



# Washington Conservation Corps Corps News



April 2006, Volume 2, Issue 3

## Important Dates:

- April 3rd-6th: Assistant Supervisor Training Academy
- May 29th: Memorial Day Holiday
- June 12th-15th: Week 2 WCC Elective Training

## Highlights:

- Restoration: an ongoing process . . . . . Pg. 2
- Training . . . . . Pg. 3
- Community Service . . . . . Pg. 3
- The Urban Corps . . . . . Pg. 4
- Voices for National Service . . . . . Pg. 5
- In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. . . . . Pg. 6
- Teamwork X 3 . . . . . Pg. 7
- Work Worthwhile . . . . . Pg. 8
- About Our Organization . . . . . Pg. 8



## WCC Crews and Corpsmember of the Quarter

The WCC congratulates the Skagit Crew and Nisqually Crew for being selected as Crews of the Quarter for Winter 2006.

The Skagit Crew exemplifies the WCC ethic of volunteerism with their continued involvement with service projects in their local community. The crew was the first to organize a community service project this year--resulting in a highly successful toy drive for victims of Hurricane Katrina. They've continued these efforts by teaming up with crews and Individual Placements in Snohomish County to organize a beach cleanup for the MLK week of service, and participating in the Swinomish Earth Enhancement Celebration for Earth Day. This crew epitomizes the WCC at its best. Thanks for your efforts and keep up the great work.



Skagit Crew (from top clockwise): Vanessa Lott, Lisa Reznicek, David Sullivan. Bottom: Brittany Melo, Steve Van Selus, Rob Crawford (sup).

The Nisqually Crew has taken on several extra projects this winter. They've helped out on community service projects, sent crew members to hurricane relief, tirelessly stacked sandbags during the February floods and continued to do a stellar job with their sponsor, the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. This crew is always eager to assist, whether it is filling a last minute vacancy on a spike crew, staying late to help staff with equipment, responding to floods, or working to complete their own projects so that they can lend a hand to a crew in need of assistance. Thanks for your hard work and spirit of solidarity!



Nisqually Crew (L-R): Brian Wilson-Raines, Dalton Goodwin, David McArtor, Beau Smith, & Dale Rahier (sup). Emily Doré pictured on page 2.

Meryl Kamowski, is the Corpsmember of the Quarter for Winter 2006. Paul Adler, the sponsor from King County DNRP, had this to say: "Meryl has been doing a phenomenal job as the Individual Placement for King County. She has a very busy schedule previewing projects, ordering materials, getting tools repaired, coordinating training and recruiting for new members. She is very professional in her communication and demonstrates good judgment both in the field and with other staff members."

Recently, Meryl took a lead role in organizing a highly successful service project for Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Nearly 80 volunteers worked alongside 12 WCC Members, planting 1100 potted plants and 900 bare root plants--not bad for a day's work! Well done Meryl!



Meryl Kamowski



## Restoration: an Ongoing Process

*Article by Emily Doré, Nisqually Crew Member, & Rachel York, WSC Individual Placement*

On February 23rd and 24th, 762 students and two WCC crews, supervised by Dale Rahier and Darrell Borden, succeeded in planting over 4,000 trees and native species along the West Bluff at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge.

The West Bluff is a 100-acre parcel of land located near the Nisqually delta that was once clear-cut and slated for development. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased the land for the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge in 1995 and began restoration efforts with WCC crews shortly thereafter.

In 2002, Komachin Middle School students and Nisqually NWR volunteers began working with the WCC to do more restoration plantings. The project is funded every year through a grant which covers the cost of the trees and the bus transportation. Students are supervised by the crews in planting bare root Douglas Fir, Red Alder, Black Hawthorn, Hazelnut and Elderberry.

Over the years, several methods have been used for this habitat restoration project. This year the focus was on quality planting, rather than quantity planting. After the student groups were formed, each one would grab a

variety of vegetation. They would then choose a spot to start planting. The holes were pre-augured, but some digging was still required. Once the plant was securely in the ground, the students would go and get a bucket of mulch to put around the plant. Finally, they would water and tag the plants for identification purposes.

The Nisqually crew has an ongoing commitment to maintain the West Bluff because it is heavily affected by Scotch Broom and the native plants have a difficult time growing because it is an exposed area with disrupted soil. Scotch Broom removal and consistent watering are just two activities that are done year round so the annual project with Komachin is a success.

This year the project was very successful. We got all our plants in the ground and the students really enjoyed being out of the classroom and in the environment. I think they liked the idea of helping restore land so close to home and doing work that has a visible outcome. They can come back in a year or two (or ten!) and see how their hard work pays off. All the refuge volunteers were a great help in keeping everything moving smoothly, as well. Hopefully, with proper follow up, we will have a high survival rate this year.



*Emily Doré poses with Komachin Middle School Students. (L-R) Kelly Pennington, Emily Doré, Megan Stocker, Jessica Townshend, Ciara Dahm, & Sarah Griffiths.*





*Ethnobotany display of the many uses for Cedar*



*WCC Member, Justin Williams, & Crew Supervisor, Shawn Zaniewski, work with GIS software*



*WCC Member, Jordan Pinney-Johnson and Crew Supervisor, Michael Koenen, repair fences at the Animals as Natural Therapy farm.*

## Training: Not Just for Fun, Friends, and Free Food

The Washington Conservation Corps held the first of two week-long training workshops from March 6th-9th at Pilgrim Firs in Port Orchard. The following trainings were offered, most of which result in a certificate: Wilderness Advanced First Aid (WAFA), Ethnobotany, Wildland Firefighting, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)/Proper Functioning Condition (watershed assessment tool). These courses are well developed and intensive, offering Corpsmembers a great opportunity to strengthen their résumés.

WCC Members who attended Wildland Firefighting training will not only put their red cards to use while in the WCC, but well beyond, as they go to work for state and federal firefighting agencies like the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service, or the National Park Service.

GIS is becoming increasingly important for people entering the environmental field. This course, coupled with Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) will prove invaluable to WCC Members that go on to work for environmental organizations.

Ethnobotany and Wilderness Advanced First Aid are prerequisites for many careers including: backcountry guides, field scientists, environmental educators, and rangers.

All courses were taught by experienced instructors from recognized training schools and would cost upwards of \$1,000 for Corpsmembers to attend these training sessions outside of the WCC. The upcoming June session will allow Corpsmembers to gain training in a second subject area or expand on what they've already learned through advanced certifications like Wilderness First Responder or Wildland Fire Pumps and Water Use (extended fire training). Hazardous Materials training has also been added as an option for the June session.

## Community Service

The City of Bellingham Crew (supervisor Michael Koenen) volunteered for a day in March helping the nonprofit group, Animals as Natural Therapy. The crew performed several minor repairs, including the repair of a fence surrounding the horses and ponies used in guided activities for at-risk youth participants.

Animals as Natural Therapy offers an array of programs:

- day camps and year-round weekly sessions for families living in homeless or abused women shelters;
- bi-weekly sessions for youth in level II substance abuse recovery programs;
- private sessions and day camps for preschool and elementary children;
- outreach programs for institutionalized elders; and service learning for students of all ages.

To learn more about Animals as Natural Therapy, please visit: <http://www.animalsasnaturaltherapy.org>

# The Urban Corps

Article by Bridget Mason, WCC Outreach Coordinator

Tacoma is a city often overlooked—a city that is thought of as a lesser city than neighboring Seattle. Well, times, they are a changing. Tacoma is the second largest city in Washington and, if you haven't noticed, it is in the midst of an urban renaissance. While it is true that, in the past, Tacoma did suffer from the urban ills of excessive crime, pollution and congestion, this "City of Destiny" is finally coming around. In recent years, Tacoma has become home to new retail outlets, up-scale restaurants, great new theatres, the University of Washington's Tacoma Campus, condominiums, marinas and several internationally renowned museums.

In all this urban renewal, the City of Tacoma has not forgotten the natural environment. Tacoma has been working to clean up its image by reducing industrial pollution and turning once Superfund sites into new habitat, parks and pedestrian paths. The City of Tacoma hired the WCC Crew of Melody Abel, Ryan Gore, Sara Hanson, Michael Mseitif, Shane Paulson, and Steve Whetherhult to play a part in this tremendous transformation. Below are examples of the many environmental efforts that this crew has taken part in this year.

**Tahoma Salt Marsh:** Several years ago, the largest contributor to the notorious "Tacoma Aroma", Asarco, closed. This site was listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a Superfund site in 1983. Asarco had operated for over 95 years, contaminating the surrounding area with arsenic and lead. Additionally, the smelter process resulted in slag—a hard, glassy, heavily toxic material, which Asarco used to extend the shoreline by 500 feet. There are areas in Commencement Bay where the slag is over 100 feet thick. Cleanup of the old Asarco site has been extensive and continues today. Commencement Bay has since been dredged to remove contaminated sediments and the slag was capped. The City of Tacoma recently completed a salt marsh wetland restoration project along the Ruston Way shoreline. The City excavated nearly 2 acres and then planted native marsh and riparian vegetation. A tidal channel was excavated to connect this marsh with the now restored beach. This has established saltmarsh and mudflat habitat for a variety of fish and birds. Along with planting, the Tacoma Crew continually monitors the site.

