

## CORPS NEWS

### DISPATCH FROM THE FIRE LINE

BY: MICHAEL HANLEY, KING COUNTY SPIKE CREW ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR



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**A pontoon plane flies through smoke at the Rutter Canyon Fire. Pontoon planes make repeated water drops to slow the spread of the fire. Photo by Rob Crawford.**

*Editor’s Note: Washington Conservation Corps supports communities during and after disasters in-state and around the country. This fire season, WCC AmeriCorps members have served across Western, Central and Eastern Washington. Members serve as camp crews and hand crews to support wildfire response. Hand crews use chainsaws and hand tools to fight fire. Techniques include digging fire line, or linear ditches that serve as fire barriers to prevent fires from advancing.*

Handheld radios crackle to life outside the rural fire station. All twenty AmeriCorps members of the WCC hand crew fall silent. A scratchy voice announces a new fire burning Northeast of Spokane. Any conversation with the Department of Natural Resources dispatcher is transmitted in a dialect of unit names, fire numbers, township and range positions and fire jargon. Jay McMillen (Skagit DNR Crew Supervisor), fluent in fire jargon, flashes a pen to a notepad. I strain to understand the conversation. Zach Leavitt (Skagit DNR crew member) Googles the fire address. We move around excitedly when he tells us the satellite image shows forest and hills. Bulldozers build fire line wherever possible, but command sends



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**Fire, p. 1**

in hand crews like us, when terrain is too rough for heavy equipment.

Our unit name is called. We pile into trucks. The first bursts of adrenaline hit as our caravan drives south. The radio croaks with fire engine traffic. "Fire's origin is in a box canyon." "Difficult access and egress." Trees torch and black smoke pours into the growing grey cloud. The fire is too hot. Helicopters drop buckets of water from the nearby river. Tankers drop retardant lines to cool the flanks. We wait at the staging area. We hydrate and spit sunflower seeds. We talk to homeowners who thank us and take pictures. As the sun sets, command sends us to hold the east edge of the fire. We burn back from the fire line and patrol for embers that might jump our line. I hike in the darkness. Burning trees fall in the valley below me. The Perseid meteor shower throws sparks across the sky. No fire crosses our line. We're back at our trucks eating pizza by 1:30 a.m. The Rutter Canyon fire is held to 150 acres.



**Covered in ash, but still cheerful: Ernie Farmer (Ellensburg Supervisor), Michael Hanley (King County Assistant Supervisor), and Jackson Owens (Skagit Spike Assistant Supervisor) after a windy and dirty day at the Hawk Creek Fire.**



**WCC hand crew walks in grid formation to search the ground for heat and smoke, as part of the mop-up procedure at the Hawk Creek Fire. Photos by Rob Crawford.**

At this moment, 17 WCC folks and three DNR employees have been fighting fire together in the Northeast corner of the state for two weeks. We are on our fifth fire. We have cut thousands of feet of hand line, called in water drops from helicopters and air tankers and mopped up acres of smoldering ash. Our bodies have been pushed to the limits. Our tempers have occasionally been tested, but we have all come out stronger. I can honestly say this experience has left a lasting mark on me. There is something amazing about depending on 19 other individuals as deeply as is required to fight fire. I am very grateful to supervisors Rob Crawford, Ernie Farmer and Jay McMillen for building the WCC's firefighting capacity and keeping me safe out here.

## IP SPOTLIGHT: COASTAL MONITORING AND ANALYSIS PROGRAM

**BY: JAIME LILJEGREN, CMAP AMERICORPS IP 2014-2015**

Do you like being outside almost all of your time in the summer? Do you like working with sand? Do you like learning new things every day? Then the WCC AmeriCorps Individual Placement position with the Coastal Monitoring and Analysis Program may be for you! The Coastal Monitoring and Analysis Program (CMAP) began in 1997 to monitor sediment transport from the Columbia River. From this project, CMAP has grown to perform a multitude of projects for various stakeholders. The Columbia River Littoral Cell Study involves surveying the coastline from Washington to Oregon. These surveys occur every season and include collecting topographic data of the beach to capture the present conditions within the system. Another project our group participates in is a biannual survey



Collecting topographic data at Leadbetter Point State Park in Long Beach.

of the Elwha river mouth to monitor sediment and capture seasonal and annual change following the dam removal. In addition, CMAP utilizes LiDAR and sonar technology to capture present topography and bathymetry of shorelines over various regions of Puget Sound and the Strait



Topographic mapping at Grayland, WA.

of Juan de Fuca. What does this mean for the WCC IP? Late hours in a changing environment, prepping and cleaning equipment, hiking on various terrain, carrying 2x4s and sheet metal up sand dunes, serving with a great group of people and learning a lot.

