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AB-2126 California Conservation Corps: forestry corps program. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Bill No. 2126

CHAPTER 635

An act to amend Section 14001 of, and to add Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 14410) to Division 12 of, the Public Resources Code, relating to resources conservation.

[Approved by Governor September 21, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2126, Eggman. California Conservation Corps: forestry corps program.

Existing law establishes the California Conservation Corps in the Natural Resources Agency and requires the corps to implement and administer the conservation corps program. Existing law requires the Governor to appoint a director to act as the administrative officer of the corps. Existing law authorizes the director to employ special corps members without regard to their ages so that the corps may draw upon their special skills that may contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the program. Existing law provides that these special members may be assigned to headquarters, as well as field positions.

This bill would require the director, no later than July 1, 2019, to establish a forestry corps program to accomplish certain objectives including developing and implementing forest health projects, as provided, and establishing forestry corps crews. The bill would require the director to partner with certified community conservation corps in implementing the forestry corps program, where feasible. The bill would require the director, no later than January 1, 2020, to establish 4 forestry corps crews, one to be based in the Central Valley, one in the Inland Empire, and 2 to be based in either a state responsibility area or a very high hazard fire zone, as specified.

The bill would also make a nonsubstantive change.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the creation of the Central Valley and Inland Empire forestry corps crews.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 14001 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

14001. In the Natural Resources Agency there is the California Conservation Corps, which shall be responsible for carrying out the purposes of, and implementing the findings and policies set forth in, this division.

SEC. 2. Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 14410) is added to Division 12 of the Public Resources Code, to read:

CHAPTER 4. Forestry Corps Program

14410. No later than July 1, 2019, the director shall establish a forestry corps program.

14411. (a) The forestry corps program shall accomplish all of the following objectives:

- (1) Develop and implement forest health projects, pursuant to Section 14412.
- (2) Establish forestry corps crews, pursuant to Section 14413.
- (3) Provide assistance to corps members in obtaining forestry and forest technician degrees and certificates.
- (4) Train corps members to operate equipment in forestry and related fields.
- (5) Create pathways from the corps to degree programs and jobs.

(b) The director may partner with community colleges, trade associations, forest and timber industries, vocational educational institutions, and apprenticeship programs to provide training and experience to corps members.

(c) The director shall partner with the certified community conservation corps, pursuant to Section 14507.5, where feasible, in implementing the forestry corps program.

14412. Forest health projects may include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

- (a) Fuels reduction and hazardous fuels removal.
- (b) Seedling and tree planting.
- (c) Cone and seed collection.
- (d) Tree mortality and tree felling.
- (e) Tree nursery and arborist training.
- (f) Forestry and conservation awareness and educational outreach.
- (g) Participation in forestry pilot programs.
- (h) Wildlands forest firefighting training.

14413. (a) No later than January 1, 2020, the director shall establish two forestry corps crews, one to be based in the Central Valley and the other in the Inland Empire, as follows:

- (1) To the extent feasible, the Central Valley forestry corps crew shall be administered and operated as a Greater Valley Conservation Corps program and shall be available to members of the Greater Valley Conservation Corps.
- (2) The Inland Empire forestry corps crew shall be administered by the department and shall be based at the Inland Empire Center.

(b) No later than January 1, 2020, the director shall establish two additional forestry corps crews, each to be based in either a state responsibility area, as defined in Section 4102, or a very high hazard fire zone, as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 51177 of the Government Code.

SEC. 3. The Legislature finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because of the geographic proximity of forested areas to, and partnership opportunities that exist in, the Central Valley and the Inland Empire.