

In This Issue:

<i>MLK Day 2017</i>	1, 2
<i>Operation Salmon Release</i>	3, 7
<i>IP Spotlight: Claire Cook</i>	4-5
<i>Alumni Abound at SFEG</i>	6-7
<i>WCC Snapshots</i>	8-9
<i>WCC Activities Corner</i>	10

Living the Legacy: MLK Day of Service 2017



WCC AmeriCorps members from five WCC crews spent their MLK Day of Service helping out in World Vision's local warehouse. Photo submitted by Steven Quick.

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Brendan.Dwyer@ecy.wa.gov

By Steven Quick, Pierce County Spike Crew AmeriCorps Member

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the King Holiday and Service Act into law. This act sought to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, not only as a celebration of the man and his dream of a world defined by empathy, not indifference, but as a reaffirmed call to embody this spirit through action. On Monday, Jan. 16, WCC AmeriCorps members joined fellow AmeriCorps members and other citizens in communities across the county in service projects to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a day on, not a day off.

Crews from all over Tacoma came together on MLK Day to be a part of a grander message that pays homage to the values that Dr. King left for us. My supervisor, Junior Fuimaono, thought it would be a fantastic idea to get as many of us together as possible, to maximize visibility and service on this momentous day.

I was ecstatic to oblige, and I am proud of the resulting project. We served with World Vision, an international relief, development, advocacy and humanitarian aid organization which focuses on the needs of one of the world's most vulnerable populations: our children.

We received plenty of praise and thanks from our sponsor for the time we served that day, which was satisfying in of itself. We even managed to foster a bit of friendly competition in the form of a food drive, which each crew organized independently. Without a doubt, this day will go down as one of the most rewarding days of my time here with the WCC.

Continued on page 2



Living the Legacy: MLK Day of Service 2017 ●●●●●●●●●●

Continued from pg. 1



WCC crew members Eli Schmidt and Jareth Utter lend a hand in World Vision's warehouse. Photo submitted by Steven Quick.



WCC crew members gather around food donations collected as a part of their Day of Service. Photo submitted by Steven Quick.

As most of us had never spent time in a warehouse before, serving with World Vision put a lot of us out of our comfort zones. Throughout the day, we helped with a variety of projects that the staff needed done. We folded clothes and blankets and reorganized a storehouse where teachers and the needy can come and shop at an enormous discount. My fellow Corps members and I also help unload and store items to be shipped to Somalia the next day. Some of us tested and disassembled furniture for responsible disposal and donation.

On one of our breaks, the facility manager asked us all to gather around him and two of his senior employees. They had come in on their day off to see what they had heard but couldn't believe was true: a volunteer group 17-people large, were completing projects faster than they'd seen in their warehouse ever before. It was the volunteer coordinator's words regarding our drive to create a better world that made the day truly remarkable, especially after such a divisive election season. He said that it makes him proud to see young men and women standing up and doing the right thing.

After the event, I got to see pictures of grateful children riding one of the bikes I had moved that day. It brought tears to me eyes. Just the thought gives me goosebumps. My feelings of gratitude are powerful to say the least, and the relationship I hope to foster at World Vision will offer much more to come — possibly even after my term with the WCC.

I saw it as a challenge when Junior invited me to organize this MLK Day collaboration project. So, in the spirit of challenges, I dared Junior to take the crew out for dinner if we could raise 250 lb. of food for a food drive in addition to our project. Word quickly made its way to the ears of Kevin Farrell, our regional project coordinator, who extended the challenge. He promised the Tacoma crew who raised the most food a free pizza dinner after a long day of service. All in all, I estimate the total food donation that day to weigh in at around 500 lb.

This experience has taught me so much about what it means to serve your community. It just goes to show that we truly are making a difference wherever we step. I can only feel thankful to WCC for giving me the platform to organize such great projects, and to my supervisors for being so encouraging of my growth.

Stay warm out there, fellow corps members.

Operation Salmon Release

By Kaylene Raftis, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe/Olympic National Park Crew AmeriCorps Member

Hi everyone, I'm Kaylene Raftis, and I serve on the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe/Olympic National Park crew. I have the opportunity to serve on some of the coolest projects in one of the most beautiful areas of Washington, so I thought I would share some of these amazing experiences with you all. But first, a little background on our crew and the projects we've been supporting.

From November to May we serve as a restoration crew with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, which means planting in sites significant to the restoration of the Elwha River. We began the season planting in former Lake Mills — a reservoir originally formed as a byproduct of the Glines Canyon Dam. This dam was fully removed in 2014, draining the reservoir and consequently exposing a large plot of land with no vegetation. Since the dam's removal, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Olympic National Park have led an effort to revegetate these crucial areas along the Elwha River by planting over 400,000 native plants. As a crew, we have contributed 2,200 plants toward this goal so far.

The Elwha River used to be a thriving habitat for ten species of salmon and trout. This changed when two dams were installed on the river to promote local economic growth. The Elwha Dam and Glines Canyon Dam, erected in 1913 and 1927, respectively, were designed without fish ladders, and therefore did not allow fish passage. This limited returning fish to five miles of river habitat, where before the dams fish had access to 45 miles of the Elwha River plus its many tributaries. By 1992, concerns had been raised over the narrowing of salmon habitats and the environmental impact the dams were having on the surrounding areas. That same year, Congress passed the Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries Restoration Act. In 1995, the National Park Service and other affiliates prepared an environmental impact statement that stated dam removal as the best course of action. Dam removal began in 2011 and was finally completed in 2014.

Since the dam removal process was initiated, multiple restoration efforts are underway to help restore habitat. The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe Fish Hatchery plays a critical role in the ongoing restoration process, specifically for winter steelhead and coho, chum, and pink salmon. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) team decided to use hatcheries to supplement native fish populations to ensure significant progress towards fish restoration occurs within a 20- to 30-year time frame. At this point in the post-dam removal period of the restoration plan, natural spawning is improving and monitoring programs examine rates of stock rebuilding. Eventually, this data will help determine when steelhead and coho, chum and pink salmon populations have reached self-sufficiency, and hatchery enhancement can begin to be phased out.

Continued on page 7



The WCC Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe/Olympic National Park Crew repping the "W." Photo submitted by Kaylene Raftis.



WCC crew member Samantha Miller transfers a sedated salmon at Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe fish hatchery. Photo submitted by Kaylene Raftis.

IP Spotlight: Getting My Feet Wet

By Claire Cook, Padilla Bay Research IP AmeriCorps Member

It's 3 a.m. and you find yourself two kilometers out on the tide flats under a full moon. It's below freezing, and your breath obscures the already muted landscape. The waders, boots and layer cake of long-underwear and gear make you look like the creature from the black lagoon, but you don't care. You are out here for a reason.

You're walking along a line, and every hundred meters or so you paw around in the sediment looking for a small blinking box attached to a corkscrew. At low tide, the flats are a vast expanse of eelgrass and macro-algae, peppered with piles of wrack and cut with channels from the ebb and flow of the tides. Before you can get to the end of the line, the tide turns and you find yourself wading through deeper and deeper water. The end of the line is marked with a white post, but with the water already up to your thighs you begin to doubt that you'll find it. As you peer into the darkness of the sea and the only slightly more visible islands in the distance, you spot a white beacon in the trough of a wave. You've found the last post. You place the final blinking box and turn back towards land. While wading out of the sea, you can't help but wonder, is this a dream?

Nope. Just another day of service with the Research and Monitoring Department at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Padilla Bay is a biologically productive, shallow embayment in northern Puget Sound. With more than 8,000 acres of eelgrass, it contains one of the largest contiguous beds of seagrass on the west coast. The extensive eelgrass meadows provide habitat for a wide range of marine animals from sea slugs to Dungeness crab, juvenile salmon to Brant geese. The ecological importance of the bay led to its designation as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), one of 28 reserves throughout the United States. The NERR system is a network of protected areas established to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. Reserves are established and protected to provide opportunities for research, monitoring, education and interpretation.

Monitoring and research in Padilla Bay includes the System-Wide Monitoring Program as well as a variety of long and short-term research projects. Long-term research projects track things like plankton community composition, the presence or absence of invasive crabs, sea star recruitment and growth, and the extent of eelgrass. Short-term research projects focus on a wide variety of topics, from woody debris and harbor seals to eelgrass density and surf scoters.

The System-Wide Monitoring Program monitors water quality, nutrients and weather. Water quality data (temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, etc.) are collected by instruments called sondes that are anchored at four sites in the bay and automatically record data every 15 minutes. All of the NERRS participate in this program, and data from the various reserves can be found on the NERRS website where they're available to researchers and the general public.

Continued on page 5



Claire helms a small research vessel on the way to retrieve water samples.
Photo by Brendan Dwyer.



Claire retrieves water samples collected over a 24 hour period to be analyzed back at the lab. Photo by Brendan Dwyer.

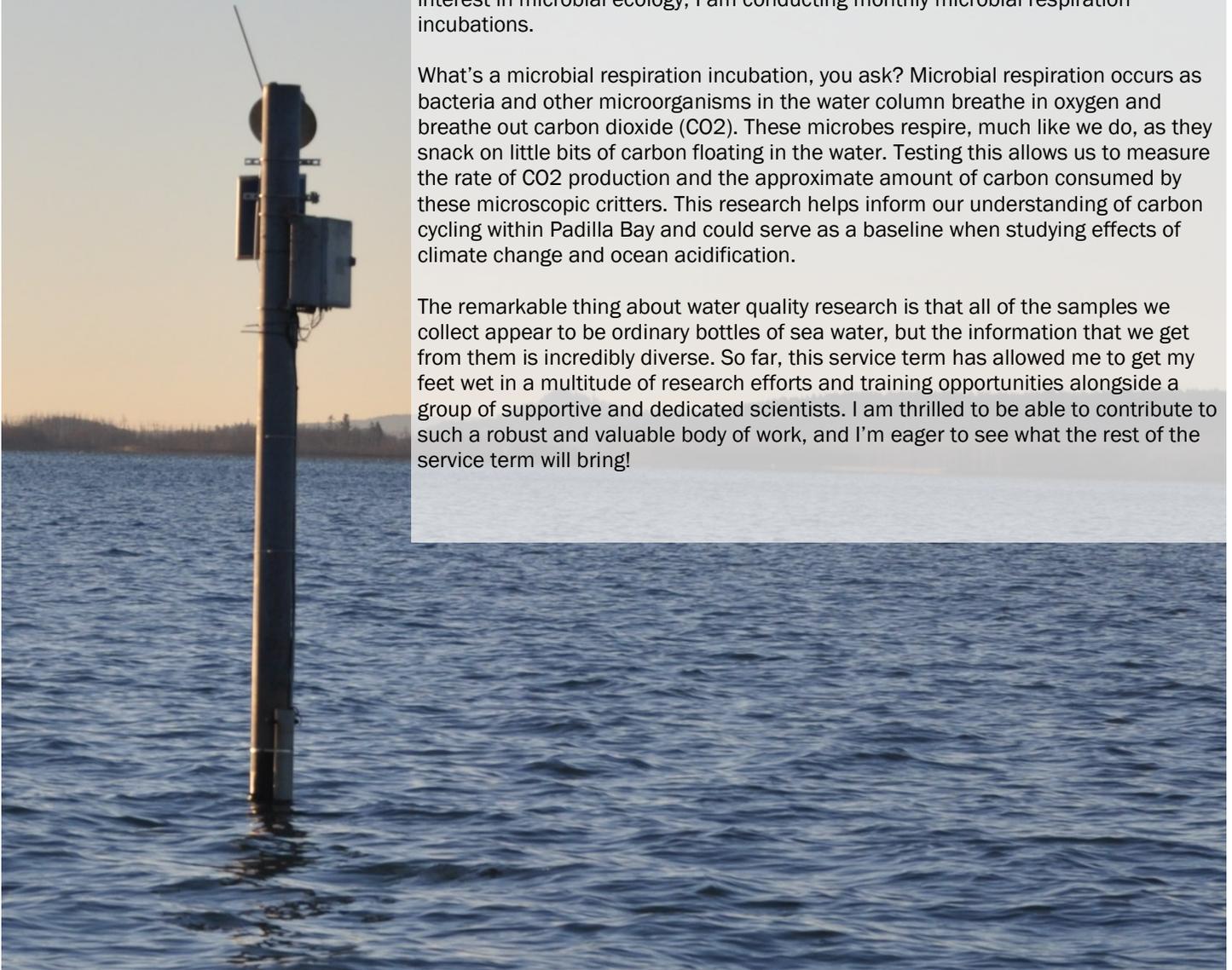
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On this dream-like night, we were retrieving and deploying temperature loggers along transects in the eelgrass meadows. In winter, the ideal times for accessing the tide flats are in the middle of the night. In the summertime, we will be out on the tide flats again – this time to measure and record growth metrics of the eelgrass itself. This is the first year that the research department has been monitoring temperature changes in the eelgrass meadows. We deployed temperature loggers in an effort to identify conditions that help us understand eelgrass growth.

When not in the mudflats or out on the boats conducting field work, I am in the lab processing data or analyzing water samples. Each year the IP in this position is encouraged to implement their own research project. With my newly discovered interest in microbial ecology, I am conducting monthly microbial respiration incubations.

What's a microbial respiration incubation, you ask? Microbial respiration occurs as bacteria and other microorganisms in the water column breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide (CO₂). These microbes respire, much like we do, as they snack on little bits of carbon floating in the water. Testing this allows us to measure the rate of CO₂ production and the approximate amount of carbon consumed by these microscopic critters. This research helps inform our understanding of carbon cycling within Padilla Bay and could serve as a baseline when studying effects of climate change and ocean acidification.

The remarkable thing about water quality research is that all of the samples we collect appear to be ordinary bottles of sea water, but the information that we get from them is incredibly diverse. So far, this service term has allowed me to get my feet wet in a multitude of research efforts and training opportunities alongside a group of supportive and dedicated scientists. I am thrilled to be able to contribute to such a robust and valuable body of work, and I'm eager to see what the rest of the service term will bring!



WCC Alumni Abound Within Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Staff

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

In last month's newsletter we got a peek into Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) as seen through the eyes of our WCC AmeriCorps Individual Placement member serving there, Taylor Schmuki. SFEG not only houses Taylor, but also employs eight WCC alumni within its ranks.

Earlier this month, I spoke with three WCC alumni, Bengt Miller, Kyle Koch and Rachael West, to learn more about what each of them are up to in their current roles at SFEG.

SFEG's Stewardship Coordinator **Bengt Miller** served as SFEG's first WCC IP all the way back in 1999-2000. As Stewardship Coordinator, part of his role is to manage the riparian corridors owned by Seattle City Light. He visits these sites quarterly to ensure proper land management. Bengt is also in charge of knotweed control at SFEG. He takes a WCC crew out each year for three months. Together they weave their way across the Skagit River Watershed removing invasive knotweed.

When I asked Bengt if he had any advice for current WCC members on making the most out of the program, he shared how he became Steward Coordinator at SFEG: Nearly a decade after his time in the WCC, Bengt bumped into his former SFEG supervisor. She still remembered him as an IP after all those years. He mentioned that he was looking for work, and asked if she could point him in the right direction. Just a few months later he was working at SFEG. Bengt points to this story as proof of the importance of fostering professional relationships and making good impressions on the people you meet during your time with the Corps:

I think the takeaway lesson from that [is] you can learn a lot of stuff on the ground and in practical applications too, but just as important as that is meeting people, networking and building those professional relationships. Because, I feel like I had good experience my year here, and...they remembered me ten years later. Meet as many people as you can. Do the job shadows you are allowed to do. Whenever you work with a sponsor...build that relationship. —Bengt Miller

SFEG Habitat Restoration Coordinator **Kyle Koch** first joined the WCC as SFEG's 2007-2008 IP. Serving an AmeriCorps term previously in Barnstable County, Mass., provided experience in environmental service with a focus on education and outreach. His AmeriCorps supervisor in



WCC alumni and current employees of SFEG, Kyle Koch, Bengt Miller and Rachael West, pose after their interviews. Photo by Brendan Dwyer.

Massachusetts connected him with the WCC IP coordinator, who led to him to his IP position at SFEG. Right out of the WCC, he landed a full-time restoration technician position at SFEG, where he has remained since. Kyle's current position as Habitat Restoration Coordinator has involved a shift from field work to volunteer coordination, grant work and permitting.

Looking back on his time with the WCC, Kyle shared his own recommendation for current WCC members:

I would ask questions. The people that are being engaged, asking questions, seeing who they're working with for the day, seeing some of the background of whatever partners you're working with, [they are] a lot more recognized...it kind of helps you out too, because if you're really interested in what a partner is doing, that might be a really good fit for you further on.

— Kyle Koch

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

Last, I spoke with Riparian Restoration Coordinator **Rachael West**. In this role, Rachael is in charge of riparian plantings on all of the SFEG projects in the Skagit River Watershed. She also manages SFEG’s Volunteer Vegetation Monitoring Program and the SFEG riparian database. Rachael also supervises SFEG IP Taylor Schmuki, who manages the plant nursery. Rachael began her time with the WCC in 2009 serving two years as a crew member and spending her second year as assistant supervisor. She moved up to a WCC supervisor role in Pierce County for a year and a half before spending 2 1/2 years as a supervisor in King County.

Rachael believes what you get out of a term with the WCC is dependent on what you put into it:

If you really put forth the effort to network with your sponsors and...[take] advantage of doing all of the things that’s given to [you], it means more networking, more exposure and more experience...I guarantee you’ll leave the program feeling [you] had a very successful year. — Rachael West

A big thank you to Bengt, Kyle and Rachael for taking the time out of their busy schedule to share their stories!



WCC crew member Matthew Findanzato and his supervisor, Phil VanKessel, transport captured salmon in bags to be released on the Elwha River. Photo submitted by Kaylene Raftis.

Operation Salmon Release

Continued from page 2

To help support natural spawning, the fish hatchery releases adult spawning salmon that have returned to the hatchery into the Elwha River. These salmon will spawn naturally in the river, allowing the next generation to imprint in the river as opposed to the hatchery. This way the next generation of salmon are able to recall chemical cues specific to the water in the Elwha River. When this generation reaches adulthood they will return to the river to spawn, creating a new wild population. Our crew was fortunate enough to be invited to serve in the tribe’s fish hatchery for a day and take part in this process.

Our day began with rounding up salmon at both the Elwha and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) hatcheries. We worked with Chum and Coho salmon — as they return September to November. The WDFW hatchery required us to use a large net to gather up the fish, a process called seining, for transport to the Elwha hatchery. Once at the Elwha hatchery, the fish were carried up for processing by a pescalator, a spiral-shaped mechanism that slowly turns, gently carrying fish and water up from a holding pond. The

salmon are then placed in a low-dose sedative state so they can be Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tagged, measured and then placed in a bag for transport. Afterwards, the salmon were released at two points on the Elwha: Glines Canyon and Indian Creek. Around 100 fish in total were returned to the Elwha.

I love making short videos, especially about my AmeriCorps experiences, and I have found there is certainly no shortage of interesting things to film in this program. Be sure to check out my video on YouTube showing this really cool day in the life of our crew:

Operation Salmon Release with Washington Conservation Corps Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe Crew: <https://youtu.be/MYhbXVdg9vQ>

WCC Snapshots: MLK Day Edition



WCC Snapshots: MLK Day Edition

1. WCC IP Taylor Belisle teams up with Intermountain AmeriCorps members for Pybus Public Market's MLK Game Day in Wanatchee. Photo submitted by Taylor Belisle. 2. Michael Frank's and Caleb Dobe's crews put together food packages with Homeless Backpacks. Photo by Brendan Dwyer. 3. WCC AmeriCorps member Eric Eystone helps his crew coordinate the collection of over 3,000 pounds of food for their local food bank. Photo by FISH Community Food Bank. 4. WCC IP Katerina Wells helps the Chehalis River Basin Land Trust care for recent plantings. Photo by Brendan Dwyer. 5. WCC AmeriCorps members Lauren Kelm and Colleen Braun help collect trash at Magnuson Park. Photo by Cynthia Saleh. 6. WCC AmeriCorps members Lizzie Haworth and Hannah Searcy serve at Tukwila Food Pantry. Photo by Laura Schlabach. 7. WCC AmeriCorps crew members Mason Showalter, Sarah Smith and Lauren Thacher help canvas apartments for Habitat for Humanity. Photo by Brendan Dwyer. 8. WCC DNR IPs Emily Cain, Galen Richards and Hillary Foster install protective barriers around new plantings at Chehalis River Basin Land Trust. Photo by Brendan Dwyer. 9. WCC crew members Nathan Joiner and Renate Arnold check expiration dates on yogurt while serving at Snohomish County Food Bank. Photo submitted by Kelli Sheldon.





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

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WCC Activities Corner

ID Quiz: Birds of Washington



Our feathered friends above all call Washington their home. Be the first crew member or IP to correctly email their names (common or scientific) to brendan.dwyer@ecy.wa.gov and you'll receive some WCC swag!

Answers to last month's crossword puzzle:
Down: 1. SwordFern; 2. SalmonBerry;
3. CanadaThistle; 4. WesternLarch;
5. RedElderBerry; 6. ScotchBroom;
Across: 7. QueenAnnesLace;
8. SkunkCabbage

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.