

Joint Statement of U.S. Secretaries of the Interior on the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps

We, the four most recent Secretaries of the U.S. Department of the Interior, strongly support the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC). We served in Republican and Democratic Administrations for the past 20 years and represent strong bi-partisan support for this important initiative.


The 21CSC is a bold national effort to put thousands of America's young people and veterans to work protecting, restoring, and enhancing America's great outdoors at a time when existing federal resources must be used more efficiently.

Our country faces a myriad of critical issues: many public lands, waterways, natural resources, and cultural and historic treasures need maintenance and restoration to fulfill their full value as natural and cultural resources and as national recreation assets; thousands of young people want to serve their country but lack opportunities to be engaged; unemployment rates among America's youth and returning veterans stand at record highs; and, many Americans, particularly children and youth, are disengaged and disconnected from the outdoors leading to growing physical and emotional health issues. The 21CSC is a solution to these issues and will result in service, training, education and employment opportunities for thousands of young Americans and veterans, and significant work accomplishments that preserve, protect, and promote America's greatest natural and cultural treasures. As importantly, the 21CSC will help develop a generation of skilled workers, educated and active citizens, future leaders, and stewards of our nation's natural and cultural resources.


The 21CSC is a natural fit in: 1) the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, where development of a 21CSC is the first recommendation of the AGO Report; 2) the Aspen Institute's Franklin Project to provide 1 million civilian national service opportunities to 18-28 year olds every year as a rite of passage and to bring Americans from all backgrounds together to address challenges in conservation, education, health, poverty and re-integration of veterans; 3) the White House Task Force on National Service; 4) the White House Council for Community Solutions recommendations to engage Opportunity Youth; 5) the National Park Service's Centennial Initiative and Challenge; and, 6) the Take Pride in America and Cooperative Conservation initiatives.


We support the Administration in launching this important effort and fostering a strong public-private partnership to support the 21CSC, so that it can reach its goal of engaging 100,000 young people and veterans per year in important conservation service to our country.

Sincerely,


Ken Salazar
Secretary, 2009-2013


Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary, 2006-2009


Gale Norton
Secretary, 2001-2006


Bruce Babbitt
Secretary, 1993-2001