**Thea Foss Waterway:** Thea Foss is the waterway in Downtown Tacoma. It was once amongst the most polluted waterways in the country, but is evolving to become a great example of open space in the urban core. The Tacoma Crew has ongoing work assignments at 6 sites along the Thea Foss. Most recently, the crew volunteered alongside the Citizens for a Healthy Bay to plant 300 shrubs and trees along the recently completed esplanade, which stretches along the western side of the Thea Foss Waterway. Monitoring at this site will continue for the next several years. At other sites along the



Restoration projects in Tacoma. Map courtesy: city of Tacoma

Thea Foss, the Crew has placed erosion control measures, planted Willow, Ocean Spray, and salt water reeds and grasses.

**Hylebos Creek (Fife):** The project at Hylebos Creek will diversify creek habitat for salmon by creating channel-like "fingers" connected to the creek. These fingers fill up during high tides and freshwater surges to create refuge, feeding, and acclimation areas for salmon that call Hylebos Creek their home: chum, coho, and chinook. The City hired a contractor to remove over 26,000 cubic yards of material to create the "fingers". The Tacoma Crew's interaction began after the EPA requested more large woody debris (LWD) be installed. Because it was no longer feasible to use heavy equipment on site, WCC crews were called in to place LWD into the newly created fingers using low impact methods. Displaying much ingenuity, the WCC Crews used a pulley system to place the woody debris exactly where it needed to go. What was once an irrigation ditch is growing to become a restored habitat site, surrounded by a park with walkways and boardwalks. Desiree Pooley, Sponsor from the City of Tacoma, explained that "The city is excited about the connectivity of the project, as it is located near two other restoration projects."

The revegetation of the Lower Hylebos Marsh will include one additional volunteer work day: Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006. Volunteers interested in participating should contact Hillary KleeB, Hylebos Stream Team Coordinator at (253) 929-1519.

**Middle Waterway:** The contaminated material from in and around Commencement Bay had to go somewhere, so the City of Tacoma and the Simpson Timber Company made a deal. The dredged material is being used to fill in a 12-acre portion of the Saint Paul Waterway. This in-fill site will be capped, creating additional land for development by the Simpson Tacoma Kraft facility. In exchange, the Company gave up a portion of their land along the Middle Waterway to be restored for habitat. The crew has participated in planting and monitoring of this site. (continued on page 7)

# Voices for National Service

*Peter Dieser, Skagit Crew Member*

On February 8, 2006, WCC Program Director, Rob Spath and WCC Member, Peter Dieser, were invited to represent the Washington Conservation Corps at an address to Congress in Washington D.C. as a part of Voices for National Service. Below is the transcript from Peter's speech.

Hello, this is my second year with AmeriCorps. I chose Washington because I sought out environmental restoration, and it seemed like a good place to start. I am now in the Washington Conservation Corps, which will be my last since it is my second year with AmeriCorps; I was attracted to it because of the disaster relief the program is providing.

I was hired on Wednesday and was asked to start by Monday. For the first month my program split up, with one team going to the Gulf Coast. I stayed in Bellingham, Washington for the first month, performing service. When the rest of my team returned, I got my first introduction on what actually was going on down south and what really the relief effort was. My crew took it upon themselves to set up a toy drive for the kids effected by the hurricanes. Through community help, we were able to send down 1200 toys along with \$800 and a couple of cameras so they could have a Christmas party. They took pictures and sent copies to my program.

I was extremely proud of my crew, and proud to be a part of it. I was able to start something from nothing and make a huge difference before I even went down, before I had *my* experience. When I went down to participate in hurricane relief efforts, I was placed in Deweyville, Texas with a couple of other corps members, doing debris removal, chainsaw work, and removing debris off of houses. One of the most important aspects to me, besides the 6-7 days a week of 12-hour physical labor was the chance to speak with those people of the community.

In Deweyville, we stayed in their community centers. The First Baptist Church was the biggest shelter in the town. We stayed on cots; they provided a kitchen for us. Many of the community members that we helped came and cooked. For instance when they came for the Thanksgiving dinner the church had set up, we were able to sit down and talk to the people, and we were able to hear their story. A friend of mine in the program put it best when he said that «we were able to put empathy into action.» We weren't there just for work or labor—if we were there just for that, I don't know if we could have done what we did. It was the people we worked for and the people I worked with that made this possible, that made our effort possible. Their smiles and their thanks, the stories and friendships, and being part of the community. Those are the things that gave me strength each day.

After the first week of doing relief work in Texas, I was wiped out. I didn't know if I could lift another 45-50 ton log, carry it 200 meters and drop it into a pile, and do that all day! I didn't know if I could deal with the poison ivy that spread all over my body, all around my arms. But I don't want to say it was something that was easy; it was something I was able to do without a problem. If I could go back and keep doing what I was doing, I would!

Now, Rob Spath, the Executive Director of the Washington Conservation Corps, talked about my program's experience quite a bit. I was also very proud of other Corpsmembers who worked on the cruise vessel. They were part of the community as well. They provided infrastructure, they wrote newsletters, teen center; they set up "Pajamarama" and got the kids to school. That's amazing, how a group of young adults goes down there and sets up something like that with really no instruction, with really no guidebook; and to me, I can do nothing but smile and nod and say «yes.» I was able to see the community react to it, as well.

I was also able to meet a local resident named Jerry who would take the logs into Deweyville, Texas and make them into boards. He worked for the mill and would give the boards to people who needed them to rebuild their homes. I was asked a question, when I first interviewed for the program "What is the one thing you have done that you are proud of, that kind of defines your ability to give, because that's what we [the WCC] are all about. This program looks for compassion, the ability to be selfless." My answer was good, but it doesn't even compare to what I will say in the future. This experience, I am proud of it. I did not underestimate it. So I thank you very much for this experiment, and I just hope I did enough. Because I can't go south again, I have only one other gift to give [He takes off his AmeriCorps shirt and hands it to Marsha Meeks Kelly, executive director of the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service]. Thank you very much.

To read other Voices for National Service stories, please visit: <http://www.voicesforservice.org/stories.htm>



*Senator Patti Murray commends Peter Dieser and all WCC Members for their service. Photo Courtesy: [www.voicesforservice.org](http://www.voicesforservice.org)*



# In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

With help from a mini-grant provided by the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC), there were nine service projects designed and implemented by WCC members in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These service projects varied from planting events to food drives, trail building to building renovation. These service projects recruited 170 volunteers. The MLK service projects organized by the WCC will serve to benefit several disadvantaged populations throughout Washington, including: youth who live in rural areas, disabled youth and adults, ARC clients, struggling students, and impoverished families. The WCC would like to thank the partnering sponsors that helped make these projects such a huge success.



## Local Organizations:

- Bellingham Parks
- City of Redmond
- City of Olympia
- King County DNRP
- Quinault High School
- Snohomish County

## Non-Profit Groups:

- ARC of Whatcom County & Whatcom Volunteer Center
- Garden Raised Bounty
- York Neighborhood Association



Volunteers joined two WCC crews from King County DNRP and 2 Individual Placements in planting a native vegetation buffer along the newly dug channel at the Taylor Creek Channel Relocation & Wetland Restoration project.



The Kent Crew held an MLK food drive for donation to the Kent Food Bank. The crew collected 630 pounds of food.



Snohomish County Beach Cleanup: WCC members remove Himalayan blackberry.



Greenhouse built by the Olympia spike crew (sup Dewees) and 5 Individual Placements for the non-profit Group, Garden Raised Bounty (GRUB)



The Hood Canal Crew spent the week honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. by assisting the Lake Quinault School District install an ADA accessible trail that will enable physically handicapped students and fans access to the outdoor sports fields.



## The Urban Corps (continued from page 4)



Swan Creek Restoration Project: Before



Swan Creek Restoration Project: After (Photos courtesy: City of Tacoma)

**Swan Creek:** This stream restoration project is a 12 acre site located away from the downtown Tacoma area. This property borders Swan Creek and the Puyallup River. In-stream work was performed to allow fish easier passage. This effort was followed by the removal of invasive plant species and then revegetation around the creek and wetland. The Tacoma Crew also placed plants along a new walkway adjacent to the creek. Outdoor enthusiasts can now wander these trails at Swan Creek, following interpretive signs that explain the ecosystem of the watershed.

Other projects that the Tacoma Crew has been involved with include the creation of a new Puyallup River Side Channel and Public Outreach on pollution prevention.

So please, visit Tacoma to take advantage of the great new urban amenities, but don't overlook the great examples of environmental restoration that Tacoma has to offer.

## Teamwork x 3

*Article by Brock Milliern, Bellingham Crew Supervisor*

When people ask me what I do for a living, my automated response is, "environmental restoration." Now, at this point you are probably thinking to yourself that this is correct, and maybe I should have written another article. However, I think if you give me a little bit of your time, I can change your mind forever.

Recently, my crew **teamed** up with two others in what turned out to be a marvelous display of production and **teamwork**. Flat out one of the best experiences I have had while working with WCC has been working on one site with multiple crews. Not only does it teach you a lot about working with large and diverse groups, but it also helps you further discover your strengths and weaknesses. Taking that one step further, it allows the opportunity to see other people's perceptions of you. The group will make judgments of your attitude and ability, maybe you agree with their thoughts, or maybe it is time to start selling a more positive self image. Regardless, the benefits are endless. Morale, production and general enjoyment of the job all go up exponentially—all from allowing yourself to be part of this **team**.

To help all of you out, whether you are working on your crew of six or have the special opportunity to work collaboratively with other crews, here is what you now need to tell people who ask what you do. Just like a football player who plays football on a field with their eleven other **teammates**, we also often PLAY on fields of blackberry and open spaces for planting. So, it just makes more sense, as you are a part of a **team**, maybe it would give people a better understanding if you said you, "played environmental restoration." That would probably negate the need for hours of explanation on how **teamwork** is paramount within the WCC.



Three WCC Crews at Snohomish planting event



# Work Worthwhile

Article by Nathan Eversole

Imagine sitting in your home on a warm September day, just relaxing after a long day of work, only to discover that the largest hurricane (actually largest natural disaster) to ever hit the U.S. was headed your way. It would bring devastating winds and monsoon rains and would take out the levee holding back the floodwaters of the mighty Mississippi River, thus flooding your home and everyone else's homes around, completely devastating your town. Then an oil spill the size of the Exxon Valdez disaster would roll through your neighborhood, and if that weren't enough, followed by a hurricane nearly powerful enough to match the first. Also, imagine all of this happening in the course of two weeks.



Nathan Eversole

Welcome to St. Bernard parish, Louisiana. That's what the residents there are faced with. The disasters that have struck here have shut down this community as it is gone from an area of over 70,000 people down to approximately 7,000 people. Despite this grim image you can still find signs like one I read down there on the door of a home that sticks in my mind: Not for sale at any price, I'm coming back. Many people would say the same thing as an initial reaction, but they have not witnessed the destruction of this community. To step in one of these homes you would have to first push back a mountain of rotten sheetrock and insulation to discover your ceiling is now on the floor. Furniture, appliances, cabinets all destroyed. Precious pictures, awards, children's drawings all have been victimized by these disasters. Little can be salvaged from any of these homes before they are torn down to nothing but framework and flooring on the interior, awaiting renovation.

This community is pulling together, however, with the help of volunteers from around the country that come in every week to help rebuild. These volunteers bring something with them that many of the residents of New Orleans have lost; hope. I realized during my time in New Orleans that we are not just blue-tarping someone's home or clearing debris out of a house, we are giving a person hope. As long as that hope isn't lost, these residents will come back and rebuild New Orleans.

We all our proud to be a part of our tight-knit organization (Washington Conservation Corps) and beyond that our own crews we work for on a daily basis, but it seems that folks in Louisiana share our enthusiasm and appreciate and recognize our strong work ethic so much they know who the WCC are and ask for us by name. We all know that the Americorps motto is "getting things done", but I even heard one gentleman remark after asking what organization we were with, "Washington Conservation Corps? You guys are like the Navy S.E.A.L.S. of AmeriCorps." What better way can we gauge our work than that? That made me realize that our time and effort is most certainly worthwhile.

## Crew Member Pictures from Page 1



Peter Dieser



Jacquie Gauthier

## Washington Conservation Corps

PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA  
98504-7600

PHONE: (360) 407-7248

FAX: (360) 407-6902

E-MAIL:  
kdan461@ecy.wa.gov

To submit articles:  
Please call Bridget Mason at  
(360) 407-6706 or email  
brim461@ecy.wa.gov

## 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.*

*If you require this publication in an alternate format, please contact Ecology's SEA program at (360) 407-6096, or TTY (for the speech or hearing impaired) 711 or 800-833-6388.*