



Washington Conservation Corps Corps News



January 2006
Volume 2, Issue 2

Important Dates:

- February 20th:
President's Day Holiday
- March 6th-9th: Week 1
Elective Training

Highlights:

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Christmas Pg. 3
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from Texas Pg. 4
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Fish to Save Salmon Pg. 6
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WCC Crews and Corpsmember of the Quarter

Bob Milner and Julie Holder's crew were instrumental in initial set up and coordination of hurricane relief efforts in Mississippi and Texas. While most AmeriCorps deployments lasted 2-4 weeks, these crews did extended 60 day tours! The experience of 2nd year WCC members Will Sand and Ben Valdez was instrumental in ensuring the mission was successful — helping forgotten victims in rural Mississippi, coordinating projects with FEMA and the Christian Contractors, training NCCC members in tarping techniques in Louisiana and removing large trees from houses in Texas. Julie Holder's crew organized an effort to canvas the region and leave no one behind—assisting hundreds of citizens in Deweyville, Texas impacted by Hurricane Rita. Both crews went above and beyond expectations in what were, at times, difficult, trying and frustrating days. Yet both crews could only talk about the wonderful and appreciative people they helped and the positive changes in their own lives brought about by their work on this lengthy deployment.



(L-R): Tony Althaus, Nathan Eversole, and DJ Shook (sup). More crew pictures on page 2.

The WCC is pleased to announce the selection of the Yakima crew as Crew of the Quarter. While crew supervisor, DJ Shook, was away for his wedding and honeymoon (congratulations!), the crew made organized and efficient use of their time. Working with WCC management, North Yakima Conservation District, and other WCC crews, they fulfilled the needs of their sponsor and coordinated with other WCC crews to work alongside them on spike. In December the crew was joined by the Wenatchee Crew and WCC IP, Joel Arter, to assist the Catholic Family and Child Services of Yakima, winterizing and repairing 13 homes of local low-income seniors and disabled adults. Special thanks to Assistant Supervisor, Rodolfo Guzman.



(L-R): Leah Kellogg, Sean Gaskell, Julie Holder (sup), Steve Lindberg, & Gretchen Sterba

Kristin Marshall, Individual Placement with the Stilly-Snohomish Task Force, hit the ground running when she began her service with the WCC in October. Kristin's sunny disposition and contagious smile make any event she organizes an instant success. Knotweed surveys, habitat assessments, and planting projects are just a few of the many activities that Kristin has taken on. Her excellent outreach skills helped in recruiting over 200 volunteers, thus far. For an interesting story from Kristin about one such volunteer event, turn to page 6. For more information about the Task Force, visit www.stillysnofish.org.



Kristin Marshall



(L-R): Bob Milner (sup), Will Sand, & Ben Valdez

Life After WCC: Two Months Before The Mast

Article By *Bethany Loudon*

During my last month in the WCC, people were constantly asking me “What’s next for you?” I told them that I was running away to sea on the very ship Johnny Depp rode upon in the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*. I received a lot of funny looks for my response, but the only funny thing about it was that it was true.

I had signed up with the Gray’s Harbor Historical Seaport to do a volunteer program called “Two weeks before the mast” on board the *Lady Washington*, a fully functioning replica of a merchant vessel that haunted the waters of the Pacific Northwest in the late 1700s. Here’s how the program works: you pay \$350 and donate two weeks of your life, and in return, you are issued a bunk, three meals a day, a harness for climbing the rigging and a complementary crew T-shirt. That’s where the adventure begins.

I spent the first two weeks literally learning the ropes—all 168 of them — approximately 6 miles of line! I learned how to climb the rigging and furl the sails as we hopped from port to port in the Puget Sound. I even got to teach in some educational sails, thanks to all of my environmental education training from the WCC.

On my last morning aboard, I knew that I was nowhere near finished with my sailing adventures. When I came home to find that my fiancé and my friends still enrolled in the WCC were headed down south to the hurricanes, I promptly re-packed my bags and high-tailed it to Aberdeen where the brig was moored for 3 weeks of maintenance.

I set to work alongside my new sailor friends, painting the hull, tarring the rigs, sanding the yard arms and mending the sails. The hard work I did during maintenance earned me a spot on the ship’s annual transit to California. That journey on the open seas 100 miles off shore was the coolest thing I have ever done. Climbing the rigging on the rolling ocean was challenging. I also got seasick, and there were some long, cold and difficult watches in the rain. The WCC taught me how to deal with stuff like that, which made it easier to focus my energy on the actual adventure. I now intimately know the romantic life of the 18th century sailor, and can tell you first hand that the open sea is vast, mysterious, and awe-inspiring.

When we sailed into San Francisco Bay I realized that the most important things that the WCC taught me was how to work hard and be part of a crew. These skills will get you so much more in this world than just a paycheck. I was up in the rigging with my shipmates as we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge. We were dirty, tired, and awash with the success of our amazing journey. Most of us knew that our lives would never be the same again.

After one last week in Sausalito on educational sails, I returned home. My résumé, once so unbelievably boring, is now brimming with stuff that even I cannot believe is true. I haven’t found a job yet, but a few days after I got back I received a telephone call from the Gray’s Harbor Historical Seaport. They offered me a position as the new education coordinator starting in March. I told them to call me back in a few months. At this rate, who knows what other opportunities for adventure might pop up in the meantime.

I would like to extend a special thanks to my crew supervisors, Isaiah Webb and Rob Crawford, and to Michael Koenen for his support and inspiration. I couldn’t have done this without you guys!



Learn more about
The Lady Washington:

Call the Gray’s Harbor
Historical Seaport at:
1-800-200-LADY
Or visit the Website:
www.ladywashington.org

(Also, check out the special
features of the *Pirates of
the Caribbean* DVD)



Pictures from Page 1

Yakima Crew Members, from left to right are: Stephanie Brown, Isaiah Cunningham and Rudy Guzman.

Operation Katrina Kid's Christmas

By Vanessa Lott, Skagit Crew Member

There are many ways to give. The Skagit WCC crew was inspired by the Hurricane Katrina disaster relief effort. Two members from the crew helped provide services to the 1,700 people on the Carnival Cruise ship during their deployment. Upon returning home the crew still wanted to help the families affected by the hurricane. A toy drive was a tangible way to make a difference in the lives of displaced children and to ease the minds of their parents this holiday season.

The task of raising their goal of 1000 presents seemed daunting at first. The crew placed decorated boxes in local business offices, school classrooms, and restaurants. Many family members and friends also contributed to the cause. Books, clothes, stuffed animals, cars, train sets, and DVDs were just some of the things donated. Not only was the goal reached, but exceeded. With the help of others, the Skagit crew raised 1200 new and gently used presents for the Katrina kids. That meant at least two presents for each child on the boat.

A sense of satisfaction filled the crew as they sorted, cleaned, counted, and boxed the toys. Little did they know that collecting the toys was the easy part, getting them to Mississippi was another story. To mail the 24 boxes of toys was going to cost at least \$1,200. The crew was able to raise about \$300 and then hit a wall. Some shipping companies were willing to ship to Katrina survivors for free but the shipments needed to be registered by last August or September. Days in the truck were spent playing phone tag with people who might be willing to donate money for shipping. Then following up on an interesting lead they found their answer. Commander Bob Collins of the Oak Harbor Naval base offered to fly the presents for free. There was a plane going down a week and a half before Christmas that had room to take the presents to Pascagoula, MI. The crew contacted the NCCC members still on the boat to help distribute the presents. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



For all their help in collecting and transporting the presents, the Skagit WCC crew would like to thank the nearly 300 volunteers that made the Katrina Kids Christmas possible:

- Lucielle Umbarger Elementary
- North Cascade Internal Medicine
- Fidalgo Elementary Primary
- Samish Elementary Staff and Faculty
- Mary Percel Elementary Staff & Faculty
- Hale's Restaurant
- Riverside Chiropractic
- Skagit Co. Planning/Permit Employees
- Skagit County Public Works Employees
- Knights of Columbus North Chapter
- Little People's Playschool
- Debbie Gustufson
- D.J. Estate sales
- City of Kirkland Employees
- Lynn Stokesburg
- Sue and Martin Simpson
- Commander Bob Collins VR61
- Mike Mrachek Opreations VR61
- Designer's Warehouse
- Whatcom Day Academy
- Skagit County Residents
- Seattle Earth Corps
- Snohomish WCC

Piles of Tin

By Ryan Swindler, Port Angeles Crew Supervisor

*Driver said, "we're almost there"
The haze of smoke hung in the air
The night is dark except for the lights
It comes from the fires they burn here at night*

*There's no better way to get rid of the wood
From the Grand Oak that once proudly stood
But the worst smoke that makes me cough
Comes from the shingles that Rita blew off*

*The people can't move the debris out the way
For FEMA to bring 'em a place to stay
So we helped out to get the trailer in
By moving those trees and the big piles of tin*

*I know that physically we helped out a lot
But what is more comforting comes from the thought
That we helped these people, we eased their mind*

*'cause straight out of Washington,
compassion they find*

*"Ya'll came here, all the way from D.C.?"
"No sir, the state, we're the W.C.C."*

Stories from a Ship

Article by Brock Milliern and Crew (Snohomish County)

At the first notice that my crew would be traveling to the Katrina disaster zone, I knew the experience would be something much bigger than I could ever imagine. It was soon that I, along with my crew, would learn how true this was—in every way.

Arriving at 2 o'clock a.m. in Mobile, AL, after nearly twenty hours of travel, the wearied eyed five met WCC member Steve Whetherhult aboard the MS Holiday. Right away everything seemed so big: the ship, water and security were all so overwhelming. Within 12 hours, the other four Corpsmembers arrived and we were implementing the programs that the AmeriCorps teams previous to us had put in place. Our jobs were varied, and in great contrast to the "normal" tasks performed by WCC. These included a mail room, special needs room, information dissemination, teen center, bus monitoring and many other odd jobs. With all of our interactions with the over 1700 displaced hurricane victims, I wondered how our mutual relationships would effect the rest of all the residences lives—refugees and employees alike. In talking to my crew about this very matter, it became clear how it touched both.

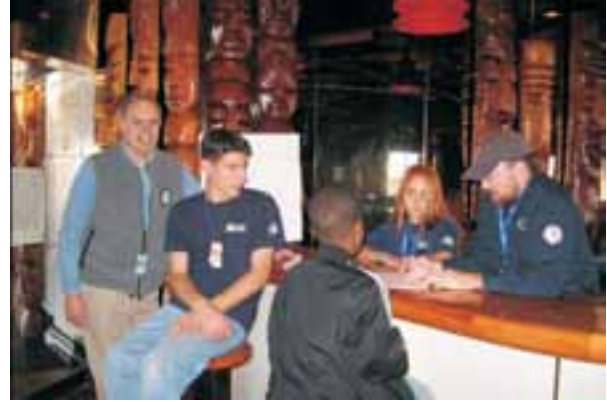
Crew member, Mark Hopf, did not realize his impact until the last few hours on the ship, "The work was unique and quite interesting, but I didn't feel satisfied until the end when many of the residents, especially the teens, expressed their thanks. They were clearly sad to see us go, and to me that was something else."

Responding to and Preventing Floods

Each year, the WCC responds to emergencies across the nation. Recently, severe winter weather brought WCC's emergency response efforts back to our own backyards. Record rainfall caused flooding in nearly a dozen Western Washington counties. Flooding along the Nisqually River required three Olympia area WCC crews to assist with placing sandbags. Several members from the Renton crew responded to a mudslide that was a result of record rain events.

Throughout the year, WCC crews are focused on more proactive measures for *preventing* disasters like these. Planting trees, placing erosion control blankets, and stabilizing slopes are some of the many ways that the WCC attempts to minimize erosion and flooding. Last year, the WCC treated over 500 acres for erosion control. Additionally, 135 in-stream barriers were removed which not only prevents rivers from flooding, but assists spawning salmon, as well.

According to the Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Committee, flood damages in Washington exceed damages by all other natural hazards. For more information about floods, visit www.fema.gov.



AmeriCorp's Bill Basl visits WCC Members working in a teen center onboard the MS Holiday. (L to R) Bill Basl, Kevin Trolli, Amy Potts, & Brock Milliern.

Josh Velazquez, the main worker in the mail room, was impacted considerably by one particular individual on board, "An elderly woman would come down every other day to pick up her mail, often staying a while for some conversation. It was not until the second week that I learned she played piano, but had unfortunately lost hers in the storm. As circumstance would have it, the mail room was setup in a lounge—with a piano. As she played, many folks would come listen and it brightened everyone's mood, but what made me feel best is the look of joy on the women's face as she played and told more stories. Many people just needed an ear, someone to listen; being that person was more fulfilling than anything else I did."



Dale Rahier (sup), Dave McArtor, Brian Wilson-Raines, Beau Smith, & Dalton Goodwin stack sandbags to prevent further flooding to homes near the Nisqually River.

Thank You, From Texas!

Good Morning,

This December 1st, finds me happier. I do not know what Deweyville, Texas would have done without the Washington Conservation Corps. Today, Nick Saling's crew left for another person's yard, after working in my yard for two days. The crew included: Steve V., Steve, Peter, Mike, Dana and, of course, Nick. Before Hurricane Rita, I had never heard anything about the WCC. Since entering my name on the list to get help with my yard, I have read your web page and learned much about the program. The crew of young adults that came and worked around my home are HARD workers and did not ask for anything other than a Thank You for all their hard work. I even asked if they take donations. I could not have asked for better help. Each and every one of these crews have touched the lives of the people in the community of Deweyville. Polite, hard-working and friendly it seems is the crews motto! What more can you ask of a person? We had trees everywhere and had time to clear some before your crew came in. And believe me, it is hard work. We could not afford to rent heavy equipment to haul off the debris. It would have cost us a few thousand dollars. Your crew comes in and attacks the pile of twisted remains and pow, it is done! No complaining! I asked them if they liked their work, and they said they loved it. As you can see in one of the before and after pictures of a part of my yard they worked on, they did a fantastic job. The picture of the crew was taken after they finished and were loading up their equipment. All smiles and happy. I bet all of their families are so proud of them. If they were mine, I would be pleased and proud of each and every one of them. If all of your crews are as good as this one was, you have a GREAT BUNCH! And young people who are going to go far in life. Thank you for sending help to a community in need!



(L to R): Steve Lindberg, Peter Dieser, Michael Morris, Nick Saling, & Steve Van Selus

-- Dana Wilbur of Deweyville, TX



Before



After

Stories from a Ship (continued from Page 3)

Erin Halbert had many opportunities to travel off the boat, and realizing where many of the folks came from overwhelmed her considerably, "To me, the severity of the devastation left in the wake of the hurricane was not totally real until I had the opportunity to drive through the communities and see for myself how much the people lost."

And I am sure the 25 other WCCers who had the opportunity to interact with the people of the MS Holiday will keep that memory with them forever, as Kevin Trolli reflected, "It was definitely a memorable experience, seeing

1700 homeless individuals, living together on a ship where WCC provided help in many ways—to everyone of them."

As I reflect back on what we really provided them, I consider what was most important. Sure, we gave them mail and got their kids on the bus and all that was important. Moreover, we provided a safe place, normalcy and smiles in a way only the "AmeriCorps kids" (that includes Dave Coffey) could. We are not a piece of mail or a t-shirt, we are an EXPERIENCE!!!

Corpsmembers Fling Fish to Save Salmon

By Kristin Marshall, Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force IP

Much of the work done by the WCC involves planting trees for fish. In late November and early December, several WCC members had the chance to switch gears and plant fish for trees. Each fall, the Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force hosts Carcass Distribution Events. It is one of the most fun—and definitely the most stinky—time of year at the Task Force. This year, WCC members joined other adventurous volunteers in some fish flingin' fun. Using spawned fish carcasses donated by the Stillaguamish Tribal Hatchery, the Task Force and 22 volunteers distributed over 273 chum carcasses into Harvey, Rock, and Kuntz creeks.

As if 15-pound flying fish carcasses and splashing slime isn't enough fun, some special volunteers were enlisted to help with the event this year. On December 2nd, three fish mongers from Pike Place Market joined the WCC to fling fish. Fish mongers Justin Hall, Sam Samson, and Jaison Scott excitedly jumped right in alongside Corpsmembers, and it was quickly apparent how much these guys love fish. The work wasn't just smelly—by the end of the evening, fish blood and slime covered the volunteers from head to toe.

Volunteers tossed the carcasses out of the back of a truck, marked the caudal fin (so that anyone encountering the carcasses will know they were placed, rather than swam, up the creek), and then hauled the heavy carcasses down to a segment of stream using a wheelbarrow. From there the real fun began. The fish were tossed into and alongside several hundred feet of stream. When it came time to see who could lob a fish the farthest, it was quickly apparent that several of the

Corpsmembers were going to give the professional fish mongers a run for their money!

These carcass distribution events are not just about having fun. The decaying carcasses are a vital component to the nutrient cycle in the freshwater and forest ecosystems, and represent an important link between freshwater and saltwater ecosystems. Salmon add most of their body weight while at sea. When they migrate back to the freshwater ecosystem to spawn and die, they also bring their marine spoils to the aquatic and forest ecosystems. The nutrients (especially nitrogen) and carbon release during decay and increase the productivity of the macroinvertebrates (stream bugs), which translates into more food for juvenile salmon. These nutrients benefit the terrestrial ecosystem as well by enhancing riparian plant productivity.



(Back L-R): Justin Hall, Sam Samson, Peter Nevin, Duane Lane, Basil Weiner, Kelly Reitz. Front: Kristin Marshall, Kathy Piland, Monica Mogg, Jaison Scott. Not Pictured: Christi Hardy

Human infrastructure (e.g. culverts and road crossings) prevents salmon from returning to streams, interrupting the nutrient cycle for many streams in the Pacific Northwest. By distributing salmon carcasses into streams that have recently had passage barriers removed, these events help enhance salmon habitat where this cycle has been interrupted.

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Photos, Suggestions, and Stories Wanted!

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See us at:
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc

About Our Organization

The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) was established in 1983 as a job training program for young adults between the ages of 18-25. The WCC is a program offered through the Washington State Department of Ecology and continues the legacy left by the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s.

The program provides work experience and skills for projects that support conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of Washington's natural, historic, environmental and recreational resources. Today, the WCC has nearly 150 members working on various projects in every part of the state. WCC partners include Federal, State, Local, and Tribal organizations.