




United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

MAY 23 2017

Memorandum

To: Office and Bureau Human Resource Directors

From: Raymond A. Limon 
Director, Office of Human Resources

Subject: Distribution of Public Lands Corps Hiring (PLC) Authority Personnel
Bulletin 17-03

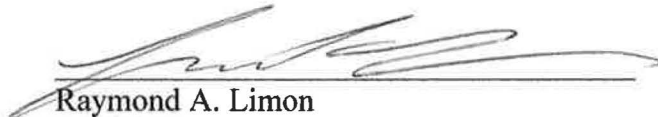
This memorandum transmits the updated policy regarding the PLC Hiring Authority, PB 17-03. The PB supersedes PB 12-13 and provides further clarification and provides changes implemented by the National Park Service Centennial Act (PL 114-289).

Major changes implemented in the attached PB include:

1. Extended the age for eligibility to participate in the PLC to include individuals between the ages of 16 and 30 inclusive.
2. Extending the period of non-competitive hiring status for former PLC members, who meet the eligibility, from 120 days to 2 years from the completion of their most recent Corps service.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) can be found on the Human Capital Crossroads Google Site under FAQs at this link <https://sites.google.com/a/ios.doi.gov/human-resources-community-of-practice/external-resources/faqs>

Additional information or questions may be directed to the Office of Human Resources, Strategic Talent Programs Team, Ms. Akia West-Butler at akia_west-butler@ios.doi.gov.


Raymond A. Limon
Director, Office of Human Resources

Attachment



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MAY 23 2017

Washington, DC 20240

PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 17-03

Subject: Departmental Policy on Public Lands Corps Hiring Authority

1. Purpose.

This Bulletin supersedes Personnel Bulletin (PB) 12-13 and establishes the policy and procedures for providing former members of the Public Lands Corps (PLC) non--competitive hiring status for competitive service positions in the Department of the Interior (DOI). The primary focus of this re-issuance is to provide additional guidance and instructions for utilizing the hiring authority outlined in the Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005, P.L. 109-154 and as amended in the National Park Service Centennial Act, P.L. 114-289.

The PLC program expands youth services opportunities and serves important conservation and societal objectives. Individuals who are economically, physically, or educationally disadvantaged may receive preference for enrollment in the Corps.

NOTE: The changes pertaining to participant age and length of noncompetitive status eligibility are effective December 16, 2016. PLC members and former-members who completed their service and whose 120 day eligibility expired prior to December 16, 2016 are not covered by these changes.

2. Scope. This PB applies 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); Public Law 114-289, National Park Service Centennial Act (further amends Public Lands Corps Act of 1993).

4. Definitions.

- a. Corps and Public Lands Corps** means the Public Lands Corps (PLC) established under section 1723 of title 16, United States Code. The Corps consists of individuals between the ages of **16 and 30, inclusive**, who are enrolled as participants in the Corps by the Secretary for projects referenced in 16 USC 1723(d), and satisfy the requirements of section 12591(b) of title 42. 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 **30**, 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;
 - (3) provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their community and the United States; and
 - (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 resources. 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 corps.
- d. Former PLC Member** means an individual who meets the criteria in 4(e) below and has completed their service with the PLC. An individual may serve in the PLC multiple times: thus, he/she becomes a former member of the PLC each time he/she completes their service within the PLC.
- e. Eligible Youth** means an individual who may be enrolled in the Corps program, having satisfied the following criteria as specified in section 12591(b) of title 42:
- (1) Meets such eligibility requirements, directly related to the tasks to be accomplished, as may be established by the program;
 - (2) Is selected by the program to serve in a position with the program;
 - (3) Will serve in the program for a term of service specified in section 12593 of this title [Title 42] to be performed before, during, or after attendance at an institution of higher education;
 - (4) Is between the ages of 16 and 30, inclusive, at the time the individual begins the term of service¹;
 - (5) 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) 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

