

AMERICORPS SERVICE IN SAIPAN

BY: ADELINE WISERNIG



Editor's Note: On October 3, Washington Conservation Corps sent a team of eight returning AmeriCorps members with supervisors Ernie Farmer and Rob Crawford to Saipan for a 30-day disaster response assignment. Below is a personal account from second-year AmeriCorps member Adeline Wisernig, currently serving in Saipan. The team will return October 29.

Across The Ocean

Saipan is part of a chain of islands that form the Northern Mariana Islands, which are considered a commonwealth of the United States. At 12 miles long and 5.6

Above: AmeriCorps members from Texas Conservation Corps and Minnesota/Iowa Conservation Corps gather with Washington Conservation Corps.

miles wide, it's hard to imagine that Saipan is the largest of the islands. On August 2, Typhoon Soudelor hit Saipan, destroying hundreds of homes and knocking out power on the island for over a month. Because of its exposed location in the Pacific, the island maintains an ongoing Warning Level 1 for typhoons. This means that storms can develop with winds up to 60 miles per hour within 24 hours at any time. The locals are used to extreme weather and have become accustomed to what they call "banana typhoons" - typhoons that don't cause much damage outside of knocking a few bananas off trees. Typhoon Soudelor was anticipated by many to be exactly that. What in reality occurred was the worst typhoon to hit the island in 30 years.

We arrive here just over two months after Typhoon Soudelor made landfall and it is clear the island is still very much in need of relief. Having moved past the initial response period of food and water assistance, the current need is a comprehensive plan for rebuilding communities affected by the storm. Damages were primarily homes and structures inhabited by contracted workers—workers who are not citizens of the U.S. but were granted social security cards and the right to work in Saipan. These homes are largely comprised of tin and plywood walls and roofs which cannot withstand the upward of 90 mph winds Soudelor delivered. As a result, communities were destroyed, trees uprooted, and a way of life upturned. One major challenge faced by the island is the sheer scale of the debris removal that needs to occur before rebuilding can even begin. The task over the next month will be to build a support system to match the expansive network of resource organizations (with an impressive volunteer effort) so that ongoing relief can continue on a local level.

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sadn461@ecy.wa.gov

From The Saipan Office To The Field

Hafa adai from the Pacific! It has been a busy week here in Saipan and now we are on our own. The Conservation Corps members from Texas and Minnesota/Iowa briefed us on all they had done their last 45 days and we hit the ground running. We spent the first couple days introducing and familiarizing ourselves with the various organizations active in relief efforts. We attended meetings and trained organizations on the importance of logging volunteer efforts to contribute to the cost share of Typhoon Soudelor.

The typical cost share of a disaster is 75% federal assistance and the remaining 25% is the responsibility of the local government. Because of the struggling economy here in Saipan, the federal government has agreed to cover 90% of the recovery cost. What many of the organizations here are not aware of is that their ongoing volunteer efforts—from beach cleanups to providing food and water to homeowners—has a monetary value that can contribute to the 10% cost share covered by local government. The widespread volunteer effort could help cover a significant amount of that 10%.



The beach at the American Memorial Park, at sunset.



Team leads Ashtyn Moss and Alan Richardson brief volunteers. Saipan photos contributed by Ernie Farmer and other AmeriCorps members serving in Saipan.

Our AmeriCorps crew has taken it upon ourselves to visit local organizations that have been helping with recovery efforts. We then train their staff on how to in-take volunteers and accurately log their hours. In addition to staff training, we have been providing open trainings to folks in the community who are interested in becoming leaders at volunteer events. There is no shortage of people who want to help and organizations that want to hold events. What the community needs is to multiply their efforts with individuals who are willing to lead a group of volunteers at those events.

Our goal by the time we leave is to have a database of organizations, team leaders, and volunteers that can easily be accessed and coordinated to help in the relief efforts. We have also been directly participating in the volunteer efforts ourselves. Our team of assessors have gone into the community and identified homes from our homeowner database where volunteer efforts would be most useful. Over Saturday and Sunday, together with United 4 Saipan (U4S), we were able to visit 3 different homes to help sort debris—massive amounts of tin and

wood from destroyed structures—to be taken to the local dump. We were also able to physically secure a structure to provide a temporary shelter for a family whose house was severely damaged.

What isn't always clear in the multitude of databases and intakes, spreadsheets and statistics, is the scale of the destruction that communities are still living in the midst of now over two months post-Soudelor. Once we were able to get into the effected communities and begin debris removal, it became clear that entire families and neighborhoods, all living in close proximity, were all helping one another and doing their best with the salvaged resources they had to reestablish their homes.

