



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JAN 22 2013

PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 12-13

Subject: Departmental Policy on Public Land Corps Hiring Authority

1. Purpose.

This Bulletin replaces Personnel Bulletin (PB) 11-02 and establishes the policy and procedures for providing former members of the Public Land Corps (PLC) non-competitive hiring status for competitive service positions in the Department of the Interior (DOI). The primary focus of this issuance is to provide additional guidance and instructions for utilizing the hiring authority outlined in the Public Land Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005, P.L. 109-154. The PLC program expands youth services opportunities and serves important conservation and societal objectives.

2. Scope. This PB may apply to all bureaus and equivalent offices of the Department.

3. Authority. 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).

4. Definitions.

a. Corps and Public Lands Corps means the Public Lands Corps established under section 1723 of title 16, United States Code. The Corps consists of individuals between the ages of 16 and 25 and is a program that authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Interior to enroll individuals for the purpose of performing needed conservation activities and assist the Federal government with natural and cultural resources. Corps members are not civil service Federal employees during their time of service in the Corps.

b. Qualified youth or conservation corps means any program established by a State or local government, by the governing body of any Indian tribe, or a nonprofit organization that –

- (1) is capable of offering meaningful, full-time, productive work for individuals between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, in a natural or cultural resource setting;
- (2) gives participants a mix of work experience, basic and life skills, education, training, and support services; and
- (3) provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their community and the United States.
- (4) provides the individual with a living allowance, stipend, or wages.

c. Appropriate conservation project refers to any project for the conservation, restoration, construction or rehabilitation of natural, cultural, historic, archaeological,

recreational or scenic resource. For purposes of this bulletin, for an appropriate conservation project to be creditable, it should have been accomplished by the participant while serving as a member of a qualified youth or conservation corp.

d. Former PLC member means an individual who meets the criteria in 4 (g) below and has served the time required for completing a PLC project carried out on Federal land. An individual may serve on many PLC projects: thus, he/she becomes a former member of PLC each time he/she serves the time required to complete the PLC project carried out on Federal land.

e. Eligible youth means an individual who may be enrolled in the Corps due to satisfying the following criteria as specified in section 12591 (b) of title 42:

Meets such eligibility requirements, directly related to the tasks to be accomplished, as may be established by the program;

Is selected by the program to serve in a position with the program;

Will serve in the program for a term of service specified in section 12593 of this title to be performed before, during, or after attendance at an institution of higher education;

Is between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, at the time the individual begins the term of service;

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 which determined that the individual education assessment conducted by the program which determined that the individual is incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent.) and the individual did not drop out of an elementary or secondary school to enroll in the program, or is enrolled in an institution of higher education or an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 1091 of title 20; and Is a citizen or national of the United States or lawful permanent resident alien of United States.

5. Policy

a. Bureau Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of every bureau to establish a program coordinator for their respective PLC program. The PLC coordinator will establish bureau procedures for administering the program. The PLC Coordinator will serve as the bureau point of contact on the PLC program and be responsible for determining which qualified youth or conservation corps and appropriate conservation projects are creditable or meets service requirements. Documentation of service must include all information stated on the attached PLC Participant Work Hours Verification form (attached), including satisfactory service, dates of projects, date of completion of the candidate's most recent PLC service project, and verification signatures.

Each bureau PLC program coordinator will provide a Certificate of Non-Competitive Hiring Eligibility (attached) to participants who have demonstrated satisfactory service and have met the service requirements for non-competitive hiring.

b. Crediting Time Served

In accordance with Public Law 109-154, a member of the PLC may use time satisfactorily served under 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 TSP. Time served does not count towards probationary period or career tenure. Former PLC members do not accrue adverse action appeal rights based on PLC service.

b. Implementing Non-Competitive Hiring Status

(1) Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the special PLC non-competitive hiring status, the candidate must be a former member of the PLC and meet the following criteria:

- (A) Served as a qualified youth on an appropriate conservation project completing a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service that included at least 120 hours through the PLC, and
- (B) Meet OPM qualification standards and any other qualification requirement(s) stated in the vacancy announcement for the position for which they are applying.

An individual's eligibility for non-competitive hiring status under this authority shall not exceed 120 days after completion of his/her last PLC project which provides him/her a total of 640 hours of which 120 hours were performed as a PLC member. The 120 day timeframe cannot be extended. The appointment must be effected within this 120 day timeframe.

Positions to which candidates may be appointed are General Schedule and Federal Wage Schedule positions. Selectees will be subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service positions.

(2) Application and Completion

Individuals who meet the Office of Personnel Management's minimum qualifications requirements may be non-competitively referred to the selection official in accordance with established competitive hiring procedures. The candidate must provide the a copy of the "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-Competitive Hiring Based on PLC Service" with the application in order to be considered under this hiring authority. Servicing bureau HROs must also ensure agency and interagency career transition programs are appropriately cleared prior to appointment.

