



May 16, 2011

Dear Colleague,

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Interior (DOI), and Labor (DOL) encourage workforce investment and public and tribal lands management agencies to strengthen partnerships that will expand meaningful work and learning opportunities for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth, taking advantage of emerging opportunities for summer 2011 and supporting ongoing youth employment, training and service opportunities year round.

The USDA Forest Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Parks Service at DOI, and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) at DOL (hereinafter, "the Departments") share common goals around career development for young people. These goals include giving American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth opportunities to gain valuable work experience, provide service to their communities, and contribute to much needed work projects on public and tribal lands. The Departments also believe that exposing youth to careers in conservation, preservation, and resource management helps to develop the future workforce.

### **Background**

In an effort to realize these shared goals, the Departments implemented a pilot project during the summer of 2010 to increase work experience opportunities for youth served by the publically-funded workforce investment system by placing them in conservation corps, internships, and other summer employment opportunities at national parks, forests, grasslands, conservation areas, historic sites and tribal lands. Building on the initial efforts of this pilot, the Departments would like to encourage the public workforce investment system and public and tribal land management agencies to work together to explore partnership opportunities and ways to leverage resources to increase employment opportunities for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth and young adults during the summer of 2011 and beyond.

The youth labor force – 16 to 24 year-olds working or actively looking for work – grows sharply between April and July each year, with July typically marking the peak of

summer youth employment. Unfortunately, the current recession will likely eliminate many employment opportunities for youth. According to the 2009 American Community Survey, the unemployment rate for Native American/Alaska Natives was 27.3%. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) provided approximately \$18 million in funds for Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) Section 166-Indian and Native American Supplemental Summer Youth Program activities and placed over 5,000 youth in employment during the summers of 2009 and 2010. As the WIA summer youth employment funding under the Recovery Act has been nearly expended, states, tribal, and local workforce investment areas seek to identify mutually beneficial partnerships that will help provide meaningful work opportunities for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth.

Work experience opportunities help young people develop valuable skills, and serve as critical stepping stones on the path to a career. Work experience opportunities on public and tribal lands, in particular, can provide youth with an education about natural resources, conservation, and American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian history, culture, and heritage, can teach them to be good stewards of public and tribal lands and resources, and can provide a career pathway into land management, conservation, and other green job sectors.

Land management agencies and the land itself can benefit from increased employment of American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth on public and tribal lands, especially to address the maintenance issues many agencies and tribes face. Maintenance projects can be a valuable, hands-on work experience for young people while providing exposure to career pathways in the areas of conservation, preservation, and public/tribal resource management. As youth learn about the potential career pathways in these occupations, those who are interested can help meet the imminent demand for skilled workers as approximately 40 percent of DOI's employees and 35 percent of USDA Forest Service employees are eligible for retirement in the next four years.

### **Partnership Opportunities**

Through WIA, ETA allocates funds to states, tribes, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and tribal non-profit organizations to provide local workforce investment boards and WIA Section 166 grantees with resources to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting at-risk and disadvantaged youth attain educational and skills training, participate in post-secondary educational training, and secure employment with career and promotional opportunities. Local workforce investment boards and WIA Section 166 grantees provide training and employment services, including work readiness, career guidance, skill assessments, case management, supportive services, basic skills and literacy training, and occupational training. They also provide work experience, summer employment opportunities, leadership development opportunities, and mentoring.

DOI manages some of the most unique and culturally sensitive lands of the United States, from Yellowstone National Park and the Martin Luther King Jr. Historical Site to the 553 wildlife refuges, and 21 conservation areas that stretch across every state and tribal area

in the country. DOI oversees 55 million surface acres of tribal trust land and, economic development programs on tribal trust land in some of the most isolated and economically depressed areas of the United States. In addition, DOI oversees one-fifth of the nation's land mass, and is strategically positioned to provide employment opportunities that directly benefit the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the communities in which young people live.

Similarly, the USDA Forest Service manages lands that are of immense ecologic, social, cultural, and economic importance, including 155 national forests and 20 grasslands in 44 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These lands provide clean water, clean air, important cultural and historic sites, economic opportunity, and beautiful places for people to connect to the outdoors. In addition to operating 28 Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers, the Forest Service provides thousands of youth with training and work opportunities related to natural and cultural resource conservation each year.

