

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

March 18, 2021

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our gratitude for your swift action in addressing the climate crisis during your first weeks in office, and to highlight our *21st Century Conservation Corps Act* (H.R. 1162/S. 487) as a pathway to continue this work. Your steadfast commitment to protecting our environment while also creating jobs to lift Americans out of an economic crisis is inspiring and historic.

Specifically, we are grateful for your championing of a Civilian Climate Corps in Sec. 214 and 215 of Executive Order 14008. We agree that our country is in need of a program to “mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers and maximize the creation of accessible training opportunities and good jobs,” and we look forward to the forthcoming report from the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior outlining a strategy to support it.

Given the devastating events of 2020, we believe that our nation has a unique opportunity to not only repair our public health and economy, but to also restore our environment. Throughout the previous year, our home states of Colorado and Oregon have been severely impacted by both a devastating pandemic and a historic wildfire season. In Colorado, the three largest fires in state history all burned in 2020, costing the state over \$200 million in suppression alone. In Oregon, climate-driven wildfires burned over 1.2 million acres across the state, destroying hundreds of homes and businesses.

That is why, as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and a senior member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, we collaborated to introduce the *21st Century Conservation Corps Act*. The bill aims to address these challenges directly by investing in workforce training and jobs to support conservation programs and reforestation to restore our public lands; address deferred maintenance and expand recreation access on our public lands; improve access to clean drinking water; and mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

More specifically, the bill:

- Establishes a \$9 billion fund for qualified land and conservation corps to increase job training and hiring specifically for jobs in our nation’s forests, helping to restore public lands and provide jobs in a time of need;
- Provides an additional \$500 million for Tribal drinking water infrastructure repairs, prioritizing Tribal communities that have decrepit and underfunded drinking water systems causing health and safety emergencies;

- Provides \$2 billion for the National Fire Capacity program, which helps the Forest Service implement FireWise, to prevent, mitigate, and respond to wildfire around homes and businesses on private land;
- Provides \$2 billion for the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to improve resiliency for communities impacted by wildfire;
- Provides \$6 billion for U.S. Forest Service, \$6 billion for the National Park Service, and \$2 billion for the Bureau of Land Management maintenance accounts to create jobs, reduce the maintenance backlog, and expand access to recreation;
- Provides an additional \$3.5 billion for the U.S. Forest Service and \$2 billion for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to support science-based projects aimed at improving forest health and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire;
- Provides \$3.5 billion for reforestation projects on a combination of federal, state, local, tribal and NGO lands, with over one hundred million trees to be planted in urban areas across America by 2030;
- Increases access to public lands through expanding and investing in programs like Every Kid Outdoors and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership;
- Supports voluntary climate stewardship practices on over 100 million acres of farmland by providing supplemental funding for USDA working lands conservation programs; and
- Helps restore and improve rangeland health by providing an additional \$150 million for the North American Waterfowl Management and Joint Ventures program and \$150 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Partners for Fish and Wildlife.

We believe that the *21st Century Conservation Corps Act* serves as a strong foundation to achieve the goals outlined both Executive Order 14008 and that it aligns closely with the Build Back Better agenda. Therefore, we encourage you to take the following actions:

- **As you craft the Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, we encourage the inclusion of explicit funding to support a Civilian Climate Corps.** Currently, Public Lands Corps utilize cooperative agreements with Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture bureaus to complete agency-identified project work through existing appropriations. We request a Civilian Climate Corps presentation be included in the FY22 budget request for federal agencies that designates funding for existing Corps partners across key climate-related operational and project accounts. This funding will be leveraged through existing Public Lands Corps programs to carry out activities that conserve and restore public lands and waters, bolster community resilience, increase reforestation, increase carbon sequestration, protect biodiversity, improve access to recreation, and address the changing climate.
- **We also urge the inclusion of the *21st Century Conservation Corps Act* in your upcoming Build Back Better infrastructure plan.** Given the historic need for both employment opportunities and public lands restoration, enactment of the *21st Century Conservation Corps Act* would accomplish many key priorities of the Build Back Better agenda. From improving wildfire resiliency, to strengthening our natural resources workforce, to making needed investments in ecosystem health, we must invest in our public lands infrastructure as intentionally as we do our roads and bridges. This proposal

will not only take steps to address the climate crisis and improve environmental resiliency, but also put Americans back to work.

We look forward to joining you in putting a new generation of Americans to work conserving our public lands and waters. Thank you for your commitment to our environment, and for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Neguse".

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron Wyden".

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

CC:

Rob Fairweather, United States Office of Management and Budget