It has been a chaotic, long, and productive week. Our crew has been moving a mile a minute, yet I think we have all had those moments of reflection. Amongst all the ruin, there is always the magnificent ocean. We have had two birthdays while on the island—Teddy Lasky and Evan Nally—and have managed to have our first day off. We took full advantage and, despite the pouring rain, we had our first snorkel session. All this to say, despite all the struggles and ruin, the island is absolutely beautiful. The people are thankful, happy, and gracious. The kids play in the streets and the ocean. A truly resilient island and people.

Visit our [WCC Facebook page](#) to read additional blogs from Adeline and other updates on Saipan response efforts.

SNAPSHOTS OF DROUGHT RELIEF SERVICE

Our Washington Conservation Corps crews responded to a different type of emergency over the summer: Emergency Fish Response! The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) called on WCC AmeriCorps members last August and September to complete critical fish passage projects through the Governor's Drought Relief funding package.

These fish passage projects are important in maintaining salmon runs this year because of statewide severe drought conditions over the summer. Hot weather combined with low snowpack means that most of Washington's rivers were running significantly lower than normal. Flows were so low that fish could no longer migrate upstream. Fish passage projects help salmon navigate low rivers by eliminating barriers to water flow and creating deeper pools for salmon to advance upstream.

WCC members on supervisors Matt Cone and Josh Perry's crews were called to help the Benton Conservation District clear water star-grass, a native underwater plant clogging the river, from shallow river beds along the Yakima River. Removal of this plant worked to increase water flow for salmon migration.

For more information on drought relief projects, check out Ecology's [EcoConnect blog](#).

[Photos by: Kevin Farrell, Phill VanKessel, and Benton Conservation District]



Port-Angeles based WCC AmeriCorps members help create fish passages in the Dungeness River.



East-side WCC AmeriCorps members clear star-grass from the Yakima River (right).

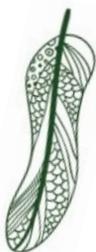


LINKING HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



"We live in a world that is full of problems, and we are the solutions to those problems."

-Julia Butterfly Hill



Research Project:: Conservation Jobs and Worker Health

Kathleen Wolf, Ph.D. Research Social Scientist: University of Washington

Elizabeth Housley, M.A.: Research Project Manager: OFE Consulting

Project Funding:



Conservation Corps Sponsors:



This research project, conducted by Kathleen Wolf, P.h.D., and Elizabeth Housley, M.A., explored how an outdoor service environment may serve as a path to personal resiliency (through job opportunities, peer engagement, and skill building) and provide healing opportunities. This study followed WCC AmeriCorps members who served from 2013-2014.

Why is This Important?

There is growing interest in the links between healthy environment, healthy lifestyles, and healthy people. Research shows that getting people into the outdoors and bringing the outdoors closer to people may increase physical activity, reduce stress, and build social connections—all important public health issues. The scientific evidence concerning nearby nature experiences and human health and well-being spans nearly forty years. Green Cities: Good Health is a research review sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, and can be used by professionals and concerned citizens to access research about the healing capacities of nature:

www.greenhealth.washington.edu

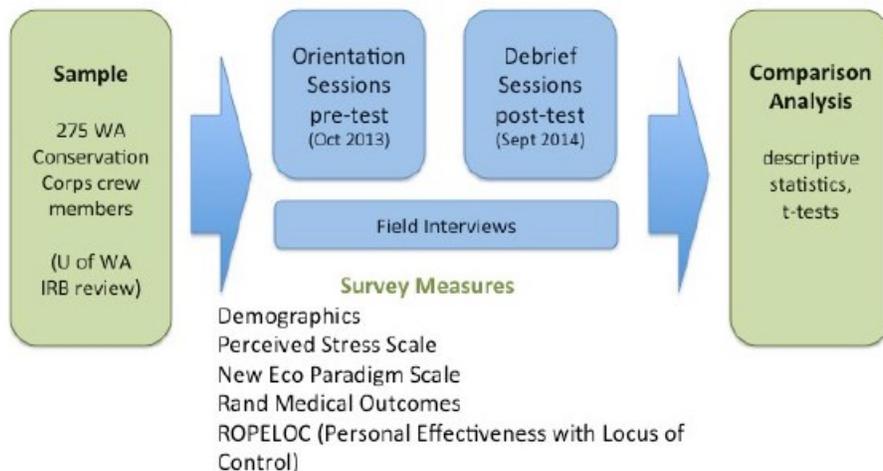
Guiding Questions

This study of young adults and conservation service began with several guiding questions. The questions shaped the selection of multiple scientifically validated health and attitude measures, administered at the beginning and end of the WCC members' year of service. Site visits and other qualitative data were collected to add depth and reveal additional insights about corps members' experiences.

- How Does Conservation Involvement Affect Personal Effectiveness and Stress Recovery?
- How Do Social Interactions Contribute to Stress Recovery and Personal Effectiveness?
- What Individual Traits and Characteristics Are Related to Stress Recovery and Enhanced Personal Effectiveness?



Study Methods



Quantitative Findings

- At the beginning of the WCC program most members experienced low perceived stress and were physically very healthy.
- Perceived stress during the employment period lowered. The statistical results suggest that there is a less than one percent chance that WCC members would report less perceived stress on a random basis compared to the beginning of their employment.
- Returning second year members reported better perceived health and higher perceived leadership ability compared to new members.

Site Visits & Survey Open Text Findings

- Participants mentioned general improvements in their physical and emotional well-being since the beginning of the year (81%).
- “In 10 years, what will you remember about your time with WCC?”
 - Gains in skills and self-efficacy
 - Nature’s beauty and the weather
 - Communication challenges/accomplishments
 - Learning how to serve as a team/developing friendships.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conservation and service programs serve many good purposes. They help young people learn basic employment skills, provide community services, and help restore key outdoor environments. In this study we wanted to explore potential benefits to corps members in greater depth. In particular, can outdoor jobs promote personal resilience? Stress and anxiety is a public health concern. Tragic or traumatic situations and events may disrupt people’s lives, but are not the most troubling sources of stress. Everyday life now presents chronic stressors such as financial strain, complex family interactions, extended commutes, and other persistent situations. Overall, the corps members entered the work program in quite good health compared to national standards. Their perceived stress was further reduced after a year’s service. One possible outcome of this study might be to introduce outdoor service as a therapeutic activity for young adults, including younger veterans. If so, careful planning of work tasks to align with physical abilities would be important.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has”

-Margaret Mead

ALUMNI: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

-Helen Keller



JACKSON BARNES: REITER FOOTHILLS TRAIL CREW & DNR AQUATICS RESERVES INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AMERICORPS MEMBER 2013



Experience as a member:

I joined the WCC in April of 2013 as part of the Reiter Foothills DNR Trail Crew led by Derek Voelker. I had a great time building gravel motorcycle trails, learning to use equipment, and making new friends in the woods. This crew experience was cut short when I received an offer for the DNR Aquatics Reserves Individual Placement (IP) Position, which I applied for the previous October. This position was a little different than most IP positions since it meant joining a six-person crew of IPs. The main focus of this position was to collect baseline coastline data on DNR's Aquatic Reserves, doing forage fish surveys. Forage fish surveys consist of collecting bags of sediment on the beach, sieving them down, and looking for eggs to determine if the area was a spawning location. In the office we entered data, looked through samples in the lab, planned outreach events, and served with Citizen Steward Committees. There were long days of collecting samples, challenging weather, and processing in the lab, but we were able to travel to remote locations and serve on beaches in different areas throughout the Puget Sound.

What I'm doing now:

I currently work for the Department of Ecology on a project called the Tacoma Smelter Plume. There was a smelter in Tacoma that ran for about a hundred years and through its air emissions, it deposited lead and arsenic around north Tacoma. Due to a bankruptcy settlement we are able to offer free cleanups of residential yards, childcare play areas, and parks to reduce exposure to these heavy metals. The cleanup process is excavation of the contaminated soil, replacement of topsoil, and then replacing ground cover. My role in this project is meeting with homeowners to educate them on the process, plan their yard replacement, and measure their yards for the cleanup plans. I draw the cleanup plans on AutoCAD, a computer aided drafting program, used in the Access Agreements with the homeowner and construction plans for contractors completing the work.

Advice for current members:

Keep thinking about the future, and try and have something lined up afterwards. Think about what you want to be doing for a career. At the trainings, pick the best courses for the career goals you have. I really recommend going back to school, for a Bachelor's or a Master's degree; I regret not having the next step of school lined up after the WCC. I believe it is the best way to open doors into better careers. If you don't know what you want to do, I recommend volunteering with an organization that interests you. Take advantage of the 3-day weekends to set up next steps after WCC.

WCC MEMBER DISCOUNTS!

