CCLC
Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council

Correctional Conservation Collaborative: Achieving Pennsylvania Forestry Goals through Workforce Development

Report #5

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GIT/CCC Executive Summary

The Correctional Conservation Collaborative (CCC) is an existing program sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (PA DCNR), in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC), and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, to provide pre-release green workforce training at state correctional institutions (SCIs). Programs that teach arboriculture, riparian forest buffers, and workforce skills have been piloted at several SCIs.

Upon seeing the success of this initial effort and opportunities to expand and formalize the program, DCNR staff worked with the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) to refine and further develop CCC program resources, including a program manual, for CBT's 2019 Request for Proposals for the Chesapeake Bay Goal Implementation Team (GIT). The effort was included in the RFP as Scope of Work #10.

As the successful bidder, the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council (CCLC) team has been working on the project and has completed five separate reports addressing the scope elements. This Executive Summary provides an analysis of the CCC program and recommendations for the future of the program. The CCLC team has been honored to work with DCNR staff on this effort, as their dedication and innovation launched the program and positioned it to be a significant advance in the Chesapeake Bay restoration program. The program combines workforce training with environmental restoration in a way that is meaningful for both categories.

The remainder of this Executive Summary addressed six key questions about the program, and in so doing, summarizes some of the CCLC Scope #10 reports and findings:

1. Are there relevant models and lessons learned for the CCC as it continues to grow?
2. Is there an adequate population within SCIs for the CCC to expand?
3. Are there adequate field sites on SCI property or in surrounding communities where CCC participants can get hands-on experience with riparian forest buffers?
4. Does the CCC have structure and flexibility for different types of SCIs?
5. Would the CCC credential provide a realistic path to employment for participants?
6. What is needed for continued success of the CCC program?

1. Are there relevant models and lessons learned for the CCC as it continues to grow?

There are many workforce programs that focus on green industries, horticulture, green infrastructure, conservation, and allied fields. Some of these programs operate within correctional institutions and some cater to returning citizens and/or at-risk populations in a community setting. As documented in **Report 1**, there are many models and key lessons to be learned from the experiences of these programs. The report provides profiles, based on interviews with project personnel, of nine programs within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and 15 outside of the watershed. Many of these programs include training in horticulture and natural area restoration, and several include a broader array of potential employment sectors.

A couple of program considerations gleaned from the interviews include how narrow or broad the curriculum should be and how to coordinate with other community services for returning citizens. For the former, the CCC currently has a relatively narrow focus on arboriculture and riparian buffers. Some

of the profiled programs in Report 1, while having an environmental emphasis, expanded the training and certifications to topics such as OSHA regulations, fire suppression, CPR and First Aid, utility work, and beekeeping, among other topics. As documented in the report, there are advantages and disadvantage to having a broad or narrow focus.

As for community services, many of the interviewees stressed the importance of supplementing technical training with support for employment seekers in the realms of mental health, financial literacy, communication, transportation, childcare, interview skills, and a range of other services. In almost all cases, these services are not built into the organization's technical program but are instead accomplished through collaborations with community agencies that are already adept at providing these services. This topic is addressed below under Question #5.

A more complete list of lessons learned from the interviews is included in **Report 1**.

2. Is there an adequate population within SCIs for the CCC to expand?

There are 24 SCIs and 35 County jails within Pennsylvania's portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Among the SCIs, there are an estimated 13,045 Part II Offenders and 15,065 Security Level One or Two Offenders within or in close proximity to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (see **Report 2** for definitions of these categories). The CCC has been piloted successfully at SCI Rockview's Tree Camp (arboriculture) and at Huntingdon SCI (riparian buffers), and there is ample opportunity to expand the program.

DCNR staff has prioritized the following state facilities for potential near-term application of the CCC: Rockview, Huntingdon/Smithfield, Muncy, Quehanna Boot Camp, Camp Hill, and two county facilities: Lancaster County Prison, and York County Prison. These sites were the areas of focus for the GIS mapping project conducted as part of the GIT scope #10 effort, and included in **Report 2**.

3. Are there adequate field sites on SCI property or in surrounding communities where CCC participants can get hands-on experience with riparian forest buffers?

Collectively, there are many acres of unbuffered sites that can be enhanced at the six correctional facilities noted above. For these facilities, there are nearly 150 acres of riparian areas that are potential buffer planting sites, with another 235 acres where tree planting and reforestation can potentially take place outside of the immediate riparian zone but still in close proximity to streams.

For SCIs where workforce training can take place within surrounding communities, there are over 1,100 acres of potential riparian buffer planting areas on public land within 30 miles of the priority facilities.

As such, opportunities abound both on SCI and two county prison properties and within a reasonable radius for CCC participants to gain hands-on experience with buffer installation and maintenance. This program would also help the Commonwealth meet its riparian buffer goals outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

Report 2 documents these planting opportunities, with links to maps and a geographic information system (GIS) analysis designed specifically for the CCC program to plan and track riparian buffer projects. The GIS project was based on and expanded previous work conducted by the Pennsylvania Land Trust

Association (PALTA), as documented in *Identifying and Prioritizing Stream Forest Planting Sites in Pennsylvania Using GIS.*

4. Does the CCC have structure and flexibility for different types of SCIs?

As provided as part of **Report 3**, the CCC program manual and associated **website** are important steps to build an ongoing structure for the CCC. These resources outline a curriculum with 29 modules in the categories of: (1) general environmental knowledge, (2) riparian forest buffers, (3) arboriculture, and (4) vocational skills. Each module contains learning objectives. Modules that include classroom and field-based hands-on activities provide detailed guidance, resources, materials lists, field skills evaluation tools, and schedules, with flexibility provided for different types of correctional settings.

The Manual will allow program staff, instructors, and SCI/prison personnel to engage with the program in various ways and adapt individual modules to suit facility-specific and participant-specific opportunities.

5. Would the CCC credential provide a realistic path to employment for participants?

The answer to this question involves the readiness for employment of the applicants as well as the number of jobs available and potential employers. While there are no guarantees in this regard, there are promising signals. While the CCC does not currently offer an approved Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) apprenticeship, the program can be viewed as a steppingstone towards that type of apprenticeship or on-the-job training. According to the Department of L&I, 90% of apprentices are employed after completing an apprenticeship, with a starting annual salary of $70,000 (see **Report 4** for more information). The CCC can certainly build towards that type of performance success as the program expands and becomes more structured.

Another important aspect of the CCC in terms of employment credentials is the link the program can build with several existing certification and certificate programs. These include credentials in horticulture, sustainable landscaping and stormwater, pesticide and herbicide licensing, arboriculture, nursey management, and watershed stewardship (these programs are outlined in the **Report 3** manual).

Importantly, although the CCC focuses on training while participants are still within the correctional setting, the CCC can collaborate with community-based workforce agencies to provide continuation of support for returning citizens. Agencies, such as **SCPa Works**, leverage the resources of other community-based partners and community organizations to provide a wide range of services in assisting returning citizens and other to connect with employment and training.

Within the current CCC focus areas of riparian buffers and arboriculture, the project team identified 17 potential employers within PA's region of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Of course, this list would expand with a broader geographic focus. Many green industry employers surveyed report difficulty with hiring and retaining a sufficient workforce to meet demand, and demand is expanding as funding and Chesapeake Bay mandates continue to grow. Some employers also hire independent contractors, so there are also opportunities to start small businesses, with support from programs such as the **PA Business One Stop Shop**.

6. What is needed for continued success of the CCC program?

The following are specific recommendations for building the CCC from its solid foundation.

1. Develop a concise mission, objectives, and target audience for the program. This was stressed in the interviews with other programs (**Report 1**). The text at the end of this summary can be used as starting point for DCNR staff to create these programmatic guiding principles.
2. Further educate key stakeholders at DCNR, DOC, Department of Labor & Industry, and other PA agencies about the CCC through presentations, meetings, the website, and other venues. The purpose is to build understanding of and support for CCC, including dedicated staffing and funding.
3. In a similar vein, conduct outreach and education on the CCC to community-based organizations, such as **SCPa Works**, to build successful collaborations, especially for post-release services.
4. Define the external certification and certificate programs that CCC would like to incorporate into future trainings. These will come with their own curricula, testing, fee structures, and maybe instructors, so the decision represents an important means to complement the resources in the CCC Program Manual. It is important in this regard to find the best matches so that CCC retains its identity and core values. As a longer-term goal, continue to work with PA L&I on an approved apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program, with possible collaboration with the community college system.
5. Use the **list of instructors from Report 2** to establish dedicated plans for instructors to continue the Rockview and Huntingdon programs while expanding to other facilities, as described below. The Excel spreadsheet associated with Report 2 includes 47 potential instructors that have been identified and will need further vetting or discussion to confirm their participation.
6. Depending on post-COVID conditions at the SCIs, continue to offer the program at Rockview and Huntington SCIs, while planning for one or two new additional programs, selecting from the priority sites. This will be an opportunity to test drive the Manual, modules, buffer project mapping/GIS, and especially release/post-release communication and planning outlined in **Report 4**. It is quite possible that external funding can be used to support this effort, using the **funding sources associated with Report 3**. With regard to funding, it is essential that the program have a dedicated staff position with a supporting budget. This is not expected to be a huge expenditure, but must be adequate to cover travel, materials, any instructor fees, certification program fees and materials, and related expenses.
7. Document and revise the program resources based on experiences.

DRAFT Mission, Objectives, and Target Audience Statements for CCC to Revise

Mission & Goals

The mission of the Correctional Conservation Collaborative (CCC) program is to provide pre-release green workforce training at state correctional institutions (SCIs) in the Chesapeake Bay watershed with focus areas of arboriculture and riparian forest buffers. The CCC collaborates with allied educational, environmental, and workforce programs to provide training, relevant certifications, and post-release employment services to participants.

