

Washington Conservation Corps

CORPS NEWS

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Richard Humphrey learning a new climbing technique in Safety Ropes at March Elective Training held at Cispus Learning Center. Photo by Janna Ryan.

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A WEEK OF TRAINING

During the week of March 17-20, the entire Washington Conservation Corps program joined together for a week of camaraderie, résumé building, and new skills. 286 WCC, AmeriCorps members, along with supervisors, coordinators, and instructors, gathered at the remote Cispus Learning Center in Randle, WA.

Members selected from 10 different classes: Ethnobotany, Forestry, Grant Writing, Wildland Firefighting, Rigging Application, Search and Rescue, Wilderness Survival, Swiftwater Rescue and Safety Ropes, Wilderness Advanced First Aid, and Wilderness First Responder.

After classes were done for the day, members and supervisors enjoyed activities like the Beard & Moustache competition, Salmon 101, trivia night, and campsite jam sessions held by talented WCC musicians.



The Search and Rescue class practicing litter carry techniques. Shane Taylor, Hugh Douglas, instructor, Ryan Baumfield, Clayton Buffer, and Melissa Jackson.



MARCH ELECTIVE TRAINING



(Above) Ernie Farmer with a few of the competitors in the after hours “beard and moustache” competition. Facial hair ranged from full beards to creepy moustaches as well as convincing, yet artificial, beard hats and forest dwelling beards. Keep up the facial follicles WCC! Front row: Clark Paisley, Casey Branson, Able Whitmore, Benjamin Kunesh, Sarah Wheatley, Katy Burmaster, Shea Scribner, Kate Terpstra. Back row: Justin Striker, Aaron Badillo, Brian Frankowski, Ryan Barker, and Ian Tate.



(Top) The Wilderness Survival class sets up a three-tiered system for water filtration. Many members of this class learned first hand how warm (or not so warm) their personally built shelters were. Cassandra Shirkey, Holly Groussman, Jake Smith, Gina Boland, Bryan Noyes, Adam Thompson, and Julia Martel.

(Bottom) Kirsten Miller treats her “patient,” Brooke Bannerman, in their Wilderness First Responder class.

(Right) Forestry basics, in the aptly named, “Forestry Room.” Kirsten Boeson, Brett Wilson, Mikeal No-Line, Jennifer Fausey, Nick Jones, Andy Quast, Danny Sabo, Laura Schlabach, Nancy Toenyan, Mallory Peterson, Megan Brennan, Genevieve Shank, and Adrian Ettinger.



Photos courtesy of Janna Ryan.



The Grant Writing Class, making use of the library. Rachel Brown, Clifton Hermann, Melanie Anderson, and Kira Jannusch working hard on their writing skills.



Dustin Morris is excited to go home with a hand-made cedar basket. The Ethnobotany class made others jealous as they raved about preparing a delicious feast of gathered delicacies.

“Great, fun, informational experience!”

“Natural setting was awesome.”

“Overall fun week! The music at night was awesome!”

-Excerpts from training evaluations

(Left) Natasha Coumou making it look easy in Safety Ropes.



(Right) Brent McGinn single handedly pulls a 9,000 lb truck using a mechanical advantage system set up by the Rigging Applications class.



SR530 SLIDE IN OSO, WA

By Kate Nagel, WCC Outreach Assistant and Garden Coordinator IP

My hometown, Arlington, WA, and the neighboring communities of Oso and Darrington have been deeply affected by the tragic SR530 slide in Oso, WA that took place in March. Hearing President Obama and Governor Inslee speak about these areas that I am so familiar with gives me a whole new perspective on the magnitude of this disaster.



WCC's AmeriCorps Members, Courtney Gilgore, D.J. Otis, Gina Boland, Morgan Gilchrist, and James Luttrell load their truck for Oso landslide Response Deployment. Photo courtesy of Jay McMillen.

According to family and friends still living in the area, the compassionate response has been remarkable. Local, state, and federal organizations, as well as community members from near and far have come together to give support in this time of need.