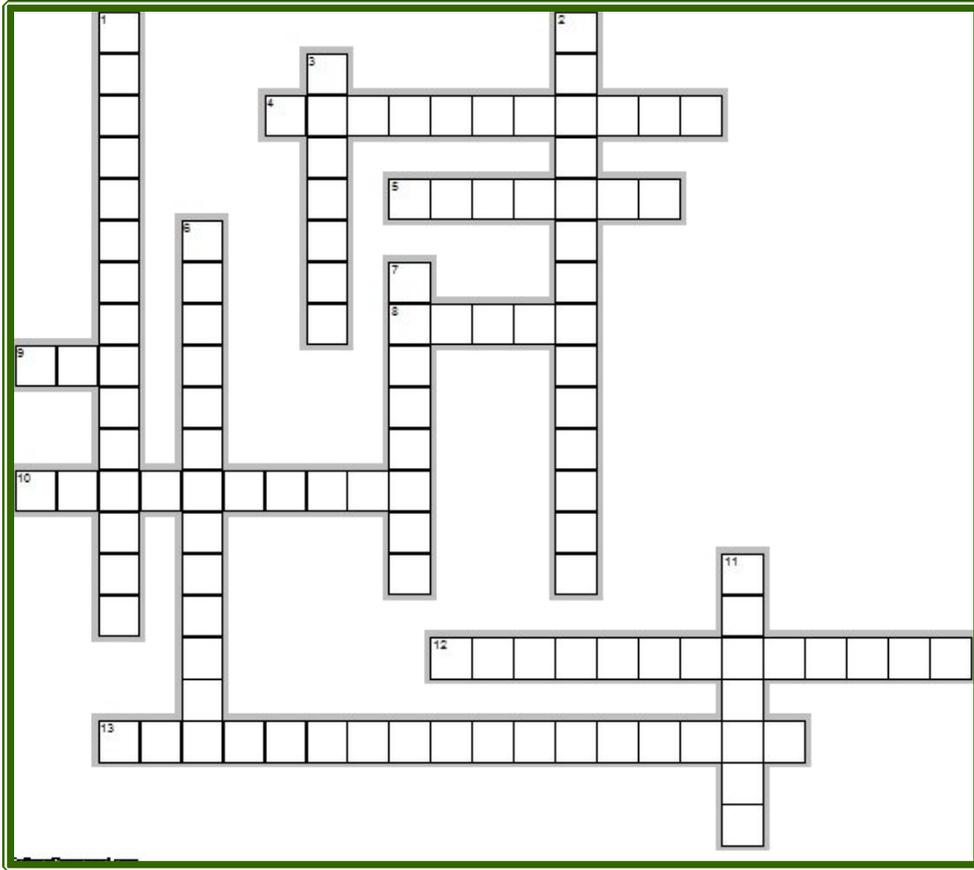
Go into Jiffy Lube and let them know you are a "National Cash Fleet Account" and part of "The Corps Coop Employee Discount Program #12431874" and enjoy a 15% discount.

Enterprise/National Car rental is offering a 5% discount for Enterprise rentals and a 10% discount for National car rentals. Just go online and in the Corporate ID Box enter "XZ50C58" and use pin "THE" and see your discounted rate at checkout.

Sprint is offering a 15% discount on plans, accessories, plus giveaways and discounted phones. use code MTCCP_222 at sprint.com.

For more details visit www.thecorpscoop.org

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION CORPS CROSSWORD

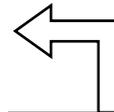


ACROSS

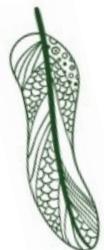
4. Current Director of the Department of Ecology
5. The President under which AmeriCorps was founded
8. State fruit of Washington
9. Name of one of the largest temperate rainforests in the US. Located on the Olympic Peninsula
10. name for the network of coastal waterways that includes the extends from Canada to the PNW. It includes the Strait of Georgia and Juan de Fuca, and the Puget Sound
12. Scottish botanist that the Douglas Fir is named for
13. *Thuja plicata*

DOWN

1. State Tree of Washington
2. Court case ruling that reaffirmed the rights of tribes to co-manage salmon and other fish and allocates 50% of the harvestable catch to the tribes.
3. Tallest mountain in Washington State
6. First Governor of Washington
7. Washington gets an average of 38.78 inches of ____ a year
11. Second largest city in Washington



1st crew or IP to
send in answers
will receive a
prize!





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WASHINGTON CONSERVATION CORPS “TRUCK TALKS”

Looking for some inspiration for getting to know your co-workers? Try using these discussion questions to get to know your new co-workers better!

1. What would your strategy be in the event of a zombie apocalypse?
2. Do charities do more harm than good?
3. What would you do if you won the lottery?
4. When do you become an adult? Do you consider yourself one? Why or why not?
5. What personal achievements make you proud?
6. What's the hardest thing you've ever done?
7. How has Facebook changed the world? How would your life be better or worse without Facebook?
8. How do you feel about fashion? Is it wasteful? Is it art?
9. What's the best Halloween costume you've ever had?
10. Who was your favorite teacher and why?
11. Which Hogwarts house would you belong to and why?
12. What would your personal mascot be and why?

Submit your suggested truck talk topics for next month's newsletter to supervisor Alicia Kellogg at: alicia.kellogg@ecy.wa.gov. Feel free to suggest anything fun, creative, philosophical, deep – just remember to keep it appropriate!

Bonus question: First to send in the answer wins a prize!

What is this animal?

Hint: It's the state land mammal



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 working 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.