¹ **16 USC 1723(b), as amended by P.L. 114-289**

title 20; and

- (6) Is a citizen or national on the United States or lawful permanent resident alien of the 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. Bureaus may use the sample Participant Work Hours Verification (Attachment 1) and Certificate of Non-Competitive Eligibility Form (Attachment 2) or create their own documents. Bureau created documents must include, at minimum, all the information on the sample forms provided. Each bureau PLC Coordinator will ensure that participants are provided *with Participant Work Hours Verification*. Each bureau PLC coordinator, or their designee, will provide a *Certificate of Non-Competitive Eligibility* to participants who have satisfactorily completed all the service requirements and meet eligibility for non-competitive hiring status.
- b. Crediting Time Served.** In accordance with Public Law 109-154, a member of the PLC may use time satisfactorily on 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 Thrift Savings Plan (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.
- c. Implementation.**
- (1) Eligibility:** In order to be eligible for PLC non-competitive status, a former member of the PLC must provide documentation, as part of their application, verifying their eligibility and that they 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;
 - (b) Applied to a vacancy announcement for which applications are being accepted from individuals with non-competitive status;
 - (c) Meet the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) minimum

qualification standards and any other qualification requirement(s) stated in the vacancy announcement for the position for which they are applying; and

(d) Completed his/her most recent Corps service, which provided him/her with a total of 640 hours, inclusive of 120 hours on a PLC project as defined in 16 USC 1723(d), within the last two (2) years.

- (2) Appointments must be effected within the two (2) years requirement.
- (3) The two (2) year time-frame cannot be extended.
- (4) Selectees will be subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service positions.
- (5) This authority may be used for General Schedule and Federal Wage System positions.
- (6) Competitive service appointments may be made for temporary, term or permanent positions.

d. Announcement, Application and Competition. Individuals who meet the OPM minimum qualification requirements may be non-competitively referred to the selection official in accordance with established competitive hiring procedures (delegated examining and/or merit promotion). Job opportunity announcements must clearly state that non-competitive status applicants may apply and how to be considered using non-competitive status. Bureaus are encouraged to utilize language within job opportunity announcements that solicits former PLC members to apply, such as ***Former Public Land Corps (PLC) members eligible for non-competitive hiring status (16 USC 1726(c))***. The candidate must provide a copy of the "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring Status (PLC)," signed by a bureau PLC coordinator, to be considered under this authority. Servicing human resource offices must also ensure that agency and interagency career transition programs are appropriately cleared prior to appointment.

e. Appointment. Appointments under this authority must be effective within **2 years** of the candidate's' 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.

f. Legal Authority Code. The servicing Human Resources Offices must use "ZLM" as the legal authority code and reference P.L. 109-154 as the primary and/or secondary code as appropriate.

Please contact Akia West-Butler at 202-208-6754 or by email at akia_west-butler@ios.doi.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raymond A. Limon', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Raymond A. Limon
Director, Office of Human Resources

Attachments

Attachment 1

Verification of Participant Work Hours for Conservation Projects (Sample)

Participant Name: _____ Last Four SSN: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Email: _____

Primary PLC Organization: _____ Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

| Start and End Dates of Project | PLC Organization | Org. Phone Number | PLC (Yes/No) | Location of Project | Project Type | Project Duties | Performance Satisfactory (Yes/No) (Notes) | Total Hours | Supervisor's Signature |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|---|-------------|------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

I certify that these hours accurately represent the work I conducted on the listed projects

Participant Signature and Date

I certify that these hours accurately represent the work the participant conducted on the listed projects

Certifier Signature and Date

Attachment 2

(Sample Certificate of Eligibility)

[Bureau Letterhead]

Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring Status (PLC)

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 noncompetitive hiring status until 2 years after the date
shown below as provided by the Public Land Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of
2005, P. L. 109-154.

Date of Completion of Last PLC Project: _____

Certified by: _____
Signature

Name:

Title:

Phone Number:

Bureau:



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/ANRS-VSC/063147

Memorandum

JUN 06 2016

To: Service Directorate

From: Deputy Director 

Subject: Authorization to use the Public Land Corp Act's 120-Day Non-competitive Hiring Authority
(Response Due: 30 days from the Date of this Memorandum)

This memorandum authorizes the use of the Public Land Corp (PLC) program's 120-day non-competitive hiring authority in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Additionally, it transmits guidance for ensuring the application of consistent PLC program standards for granting non-competitive hiring status to former PLC participants across all Service offices. This guidance provides hiring managers with another tool for diversifying the applicant pools for Service vacancy announcements.

The Service has a long history of employing youth through PLC. In Fiscal Year 2015, the Service worked with nearly 100 organizations to employ 1,300 youth on conservation projects on Service lands and facilities. The PLC Program is 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 PLC Act of 1993). The attached guidance reflects current policy and guidelines addressed in the Department of the Interior's Personnel Bulletin 12-13, dated January 22, 2013
<http://elips.doi.gov/elips/0/doc/3753/Page1.aspx>.

The purpose of the PLC program is to provide work and education 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 program allows the Service to enter into partnerships using financial assistance agreements with qualifying partner organizations to employ qualified youth to work on PLC projects.

Each Service Directorate member is responsible for identifying a PLC program coordinator who will be responsible for coordinating and assisting in the implementation of the PLC program in your Region or Headquarter area using the attached guidance. Service PLC program coordinators should be familiar with the operation of youth partnering organizations under the 21st Century Service Corps guidelines, and applicable Federal laws, regulations and Service policies on establishing financial assistance and cooperative agreements.

Within 30 days of the date of this memorandum, please submit the name and contact information for your PLC program coordinator to Mr. Kevin Kilcullen in the Division of Visitor Services and Communications. Headquarters will follow-up with the identified coordinators on the implementation of the PLC program.

Questions regarding the PLC program's implementation and administration should be directed to Mr. Kevin Kilcullen, (703) 358-2382 or kevin_kilcullen@fws.gov, or Ms. Jessie Cheek, (703) 358-2597 or jessie_cheek@fws.gov.

Attachment

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Public Lands Corps Program Guidance

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I. Overview

The Public Lands Corps (PLC) Program is 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)¹. Definitions and criteria for PLC Participants, Projects, and Organizations, are addressed in Appendix A on page 9. This guidance authorizes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) HQ, Regional, and field offices to (1) establish PLC Programs (2) certify participants who meet the PLC eligibility requirements for the PLC non-competitive hiring status, and (3) ensure consistent program standards throughout the Service.

The purpose of the PLC Program is to provide work and education opportunities for youth in the areas of natural and cultural resource conservation, development, and scientific research. Youth will perform work on our nation's public lands that cannot be carried out by Federal agencies at existing personnel levels. The PLC Program allows the Service to enter into partnerships using a financial assistance/cooperative agreement with partner organizations to employ youth in PLC projects and internships. Sections I, II, and III of Appendix A provide eligibility requirements for participating youth, partner organizations, and projects authorized under the PLC Program. PLC participants who complete program requirements will be eligible for non- competitive appointment to Federal positions for which they qualify.

The PLC Program'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 Service and conservation careers by exposing them to conservation, scientific research, and other professionals in the Service, 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 loans².

The Service Directorate is responsible for identifying Program or Regional PLC Coordinator(s) who will be responsible for assisting appropriate Service offices and program partners to certify non-competitive hiring status for qualifying PLC participants in accordance with Section V. of this guidance.

¹ The Public Land Corps legislation is available on-line at <http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title16/chapter37/subchapter2&edition=prelim>

² Stafford loans are Federal student loans available from the U.S. Department of Education for eligible students to help cover the cost of higher education at a four-year college or university, community college, or trade, career, or technical school. More info available at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized>

II. Non-competitive Hiring Status (NCHS) for Federal Positions

Department of the Interior (DOI) Personnel Bulletin (PB) 12-13 establishes the policy and procedures for providing former members of the Public Land Corps (PLC) non-competitive hiring status for permanent competitive positions with the Service upon meeting the following requirements.

1. The former PLC participant was between the ages of 16 through 25 years during his/her participation in the PLC;
2. Served a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service on an appropriate conservation project that included at least 120 hours on Federal public lands/facilities. Proof of the project(s) and hours completed must be verified by the following documents: *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Lands Corps Service* (Appendix A), *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* (Appendix B), and a *Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring*; and
3. Selected from a non-competitive selection certificate and appointed within 120 days of the candidate's completion of PLC service qualifying him/her for the non-competitive hiring authority.

Appointments under this authority must be effective within 120 days of the candidate's completion of PLC service or his/her release from the PLC project. Under no circumstances shall an appointment eligibility period under this authority exceed 120 days, nor can the 120 day time frame be extended.

A former PLC Participant may be appointed to permanent General Schedule or Federal Wage Schedule competitive positions for which he/she qualifies. The former PLC Participant must meet the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Qualification Standards and any other qualification and eligibility requirements identified for the Service position vacancy. The selectee is subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service positions.

DOI PB 12-13 (Departmental Policy on Public Land Corp Hiring Authority), dated January 22, 2013, is located here: <http://elips.doi.gov/elips/0/doc/3753/Page1.aspx>.

NOTE: *Currently, the DOI's PB 12-13 states that Bureaus can make temporary, term or permanent appointment using the PLC authority. However, the current OPM's regulatory and procedural guidance does not allow a term or temp appointment. If the Department's request to OPM is approved for the establishment of an authority code for term and temp appointments, this guidance will be updated.*

Additionally, the DOI's PB 12-13 can be rescinded, updated or replaced by DOI's Human Resources Office if changes in the law governing the PLC or human resources requirements and procedures necessitate such an action. The FWS will revise this guidance, as appropriate, to reflect any changes in the law and the DOI Personnel Bulletin.

III. Living Allowances & Funding

1. The Director has the authority to set living allowances for PLC Participants.
2. Living allowances are paid by the partner organization and can be in the form of an hourly wage or weekly stipend.
3. PLC projects are exempt from Davis Bacon Act wage guidelines³.
4. PLC projects can be funded from any Federal government fund source.
5. Partner organizations are required to provide a minimum 25% cost match from non-Federal sources in either cash or in-kind services. In kind services may include service, facilities, materials, or equipment. No cost match is required for PLC projects carried out on Indian lands or Hawaiian home lands⁴.
6. In kind services can be defined as the difference between the hourly break down of a PLC participant's living allowance and the Independent Sector volunteer time value rate.
7. The value of volunteer time is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and non-supervisory workers on private non-farm payrolls (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). "Independent Sector" takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits (the hourly value for volunteer time is published annually)⁵.
8. In kind services can also be calculated as overhead expenses and hourly compensation not charged to the government.

IV. The Use of Cooperative Agreements to Support PLC Projects

While the Service is authorized to use contracts for PLC projects and internships, cooperative agreements more accurately reflect the nature of the relationship between the Service and the partner organizations under the PLC program where both parties have substantial involvement in completing identified work.

Service offices are authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with partner organizations under the Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977. A cooperative agreement is a written legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the Service and a State or local government, tribal government, or other non-Federal recipient in which the primary purpose is to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to the State or local government or other recipient to stimulate or support a public purpose authorized by Federal statute. Under the PLC program, the substantial involvement of both the Service and partnering organization will be necessary during the performance of the agreed upon project.

Public Purpose and FWS Substantive Involvement

Public purpose is defined as government assistance for which the primary purpose is to promote the general welfare, security, prosperity, or public convenience as authorized by a Federal law.

³ The Davis-Bacon and Related Acts, provide guidelines for compensation levels for laborers working under federally funded or assisted contracts in excess of \$2,000 for the construction, alteration, or repair (including painting and decorating) of public buildings or public works. For more information on the Davis-Bacon Act see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/govcontracts/dbra.htm>

⁴ For definitions of Indian lands and Hawaiian home lands see section 1722 of the Public Land Corps Act (<http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title16/chapter37/subchapter2&edition=prelim>)

⁵ Please see https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time for the latest estimated value of volunteer time.

1. All PLC projects have a public purpose since Participants receive benefit through vocational and educational opportunities gained through their participation, and public lands are improved as a result of the work they provide.
2. Substantial involvement is defined as significant Service participation during the performance of a cooperative agreement. Examples include Service involvement in program management decisions; Service collaboration in the accomplishment of a project; or Service operational involvement or participation on a project such as:
 - a. Providing education support through project overviews to the PLC Participants
 - b. Explaining a public land's site significance
 - c. Delivering informal and formal sessions about Service and career opportunities
 - d. Providing feedback to PLC crew leaders on project accomplishments
 - e. Providing technical assistance and training (e.g. plant identification, weed control methods, and/or worksite/safety orientation).
3. Service funding and monitoring/administering an agreement do not constitute substantial involvement.

Cooperative Agreement Requirements

All new or amended agreements (beginning in FY 2016) will require partner organizations to certify that PLC Participants, organizations, and projects meet the requirements set forth in Sections I, II, and III in Appendix A of this guidance, provide project descriptive information, track and sign *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* (Appendix B) and the *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Land Corps Service* (Appendix A), and maintain official files for each PLC Participant.

V. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of individuals and offices involved in the PLC program are defined as follows.

A. For the PLC Participant:

1. Notify the partner organization supervisor of their intention to seek certification for non-competitive hiring status for Federal positions one month prior to the project end/release date.
2. Work with the partner organization supervisor to document the hours worked using the *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* form (Appendix B). Note: this form must be signed by the PLC Participant, partner organization supervisor, and the FWS supervisor.
3. If relevant, provide copies to the partner organization supervisor of all *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* forms (Appendix B) from previous PLC projects that the PLC Participant plans on using to meet the requirements of non-competitive status.
4. Upon receipt of the *Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring* from the appropriate Service Regional or Program PLC Coordinator, apply to General Schedule and Federal Wage Schedule positions for permanent vacancies advertised under Merit Promotion procedures and posted to www.USAJOBS.gov. The former

PLC participant must meet all the qualification and eligibility requirements stated in the Service vacancy announcement. If selected for the position, he/she will be subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service positions.