Nine WCC AmeriCorps crews are assisting with the response to the landslide. They are providing logistical and ground support to responders in the field. Their efforts have included data entry and ordering supplies at the command post, camp coordination, processing inventory, donation management, maintaining fuel services, and shuttling personnel and supplies. Members have also built accessibility ramps and helped to maintain generators.

Early on, Luke Wigle's Port Angeles crew helped to establish the responder tent camp in Darrington. This required the construction of yurts that are now used for a variety of purposes like camp logistics, food services, laundry, waste disposal, and sleeping quarters. The crew has continued maintaining camp operations to support responders that



The Port Angeles crew constructs a Yurt in Darrington at the responder tent camp. Photo courtesy of Luke Wigle.

"The AmeriCorps family holds those affected by the tragedy in our thoughts and we stand ready to assist where needed."

*-Debbie Schuffenhauer,
Executive Director,
Serve Washington*

are on the line. This set up is similar to typical wildfire camp crew duties.

WCC forestry skills have also been put to good use. With the interest of installing LiDAR equipment to monitor the hillside above the debris pile, engineers at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)



Ernie Farmer, crew supervisor, clears a path for LiDAR equipment to be installed above the debris field in Oso.

asked that WCC sawyers assist with clearing downed trees.



Dallas Barron, Ernie Farmer, and Morgan Gilchrist assist with LiDAR installation. The yellow device in the background is part of the LiDAR equipment used to monitor shifts in the hillside above rescuers.

This sophisticated mapping software creates a 3D image that geologists can compare to future maps of the site to determine whether the hillside is shifting further and is therefore a risk to the safety of responders below.

WCC crews will remain in Arlington, Oso, and Darrington for several months, as needed, completing 14 day rotations.

Although these crews are completing long shifts and helping primarily with behind the scenes tasks, they are working hard and staying positive. A special thanks to the local community members for keeping our crews going with home baked treats and kind words.

“All of this work [by WCC] occurs somewhat behind the scenes, but these tasks are essential to the overall response effort.”

*-Maia Bellon,
Washington Department
of Ecology Director*



WCC member Gina Boland takes a shift at the Incident Command Post in Arlington.

Photos courtesy of Jay McMillen.

SALMON HUGGERS

By Kris Staples-Weyrauch, Bellingham NSEA Crew Member

As a returning WCC crew member, I knew this term would be a blast. The NSEA Whatcom County crew works exclusively in and around the Nooksack River and its tributaries in order to enhance salmon habitat. NSEA employees are amazing; everyone is productive, knowledgeable, and excited. Their attitude enhances our crew and we enjoy getting our hands dirty and feet wet working for the fish.

With a crew full of second years we hit the ground running. We went to several sites, both private and public, spraying Himalayan Blackberry and Reed Canary Grass. It was my first time spraying, but I oddly enjoyed strapping a pack to my back and applying herbicide. Brush-cutting is fun, but herbicide really works. Besides, I'm also outside, walking along the creek, waving a wand. What more could I ask for?

As fall flew by and winter came, we shifted our focus from invasive plant removal to native tree and shrub planting. It was rainy and cold, but our spirits were high as we planted coniferous trees like Western Red Cedar and Douglas Fir, deciduous trees such as Red Alder and Black Cottonwood, and shrubs for the understory including Salmonberry and Pacific Ninebark. These native plants help to decrease erosion and provide the shade Salmonids need to survive their journey upstream.

Looking to the future, this spring will be awesome. NSEA will be starting their Saturday volunteer work parties again in March, and with the sun's return we will see how our hard work pays off. Where once you saw a bramble of blackberry, you will now see hundreds of trees well protected by blue tubes and caging. Everything we do here enhances the salmon, and thus our community, in some way.

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*"I'm also outside,
walking along the creek,
waving a wand. What
more could I ask for?"*



Hannah Saldana, Brady Lester, Kris Staples-Weyrauch, Zach Shirk (supervisor), Jordan Mackey, and Courtney Born of the Bellingham NSEA crew.

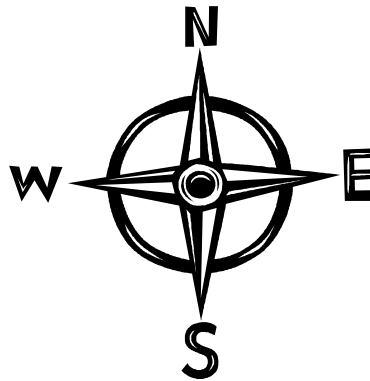
Through our work we have developed a special bond with the Salmon. Chinook, Coho, Chum, Pink, Sockeye, and Steelhead run through these waters and nourish the soil with important minerals. Whenever we see one swim upstream we point it out and watch for a few seconds. In that moment our work is affirmed, and we feel fulfilled and satisfied. I never thought seeing a fish could bring me this much excitement and joy.

WASHINGTON LEADER CORPS

By Ian Thompson, Thurston Spike Crew Member

When I first finished reading the agenda at the Washington Leader Corps (WLC) training, a few phrases stood out to me. "Nourishing the soul in service", "Tai Chi", and "meditation" were among those which almost made me laugh. I see myself as a very practical guy, and someone who just likes to "get the job done". I used to think of these kind of practices as a silly waste of time, but I decided to go to this year's WLC training nonetheless, and am so glad that I did!

As I came to learn during the training, my headstrong "get er' done" attitude is most like a "North" on the compass wheel of personality types. Other types were Souths, who are all about the team and caring for other people, Easts are amazing brainstormers and visionaries, and the Wests who love the detail work, and can be great at logistics.



The "compass wheel" is one of the most useful leadership tools I have ever come across, and is already helping me to interact more successfully with my co-workers, and even with team members on my search and rescue unit. Now I can more easily identify their strengths and their areas of challenge in order to get the most out of everyone, and try to make sure that everyone is doing work that they enjoy doing.

Our instructor, Jeff Birdsall (who also teaches this course to WCC's Assistant Supervisors at their training in January), was the perfect facilitator throughout the training. He was there just enough to get the conversations started, but he didn't rule the discussions. He had many great personal examples to share with us, but let us share and experience each others' challenges and successes in leadership as well.

While I may still be skeptical of Tai Chi and meditation, I did take away a wealth of knowledge and new experience with leadership which I believe will help me exponentially down the road and for the rest of my life.

"The 'compass wheel' is one of the most useful leadership tools I have ever come across."



Tuesday, April 22nd is Earth Day!
Send photos and stories from your
Earth Day festivities to
[kate.nagel@ecy.wa.gov!](mailto:kate.nagel@ecy.wa.gov)



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LETTER TO FISHER CREEK TEAM LORAX

By Sarah Wheatley, Urban Forestry Crew Member

A group of youth were upset with the removal of their scotch broom forest. They delivered a letter detailing their concerns, yet still thanking the crew for their work. This is the letter in response, explaining the reasons for what the WCC crew was doing to their ‘forest.’

Thank you for caring about Mother Nature! We think that’s awesome. We care about Mother Nature too, and that’s actually why we’re doing this work! The plants we’re taking out are called invasive species, which means they are really good at taking ALL the light and ALL the water and not letting anything else grow. They’re kind of the bullies of the plant world.

If you go to a healthy forest—maybe the park across the street, or Rattlesnake Ridge, or Mount Si—you might notice there are lots of different kinds of plants. Different shapes, sizes and textures of leaves, berries and flowers, and all different heights of plants. This is called biodiversity, and it means Mother Nature is healthy. When an invasive species takes over, it makes it really hard for other plants to grow, and you end up with just one or two kinds of plants instead of lots.

If you just take out invasive species, and don’t plant anything in their place, guess what will come in...MORE invasive species. So we’re going to plant more plants—a variety of native plants—in the coming weeks. Does that help? Would you like to help us plant new plants? Do you like salmonberries or thimbleberries? We would love your help, if you want to!

Thank you again for caring about Mother Nature, and for SPEAKING UP! Keep up the good work—Mother Nature needs voices like yours more than ever. And we are here to help.

In friendship,
The WCC Urban Forestry Crew: Ashley, Evan, Branden, Lindsey, Austin, and Sarah



Ashley Gould (supervisor), Austin Werts, Lindsey Juen, Branden Ellsworth, Evan Runquist, and Sarah Wheatley of the Urban Forestry Crew.

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.