lands Corps (FSM 1820), the Resource Assistants Program (FSM 1820), Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (FSM 1850), and Youth Conservation Corps (FSM 1840). The 21CSC projects may be hosted by any Forest Service unit, office, or project that supports Forest Service priorities.
3. Responsible officials will take advantage, within administering capability, of opportunities to host qualified service and training programs which complement, assist, or enhance resource management activities as well as meet social and economic program requirements of the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993, as amended.
4. Responsible officials may establish Forest Service operated and managed Public Lands Corps utilizing Forest Service or other appropriations.
5. Public Lands Corps Participants and Resource Assistants shall not displace Federal employees but expand opportunities to partner with others to accomplish essential work.
6. Individuals, except for those engaged in Forest Service operated and managed Public Lands Corps programs, cannot apply hours worked in Administratively Determined status towards the Public Lands Corps or Resource Assistants Program hiring eligibility.
7. Assignments for participants under age 18 must comply with the child labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended, and State child labor laws.
8. Participants of the Public Lands Corps and the Resource Assistants Program will acquire hiring eligibilities (see FSM 6109.12, Employee and Benefits Handbook– External Recruitment) once they have met the minimum requirements for program participation. Existing RAP and PLC Hiring information can be found at: <http://fsweb.ic.wo.fs.fed.us/hire-a-job-corps-student.php>.

1820.4 - Responsibility

The responsible official for implementation of the Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Program is the Agency employee who has the delegated authority to establish and implement a project.

The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated the authority to implement the Public Lands Corps (PLC) and the Resource Assistants Program (RAP) to the Forest Service.

1820.41 - Chief

The Chief is the responsible official for implementing the PLC and the RAP. In accordance with the general delegations of authority at the Forest Service (see FSM 1235), the Associate Chief may act as the responsible official on any matter reserved by the Chief, unless the Chief directs otherwise.

1820.42 - Deputy Chiefs and Associate Deputy Chiefs

In accordance with delegations, the Deputy Chiefs and Associate Deputy Chiefs may serve and sign as the responsible official for implementing the PLC and RAP in their areas of jurisdiction.

1820.43 - Volunteers and Service

The Volunteers and Service program is organized within the Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources staff in the National Forest System Deputy area and has responsibility for the overall administration, implementation, and coordination of volunteerism and service programs, including the PLC and the RAP.

1820.44 - Field Line Officers

Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Job Corps Center Directors, and Forest Supervisors shall have delegated authority to implement the PLC and the RAP.

1820.5 - Definitions

Administratively Determined (AD). Notwithstanding any other provision of law, on and after October 21, 1998, the Forest Service is authorized to employ or otherwise contract with persons at regular rates of pay, as determined by the Forest Service, to perform work occasioned by emergencies such as fires, storms, floods, earthquakes or any other unavoidable cause without regard to Sundays, Federal holidays, and the regular work week (Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 5102(c)(19), 7 U.S.C. 2225 and 2226, 16 U.S.C. 554e and 43 U.S.C. 1469).

Appropriate Conservation Project. Any project that meets the priority project definition or furthers the conservation, restoration, construction, or rehabilitation of natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, or scenic resources or supports research and resource protection.

Conservation Center. Facilities operated by the Secretary that are used to house, train, and in general facilitate the delivery of programs including Public Lands Corps, the Resource Assistants Program, Youth Conservation Corps and others. The Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (JCCCC) are considered Conservation Centers.

Cooperator. Also called partner organization, an agency or organization with which the Forest Service formally partners to carry out Public Lands Corps and Resource Assistants Programs through an appropriate agreement instrument.

Direct Hiring Eligibility. This hiring eligibility grants ability to hire without competition individuals who have successfully completed the requirements of the Forest Service Resource Assistants Program.

Eligible Service Lands. Any forest, grassland, prairie, wilderness area; State or locally managed public domain; Forest Service unit; Indian lands approved by the tribe involved; Hawaiian home lands approved by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands of the State of Hawaii; and locations where projects and work assignments are accomplished in support of the Forest Service mission.

Host. A unit or staff that provides facilities and resources for a PLC Participant or Resource Assistant through a cooperator agreement.