5. Provide a copy of the *Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring* in the application package. This document must be certified (signed) by the appropriate Service Regional or Program PLC Program Coordinator. It is the primary responsibility of the PLC Participant, the partner organization supervisor, and the Service supervisor to confirm and validate project hours worked (Appendix B).

NOTE: *There is no maximum number of hours a PLC participant can serve. As a result, this allows PLC Participants to meet the hours worked requirement for non-competitive status before the project ends. The project end/release date is the official start of the 120 non-competitive appointment window; if Service managers are recruiting PLC Participants using the non-competitive authority, it is important for them to time the vacancy announcement with the PLC project end date to allow sufficient time for application, selection, and appointment.*

6. Maintain copies of all PLC Participant Work Hours Verification forms for all projects the participant has served on.

NOTE: *PLC Participants can accrue hours on multiple PLC projects in all DOI agencies to meet the hourly requirements for non-competitive status under the PLC. It is the responsibility of the PLC Participant to keep copies of all completed Participant Work Hours Verification forms from all the projects they have worked on and plan on using to meet the hourly requirements of non-competitive status.*

B. For Partner Organization Program Officials/Staff

1. Educate PLC Participants about the availability of and requirements for obtaining non-competitive hiring status for certain Federal positions, as outlined in section II of this guidance. Partner Organizations should ensure that PLC Participants understand that non-competitive status is NOT a guarantee of a Federal job, and that hiring decisions are based on the selection of the best qualified candidates for the few vacancies available at any given time. Partner Organizations must also ensure that PLC Participants understand that they – the PLC Participants - are responsible for:
 - a. Alerting the partner organization of their intention to seek non-competitive status.
 - b. Working with the Partner Organization Supervisor and the Service Supervisor to complete the *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* (Appendix B) forms for the project they've worked on.
 - c. Networking with Federal hiring officials, recruiters and other staff to build awareness of their interest in obtaining a Federal position, and their non-competitive status.
 - d. Researching and applying for vacancies on USA Jobs.
2. Notify the Service supervisor of the number of PLC Participants intending to seek certification for non-competitive hiring status for Federal positions one month prior to the project completion date.

3. Work with the PLC Participant to complete and sign the *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* form (Appendix B) for the projects under the cooperative agreement.
4. Certify that the partner organization, PLC Participant, and PLC project all meet eligibility requirements for non-competitive hiring status by completing and signing the *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Land Corps Service* (Appendix A) for each PLC Participant seeking non-competitive hiring status.
5. Maintain official copies of all completed (signed) *Certifications of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Land Corps Service* and *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms issued for each Participant under the cooperative agreements for which they are responsible, and any additional *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms received from the PLC Participant.
6. Forward all completed *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* forms, and the *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Land Corps Service* to the Service supervisor for signature on the day the PLC Participant meets eligibility requirements. Ideally, this date should be approximately two weeks prior to the project end/release date.

NOTE: *There is no maximum number of hours a PLC participant can serve. As a result, this allows PLC Participants to meet the hours worked requirement for non-competitive status before the project ends. The project end/release date is the official start of the 120 non-competitive appointment window; if Service managers are considering hiring PLC Participants using the non-competitive authority, it is important for them to time the vacancy announcement with the PLC project end date to allow sufficient time for application, selection, and appointment. See Appendix C – Sample Timeline for Issuing Certificates of Non-competitive Eligibility for additional information.*

C. For the Service Supervisor:

1. Ensure that all Cooperative Agreements for which he/she is responsible meet the requirements of Section IV.5 of this guidance.
2. Certify (sign) *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* forms, and *Certifications of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Lands Corps Service* for each PLC Participant seeking non-competitive hiring status one week prior to the project end/release date. (Ideally, these documents will be sent to the Service by the partner organization when the PLC Participant completes eligibility requirements which will be two weeks prior to the project end/release date – which is the date the 120 days of non-competitive eligibility begins).
3. Maintain official copies of all completed (signed) *Certifications of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Lands Corps Service*; *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms and *Certificates of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring* issued under the cooperative agreements for which they are responsible; and, any additional *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms being used to meet hourly requirements of non-competitive status under the PLC, in accordance with Privacy Act requirements.
4. Forward the complete *Certification of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Land Corps Service* to the appropriate Regional or Program PLC

Coordinator for signature along with copies of all completed *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms one week prior to the project end/release date.

NOTE: *There is no maximum number of hours a PLC participant can serve. As a result, this allows PLC Participants to meet the hours worked requirement for non-competitive status before the project ends. The project end/release date is the official start of the 120 non-competitive appointment window; if Service managers are considering hiring PLC Participants using the non-competitive authority, it is important for them to time the vacancy announcement with the PLC project end date to allow sufficient time for application, selection, and appointment. See Appendix C – Sample Timeline for Issuing Certificates of Non-competitive Eligibility for additional information.*

D. For the National PLC Program Coordinator

1. Update the PLC Program guidance with any procedural, policy or regulatory changes.
2. Develop program forms and templates for certifying and verifying creditable service and project hours worked.
3. Assist FWS offices and partner organizations in marketing the PLC Hiring Authority to all qualifying audiences, including underrepresented groups such as women, and Historically Black-, Hispanic-, Asian-, American Indian-, Native American-, Alaskan Native-, and Pacific Islander- serving institutions.
4. Develop reporting requirements and lead and conduct oversight reviews of the Regional PLC programs including the use of the non-competitive hiring authority.

E. For the Regional PLC Program Coordinators

1. Assist Service supervisors in certifying non-competitive hiring status for PLC Participants seeking it.
2. Provide guidance to regional, field and partner staff regarding communications and messaging regarding the Service's intended use of the non-competitive hiring authority
3. Review Appendix A and Appendix B to ensure they are properly completed and sign a *Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Lands Corps Service* and forward copies to the former PLC Participant, partner organization supervisor, and Service field staff. The Regional PLC Coordinator will sign the Certificate and forward the copies as close to the project end/release date as possible (but not before). Note: the Project end/release date is the first day of the 120-day window of non-competitive hiring status.
4. Maintain original copies of the *Certificate of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Lands Corps Service* and *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms, in accordance to the DOI PB 12-13 requirements for recordkeeping for the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
5. Respond to request for reports from the National PLC Coordinator and provide information needed and assist with the coordination of the oversight reviews.

F. Headquarters Human Resources Office

1. Designate an HR staff member to serve on the Department's Human Resources (HR) PLC workgroup to provide technical expertise in the development and updates of HR policy for the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
2. Assist the National PLC Program Coordinator in developing and/or revising guidance, training, etc., to implement the PLC Program in the Service.
3. Provide communications, interpretation of DOI's policy guidance and support to the Regional Human Resources Officers on the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
4. Educate and advise managers and supervisors on DOI's and the Service's requirements established for the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
5. Inform the HR staff on DOI and Service policy requirements for the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
6. Ensure proper HR clearances and OPM's qualifications are applied to an applicant(s) who applies for a vacancy announcement using his/her PLC non-competitive hiring status.
7. Ensure that the former PLC applicant included a signed certificate with his/her application.
8. Assist the Service PLC supervisors in educating PLC Participants regarding the non-competitive hiring authority.

G. Regional Human Resources Offices

1. Work with the Regional PLC Coordinator to establish any HR related process and procedures for implementing and administering the program at the Regional level.
2. Educate and advise regional managers and supervisors on DOI's and the Service's requirements established for the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
3. Inform the HR staff on DOI and Service policy requirements for the PLC non-competitive hiring authority.
4. Ensure proper HR clearances and OPM's qualifications are applied to an applicant(s) who applies for a vacancy announcement using his/her PLC non-competitive hiring status.
5. Ensure that the former PLC applicant included a signed certificate with his/her application.
6. Assist Regional Service PLC supervisors in educating PLC Participants regarding the non-competitive hiring authority.

VI. Coordination and Contact Information

Questions on the PLC Hiring Authority component of this guidance should be referred to Jessie Cheek, Senior Advisor, Division of Human Resources (703-358-2597), jessie_cheek@fws.gov. Questions involving detailed information on the overall PLC Program requirements and for clarifying roles and responsibilities of the Service's Regional/Program PLC program coordinators, Service PLC Supervisors and Partner Organization Supervisors, or qualifying PLC organizations, participants, or projects, should be directed to Kevin Kilcullen, Chief, Branch of Visitor Services, National Wildlife Refuge System, at (703) 358-2382, kevin_kilcullen@fws.gov.

VII. Attachments

Appendix A – Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status

Appendix B - Public Land Corps Participant Work Hours Verification

Appendix C – Certificate of Eligibility

Appendix D - Sample Timeline for issuing Certificates of Eligibility for Non-competitive Hiring

Appendix E – Frequently Asked Questions

Appendix A
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status
Based on Public Land Corps Service

Instructions:

Partner organization staff

(Public Land Corps (PLC) project supervisor)

Complete, sign, and forward the *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Land Corps Service* with all relevant *Participant Work Hours Verification* forms to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) staff on the day the PLC Participant meets eligibility requirements. Ideally, this date should be at least two weeks prior to the project end/release date.

Service field staff

(PLC project supervisor)

Sign the *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Land Corps Service* and the *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* forms and forward them (and any additional *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* forms) to the appropriate Service Regional/Program Public Land Corps (PLC) Coordinator one week prior to the project end/release date.

Name of PLC Participant: _____
Email Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Project End/Release Date: _____
Number of Cumulative Hours Worked on PLC Projects⁶: _____

I. Public Land Corps Participant Eligibility

Name of individual: _____

- Was between the ages of 16 and 25 years inclusive, at the time the term of service began.
- Met eligibility requirements, directly related to the tasks to be accomplished, as established by the program.
- Is a U.S. citizen or legal resident.
- Possesses 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 program⁷.
- 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

⁶ All project hours must be documented using the *PLC Participant Work Hours Verification* form(s) (Appendix B) and attached to this certificate.

⁷ This requirement can be waived based on an individual education assessment conducted by the program that determined the individual is incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Hawaiian homelands. Please attach *PLC Work Hours Verification* forms for all projects in which hours were accrued toward the 640-hour requirement.

- Is available for employment for the duration of the job described in any vacancy announcements to which the Former PLC Participant applies.

II. Partner Organization Eligibility

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, or have submitted letters of intent to become members of, the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps⁸. If an organization is not yet a member of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, a copy of the organization's letter of intent must be attached.
- 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 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 25 years of age.
- 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 home lands.

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.

III. Public Lands Corps Project Eligibility

- PLC Projects must involve conservation, restoration, construction or rehabilitation of, or scientific research on natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, or scenic resources.

⁸ For additional information on membership criteria and how to become a 21CSC member organization, please see <http://www.21csc.org>.

IV. Signatures

Partner Organization Staff

(PLC project supervisor)

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Organization:

Signature and Date

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office/Field Staff

(PLC project supervisor)

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Field Station or Unit:

Signature and Date

The signatories above certify that the individual named is eligible for non-competitive hiring until 120 days after the project end/release date shown above as provided by the Public Land Corps Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2005, P.L. 109-154.

Appendix B
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Verification of Participant Work Hours
 (Example entry in blue text)

Participant Name: _____

Last Four SSN: _____

Phone Number/Email: _____

Partner Organization: _____

| Project Name | Start & End/Release Date | PLC Y/N | Project Location & Description | Project Duties | Total Hours |
|--|--------------------------|---------|--|--|-------------|
| Pollinator habitat improvement and invasive plants removal | 6/1/2015 to 9/30/2015 | Y | Monarch National Wildlife Refuge, Texas. Project involved supporting the Refuge's work to improve pollinator habitat for monarchs and other species and to build a new wildlife observation deck approximately a half mile away from the visitor center. Work also included environmental education classes and public programs focused on pollinators and invasive species associated with the Refuge. | Removed invasive plants and prepared habitat for monarchs and other pollinators. Participants lived on the Refuge and also received environmental education classes for 10 hours each week. The participant also assisted Refuge staff with public programs about pollinators. | 640 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

I certify that these hours accurately represent the work I conducted on the listed projects

I certify that these hours accurately represent the work the participant conducted on the listed projects

I certify that these hours accurately represent the work the participant conducted on the listed projects

 Participant Signature & Date

 Partner Organization Staff Signature & Date
 (PLC project supervisor)

Email/Phone Number: _____

 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Field Staff Signature & Date
 (PLC project supervisor)

Email/Phone Number: _____

Appendix C
Certificate of Eligibility for Noncompetitive Hiring Based on
Public Land Corps Service



Name of Individual

has satisfactorily served a minimum of 640 hours through a Public Land Corps on an appropriate conservation project that included at least 120 hours on Federal public lands or facilities

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:

Email:

Appendix D

Sample Timeline for issuing Certificates of Eligibility⁹

| Task | Date |
|---|---|
| PLC Participant informs partner organization supervisor of intent to seek non-competitive hiring status (NCHS) | One month prior to project end/release date |
| Partner organization supervisor informs Service field staff of Participant's intent to seek NCHS | One month prior to project end/release date |
| Partner organization supervisor sends completed forms (Appendix A & B) to the Service supervisor. (Note: <i>Verification of Participant Work Hours</i> from other projects should also be sent if they are being used to meet NCHS eligibility). | The day the Participant meets eligibility requirements. (Note: ideally this should be at least two weeks prior to the project end/release date) |
| Service Project Office/Supervisor signs both forms (Appendix A & B) and forwards them to the appropriate Regional/Program PLC Coordinator, along with all <i>Verification of Participant Work Hours</i> from other projects that are being used to meet NCHS eligibility. | One week prior to the project end/release date. |
| The Region/Program PLC Coordinator Reviews Appendix A and Appendix B, and completes and signs a <i>Certificate of Non-competitive Eligibility</i> and sends copies to the PLC Participant, partner organization supervisor, Service Supervisor. | As close to the project end/release date as possible (but not before) |
| Former PLC Participant includes the Certificate of Eligibility with his/her application package and applies for any merit promotion vacancy announcement for which he/she meets all the qualifications and eligibility requirements. | Upon receipt of <i>Certificate of Non-competitive Eligibility</i> from the National PLC Coordinator |
| Note: The former PLC Participant must apply to a merit promotion vacancy and meet all the qualifications and eligibility requirements to be referred to the hiring manager on a non-competitive hiring certificate. | |

⁹ This is a suggested timeline for managers that have identified the individuals with non-competitive status whom they wish to hire. Former PLC Participants are free to apply for all vacancy announcements during their 120-day window of non-competitive status.

Appendix E

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the Service use different age ranges for its youth employment programs?

The Public Land Corps Act sets the age limits for youth employed through partner organizations from 15 to 25 years. Youth are eligible as long as they are 25 years-old when they are hired – even if they turn 26 during their period of service. The Department of the Interior uses a broader age range (15-35) for youth employed under other authorities (e.g. pathways) in order to capture all individuals that comprise the “next generation.”

Didn't the Service recently eliminate the use of living allowances for the volunteer program? Why does the Service have the authority to set living allowances for PLC Participants?

The Service volunteer program is not the same as the PLC program. The volunteer program policy only allows for the reimbursement of expenses and not the payment of living allowances. On the other hand, the PLC Act requires that organizations provide a living allowance, stipend or wage for participants. The appropriate living allowance, stipend or wage is addressed as part of the financial assistance/cooperative agreement and paid to the PLC Participant by the partner organization.

Why can't we use digital documentation and signatures for the *Certification of Non-competitive Hiring Status Based on Public Land Corps Service* and the *PLC Verification of Participant Work Hours* forms?

The first year of the program will be maintained in paper format, with the goal of going digital in future years once the program is implemented and the process is evaluated.

Can PLC *Verification of Participant Work Hours* forms be completed retroactively?

Yes, provided the following conditions apply:

1. The partner organization and the Service supervisors have clearly documented the hours worked, such as through hard copy of computerized time sheets.
2. The PLC Participant has not yet completed 640 hours of service, or
3. The PLC Participant has completed 640 hours of service, and is still within 120 days of the project end/release date.

Can PLC Participants or former PLC Participants apply to vacancies before receiving their *Certificate of Eligibility of Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Land Corps Service*?

No, PLC applicants must work with the partner organization and the Service supervisor to ensure that their Certificate of Eligibility is certified expeditiously after the end of the PLC project or the date he/she is released from the PLC project. Information to determine an applicant's eligibility and qualifications must be submitted by the closing date and time of the vacancy announcement.

Can PLC Participants and/or former PLC Participants apply to vacancy announcements from agencies other than the Service?

Yes. *Certificates of Non-competitive Hiring Based on Public Land Corps Service* are accepted by all DOI Bureaus and the United State Forest Service. It is the applicant's responsibility to adhere to each agency's respective guidance when applying to vacancy announcements.

Do partner organizations have to qualify under the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps to be involved in this program?

Yes, partner organization's eligibility requirements are clearly identified in the PLC Act which is the framework for qualification in the 21CSC. For additional information on the 21CSC's requirements, see:

<http://21csc.org/join/become-a-program-operator/>.

Where can I find other FAQs regarding the PLC Program and non-competitive hiring authority?

Please refer to the DOI PB 12-13 for additional FAQs at this link:

http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2015.Par.48330.File.dat/IM2015-026_att3.pdf