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Corpsmembers Rewarded for Outstanding Efforts

Congratulations to **Bob Milner's Wenatchee Crew** and Padilla Bay Reserve's Individual Placement (IP) **Austin Rose** for receiving Crew of the Quarter and IP of the Quarter for January through March 2008. Read on to find out why these members have earned this recognition.

Wenatchee Crew

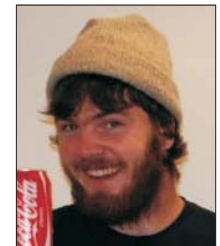
The crew did an outstanding job working with the Ecology Spills program cleaning up toxic materials left by the devastating floods of December 07. They spent 8 weeks working in miserable conditions made more difficult by the persistent Chehalis river mud. The crew collected over 700 containers and drums, 100 tires, 15 propane tanks and a wide variety of household and commercial cleaners. Most of the items were in or near creeks and rivers. The crew consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic, professionalism and the spirit of dedication and teamwork that exemplifies WCC, Ecology and AmeriCorps. Thank you for all your hard work.

Individual Placement

Austin Rose has motivated us all to strive to find the positive side of life—no matter what. Following the start of her position with the WCC at Padilla Bay, Austin was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and taught us all a lesson when she stated that, "a negative attitude was a waste of time." Below is an excerpt from an article she wrote about her experience at the MS Walk earlier this year.



Austin Rose



Clockwise from upper left: Bob Milner (sup), Jesse Freedman, Kyle Thompson, Kyle McIntosh.



"I have learned that passion is highly contagious. As a successful team captain for my first Walk MS, I have found that the more excited I am, the more driven my teammates become. I have learned to ask for pledges with boldness and without hesitation because of my supportive family and compassionate people I have met while working at the Department of Ecology."

Austin has given us all a reason to keep moving forward both through our experiences with the WCC and in life. Thank you for all your hard work with the Padilla Bay team and for your willingness to share your powerful message with everyone you touch.

(Please see page 4 for Austin's full article.)



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Rain Gardens in Mill Creek

Article by Lin Htet Kyan, Snohomish Crew

The Snohomish County Watershed encompasses all the land where rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, estuaries, and underlying ground waters drain and collect. Watersheds are vital for the survivorship of wildlife, plants, and people. From high altitudes water branches down into the valleys below, dividing local lowlands into a series of riparian zones. When rivers and streams are inundated with excessive seasonal rain fall, it can spell disaster for Snohomish County residents. Detention ponds overflow, stream banks erode and back yards are flooded. Such was the case at one of our recent job sites in Mill Creek.



To slow the flow of water down, these sedges will be planted in a "half moon" fashion alternating along the rain garden

A collaborative effort between Snohomish County Surface Water Management (SWM), Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), land owners, and road maintenance designed and built the rain gardens in a Mill Creek neighborhood on 6th Ave. The project is called "Talbot" after the home owner who informed SWM. The property belongs to Snohomish County and so no special permits were needed to do work. After SWM was aware of flooding issues on the Talbot site (Mrs. Talbot's back yard), rain gardens was designated an appropriate resolution to reduce flooding and slow down water flow.

There was considerable amount of urban flooding from rain water prior to the rain gardens. Impervious pavement prevents water from slow infiltration into the ground and later flowing into streams where high water is carried through out the wet season. Water meanders over the surface preventing absorption from plants. One of the main problems of the Talbot site was that rain water from the cul de sac including the adjacent neighborhood collectively gathered into Talbot's back yard thus flooding it. Flooding at the neighborhood could potentially cause flash floods in streams due to fast flow rates and fast water speeds for a shorter period of time. As a consequence, people who live down stream will have flooding and stream characteristics will change. Various size rocks will be carried and deposited which diverts channels to new directions. Channels may be scoured deeper than before while others straightened. Essentially, ecosystems will be changed after a flooding event.

The project was initiated over a year ago by SWM. The Talbot site was designed last summer. Construction started late November with plants ordered and ready to be installed. The December 6th storm washed way the plants and so the project had to be postponed until conditions were favorable. Talbot was restarted in early spring 2008 and is almost complete.

With guidance from our Snohomish County Surface Water Management sponsor and Native Plant Nursery manager, both of our crews help finish the final stages of the rain gardens. An assortment of materials and plants had to be collected and transported to the site. Appropriate plants were ordered that not only supplied the aesthetic quality to the neighborhood but also provided ecological function. Each land owner wanted different plants and so it was important we provided those needs. Each planting was done with care and precision. Before we could install plants, a large amount of material had to be removed to provide a substrate for the plants. We removed gravel and hay nets from areas comprising the rain gardens. Turf was removed to expand the area for plants. Corrier from the rain garden at Talbot site was removed because of its long decomposition rate and smaller mesh. Invasive plants were also removed throughout the site. Some existing hedge and stump were removed and covered with mulch and plants. After all rock and plant materials were removed, we added our stock pile of new material.

We added soil that was graded and topped off with adequate mulch. In a neighbor's back yard by Talbot, we selected and carried four large woody debris, about 12 feet long by about two feet in diameter placed in the rain garden. Smaller pieces were cut with one side sliced out into a flattened edge so that water can flow through. Jute was laid down on the bottom of the rain garden to help stabilize the soil. Native plants were tentatively staged before the best arrangement was decided. Installation of each plant was situated so that it was aesthetically pleasing. One land owner wanted a path for her lawn maintenance crew to move a mower across. Since this access point cut across the rain garden, we created a rock path wide enough for a lawn mower by using rocks with smooth edges. The path had a concave surface allowing water to flow to the rain garden.



The rock pathway was innovatively designed to suit both homeowner and stormwater needs

Continued on next page.

Rain Gardens (continued from previous page)

We are almost to the end of this project with only a few more plant species left to install. This project was unique in that it was different from our usual sites. Only a couple of crew members had landscaping experience and so the rest of us learned the techniques in the field as we worked. We were careful not to make a mess each time we worked and swept the areas well after we finished. Sometimes we encountered land owners who would change their minds about certain plants and/or materials we provided after we had done the work. This was a slight set back but we managed to make the land owner happy. We demonstrated professionalism and communicated with land owners who had questions. We received positive feedback from the land owners as well as our sponsor.

Project Talbot was a challenging yet rewarding task. We as a unified crew were part of constructing a Low Impact Development (LID) project that is returning to be a necessity as population in Washington State rises. The 6th Ave rain gardens will serve as an example for public education and awareness. We are fortunate to help the community enhance the quality of their neighborhood as well as improve the health of adjacent ecosystems.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the WCC supervisors, Surface Water Management, land owners, and my WCC coworkers for their guidance and assistance on this job site. I would also like to thank Anna Heckman (Native Plant Nursery Manager, SWM) and Ricky Porter (WCC crew member) who supplemented technical information and ideas for this write up.

AmeriCorps Symposium

Article by Miguel Blancas, Yakima Crewmember

AmeriCorps Network Northwest Symposium was hosted by the chairs of the Washington and Oregon State Commission on National and Community Service. The event was held at Portland State University on May 12th and 13th. The symposium, in its 13th year, consisted of AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve, Vista, and Senior Corps. This event offers individuals the opportunity to present service projects, life events, and special stories which have impacted their lives'. Presentations at the symposium are compiled into a book to collect the data in a historical manner. Awards are given in various categories as an incentive.

One project presentation, which I attended on disaster relief and its impact on the community effected. One important point was having a backpack setup with survival materials for a minimum of 72 hours. Knowing what to do so one is not caught off guard is very important. The actions taken by an individual in the eyes of those affected by the disaster, be it either man made or natural, offers hope. One AmeriCorps member told a story of a man who had lost everything and really didn't want any help. When asked if he needed anything, he just answered "everything I need I have at my side" talking about his wife standing next to him. This individual owned a dairy farm with 60 cows- after the flood struck his community he ended up with no farm, no home, and nothing but 16 diary cows covered in filth. The AmeriCorps member was bought to tears by the man's ability to with stand such a blow to his lively hood.

The symposium was an event I would strongly recommended to anyone who has an interest or is wanting to learn more about projects or what others are doing across Washington state and Oregon.

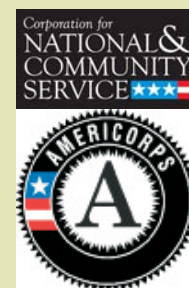


Ricky Porter plants sedges in the rain garden. A rock dam with curvature helps slow the water.



Share Your Story of Service

If you are interested in reading about what other AmeriCorps members are doing or want to submit YOUR story of service, be sure to visit: www.nationalservice.gov and click on "Stories of Service"



Walk MS

Article by Austin Rose, Padilla Bay IP

“Your MRI shows several lesions along your brain from the demyelization of your nerves. This is typically a sign of multiple sclerosis.”

I will never forget that phone call from my doctor. At that time I had heard of multiple sclerosis before, but didn't quite understand what it was and realized I had a lot to learn. Try as I might, I cannot come up with the words to adequately describe my shock as I sat before a neurologist and listened to her describe what was happening to my body and ways it would effect me the rest of my life.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel sorry for myself in the beginning, but thankfully my self-pity was short lived. Somehow through my own shock and fear, I convinced my family and friends that their pity was the last thing I needed. I knew I had to stay focused on what was and that a negative attitude was a waste of time. I desperately needed to be surrounded and supported by positive people, and luckily I had just that.

I attacked my MS with enthusiasm and passion with the help of those that surround me and have learned many important lessons that have guided me and kept me focused. I registered for the MS Lifelines Walk MS for both Bellingham and Seattle to keep moving and do something to prevent more people from learning what it means to live with this disease. More than 10,000 people walked in 8 cities throughout Central and Western Washington to help reach a goal of 2.4 million for the National MS Society. Money raised by individual walkers, teams, corporate sponsors, and other donors help pay for programs for people living with MS and their families as well as research into new treatments and a cure.

Thanks to Walk MS and other fundraising events the National MS Society has been able to significantly increase support for research and expand program offerings. So, I “joined the movement” with those people walking together to make a powerful statement, and keep moving towards a cure.

I have learned that passion is highly contagious. As a successful team captain for my first Walk MS, I have found that the more excited I am, the more driven my teammates become. I have learned to ask for pledges with boldness and without hesitation because of my supportive family and compassionate people I have met while working at Dept of Ecology.

The walk was an overwhelming experience, but morbidly reassuring to learn how many people this disease affects. The event was extremely important for me to view MS with positive thoughts and ideas to help see that a challenge can be a good thing. The past few months since my diagnosis have been an incredible experience, and I can actually say I am proud to be taking the journey.

MS FACT

Approximately 400,000 Americans have multiple sclerosis and every week 200 people are diagnosed. World-wide, MS affects about 2.5 million people. (source: national ms society)

Get the facts...

To learn more about multiple sclerosis, and hear about ways you can help, please check out the National Multiple Sclerosis Society at www.nationalmssociety.org



Erin Curl

Welcome

In January of this year, when I heard that Bridget Mason's position was opening soon, I immediately started to prepare myself to apply for a position I knew was written for me. I started my environmental career at Washington State Parks where I was a “WCC Environmental Specialist” from 2003-2005. The WCC program at State Parks was much different

than the one here at Ecology, but I knew the mission was the same and I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I had been looking for a position that would allow me to use my creativity and send me home feeling as though I had made a difference in the world around me.

When I got the call from Karen VanLeeuwen that I was being invited to interview with the WCC, I had butterflies in my stomach like you wouldn't believe! I spent every last minute of every day up to the interview with a sheet of paper I kept all folded up in my pocket filled with questions I thought might be asked of me. I read it over and over and answered the questions

out loud to myself on my way to and from work, before I went to bed, before I ate breakfast, on my lunch breaks...my family thought I had gone crazy (I am sure that the drivers in the vehicles next to me thought the same), but I just knew all the hard work would pay off.

The day of the interview, I picked out my favorite “professional” outfit, picked out a pair of shoes that didn't have chew marks on them, and at 3:00 in the afternoon, I met Marcee Peterson at the front desk who brought me up to the second floor to my interview. I noticed she was wearing comfortable jeans, tennis shoes, and one of those dark blue WCC T-shirts...it was confirmed, this is where I wanted to be.

I was lead into Rob Spath's small office where I met Nick Mott and Rob, both seemed laid back and smiling. Despite my extra-flushed cheeks and the fact that I had consumed 32 ounces of water in less than one hour, I survived the interview! I felt that my hand-dandy folded up sheet of paper that I had carried with me everywhere for a week prior had really paid off.

And then...it happened....

Continued on next page.

Welcome (continued from previous page)

The world reminded me that there is no way to avoid obstacles, even if you are totally prepared; I stepped out of my chair...twisted my ankle...and fell right on my face...right there in Rob's small office, following what I considered to be the interview of my life! You have GOT to be kidding me, right? That did not just ACTUALLY happen to me, did it? Rob and Nick weren't sure what to do as they were at the other side of the round table, so they laughed a little and then asked if I was alright. I simply replied, "oh I'm, fine...I just hope you aren't hiring for physical coordination!"

I got home and immediately threw those stupid shoes away...I mean...it had to be the shoes, right?

Despite the fact that my hands were shaking, my face was flushed, my ankle was swollen and I had limped out of the Ecology building (of course pretending like I wasn't), I got the job as the new WCC Outreach/IP Coordinator and here I am, ready to work hard for the Washington Conservation Corps (as long as there aren't too many chairs to fall out of), and give back to a program that I owe all my successes to. I am glad to be here and looking forward to meeting all of you and all future Corpsmembers to come.

WCC Puzzles

Prizes for the 1st WCC Crew/IP to complete these puzzles

Puzzle 1 – Return this page to WCC Headquarters; 1st to complete correctly, WINS!



Americorps	Padilla Bay
Austin Rose	Stormwater
Bellingham	Symposium
Bio Swales	Tacoma
Bob Milners Crew	WAFA
Corrier	Watershed
Crupina	Wenatchee
Ellensburg	WFR
Ethnobotany	Yakima
GIS	Rain Garden
Habitat Surveys	Puget Sound
HAZMAT	Pumps
Hood Canal	Spokane
Jefferson	Saws
King	Seabeck
Mulch	Sedge
Nature Conservancy	Skagit
Nisqually	Snohomish
Olympia	PFC

Puzzle 2 – Crew or IP with the most words submitted by August 15th, WINS!

A little knowledge is dangerous, but a lot of knowledge of words will be an asset in attempting this Quarter's WORD CHALLENGE! Make as many words as possible using only the letters in the words:

"A Little Knowledge"

Not Just a Crew: Looking Back From Mid-Year

Article by Corinne Hughes, Nature Conservancy Spike Crewmember

Work with the Conservation Corps began with the sun rising early in the morning and shining vigorously the entire drive home. It began with mild weather, some puffs of rain, and plenty of nettles. It began with strangers colliding and deciding to speak. Rob, Hillary, Brad, Nate, Stephen, and me, Corinne.

After the second day of work, I wrote in my journal, "Yes, this will be quite a crew indeed." The first day was quiet, awkward. The second day was the same until I found a bottle on a piece of riverside property Rob showed us. It was so beautiful and this brown beer bottle stirred something in me. I had to remove it. Yet, of all the bottles in the world, it had to be the one infested with the scent of death. I put it in the truck. Front seat. Beneath my feet. We drove ten feet and then flung ourselves from the truck gagging. Even upon its removal from the truck, the scent stayed attached to my hands. We laughed most of the ride home, my small defenses becoming more and more hilarious. From that moment on, the truck was rarely a quiet place.

In November, we reached another turning point. We camped on Waldron Island with a job for the Nature Conservancy. We needed to gather up the brush left from an intensive saw job that cut down most of the Douglas Fir surrounding dying Gary Oak. We left our truck behind, joined hands and jumped into an experience that had all the possibility of breaking us.

Waldron Island is in San Juan County but no public ferry harbors at its dock. It is a private island made up of barely one hundred people. One post office, one school, one dock, and all the pleasures of unspoiled land. The Nature Conservancy owns two separate areas of the island as preserves. The manager of the saw project was named Carson. His hair was as red as his thick beard. He grew up on the island and now owned his own consulting business for environmental companies.

We arrived at Waldron Island by way of Carson's wooden boat, The Raven. It was once a rescue boat for a cruise ship in the Caribbean. We bobbed beneath the sprays of the bay as the cliffside we would be camping on grew near. From dock to camp, we stuffed ourselves in an old bronco followed by a truck burnt out with no doors that held all of our gear in the cab. After hauling food bins with our packs pulling at our sides like bulls, we walked down The Hill to work, pulling fir limbs into bulbous piles that resembled creatures from Jim Henson's mind. All awe of the view was sweated out on the side of The Hill as we walked back up to camp. This would be our routine.

That evening, Nate discovered that he had forgotten the main part of his tent, which was intended to house him, Brad and Stephen for the next three nights. The wind was fiercely cold every night. For the first night, they each interpreted the idea of a tent with extra tarp. Stephen literally wrapped himself in one. The next night, Carson let the guys borrow a two-person tent. It was a tight fit. The last night, Brad just slept outside. I had bought a child's sleeping bag for the trip to save money, truly

believing it would fit. I ended up in sleepless misery from the aching cold of the upper half of my body. Due to the tight fit of the small tent, Nate ended up letting me borrow his sleeping bag for a couple nights. Hillary's tent ended up leaking. By the third night, she was sleeping in a pool of water with half of her tent toppled over her wet legs. Needless to say, Rob had an excellent night's sleep every night.

During the trip, Rob set up a game based on the television show "Survivor." The first day, we blindly "bought" supplies in paper bags with Monopoly money for the first event: making a fire. Brad won immediately. I took forever and was kicked off that night. Other competitions included word puzzles, standing on one leg, and pure laughter.



At the end of the day, we could do this thing: laugh. We knew that each of us had given our all, which gave us dependability. In essence, we were a team and because we could depend on that, we had the chance to discover more in each other and this place we were so lucky to see. The ocean spread out beneath us like glass every morning. The wind swept our cold faces and we worked into sweats. We saw eagles and porpoises, rain traveling across islands, and so many sunsets.

We left grateful and glad to be a part of it instead of lingering in some strange bitterness that work brings between people. This was the defining moment of our year. Later, when we would spend a month doing emergency relief for the floods in southern Washington, we would know the hands around us and their strength, the faces and their honesty.

Callused hands, sweat trickling against wind and rain, breath as heavy as stone. We wake before dawn's first light and drive home with the twilight glow of the sunset. The work life. It is winter's end. After months as a crew, we've reached yet another turning point. Maybe it's because of what we've done or been through or the simple coincidence that six human beings, perhaps, destined to meet would. This is no longer just a job, it is a life changing event. This is no longer just a crew, but a promise of friendship.

Killer Whale Poop:

Everything You Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask

By Amy Johnson, IP Snohomish County

For two years in a row, I have been fortunate enough to have the amazing opportunity to assist with killer whale research in the San Juan Islands as a “Pooper Scooper.” When people find out that I help collect killer whale scat, I’m often greeted with amazed, questioning looks of awe. By far, the most common question I get is, “how in the world do you do that,” followed shortly by, “so, what does it look like?” You may be thinking the same thing.

Before I delve into the mucky details, let me introduce you to the stunning creatures that inhabit the Puget Sound waters. The Southern Resident killer whales are a small group of approximately 90 individuals in 3 family groups known as J, K, and L pods. They spend the summer months in the waters around the San Juan Islands and the Canadian Gulf Islands, feeding on their favorite prey, Chinook salmon. The whales are currently on the endangered species list, with listed threats being lack of prey, increasing toxin levels, and vessel interference.



The net is ready for use as female J22 surfaces during a follow

Katherine Ayres, a graduate student at the University of Washington, is collecting killer whale scat to study

their hormone levels to assess their stress responses, nutritional status, and reproductive condition. Essentially, looking at their poop will give us insight into some of the factors that are affecting this population, and what can be done to alleviate them. Conducting the study in this manner is also a relatively non-invasive way of studying the animals. No biopsy darts are needed – just plain and simple poop collecting.

In reality, collecting killer whale scat is not as difficult as it sounds; you just have to know how to find it. As the whales dive down, their tails hit the water, and create circular pools of calm water, called footprints. The boat crew follows a targeted group of whales and checks these footprints, looking down into the water column. If we were to find the scat, we would easily see it in those footprints. The texture and consistency varies – sometimes it’s chunkier and sinks faster (those are harder to get), and sometimes it’s more viscous and floats on the surface (those are the ones we hope for!).

Once a scat “pile” is found, the crew grabs nets, scoops, and vials – anything to salvage every bit of the valuable sample. The tricky part is just convincing the whales to go!

Sometimes we also collect prey remains (usually salmon). The whales will give us tell-tale signs when they’re foraging by splashing through the water as they lunge, cartwheel, slap, or perform other percussive behaviors potentially used to stun the fish. My favorite experience from my first year was watching L57 elegantly zip past our boat chasing a large salmon merely 2 inches from his rostrum (nose). The salmon put up a great fight, weaving in and out of the current, but was no match for the large male orca. With a great lunge, the fish disappeared, releasing hundreds of scales in the water glimmering like stars in the sky. These scales contain valuable DNA that is vital in determining the diet of the orca. From it, scientists can not only determine the type of salmon, but also the exact river the salmon came from.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to spend my time with the beautiful, majestic whales up close and personal, but it was also a privilege to be included in the whale community on San Juan Island. When I wasn’t on the boat scoping for poop, I spent the off-hours networking with local organizations. These informational interviews always ended with a casual sharing of favorite whale stories. I felt a special kinship with them anytime we used phrases like “Oh, poor J34 was being picked on by J30 today,” or “That J39 is a feisty little guy, isn’t he?” Like humans, each whale has a distinct personality that shines through as you spend more time with them, and every

In the future, I hope to work with the whales in some capacity, and these two experiences were an important step toward that goal. For now though, I keep the memories close to my heart, and feel privileged every time I look at pictures from my experiences. I am one of the few that can proudly say I don’t just know the whales; I *know* the whales!



Amy Johnson smiles excitedly as she holds a vial of killer whale poop

WCC Skis to Sea

Article by Corinne Hughes and the Skagit County Crew

Ski to Sea is a marathon race that began around 1911. Every Memorial Day weekend, over 400 teams gather at Mt. Baker. Through seven athletic segments, they travel to Bellingham’s bay, 85 miles away. The time is recorded on a wristwatch chip that is passed through a chip-reader at the end of every leg. Rob Crawford’s crew along with Mitchel Brown from David Coffey’s crew and Rob Hamlin from Vanessa Lott’s crew made up the team. Stephen Johnson’s father sponsored us with his business, Procreate, whose mascot is a bunny rabbit.



L to R: Stephen Johnson, Brad Vehovic, Mitchell Brown, Nate Jones, Corinne Hughes, Rob Crawford. Hillary Levine & Rob Hamlin absent from photo.

<p>First Leg: Cross Country Ski, Rob Hamlin, Mt. Baker, 4 miles</p>	<p>Rob had everything against him. He had a foot injury, a hurt shin, a smashed finger, different sized poles with tips that didn’t fit the poles, and his skis were unwaxed. For a national competitor, these details barely mattered. He finished 20th in his leg.</p>
<p>Second Leg: Downhill Snowboard, Stephen Johnson, Mt. Baker, 2.5 miles</p>	<p>Stephen had never seen his course before the day of the race. Instead of starting out on top of the mountain and snowboarding down, he had to climb 1.25 miles up steep terrain in snowboard boots. After many false horizons, he finally made it and flew down to Nate with intense relief.</p>
<p>Third Leg: Running, Nate Jones, Mt. Baker to Shuksan DOT Station, 8 miles</p>	<p>From the look on Stephen’s face running to Nate at his finish line, he could tell this was the real thing. He started his run pretty steady and noticed a mile 2 marker, believing it to be the starting marker for the second mile. By mile 7, he believed he had two more miles and he had hit his physical wall. He thought it all awful when he noticed that people around him were cheering, “You’re almost there!” He asked someone how much further it was and found out it was “just around the corner.” With that, he pushed hard for all it was worth.</p>
<p>Fourth Leg: Road Bike, Rob Crawford, Shuksan DOT Station to Everson, 36 miles</p>	<p>Rob crossed the finish line around 12: 45 pm, suffering from leg cramps that started around the 23rd mile. He passed by others changing their tires and others merely out of breath from the heat. He pressed on through the leg cramps with an amazing effort.</p>
<p>Fifth Leg: Canoe, Corinne Hughes and Hillary Levine, Everson to Ferndale, 18 miles</p>	<p>It was a hot, sunny day and, in every aspect of the race, this was wonderful! But for Corinne and Hillary’s leg, the river was already at record-breaking heights. They had practiced the ride twice before the race, so therefore, when it was cancelled, the experience itself was not completely lost. Along with the 400+ team members, they watched the finish line for Rob and all the hysteria of people piling over the finish lines with their hands stretched out for the wristwatch chip. Then they’d run through the gate with all the energy they meant to use on the river. Nate, Stephen, and Rob were on their way to the park to watch the finish line, but never made it due to traffic.</p>
<p>Sixth Leg: Mountain Bike, Brad Vehovic, Ferndale to Bellingham Bay, 9 miles</p>	<p>Brad’s leg was a venture through many terrains: trail, swamp, road, to beach for the finish. He was pretty nervous but that turned into exhilaration. There was a bit of confusion brewing with the canoe leg cancelled. Everyone started two hours after the road bike’s time. Brad had his parents in town from Pennsylvania, adding onto the caravan driving to his finish line. By this time, Nate, Stephen, and Rob had been in a car for four hours. Brad, of course, beat us to his finish line and we began the long drive through traffic to the finish line.</p>
<p>Seventh Leg: Sea Kayak, Mitchel Brown, Across Bellingham Bay, 5 miles</p>	<p>By this time, everyone was piled into cars and driving to the festivities of Fairhaven. We all rushed to the finish line and missed Mitchel’s ring of the bell, the final act of the race. This leg was also up for cancellation due to wind. Instead, they had to muster amazing strength for five miles against the wind.</p>

