

**Chair Joe Neguse  
NPFPL Hybrid Oversight Hearing  
Opening Statement  
July 20, 2021**

**Thank you all for joining us here today for an oversight hearing of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.**

**We are here to discuss a new version of an old idea: how the Federal Government can put tens of thousands of young Americans to work serving communities and protecting the environment, all while learning valuable jobs skills.**

**When Franklin Roosevelt first established the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933, the country was already deep in the Great Depression.**

**That historic program helped put young Americans back on their feet working towards the public good.**

**Today, as we seek to rebuild after a prolonged period of national upheaval from the coronavirus crisis, we might learn from that model.**

**The President has called on Congress, through his American Jobs Plan, to establish a new Civilian Climate Corps to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

**Numerous members of Congress, including myself and some of our colleagues here today, have introduced legislation to support this goal, and to set out models for what this new CCC might look like.**

**There is broad, bipartisan support for this program, which speaks to the opportunities this program presents.**

**We have a chance to put young people to work, learning skills that will carry them forth into their careers.**

**We have a chance to give these young people an opportunity to serve their communities and to protect the environment on which we all depend.**

**We can take this well-established idea and ensure that it suits our nation's needs for generations to come.**

**However, while we look back to this model from a difficult time in our past, we must also recognize its shortcomings.**

**Nearly all those young Americans were men, nearly all white.**

**America in 2021 is a nation of diverse backgrounds, creeds, and identities.**

**We need to ensure that a new CCC looks like and represents that new America, and that the benefits of these programs are equally available to all American communities.**

**This new CCC needs to pay a living wage and teach skills – providing certificates and industry recognized certifications – to help young Americans transition this service opportunity into lifelong careers.**

**Similarly, the challenges we face today differ from those we faced in 1933.**

**Human caused changes to our climate system are altering the Earth's environment, and our communities are already feeling the effects.**

**As we speak, the West is in a summer of almost unprecedented heat, in a drought that has spanned two decades.**

**Warmer, drier conditions create fire years, during which forests burn hotter and faster, threatening lives and communities.**

**Across the country we face threats from a changed climate – from flooding to drought, and degradation of the land to sea level rise.**

**This new Civilian Climate Corps must embrace these challenges, recognizing that we need a new generation of leaders and professionals to address the threats to come.**

**Luckily, there are already organizations leading the way on this important work, and we've invited some of them to testify before us here today.**

**These corps leaders and participants have seen firsthand the promise of service programs.**

**Today's witnesses can speak to the breadth of work to be done – from forest and invasive species management to energy efficiency work in public housing – as well as the life-changing benefits of this work for so many young people.**

**I am grateful you all are able to join us here this afternoon, and I very much look forward to hearing, in your experience, what we can achieve with a new Civilian Climate Corps.**

**Again, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimony, but first I'll yield back my time and recognize the Ranking Minority Member, Mr. Fulcher, for 5 minutes.**