



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Encouraging Youth to Engage with Our Environment

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It was during the Great Depression when then President Franklin Roosevelt created a program known as the Civilian Conservation Corps or “CCC,” an effort intended to engage young men in conservation work across the nation. In exchange for building parks, clearing trails and planting trees, the plan offered these individuals housing, skilled training and a stipend to support their families. Helping hundreds of thousands of Americans, while at the same time promoting environmental stewardship, “CCC” became one of the most

recognizable programs of President Roosevelt's "New Deal."

Today in New York State, that program lives on as the "Excelsior Conservation Corps (ECC)," a multi-agency partnership providing young men and women the chance to get involved in the protection of our state's environment. These New Yorkers are making a difference, working on projects in the field, leading large-scale volunteer initiatives and educating the public on environmental issues. At the same time, they are developing leadership and career skills that will help them achieve future success.

The 2020 ECC program will begin in late February and allows for up to 40 full-time service positions for those between the ages of 18-25 and military veterans up to age 28. In recent years, participants have completed a number of projects, including:

- Infrastructure improvements;
- Historic preservation;
- Energy efficiency projects;
- Invasive species removal;
- Trail construction; and
- Erosion control and many others.

For their commitment, members are provided a weekly living allowance, housing, all meals, no-cost health insurance and an education award of more than \$6,000 upon completion of the program. Participants will also have the opportunity to obtain certifications that will help them prepare for future careers in a number of fields including conservation, logging and carpentry, among others.

ECC teams not only leave a lasting impact on the communities they serve, but they provide members with an opportunity to build important skills they will use throughout the rest of their lives. If you are interested in being part of this program, I encourage you to apply by visiting www.ny.gov/ECC. The deadline to do so is Friday, February 14, 2020.