Common program elements that the workforce investment system, WIA Section 166 grantees, and land management agencies are poised to provide in a partnership to increase work opportunities for youth on public and tribal lands include:

- ▶ **Meaningful work experience** through subsidized employment, conservation corps, or internship opportunities to introduce and reinforce the rigors and rewards associated with holding a job, as well as to develop skills necessary for successful employment such as communication, interpersonal, leadership, decision-making, and project management. USDA and DOI can provide meaningful work experiences, such as trail maintenance and construction; energy efficiency audits; environmental restoration; cultural/historic preservation and interpretation; tribal land management; restoring fish habitat, native plants, and eco-systems; removing invasive species; and wildlife monitoring.
- ▶ **Resources to pay for youth wages** in a subsidized work experience/summer job. Through WIA, local workforce investment and tribal areas can support youth wages in summer employment or in a work experience. USDA and DOI can either directly hire youth through various hiring authorities, including the Youth Conservation Corps and Indian Honors Program WIA Section 166, or they can partner with a youth or tribal serving organization via the Public Land Corps hiring authority.
- ▶ **Supervision** to help youth receive high quality work experience and training, and to ensure safety on the job. USDA and DOI can provide supervision through experienced team leaders and program staff, volunteer coordinators, rangers, and youth conservation partners, among others, while workforce investment agencies and WIA Section 166 grantees can work to maintain on-going contact with land management supervisors to provide support and technical assistance throughout the work experience.

- ▶ **Career pathways** leading to future employment in public and tribal land and resource management occupations. Workforce investment agencies and WIA Section 166 grantees can support youth while in a work experience by assisting in the development of career goals and pathway options. USDA and DOI can match youth with mentors in related careers, share information on various career pathways that align with their goals in the areas of natural/cultural resource management, and connect them to the Youth in the Great Outdoors Web portal, <http://www.doi.gov/whatwedo/youth/index.cfm>, where they can find information about relevant jobs in related fields.

Partnerships among public and tribal workforce investment and land management agencies can be developed in a number of ways. For example, state, local workforce investment agencies, or WIA Section 166 grantees can conduct outreach and provide case management and support to youth, while land management agencies provide quality supervision and wages to hire youth in paid work experiences in summer or year-round opportunities. Land management agencies can also provide supervision for a crew or corps and reimburse workforce investment agencies or WIA Section 166 grantees for youth wages at the end of the summer or at the completion of a project. It is possible for workforce investment agencies and WIA Section 166 grantees to pay for youth wages in summer employment or in a work experience, when funding is available, while land management agencies provide the work experience and supervision. Other partnership models can be developed to support unpaid internships or service learning opportunities. While we recognize that resources are tight across all agencies, the Departments encourage workforce investment, WIA Section 166, and public and tribal land management agencies to be creative and innovative as they leverage capacity and resources for the purpose of providing American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth and young adults with meaningful work experience on public and tribal lands.

### **Contact Information**

We encourage as many Federal, state, tribal, local workforce investment, and land management agencies as possible to take advantage of the youth employment opportunities made available through these partnerships and reach out to the appropriate contacts to develop partnering strategies. In order to facilitate the development of partnerships, we have provided contact information for land management and workforce investment agencies and WIA Section 166 grantees across the country.

To find the agency nearest you, please see the contact information on the attached lists. Attachment A is a list of contact information for ETA's six regional offices, state workforce investment agencies, and local workforce investment boards across the country. Attachments B and C are contacts for the Agencies and Bureaus at DOI (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service) and USDA (Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service), respectively. Attachment D is a list of contacts for WIA Section 166 Indian and Native American Program grantees.

For national contacts, please see below:

U.S. Department of Labor  
Employment and Training Administration  
Indian and Native American Program  
200 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210  
[campbell.evangeline@dol.gov](mailto:campbell.evangeline@dol.gov)

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Youth in the Great Outdoors, Office of the Secretary  
1849 C Street, NW  
MS 3559  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
[Julie\\_Rodriguez@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Julie_Rodriguez@ios.doi.gov)

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service  
Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources, Office of the Director  
Volunteer and Service Programs  
201 14<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
MS1125  
Washington, D.C. 20250  
[jbedwell@fs.fed.us](mailto:jbedwell@fs.fed.us)

Sincerely,

(signed by Jane Oates)

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Assistant Secretary Jane Oates  
Employment and Training Administration  
U.S. Department of Labor

(signed by Rhea Suh)

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Assistant Secretary Rhea Suh  
Policy, Management and Budget  
U.S. Department of the Interior

(signed by Harris Sherman)

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Under Secretary Harris Sherman  
Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture