

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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MAINE CLIMATE CORPS

Inspired by History. Designed for Today.





Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
"A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism"



January 28, 2022

TO: Senator Stacy Brenner, Chair
Representative Ralph Tucker, Chair
Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Dear Senator Brenner and Representative Tucker,

As requested in L.D. 722, the Commission has examined three aspects of creating a Maine Climate Corps that were of interest to legislators:

1. How best to structure the program;
2. What existing service programs might serve as the foundation;
3. What public and private partnerships could be created to accomplish the program goals.

We are pleased to submit *Maine Climate Corps: Inspired by History. Designed for Today* accompanied by the study findings.

Not surprisingly, there is significant interest in having a Maine Climate Corps provide the human resources needed to increase the scope and scale of climate change response. The state of readiness is advanced. Goals and strategies for addressing the impact of climate change on Maine are laid out in *Maine Won't Wait, the Four-Year Plan for Climate Action*. Nonprofits, communities, private industry groups, higher education institutions, researchers, and local officials are gearing up to deal with climate impacts that are upon us.

Corps programming has an extensive history of providing human resources needed to tackle urgent community problems. Nearly 90 years ago, the Civilian Conservation Corps enlisted people to serve Maine communities needing help with constructing roads and buildings, mitigating forest disease and insect infestations, forest fire prevention, hurricane recovery, and creation of trails in remote areas. Over 3,300 individuals served in Maine between 1933 and 1942 – 53% were residents. They were based in Portland, Lewiston, and Alfred, as well as Bar Harbor, Flagstaff, Millinocket, and 18 other locales. While there were inequities related to who could serve and receive benefits, there was a lesson learned regarding the power of service to change individuals, communities, and improve local conditions.

Recent Corps programming paid attention to those lessons but modernized the tactic so the model was not solely large residential teams working on trails and construction. A role for states was added, giving them a say in priorities for action, design of responses, and direct assessment of impact. That role is fulfilled by State Service Commissions, of which Volunteer Maine is one.

Since 1993, more than 3,900 AmeriCorps members have served Maine communities grappling with educational, human service, health, economic, environmental, public safety, and housing issues. Through service, AmeriCorps alums – half of whom came to Maine to serve and stayed – connected to community action in ways that has led them to run nonprofits, serve in local government, teach, run for office, start businesses, and – always – get things done. The Climate Corps is ready to accomplish the work outlined in this report and help Maine prepare as well as adapt, so the goals of *Maine Won't Wait* and the climate action plans of Maine towns can be realized with the aid of citizen volunteer service.

We are grateful to the many people who contributed to this study and look forward to harnessing the power of service to ensure Maine's future is vibrant and beneficial to all.

Sincerely,

Jenifer Tilton-Flood, Chair
Volunteer Maine, the state service commission

**Maine Climate Corps:
Inspired by History.
Designed for Today.**

Report as Requested
State of Maine
130th Legislature
L.D. 722 – Resolve, To Study the Establishment
of the Maine Climate Corps

Respectfully Submitted
by
Volunteer Maine
The Maine Commission for Community Service
JANUARY 28, 2022

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A full list of contributors to this report may be found on page 45. Volunteer Maine is deeply grateful to the many people who contributed their time and expertise throughout this project.

Key Terms Used

Related to Climate:

Adaptation. The process of adjusting to change to reduce further damage or challenges due to climate change.

Impact area. A physical space affected by a stressor.

Impacts. Direct or indirect effects resulting from climatic changes. Potential impacts are used to assess climate change vulnerability.

Mitigation. The process of reducing the impacts of climate change by reducing emissions or removing harmful greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.

Resilience. The ability of a community, ecosystem, or organization to recover from a negative or disruptive event and resume healthy, successful functioning through adaptation or corrective action.

Vulnerability. The overall risk of harm on an entity from climate hazards.¹

Related to Service:

Corps. A comprehensive voluntary service program that engages a diverse team of people in community service projects. Each corps has a specific mission that corresponds to its focus on an important human and/or environmental community need. The team works together to implement activities proven to impact the need and advance the mission of the program. The program also devotes resources to developing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of those who serve so they are better prepared to enter the workforce or pursue career training/education and are equipped to be lifelong active citizens.

Corps member. Voluntary participant in a Corps program who commits to serving a defined term (a year, 6 months, a summer, etc.) and generally gives full-time effort to service. Full-time members receive a living allowance and other supports. Corps members develop job and leadership skills and often have access to educational opportunities, counseling, and career assistance. In certain Corps programs, members who successfully complete their term of service may qualify for educational assistance, professional credentials, or preference in hiring.

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) dba AmeriCorps. A federal government agency that engages individuals in national service initiatives like AmeriCorps and Volunteer Generation Fund (VGA). The Corporation was created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.² In October of 2020, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) changed the operating name of the agency to “AmeriCorps.”³

AmeriCorps State/National. A voluntary, team-based national service program supported by the U.S. federal government that engages individuals ages 17 and older in public direct-service projects with a goal of helping communities meet critical local educational, public safety, environmental, and human needs. The program is often seen as a domestic Peace Corps.

This program operates through grants of positions and funds to support those who serve. Grants are awarded to nonprofits, units of government, educational institutions, and faith-based organizations. Those grantees provide the local share of resources needed to operate the program, such as but not limited to material costs, human resources, and training. If the AmeriCorps grantee operates solely within

¹ U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit. 2021. “Glossary.” Visited on 25 October 2021. <https://toolkit.climate.gov/content/glossary>

² Library of Congress. 2020. “Corporation for National and Community Service.” Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0017326/>

³ Corporation for National and Community Service. 15 October 2020. *Federal Register, The Daily Journal of the United States Government*. “Agency Operating Name, Adoption of New Logos, & Retirement of Logos” Retrieved from <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/10/15/2020-20318/agency-operating-name-adoption-of-new-logos-and-retirement-of-logos>

a single state, the grants are administered by the state's service commission. If the grantee operates in multiple states, the award is made directly by the federal AmeriCorps agency.

AmeriCorps member. Participants in AmeriCorps programs age 17 or older who are recruited, selected, trained, and supervised by the AmeriCorps grant recipient. A member commits to a term of service that is at least 1700 hours over 11 months. As a team, members carry out a project from the nonprofit community organization or public agency that is tackling a community problem related to education, public safety, health care, or the environment. AmeriCorps members who serve 35-40 hours weekly receive living allowances, health insurance, childcare, and work-related accident/injury/death coverage. In most programs, they also have access to assistance in resolving personal problems that may adversely impact their ability to serve. Upon successful completion of service, members qualify for an education award that can be used in any post-secondary program eligible to accept federal financial aid. Under federal law, members are not employees, apprentices, or interns.

Direct service. Action or service that directly affects the community or in the case of environmental protection, impact area, that an organization identifies as its customers or clients. The service purpose is to benefit entities external to the organization that provides it. The quality or resulting change is quantifiable through data or evaluation. Direct service is *not* planning, grant writing, administration, or research.

Host site. An organization that is not the Corps sponsor but is part of a coalition whose clients/customers/impact area share the need the Corps targeted for improvement. The host site has Corps members implement the program activities under their guidance at their locale. Host sites share responsibility for Corps member training, supervision, and support with the program sponsor.

Living allowance or stipend. Financial support for Corps members serving full-time. The amount is the same for every participant carrying out the same assignment. It is not a wage or salary, nor is it based on hours worked. The total amount for a year is pro-rated for full-time terms of less than 11 months.

Partner. In the context of this report, an organization or agency that contributes to the Corps program by providing specific training, supplies, or financial resources. Partners may also be hosts.

Project. A set of actions completed over a defined period that result in a measurable change in a situation or quantifiable progress toward a goal. When carried out by Corps members, the project required additional human resources which were not available locally. Corps members may not displace employees or community volunteers.

Service-learning. An educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience for students while meeting societal needs. It may occur in formal education where students apply academic learning to community problems in order to affect positive change. It may also be integrated into community youth development programs that coordinate their learning objectives with local school curricula. Service learning is a developmental asset because it promotes a sense of belonging and community participation.

Service site. Locations where service is performed by Corps members. This report will use **service site or host site interchangeably**.

Sponsor. An organization that takes on the administrative and financial responsibilities of a Corps program.

State Service Commission. The state government partners of the federal AmeriCorps agency. The commissions administer AmeriCorps and other volunteer programs to address local needs, foster civic health, and promote civic engagement. Volunteer Maine (the Maine Commission for Community Service, VolunteerMaine.gov) is Maine's state service commission.

Preface

“Volunteer service.” It’s an aspect of civic health and community life that has one foot in the era of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the other in the 21st century’s experience of skilled volunteering. Regardless of the era, volunteer service always has three outcomes:

- pro bono human resources to address a community issue;
- benefits and experience for the participants who serve; and,
- increased community resilience as a result of the personal and institutional relationships that develop.

Then there are over 30 years of research on the volunteer sector that demonstrate:

- The level of voluntary citizen engagement in community life is an indicator of resilience and ability to thrive. In fact, high volunteerism rates and high rates of group membership are strongly associated with higher economic opportunity.
- Volunteer service is a strong community-building strategy.
- Service is an effective strategy for solving a range of community problems.
- When service programs are well-conceived and implemented, they can be a cost-effective complement to the work of professionals.
- Citizen engagement in volunteer service supports positive mental and physical health; and
- Service is an effective pathway to employment, particularly for isolated rural residents, out-of-school unemployed youth, displaced workers, people in recovery from substance misuse, individuals with disabilities, as well as people seeking career-related skills and experience.

Note: The connection is so strong that in April 2012, the US Department of labor issued policy guidance in the form of an unemployment insurance Program letter (uiPI) that recognized volunteering helps expand opportunity for unemployed individuals.

There is an urgency behind the plan for climate action and a need for an “all hands on deck” approach. As noted in *Maine Won’t Wait*, the State’s residents, communities, and environment need to prepare now for the climate-related harms that are emerging. Without action, Maine’s buildings, infrastructure, ecosystems, trademark species, and public health will likely face costly damage.

With that urgency comes the realization that work at this scope and scale requires effort of a near army of people. And, while those with their eye on economic opportunities bear down on developing new jobs and job-training programs, there is a large contingent of citizens ready to mobilize through formal volunteering and intense service in a Maine Climate Corps that would add significant human resources to move the strategies forward.

Students as young as middle school could be involved in climate change work through service learning supported by the Maine Climate Corps. Service-learning is a teaching method through which students bring what they are learning in the classroom into the real world. It also can be employed in community youth development programs and has the advantage of improving student performance, fostering connections with the community, growing social and personal skills, and building civic health.⁴ A 1999 study by the Society for Research in Child Development found that service-learning encourages a greater understanding of the world and others, the expansion of humanitarian and altruistic values, strengthened purpose and skills that can lead to a career, fulfilment of social expectations, and protection from negative life stresses.⁵

⁴ Maine Commission for Community Service. June 2012. “Infusing Service-Learning into Learner-Centered Education in Maine Schools.” Accessed from <https://www.flipsnack.com/ESBFABCC5A8/2011-infusing-service-learning-maine.html>.

⁵ Stukas, Arthur & Clary, E. & Snyder, Mark. 1999. Service Learning: Who Benefits and Why. Social policy report / Society for Research in Child Development. 13. 1-19. 10.1002/j.2379-3988.1999.tb00039.x.

The greatest opportunity for engaging in this work, a large group of citizens representing all ages, abilities, and backgrounds lies with Service Corps.

Today's federal legislation, executive order preambles, editorials, and feature articles about a Civilian Climate Corps want to harness the strengths of modern Service Corps programs for good reason. The inspiration of the 1930's CCC falls short of conveying the essence of modern Corps programs that developed from the youth corps of the 1980s to today's state conservation corps and the national service program, AmeriCorps.

Modern Corps strengths. High-quality Service Corps, including the proposed Climate Corps, have distinct traits:

- The problem to be addressed and the proven solution to implement are proposed by the community that is impacted
- A community organization works with like-minded local groups and uses its technical knowledge, community relationships, and human resource management expertise to design a program that implements the solution
- The program mission is externally focused on improving a problematic situation affecting community life --
 - the tactic used to fulfill the mission is to engage both Corps members and community residents as volunteers in the service activities;
 - the program recruits and selects Corps members in an inclusive manner that results in the Corps being representative of the community's diversity even if some members do not reside locally;
 - an advisory group of community stakeholders and residents provides feedback and guidance throughout implementation.
- Corps members commit to a term of service that fits both their availability and the program design needs --
 - terms of service require participants to commit time that, at a minimum, is 10 times greater than the average community volunteer (10-40 hours/week for Corps member; 1-4 hours/week average for community volunteer);
 - Corps members receive benefits aligned with intensity of service so they are able to fulfill their commitment. Benefits may include a stipend, childcare, health insurance, housing, and post-service financial awards.
- Program staff conduct or facilitate Corps member development through training, certifications, and professional networking in order to:
 - prepare Corps members to carry out effective service tasks;
 - develop positive team environment where differences are appreciated, opportunities to both lead and support the team occur, and soft-skills valuable for personal and work relationships are honed;
 - add to technical skills, knowledge and abilities in ways that enhance post-service job prospects;
 - foster civic engagement so they are prepared to be active citizens post-service;
 - support post-service transitions into jobs, post-secondary education, military, or other national service.
- Often have a goal of building the community's capacity to sustain the effort and, therefore, be capable of meeting its own needs.

Corps models. Modern Service Corps use several models that encompass communities defined by shared experiences or needs.

Individual Placements. Service Corps that use this program model have a lead sponsor for the program on behalf of a coalition of agencies. The coalition usually represents communities during the design phase of

the program, share the vision and are committed to its mission, and want one or two Corps members to implement certain service activities but do not have the capacity or need to administer a program with 10 or even 100 Corps members. Each of these agencies “host” the number of Corps members needed for their site and share in responsibilities for acquiring local resources, supporting Corps members, and gathering data to document progress and impact.

Both the AmeriCorps Resilience Corps at Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) and Island Institute Fellows program are examples of an individual placement model. (See discussion of existing programs, page 17.)

Team model. In this model, the lead sponsor of the program not only administers the program but also supervises the Corps members as they work in teams at community sites to complete discrete tasks. Generally, the team members are consistent through the term of service and a team leader is assigned to promote cohesion, collaboration, and teamwork. The team has a central home base from which they leave to complete tasks that last a day, a week, or longer.

One Maine example was LearningWorks’ Aim High AmeriCorps program. Teams of six to eight members based at the LearningWorks office served daily in public school classrooms throughout Greater Portland.⁶

Residential model. This is the oldest program model and tends to serve a larger geographic area than the Team or Coalition model. The program sponsor is responsible not only for administration, Corps member management and training, project development with partners, but also housing, feeding, and supplying members. The members live together and organize into various-sized teams that go into a community to complete a time-limited project. Depending on the task and geographic location of the work, they may travel from their base daily, weekly, or even at longer intervals. This model is often referred to as a youth corps because usually members are mid-teens to early twenty year-olds. The programs tend to emphasize personal development and training as strongly as the service impact.

An example of a residential model is the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), where individuals 18-26 train and live communally, and are deployed as a team to serve communities in a specific region. AmeriCorps NCCC has a primary mission of disaster response and recovery but deploys to communities for 6-8 week projects during “blue skies.” In Maine, NCCC Corps members have gleaned food for food banks, built homes for Habitat for Humanity, and helped small towns develop open space and recreational areas.⁷

Setting down roots. From 1994 through 2021, nearly 3,900 people have enlisted to serve in AmeriCorps programs in Maine communities and Volunteer Maine has surveyed them at the end of their service. The answers show that 34% moved to Maine for service and half of those individuals stayed in Maine after service because of the ties they developed during their term. Recent communication and outreach to those AmeriCorps Alums as well as those who were Maine residents before service finds they have started businesses, entered public service as municipal town managers and employees, become nonprofit leaders, and taken leadership roles in civic life. Their service clarified career options and nurtured attachments to Maine that turned into commitments to stay.

Regardless of the model a Climate Corps uses, the proven Service Corps strengths of getting things done, developing participants who go on to employment and community leadership, and building community resilience make this volunteer service approach a strong and cost-effective tactic for moving the needle on the goals of Maine’s climate change plan.

⁶ Learning Works. News + Events. Visited on 25 October 2021. <https://www.learningworks.me/news-events-categories/aims-high-ameri-corps/>
⁷ AmeriCorps. 2021. “AmeriCorps NCCC”. Visited on 5 December 2021. <https://americorps.gov/serve/fit-finder/ameri-corps-nccc>.

Executive Summary

L.D. 722, Resolve To Study the Establishment of the Maine Climate Corps, directed Volunteer Maine (the Maine Commission for Community Service) to study three aspects of creating a Maine Climate Corps:

- how best to structure the program,
- what existing service programs might serve as the foundation, and
- what public and private partnerships could be created to accomplish the program goals.

The study used structured interviews of climate experts, researchers, corps leaders in other states, state agency climate program leaders, and community representatives. Using a rating rubric, ten areas of impact were identified as: 1) contributing to the goals of *Maine Won't Wait: the Four-Year Climate Action Plan*; 2) priorities for action that would have broad, near-term impact on climate related issues; and 3) at the point of shovel-ready implementation so that a corps could devote significant time and effort to the work.

Recommendation 1: Maine Climate Corps be structured as a set of programs.

The Maine Climate Corps will be asked to tackle a wide-ranging set of activities that will “move the needle” on state climate change goals. There are some opportunities for efficiencies but there is a greater need to ensure the service activity is technically correct, member training is high quality, a broad and inclusive set of partners are engaged, performance targets are met, and Corps participants are supported by skilled program leaders.

For those reasons, it is recommended that Maine Climate Corps be a set of programs that:

- exhibits the traits of high-quality service programs;
- contributes directly to the goals of the State of Maine’s *Climate Action Plan*;
- individually focuses on responses to climate change that are aligned with the sponsoring organization’s demonstrated area of expertise --
 - Example: A building modification Corps would be operated by an organization with that expertise while education about climate-friendly agricultural practices would be under the purview of another organization.
- implements service activities based on current, good science;
- is deliberate in its actions addressing equity, justice, and accessibility;
- collaborates with organizations and agencies who share the goals of the program but who do not have the capacity to independently operate a Climate Corps program --
 - Example: A regional public agency with expertise in mitigating the impact of rising water levels may sponsor a Corps that helps communities assess risk and identify adaptations or mitigation strategies.
- coordinates goals, service actions, Corps member training, recruitment, and community outreach in a formal State Climate Corps Directors Team convened by Volunteer Maine;
- meets any state or federal standards or requirements set for being identified as a Climate Corps program.

Recommendation 2: Any program operating as part of Maine Climate Corps will be proposed by a coalition of organizations committed to the program’s priority for action and a member of the coalition takes responsibility for administering the program as the lead sponsor.

A survey was used as part of the research for this report. Several questions focused on how many Corps members were needed and whether partners were required to succeed. 86% of respondents said their projects would require five or fewer Corps members each year. 79% of respondents noted that their organizations would engage partners in their work. Based on these responses, the strongest and most cost-effective approach for a Maine Climate Corps would be a coalition model in which organizations,

municipalities, nonprofits, or government agencies with similar missions partner to work on closely related issues. One of those organizations administers the program and other organizations host Climate Corps members.

Recommendation 3: Authorize programming in 8 climate-related areas to give Climate Corps the greatest latitude in tackling climate impacts with proven tactics.

Climate Corps are not demonstration projects but, rather, dependent on research by others to identify community actions that will impact specific problems. As climate scientists study what works best, how to address negative climate change impacts, and track changes in climate, the Corps programs should be able to implement tangible responses in any of these focus areas:

- Coastal Zone
- Transportation
- Energy
- Housing
- Land and Fresh Water Preservation
- Community Resilience
- Education (K-12 and community)
- Public Health

Recommendation 4: Based on current science and expressed need of Maine communities, prioritize for action 11 project areas.

Based on the research done for this report (see Methodology, page 20), Maine Climate Corps programs need to initially work on:

1. Community Resilience Planning

Municipal or regional government bodies partner with a Climate Corps to implement community-based and data-driven climate planning, vulnerability assessments, and flooding assessments, while building local capacity.

2. Energy Education and Outreach

Under the guidance of advising partners, Climate Corps members would educate community residents and organizations about energy use (conservation and management), new sources of energy, and reliable consumer guidance. Tactics would aim to empower residents to take action in their own homes and make informed energy choices both personally and in collective decision-making.

3. “Lead by Example”

Maine local, county, and regional governments, as well as nonprofits, have buildings that need to be made energy efficient. Climate Corps projects that address this need would upgrade the structures and give Corps members opportunities to demonstrate skills valuable to future employment.

4. Home Energy Conservation and Management

Under the guidance of advising partners, Climate Corps members would educate community residents and organizations about energy use, conservation, management, and sources, and provide reliable consumer guidance. Tactics would aim to empower residents to take action in their own homes and make informed energy choices both personally and in collective decision-making.

5. Emergency Management Community Assistance

Small communities lack the capacity that it takes to apply for federal and state emergency management agency assistance related to resilience, floodplain management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Corps members would fill that gap by engaging in community outreach and education, community surveys, and gathering data to strengthen local emergency management operations.

6. Healthy Soils and Regenerative Agriculture Outreach and Education

There is a significant amount of carbon sequestering potential for farmers and woodlot owners in Maine. Members engaged in this Climate Corps project would conduct outreach, education, and technical assistance to develop and transition to regenerative practices that maximize carbon sequestration.

7. Local Foods Program

Maine has a goal of sourcing 30% of food consumed within the state from in-state producers by 2030. Climate Corps members would partner with communities to plant and maintain community food forests, engage in public outreach to localize the food system, and build gleaning and preservation programs.

8. Community Solar Projects

In collaboration with communities, Corps members would gather information and data required to successfully site and install community solar projects across the state.

9. Invasive Species Monitoring & Management

Maine Climate Corps members would engage in invasive species monitoring and management, train the general public to carry out these activities as citizen scientists, build upon the invasive species inventory, and grow the network of volunteers in the field.

10. Shoreline Monitoring & Stabilization

Members would expand current shoreline monitoring and stabilizing projects, including living shoreline stabilization, green infrastructure, culvert monitoring and repair, and road vulnerability assessments.

11. Green Schools

In collaboration with K-12 schools, Climate Corps members would lead groups of students in school-based sustainability initiatives that they would then bring into the greater community.

Recommendation 5: The Maine Climate Corps be created in statute as an amendment to the Maine Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) statute in order to ensure the purpose, structure, standards, and responsibility for coordination are clearly established.

Codifying these aspects of a Maine Climate Corps will address the need to keep the mission and responsibilities focused. It also will authorize the Commission to represent Maine in the myriad of national nonprofit and governmental policy and regulatory work groups related to Civilian Climate Corps – their standards, funding, branding, regulations, recruitment, and more.

The Presidential Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad signed on January 27, 2021, that directed federal agencies to develop a strategy for creating a Civilian Climate Corps was followed by Senate and House introduction of bills to establish the Corps. The bipartisan Civilian Climate Corps Act has been endorsed by the Corps Network, Voices for National Service, Service Year Alliance, National Wildlife Federation, and the National Audubon Society, as well as others, because it makes some significant updates to AmeriCorps, the program through which the Civilian Climate Corps would operate. Many of those changes -- including priorities for project action and for aid to both disadvantaged and indigenous communities, increasing the living allowance to the equivalent of \$15/hour, doubling the value of the education award, setting the federal contribution per FTE as a percent of the living allowance so all benefits and taxes are covered -- were incorporated into the budget reconciliation bill pending in Congress.

Recommendation 6: A Climate Corps Coordinator at Volunteer Maine provide State leadership.

Establish and fund the position of Climate Corps Coordinator at the Commission. Maine Climate Corps programs need a state leader who will:

- guide development and implementation of community programs;

- ensure the standards for being a Climate Corps program are met by individual programs;
- connect program leaders to technical assistance and training for Service Corps or, if the issue is specific to a climate corps program, provide the technical assistance or training;
- participate in national governmental and nonprofit Climate Corps development and policy setting groups;
- identify opportunities for Maine programs to benefit from regional or national collaborations and arrange for Maine participation;
- coordinate policy and plans for Maine Climate Corps with the Maine Climate Council;
- ensure Climate Corps programs collaborate with other Service Corps in Maine for the benefit of members, communities, and program leadership;
- develop and present for Commission consideration, any policies and procedures related to grant making, grant administration, or program requirements that may be unique to Climate Corps programs;
- work with Commission staff and board leadership on setting program goals, evaluating performance, planning development, and staying informed of national and state policies and priorities;
- prepare funding applications for relevant federal or state grants and administer funds in accordance with requirements.

Recommendation 7: Direct state agencies to coordinate climate-related funding for projects so that the human resources Climate Corps brings to bear can be paired with federal project financial resources to maximize scale and scope of those funds.

Service Corps provide human resources to get projects done locally. For the past 30 years, organizations with Service Corps operating grants have provided as match or grantee share, the local program leadership (administrative, supervisory, and technical), plus the supplies, materials, facility, and other resources needed to implement projects. Beginning in 2011, the AmeriCorps program authorized use of other federal agencies' funds as grantee share if the other awarding federal agency agreed with the use. The goal of all the federal agencies involved has been to maximize the impact of funding at the community level.

At the federal level, there already is a Civilian Climate Corps interagency coordinating committee led by the Department of Agriculture with membership including AmeriCorps. The involved agencies and departments (Interior, Housing and Urban Development, Energy, etc.) are considering what actions might be needed to ensure funding comes together locally in a timeframe and with compatible regulations, applications, and requirements that will make the opportunities accessible, equitable, and impactful.

With the funding for climate change response coming to states through multiple federal channels, state coordination will be essential to ensure any potential challenges to linking Climate Corps members' efforts with grants or funding to community organizations are overcome.

Recommendation 8: Leverage the federal Climate Corps resources that will flow through AmeriCorps by appropriating state funding for corps programs' leadership (a local match expense) and supporting the state corps, Maine Service Fellows, so it can help rural communities do the essential planning and preparation for successful Climate Corps action.

One aspect of the research for this report was a survey of organizations about their financial ability to support a full Climate Corps program. 75% of respondents to the Potential Climate Corps Budget Survey indicated the budget item they could not cover from known resources was the program leadership. Typically, a Corps needs at least 1 FTE full-time leader. Using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics table on Maine occupational employment and wages, the median total annual wage and benefits for 1 FTE community service manager would be \$81,310. The appropriation would guarantee a level of stable

leadership for the Corps members and programs while helping to meet required local match for federal funds.

	<i>SFY 2023</i>	<i>SFY 2024</i>
Grants for 5 Climate Corps program leadership	\$406,550	\$418,746
Grants for 2 additional Climate Corps programs' leadership	\$ 0	\$167,499

The Maine Service Fellows, a non-federal corps program responsive solely to Maine needs, was established in the first session of the 130th Maine legislature as an amendment to the Commission's statute. One of the purposes of the program is to provide the most rural and underserved communities in the State a resource to address critical health and human, public safety, educational, and environmental needs. The priorities for action were first, COVID-19 recovery, and then issues that significantly overlap with local climate change impacts.

These Maine communities share much in common with those discussed in the Spring 2021 Stanford Social Innovation Review article about rural communities that did not access COVID-19 economic relief for which they qualified. Researchers found that these communities were both economically disadvantaged and disadvantaged by the absence of community agencies and local leaders with the training and skills to communicate needs through applications. It can be expected that the same will happen when faced with the complexity of responding to climate change impacts.

Although \$500,000 in public funds was authorized for Maine Service Fellows, no source of funding was specified, so no operating funds have been directed to the program. It is recommended that a specific source be identified in SFY2023 and 2024 for half of the authorized funds (\$250,000) to support Maine Service Fellows who would help the targeted communities set priorities, connect with appropriate Climate Corps programming, and do the planning needed to host one or more Climate Corps members.

Report Background

Maine Won't Wait

In December 2020 *Maine Won't Wait*, a Four-Year Plan for Climate Action, was published by the Maine Climate Council. This plan was informed by over 200 Maine people with varying expertise and backgrounds who formed six working groups and a subcommittee, and took thousands of Mainers' concerns on local climate impacts into consideration. The report is backed by the *Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and Its Effects in Maine*, a report by Maine Climate Council's Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. This report specifically focuses on climatic changes and the impacts that they will have on hydrology and freshwater quality, sea level rise, ocean temperature and acidification, marine ecosystems, biodiversity, forestry and forest ecosystems, agriculture and food systems, human and animal health, and Maine's economy.

The Maine Climate Council developed four key climate action goals: reduce Maine's greenhouse gas emissions, avoid the impacts and costs of inaction, foster economic opportunity and prosperity, and advance equity through Maine's climate response. *Maine Won't Wait* suggests eight strategies to address these goals:

- A. Embrace the Future of Transportation in Maine
- B. Modernize Maine's Buildings
- C. Reduce Carbon Emissions in Energy and Industrial Sectors
- D. Grow Maine's Clean-Energy Economy and Protect Our Natural Resource Industries
- E. Protect Maine's Environment
- F. Build Healthy and Resilient Communities
- G. Invest in Climate-Ready Infrastructure
- H. Engage with Maine People and Communities

Under each of these strategies are action items. The action item that underpins this report is to "Start the 'Maine Climate Corps' for Climate-Related Workforce Development," under Strategy H, "Engage with Maine People and Communities."⁸

Also listed in Strategy H is establishing a Clean Energy Corps. The proposed program would be a public and private sector collaboration in development with the Clean Energy Workforce Partnership, the Governor's Energy Office, and the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. It should be noted that within the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan is \$4 million for advancing Clean Energy Workforce Partnership "to prepare more Maine people for jobs in growing clean energy efficiency fields," and \$1.5 million for apprenticeships "for in-demand clean energy fields, with an emphasis on increasing apprenticeships among under-represented communities."⁹ It is the intention of the Governor's Energy Office and the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future that the Maine Climate Corps and the Clean Energy Corps be distinctly different. Thus, the funding allocated for energy projects and the projects themselves are not available to the Maine Climate Corps. This report will exclude further mention of a specific Clean-Energy Corps.

Federal Civilian Climate Corps Activity

Federal support for a Civilian Climate Corps has been building since January 2021 with an Executive Order on climate from President Biden, the Civilian Climate Corps Act of 2021, and the inclusion of the Civilian Climate Corps in the Build Back Better Act.

⁸ Maine Climate Council. *Maine Won't Wait, a Four-Year Plan for Climate Action*.

⁹ Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and Governor's Energy Office. *The Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan*. 2021. <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/maine-jobs-and-recovery-plan>

Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad

On January 27, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. Section 215 of this Executive Order directs the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the heads of other relevant agencies to submit a plan for creation of a “Civilian Climate Corps.” This strategy would “mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers and maximize the creation of accessible training opportunities and good jobs.” This section of the Executive Order also notes the far-reaching nature of the Corps, which would be permitted to focus on aspects of adaptation, mitigation, and resilience as it pertains to climate change.¹⁰ The federal AmeriCorps agency is a member of the interagency committee creating the plan.

Civilian Climate Corps Act of 2021

Senator Coons (D-DE) and cosponsors introduced the Civilian Climate Corps Act of 2021 (S. 1057) to the Senate on March 25, 2021. This Bill is in direct response to Executive Order 14008 which set April 27, 2021 as the deadline for a plan to develop a Civilian Climate Corps. The Bill notes the importance of building the job force after the COVID-19 pandemic, the urgency of the climate crisis, the economic impact that the two years prior had on the country, and how a Civilian Climate Corps could help address these pressing needs. The Bill identifies potential projects that may fall under a Civilian Climate Corps and outlines the criteria for determining which communities should be allocated Corps resources.

S. 1057 is proposed as an amendment to both the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA) and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA). NCSA was amended in 1994 to create the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and authorize AmeriCorps under CNCS. DVSA authorizes AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps Seniors. Thus, the federal Civilian Climate Corps would operate through CNCS and AmeriCorps (see page 16).¹¹

Although the Civilian Climate Corps Act of 2021, at the time of this report, has not passed in the Senate or the House, it provides the national framework for state-operated Climate Corps programs that are supported both in spirit and financially by the federal government. Parts of this Act have migrated to the Build Back Better Act, which is also waiting to be resolved.

Build Back Better Act

On October 28, 2021, President Biden announced the Build Back Better Act Framework. The announcement included the creation of a 300,000-member Civilian Climate Corps to provide good-paying jobs to diverse populations, build the workforce and community capacity, and address climate change.¹² The Bill includes \$3.2B in funding to AmeriCorps State & National through September 2026 to increase living allowances, improve member benefits, and support increased participation. At the time of this report, the Build Back Better Act has passed in the House.¹³

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is the largest civilian national service program. It is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent, federal grant-making government agency with

¹⁰ The White House. “Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.” 27 January 2021.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

¹¹ S.1057 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Civilian Climate Corps Act of 2021. 25 March 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1057/text>

¹² The White House. “President Biden Announces the Build Back Better Framework.” 28 October 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/28/president-biden-announces-the-build-back-better-framework/>

¹³ H.R.5376 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Build Back Better Act. 19 November 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5376>

the mission to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. CNCS and AmeriCorps support communities by giving grants to promote service and volunteering through four programs: AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), AmeriCorps Seniors, and AmeriCorps State and National.

AmeriCorps State and National is the largest of the AmeriCorps programs with 40,000 individuals serving during 2021. It operates through grants to local and national nonprofit and public agencies as well as higher education institutions. (75% of the grant funds are administered by governor-appointed state service commissions of which Volunteer Maine is one.) AmeriCorps grant recipients recruit individuals to serve for up to a year and use the funds to support those members' living allowance, health insurance, etc. Their service activities help communities address local needs related to education, health, environment, economic opportunity, veteran services, and disaster services. Grant recipients provide a share of program expenses in the form of cash or in-kind match to cover personnel, supplies, travel, training, etc. When applying, each grantee must note the number of member positions the grant would support.¹⁴ This is the AmeriCorps funding structure and program model through which Maine Climate Corps will likely access federal funds.

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) was founded in 1965 as a domestic version of the Peace Corps. The program was incorporated into AmeriCorps and renamed AmeriCorps VISTA in 1993. VISTA provides full-time members to public and nonprofit community organizations to build capacity in those organizations' efforts to alleviate poverty.

AmeriCorps NCCC is a residential program with four campuses across the country that responds to national or regional disasters. During "blue skies" members organize into teams and serve the states in their assigned region by helping with improvements to infrastructure, environmental or energy conservation projects, and development.

AmeriCorps Seniors is the set of programs that specifically recruits people 55 and over to serve their community. Foster Grandparents are mentors and role models who work in schools to help youth needing support. RSVP volunteers serve in community nonprofits and public agencies that need assistance providing a wide variety of services including hot meals, local medical transportation, health programming, and food distribution. Senior Companions aims to keep seniors independent longer, and provides respite to family caregivers by providing assistance and friendship to seniors who have difficulty with daily living tasks.

Existing Environmentally-Focused Corps Programs in Maine

The AmeriCorps programs highlighted below are engaged in direct service and are aligned with the vision for a Maine Climate Corps mentioned in *Maine Won't Wait* and the federal Civilian Climate Corps plans.

Maine is home to many organizations doing admirable, environmentally-focused work. However, the five direct service Corps programs below were most closely aligned with this study. The programs are the Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program, Maine Conservation Corps AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Resilience Corps, Island Fellows at the Island Institute, and Maine Service Fellows.

Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program

The Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program (MEAP), operated by Campus Compact (University of Southern Maine), aims to provide cost-savings to low-income and disadvantaged populations through increasing energy efficiency and weatherization. Members measure and then install window inserts,

¹⁴ Corporation for National and Community Service. 2020. "Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National." <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1%20-%20Intro%20to%20AmeriCorps%20State%20and%20National%202018.pdf>

develop educational materials for communities, conduct public awareness campaigns, and carry out basic green energy assessments.^{15,16}

Through their participation in this program, members gain a better understanding of what it takes to change household behavior and make concrete change for individuals and families by decreasing their carbon footprint.

Maine Campus Compact is part of a national coalition of higher education institutions whose mission is to “advance the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility.”¹⁷ Participants are college students interested in the sustainability, environmental, and energy fields.

Maine Conservation Corps

Maine Conservation Corps is administered by the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) within the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry. The program was established in 1983 and then codified in Maine statute in 1985. It became an AmeriCorps program in 1994 and has been administered by BPL since 2007. Members in this program serve terms from 3 to 11 months where they focus on four areas: accomplishing outdoor recreation and conservation projects, providing conservation education, engaging volunteers, and developing members.¹⁸

The program currently has two program components: environmental stewards and field teams. Stewards are generally environmentally-focused recent college graduates who are placed with organizations or agencies with a distinct need. Projects for environmental stewards include but are not limited to habitat restoration, water quality monitoring, public outreach, and volunteer management. Field teams are mostly found doing trail work, conservation projects, engaging local communities, and maintaining public land. There are several position types in the field teams program, with college graduates mostly placed in leadership roles.¹⁹

Maine Conservation Corps members receive direct ongoing skills training and have opportunities for specialized trainings at conferences. Beyond that, members partake in diversity, equity, and inclusion training with Equality Maine, nonviolent communication training with Clarity Services, and other trainings dependent on their position.²⁰

The Conservation Corps’ statute authorizes it to carry out projects that include but are not limited to:

- A. Forestry, nursery, and silvicultural operations
- B. Wildlife habitat conservation, rehabilitation, and improvement
- C. Recreational area development, management, and improvement
- D. Energy conservation projects
- E. Fish culture and habitat maintenance and improvement and other fisheries or marine resource assistance
- F. Trail and campsite development and improvement
- G. Insect, disease, rodents and fire prevention and control
- H. Erosion, flood, drought and storm damage assistance and control
- I. Reclamation and improvement of lands disturbed by erosion, mining or other adverse natural or human-made actions
- J. Environmental education programs²¹

¹⁵Interview with Sally Slovenski, Maine Campus Compact Executive Director. 31 August 2021.

¹⁶Maine Campus Compact. “Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program.” 2021. Visited on 25 October 2021. <http://mainecompact.org/programs/meap/>

¹⁷Campus Compact. “Mission & Vision.” 2021. Visited on 25 October 2021. <https://compact.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision/>

¹⁸Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry. “About the Maine Conservation Corps.” 2021. Visited on 18 October 2021. https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/get_involved/conservation_corps/history_mission.shtml

¹⁹Interview with Sara Knowles, Director of Maine Conservation Corps. 25 August 2021.

²⁰Interview with Sara Knowles.

²¹Title 12: Conservation, Part 2: Forests, Parks, Lakes and Rivers. Chapter 220: Bureau of Parks and Public Lands. Subchapter 6-A: Maine Conservation Corps. <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/12/title12sec1891-1.html>

AmeriCorps Resilience Corps

Greater Portland Council of Governments' (GPCOG) AmeriCorps Resilience Corps began in 2020. The Corps supports local government agencies, nonprofit agencies and regional cohorts in the Greater Portland area in their resilience planning efforts and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Members assist with projects that accelerate civic innovation, climate action, racial equity, and digital equity.²² The Resilience Corps adds new capacity in local governments to adapt and proactively respond to short-term and long-term challenges to economic, social, and environmental systems.²³ Each of the members have a supervisor, and all members have cohort-based professional development opportunities and trainings.²⁴

Island Fellows

The Island Institute's Island Fellows Program has been serving Maine's coastal and island communities since 1999. This is a two-year program in which recent graduates are hosted by island or remote coastal organizations where they assist with a "community supported project." The goal of the fellows within these communities is to build community capacity and assist with important projects requiring some level of expertise.²⁵

When applying to host an Island Fellow, communities submit a two-year work plan. Within those communities, the Fellow has a supervisor to ensure their work stays on track, offer support, and provide additional training as necessary. Fellows also have weekly check-ins with staff at the Island Institute, and formal opportunities for professional development three times per year.²⁶

The Island Institute's Island Fellows Program is a model program for integrating a service member into a community where they can affect change.

Maine Service Fellows

Maine Service Fellows is a rurally-focused program administered by Volunteer Maine that initially will concentrate on pandemic recovery and help communities address needs related to workforce, housing, mental health, and issues that overlap with the priorities of Climate Corps. The program was established by the legislature in 2021 to:

1. Provide rural and underserved communities in the State a resource to address critical health and human, public safety, education and environmental needs;
2. Increase the opportunities for individuals to devote a year of service to communities in the State;
3. Attract to and retain in the State motivated adults who have completed a college degree within the prior five years to serve in positions where they can apply skills and abilities to projects for the benefit of citizens of the State; and,
4. Strengthen civic engagement of both the program fellows and community residents through solutions based in whole or in part in volunteer service.

The yearlong program is open to any individual who has completed college within the last five years. These members will live within the communities they serve.

²² Greater Portland Council of Governments. "2020-2021 Fellows." 2020. Visited on 25 October 2021. <https://www.maineresiliency.org/2020-2021-fellows>

²³ Greater Portland Council of Governments. "Resilience Corps." 2021. Visited on 20 October 2021. <https://www.gpcog.org/472/Resilience-Corps>

²⁴ Interview with Julia Bruel and Sara Mills-Knapp, Greater Portland Council of Governments. 1 September 2021.

²⁵ Island Institute. "Fellows." 2021. Visited on 25 October 2021. <https://www.islandinstitute.org/priorities/strong-leadership/fellows/>

²⁶ Interview with Susie Arnold and Suzanne MacDonald, Island Institute. 18 August 2021.

This program offers communities the opportunity to increase their capacity to build consensus around priorities, identify solutions that are locally driven, connect to resources, and plan or implement the solutions. It is expected the rural communities will need Climate Corps assistance to respond to environmental, energy, public health, and infrastructure climate vulnerabilities.

Methodology

This study was conducted using *Maine Won't Wait* as the framework for a potential Maine Climate Corps. It is built using expertise of professionals on the Maine Climate Council, advisors to *Maine Won't Wait*, climate change mitigation and adaptation field experts within the State, and environmentally-focused AmeriCorps programs across the country.

Interview Selection

Research for this study began by compiling a list of people to interview from the attendees of the Summer 2021 Coastal Climate Corps Think Tank held by Volunteer Maine, state agency leaders and commissioners, and *Maine Won't Wait* subcommittee members. Once interviews began, referrals led to additional contacts within organizations and agencies doing similar work with aligning missions. Additionally, America's Service Commission (ASC) working groups and web searches were used to develop a contact list for like-programs across the country.

Ultimately, interviewees were leaders of government agencies and specific programs focused on climate change, local nonprofit organizations, previous AmeriCorps members, and leaders of similar programs in other states.

Questions

Interview questions covered the areas of interest in L.D. 722. They were used as an outline or guide for conversations rather than a structured interview. The questions covered a wide breadth of topics, including the organization's experience with volunteers, administrative capacity, projects suitable for Climate Corps members and the trainings required for success, collaboration with government agencies or other organizations, and focus on equity.

The results were meaningful conversations that yielded insights, advice, and concrete direction on a Climate Corps design, what potential projects would be suitable, and what partnerships could be leveraged to build a robust statewide program.

Maine Won't Wait as the Framework

Maine Won't Wait served as the framework for the research behind this report. Prior to any interviews, the strategies and actions outlined in the *Climate Action Plan* were analyzed for relevance to a potential state Climate Corps program. Throughout the interview process, each potential project outlined by interviewees was linked to one of the strategies. Many of the projects mentioned crossed strategy lines.

The strategies are as follows:

- A. Embrace the Future of Transportation in Maine
- B. Modernize Maine's Buildings
- C. Reduce Carbon Emissions in Energy and Industrial Sectors
- D. Grow Maine's Clean-Energy Economy and Protect Our Natural Resource Industries
- E. Protect Maine's Environment
- F. Build Healthy and Resilient Communities
- G. Invest in Climate-Ready Infrastructure
- H. Engage with Maine People and Communities²⁷

²⁷ Maine Climate Council. *Maine Won't Wait, a Four-Year Plan for Climate Action*.

This ambitious four-year plan is referenced throughout this report and is the grounding force behind a Maine Climate Corps.

Matrices to Assess the Information

A matrix was built to assess the priority projects for the Maine Climate Corps. This matrix considered the popularity (frequency), impact, and equity of each potential project that was mentioned during interviews. Each of these three categories (popularity, impact, and equity) was assigned an index number. The Popularity Index (PI) was based on the number of times something was mentioned in interviews; the Impact Index (II) was based on the number of *Maine Won't Wait* strategies it affects and how many agencies and nonprofits could be involved; and the Equity Index (EI) was based on whether the project had very positive, positive, or no impact on equity. These three indexes were combined to rate the projects against one another. This final index is known in this report as the PIE Index.

This matrix forms the basis for recommendations on initial Climate Corps projects, partnerships, and hosts.

Budget Survey

This online survey gathered information regarding what materials, resources, and support would be needed to move forward with hosting Maine Climate Corps members or administering a program. The survey was sent to interviewees who had identified themselves as being interested in hosting members or running a program.

Findings: Potential Projects

It should be noted there is a well-connected network of community organizations in Maine that were heavily represented among those interviewed. While the frequent mention of certain projects could be seen as bias, it is more likely that it represents consensus.

In addition, throughout the interviews people interpreted private partnerships to be ones that would develop among nonprofits, foundations, or private higher education institutions rather than for-profit entities.

The climate change impacts on public health were not explored extensively. Most public health professionals were preoccupied with the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it is likely the absence of public health-related climate corps projects is not a reflection of potential impacts or vulnerabilities, but rather a lack of capacity to participate in the work. It is our recommendation that the conversation with public health officials and health organizations continue as people and institutions adjust to COVID-19 and operations become more routine.

Popularity

The Popularity Index matrix had the highest rating equal to 13 and the lowest rating equal to 1. Of the projects, only 7 had a rating of 5 or over, and 18 had a rating of 2 or less. Note that the highest rated potential programs are also the most detailed.

The top projects in the Popularity Index are:

1. Community Resilience Planning (13)

Municipal or regional government bodies partner with a Climate Corps to implement community-based and data-driven climate planning, vulnerability assessments, and flooding assessments, while building local capacity.

2. “Lead by Example” (9)

Maine local, county, and regional governments, as well as nonprofits, have buildings that need to be made energy efficient. Climate Corps projects that address this need would upgrade the structures and give Corps members opportunities to demonstrate skills valuable to future employment.

3. Emergency Management Community Assistance (7)

Small communities lack the capacity that it takes to apply for federal and state emergency management agency assistance related to resilience, floodplain management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Corps members would fill that gap by engaging in community outreach and education, community surveys, and gathering data to strengthen local emergency management operations.

4. Home Energy Conservation and Management (7)

Climate Corps members would both teach homeowners how to take action to lower energy consumption and, for people needing hands-on assistance, weatherize or carry out light retrofitting. Members would also conduct energy audits and engage with the community through outreach and education about resources available to homeowners to reach their energy goals.

5. Invasive Species Monitoring & Management (7)

Maine Climate Corps members would engage in invasive species monitoring and management, train the general public to carry out these activities as citizen scientists, build upon the invasive species inventory, and grow the network of volunteers in the field.

6. Energy Education and Outreach (6)

Under the guidance of advising partners, Climate Corps members would educate community residents and organizations about energy use, conservation, management, and sources, and provide reliable consumer guidance. Tactics would aim to empower residents to take action in their own homes and make informed energy choices both personally and in collective decision-making.

7. Healthy Soils & Regenerative Agriculture Outreach (5)

There is a significant amount of carbon sequestering potential for farmers and woodlot owners in Maine. Members engaged in this Climate Corps project would conduct outreach, education, and technical assistance to develop and transition to regenerative practices that maximize carbon sequestration.

8. Community Readiness Assessments (Public Health) (4)

Similar to resilience planning, Corps members would complete vulnerability and strength assessments for communities with a specific focus on health. These would include monitoring water pollution levels and addressing the systems associated with those, assessing extreme weather vulnerabilities in shelters, hospital capacities, and the like. This would also include local capacity building, community outreach, and surveys of focus groups.

9. Aquatic Toxins Monitoring and Outreach (4)

Corps members would track and monitor aquatic toxins like *Vibrio* and Toxic Phytoplankton and build public outreach campaigns surrounding the issue. The members would also train citizen scientists to contribute to the work.

10. Community Solar Projects (4)

In collaboration with communities, Corps members would gather information and data required to successfully site and install community solar projects across the state.

11. Shoreline Monitoring and Stabilization (4)

Members would expand current shoreline monitoring and stabilizing projects, including living shoreline stabilization, green infrastructure, culvert monitoring and repair, and road vulnerability assessments.

Projects ranked 8-11 all have a Popularity Index score of 4 and thus all four have been included.

Impact

The Impact Index assessed the likelihood of success with the theory that the more agencies, hosts, and strategies a project could engage, the larger impact it could have. This rating was created by simply summing the number of strategies a project addresses, the number of agencies that could be involved, and the number of potential partners.

The top eleven projects in the Impact Index are:

1. Community Resilience Planning (17)

2. Energy Education and Outreach (12)

3. “Lead by Example” (12)

4. Healthy Soils and Regenerative Agriculture Outreach (12)

5. Ocean Acidification Monitoring (10)

6. Green Schools (10)

In collaboration with K-12 schools, Climate Corps members would lead groups of students in school-based sustainability initiatives that they would then bring into the greater community.

7. Local Foods Program (10)

Maine has a goal of sourcing 30% of food consumed within the state from in-state producers by 2030. Climate Corps members would partner with communities to plant and maintain community food forests, engage in public outreach to localize the food system, and build gleaning and preservation programs.

8. Community Solar Projects (10)

9. Invasive Species Monitoring and Management (9)

10. Shoreline Monitoring and Stabilization (9)

11. Aquatic Toxins Monitoring and Outreach (9)

Projects ranked 9-11 all have an Impact Index score of 9 and thus all three have been included.

Equity

The Equity Index was based on the impact that any given project was likely to have on communities with fewer resources and disadvantaged populations. The ratings are in comparison with one another. A rating of 0 was given to projects rated as “no foreseen impact,” 3 was given to projects rated as “positive impact,” and 6 was given to projects rated as “very positive impact.” The “very positive” project rating was reserved for those projects specifically focused on equitable causes. These rating values (0, 3, 6) were chosen within range of the Popularity Index and Impact Index.

The projects in the Equity Index that are rated as very positive (6) are:

○ *Preservation of Environmentally and Culturally Significant Places*

Maine has many historically, culturally, and environmentally significant sites that are at risk due to climate change. A Corps member would document these sites and track the impacts that climate change is having on such important areas, especially those significant to tribal communities. A program currently in operation that would fall under this program is the Maine Midden Minders.²⁸

○ *Communications for Vulnerable Populations*

Corps members would build and implement communications, outreach, and education strategies that are inclusive of vulnerable populations.

This is not a discrete project on its own but should be woven into each project of the Maine Climate Corps as it is an important piece of the work to address equity issues throughout the state. This pillar of the Corps is included in the section “Organizational Structure, Principles” which notes the hallmarks of a successful Climate Corps.

○ *Energy Education and Outreach*

○ *Alternative Transportation Safety Program Officers*

Corps members would provide public outreach and education on biker safety and disperse safety tools with specific consideration to vulnerable and transient populations.

²⁸ The University of Maine. 2021. “Maine Midden Minders.” Accessed on 1 November 2021. <https://umaine.edu/middenminders/>

- *Electric Bike Pilot Program*

Electric bikes offer an alternative city transportation to cars and buses. Corps members could plan and implement a pilot program on electric bike education and allocation to vulnerable populations.

- *Home Energy Conservation and Management*
- *Emergency Management Community Assistance*
- *Local Food Programs*
- *Broadband Coalition*

Corps members would provide support to municipalities and the state on expanding broadband to rural communities.

Findings: Priority Projects

To find the final Popularity, Impact, Equity (PIE) Index, the individual indexes were added to find a total value. The highest value was 33 and the lowest was 5. The potential partners noted in each priority project are not exhaustive lists, but rather organizations or agencies that noted interest, have experience in the area, or were mentioned as a fit for hosting a member or administering a program by other interviewees.

1. Community Resilience Planning (33)

Community Resilience Planning projects would contribute to Strategy F: Build Healthy and Resilient Communities, and Strategy G: Invest in Climate-Ready Infrastructure of *Maine Won't Wait*.

Corps members would be placed with municipalities or local nonprofits to assist with strength, inefficiency, and gap analysis for those that have not yet engaged with that work. The members could work through FEMA's Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT) and the locally developed List of Community Actions from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF).²⁹ GOPIF's inventory contains a list of 72 activities a community can take that are associated with *Maine Won't Wait* and works to assess what communities are already doing, and how they may expand to collectively address climate change in the State.^{30,31}

In addition to assessing the activities that communities can do to become more resilient, members would make flooding assessments in potentially affected communities. A suggestion noted in multiple interviews was to organize and maintain citizen science projects where the public takes photographs and supplies anecdotal evidence with a geotag and timestamp of specific areas that are determined by the municipality, county, or state to track the severity and frequency of flood events. This work can be combined with mapping using ArcGIS and story-mapping to support communities in their public outreach and education on climate change. Further, this project will include the technical assistance pieces such as other levels of information gathering, data mapping, community outreach, event organizing, and leading community discussions surrounding community-level resilience building.³²

This is a particularly important project to start as soon as possible, to lay the groundwork for the priority projects within individual communities. This also will serve as baseline research for allocating state and federal funding reserved for climate-related infrastructure projects as funds become available.³³

GPCOG's AmeriCorps Resilience Corps is a model that could be used in the planning for like-programs.

Potential partners in this work are Maine Emergency Management Agency, local emergency management agencies, GOPIF, Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC), Maine Geological Survey, Maine Coastal Program, Department of Environmental Protection, councils of government, GPCOG, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, Maine Development Foundation, Climate

²⁹ FEMA. 2021. "Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT)." Accessed on 7 November 2021. <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/resilience-analysis-and-planning-tool>

³⁰ Interview with Brian Ambrette, Governor's Office on Policy Innovation and the Future. 17 September 2021.

³¹ State of Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. November 2021. "Community Resilience Partnership." Accessed from <https://www.maine.gov/future/climate/community-resilience-partnership>

³² Interview with Julia Breul and Sara Mills-Knapp, Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG). 1 September 2021.

³³ Interview with Julia Breul and Sara Mills-Knapp, Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG).

Change Adaptation Providers Network (CCAP), the Municipal Planning Assistance Program, and Maine Sea Grant.

2. Energy Education and Outreach (24)

Projects within this category would contribute to Strategy A: Embrace the Future of Transportation in Maine, B: Modernize Maine’s Buildings, and H: Engage with Maine People and Communities.

This project would focus on raising awareness about energy efficiencies across households, businesses, communities, and individuals with the goal of reducing energy use and saving money. Public training sessions, information on rebate programs for home energy improvements, electric vehicle and carpooling education, community surveys on energy use, and general climate education should all be considered important aspects of the program.

This project should specifically target areas of need within low income and disadvantaged communities.

Potential partners in this work are the Department of Transportation, Maine Housing, Maine Clean Communities, Community Action Agencies, the Greater Portland Council of Governments, the Community College System, Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program, Efficiency Maine, the Governor’s Energy Office, and GoMaine.

3. “Lead by Example” (24)

“Lead by Example” projects would contribute to Strategy B: Modernize Maine’s Buildings, and Strategy D: Grow Maine’s Clean-Energy Economy and Protect Our Natural Resources Industries.

This is an opportune project for Maine Community Colleges to step into this Climate Corps space. This project would center itself on energy audits of government buildings, heat pump installations and cleaning, and would potentially serve as a pre-apprenticeship or service-learning opportunity with college energy and HVAC programs. The “Lead by Example” Climate Corps program would contribute to the goal of Governor Mills’ January 2020 Executive Order that outlines the strategies State agencies may implement to decrease their emissions and transition to clean power.³⁴

The Maine Apprenticeship Program requires 2000 hours, just 300 hours more than the minimum requirement for a full-time AmeriCorps term. It is recommended that conversations continue with community colleges to explore the potential of a program that would satisfy the requirements of an AmeriCorps term and an apprenticeship.³⁵ This opportunity would allow participants to leave their 11-month AmeriCorps term with their full benefits and a completed apprenticeship certificate. If this program is pursued, it could be a significant pipeline for the renewable energy workforce.

Potential partners in this work are Maine Housing, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Economic and Community Development, Community Colleges, Efficiency Maine, Governor’s Energy Office, and the Department of Labor.

4. Home Energy Conservation and Management (21)

Home energy projects would contribute to Strategy B: Modernize Maine’s Buildings, and Strategy D: Grow Maine’s Clean-Energy Economy and Protect Our Natural Resources Industries.

³⁴ Maine Climate Council. *Maine Won’t Wait, a Four-Year Plan for Climate Action.*

³⁵ Maine Department of Labor. 2021. “Maine Apprenticeship Program.” https://www.maine.gov/labor/jobs_training/apprenticeship/

This project would focus on the weatherization of low-income homes throughout Maine. This could include but would not be limited to window inserts, energy audits, and light weatherization and energy efficiency improvements, such as weather stripping and LED lightbulbs. The administrative organization supporting this project would collaborate with a network of energy efficiency experts for added services as well.

This project is another opportune space for the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System.

Potential partners in this work are Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program, Maine Housing, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Economic and Community Development, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System, Community Action Agencies, Efficiency Maine, Governor's Energy Office, and the Department of Labor.