*“There is something amazing about depending on 19 other individuals as deeply as is required to fight fire.”*

*-Michael Hanley,  
King County  
Crew Assistant  
Supervisor*

## WCC: CONTINUING THE CCC LEGACY

BY: SHANNON JONES, SPOKANE SPIKE AMERICORPS CREW MEMBER

In conservation and restoration, we should place great importance on the legacy of our projects. Their quality, sustainability, and lasting impact on the world around us are all remembered, from the greatest to the seemingly insignificant tasks. This June on the Spokane Spike Crew,



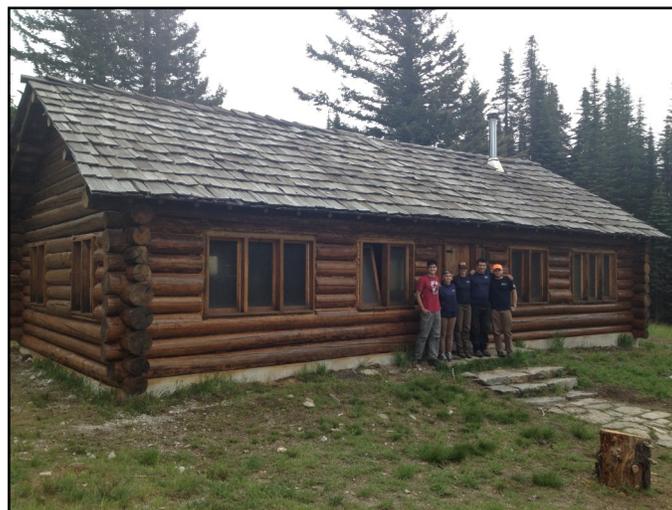
View from Mt. Spokane.

we had a unique opportunity to help preserve the legacy of our predecessors—the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)—whose service, like ours, varied greatly in scale, variety, and purpose. President Roosevelt created the CCC in the 1930s as a part of the New Deal to provide employment relief following the Great Depression - and as a way of implementing natural resource conservation as a national standard and priority. The Washington Conservation Corps now exists for many of the same purposes and our legacies are thus entwined, making it a great privilege to serve where those men once did. The CCC Company 949 set up a camp on Mt. Spokane in 1934, employing 200 people to live and serve in

the state recreation area for over a summer. The memory of their service is now preserved in a replica of the small cabin which served as the CCC headquarters during that period. It still contains some of the original material. Our crew gained valuable experience in historical preservation as we chipped away old concrete breaking down

*“In conservation and restoration, we should place great importance on the legacy of our projects.”*

*- Shannon Jones, Spokane Spike Crew Member*



Restored CCC Cabin and Spokane Spike Crew Members left to right: Zach Oborny, Shannon Jones, Ashtyn Moss, Sam Richardson, and Ian Tate.

around the structure, stained the logs, weatherproofed the wood, and prepared the structure for caulking. We also assisted with trails maintenance on Mt. Spokane by digging trail, cutting water bars to prevent erosion, removing fallen trees from pathways, and spraying for invasive plant species. Snow and mobile recreationists now enjoy the cabin as a warming hut. It will last for many years to come if crews such as ours continue to come back and preserve this legacy. One day the WCC will also be remembered as an organization that left no trace except the quality of the projects we accomplished and the impact they have on the environment.

Photos courtesy of Adam Hein (Spokane Spike Crew Supervisor).

## PRODUCT TESTING: CUTTING APART YOUR FAVORITE TOY

BY: MAGGIE COUNIHAN, OUTREACH & SUSTAINABILITY AMERICORPS IP



Creating a foam sample for testing.

Have you ever wondered what is in the clothes you wore or the toys you had as a kid? Ecology wondered too, and a team from the Hazardous Waste Toxics Reduction Program (HWTR) and the Environmental Assessment Program (EAP) have started to tackle this question.

In 2008 Washington State passed the Children's Safe Product Act (CSPA, [RCW 70.240](#)) restricting children's products or product components from containing more than 90 parts per million (ppm) of lead, 40 ppm of cadmium or 1000 ppm of phthalates. It also requires manufacturers to report the presence of other toxic

chemicals. There are additional studies

being conducted on packaging, based on the [Toxics in Packaging legislation](#) passed in 1991.