The goals are to assist participants with obtaining desired employment in green and allied industries; enhance participants' confidence, skills, and enrichment while participating in the program; and contribute in a meaningful way to the Chesapeake Bay and local waterway restoration.

Objectives

1. Provide an engaging and relevant experience for CCC participants with specific learning objectives for arboriculture, riparian forest buffers, general environmental awareness, and employment skills.
2. Allow flexibility for instructors, participants, host institutions, and the program in general to allow the CCC to be hosted at a range of SCIs within Pennsylvania as well as replicated in other states or local governments.
3. Where applicable and feasible, allow participants to obtain relevant certifications and/or certificates from existing programs in order to build employment credentials.
4. Collaborate with community-based workforce agencies so that returning citizens who have participated in the CCC can continue to receive support for employment services as well as other community-based services that are necessary for successful employment.
5. Through all aspects of the CCC, work towards cleaner water and healthier environment at the SCIs themselves, in the communities in close proximity to the SCIs, in the communities where CCC participants will live upon release, and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in general.

Audience

The CCC target audience is individuals who are currently incarcerated who are interested in building workforce skills and to potentially work in a green industry upon returning to their communities.

Summary of Collected Data

The following table summarizes the primary deliverables prepared as part of the GIT Scope #10 project.

Title of document	Summary	Report section
Organizations working with incarcerated and reentrant individuals - Bay Region	This table contains the organization name, program title, jurisdiction, and contact information for the eleven programs in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that were interviewed for the research for this report.	Report 1
Organizations working with incarcerated and reentrant individuals - Beyond the Bay	A table listing the leading organization, program title, jurisdiction, and contact information for fourteen organizations that work with incarcerated and Reentrant individuals located outside of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Summaries of each organization can be found in Report 1	Report 1
Summary of interviews with other programs	This narrative document describes interviews conducted with various prison and work force education programs.	Report 1
Organizations working with incarcerated and reentrant individuals	An Excel spreadsheet combining the contact information of all the programs researched work that with incarcerated and reentrant individual is in the country.	Report 2
Instructors for CCC program	Spreadsheet organizing information about former, and potential instructors for the CCC.	Report 2
Pennsylvania Bay watershed SCI population	This spreadsheet details the total population of offenders in Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution (SCI) facilities that fall into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This information was collected in September 2020	Report 2
Buffer and urban tree care businesses in Pennsylvania	A spreadsheet of landscaping businesses that perform riparian buffer or tree care work in Pennsylvania. Contact information, scope of work, and interest in participating with the CCC is included.	Report 2
Riparian buffer planting potential	A spreadsheet that allows for expedient searching for available buffer planting areas both on correctional facility properties and on public lands within certain radii of the facilities (30 and 50 miles). The spreadsheet has various pivot tables to conduct these types of searches.	Report 2

Maps of potential buffer sites	GIS maps indicating potential riparian buffer planting sites near SCI Smithfield, SCI Huntingdon, SCI Muncy, Quehanna Boot Camp, SCI Camp Hill, as well as two county facilities in York and Lancaster. Maps that show potential sites in a 30-mile radius have also been prepared.	Report 2
CCC training manual	Comprised of four modules and supporting materials such as checklists, the manual is available in both written format and in a user-friendly website version	Report 3
Potential funding resources	Spreadsheet of federal, state, and private funding opportunities for prison-based conservation education programs.	Report 3
Plan for Labor and Industry apprenticeship	A brief overview of the apprenticeship process with resources specific to both the state and the country.	Report 4
Post release communication plan	Recommended steps to facilitate communication with CCC participants after they complete the program.	Report 4
Process for scholarship applications	Document outlining process for reentrants to apply for financial assistance from DCNR to further their education and training related to CCC.	Report 4
Plan for job placement	Recommendations for connecting CCC graduate returning citizens with job opportunities.	Report 4
Guidelines for establishing a new business	Overview of the steps a returning citizen should take to start their own business, along with information on a Pennsylvania specific start-up program.	Report 4
Work process schedule	The structure for a focused Riparian Forest Buffer (RFB) Technician Apprenticeship in conjunction with CCC in DOC facilities. This specific apprenticeship would aim to directly build the workforce for implementing and managing buffers in Pennsylvania and across the Chesapeake Bay region.	Report 4
Program participant tracking	This spreadsheet template allows CCC program managers to track attendance, and outreach to program participants.	Report 4
Potential business contacts for apprenticeships	Spreadsheet of contacts who may be interested in supporting apprentice program with reentrant individuals.	Report 4

Executive summary	This document addresses six key questions about the CCC program, and in so doing, summarizes the CCLC Scope #10 reports and findings.	Report 5
Summary presentation	This Powerpoint presentation summarizes the processes completed as part of this scope of work, and also includes a list of planned presentation dates and venues.	Report 5

The GIT Scope #10 Project Team

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