



A winter trail behind the Department of Ecology's Lacey building. Photo by Kate Nagel.

JANUARY: A TIME FOR SERVICE PROJECTS FOR THE WCC

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Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) Crews and Individual Placements (IPs) will be spending the week of January 20th honoring Martin Luther King Jr. They will be joining with other AmeriCorps programs and non-profit organizations throughout the state to complete service projects.

Many members have designed their own service projects. Among this year's projects are food drives, construction projects, disaster response trainings, food

bank assistance, and community garden work.

As the Corporation for National Community Service says, WCC Members will "make it a day on, not a day off."

Share your experiences during the MLK week of service on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/washingtonconservationcorps or by sending your stories and photos to kate.nagel@ecy.wa.gov by February 7th.



Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE

"The Washington Conservation Corps volunteers are charming. Talking with them and learning what inspires them is exhilarating and restores/encourages hope for the future."

-Ava Frisinger, retiring Mayor of Issaquah



RESILIENCE: COMMUNITIES STANDING STRONG

Presented in a speech by Erika Redzinak, King County Crew Member, at the 2013 AmeriCorps launch in Seattle.

When I first applied to the WCC, I did not expect to go anywhere besides King County.

In the last several years, WCC has successfully established its roots in disaster relief and has served in many cities across the United States. In addition, the organization has never turned down an operation. The two deployment stints I went on changed how I see my surroundings as well as what kind of jobs I want to look for after AmeriCorps. This is why I am proud to be a part of this organization: to help “strengthen our communities” and to “get things done.”

Hurricane Sandy

Hurricane Sandy destroyed the east coast starting in late October 2012. WCC immediately sent crews to drive the 40 hours to upstate New York and Seaside, New Jersey to help jumpstart clean up and carry out shelter work. My crew and I had a couple of hints before January 2013 about going that kept us at the edge of our seat, but nothing came to fruition. It was not until the end of the month that we got the call to go to New Jersey to do post hurricane relief.

There were hundreds of volunteers of all ages from states like Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Connecticut. They were put to the test - working hard from the moment we put a tool in their hand. No matter how moldy or foul smelling a job was, they were upbeat and engaged. Working and spending time with them motivated me to be a better leader and make sure they were getting the most out of this experience.



Bags of wet insulation pulled from a crawlspace.

I also learned quite a bit from some of our volunteers and was very inspired. Their dedication and focus on the tasks we asked them to do made all the difference and they always had a smile on their face throughout the day.

Being part of Hurricane Sandy relief was one of most emotional times in my life. It was remarkable to see how resilient and strong-willed the community reacted after the disastrous storm. Many folks I interacted with had an optimistic

attitude and were determined to get back on their feet to restart their lives.

The month had a huge impact on me for several reasons, one of the most important was having family living near where the hurricane hit. Luckily, the storm did not affect them directly, but the community they know inside and out have drastically changed forever.

I was able to travel north with them to see more extensive damage near Seaside Heights and Mantoloking, where I used to drive by with my family as a kid.



Mounds of sand on a dune fence.

The landscape was unrecognizable under the piles and piles of debris behind fences with signs reading “Danger, Keep Out” or “No Soliciting.” The big houses with their unique mailboxes that I used to point out with my aunt were no longer there. Places all along the highway by the Ortley Beach and Lavallette water towers were in complete disarray. When we tried to visit the Point Pleasant boardwalk where I rode rides when I was younger, it was in the process of rebuilding. The severely damaged houses along the boardwalk had numbers and X’s on them indicating which had been counted after the storm. As I looked out toward the ocean, all I saw were massive mounds of sand next to tractors that were eventually going to spread them out.

Directly helping the people affected was amazing and more than words can describe. Every time we mucked and gutted a house, we got nothing but praise for our work and some homeowners could not believe that we were doing all the work free. One woman’s exact words to me when I called asking if she needed help were, “your voice is like an angel.” It was the best feeling in the world. After our thirty days in Jersey, it was back to regular work, until the next challenge came along.

Flooding in Galena, Alaska

Galena, Alaska is a tiny village in the interior of the state on the banks of the Yukon River. Every winter,

the river freezes over and thaws in the springtime. On May 27, 2013, the Yukon River flooded numerous small towns, including Galena. After the ice thawed, re-thawed and thawed again, massive water pushed ice chunks ashore as it tried to move downstream, resulting in water back up. The little town of 500 people flooded in a matter of hours. Most of the town was able to leave by a small plane, while some stayed behind to make sure no one was missing. Historically, flooding has never been this horrific.



Galena, AK flooding. May 27th, 2013.

Stepping out of the airplane on Galena soil and getting to work within the hour was incredible. Our first project was a big house with several obstacles, namely the loose insulation used

underneath the house, was drenched with floodwater. It took the crew several days to get everything cleaned up inside and outside the house. Once we gutted the wet material, we gained the trust of the town, who believed we were there to work hard. From there, we had constant work orders and received cooked meals and a town barbecue/softball game at the end of our deployment.

As part of our assignment to Galena, we set up a Volunteer Reception Center, similar to the one we ran in New Jersey. We served as a safe place for folks to ask questions and receive aid. We also had connections in Anchorage, who sent building material needs on a barge.

Since we were working in a small, unique town, no two houses were alike. Some homes were low to the ground, which made it difficult to remove wet insulation and the homeowner wanted to keep the floor intact. Other houses were high on stilts, but still had at least four feet of water inside. Another house I was at still



Gutting and taking out flooring and sopping wet insulation in a Galena home.



Erika with her flood water treasures.

had a lake in their yard, where we found many treasures.

The mood of the town was mostly upbeat, with little complaints. The folks who came back into town were very appreciative of the hard work we

were doing. It was an immense relief to get rid of the wet and moldy material from as many houses as we did. We were getting the homes "contractor ready" so people could move back before the harsh winter set in.

There were plenty of times after hours that I thought I should be doing more to get these people back sooner. I was fortunate to have great support and communication from my crew. They constantly reminded me that I was doing the best job I could and the work we were doing, big or small, affects the village and the people positively. Going to Alaska was amazing and flying to a town that is only accessible by boat or plane is an experience some will never encounter.

When the work got tough and frustrating, having the crew there by my side to crack a joke or to have simple life chats helped ease some stress. Even taking a few minutes to capture a hilarious photo released tension. Aside from working six days a week, we had some down time to explore the town and go on boat rides on the Yukon River with the locals. As we explored, you could easily see how high the ice carved into the trees and cliff sides. It was an impressive sight. On our river adventures, we found bear and moose tracks, picked wild blueberries and listened to stories that Jake the Russian told.

Resilience was a big part of this year. Working closely with a crew day in and day out can be challenging, but in the end, friendships are created and memories are made. AmeriCorps shaped me into who I am today and I am excited to see where this next year will take me. If I had this much fun, and as many opportunities last year, there is only one way to go - up. Remember to have fun and take advantage of as many opportunities as you can. Even though natural disasters happen, when we work hard and help each other, we still stand strong!

NEARLY 15 YEARS LATER, BELLINGHAM CREWS CONTINUE WORK ON PIPELINE RESTORATION

By Kate Nagel, WCC Outreach Assistant

On June 10, 1999, an Olympic Pipeline Company pipeline exploded in Bellingham, WA. Around 236,000 gallons of gas spilled into two Bellingham creeks and a fireball erupted and burned for a mile and a half down one of the creeks. Smoke billowed to 30,000 feet in the air. Tragically, the gas leak and explosion killed three youth and thousands of animals, fish, and plants within the Whatcom Watershed.



An aerial photo captures the magnitude of the destruction. Credit: National Transportation Safety Board.

Restoration

Because of the damage, it was apparent that environmental restoration needed to take place. The City of Bellingham enlisted the Washington Conservation Corps

(WCC), funding crews to restore the native vegetation and habitat loss along the watershed.

Liz Anderson, Bellingham crew supervisor and former WCC member has served on the Bellingham pipeline restoration project since 2006. She spoke of the devastation that the explosion caused to the Bellingham community, and the importance of returning the watershed to its original state.

For nearly 15 years, WCC restoration efforts have included:

- Re-engineering the creeks; creating ponds and floodplains, installing woody debris, and cable bogs
- Planting more than 100,000 trees
- Creating habitat
- Monitoring water quality and animal usage
- Thinning alder trees and allowing for conifers to take over as the primary forest covering
- Removing invasive plants
- Maintaining the site
- Removing debris

The Success Continues

Site monitoring has shown huge improvements in the quality of the watershed. Over the past few years, WCC crews have witnessed the once damaged site becoming a habitat to fish, birds, and mammals. A bobcat has even been spotted taking up residence in the area.

“Over the past few years, WCC crews have witnessed the once damaged site becoming a habitat to fish, birds, and mammals.”

According to Liz, the site is not yet fully self-sustaining; however, crews are seeing success beyond the primary stage of restoration on the project.

“This is a great example of what can be done after a disaster,” Liz said.



Boulder Bend, Post Fire, Pre-Restoration.



Boulder Bend, Post Restoration.



Boulder Bend, Post Fire, Pre-Restoration.



Boulder Bend, Post Restoration.



Heart Attack Hill, Post Fire, Pre-Restoration.



Heart Attack Hill, Post Fire, Pre-Restoration.

“This is a great example of what can be done after a disaster.”

Photos courtesy of Liz Anderson.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH, DEAD, STINKY FISH?!

By Kelley Govan, Sound Salmon Solutions IP

As we all know, salmon spawn up stream to lay eggs and give their life to support future generations. But, what happens to fish caught and artificially spawned at hatcheries?

Sometimes, hatcheries donate the higher quality carcasses to food banks. Other carcasses act as animal food for wildlife programs or are tossed back into the hatchery stream to decay. Some carcasses are collected and dispersed in nearby streams.



Tori Henderson, City of Redmond crew member, expertly tosses a salmon into the stream below.

These dispersal events are affectionately known as Fish Flings. Fish Flings are a popular way to complete nutrient enhancement programs, placing fish carcasses in areas where naturally spawning populations are limited or non-existent. This provides nutrients for the ecosystem - benefitting animals, trees, plants, and soil quality.

Sound Salmon Solutions (SSS) started organizing annual Fish Flings around 2004. SSS is a non-profit that conducts salmon habitat restoration and education projects in the Stillaguamish and Snohomish watersheds. Although SSS has a long history of Fish Flings, there has not been one for a few years due to insufficient fish numbers and lack of staff time to dedicate to an unfunded fling. In November, I began planning and organizing a fish fling, despite the grim outlook for returning salmon numbers this year,



Kelley Govan, Sound Salmon Solutions IP, with one of the soon to be flung salmon.

Mistakenly, I thought it would be fairly straightforward and easy to plan since SSS had done them before. After some sleuthing on the internet and within our network, I started to compile information and data from previous fish flings, but the out-of-date information was not very useful. Eventually, one search turned up an entire three-inch binder full of fish fling stuff. How exciting, right?!

It was a lot of information, maps, and literature to sift through to find minute helpful information. However, the little information I

“Placing fish carcasses in areas where naturally spawning populations are limited or non-existent...provides nutrients for the ecosystem—benefitting animals, trees, plants, and soil quality.”

found ended up being the stepping-stone to pursue the fish fling because it gave me contacts (or at least the contacts from six years ago) and maps of the fish fling distribution sites. Although the legwork was complete, I still had a daunting amount of planning ahead of me.

Then one day, as if by magic, everything fell into place: the fling was on! I figured out permitting through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and coordinated with the Stillaguamish Hatchery for potential days and fish availability. I acquired keys for the Pilchuck Tree farm property where SSS has worked with the Stillaguamish Tribe on all previous fish flings. I recruited the Snohomish Conservation District WCC crew for fish flingers, and talked to a former SSS employee who had planned these events previously.

At that point, it was the beginning of December and we were awaiting the spawning salmon. We crossed our fingers and hoped that copious amounts of chum would swim to the hatchery; but the outlook was not good.

The Tribe's Harvey Creek Hatchery was experiencing extremely low chum salmon runs, a fraction of the numbers from even a few years ago. There was still enough fish to conduct hatchery tours, where schoolchildren learn about salmon hands-on and witness artificial spawning. Despite low numbers, the wonderful people of Harvey Creek Hatchery allowed us to take their few carcasses to toss further

up Harvey Creek. There were only 12 artificially spawned salmon. So the WCC crew and I donned boots and waded into the creek to net very dead fish so we could have a slightly higher amount of carcasses.

Have you ever been hiking along a salmon stream and smelled a strong, pungent decaying smell? Once you have smelled the delicate aroma of decaying salmonid flesh, it is hard to forget. The fish we used in the fling were dead - some were fresh, some were not. So the WCC crew and I braved the smell, loaded up 30 dead stinky fish, and drove over to our site.

At the site, we parked the truck on a bridge with the fish bin in back. Prior to tossing the carcasses, we used machetes to cut the tails off so stream



Crew members with their salmon: Tori Henderson (City of Redmond), Warren House, Adrian Ettlinger, and Katie Draude (Snohomish Conservation District).

surveyors will know they were hand distributed. It was messy and smelly, but we tossed those 30 carcasses out into Harvey Creek where they will continue to rot, stink, provide food for animals,

and introduce some much needed nutrients into the local ecosystem.

It was a lot of work, but I had a blast learning about Fish Flings while planning one. A huge thanks to the Harvey Creek Hatchery staff, and the WCC crew; it would not have been possible without all of you! I hope that others will be able to experience the wonder of tossing around dead fish in the future.

“Once you have smelled the delicate aroma of decaying salmonid flesh, it is hard to forget.”



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CAN YOU NAME THESE PLANTS?

A prize will be awarded to the first Crew or IP to name all of these plants and send in their response! Submit via email to wcc.update@ecy.wa.gov or by snail mail.

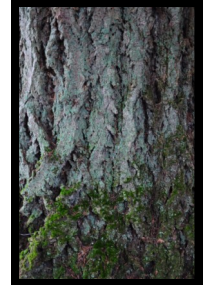
Give the Scientific Name of the following plants:



A) _____



C) _____



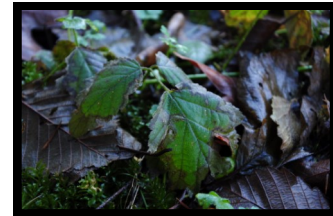
E) _____



B) _____



D) _____



F) _____



G) _____

Photo Credits: Kate Nagel

December Crossword Answers:

Across: 3. Hike, 4. Volunteer, 5. Nisqually, 9. Restore, 12. Mud, 13. Crew, 15. Brassicaceae, 16. Sea, 17. Dig, 19. Winter Solstice, 20. Lady Fern, 21. Rain, 22. Dirty
Down: 1. Devil's Club, 2. Kulshun (edit: correct spelling, 'Kulshan'), 6. Yarrow, 7. Nest, 8. Lichen, 10. Oddballs, 11. CCC, 14. Rainbow, 16. Salmonberry, 18. Tacoma

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 278 members working 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.