Institution of Higher Education. An institution that was accredited at the college level by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of Education. These schools offers at least a 1 year program of study creditable toward a degree and were eligible for participation in Title IV Federal financial aid programs.

Job Corps. Refers to Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (JCCCC).

Membership/Enrollment. A Public Lands Corps Participant or Resource Assistant is enrolled when they commence work/service on a PLC project or as a Resource Assistant. See FSM 1824.1, Enrollment.

Noncompetitive Hiring Eligibility. This eligibility grants noncompetitive hiring status to Public Lands Corps Participants and Resource Assistants who have successfully completed the requirements of their respective Forest Service PLC or RAP.

Priority Project. An appropriate conservation project conducted on eligible service lands to further one or more of the purposes of the Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005. See FSM 1820.1.2.b.

Public Lands Corps (PLC). PLC engages young adults 16-30 years old, inclusive, and veterans age 35 and younger, in crews and internships on natural and cultural resources projects located on eligible service lands that are in disrepair or degraded and in need of labor intensive rehabilitation, restoration, and enhancement work, and other activities that enable the accomplishment of essential work, which cannot be carried out by the Forest Service at existing personnel levels.

Public Lands Corps Participant (PLC Participant). Is an individual enrolled in the PLC.

Qualified Youth or Conservation Corps. Any program established by a State or Local Government, or by the governing body of any given Indian tribe, or by a non-profit organization that 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; gives participants a mix of work experience, basic and life skills, education, training, and support services; and provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their community and the United States.

Resource Assistant. Any individual age 17 and up enrolled in a rigorous work and learning assignment which accomplishes meaningful and measurable work on behalf of the Forest Service, and provides the participant with developmental training opportunities and exposure to natural resources, land management, and conservation careers through a cooperator agreement that is responsive to the RAP design as approved by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Resource Assistants Program (RAP). This program engages persons age 17 and older on individual placements to carry out research, forest and recreation management, or resource protection activities in support of the Forest Service mission. Preference shall be given to the selection of individuals enrolled in or are recent graduates of an institution of higher education, with particular attention given to ensure full representation of women and participants from historically Black, Hispanic, and Native American schools.

1821 - Program Operations

1. The Forest Service may establish and operate or allocate appropriated funds to a Public Lands Corps or Resource Assistants Program through a cooperator agreement under Public Law 103-82, the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993, as amended. See FSM 1820.5, Definitions and FSM 1825 Funding.
2. Consistency. Each PLC or RAP project carried out under this authority on eligible service lands must be consistent with the provisions of law and policies relating to the management and administration of such lands, with all other applicable provisions of law, and with all management, operational, and other plans and documents which govern the administration of the area.
3. The PLC and the RAP may also be carried out on tribal lands with the approval of the tribe involved and on Hawaiian homelands with the approval of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands of the State of Hawaii. The Forest Service may also authorize PLC and RAP projects to be carried out on eligible service lands and / or as part of disaster prevention or relief efforts in response to an emergency or major disaster declared by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.).

4. The PLC and RAP may be conducted on any Forest Service unit or office or project that supports Forest Service priorities.

5. Agreements.

a. Partnerships shall be documented using a formal agreement instrument established with the assistance of a Grants and Agreements Specialist. See FSM 1823.4, Cooperator Agreements.

b. PLC and RAP cooperator agreements with qualified youth and conservation corps require a contribution of 25 percent of the total project costs from the cooperator which can be wholly attributed to the Independent Sector valuation of volunteer labor less Forest Service contributions to the project. See FSM 1823.4, Cooperator Agreements.

6. PLC Participants and Resource Assistants.

a. Must be citizens, nationals, or lawful permanent resident aliens of the United States;

b. May be enrolled without regard to the civil service and classification laws, rules, or regulations of the United States;

c. May not earn credit for time served for the PLC or RAP when employed by the Forest Service or in Administratively Determined status, except for those engaged in Forest Service operated and managed programs;

d. Are eligible for respective PLC or RAP benefits when minimum requirements are met. See FSM 1826 Eligibility; and

e. Are not to be contracted out to do work on eligible service lands unless explicitly defined in the agreement, including listing which organizations may participate in the contracted projects. See FSM 1823.4, Cooperator Agreements.