This year I've had the opportunity to learn and help with numerous studies that Ecology has conducted, including studies on children's clothing, seasonal toys, and toxics in packaging. From cutting apart shoes and belts, to foam footballs and doll heads, I've gotten an up-close look at what it takes to screen and sample products.

Each sample is meticulously logged into a database and split into

*"Bees do have a  
smell, you know,  
and if they  
don't, they  
should, for their  
feet are dusted  
with spices from  
a million  
flowers."*

- Ray Bradbury

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## IP SPOTLIGHT: MT. BAKER- SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST

BY CORI RENDÓN, MT. BAKER-SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST AMERI-CORPS IP



**Cori Rendón (front right) and the SCA Seattle Community Crew after completing three-day trail project on Franklin Falls, off of I-90.**

*“The best part of doing this is having interactions with kids and people who don’t always have access to public lands and seeing their wonder and curiosity for the outdoors grow.”*

*-Cori Rendón*

Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator is quite the title, but this year has been quite the adventure. From Glacier to Enumclaw, being an Individual Placement at the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest has taken me from mountain tops to board rooms and everywhere in between.

The primary role of this position is to serve with National Forest partners throughout the Puget Sound to manage, coordinate, and lead youth and community events. Events range from day events at elementary schools to multi-day camping trips on the National Forest where students perform stewardship activities. This also includes building new partnerships. This year with the guidance of staff, I forged a new partnership with Seattle’s Veterans Affairs Recreational Therapy program to provide ADA-accessible interpretive hikes for disabled veterans. Beyond coordinating and leading events, I also manage most of the National Forest’s new media initiatives including social media and video production. Lastly, a big piece of this position is recruitment (does anyone remember my USAJOBS workshop at June elective training?). It’s the hopes of the Youth Engagement team that the National Forest hire students who have been a part of our programs; I help educate students on the Federal application process and inform hiring officials how great our students are.

As the months go by, I’ve learned so much about interpretive planning and have had the opportunity to serve with countless professionals. For me, serving in the realm of environmental education always goes back

to the same thing – sparking ones interest.

The best part of doing this is having interactions with kids and people who don't always have access to public lands, and seeing their wonder and curiosity of the outdoors grow. There's nothing like hiking with students that have never been hiking before, or providing elders the opportunity to get out and view eagles along the Skagit River. It's amazing to see the sense of accomplishment students feel once they build their own new 10 feet of trail, or the sense of community and gratitude you gain from disabled veterans who wouldn't be able to recreate otherwise. The time spent in the office is all worth it when you get to be in the field and see the planning come to life: everyone is extremely thankful and genuinely enjoying themselves.



**View from Heybrook Lookout near Skykomish. Photo by Cori Rendón.**



**Cori Rendón on Ptarmigan Ridge Trail with Mt. Baker in the background.**

*"Stay in touch with us! WCC Alumni, join our Washington Conservation Corps Alumni Facebook Group to stay connected, check out job postings, or share volunteer opportunities."*

*"We do not see nature with our eyes, but with our understandings and our hearts."  
- William Hazlitt*



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### Testing, p.1



**George the Hippo**

[previously](#) published [reports](#) and stay tuned for more reports coming out in the near future.

components. Each component is scanned by the X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzer which can detect metals such as cadmium and lead.

Toxic chemicals have lasting impacts, both environmentally and physically. For instance, phthalates (plasticizers that creates soft, flexible plastic) are suspected to be [endocrine](#) disrupters.

The projects being performed by a group of dedicated people is groundbreaking and I feel fortunate to have the chance to serve on such an important project. If you are interested in learning more about product testing, check out

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### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Below is a text correction from the June newsletter. Author Matthew Evinger did not approve edits published in June and requested a re-print of the article's original text. Please refer to the June newsletter for accompanying photographs.

DO:

According to Wikipedia, one of the common names for *Crupina vulgaris* is bearded creeper.

DO:

Work isn't the only time for uniforms. Pick a camp outfit as a crew and never listen to what anybody else says about it.

DON'T:

We get it, Bridget. You go rock climbing in the Alps and are stronger than all of us. But when your cubicle is ten feet from the tools and logistics coordinator's, couldn't you get a real WCC hard hat?

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## ABOUT THE WCC

The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) was established in 1983 as a service program for young adults between the ages of 18-25. The WCC is offered through the Washington Department of Ecology and continues the legacy started by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The WCC has been an AmeriCorps program since 1994. Today, the WCC has around 300 members serving on projects in every part of the state. Our partners include Federal, State, Local, and Tribal organizations. For more information please visit our website: [www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc).