

AN ACT concerning conservation.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Youth and Young Adult Conservation Education Act.

Section 5. Declaration of intent. The General Assembly finds that youth, representing all segments of society, benefit from education and employment in the healthful outdoor atmosphere of the State's park systems, recreational facilities, and other public land and water areas and, through those education and employment opportunities, will develop, enhance, and maintain the natural resources of the State of Illinois while gaining an understanding and appreciation of the State's environment and heritage. The General Assembly, therefore, creates this Act to establish the Youth and Young Adult Conservation and Education Pilot Program to provide education and employment opportunities for the youth and young adults of this State to further the development and maintenance of the natural resources by Illinois' youth and, in so doing, to prepare them for the responsibility of maintaining and managing these resources.

Section 10. Definitions.

As used in this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

"Department" means the Department of Natural Resources.

"Program" means the Youth and Young Adult Conservation and Education Pilot Program created by this Act.

Section 15. Cooperation. The Department shall have the full cooperation of the Illinois State Board of Education, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois State Job Coordinating Council created by the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (Public Law 97-300), and the Department of Employment Security in carrying out the purposes of this Act.

Section 20. Funding. Funding for the Program shall be from any State or federal funds or grants or other funding received by the Department. The Program is subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.

Section 25. Youth and Young Adult Conservation and Education Pilot Program.

(a) Subject to appropriation, the Department shall administer the Program. The Program may consist of any of the following:

- (1) allocation of grants to units of local government or non-profit entities to provide conservation education

and employment opportunities for youth and young adults of this State;

(2) development and implementation of conservation education or job training programs; and

(3) internship opportunities with the Department for youth and young adults of this State.

(b) The Program's education and employment opportunities shall be limited to citizens of this State who at the time of enrollment in the Program are 15 through 25 years of age. Grants under this Act are limited to units of local government and non-profit entities that are located in the State of Illinois and that provide conservation education and employment opportunities for youth and young adults of this State.

(c) The Department shall designate suitable grant opportunities, projects, internships, and educational curriculum for the purposes of this Act.

Grants, projects, internships, and curriculum so designated by the Department shall be for the purpose of: (1) development, enhancement, and maintenance of the natural resources of the State of Illinois, and offering related educational opportunities; (2) environmental stewardship and civic responsibility; (3) enhancement of public lands owned or leased by the Department or developing and enhancing projects or initiatives undertaken in whole or part by the Department; or (4) any combination of the purposes described in items (1)

through (3). Such projects, internships and curriculum shall include improving the habitat of fauna and flora; improving utilization of conservation or recreation facilities and lands by the public; improving water quality; and any other project deemed by the Department to improve the environmental, economic, and recreational quality of the State's natural resources.

All projects and internships designated by the Department shall be within a reasonable commuting time for each participant. In no circumstance shall interns be required to spend more than 1 1/2 hours of commuting time to a project or a designated area, but an intern may agree to spend more than 1 1/2 hours of commuting time to a project or a designated area.

(c) Interns shall receive at least the standard minimum wage as set by the State of Illinois, when applicable, and shall work normal working hours as determined by the Department. The interns shall not be classified as employees of the State for purposes of contributions to the State Employees' Retirement System of Illinois or any other public employment retirement system of the State.

(d) The Department may enter into contracts, intergovernmental agreements, grants, cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding, or other instruments as necessary to implement the Program.

(e) The Department shall adopt administrative rules pertaining to implementation, standards, criteria, and

Public Act 103-0788

HB0255 Enrolled

LRB103 03779 RJT 48785 b

administration of the Program.

Section 90. Repeal. This Act is repealed on June 30, 2029.