1821.1 - Public Lands Corps Program Operations

1. The PLC is an educational and work program involving the nation's qualified youth or conservation corps and other cooperators that contribute to the rehabilitation, restoration, and repair of public lands resources and infrastructures. PLC projects provide opportunities for community and National service, work experience and training to participants, including veterans who are unemployed or underemployed persons.

2. PLC projects are conducted as a Forest Service operated and managed program and through cooperator agreements with qualified youth and conservation corps, non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) and local agencies, or educational institutions through cooperator agreements to perform appropriate conservation projects.

3. The Forest Service Job Corps program is managed and operated by USDA as a training program funded by the Department of Labor, and is operated and managed by the Forest Service as a PLC.

- a. Job Corps members shall meet the participant criteria described in FSM 1821.
- b. Job Corps members are enrolled in the PLC when a work-based learning agreement is established between a Forest Service unit and the Job Corps National Office which outlines the terms of a PLC project, logistics and the weekly living allowance. See FSM 1823.3, Forest Service Job Corps Centers.
- c. JCCCC personnel are responsible for recruiting and supporting Job Corps students and tracking the PLC hours accrued on projects.

7. PLC participants shall meet the following criteria:

- a. Be between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, or veterans age 35 or younger at the time the individual begins the term of service; and
- b. Meet the participant criteria described in FSM 1821.

8. The Forest Service may establish a preference for the enrollment in the PLC of individuals who are economically, physically, or educationally disadvantaged.

9. The Forest Service is authorized to provide transportation from the PLC Participant's home to their duty station under appropriate circumstances. Authorization is sought by completing AD 728 – Request and Authorization for Home to Work Transportation form which must be approved at the local level and submitted through the chain of command to the Secretary of Agriculture.

1821.2 - Conservation Centers

1. Establishment and use.

a. In general, the Secretary may establish and use conservation centers owned and operated by the Secretary for:

- (1) Use by the Public Lands Corps; and
- (2) The conduct of appropriate conservation projects under this subchapter.

- b. Assistance for conservation centers. The Secretary may provide to a conservation center any services, facilities, equipment, and supplies that the Secretary determines to be necessary for the conservation center.
 - c. Standards for conservation centers. The Secretary shall:
 - (1) Establish basic standards of health, nutrition, sanitation, and safety for all conservation centers; and
 - (2) Ensure that the standards established under (sec. 1821.2, para. 1) are enforced.
 - d. Management. As the Secretary determines to be appropriate, the Secretary may enter into a contract or other appropriate arrangement with a State or local Government agency or private organization to provide for the management of a conservation center.
2. Logistical support. The Secretary may make arrangements with the Secretary of Defense to have logistical support provided by the Armed Forces to the Public Lands Corps and any conservation center established, where feasible. Logistical support may include the provision of temporary tent shelters where needed, transportation, and residential supervision.
3. Use of military installations. The Secretary may make arrangements with the Secretary of Defense to identify military installations and other facilities of the Department of Defense and, in consultation with the adjutant generals of the State National Guards, National Guard facilities that may be used, in whole or in part, by the Public Lands Corps for training or housing Public Lands Corps participants.
4. Assistance. The Secretary may provide any services, facilities, equipment, supplies, technical assistance, oversight, monitoring, or evaluations that are appropriate to carry out this subchapter.
5. Transportation. The Secretary may provide to Public Lands Corps participants who reside in their own homes transportation to and from appropriate conservation project sites.

1821.3 - Resource Assistants Program Operations

1. The RAP is a rigorous and immersive, paid work and learning experience that provides individuals with exposure to the Forest Service organization and developmental and training opportunities and allows for a meaningful contribution to the Forest Service mission.

