

# PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVATION CORPS

# Fact Sheet

July 2006

## Mission

The mission of the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps is to develop the workplace skills, life skills and self-confidence of corpsmembers; instill an ethic of citizenship; accomplish significant conservation and historical work; and carry out other projects of public benefit. The Corps is committed to a comprehensive approach that fosters a spirit of teamwork and advances the concept of individual empowerment through community service.

## Administration & Funding

Administered by the Department of Labor and Industry, the Corps was launched in July 1984 and is currently authorized until June 2010. The PCC's state appropriation for fiscal year 2006-07 is \$5.96 million.

## Participants

Corpsmembers are Pennsylvania residents between the ages of 18 and 25 (16- and 17-year-olds can participate in special circumstances). Corpsmembers are offered a one-year term of service, with the possibility of extending for an additional six or twelve months. They are paid \$6.25 an hour to start, and get a 10-percent increase after six months on the job. Corpsmembers who complete a year of service receive a cash bonus of \$1,000 and may qualify for an education award of up to \$4,725. Education awards—which are provided by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service—may be used for future schooling or to pay off existing student loans.

More than 14,000 young Pennsylvanians have served as corpsmembers. All were unemployed when they joined the Corps; most were economically disadvantaged; and many had less than a high school education. Most corpsmembers leave the Corps for what are considered positive reasons: because they have completed their term of service, found outside employment, joined the military or re-entered school. PCC corpsmembers work in crews under the guidance of crewleaders who have experience in the building trades and are skilled in motivating and training young adults.

## Corpsmember Development

During their enrollment, corpsmembers gain valuable work experience while completing substantial and needed projects. Depending on the work they are doing, they receive on-the-job training in carpentry, masonry, landscaping and other trades. Corpsmembers are also offered out-service training, which may include adult literacy tutoring, life skills instruction, vocational education, college courses, job-search workshops and the chance to earn an equivalent high school diploma. Training is tailored to the needs and desires of individuals. Most classes are fully paid by the PCC, and corpsmembers are usually paid while attending them.

The PCC mentoring program allows corpsmembers with at least eight months of service to gain experience in potential career fields by working a few hours each week for businesses or skilled tradespersons in their communities. To date, about half of all participants in the mentoring program have moved into full-time jobs at their mentoring locations.

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**DEPARTMENT OF  
LABOR & INDUSTRY**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

# Projects

Agencies eligible to sponsor corps projects include local political subdivisions; the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency; the Game, Fish & Boat, and Historical & Museum Commissions; community-based non-profit agencies; and the Departments of Aging, Corrections, Education, Public Welfare, Military & Veterans Affairs, Community & Economic Development, and Conservation & Natural Resources. Since 1984, the Corps has undertaken nearly 1,200 projects in urban, suburban and rural areas statewide. Accomplishments include:

- the improvement of 105 miles of streams, 5,400 acres of wildlife habitat, and 21,400 acres of forest lands;
- the construction or renovation of 676 picnic areas, 660 cabins and lodges, and 9,350 miles of trails;
- the rehabilitation of 347 historical buildings; and
- the planting of more than 840,000 seedlings and trees.

Estimates suggest that for each dollar invested in the program the state receives well over a dollar in the value of work accomplished.

## Emergency Work

The Pennsylvania Conservation Corps Act allows the Corps to respond in times of emergency. The Corps has mobilized on a large scale for a number of in-state disasters: a tornado in 1985; floods in 1985, 1986 and 2006; and snowstorms and flooding in 1996. In addition, corpsmembers are often used on a project-by-project basis to assist with fire suppression, search and rescue operations, and the clearing of storm debris. Disaster-relief operations are not limited to Pennsylvania: In February 1993, 20 PCC corpsmembers and crewleaders spent two weeks in Homestead, Florida, helping to rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Andrew. In July 1994, 12 corpsmembers and crewleaders traveled to Kansas and spent a week repairing structures damaged in the devastating floods of the year before. Beginning in November 2005, 16 corpsmembers and crewleaders spent nearly a month in the Florida Keys, helping residents recover in the aftermath of Hurricane Wilma.

## Expanding Horizons

As part of continuing efforts to improve corpsmember development, the PCC has established its own technical training center at historic Curtin Village near Milesburg, Centre County. This site—conveniently situated in the middle of the state—gives the program the ability to provide high quality trade skills instruction to corpsmembers at an economical cost. By using PCC crewleaders and staff to present most of its weeklong courses, the center draws on the program's existing knowledge and experience, reducing the need to pay for outside expertise and thus conserving valuable training funds. In its first year, the center hosted just three classes. By the beginning of FY 06-07, fully ten classes were being scheduled annually (two each in basic and advanced carpentry, masonry, electrical wiring and ceramic tile installation).

## Recognition

The Pennsylvania Conservation Corps has won recognition from the Take Pride in Pennsylvania competition, the Searching for Success program, the Chesapeake Bay Program, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps.

## For More Information

Write to the PCC at 1304 Labor & Industry Building, Harrisburg, PA 17121. Or call us at (717) 783-6385. Within Pennsylvania, you can call us toll free at (888) 577-4722. You can also e-mail us at [pcc@state.pa.us](mailto:pcc@state.pa.us).

*"This has given me a shot at a whole new life."*

—PCC Corpsmember

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.  
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