

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 5164

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Expanding the veterans conservation corps program.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Hobbs, Shin, Rasmussen, Kilmer and Franklin).

**Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation**

**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**

**House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** The Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) was created by the Legislature in 2005 to assist veterans by providing volunteer opportunities on natural resource restoration projects that help protect and restore Washington's watersheds, rivers, streams, lakes, marine waters, forest lands, and open lands. The VCC is administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs (Department).

**Summary:** The Department is required to assist veterans who are enrolled in the VCC with obtaining employment in conservation programs and projects to restore habitat. In order to incorporate training, education, and certification in environmental restoration into the program, the Department must consult with the appropriate state level higher education and work force training boards and other state agencies.

The Department may enter into agreements with community colleges, private schools, state or local agencies, or other entities to provide training and educational courses as part of the enrollee benefits from the program. The Department may enter into an agreement with a local government or other entity for use of VCC enrollees in a project where work will begin prior to June 30, 2008.

The Department must collaborate with other state agencies that administer the Washington Conservation Corps and identify stewardship and maintenance projects on agency-managed lands that are suitable for the VCC program.

The Department must seek to enter into agreements with federal agencies managing lands in Washington for the employment of VCC enrollees in environmental restoration projects.

During calendar years 2007 and 2008, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board must cooperate with the Department to inform salmon habitat project sponsors of the availability of VCC enrollees to work on projects. The Department may also inform project sponsors of the benefits of using VCC enrollees, including the benefit of additional funds that may be available for the project. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board shall consider funds provided by the Department for a project using VCC enrollees as match funding in the evaluation of projects for funding by the Board.

By September 30, 2007, the Department must submit a report to Office of Financial Management and the Legislature that identifies projects on state agency-managed lands that are: currently planned or are suitable for VCC enrollees and have funding in place; and additional projects that if funded would be suitable for VCC enrollees.

The Department is required to submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2008, on the status of the VCC program, including the number of enrollees employed in projects and training, certifications earned, employment placement achieved, program funding provided and the results of the pilot project.

The Veterans Conservation Corps Account is created in the state treasury. Monies in the account may only be expended after appropriation and must be used for the VCC program.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	46	0
House	97	0

**Effective:** July 22, 2007