Overall, this was a race beyond competition. Being a part of it was being a part of a community. People dressed up in costumes, the most memorable being the Chewbacca crew. Thousands of people caravanned to the finish lines and ended up filling the streets of Fairhaven’s Bellingham Bay with cheers of delight for any and everyone. It was not about winning but about succeeding in one’s own physical strength.

Habitat Evaluation Procedures

Article by Kyle Bigelow and Gabe Sparks, Ellensburg Crewmembers

The Ellensburg crew spent the 5th-9th of May in the Willamette Valley of Oregon performing Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP) for the Bonneville Power Administration. The survey work is being done to assess the overall habitat value, and approximate cost to raise that value, of sites the BPA has purchased for the purpose of off-site mitigation for net loss in habitat as a cause of their projects. The work consists of a number measurements based upon a transect area such as average tree height by species, accounting for the amount as well as size classification of downed woody debris and snags (dead trees), the assessment of total herbaceous cover, the determination of the shrub sizes and species along the line, and determining canopy cover percentage by species.

Prior to our work in the field, our crew spent several days in the classroom working with HEP developer and legendary biologist Paul Ashley, becoming informed on the various intricacies of the habitat surveying process. In addition to book studies, we spent a few days training in the field in diverse environments gaining hands on experience with the instruments used for specific measurements.

In the coming weeks we will be using this process to evaluate habitats near Colville, WA and Boise, ID, where the survey work will be done in collaboration with representatives of the Colville Indian reservation. We are very excited to be working with such renowned biologists and seeing more of the region.

Environmental Education in Ocean Beach



Emilee Mroz

Article by Emilee Mroz, Department of Ecology, Coastal Erosion Program IP

During the week of May 26-30th I visited two public schools in the Ocean Beach School District to educate students about the coast on which they live. I taught three 9th grade science classes at Ilwaco High School and three 4th grade classes at Long Beach Elementary, each class being an hour long. The presentations I prepared for these classes included information ranging from the active Cascadia Subduction Zone that causes volcanism and seismic activity to localized hazards like rip currents and coastal erosion. I also focused on what I do and study in the Coastal Monitoring and Analysis

Program in Ecology, including: the impact of man-made structures such as jetties and dams on natural sediment cycles; the use of dredge material from the Columbia River to fill in eroding beaches (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers); the importance of dunes as natural buffers for the beach during storms; and the overall purpose and function of the Coastal Monitoring and Analysis Program which is to inform coastal decision makers about coastal processes and shoreline change.

I ended my talks with a blurb about Captain Planet and that the power to save the planet belongs to everyone. Simple actions like picking up trash and not littering, not driving on the beach or disturbing the dunes, and becoming involved in local conservation activities like planting native dune grasses are tangible ways that students of all ages can help take care of our coast. I also spoke about the Washington Conservation Corps to the high school students and possibly recruited future crew members.

The students were very receptive to the information I presented, likely because I spoke about where they live and spend much of their time. I find it indispensable for people of all ages to understand the physical environment in which they live and the various risks involved. My main objective for being involved with this outreach was to increase awareness in students about the natural setting in which they live and hopefully foster a greater appreciation for the natural world. My outreach project also reinforced for me my need to work in an educational setting in the future; in teaching I feel I can most influence change in the world, even if just one person at a time. The Washington Conservation Corps is an incredible avenue to explore the possibilities for protecting our planet and for teaching future generations how to do their part.

Washington Conservation Corps

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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 a program offered through the Washington State 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.

The WCC provides work experience and skills to members through 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. Our partners include Federal, State, Local, and Tribal organizations. For more information, please visit our website.

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