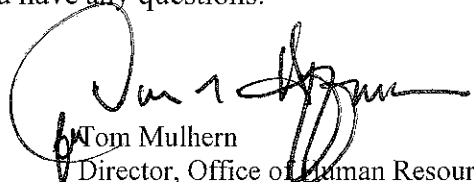
(3) Appointment

Appointments under this authority must be effective within 120 days of the candidates' completion of PLC service. 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 under this authority can be made for temporary, term, or permanent positions as appropriate. The servicing Human Resources Offices must use "ZLM" as the legal authority code and reference P.L. 109-154 as the legal authority when processing an appointment action under this authority

6. Contact. Please contact Craig Welch at 202-513-0755 or by email at craig_welch@ios.doi.gov if you have any questions.



Tom Mulhern
Director, Office of Human Resources

Attachments

[Bureau letterhead]

**Certificate of Eligibility for Noncompetitive Hiring Based on
Public Lands Corp Service**

Name of Individual

has satisfactorily served a minimum of 640 hours on an appropriate
conservation project, that included at least 120 hours through the Public
Lands Corp as of

Date

and I certify he/she is eligible for non-competitive hiring until 120 days
after the date shown below as provided by the Public Land Corps Healthy
Forests Restoration Act of 2005, P. L. 109-154.

Date of Last PLC Project: _____

Certified by:

Name
Title
Phone Number
Bureau
Department of the Interior

**Public Lands Corps Hiring Authority
Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Who qualifies under this authority?

Individuals who have served a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service on appropriate conservation projects as defined in the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 and at least 120 hours were served on a project utilizing the Public Lands Corps legal authority.

2. What is an appropriate conservation project?

The term “appropriate conservation project” means any project for conservation, restoration, construction or rehabilitation of natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational or scenic resource. The conservation work must be been completed while working as a member of a qualified youth or conservation corps organization.

3. Are all conservation projects meeting the definition of “appropriate” conducted on Federal land?

No. A conservation project on State, local or private land can be defined as appropriate. These projects can count toward the overall 640 hours of service. These projects are not defined as PLC.

4. Are all PLC projects done on Federal land?

Yes, unless it is specified that the project was conducted on Indian land, any land held by incorporated Native groups, regional corporations, any village corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Hawaiian homelands or on any former Indian reservation in the State of Oklahoma.

5. What are some examples of qualified youth or conservation corps?

Any organization that has a current cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to provide conservation project work is considered qualified. These organizations include but are not limited to the Student Conservation Association, Southwest Conservation Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, etc.

6. Must an organization have a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to be considered qualified?

No. The organization should have 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 25 years of age. Additionally these organizations should be able to provide their organizational charter or other similar documents that support their ability to provide the above-mentioned services to young people.

7. Whom do I contact if I have questions regarding the use of this authority?

All other questions concerning hiring under this authority should be directed to your servicing Human Resources office or, more specifically, to the bureau PLC program coordinator.

8. If an individual is not appointed within 120-days of becoming eligible under the PLC authority, can their eligibility be extended?

No. An individual's eligibility for a non-competitive appointment under this authority cannot be extended beyond the 120 days after the completion of their last PLC project. It is important to understand when an individual's eligibility begins to determine when it expires. The following examples describe when eligibility for a non-competitive hiring would begin:

1. If a qualified individual performs their entire service on PLC projects, they become eligible for a non-competitive appointment upon completion of the end date of the last PLC project provided they have completed the total of 640 hours. The last PLC project may exceed the 640 hours (i.e. 690 hours) requirement; however, the time period for a non-competitive appointment starts on the end date of the PLC project – it does NOT start on the day of the 640 hour completion.
2. If a qualified individual has completed 640 hours or more on an appropriate conservation project that does not include the 120 hours on a PLC project, they are ineligible for a non-competitive appointment until such time as they complete 120 hours on a PLC project. If the individual works on a PLC project and completes a 120 hours they will be eligible for non-competitive appointment. The time period for non-competitive appointment starts upon the date of completion of the last PLC project that provides the individual with a cumulative total of 120 hours.
3. If a qualified individual completes 120 hours on a PLC project, and completes the remaining 640 hours on an appropriate conservation project, the time period for the 120 day non-competitive appointment begins at the culmination

of their work on the PLC project. If the time period for the 120 day non-competitive appointment has ended, the individual will have to complete another 120 hours on a PLC project to re-establish eligibility for the 120 day non-competitive hiring status.

9. May an individual eligible for non-competitive appointment be appointed more than once under this authority?

An eligible individual may be non-competitively appointed more than once as long as it is still within the 120-day timeframe.

10. What types of positions are eligible under the PLC non-competitive hiring authority?

General Schedule and Federal Wage Schedule positions – this means any permanent full-time, part-time or subject-to-furlough, or seasonal position can be filled by hiring someone non-competitively under the PLC Hiring Authority.

11. How does an individual report hours worked on an “appropriate conservation projects”- including hours worked on a PLC project?

The corps member, supervisor overseeing the conservation project or hiring official can download a Public Land Corps hours tracking log at www.youthgo.gov. It is the responsibility of the corps member to complete the Verification of Participant Work Hours for Conservation Projects form and obtain certification from program officials and public land agency supervisors overseeing the conservation projects. At the culmination of their term of service corps members should submit their completed and signed Verification of Participant Work Hours for Conservation Projects form to a designated Supervisor within the Department for whom the corps member last worked. The corps member will receive a Certification of Eligibility for non-competitive hiring based on PLC service from a designated agency official advising them of their eligibility for the PLC non-competitive hiring status.

14. Where can I find out more information on PLC projects?

For more information about the Public Land Corps Act and PLC Projects, contact the Department of the Interior Office of Youth in the Great Outdoors at youthgo@ios.doi.gov.