



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE  
COST ESTIMATE**

Revised January 31, 2012

**S. 896**  
**Public Lands Service Corps Act of 2011**  
*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
on November 10, 2011*

**SUMMARY**

S. 896 would amend the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993, which governs programs that employ young adults to work on lands managed by the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Forest Service, and other federal agencies. Assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost \$95 million over the 2012-2017 period. Enacting S. 896 would not affect revenues or direct spending; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

S. 896 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

**ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

The estimated budgetary impact of S. 896 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars						2012- 2017
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	

**CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION**

Estimated Authorization Level	20	20	20	20	20	20	120
Estimated Outlays	5	13	17	20	20	20	95

## **BASIS OF ESTIMATE**

For this estimate, CBO assumes that S. 896 will be enacted in 2012 and that the necessary amounts will be appropriated for each fiscal year. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for the Public Lands Corps (PLC).

In addition to changing the name of the Public Lands Corps to the Public Lands Service Corps (PLSC), S. 896 would:

- Expand the program to include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA);
- Assist Indian tribes and related youth groups with operation of an Indian Youth Service Corps;
- Require DOI to establish a department-level office to coordinate PLSC programs among its various bureaus;
- Emphasize that training for participants should be provided at federal residential centers; and
- Authorize federal appropriations to be used for transportation subsidies.

## **Public Lands Corps Under Current Law**

The Public Lands Corps is a network of young men and women, most of whom are recruited by federal land management agencies through nonprofit organizations, such as the Student Conservation Association, and more than 100 local conservation service corps.

Several agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), use members of the corps and students from other programs to build trails, perform maintenance, and carry out other projects in exchange for benefits such as training, living allowances, and medical care.

Existing corps programs vary by agency and funding source. Currently, only some agencies receive specific appropriations for this program. For example, in 2012, the Forest Service received an appropriation of \$2.5 million to fund certain PLC projects. The NPS also receives funding for PLC projects, but usually that funding is derived from recreation fees that the agency is able to use without appropriation action. In 2012, the agency also received an appropriation of \$2.5 million for youth activities at parks.

Other agencies work with student conservation groups using funds from their annual operating budgets.

### **Public Lands Service Corps Under S. 896**

S. 896 would expand PLC programs and change the corps' name to the Public Lands Service Corps. Under S. 896, participants could receive classroom education, job training, transportation subsidies, housing during their time in the program, and hiring preferences upon completion of their tenure. The legislation also would expand the types of activities in which PLSC members could participate.

In addition, S. 896 would authorize DOI to provide grants and other assistance to Indian tribes and related youth organizations for a new Indian Youth Service Corps. Finally, the act would require criminal history checks for program applicants aged 18 or older.

Program costs under S. 896 are uncertain because total costs would depend on how the Administration chooses to implement the legislation and on how much funding the Congress would provide in appropriation acts. Based on information provided by the affected agencies, CBO expects that all of those agencies, including the newly added NOAA, would take advantage of the new authorities provided by the legislation.

For this estimate, CBO assumes that the land management agencies and NOAA would, over the next six years, implement S. 896 by expanding their use of partnerships between the federal government and nonprofit entities. We expect that the affected agencies would need a total of about \$32 million annually for this purpose. Because, under current law, agencies participating in the PLC program are authorized to receive appropriations totaling \$12 million annually, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would require net additional appropriations of \$20 million a year over the 2012-2017 period.

Such funding would allow agencies that have smaller programs (including the USFWS and BLM) to expand their programs, primarily by working with nonprofit corps in areas such as wildlife refuges and national monuments. The funding also would enable the Forest Service to expand the scope of its corps programs to encompass more activities. In addition, this level of funding would allow the NPS to expand its existing program—the largest of any of the agencies. Finally, this funding would allow DOI to provide grants to Indian tribes and other organizations for youth projects on tribal lands.

The estimated annual cost of the legislation includes funds to provide participants with extra training, allowances, and transportation subsidies as well as funds to conduct criminal background checks on participants required by the legislation. Under current law, some of the affected agencies provide transportation subsidies and obtain background checks on participants, but CBO estimates that implementing S. 896 would

increase the amounts that agencies spend on those activities. Because DOI currently has an office to coordinate the department's activities, CBO estimates that implementing that provision would require no additional funds.

CBO expects that funding for PLSC would grow after 2017 as agencies use the enhanced authorities contained in the legislation to recruit participants directly to their programs. CBO estimates that implementing the expanded program could require a significant increase in funding after 2017.

This estimate is based on information provided by the NPS, the Forest Service, BLM, and nonprofit organizations that operate local conservation corps.

### **PREVIOUS CBO ESTIMATE**

This revised cost estimate for S. 896 supersedes a CBO cost estimate transmitted on January 20, 2012, for the bill as ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on November 10, 2011. CBO has revised the estimate because the earlier version contained an error in describing the provisions of the bill. The estimated costs of the bill remain the same.

### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT**

S. 896 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

### **ESTIMATE PREPARED BY:**

Federal Costs: Jeff LaFave

Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Melissa Merrell

Impact on the Private Sector: Amy Petz

### **ESTIMATE APPROVED BY:**

Theresa Gullo

Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis