



April 5, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Assistant Secretaries
Bureau Directors
Department of the Interior

Chief
United States Forest Service

Assistant Administrators
Regional Administrators
Environmental Protection Agency

Acting Chief of Engineers
Army Corps of Engineers

FROM: Secretary of the Interior /s/

Secretary of Agriculture /s/

Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency /s/

Chair, Council on Environmental Quality /s/

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) /s/

The President's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative challenged all of us to be creative and collaborative in working together to connect Americans to our vast network of public lands. Nowhere is that connection more important than in finding opportunities for young people to experience the great outdoors. We admire the work that you perform every day in offering outstanding recreation and learning experiences and in giving youth meaningful work, learning, and volunteer opportunities.

In response to numerous AGO listening sessions, we received thousands of comments from young Americans about their interest in protecting America's natural and cultural resources and the need to offer career-building experiences on our public lands. The AGO Report to the President recommended finding additional ways to provide meaningful work, service, and learning opportunities to young people, building on existing Federal, state, tribal, local, and non-profit programs to create a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) for youth.

An initiative of this scale will challenge us but will also offer tremendous opportunities to address significant operations and maintenance backlogs on our public lands and help meet our workforce planning and diversity-recruitment goals. Work and service opportunities have multiple benefits: they engage our youth in important stewardship and outdoor experiences; they provide job training and employment to youth at a time of great need; and they help us to accomplish necessary projects on public lands, often with savings for the taxpayers.

We are pleased to share with you that a new Federal Advisory Committee, recommended in the AGO report, has begun its work and will submit initial recommendations for action on establishing the 21CSC to us by mid-summer. Our long-term goal is to build on existing programs and partnerships to interest and employ more young people in natural and cultural resource work.

While the new Committee is working on long-term recommendations, it is important that we continue building our youth employment and engagement programs throughout 2012. Many of your agencies already host programs and are engaged in partnerships that support these opportunities. **As your field offices begin planning this summer's work, we challenge you to build on existing partnerships and programs or create new partnerships with each other, conservation corps organizations, the workforce system, and other partnering organizations to employ young Americans this summer within current funding levels.**

Please consider currently funded projects that might benefit from youth corps assistance, such as maintenance of trails, data collection, volunteer and visitor programs, and monitoring of important natural and cultural resources. We encourage you to be creative in finding ways to add to the number of youth who will have an opportunity this year to have a meaningful work experience.

We also want to hear about your successes. Later this year, we will be seeking examples of outstanding youth employment partnership programs that help exemplify AGO objectives. We anticipate these will help illustrate important issues identified by the Committee in promoting youth partnerships and work experiences across the country.

Information about the proposed 21st Century Conservation Service Corps is available at:
<http://www.doi.gov/21CSC/>