

Corps News



In This Issue:

<i>Looking back on Louisiana</i>	1-3
<i>Introducing... The Presidential Volunteer Service Award!</i>	4, 5
<i>IP Spotlight</i>	6, 7
<i>Alumni: Where Are They Now?</i>	5
<i>WCC Snapshots</i>	8

Looking Back on Louisiana

In August 2016, 72 WCC AmeriCorps members and crew supervisors deployed to the Baton Rouge area to assist communities affected by devastating flooding. WCC supervisor Ernie Farmer served as Incident Commander for AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team efforts, with WCC supervisors Rob Crawford, Phill VanKessel and other supervisors also holding key leadership roles. WCC AmeriCorps members organized volunteer reception centers, helped muck, gut and clear debris from homes and more.

The initial group of WCC staff and AmeriCorps members returned to Washington on September 20. WCC supervisor Adam Hein and five WCC AmeriCorps members returned October 14 from a second wave of response efforts. Below, five recently-returned WCC AmeriCorps members reflect on their disaster response experience in Louisiana. Thank you to all who have served and supported this response!



A WCC member removes insulation from a residential home. Photo submitted by WCC.

Maia Gurol, WCC AmeriCorps City of Bellingham crew member 2015-2016

Louisiana is an amazing place full of culture, delicious food and warm hearted people. It is also full of guns, churches and lots and lots of bugs. Mold grows quickly in the humidity. Rural poverty is hard to grasp without seeing it in person. I have seen people at their absolute worst, sitting in a shelter with only the possessions under their cots to remind them of what they lost. The few days I spent hearing people's stories of survival and loss while visiting shelters were some of the hardest, most emotional days of my life. I have also seen people at their best, persevering with a smile on their face and laughing with people who—only hours before—were strangers. Every day was a different challenge, plans changed every few hours and quickly we all learned to expect the unexpected.

Overall I am extremely grateful for having been given the opportunity to be part of this disaster deployment. This experience has been long, hot, sticky, overwhelming, delicious, disgusting, exciting, sad, interesting and heartwarming. I have learned far more than I ever expected about myself, about my crewmates, about construction and so much more. It is hard to put into one paragraph, but to sum it up I think I have become a better, more informed and empathetic person because of this opportunity. I have laughed a lot and bonded with both my crewmates and homeowners. I have also cried, knowing that we can only help so much. I am glad to be going home, but I will remember this month for the rest of my life. Also, our supervisor Lyle is an amazing human being.

Continued on pg 2.

SEND US MATERIAL TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

Please send your stories (800 words or less), photos, and updates for publishing to Brendan at

Brendan.Dwyer@ecy.wa.gov



Looking Back on Louisiana

Continued from pg. 1.



Standing floodwaters remain one week after the severe flooding disaster declaration in Louisiana. Photo by J.T. Blatty/FEMA

Nicolas Holmquist, WCC AmeriCorps City of Bellingham crew member 2015-2016

Ending the WCC service year on disaster response was an opportunity I am glad I took. I have wanted to have an experience like this for a while. I plan to join the military. When I do, I intend to choose a career that—to some extent—provides a similar chance to help out with various disasters. Being able to help out the folks in Louisiana has not only opened me up as a person, but has allowed me to truly see how strong and hopeful a community can be when all are united in a similar cause.

Mucking and gutting in no way has been a pleasant task, but the after effect of it has been far more rewarding than I originally thought it was going to be. Seeing how grateful and generous the people are here continually enriches the spirit to do more for them and get the project done. The experience I have had here has been like no other. I am thankful that I was able to be a part of the service that's going

on here. It not only gives further initiative to help communities in the future, but inspires me not to take things for granted.

Andrew Hacker, WCC AmeriCorps City of Bellingham crew member 2015-2016

Having the opportunity to participate in a Washington Conservation Corps disaster response has been something that I had wanted to do since I started my year of service. Finishing off my first year as a WCC AmeriCorps member aiding survivors of flooding in Louisiana for a month has been a unique and enriching experience that I will never forget. I entered the state expecting to see a community full of misery, hopelessness and sorrow but what I saw was completely different. Instead I found a community full of hope, graciousness and hospitality.

Throughout the houses that I aided in mucking and gutting, there is not a single person that I will not remember. From the cheerful pleasantries of Jimmy to the hilarious joviality of Benny, each person had a positive outlook on life and a unique perspective of the flood that frankly surprised me. Looking past themselves, almost all of the people we assisted were genuinely interested in our Louisiana experience. Most days we had meals supplied to us by these community members in an effort to make us more comfortable and satisfied. Something I wouldn't have expected. Each day might have been long, smelly and arduous but there is not one moment in this experience that I would take back.

Riley Thorpe – WCC AmeriCorps City of Bellingham crew member 2015-2016

Louisiana is great. The people are warm and welcoming, there are crazy animals and bugs everywhere, and I've never had so much good food in such a short of time. Southern hospitality is real, and it is delicious. It's also really, really hot out here. Come lunchtime, we usually have already sweated through the clothes and Tyvek suits we wear to protect us from the mold and muck. It's not as bad as it sounds though. As gross as the cleanup can be, this whole trip has been immensely rewarding. All the homeowners are so grateful and loving towards us that it gives tasks an immediate feeling of purpose. There's a mutual feeling of appreciation between us and the homeowners, and I think that's what makes the whole thing worthwhile.

And I think I speak for all of us when I say that I am extremely impressed by our supervisor Lyle. He keeps his cool through all of the ridiculous jobs he is in charge of, and has always been there for us. I don't know how he does it, that guy's unstoppable!

Continued on pg. 3

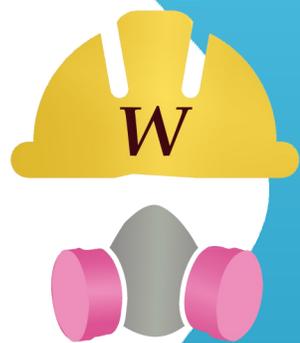


LOUISIANA RESPONSE: TOTALS

As of 9/28/2016



15,027
TOTAL WCC MEMBER
HOURS SERVED



252
HOMES GUTTED
& MUCKED

1,875,715
POUNDS OF GOODS
SORTED &
DISTRIBUTED



13,123
CUBIC YARDS OF
DEBRIS REMOVED
FROM HOMES



Infographic by Brendan Dwyer

Continued from pg. 2

Kaitlyn Hammond, *Whatcom Land Trust WCC AmeriCorps individual placement member 2015-2016*

If you had told me on Monday that I would be leaving on Saturday for a 30-day deployment to Louisiana to respond to catastrophic flooding, I would have laughed. I never thought I would do anything like this, but I am so grateful to have participated in this deployment, interacted with locals and learned new skills—about other cultures and about myself.

The first thing I learned is that Southern Hospitality is real. Oh, so real. From day one we were greeted with, “Mornin’ darlin’! Can I get ya’ll anythin’ to eat?” Even if we weren’t hungry, we knew better than to say no to these incredibly thoughtful people and miss out on some of the best food in the country. From gumbo to jambalaya to fried chicken, homeowners who had lost everything went out of their way to provide us with hot meals to ensure we got the real Louisiana experience. Our crew spent most of our time mucking and gutting homes. While the worst was over for these people, helping them sort through what was left of their possessions brought us immediately into an intimate relationship with a stranger.

The projects were hard, and I don’t think I’ve ever sweated so much in my life. Our assignments changed like the weather (sometimes with the weather!), and we were able to see a lot of the area around Baton Rouge. I’ve always thought of myself as a flexible person, but I realize now that I really like knowing the plan! Amidst these minor irritations, I was fortunate enough to get to know a lot of incredible WCC AmeriCorps members and supervisors, and feel like I have a greater appreciation for the program as a whole. The resiliency of people—both AmeriCorps members bouncing back from the hard work and heat, and survivors offering us blessings and love despite having lost so much—was overwhelming. This resiliency will continue to give me hope far into the future. I aim to one day be a part of such an important response team again.

WCC members huddle with WCC supervisor Sean Smith outside of a flood damaged home they are tasked to muck out. Photo by J.T. Blatty/FEMA.



Introducing... The Presidential Volunteer Service Award!

By Brendan Dwyer, WCC AmeriCorps Outreach Assistant & Food Bank Garden Coordinator IP

You're a part of the WCC, and you probably like community service (kind of comes with the territory); How do you feel about receiving awards and recognition for your accomplishments?

Yeah, I thought so.

Allow me to introduce you to my old buddy, the **Presidential Volunteer Service Award**. You'll make quick friends, I'm sure.

The Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) recognizes United States citizens and lawfully admitted, permanent residents of the United States who have achieved a required number of hours of service over a 12-month time period or cumulative hours over the course of a lifetime.

In order to qualify for the award, you must be registered with a leadership or certifying organization (such as WCC) and, for our purposes, volunteer for a designated number of hours in addition to the hours you are required to serve as a member of the WCC program. Only then will you be worthy to receive the "ultimate honor of presidential recognition." You can peruse the requirements for each level in the nifty table down below:

Presidential service awards come in four flavors, but the first three are our main concern. The bronze, silver and gold awards are bestowed upon members that reach the respective hour totals during their twelve months of service. This is what most of you will probably be aiming for. The reward for your time and commitment will be a personalized certificate, an official pin, and a congratulatory letter from the president of the United States (in addition to the warm and fuzzies you get from serving others, of course)!

For those for which serving others is a cradle to grave shtick, the Lifetime Achievement award requires a whopping 4,000 hours of service over any period of time. The herculean task of recording and keeping track of those hours probably deserves a reward all its own, but if you want to get cracking on that, now is as good time as any to knock out the first hundred hours or so. Rewards include a shinier pin, even more lauds from the president, and a lifetime's worth of warm and fuzzies. (I jest, but the Lifetime Achievement Award is an amazing accomplishment and anyone who spends that much time serving their community is a pretty remarkable human being in my book.)



The "ultimate honor of presidential recognition!" Photo by Brendan Dwyer.



Hours by Award	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Young Adults (16-25)	100 - 174	175 - 249	250 +
Adults (26 and older)	100 - 249	250 - 499	500+
President's Lifetime Achievement Award: Individuals who have completed 4,000 or more hours in their lifetime			



WCC Alumni LeeAnn Nawrot. Photo submitted by LeeAnn Nawrot.

What does the PVSA do for you?

First off, it's a *fantastic* chance to connect with organizations that you may not come into direct contact with otherwise, and it is an excellent opportunity to network. Former teammates of mine have ended up getting jobs with some of the organizations they volunteered with in pursuit of the award. It's a great way to see what other service-oriented professional opportunities are out there! Not to mention, the award itself looks awesome listed on your resume.

But, why do it now, when you're in the middle of a hectic service-oriented adventure, already serving in the WCC? Well, for starters, you need a sponsoring organization that has been officially certified by the PSVA program, which WCC just so happens to be (how convenient for you)! Going through the WCC means the paperwork you need to fill the award is minimal compared to someone trying to earn the award outside of the organization.

Another factor to consider is that after you turn 26, the hour requirements for earning bronze, silver, and gold awards increase A LOT. In fact, double. I don't know about you, but I seem to have less, not more, free time as I get older. The next time that you have enough open space in your schedule over the course of a single year to earn the award may not be until you've reached retirement (scary!). Having a group of enthusiastic and likeminded people (read: your teammates!) to commit time alongside can go a long way towards drumming up the necessary drive to earn the award too.

How do you keep track of all of those hours?

Conveniently, the WCC has its own tailor-made document for you to keep track of your volunteer hours on. This form is called the Presidential Volunteer Service Hours Form, and it can be found on the [forms](#) page on the WCC's website. The document must be filled out, submitted, and then signed by the award-seeking member and their supervisor or sponsor each month. The WCC will keep track of your overall progress on the awards, but it's always a good idea to keep a rough estimate yourself so that you know where you are at.

A quick word of warning: The reason this article is featured in the newsletter now, and not a month or two from now, is that this isn't one of those things you can wake up one day in July 2017 and decide "I think that I'm going to earn my PVSA Gold today." It's something you have to work at a pretty consistently in order to earn. Plan early and pace yourself! That said, the WCC is here to help you along the way!

In our next issue, you'll get the chance to meet the WCC Member Recognition Awards!
Don't miss out!

Alumni: Where Are They Now?

By: LeeAnn Nawrot: Issaquah DNR Crew AmeriCorps member 2012-2014

When did you join the WCC?

I joined the WCC in the fall of 2012.

How long did you serve?

Two full terms, both on the DNR trail crew out of Lake Sammamish in Issaquah.

What was your favorite part of WCC/favorite memory?

It is hard to choose just one favorite memory during all of my time with WCC, there were so many different and fulfilling experiences. One of the more rewarding experiences for me was seeing the trail that I helped create my first year come to completion during my second year. Seeing the project come together after all of the time both crews spent working on it was fantastic I learned so much about trail projects and what motivates me as an individual from those types of projects.

What did you take away from your experience?

I think the biggest take away from my WCC experience was finding a way to stay passionate and involved in the outdoors, even after leaving the program. I was able to meet like-minded people to help establish a solid community that focused on our mutual love for being outside.

What are you doing now?

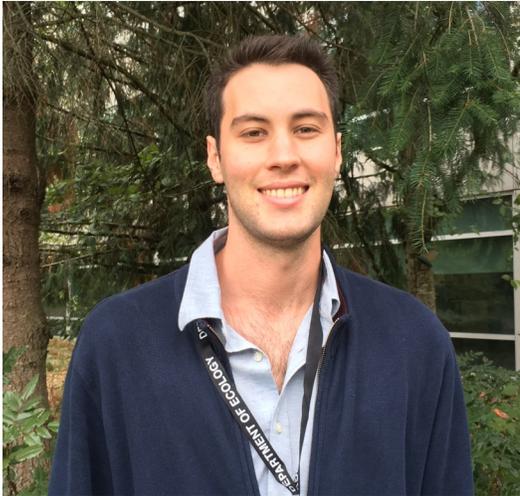
I am currently a Crew Leader for the Washington Trails Association, leading daily work parties along the I-90 corridor. I lead an average of 14-20 volunteers each day, with varying levels of experience, on a variety of trail projects from wooden structures to new trail construction and more.

Advice for current members:

My advice for current members is to take every opportunity that comes your way. The WCC program has a lot of great trainings and leadership opportunities, so use them to your advantage while you can.

IP Spotlight: Inside the WCC newsletter

By Brendan Dwyer, WCC AmeriCorps Outreach Assistant & Food Bank Garden Coordinator IP



Yours truly.
Photo by Laura Schlabach.

Hello, everybody!

My name is Brendan Dwyer, and I am the Outreach Assistant and Food Bank Garden Coordinator Individual Placement (IP) this year. Among other things, I am responsible for stitching together the darling monthly newsletter you are reading. The IP Spotlight article will feature the daring exploits of our WCC IPs, each month, every month, perhaps until the eventual heat death of the universe. IPs individually serve natural resource organizations across the state, resulting in a wide variety of unique day to day tasks. This monthly feature is your window into the mysteries of our existence. Maybe, just maybe, you'll read about a position that inspires you to serve in that role one day. I'd like to outline my vision for this year's newsletter and how all of you all figure into it.

First, a little background on yours truly.

I moved out here from New York (no, not the city) at the beginning of October, 2016. Before I arrived in the Pacific Northwest, I spent a year serving with NCCC FEMA Corps. This meant traveling around the country assisting FEMA staff with a variety of disaster relief related projects. Over the year (*deep breath*) I served in a logistics role with the FEMA warehouse at the NASA Ames Research Center in San Jose, CA, served with the External Affairs outfit dedicated to wildfires in Northern CA, assisted with the rebuilding of damaged public and nonprofit infrastructure as a Public Assistance Project Specialist after flooding in Kansas City, MO, and helped design and implement the 2016 America's PrepareAthon!'s national social media campaign with the folks over at the Individual and Community Preparedness Division in Washington, D.C.

Before that, I spent a couple of seasons working with Long Island Home Organic Gardening Service, a landscaping-cum-gardening business that specializes in edible landscaping (think Willy Wonka with fruits and veggies)! Before that, I graduated from SUNY New Paltz, studying Asian Studies and Economics.

In a way, serving with the WCC and the Department of Ecology is a lot like returning to roost for me. I spent an unhealthy portion of my childhood designing and carrying out experiments in my backyard and beyond. If you'd ever like a run-down on the spectral range fireflies are able to perceive, and what types of light pollution interfere with that, or how fiddler crabs seem to be able to sense and react directly to the moon's gravity, I'm your guy!

Flash forward to the present.

As Outreach Assistant and Food Bank Garden Coordinator at Ecology, my responsibilities are twofold. I will serve in an outreach capacity, doing everything from this newsletter, to recruitment events, to building social and traditional media content for the WCC program. I will also serve Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance program (which houses the WCC program), taking on communications projects and preparing web content.

The other half of my title leaves me responsible for keeping the Food Bank Garden, located here at Ecology's headquarters building in Lacey, alive and well. The food we grow will be harvested and delivered to the Thurston County Food Bank and then distributed to those that need it. I will organize volunteer opportunities in the garden throughout the year; local Lacey/Olympia area members are invited to come volunteer or stop by and smell the roses! The Garden Committee can always use the extra muscle. (Disclaimer: There are no roses in the food bank garden.)

Continued on pg. 7

Now, back to the newsletter...

If you have ideas for an article, or if you and your team are doing something awesome, please reach out to me! I can help develop your idea into a full-fledged piece of content. And when I say rad, I don't just mean your day to day service. Past newsletters have featured poems, doodles, reflections, and one "Is This a Real Job? Is This Just Fantasy?" ode to the WCC to the tune of Bohemian Rhapsody. So go crazy!

Why should you write/draw/scribble/compose for us? *Glad you asked!*

First off, publishing content with your name attached to it helps build your resume and portfolio if you need to give a writing sample for a future job. Behind every publication there is a routing and editing process before a piece of content is approved for release. If you have a desire to write professionally in the future, it behooves you to get to know the editing and vetting process; it will help you become a better writer and definitely teaches you to think about writing in a different way. I personally love writing, but sometimes having a specific deadline to meet really helps motivate me to sit down and create something. The WCC newsletter can be that catalyst for you.

Your term of service is going to fly by, believe me. Taking time to create something is a great chance to reflect on your service before it's over! Ultimately, this newsletter can also be a development opportunity for you in addition to showcasing your amazing accomplishments across the state.

I'm looking forward to meeting everyone at orientation, and getting to know some of you better on field visits, interviews or photo shoots that I'll be setting up with your teams. Good luck!

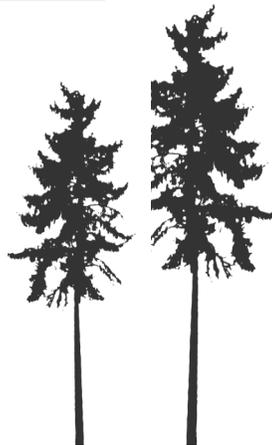


Headed out to a high-visibility project site? Take your WCC sandwich board with you for some great photo opportunities! One of our Olympic National Park crews, led by supervisor Luke Wigle, sent us this photo after a day of trail construction. Photo submitted by Adeline Wisernig.



WCC AmeriCorps members serve in beautiful places! Show us your most scenic lunch spot - just like this photo from the annual Crupina spike. This series of spikes to Lake Chelan focuses on removing the invasive Crupina vulgaris from the shoreline. Photo by WCC.

Check back in next month's issue for tips on getting your photos featured on one of WCC's outreach channels!



	Twitter: @EcologyWCC		Instagram: EcologyWCC
	Flickr: EcologyWA		Facebook: Washington Conservation Corps



Learn more on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/washingtonconservationcorps

Accommodation Requests:

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology, 360-407-7248. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

Washington Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600
www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc

October 2016
Volume 13, Issue 1
Ecology Publication No. 16-06-030



DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington

WCC Snapshots



1. Supervisor Rob Crawford's Skagit Spike crew rocking some trail projects at Hope Lake for the Forest Service. Photo by Nick Saling. 2. WCC urban forestry crews learn how to plant trees at Long Lake County Park in Port Orchard. Photo by Paul Argites. 3. WCC AmeriCorps members show off a bridge project they just completed. Photo by WCC. 4. WCC AmeriCorps members and staff at final briefing before leaving for Florida to assist communities affected by flooding. Photo by Roland McGill. 5. WCC crew mops up on Sugarloaf Fire near Anacortes. Photo submitted by Nick Saling.

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.