U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Request for Membership in the Fish and Wildlife Services' Youth Corps

Purpose

The process described in this document is required for organizations, as described below, to become members of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Youth Corps (FWS Youth Corps). Membership is one prerequisite for organizations partnering with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) to be able to provide the benefit of non-competitive hiring eligibility through the Public Lands Corps Act to qualified youth they employ through this process.

The FWS Youth Corps

Membership in the FWS Youth Corps is solely for the purpose of partnering with FWS to engage youth in Public Lands Corps (PLC) projects. Membership does not imply or constitute a partnership; it is merely a requirement to engage in such partnerships that confer this benefit upon eligible youth. Requesting membership does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This request for membership does not commit the Government to contract for any supply or service whatsoever.

Not seeking membership in the FWS Youth Corps does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued, or in partnering with FWS for purposes other than engaging youth in PLC projects. If membership into the FWS Youth Corps is granted, the Partner Organization's interns could be eligible under the Public Lands Corps Act for non-competitive hiring authority for permanent competitive positions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, assuming they meet the requirements outlined in the following section.

The Public Lands Corps (PLC)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) seeks partners with the ability to hire qualified youth or conservation corps, and with the organizational capacity and unique qualifications necessary to work collaboratively with the FWS to develop projects under the Public Lands Corps Act as authorized by Congress under 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).

The purpose of the PLC is to provide work and educational opportunities for youth in the areas of natural and cultural resource conservation, development, and scientific research. Youth perform work on our nation's public lands that cannot be carried out by Federal agencies at existing personnel levels.

The PLC allows the Service to enter into partnerships with organizations to employ youth in PLC projects and internships through two types of agreements: a financial assistance/cooperative agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. PLC participants who complete program

requirements will be eligible for non-competitive appointment to Federal positions for which they qualify.

The PLC's goals are to:

1. Perform, in a cost-effective manner, appropriate conservation projects on eligible lands where such projects will not be performed by existing government employees.
2. Assist governments and Indian tribes in performing research and public education tasks associated with natural and cultural resources on eligible lands.
3. Expose young people to public service while furthering their understanding and appreciation of the Nation's natural and cultural resources.
4. Stimulate interest among the Nation's youth in the FWS and conservation careers by exposing them to conservation, scientific research, and professionals in the FWS, and offering them non-competitive hiring eligibility for Federal positions for which they qualify upon completion of all program requirements.
5. Allow PLC Participants the opportunity to seek forbearance on Stafford loans.

Eligibility

Department of the Interior (DOI) Personnel Bulletin (PB) 17-03 establishes the policy and procedures for administering the PLC within the Department. This policy identifies eligibility requirements for participants and partner organizations and outlines the process for granting non-competitive hiring status.

Eligible participants must:

- Have been between the ages of 16 and 30 years inclusive, at the time the term of service began. Veterans up to the age of 32.
- Have met eligibility requirements, directly related to the tasks to be accomplished, as established by the program.
- Be a U.S. citizen or legal resident.
- Possess or agreed to pursue a high school diploma or its equivalent and did not drop out of an elementary or secondary school to enroll in the program or is enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 1091 of title 20.
- Satisfactorily served 640 hours of service, 120 of which was on Federal lands, waters and facilities owned or administered by the United States, or on Indian lands, or Hawaiian homelands.

Eligible partner organizations must:

- Be a State or local government entity, the governing body of any Indian tribe, a nonprofit organization, or an accredited institution of higher education.
- Be members of the FWS Youth Corps.

- Have financial policies and procedures that reflect generally accepted accounting principles
- Have risk management policies that reflect industry standards and are proactive and thorough in mitigating and managing risk to PLC Participants.
- Have a contract or financial assistance agreement (or MOU) with the Service that clearly identifies both organization's roles and responsibilities for implementing the PLC program, or have documentation (e.g. organizational charter or similar documentation) that they have performed conservation work on Federal, State, tribal, local or private lands and utilized young people between the ages of 16 and 30 years of age, and Veterans up to age 32.
- Provide liability insurance.
- Contribute a minimum of 25% of the total costs of the project or internship program either as direct funds or qualified in-kind services unless the project is carried out on Indian or Hawaiian homelands.

Additionally, these organizations must have an established program that:

- Offers meaningful, full-time, productive work for PLC Participants in a natural or cultural resource setting.
- Provides a mix of work experience, basic and life skills, education training, and support services.
- Provides PLC Participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their community and the United States.
- Provides PLC Participants with a living allowance, stipend, or wages.

Former Public Land Corps participants may be granted non-competitive hiring status for permanent competitive positions within the Department of the Interior, provided both they and the partner organization meet the above requirements. Non-competitive hiring status is granted through an approved FWS process and allows the recipient to apply and compete for vacant positions open to those with special hiring authorities or for merit promotion. The former PLC participant also must be selected from a non-competitive selection certificate and appointed within two years of the candidate's completion of PLC service qualifying him/her for the non-competitive hiring authority.

PLC and Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Goals

This special hiring authority provides the FWS with an opportunity to help meet the agency's goal of building a diverse and inclusive workforce.

The FWS is committed to building and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the ethnic, age, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and language diversity of contemporary America.

Diversity means having many different elements, ideas and qualities.

We define workforce diversity as the differences that influence personal perspectives of individuals in that workforce – not just those differences based on ethnicity, gender, color, age, race, religion, disability, national origin, and sexual orientation, but also differences in communication style, career path, life experience, educational background, geographic location, income level, marital status, military experience, parental status, and other variables that influence personal perspectives.

Inclusion is about recognizing, respecting, and valuing differences that influence personal perspectives. These unique perspectives make us react differently, solve problems differently, and see different opportunities. Superior organizational performance requires employing people with a diversity of thought.

Equal employment opportunity: The Service has an ongoing obligation under equal employment opportunity laws, executive orders, and other standards to prevent discrimination on the bases of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, retaliation/reprisal, disability, sexual orientation, parental status, and genetic information; we are also obliged to eliminate barriers that impede free and open competition in the workplace.

We conduct an annual self-assessment to monitor progress and identify areas where barriers may exclude certain groups. In conducting this assessment, we compare our internal participation rates with corresponding rates in the relevant Civilian Labor Force (CLF) as points of reference. Equal employment opportunity is focused on equality and equal access and is primarily concerned with protected classes. Even with these protections, it is important to treat every individual with respect and to embrace differences in the workplace. In this way, equal employment opportunity is distinct from diversity.

How to Request Membership in the FWS Youth Corps

Interested partner organizations may request membership in the FWS Youth Corps for the purposes of working with the FWS by submitting a proposal.

Proposals should be submitted in a Microsoft Word-compatible format and are accepted throughout the year. Proposals shall be limited to 10 pages for Section 2 as described below, and submitted via e-mail only to deborah_moore@fws.gov. Proprietary information, if any, should be minimized and MUST BE CLEARLY MARKED. To aid the Government, please segregate proprietary information. Please be advised that all submissions become Government property and will not be returned. FWS staff will review requests, and responses will be sent within 30 days of receipt.

Section 1 of the proposal shall provide administrative information and shall include the following as a minimum: Name, mailing address, overnight delivery address (if different from mailing address), phone number, and e-mail of designated point(s) of contact. The number of pages in

Section 1 of the proposal shall not be included in the 10-page limitation, i.e., the 10-page limitation applies only to Section 2.

Section 2 of the proposal shall answer the points listed below and shall be limited to 10 pages.

- Provide background information detailing youth or veteran programs relating to conservation that you have operated and administered that would demonstrate organizational capacity to operate under a PLC program.
- Demonstrate your organization's ability to develop natural resource conservation projects that can accomplish needed and important work on public lands, while at the same time providing program participants with educational, technical, life and leadership skills.
- Demonstrate that your organization has clearly identified hiring and enrollment standards for youth.
- Demonstrate your organization's ability to teach and develop relevant vocations/work skills for program participants that include dependability, punctuality, and problem solving.
- Demonstrate your organization's ability to develop natural and cultural resource stewardship ethics in the program participants.
- Demonstrate your organization's ability to develop strong community engagement skills. Program participants will create a strong ethic of service to convey to others in their immediate communities.
- Describe your organization's recruitment strategies to demonstrate the unique characteristics of your organization.
- Demonstrate your organization's expert ability and knowledge to engage racially diverse, socially diverse and economically disadvantaged communities in programs and projects that focus on natural and cultural resource stewardship.
- Demonstrate your organization's documented training curriculum for supervisory staff and projects that focus on natural and cultural resource stewardship.
- Describe your organization's governance and accountability structure, including how your organization utilizes proper financial controls and generally accepted accounting principles.
- Demonstrate that your organization has sufficient staff to develop and operate FWS Youth Corps programs and projects.
- Demonstrate that your organization has clearly written defined risk management policies and procedures.
- Provide documentation of current insurance coverage that meets Federal, State, and local laws.
- Demonstrate that your organization has emergency response, communication and documentation guidelines pertaining to field emergencies, missing persons, natural disasters and severe weather.

Requestors should also attach a copy of their current Memorandum of Understanding, Financial Assistance Award, or other appropriate agreement, between themselves and the FWS site they plan to partner with for the purposes of PLC youth employment. If the requestor is in the process of applying for a Financial Assistance Agreement, please indicate the Grant Solutions Application ID in the proposal. If no such agreement is in place, contact the person listed below for information on completing an agreement before requesting membership in the FWS Youth Corps.

Questions

Questions regarding this request for membership may be directed to Deborah Moore, National Youth and Public Lands Corps Coordinator, National Wildlife Refuge System at deborah_moore@fws.gov. Questions may also be directed to your regional Public Lands Corps Coordinators, listed below.

Pacific Northwest and Islands Region (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Hawaii) – Chelsea McKinney, chelsea_mckinney@fws.gov

Southwest Region (Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma) – Monica Kimbrough, monica_kimbrough@fws.gov

Great Lakes Region (Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio)– Megan Wandag, megan_wandag@fws.gov

Southeast Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina) – Pamala Wingrove, Pamala_wingrove@fws.gov

Northeast Region (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky) – Jacob Porst, jacob_porst@fws.gov

Mountain Prairie Region (Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas) – Sue McDonald, sue_mcdonald@fws.gov

Alaska Region (Alaska) – Helen Stracklejahn, helen_stracklejahn@fws.gov

Pacific Southwest Region (California, Nevada) – Matthew Nakaya, matthew_nakaya@fws.gov