5. Emergency Management Community Assistance (21)

This work would contribute to Strategy F: Build Healthy and Resilient Communities.

Anne Fuchs, Director of Mitigation, Planning, and Recovery at the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) noted a distinct need to help municipalities that lack the capacity to apply for assistance that would increase their ability to address climate change. Climate Corps members would conduct vulnerability assessments and gather data to support the town in their efforts to address climate disaster and emergency preparedness. This project would increase municipal capacity to apply for and receive assistance to address climate vulnerabilities, natural disasters, and other emergencies.³⁶ This project has the potential to be a remote position for a Corps member.

GPCOG's AmeriCorps Resilience Corps is a model that could be used in the planning for like-programs.

The Maine Service Fellows program is well suited to respond to this need and no organization has expressed interest in developing such a program to support.

Potential partners on this work are Maine Emergency Management Agency, Island Institute, Volunteer Maine, the Maine Service Fellows Advisory Committee, local emergency management agencies, GOPIF, Land Use Planning Council (LUPC), Maine Geological Survey, Department of Environmental Protection, councils of government, GPCOG's AmeriCorps Resilience Corps, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, and Climate Change Adaptation Providers Network (CCAP).

6. Healthy Soils and Regenerative Agriculture Outreach and Education (20)

This Outreach and Education project would contribute to Strategy D: Grow Maine's Clean-Energy Economy and Protect our Natural Resource Industries, Strategy E: Protect Maine's Environment, and H: Engage with Maine People and Communities.

These projects would assist woodlot and farm owners in developing and practicing ways to maximize carbon sequestration and minimize carbon output. Public outreach and education would encourage farmers to adopt certain practices and help them implement those practices. This could be in partnership with the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), "a voluntary conservation program that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals," and provides financial and technical support in environmentally-friendly practices.³⁷ Further, the outreach

³⁶ Interview with Anne Fuchs, Maine Emergency Management Agency. 19 August 2021.

³⁷ Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. February 2021. "A Guide to NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)." Accessed from https://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/integrated_pest_management/documents/FruitVegGrowersGuideEQIP2021a.pdf.

would extend to rural landowners and woodlot owners, assisting them in taking advantage of state programs that encourage healthy forestry practices.

Potential partners on this work are the Maine Conservation Corps, DACF, DEP, land trusts, the Nature Conservancy, Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment, Maine FFA, and the Maine Land Trust Network.

7. Local Foods Program (18)

This program would contribute to Strategy F: Build Healthy and Resilient Communities, and Strategy H: Engage with Maine People and Communities.

This project would help Maine reach the goal of Maine-produced food being at least 30% of food consumed within the state. Some of the tasks associated with this project are planting and maintaining community food forests; gleaned, harvesting, and preserving food for food kitchens; community outreach on localizing the food system; connecting farms to resources; building school gardens for learning opportunities; and working with low income and disadvantaged communities to assist in efforts to grow their own food.

Potential partners in this work are Maine Conservation Corps, Maine FFA, DACF, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment, Cooperative Extension, Beginning Farmer Resource Network, Cultivating Community, Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Maine Farmland Trust, and FoodCorps AmeriCorps.

8. Community Solar Projects (17)

These projects would contribute to Strategy D: Grow Maine's Clean-Energy Economy and Protect Our Natural Resource Industries.

Corps members in these projects would conduct outreach and education to communities on opportunities for solar siting and solar installations. In a technical sense, they would have the opportunity to map where best to place a project, build community capacity, facilitate community engagement, and make a real impact in renewable energy production.

This project could be modeled after the work with which Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) is currently engaging.³⁸

Potential partners in this work are Maine Conservation Corps, DACF, GEO, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Land Trusts, Maine Land Trust Network, UMaine Cooperative Extension, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, and Southern Maine Solar Collaborative.

9. Invasive Species Monitoring and Management (16)

These projects would contribute to Strategy E: Protect Maine's Environment.

A few of the problematic invasive species worth monitoring and managing are the Emerald Ash Borer, Browntail Moth, and Green Crabs. Such a program would have Corps members apply pesticides, monitor species, conduct public education and outreach campaigns, cultivate partnerships with land trusts, and build a network of volunteers that they lead seasonally to manage and monitor invasive species.

³⁸ Interview with Paul Shumacher, Abbie Sherwin, and Karina Graeter, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission. 24 September 2021.

Potential partners in this work are the Maine Conservation Corps, Maine Coastal Program, DEP, Maine Natural Areas Program, Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Casco Bay Estuary Partnerships, Land Trusts, and Wells Estuarine Research Reserve.

10. Shoreline Monitoring and Stabilization (16)

These projects would contribute to Strategy E: Protect Maine’s Environment, and Strategy G: Invest in Climate-Ready Infrastructure.

This would include coastline and living shoreline monitoring, public outreach and education campaigns for Picture Post and cataloging areas prone to sea level rise.³⁹ Further, Corps members would be the boots on the ground for efforts dealing with retreat, erosion, shoreline stabilization, and nature-based stormwater management. Within the community, members could promote green practices and how-to guides for rain gardens and erosion control on private property. Specific green infrastructure projects on private property could include but are not limited to rain barrel education and distribution, and community composting programs.

Potential partners on this work are the Maine Conservation Corps, Maine Geological Survey, the Department of Environmental Protection and Nonpoint Training Center, the Sierra Club, Maine Sea Grant, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, and Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve.

11. Green Schools (16)

These projects would contribute to Strategy B: Modernize Maine’s Buildings, and Strategy F: Build Healthy and Resilient Communities of *Maine Won’t Wait*.

The Department of Education (DOE) is already engaging in a significant amount of work with the Nature-Based Education Consortium, integrating climate change into lesson plans and curriculums. This Green Schools program would provide ample support to teachers and another level of education and experience for students. The suggested program would embed Climate Corps members into schools where they would work with students toward sustainability initiatives within schools and the greater community. As an opportunity for service-learning, these groups could engage students in developing and implementing their own initiatives, including but not limited to energy plans, waste diversion, and composting efforts. The students would then serve the greater community by expanding those programs through municipal buildings, community outreach and engagement efforts, and other students within the community.

There is potential for funding from the Sierra Club Maine Chapter if the case can be made that this program relates to Sierra Club’s clean schools or other organizational campaigns.⁴⁰ It is the recommendation of this report that DOE, DACF, and Conservation Corps convene further to develop such a program.

Potential partners in this work are the Maine Conservation Corps, Dept. of Education, DEP, the Mitchell Center at the University of Maine Orono, the Sierra Club, Maine Environmental Educators Association (MEEA), The Nature Conservancy, and the Climate Table.

³⁹ The University of Oklahoma Earth Observation and Monitoring Facility. 2022. “Picture Post.” 10 January 2022. <https://picturepost.ou.edu/index.jsp>

⁴⁰ Interview with Nathan Robbins (DEP), Ania Wright (Sierra Club)

Findings: Financial Resources

The Budget Survey served as a focus group to get a better picture of the needs of organizations in hosting or administering a program. These responses are important factors in recommendations about program design:

- **57%** indicated they could reach a major goal within 2 years of the program start
- **79%** said they would conduct the project with partners
- **86%** would only request 5 or fewer Corps members (if federally funded, grants of \$50,000 - \$125,000 for 1-5 members could be an inefficient approach to program administration; larger collaborations would spread the administrative burden)
- **67%** could not fund Corps member training, local travel, work tools or technology from local resources
- **75%** could cover project supplies/materials from existing or known financial resources
- **67%** would fund project staff training, professional development, travel, work tools, technology from existing or known financial resources
- **75%** indicated they did not have an existing or known source of financial support for a project director/manager

The results of the survey were consistent with interviews with stakeholders, agencies, and organizations, and with Volunteer Maine's understanding of local organizational capacity to run AmeriCorps programs.

A key survey result is that 75% of respondents said they did not have readily identifiable sources of support for project staff wages and benefits, Corps member tools and materials, Corps training or professional development, or Corps member travel. A successful Maine Climate Corps requires these sources of support and thus the report recommends that the Legislature appropriate funds to support the administrative positions required to administer Corps programs across the state.

Findings: Organizational Structure

Principles

The Maine Climate Corps should be based on a set of principles to which each program and project subscribe. These principles should be supported by the Climate Corps Coordinator, a newly-built role within Volunteer Maine, who will continue the work described within this report and facilitate continued collaboration with the Maine Climate Council. The subjects of these principles should be service, equity, good science, training, collaboration, and connection to the State's climate goals. These should be considered hallmarks of a strong, likely-to-succeed Maine Climate Corps program that should be a model across the country.

These principles were derived through research into similar programs across the country and consultation with environmental professionals and the Maine Climate Council.

A. Address Climate Challenges

All programs under a Climate Corps should address the challenges associated with climate change. The programs should use the State's climate goals and initiatives as the framework for projects. At present, the strategies that are permissible for projects relevant to the State's climate goals are those listed within *Maine Won't Wait*:

- a. *Embrace the Future of Transportation in Maine*
- b. *Modernize Maine's Buildings*
- c. *Reduce Carbon Emissions in Energy and Industrial Sectors*
- d. *Grow Maine's Clean-Energy Economy and Protect Our Natural Resource Industries,*
- e. *Protect Maine's Environment*
- f. *Build Healthy and Resilient Communities*
- g. *Invest in Climate-Ready Infrastructure*
- h. *Engage with Maine People and Communities.*⁴¹

B. Service

The importance of service cannot be overstated in addressing climate change. This component builds community buy-in, allows communities that otherwise would not have the capacity to address issues to tackle them, provides workforce development opportunities for a changing employment landscape, and engages the community in ways that traditional employment cannot.

C. Equity

According to the Equity Subcommittee of the Climate Council, the Climate Corps should aim to have at least 40% of program investments be toward vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Further, all Corps programs should consider language barriers, cultural differences, and other challenges that communities may face in accessing these service opportunities, both from a host and member perspective.⁴² It is the recommendation of this report to consult with the Equity Subcommittee throughout the development process of the Climate Corps in order to keep with the overarching action plan goal to "Advance Equity through Maine's Climate Response" and hopefully reach the goal of 40%.

⁴¹ Maine Climate Council. *Maine Won't Wait, a Four-Year Plan for Climate Action*.

⁴² Interview with Jessica Scott, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. 31 August 2021.

An equity concern raised throughout the interview process was whether the living stipend for AmeriCorps members would be increased. If the Build Back Better Act passes in the Senate, which has not occurred at the time of writing this report, the living stipend will be raised significantly to the equivalent of \$15/hour. Additionally, AmeriCorps programs provide wraparound services such as healthcare and accident insurance, transportation to service locations, materials and tools, and childcare for full-time members, adding value to the opportunity. If any of the potential projects moves forward outside of the purview of AmeriCorps, it is the recommendation of this report that program administrators provide those benefits listed above as the minimum.

Still, a significant barrier, regardless of pay, is the lack of affordable housing in Maine. The discussion with potential administering organizations and hosts regarding offering housing to Corps members should be continued as planning for the Maine Climate Corps advances.

One of the original potential projects is titled “Communications for Vulnerable Populations.” It is the recommendation of this report that instead of making this one succinct project, that this is a piece of the work that all Climate Corps projects prioritize. The development of climate change communications and outreach materials for vulnerable populations, New Mainers, low income communities, differently-abled individuals, and rural communities should be a pillar in this work.

D. Good Science

All programs considered should be well-researched and based in good science. These projects should have measurable outcomes that are supported with scientific evidence and should only be accepted as projects if they fall within these parameters. Institutions providing guidance in this regard may include but are not limited to federal agencies such as EPA and CDC; state agencies such as Maine CDC, DACF, DEP; and academic institutions. The Climate Corps Coordinator can provide program capacity to help identify relevant studies and models or otherwise support professional evaluation to further the goals of the programs.

E. Training

A set of trainings should be provided at the beginning of each service term to all Climate Corps participants as a cohort. These trainings should, at a minimum, address diversity, equity, and inclusion; climate change in Maine; basic climate science; environmental justice; public outreach and education; and the basics of nonviolent communication.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provides free trainings that should be taken advantage of by the Climate Corps as a whole, or for specific programs. Some of the trainings that they offer are in planning effective projects, facilitation, understanding stakeholders, conducting interviews, leading focus groups, writing effective survey questions, adaptation planning for coastal communities, risk communication, nature based solutions for coastal hazards (living shoreline), and economics of coastal communities.⁴³

Other trainings within the scope of each project should be provided by hosts or sponsors. When possible, trainings should be shared across all programs to build community within the Climate Corps, increase opportunities for professional development, and grow individual skills.

As climate science and mitigation, adaptation, and resilience techniques advance, this list of trainings for all Corps members should evolve as well.

⁴³ Interview with Danielle Boudreau, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 10 November 2021.

F. Connection and Collaboration

All Maine Climate Corps projects should remain connected to the State's climate goals and strategies. At present, those goals are listed within *Maine Won't Wait*. However, as the State continues to make progress on those goals and as climate change advances, Climate Corps programs will need to keep in stride and evolve.

The connection to these goals should be maintained through a Climate Corps Coordinator position at Volunteer Maine. This individual would coordinate with GOPIF and state agencies to keep programs connected to climate-related work and foster collaboration between agencies and organizations. This person would also facilitate partnerships and ensure that as organizations are working on similar goals there is no competition for member slots or for host placements. Through this work, the Climate Corps will build a powerful network and community of change.

G. Program Administration

Organizations that host service programs should show that they have strong financial management and capacity to manage and support Corps members.

Climate Corps Sectors

The areas of expertise that are recommended as sectors of the Maine Climate Corps are Coastal Zone, Transportation, Energy, Housing, Land and Fresh Water Preservation, Community Resilience, Education (K-12 and Community, and Public. These recommendations are based on *Maine Won't Wait* and the interviews conducted throughout this study.

Coastal Zone

The University of Maine at Orono has noted interest in being the administrative organization for a Coastal Zone Climate Corps, as they have expertise in coastal resilience and resources to support such a wide-reaching program. Unfortunately, the time has passed for the University of Maine to participate in the AmeriCorps State and National competition for programs that would begin in the Fall of 2022. However, this leaves the University with nearly a year to plan, gather funding, and establish the groundwork for such a program in time for the 2023 competition in the Fall of 2022. It is the recommendation of this report that state agencies engaging in climate-related work in the coastal zone collaborate with the University of Maine to build a robust program model. This will make the proposed Corps more likely to succeed in the competition for AmeriCorps funding.

Priority projects identified in the PIE Framework for this group are Invasive Species Monitoring & Management, Shoreline Monitoring & Stabilization, and Community Resilience Planning.

Transportation

The transportation sector is responsible for a significant amount of carbon emissions each year, with 54% of total Maine emissions resulting from transportation in 2017.⁴⁴ While this is certainly significant and is the subject of the first strategy of *Maine Won't Wait*, the potential for Climate Corps members within that realm requires additional research and conversations, as the potential projects are less equitable. For example, the financial burden of Electric Vehicles (EV) and the geographic restrictions of public or alternative transportation in rural areas of the State make establishing a transportation-focused climate corps program less of a priority than more equitable programs. However, it remains a

⁴⁴ Madore, David. 13 January 2020. "Maine DEP Releases Report on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Showing Maine on Track to Meet Immediate Goals." <https://www.maine.gov/dep/news/news.html?id=1988154>

priority to continue this conversation and build a program that will help Maine achieve this important climate goal to “Embrace the Future of Transportation.”

As it stands, hosting “test drive” events to educate the public about electric vehicles, expanding and implementing the Bicycle Coalition of Maine’s Imagine People Here program, and working with the transient community to provide safe biking training courses, bike repairs, and disperse safety gear are some potential projects for more populated communities.

Transportation projects should be further developed by the Climate Corps Coordinator in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and the Maine Climate Council.

Energy

Reducing non-renewable energy use and increasing the availability of alternative energy sources through upgrades in technology and increased efficiencies is vital in Maine’s climate goals. This Corps program would focus on community solar projects, energy use in public buildings, and building the workforce in energy audits and efficiencies.

This is an ideal space for the Maine Community College System to bring together the apprenticeship model with service-learning.

Of the potential projects listed, Community Solar Projects, “Lead by Example,” and Energy Outreach & Education should be emphasized as priority projects within this program.

Housing

This sector of the Climate Corps is a fitting place for a pre-apprenticeship program at community colleges with energy, HVAC, and related programs. The opportunity provides ample on-the-job experience and would provide connections for participants within their fields of interest to eventually be placed for an apprenticeship and then onward to the workforce. It is the suggestion of this report that the Climate Corps Coordinator cultivate connections with community colleges to engage in this work solely on municipal or state buildings, both contributing to the “Lead by Example” goals of *Maine Won’t Wait* and the goals of building the clean energy workforce.

These projects are crucial in increasing capacity of the State to respond to the energy needs of individuals and families, especially for low income and disenfranchised communities. Further, these projects will develop a workforce capable of addressing changing needs of Maine communities which will relieve some pressure from energy auditors and energy workers who are feeling that there is too much work to be done, but not enough hands to do it.⁴⁵

Land and Fresh Water Preservation

Land-based Climate Corps projects are within the statute of the Maine Conservation Corps and thus DACF, the agency within which the Conservation Corps is housed, should continue oversight of such programs.

It is the recommendation of this report that the Conservation Corps expand their current scope of projects to be more supportive of the State’s climate action goals. The immediate priority projects listed above that would fall under Maine Conservation Corps are Healthy Soils & Regenerative

⁴⁵ Interview with Matthew Damon, Penobscot Home Performance. 6 October 2021.

Agriculture Outreach and Education, Local Food Programs, Community Solar Projects, and Invasive Species Monitoring & Management.

At present, the Conservation Corps is mostly considered as a trail crew and state contractor, but there is significant potential for their growth given the alignment of their statute with the strategies of *Maine Won't Wait*. To achieve this, it has been noted that there needs to be an expansion of state funds and support.⁴⁶ While it is not within the reach of this report to find such funding, it is our recommendation that the Conservation Corps build their budget with the above projects in mind.

Community Resilience

Providing support to communities in addressing climate vulnerabilities, building systems for adaptation and mitigation, and growing community capacity are vital pieces of addressing resilience. A unified Climate Corps across the State could build a coalition with a set of standards that are supported by the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future.

The Maine Resilient Communities Partnership and previous pilot resilience planning program throughout the State provides an opportunity to support central and northern counties in their climate efforts. The pilot program built a network that can be leveraged to support a program that would build the workforce and community capacity in climate resilience projects in communities that receive the Maine Resilient Communities grants but lack the capacity and resources to complete the projects.⁴⁷

Resilience work has already begun with an AmeriCorps Resilience Corps at the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG). This program should be viewed as a model for the work outside of York and Cumberland counties, but should not be expanded at this time as their expertise is within the southern part of the State.

Education (K-12 and community)

While there are levels of outreach and education that can and should be integrated into each Climate Corps program, a specific Education sector of the Climate Corps should be considered to house a "Green Schools" program in partnership with DOE. As the Department of Education is in the process of expanding climate-based education programs for teachers, this program should be built in tandem to supplement any DOE programs rather than compete with them.

Public Health

Public health-related climate issues, particularly tickborne illness and weather-related illness, are crucial for the State to address explicitly. However, as the State's public health organizations have been overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020, the capacity for developing such a program is currently unclear.

⁴⁶ Interview with Doug Back and Sara Knowles, Maine Conservation Corps. 10 November 2021.

⁴⁷ Interview with Sarah Curran and Brian Ambrette. 3 December 2021.

Comparative State Programs

Programs in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota, Oregon, and Vermont were contacted for interviews, as they all are at various stages of building or administering climate-related AmeriCorps programs. The variety exemplified by these programs shows there are many ways to structure an environmentally-focused Corps program, and that structure is largely dependent on the organizations and agencies already operating within this area of work. Leveraging the currently operating programs gives a budding initiative like Climate Corps the opportunity to thrive, as the organizations are already familiar with what it takes to build a program and have working relationships within the community.

California

California's Climate Action Corps is operated by California Volunteers, the state service commission. This Corps is a *coalition* of members and hosts working to address a broad scope of issues throughout the state. The program was built by leveraging existing programs and reallocating member slots for the launch of a pilot Climate Action Corps, a statewide program solely focused on climate-related service. In addition to the traditional full-time, 11-month term, the Climate Action Corps also offers a summer program that allows college students and other individuals unable to commit to a full year the opportunity to participate in the program.

While most of the project training for Climate Action Corps is on the job, there is approximately one week at the start of the term for trainings as a cohort in topics relevant to all members: climate change, environmental science, community engagement, volunteerism, outreach, and environmental justice. There are additional training and professional development opportunities throughout the program as well.⁴⁸

In the pilot term beginning January 2021, 63 fellows focused on edible food recovery, wildfire prevention, and urban greening. In the following two-month summer term, over 200 members worked on specific climate actions like planting trees or climate education. In the 2021-2022 term, 50 fellows will work on climate assessments, edible food recovery, wildfire prevention, and urban greening.⁴⁹

Although this program is unsurprisingly different from what Maine Climate Corps will likely look like due to differences in size, demographics, and environmental issues, California shows great potential in addressing equity by providing shorter service terms for students and others who cannot, due to financial limitations or time constrictions, commit to 11 months of service.

Connecticut

The **University of Connecticut (UConn) Climate Corps** is an example of what a potential community-based *service-learning* opportunity could look like within higher education. In this program, students spend one semester in a course related to climate change, local government, and local climate problems, and then serve their community in the second semester. In the latter, individuals are placed within an organization or municipality build and then implement a plan. Most of this work is done remotely to assure that students can continue their other courses during the semester, which allows students to work all over the state and allows a wider breadth of students to participate in the program, as it does not require transportation. While the first semester of this program offers some

⁴⁸ Interview with Kif Scheuer, Climate Action Corps. 17 September 2021.

⁴⁹ California Volunteers, Office of the Governor. "Climate Action Corps, Become a Fellow. 2021. <https://www.californiavolunteers.ca.gov/sign-up-to-be-a-california-climate-action-corps-fellow/>

background and training, much training in building and implementing plans is done throughout the second semester, with the assistance from the University.⁵⁰

A similar service-learning model to the UConn Climate Corps could be implemented in the University of Maine System or within the Community College System. This should also be considered an option to build capacity in more rural areas by providing remote service opportunities for members of all ages.

Colorado

Serve Colorado, the state service commission and administrative agency for Colorado's AmeriCorps State program, recently announced the creation of a **Colorado Climate Corps** that will work to "combat wildfires and floods, protect public lands."⁵¹ In addition to addressing these pressing, extreme issues, the Climate Corps will also have public education and minor home retrofitting campaigns, and will likely eventually work on resilience and climate action planning for local communities. This cross-sector program will bring partners together to train members on community engagement, basic resilience, climate change, and community capacity building. This is currently a *teams* model, but will likely also have a *coalition* aspect as the program grows.⁵²

The Colorado Climate Corps is in a period of growth but should continue to be looked to for ingenuity in resilience planning and retrofitting campaigns.

Minnesota

Minnesota GreenCorps is a fantastic example of a climate change-focused AmeriCorps program. This program was developed and launched by Serve Minnesota, the state service commission, and is under the direction of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA). The PCA administers this *coalition model* program of 50 members per year who are each placed with a different organization. Other state agencies oversee different pieces of the program and offer additional trainings, opportunities for mentorship, and special programs to members. This program began in 2008 and has strategically and methodically grown since, with more applications for members (100-250 candidates per year) and hosts (approximately 100 organizations per year) than the program can support, and more statewide demand for the work than the 50 members have capacity to respond.

Each member of the Minnesota GreenCorps has a mentor; topic training on a quarterly basis; a small allowance for additional trainings, conferences, and workshops; and has other opportunities for community engagement. The program prides itself on the sense of community of the Corps brought about by these shared trainings and strong relationships between members.⁵³

Some of their projects and respective placements include community outreach to increase biking and walking with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, performing public building retrofits and increasing vehicle electrification in the City of Golden Valley, implementing energy efficiency and renewable energies with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, expanding and developing environmental programs for youth with University of Minnesota Extension, and improving waste strategies with Anoka County.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Interview with Juliana Barrett, Connecticut Sea Grant. 29 September 2021.

⁵¹ AmeriCorps. "Colorado Tackles the Climate Crisis through Creation of State's First Climate Corps." 15 September 2021. <https://www.americorps.gov/blogs/2021-09-15/colorado-tackles-climate-crisis-through-creation-states-first-climate-corps>

⁵² Interview with Paul Brown, Emily Worm, Kyla Mittal, and Danny Fisher; Serve Colorado. 1 October 2021.

⁵³ Interview with Cristina Vilella and Kevin McDonald, Minnesota GreenCorps. 20 October 2021.

⁵⁴ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. "Project Summaries, 50 Member Positions, 2021-2022." May 2020. <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/p-mgc1-14.pdf>

Maine Climate Corps should look to Minnesota GreenCorps for guidance in the organizational structure of a coalition model. Beyond that, the program has a strong focus on workforce development that should also be integrated into Maine programs as it is a notable aspect of a Maine Climate Corps per the guidance of the Maine Climate Council and *Maine Won't Wait*.

Oregon

In June of 2021, the legislative assembly of Oregon enacted into law the statute for an **Oregon Climate Corps**. The University of Oregon Institute for a Sustainable Environment Climate Masters program will administer this *coalition* model program with the goals of educating the public, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and addressing climate change challenges. The statute states that members will be “educated on projects meant to address climate challenges, including but not limited to:

- a. Carbon sequestration projects such as local community tree-planting initiatives.
- b. Climate initiatives that emphasize affordable and easily implemented actions for homes, local communities, private businesses, schools and public entities.
- c. Educational projects to increase the implementation of cost-effective, easily achievable changes in practices.
- d. Projects related to renewable energy technologies.
- e. Energy conservation and efficiency projects, such as home weatherization and the installation of solar panels and other renewable energy technologies.
- f. Projects to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from transportation, from manufacturing and from food and produce use and acquisition.”⁵⁵

Aside from the statute and broad mention of the program, additional details of the Oregon Climate Corps are not publicly available at the time of the writing of this report.

The Oregon Climate Corps Statute and service-learning model are pertinent to Maine, as it is a recommendation that the Maine Climate Corps be added to the Volunteer Maine Statute, and that the University of Maine System or Community College System build Climate Corps programs with service-learning opportunities.

Vermont

SerVermont runs multiple programs relevant to climate change without a specific state initiative establishing them. In general, Vermont’s service programs already tend toward the environmental space, so a natural progression was to move toward specific programs pertaining to climate change.

Environmental Careers and Opportunities AmeriCorps (ECO VT) is geared toward recent college graduates interested in water quality and waste prevention. This program works on projects like rain garden installations, cover cropping, riparian buffers, and reducing phosphorus in Lake Champlain.⁵⁶ While not explicitly focused on climate change resilience, mitigation, or adaptation, the waste stream is a significant greenhouse gas emitter and water issues related to climate change certainly are growing more severe.

Lyndon Economic Opportunity AmeriCorps Program focuses on offering STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and having some level of focus within natural science education and

⁵⁵Oregon Volume 13, Title 36A, Chapter 468A. Section 468A.290. 26 June 2021. https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_468a.290

⁵⁶ Interview with Philip Kolling, SerVermont. 13 October 2021.

farm-to-school education. This model should be looked at for guidance in any Climate Corps programs that include K-12 schools.

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board AmeriCorps ties together providing affordable housing with land preservation, stewardship, ecosystem services, and conservation. This program works on providing access to green space for affordable housing programs, retrofitting mobile homes into zero energy modular homes, and weatherization projects.^{57,58}

Finally, and most relevant to Maine, **Vermont Youth Conservation Corps AmeriCorps** is a *team* model that allows youth to work within small groups, guided by leaders. Crews complete projects together and each position within the crew has a different set of prerequisites. There are positions for “Pro Crew Members and Leaders,” “Day Crew Members and Leaders,” and “Camping Crew Members and Leaders.”⁵⁹ This program is similar to the Maine Conservation Corps but includes positions for younger people to get involved. Their projects range from volunteering on their farm, learning sustainable agriculture practices and responsible land use, running the farm stand, building and maintaining trails, improving wildlife habitat, improving state park facilities, and reducing erosion.^{60,61} Generally, crew leaders are college graduates and crew members are often in high school with interest in environmental or agricultural work.⁶²

⁵⁷ State of Vermont, SerVermont. 2021. “AmeriCorps in Vermont.” Visited on 5 November 2021. <https://servermont.vermont.gov/ameri-corps-state-programs>

^{58,59} Interview with Philip Kolling.

⁵⁹ Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. 2021. “Apply → “Leadership Positions.” Visited on 3 November 2021. <https://www.vycc.org/apply/lead/>

⁶⁰ Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. 2021. “Food and Farm.” Visited on 3 November 2021. <https://www.vycc.org/farm/>

⁶¹ Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. 2021. “Conservation.” Visited on 3 November 2021. <https://www.vycc.org/conservation/>

⁶² Interview with Philip Kolling.

Recommendations

The Commission has eight specific recommendations for the Legislature to support climate initiatives and grow the workforce.

1. **Maine Climate Corps be structured as a set of programs.**
2. **Programs operating as part of Maine Climate Corps be proposed by a coalition of organizations committed to the program's priority for action and a member of the coalition takes responsibility for administering the program as the lead sponsor.**
3. **Authorize programming in 8 climate-related areas to give Climate Corps the greatest latitude in tackling climate impacts with proven tactics:**
 - a. Coastal Zone
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Energy
 - d. Housing
 - e. Land and Fresh Water Preservation
 - f. Community Resilience
 - g. Education (K-12 and community)
 - h. Public Health
4. **Based on current science and expressed need of Maine communities, prioritize for action 11 project areas:**
 - a. Community Resilience Planning
 - b. Energy Education and Outreach
 - c. "Lead by Example"
 - d. Home Energy Conservation and Management
 - e. Emergency Management Community Assistance
 - f. Healthy Soils and Regenerative Agriculture Outreach and Education
 - g. Local Foods Program
 - h. Community Solar Projects
 - i. Invasive Species Monitoring and Management
 - j. Shoreline Monitoring and Stabilization
 - k. Green Schools
5. **The Maine Climate Corps be established as an amendment to the Maine Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) statute in order to ensure the purpose, structure, standards, and responsibility for coordination is clearly established.**
6. **A Climate Corps Coordinator at Volunteer Maine provide state leadership.**
7. **Direct state agencies to coordinate climate-related funding for projects so that the human resources Climate Corps brings to bear can be paired with federal project financial resources to maximize scale and scope of those funds.**
8. **Leverage the federal climate corps resources that will flow through AmeriCorps by appropriating state funding for corps programs' leadership (a local match expense) and supporting the state corps, Maine Service Fellows, so it can help the most rural communities do the essential planning and preparation for successful climate corps action.**

Conclusion

Maine can be a climate leader with the establishment of a Climate Corps. The State already is a leader in state-level climate work by developing *Maine Won't Wait*, an aspirational climate plan that meets needs of the community in terms of workforce development, environmental goals, energy use, and resilience work.

Like Oregon, and like the Maine Conservation Corps, the formal establishment of a Maine Climate Corps with a legislative statute will ensure that this climate work will continue and that Maine will be at the forefront of workforce development in an evolving employment market while addressing crucial and pressing threats due to climate change.

There is clear interest across nonprofits and agencies to establish a formal Climate Corps to assist their work in meeting the goals of *Maine Won't Wait* and beyond. The momentum and excitement over climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation in Maine and across the country should be leveraged immediately, creating an opportunity for the State to become the leader of climate workforce development in the Northeast.

Appendix: H.P. 533 – L.D. 722

H.P. 533 – L.D. 722 Resolve, To Study the Establishment of the Maine Climate Corps

APPROVED

JUNE 8, 2021

BY GOVERNOR

CHAPTER

25

RESOLVES

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-ONE

H.P. 533 - L.D. 722

Resolve, To Study the Establishment of the Maine Climate Corps

Sec. 1. Service projects; Maine Climate Corps. Resolved: That the Maine Commission for Community Service, established under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 7501, shall study and identify short-term projects and tasks in state agencies that could be made into service projects for residents of the State. The commission shall provide the basis for an establishment of the Maine Climate Corps as proposed in the Maine Climate Council's climate action plan, "Maine Won't Wait: A Four-year Plan for Climate Action." The study under this section must include consideration of how to best structure a Maine Climate Corps program to address shifting and expanding climate challenges that can be addressed by the Maine Climate Corps in the future and to allow for long-term service projects. The commission shall also study existing service programs to identify potential hosts for the Maine Climate Corps, along with identifying possible public and private partnerships. The commission shall submit a report based on its findings to the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources by January 31, 2022.

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Thank you to those who provided valuable insight and feedback in the making of this report.

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About Volunteer Maine

Volunteer Maine was established in 1994 by Executive Order and under State statute in 1995. The 25 board members of the Volunteer Maine Commission are appointed by the Governor to three-year terms and each represents a specific segment of Maine's volunteer sector. The Commission is Maine government's partner for the federal Corporation for National Service.

On October 16, 2019, the Maine Commission for Community Service adopted Volunteer Maine as its new public identity. The ME Department of Education is its fiscal agent.

Volunteer Maine's mission is to foster and inspire community service and volunteerism to address critical needs in the State of Maine. The Commission is guided by its core values and beliefs that service:

- engenders personal and civic responsibility that is fundamental to an inclusive, civil society;
- is a strategy for solving community problems;
- strengthens communities by cultivating a sense of civic identity and common purpose; and
- works best when it is community-driven and government-supported.

The Commission aims to impact the capacity, sustainability, effectiveness, and efficiency of Maine's volunteer sector by serving:

- managers of volunteers,
- Maine national service grantees,
- public and private nonprofit organizations seeking to engage volunteers, and
- public and private agencies seeking to develop national service programs.

Volunteer Maine's work includes:

- making, administering and evaluating volunteer program grants;
- developing managers of volunteers;
- fostering adoption of high-quality volunteer management practices;
- providing support to organizations applying for or implementing national service programs;
- raising awareness of volunteer sector issues through research related to the status of volunteering and volunteer management; and
- promoting service as a strategy.

It seeks to effectively use its assets:

- a unique statewide focus on volunteerism;
- the network of AmeriCorps alumni and Senior Corps volunteers;
- superior volunteer management training and capacity building;
- technical assistance capability and certified trainers;
- knowledge, thought leadership, innovation; and
- skill in convening diverse stakeholders.

Volunteer Maine is sustained by resources from the Corporation for National and Community Service, training fees from non-national service participants, in-kind donations of goods and service, a small state appropriation, the Maine Volunteer Foundation, and other private funding.



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