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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2011-12

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Natural Resources...

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (August 2013)

Assembly

Record of Committee Proceedings

Committee on Natural Resources

Assembly Bill 616

Relating to: establishment of a Wisconsin conservation corps program, authorizing a transfer of moneys appropriated to one or more state agencies, extending the time limit for emergency rule procedures, providing exemptions from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.

By Representatives Clark, Mason, Molepske Jr, Pasch, Radcliffe, Milroy, Grigsby, Pope-Roberts, Bewley, C. Taylor, Pocan, Roys, Kessler, Turner, Bernard Schaber, Sinicki, Berceau, Ringhand and Hulsey; cosponsored by Senators Holperin, Risser, T. Cullen, C. Larson and Hansen.

February 22, 2012 Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

March 7, 2012 **PUBLIC HEARING HELD**

Present: (16) Representatives Mursau, Rivard, Williams, Kleefisch, Nerison, Severson, Steineke, Tiffany, Stroebel, Litjens, Molepske Jr, Mason, Danou, Clark, Milroy and Hulsey.

Absent: (0) None.

Excused: (0) None.

Appearances For

- Fred Clark, Madison — Representative, 42nd Assembly District
- Cory Mason, Madison — Representative, 62nd Assembly District
- Jennifer Giegerich, Madison — Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters
- Matthew Brantner, LaCrosse — Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps

Appearances Against

- None.

Appearances for Information Only

- None.

Registrations For

- Lori Grant, Madison — River Alliance of Wisconsin

Registrations Against

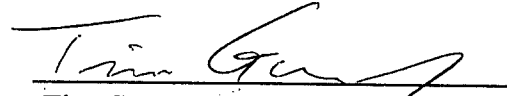
- None.

Registrations for Information Only

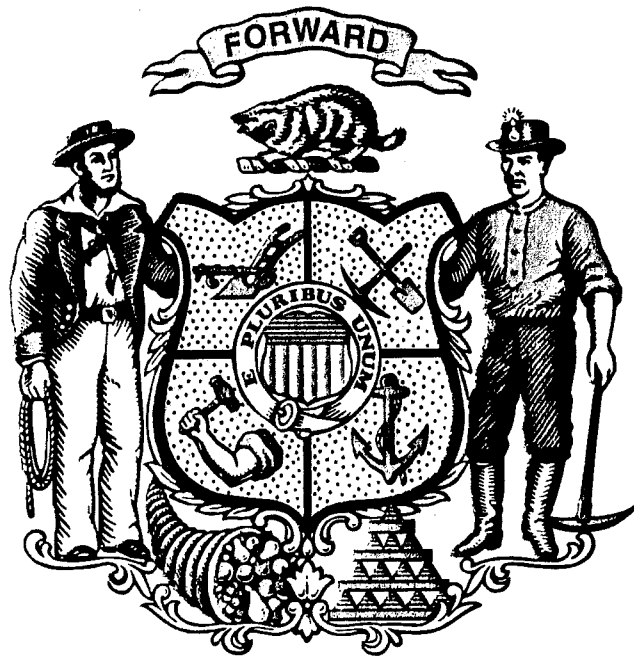
- None.

March 15, 2012

Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1.



Tim Gary
Committee Clerk





FRED CLARK

Serving Adams, Columbia, Marquette & Sauk Counties

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ♦ 42ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony for Assembly Bill 616 Reestablishing the Wisconsin Conservation Corps

March 7, 2012 - Assembly Committee on Natural Resources

The Wisconsin Conservation Corps operated in Wisconsin from 1983 until 2003 and at its height employed over 350 youth and young adults doing outdoor work in 60 crews across the state. Through its 20 year existence, the WCC had over 6,000 graduates. This popular program helped produce a generation of young leaders, taught new skills to at-risk youth, and resulted in hundreds of projects that improved parks and conservation lands throughout the state. As someone who has worked side-by-side with WCC crews, this program's reemergence is significant, and timely for confronting the challenges we face today.

Assembly Bill 616 (AB 616) reestablishes the Wisconsin Conservation Corps (WCC), to build on our tradition of stewardship of our state's natural resources, and to provide our state's young people with work and educational opportunities. The WCC seeks to protect, enhance, and provide access to Wisconsin's natural heritage and encourage and enable young people to learn the value of work in a natural setting by providing employment training and career pathways. Last session a near identical bill passed the Assembly with strong bipartisan support.

Wisconsin's unemployment is still hovering above 7% and unemployment rates in some of our inner cities is over 40%. During these difficult economic times, reestablishing the Wisconsin Conservation Corps is more important than ever. WCC will serve 18-25 year olds, and half of WCC crews must have no postsecondary education, and who have a family income of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line. Simply put, we want to take youth who are at risk and without work, and provide them the discipline and respect of a regular employment, while teaching them marketable skills.

The WCC would be housed in the Department of Administration and a board would provide direction and facilitate projects. A third-party organization specializing in conservation will be charged with the administration of the WCC and supply programming for corps members.

AB 616 recreates the WCC primarily by leveraging available federal AmeriCorps funding. In Wisconsin, AmeriCorps funding is administered by Serve Wisconsin.

This is enabling legislation. The bill does not appropriate funding, but rather directs DOA to develop a plan for administering the program and identify funding sources – that plan will receive review and approval by the Joint Finance Committee. This bill caps total state expenditures at \$400,000, and it would specify that the appropriation must be reviewed by the Joint Committee on Finance.

Last session, Representative Mason and I organized a workgroup of many members from Serve Wisconsin, the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, the Department of Administration, the Department of Natural Resources, the Natural Resources Foundation, the Technical Colleges, UW-Colleges/Extension, nonprofit conservation crews and former WCC executive directors, crew leaders and members.

Just like during the Great Depression, our nation and state face major challenges today. The advent of a Civilian Conservation Corps brought hope to many young workers struggling to find employment, and we can do that again on a state level with a new Wisconsin Conservation Corps. WCC was an organization that meant a great deal to a lot of people, and by reviving this popular program, Wisconsin will be investing in new jobs and keeping a proud tradition of conservation alive.

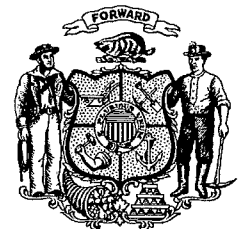
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WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CORY MASON

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY
62ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
REPRESENTING THE GREATER RACINE COMMUNITY

TO: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources

FROM: State Representative Cory Mason

RE: Support of Assembly Bill 616, Reestablishing the Wisconsin Conservation Corps

DATE: March 7, 2012

Chair Mursau and members of the committee, thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 616 which reestablishes the Wisconsin Conservation Corps (WCC). This legislation will allow us to bring back a popular and proven program that will create meaningful jobs, develop young leaders, and enrich Wisconsin's tradition of preserving our natural resources.

The Wisconsin Conservation Corps was created in 1983 to provide employment to our state's young men and women ages 18-25. For twenty years, young people had the opportunity to participate in conservation projects throughout the state, gaining work skills, educational opportunities, and learning discipline through meaningful work experiences. The WCC ceased operations in 2003.

As was the case when the WCC was first created in 1983, our state is facing an unemployment crisis. I represent a community that has faced double digit unemployment for years. My hometown of Racine and other parts of the state are all too familiar with the heart-wrenching stories of workers struggling to get by in these tough times. Young adults have been hit particularly hard by this crisis. According to a Pew Research Center study released last month, employment among Americans ages 18-24 is at its lowest level in 60 years. When available jobs are scarce, and workers with advanced education and training are scrambling to find meaningful work, there are even fewer opportunities available for teenagers and young adults.

Recreating the WCC will offer hope and opportunity to Wisconsin's young adults. WCC participants will conduct conservation and natural resources projects throughout the state, supervised by experienced crew leaders. Participants will receive a stipend and educational credit. The program will build upon and expand partnerships between the state, technical and community colleges, and local governments and nonprofit organizations, offering participants access to a rich and well-developed network of educational, professional, and conservation-related resources.

(over)

The WCC will instill in participants a lifelong appreciation of and understanding for our natural environment. The projects WCC participants will conduct will also be of tremendous value to communities that need help maintaining and preserving their recreational areas, forests, bridges, streams, prairies, and other natural areas.

This legislation has been guided by the countless former WCC staff, crew leaders, and members, whose stories about the difference this program made in their lives have inspired us and spurred this effort to reestablish the WCC. As one former WCC participant noted, the WCC “showed me a way that I could provide stability and hope for my family. The environmental education I received has made me a conscientious steward of natural resources and I have passed those values on to my children.”

In these tough economic times, reestablishing the WCC is more important than ever. Drawing upon Wisconsin’s proud tradition of stewardship of our natural resources, the WCC will offer experience and opportunity to Wisconsin’s young people who are struggling right now to find meaningful work and pay for higher education.

Thank you for holding this public hearing today on this important piece of legislation. I hope that this committee will take quick and positive action to support and advance this bill before the legislative session ends.

Join a Crew!

WisCorps will begin hiring both Corps Members and Crew Leaders for the Summer 2012 Field Season in March.

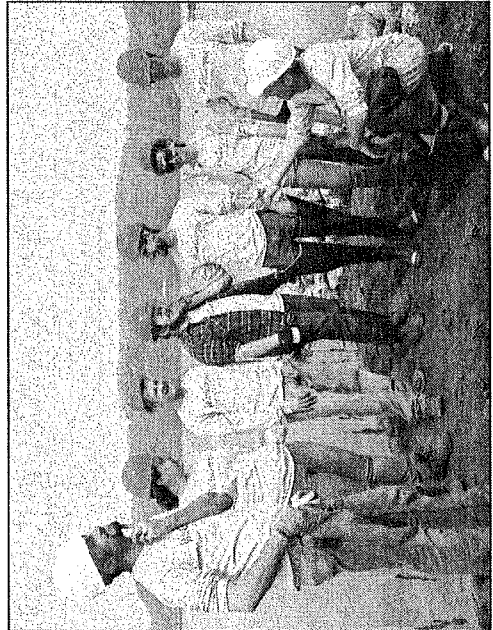
Crew Leader

Spend your summer as a work supervisor and mentor to a team of youth and young adults as you complete conservation projects across the State of Wisconsin!

Corps Member

Work as a part of a team to conserve Wisconsin's natural resources as you camp out and complete important and complete important conservation projects!

Contact us at staff@wiscorps.org for more information or to request an application.



Contact Us:

Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps, Inc.
2702 Quarry Road
La Crosse, WI 54601

608-782-2494

staff@wiscorps.org

WisCorps

Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps, Inc.



Conservation at *Work!*

www.wiscorps.org

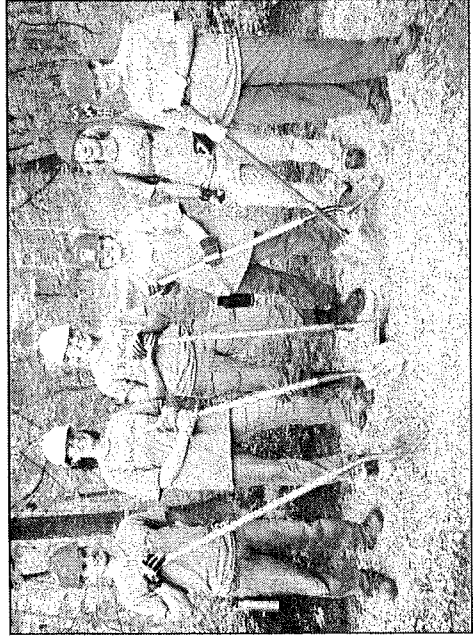
About WisCorps

WisCorps is a non-profit conservation corps that provides a valuable service to Wisconsin's citizens and environment by engaging youth and young adults (Corps Members) aged 16-25 in direct conservation projects on public lands across the state.

Under the guidance of an experienced adult Crew Leader, teams of 5-8 Corps Members complete high quality work as they gain leadership skills, practice team work, learn how to resolve differences, and expand their knowledge of current environmental and social issues.

WisCorps provides a "real job for real pay", as all Corps Members are paid a minimum wage for their participation on a WisCorps crew.

Through this intense work experience, Corps Members gain valuable life and job skills that will allow them to become future leaders in the Wisconsin workforce, as well as engaged and active members of their communities.



Conservation at Work!

WisCorps crews can complete a multitude of conservation projects including:

- New trail construction
- Trail rehabilitation
- Invasive species management
- Rock staircase construction
- Rock retaining wall construction
- Storm damage clean up
- Bridge and boardwalk construction
- Reforestation
- Timber stand improvement
- Stream bank stabilization
- Erosion control
- Rain garden installation
- Prairie restoration
- Historical site preservation
- Recreation site maintenance
- Boundary marking
- Fencing
- Landscaping
- Carpentry projects (kiosks, picnic tables, etc.)

Project Profile - Wood Duck Trail Staircase

During the summer of 2011, the WisCorps La Crosse Community Crew completed a 14 step timber staircase on the Wood Duck Trail next to the Hwy. 16 tunnel.

Prior to the staircase installation, hikers had to navigate a steep and eroded hillside to access the Hixon Forest trail system from the marsh trail system. The timber staircase will assist hikers as they climb the hill, as well as prevent further erosion to the site.

This project was sponsored by the City of La Crosse Department of Parks and Recreation.