2. The RAP is conducted in collaboration with cooperators who have been preapproved. See the Resource Assistants Program site at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-rap/SitePages/Welcome.aspx>. Cooperators may be selected from among qualified youth and conservation corps; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); local agencies; and educational institutions who demonstrate capacity to support RAP performance and outreach and recruitment of high quality and diverse candidates.
3. RAP activities encompass research, forest and recreation management, or resource protection activities work that support the Forest Service mission and expand access and public stewardship engagement. The work is policy, program, science, and/or operations based and occurs on eligible service lands.
4. Resource Assistants shall meet the following criteria:
 - a. Be age 17 and up, with no upper age limit;
 - b. Is a citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States; and
 - c. Meet the participant criteria described in FSM 1821.
5. Recruitment and Selection. Selection of Resource Assistants is a fair and open process. Cooperators conduct outreach and recruitment to identify a candidate pool from which the Forest Service selects Resource Assistants. Per 16 U.S.C 37 section 1725a, preference shall be given to applicants enrolled in an institution of higher education or are recent graduates from an institution of higher education, with particular attention given to ensure full representation of women and participants from historically Black, Hispanic, and Native American schools.
6. At a minimum, the RAP must provide work experience sufficient for Resource Assistants to qualify for GS-05 opportunities upon meeting program requirements.
7. Resource Assistant positions will address high priority needs and, to the extent possible, integrate with workforce planning efforts.
8. As part of the Resource Assistants Program, the Forest Service has authorization to coordinate and/or obligate resources for housing, workspace, travel, and other logistics to support the Resource Assistant engagement.

1822 - Reserved

1823 - Partnerships

1823.1 - Hosting Other Federal Agencies' Programs

The Forest Service may host participants of other Federal programs which meet the definition in the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 as amended. See FSM 1810 and FSH 1509.11, chapter 50. Projects should meet the guidelines outlined in FSM 1821, Program Operations.

1823.2 - Partnerships with Non-Federal and Non-Profit Organizations

1. Units may partner with any qualified youth or conservation corps, local Government, non-governmental organization (NGOs) or education institution to carry out appropriate conservation PLC projects on public lands utilizing cooperator agreements. RAP projects must be implemented through agreements with pre-approved RAP partners. See FSM 1810 and 1821.32 and FSH 1509.11, chapter 70.
2. Whenever one or more existing nonprofit organizations can provide, in the judgment of the Forest Service, appropriate recruitment and placement services to fulfill the requirements of the PLC or RAP, the Forest Service may implement a PLC or RAP with such existing organizations. See FSM 1821, Program Operations.
3. Any such participating non-profit conservation service organization or other cooperator will be required by the Forest Service to submit at minimum an annual report evaluating the scope, size, and quality of the program, including the value of work contributed by the Public Lands Corps Participants and/or Resource Assistants, to the mission of the Agency; and may be required to submit biannual or more frequently PLC Participant and Resource Assistant tracking and performance reports. Reporting requirements will be outlined in the cooperator agreement. See FSM 1827, Eligibilities Certification, Verification, and Usage.

1823.3 - Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers

1. Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (JCCCC), funded by the Department of Labor, are located throughout the country. The Forest Service Job Corps may be implemented as a Forest Service operated and managed PLC.
2. JCCCC students may be awarded PLC non-competitive hiring or RAP non-competitive and direct hiring eligibilities for Forest Service jobs upon meeting respective program requirements. See FSM 1826, Eligibility.

3. Public Lands Corps work-based learning cooperator agreements must be established between the Job Corps and the cooperating public lands agency. Existing PLC Job Corps agreements can be found at: <http://fsweb.jc.wo.fs.fed.us/ExistingPLCAgreements.php>.

1823.4 - Cooperative Agreements

1. Cooperator agreements must be used to document the scope of the specific program and the circumstances involved for PLC projects at the National, Regional, or local level, and at the National and Regional levels for RAP projects. For direction on appropriate agreement types see FSH 1509.11, chapter 70 (Partnership Agreements).
2. The cooperator agreement must specifically state the authorities and responsibilities of both the cooperator and the Forest Service regarding the status of PLC Participants or Resource Assistants, working conditions, training, pay, supervision, and other operational details. Refer questions regarding applicability of laws and program requirements to Forest Service Grants and Agreements Specialists.
3. Cooperator agreements should include required reporting and tracking data which contributes to certification and verification of participants as well as contribute to workforce development goals. See FSM 1826.3, Eligibilities Certification, Verification, and Usage.
4. Cooperator agreements must clearly define sub-cooperators who engage PLC Participants and Resource Assistants on projects.
5. Cash to Cooperator.
 - a. The PLC RAP Cash to Cooperator Calculator (<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/aqm3/pages/grants-agreements/?tab=templates>) is used with PLC and RAP cooperator agreements to assist with identifying and calculating Forest Service costs associated with a Public Lands Corps or Resource Assistant Participant. The Calculator automatically finds project expenses and assists Forest Service Grants & Agreements and program staff in determining the cost effectiveness of a project agreement.
 - b. The PLC RAP Cash to Cooperator Calculator does not replace the required Grants & Agreements financial plan form but can be used as a supplement to itemize and explain the value of a Public Lands Corps or Resource Assistant. It is designed to help Forest Service staff discern if cash to cooperator cost ratios are reasonable and to support the development of the official financial form. The Calculator will also quantify the full value of in-kind volunteer labor contributed by participants.

1823.41 - Public Lands Corps Cooperator Agreements

Cooperator instruments engaging individuals on PLC projects must state the authority Public Lands Corps Act, 16 U.S.C. 1721-1730.

1823.42 - Resource Assistants Program Cooperator Agreements

Cooperator instruments engaging individuals on RAP projects must state the authority Resource Assistants Program, 16 U.S.C. 1725.

1824 - Participants' Appointments, Pay, Benefits, and Separation

1. Living Allowances. The Forest Service and/or cooperator entity will provide each PLC Participant and/or Resource Assistant with a living allowance in an amount negotiated between the Forest Service unit and the cooperator if no minimum requirement is defined by the Washington Office.
2. Terms of Service. Each PLC Participant and Resource Assistant shall agree to participate in the Corps or on a work assignment for such term of service as may be established by the Forest Service unit enrolling or selecting the individual and within the guidelines defined in organizational policy statements such as the USDA-approved Resource Assistants Program design.

1824.1 - Enrollment

PLC Participants and Resource Assistants are automatically enrolled in their respective program when they commence working on an authorized project or individual placement assignment. Participants cannot be enrolled on a PLC project and RAP simultaneously. Hours earned on a PLC project cannot be applied to a RAP assignment and vice versa. See FSM 1824.3 Assignments, Working Conditions, and Travel for information about assignment to fire and Administratively Determined status.

1824.2 - Participant Status

The status of PLC Participants and Resource Assistants shall be clearly stated in the 1580 agreement instrument between the Forest Service and the cooperator. PLC agreements may be established with any cooperator that meet the requirements as defined in 1820.1.2.f.1 – Authority, whereas Resource Assistants agreements may only be established tiered from Resource Assistants Program master agreements with Washington Office approved cooperators.

1824.21 - Public Lands Corps Participant Status

Federal Status. "Program participants shall not be deemed Federal employees for any purposes, including 28 U.S. Code, Chapter 171 (Federal Torts Claims Act) and 5 U.S. Code, Chapter 81

(Compensation for Work Injuries).” The cooperator willingly assumes liability responsibilities unless a different Non-Federal Status for Cooperator Participant is negotiated, articulated, and justified in the cooperator agreement.

Cooperator costs associated with participant insurance coverage are allowable costs and should be recorded in the agreement financial plan.

1824.22 - Resource Assistants Program Participant Status

Program participants shall be deemed Federal employees for the purpose of 28 U.S. Code, Chapter 171 (Federal Torts Claims Act) and 5 U.S. Code, Chapter 81(Compensation for Work Injuries).

1824.3 - Assignments, Working Conditions, and Travel

1. Type of Service. Forest Service units may host PLC Participants and Resource Assistants on projects and assignments which fit the definition of PLC projects and/or RAP individual placements.
2. Fire Suppression Activities. Forest Service units may request PLC Participants and Resource Assistants, who are red card certified and engaged through cooperators, to perform fire mitigation and suppression activities. There are mitigating circumstances regarding their engagement in these activities:
 - a. Some individuals may be engaged in fire-mitigation and suppression activities while not being in Administratively Determine status, if negotiated in the cooperative agreement.
 - b. If a Forest Service unit requests a PLC Participant or Resource Assistant to participate in fire suppression, this assignment must be negotiated with the cooperator. Based on mutual agreement, those individuals would be removed from project work under any existing cooperator agreement and may be hired under separate authority.
 - c. PLC Participants or Resource Assistants shall meet fire suppression employment criteria contained in FSH 5109.34, chapter 10, 13.6, Exhibit 01-Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency Workers (Casuals).
 - d. PLC Participants or Resource Assistants will be paid by the Forest Service, not by the cooperator, while working in fire suppression in Administratively Determined status and shall not earn hours towards successful program completion of PLC or RAP. Job Corps students may be excluded from the hour restriction.

3. Supervision. Supervisors, coaches, and mentors of PLC Participants or Resource Assistants shall know and understand the objectives, goals, and requirements of the programs with which they work. See the Volunteers & Service (VS) site: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-vs/SitePages/Home.aspx>.
4. Government Motor Vehicle Use. PLC Participants and Resource Assistants who drive Government owned vehicles for their duties shall meet fleet requirements and issued form OF-346, United States Government Motor Vehicle Operator's Identification Card according to FSH 7109.19, section 63.
5. Eligibility to Wear the Forest Service Uniform. PLC Participants or Resource Assistants may wear the Forest Service uniform but not the Forest Service badge (FSH 6509.11k, sec. 48 Uniform Program). The host Forest Service unit is responsible for providing or purchasing the Forest Service uniform. PLC Participants and Resource Assistants may not wear the Forest Service badge; instead they may wear the PARTNER IN SERVICE patch on the right sleeve. The patch is available for purchase through the official Forest Service uniform vendor.
6. Termination of Service. A PLC Participant or Resource Assistant may be terminated for cause.
7. Travel and Training. Travel and training is an approved activity for PLC Participants or Resource Assistants engaged in work benefiting the Forest Service (FSH 6509.33, ch. 301). Travel and training expenses, including per diem, may be included in the cooperator agreement financial plan or arranged through invitational travel, see FSH 6509.33-Federal Travel Regulation.
8. Housing. Housing is an allowable provision or expense provided by the Forest Service and/or cooperator.
9. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE is an allowable provision or expense provided by the Forest Service and/or cooperator.

1825 - Funding and Cost Sharing

1. Funds. Any allowable Forest Service appropriations or other funds (such as recreation fees) may be used for PLC or RAP activities including cooperative agreements with a qualified youth or conservation corps, a non-governmental organization (NGO), university, Local, State or other Federal agency, or the governing body of an Indian Tribe.
2. Donations. The Forest Service is authorized to accept donations and/or contributions of funds, services, facilities, materials, or equipment for the purposes of operating the PLC or the RAP. See USDA DR-5200-3 and FSH 5109.13, chapter 20, Donations.

3. Purchasing Non-Monetary Items. The responsible official may allocate funds for the purchase of non-monetary items of nominal value for activities such as recognition and awards, outreach, and other activities which shall contribute to the successful implementation of the project. This may include items of honorary nature that may be work, displayed, or used in the work environment or gift certificates or gift cards. See FSH 6511.31d, Nonmonetary Awards for Employees, Private Individuals, and Organizations.

4. Cost share. Cooperators of PLC and RAP projects are required to contribute a minimum 25% match of the total cost of each cooperator agreement, except for Forest Service operated and managed programs such as Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers. No cost sharing will be required in the case of any appropriate conservation project carried out on Indian lands or Hawaiian home lands. In addition to in-kind resources the cooperator may attribute net costs of the value of the volunteer hour (also known as Independent Sector Rate, found at <https://independentsector.org>) accrued by participants over the life of the agreement to the match requirement. This anticipated value should be estimated when negotiating the initial agreement and progress toward match should be monitored to ensure the cooperator remains on track to meet their share of the program value. The net value of allowable volunteer labor match excludes stipend payments to participants. Other benefits such as Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), Federal withholding, health care, housing allowance, and so forth are not deducted from the net value of allowable volunteer labor match. Though PLC and RAP cooperators can meet their entire 25 percent match with in-kind labor, Forest Service units are encouraged to evaluate each project based upon all allowable contributions (cash, supplies, equipment, and so forth) and to negotiate agreements with the best interest of the Forest Service and its mission in mind.

1826 - Eligibility

Participants who successfully complete the requirements of the Forest Service PLC or RAP may become eligible to apply for positions through internal Forest Service merit vacancy announcements or be directly converted into Forest Service positions.

A certificate of eligibility is granted to each PLC Participant or Resource Assistant once they have satisfactorily completed program requirements as defined in policy guidance on the HRM site: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm/hiring-employment/index.php#ten>. In order to receive consideration for Federal competitive service employment, individuals shall:

1. Be a United States citizen.
2. Meet Office of Personnel Management Qualification Standards and any other qualification requirement(s) stated in the vacancy announcement for the position for which they are applying (including any selective placement factors, positive education requirements, physical requirements, and so forth).

See FSM 1827-Eligibilities Certification, Verification, and Usage for essential requirements of Forest Service staff and cooperators to confirm eligibility to PLC Participants and Resource Assistants.

1826.1 - Noncompetitive Hiring Eligibility

1. Non-competitive hiring eligibility may be used for applying to Forest Service permanent positions. The objectives of the noncompetitive hiring authority are:
 - a. To provide flexibility and opportunities for the Forest Service to hire current and former members of the PLC and RAP;
 - b. To meet the employment needs of the Forest Service and members of the PLC and RAP; and
 - c. To assist the Forest Service in its workforce development and cultural transformation objectives.
2. Individuals within the PLC and RAP are to receive noncompetitive hiring eligibility upon meeting respective program requirements:
 - a. Public Lands Corps Participants.
 - (1) Served as a qualified youth between the age of 16 and 30 (inclusive), or a veteran age 35 and younger, on an appropriate conservation project (see FSM 1821-Program Operations, FSM 1821.1-Public Lands Corps Operations); and,
 - (2) Completed a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service on appropriate conservation projects of which 120 hours were on a U.S. Forest Service project codified through an agreement that aligns with FSM 1823.4, Cooperator Agreements.
 - b. Resource Assistants.
 - (1) Successfully completed a minimum of 960 hours of full- or part-time work in a U.S. Forest Service Resource Assistants Program project (see FSM 1821-Program Operations, FSM 1821.2-Resource Assistants Program Operations, and FSM 1823.4-Cooperator Agreements);
 - (2) Earned at minimum an undergraduate (Associate or Bachelor) or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education; and
 - (3) Were at least 17 years old when they began their Resource Assistants Program placement.

1826.2 - Direct Hiring Eligibility

After the successful completion of RAP requirements, Resource Assistants are eligible to be considered for hiring into qualifying Federal positions for up to two years utilizing direct hire eligibility. RAP direct hire eligibility for U.S. Forest Service positions is restricted to former Resource Assistants who have successfully completed the requirements of the Forest Service Resource Assistants Program.

Direct hire eligibility must be used to appoint eligible candidates to General Schedule (GS) permanent, temporary, and seasonal positions based on the following criteria:

1. Successfully completed a minimum of 960 hours of full- or part-time work in a U.S. Forest Service Resource Assistants Program project (see FSM 1821-Program Operations, FSM 1821.2- Resource Assistants Program Operations, and FSM 1823.4-Cooperator Agreements);
2. Earned at minimum an undergraduate (Associate or Bachelor) or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education; and,
3. Were at least 17 years old when they began their Resource Assistants Program placement.

The Resource Assistant Certificate of Eligibility is an official document that verifies the Resource Assistant's successful completion of program requirements and confirms eligibility for both noncompetitive hiring eligibility and direct hiring eligibility.

1827 - Eligibilities Certification, Verification, and Usage

Certification for eligibility is conferred to former Public Lands Corps Participants and Resource Assistants upon meeting program requirements. Verification of minimum program requirements is a critical function of cooperators and hosting Forest Service units.

Eligibility for non-competitive hiring status for PLC and non-competitive and direct hiring status for RAP continues for not more than two years after completion of PLC or RAP program requirements. The two-year timeframe cannot be extended. Appointment to the Federal service position must be within two years of completion of the program. The individual shall be on-boarded before the expiration of the two years.

