GOVERNOR CUOMO LAUNCHES EXCELSIOR CONSERVATION CORPS
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

_AmeriCorps Program Offers 10-Month Service Experience to Young Adults, Veterans_

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the launch of New York State's Excelsior Conservation Corps, a new AmeriCorps environmental education and stewardship program for 18 to 25 year olds. Once enrolled in the program, members will perform meaningful environmental projects across New York State while gaining hands-on experience and skills in conservation careers.

"The Excelsior Conservation Corps will offer young New Yorkers the opportunity to gain skills and training while addressing some of our state's most pressing environmental needs," Governor Cuomo said. "Continuing this state's rich tradition of environmental stewardship, this new initiative will help ensure New York becomes cleaner and greener than ever before."

Envisioned in Governor Cuomo's 2015 Opportunity Agenda, the Excelsior Conservation Corps will enroll 50 members, striving for diverse membership and veteran engagement. The 10-month service program will begin in January 2016 and will be administered by the Student Conservation Association, a leading national organization in youth and young adult conservation service and environmental education programs.

"The Excelsior Conservation Corps will build upon New York's environmental legacy, protecting and enhancing the state's natural resources while ensuring it's continued stewardship by empowering the next generation of conservation leaders," said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, who attended today's press conference.

The program will be funded through $1.9 million in combined state and federal funding. The New York State Environmental Protection Fund, New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation and the State University of New York will provide a total of $1 million for the program. The New York State Commission on National and Community Service, in partnership with the federal Corporation for National and Community Service, has also committed $850,000 of AmeriCorps funding to the program. Additional funding will be secured by the Student Conservation Association through sponsorships.
and private donations.

**Excelsior Conservation Corps Activities & Training**

Under the supervision of the Student Conservation Association, program members will assist state agencies including the Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Environmental Facilities Corporation and State University of New York in open space management; natural resource stewardship; infrastructure and sustainability; recreation and access mapping; and environmental education and outreach at state campgrounds and nature centers. Specific projects will include water improvement projects, safety improvements on trails and campsites, tidal marsh restoration, invasive species removal, habitat monitoring, and climate change and resiliency measures. In addition to environmental stewardship work, members will undergo disaster and volunteer management training to help communities impacted by extreme weather and serve as volunteer leaders during larger service events.

Excelsior Conservation Corps members will be based at Morrisville State College, where they will receive extensive training and certifications in wilderness first aid, trail construction, stone and timber construction, carpentry, risk management and emergency response, education and outreach, and backcountry living. After completing the program’s basic training, members will engage in service work, dividing into smaller teams to tackle priority projects across the state. While on remote and multi-day or week service hitches, members will stay at satellite sites, often camping or staying in cabins at State Parks and Department of Environmental Conservation campgrounds.

**Qualifications and How to Apply**

The Excelsior Conservation Corps emphasizes education and career development. Members will develop leadership skills, general job skills and marketable skills that are designed to lead to a career in conservation or a related field. The program will provide opportunities to enhance personal and professional development and links to academic and professional resources, that will further members’ opportunities after their service. Each member will be paid a stipend.

An Excelsior Conservation Corps member must: be a U.S. citizen or resident between the ages of 18 and 25; be a New York State resident or go to school in the state; have a high school diploma or GED; be able to work both independently and as part of team; and be able to perform physical labor. Appropriate accommodations will be made whenever possible for those who are disabled. Special efforts will be made to recruit veterans and minority candidates.

To download an application or for more information on the Environmental Conservation Corps, visit [www.ny.gov/ECC](http://www.ny.gov/ECC). The Environmental Conservation Corps is an equal opportunity employer.
Congressman Paul Tonko said, “Conservation and environmental protection are critical to Upstate New York’s tourism industry. The important work these young adults perform will help to support recreation jobs that depend on a clean, healthy, organized, and sustainable environment in our communities. I thank Governor Cuomo for recognizing the need for this program, as well as the training its participants will value for the rest of their careers.”

Senator Neil Breslin said, "This new environmental education and stewardship program provides a great opportunity for young adults to gain valuable experience in the area of environmental conservation. Protecting and preserving our state’s natural resources is critical to ensuring a brighter future for New York and this kind of first-hand experience these young people will gain will only further support that effort."

Assemblymember Patricia Fahy said, “This environmental stewardship program is a truly unique opportunity for young adults to turn their environmental interests into a full blown career. The ECC will contribute to our ongoing efforts to improve the vast natural resources here in New York State, while encouraging young members to make this important work a life-long profession. I strongly commend the Governor for launching this creative conservation opportunity for our youth.”

New York State Commission on National and Community Service Executive Director Linda Cohen said, “We are grateful to Governor Cuomo for his support and vision in creating this landmark AmeriCorps program for New York State. The ECC will be a unique statewide AmeriCorps program, bringing young people together to live, learn and serve their fellow New Yorkers and to demonstrate first-hand the power of service to create solutions that work.”

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Marc Gerstman said, "Under the leadership of Governor Cuomo, New York is reviving the concept of coupling environmental stewardship with youth service and skills development. Excelsior Conservation Corps members will improve the outdoor recreation experience at Adirondacks and Catskills campgrounds. We look forward to working with the ECC to develop the knowledge and skills needed by these young adults to enter careers in natural resources management."

New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Commissioner Rose Harvey said, “Eighty years ago the CCC built many of the state parks that millions of New Yorkers enjoy today. The new Excelsior Conservation Corps will build upon this rich tradition and today’s young adults will help restore and improve our state’s outstanding recreational facilities.”

New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation President and CEO Sabrina M. Ty said, “The Excelsior Conservation Corps projects will help improve the quality of New York’s waters through infrastructure and resiliency projects. We appreciate the service and dedication ECC members will bring to one of the state’s most pressing environmental infrastructure needs.”
SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher said, “The State University of New York is proud to partner in providing this extraordinary opportunity, which will prepare participants for careers in environmental conservation while enhancing New York’s parks and natural resources. SUNY Morrisville has a rich history of leadership in agricultural education, and the campus will serve as an ideal setting for this unique and exciting program.”

Morrisville State College President Dr. David. E. Rogers said, "Located in the middle of New York, SUNY Morrisville is perfectly situated to serve as the base camp for the ECC. During their service ECC members will have the opportunity to tap into the expertise of our SUNY faculty, experience our dynamic campus life and leverage other resources in support of the program’s goals."

New York State Division of Veterans Affairs Director Eric J. Hesse said, “Outdoor conservation work is a natural fit for many veterans who have experience living and working in teams, completing tasks that are physically challenging, and adapting to outdoor living situations or other new environments. The ECC will offer New York’s young service men and women the opportunity to use these experiences and leadership skills to positively impact the state’s natural environment while preparing them for fulfilling careers in conservation.”

New York State Chief Diversity Officer Rose Rodriguez said, “The ECC’s emphasis on membership diversity builds on the Governor’s continued efforts to provide equal opportunities to all New Yorker. By connecting young adults from all walks of life to meaningful conservation career training, mentorships and education, we’re not only investing in the future of our state’s environment but in the economic success of our young adults.”

Student Conservation Association President and Chief Executive Officer Jaime Berman Matyas said, “We are honored to be selected to initiate Governor Cuomo's Excelsior Conservation Corps for New York State. Since 1999, we have successfully partnered with DEC and State Parks to expand outdoor recreation and education experiences for New Yorkers through our hands-on education outreach programs and stewardship projects. The ECC will build on our collaboration and help develop the next generation of environmental stewards.”

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