1. Verification consists of determining accomplishment of program requirements, see FSM 1821-Program Operations (and FSM 1821.1-Public Lands Corps Program Operations and FSM 1821.2-Resource Assistants Program Operations, as appropriate).
2. Supporting documentation must be submitted as part of the verification of successful completion to program requirements.

3. The certificate of eligibility must be signed by a Line Officer, preferably at the Regional level, but may be delegated to a Forest Supervisor. In the Washington Office, a Deputy Chief or Associate Deputy Chief should sign the certificate of eligibility, but delegation may be given to a Staff Director.
4. The certificate of eligibility is valid for no more than 2 years from the date it was signed.
5. The certificate of eligibility may be used more than once within the period of eligibility.
6. The certificate of eligibility is required as proof of service on an appropriate public lands project for the benefit of future Federal hiring as defined in the PLC and RAP policy guidance on the Human Resources Management (HRM) site: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm/index.php>.
7. PLC and RAP cooperators are required to track work hours of participants to contribute to certification and verification of former PLC Participants and Resource Assistants. See FSM 1828 Performance and Accomplishments Monitoring and Reporting. The cooperators are required to track PLC Participant and Resource Assistant work hours which must be certified by a Federal employee with supervisory oversight, is responsible for the management of the project, or is the signatory on the cooperator agreement. RAP cooperators must also track higher education requirements for positive completion of the program, and other information outlined in the RAP policy guidance. Documentation that verifies hours worked and other certificate of eligibility participation requirements must be maintained for a minimum of three years, once all eligibility requirements have been met.

1828 - Performance and Accomplishments Monitoring and Reporting

Forest Service staff and cooperators are responsible for participating in reporting and tracking of contributions to PLC and RAP projects and outcomes. This includes program monitoring and program performance reports respective to the project including the project name; scope, size, and quality of the program; project accomplishments; and, value of work provided by the participants.

1828.1 - Participant Engagement Tracking

Tracking and performance reports are required from the cooperator. The type and frequency of reporting required by the cooperator will be defined in the cooperator agreement. The Public Lands Corps Participant Tracking Sheet is an Office of Management and Budget approved form (0596-0247) which can monitor the progress of participants enrolled in the PLC and the RAP. Information of interest to the Forest Service that must be tracked and reported to the Forest Service via VSReports and the VSPortal, includes but is not limited to:

1. Number of PLC Participants and Resource Assistants engaged on a respective PLC or RAP project in VSReports, and individual participant data in the VSPortal;
2. Participant's position title, position description, work hours, start and end date, project locations, and dates that hiring eligibility is conferred upon participants;
3. Participant's legal name and contact information;
4. Participant's demographic data including gender, race, veteran status, and disability status;
5. Name and contact information for Forest Service staff representative responsible for managing the participant's work experience;
6. Name and contact information for cooperator staff responsible for monitoring the participant's work experience; and
7. Forest Service cooperator agreement number that formalized the partnership between the Forest Service and cooperator.

1828.2 - Reporting Accomplishments

1. VSReports. At the conclusion of each year, program activities and participation within the Forest Service Volunteers & Service program of work, including PLC and RAP projects, must be reported into VSReports, the Volunteers & Service Reporting Accomplishments Database.
2. VSPortal. A system that provides access for cooperators to directly enter their data about participants engaged on Forest Service projects, including PLC and RAP, to track hours, demographics, and type of work.

3. Congressional Reporting. Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 1727(a), the Secretary of Agriculture will coordinate with the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Commerce, and the Corporation for National and Community Service to submit an annual report to Congress inclusive of:

- a. The number of participants enrolled in the Public Lands Corps and the length of the term of service for each participant;
- b. The projects carried out by Public Lands Corps Participants, categorized by type of project and Federal agency;
- c. The total amount and sources of funding provided for the service of participants;
- d. The type of service performed by participants and the impact and accomplishments of the service; and,
- e. Any other data determined to be appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service or the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, and Commerce.

1829 - Miscellaneous

For more program related questions related to PLC and RAP, visit the Volunteers & Service site at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/volunteers>.

For eligibility certification and verification and hiring related questions related to PLC and RAP, visit the HRM site <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm/hiring-employment/index.php#ten>.