



The backdrop behind the Mountains to Sound Greenway (MTSG) Earth Day restoration event. Photo by Karen Frankenfeld, MTSG IP.

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THE PUGET SOUND CORPS CELEBRATES EARTH DAY WITH A BEACH CLEANUP!

By Heather Dalke, Department of Natural Resources IP

Earth Day, Tuesday, April 22, started off with a trek over to Maury Island. WCC members, including two Maury Island crews, six Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife IPs, and several generous volunteers, joined us (six Department of Natural Resource IPs) to cleanse the beach at Point Robinson, located in the Maury Island Aquatic Reserve.

off Styrofoam and plastic. Those items saturated the beach like cherry blossoms after a spring breeze.

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As trucks rolled in, the teams gathered, slid on gloves, prepared trash bags, and began combing the beach for debris while others geared up for a day of blackberry fighting. Data collectors continuously checked



WCC members collect trash from the beach.



A MEMOIR OF THE FIRST CREW DEPLOYED TO THE OSO MUDSLIDE, A STORY OF WCC AND TENACITY

By Gina Boland, Skagit DNR Crew Member, edited by Jay McMillen and the Skagit DNR Crew

In March of 2014, my crew and I had the opportunity to deploy to Oso for the SR 530 slide for 14 days. During disaster training, we are told to be ready for anything and expect the unexpected. If there is one thing I have learned in the past month, it is that doing so is incredibly difficult. I do not know what the crew and I thought we were getting ourselves into when we joined a disaster response crew, but we did not expect to be deployed this close to home. When I first heard about the landslide, I had no idea how big it was, and optimistically hoped it was not as bad as it sounded. When I got home and did my research, I was astounded at the size of the slide, the amount of dirt, and level of destruction. Later that night, I was informed we were being deployed.



The debris field at the SR 520 slide in Oso, WA.

In less than 24 hours, my crew and I were standing outside the City Hall in Arlington, the temporary Incident Command Post (ICP). When we first arrived, I was surprised at the small yet incredibly efficient group of people stationed there. Our first 16-hour day, my crew and I watched our supervisor, Jay, flutter from person to person making contacts. We tried to stay physically busy while our minds whirred; trying to make sense of who was in charge of what for how long and how we could help them. We collected garbage, disinfected, arranged and re-arranged, set up or dismantled.

We soon got wind that the ICP was moving. The new location was to be the former Arlington High School that had been out of commission since 2001. There was a lot of prep work required. There was no running water or toilets, which posed a new set of challenges. Luckily, ICP requested Ernie Farmer and Liz Anderson's crews shortly after our crew arrived. Everyone sensed the urgency of the disaster response and worked extremely hard to accommodate the ICP staff members.

The move to the new ICP coincided with a switch from a type 3 incident management team to a type 2 team. The new team used our members as a branch of their own and we suddenly found ourselves fully implemented in the Logistics and Facilities units. Liz Anderson's crew hit the ground running with facilities work, so my crewmate, Morgan Gilchrist, and I took control of Ordering with the help of two incident staff. We processed all orders coming in from the rescue camps on both the East and the West sides of the slide.

Closely in contact with us were Ernie's guys on the Ground Support and Supply side of things. It took a lot of work, but eventually we set up a system using Google Documents to keep track of ordering and supplies. Morgan had used the same system last year on her Hurricane Sandy deployment while her crew was reaching out to



Gina Boland and Morgan Gilchrist, of the Skagit DNR crew, are interviewed by Ashley Ahern, NPR journalist.

homeowners in the Disaster Recovery Center. FEMA, the Type 2 Team, and the Everett Emergency Operations Center were on board.

It was a taxing job to keep track of the orders from various parts of the response. It required an extensive knowledge of the entire Unified Command system to be able to answer questions or point people in the right direction. The amount of information to learn was dizzying. There were over 50 acronyms to memorize. We spent the first half of our deployment in our seats, glued to the computer screen trying to answer question after question. I have never experienced such a high volume workload. I was amazed at how kind everyone was, whatever their urgency level.



WCC crew members dig trenches at the debris field.

We found ourselves becoming friends with people that we would only ever talk with on the phone, often speaking to one another as a personal resource. We kept the mood light by joking over the radio or taking a walk (A WALK!) over to the Supply tent to hang with the guys from our crew, Jesse, Eric, and DJ. We would banter lightly and share some of the ridiculous events that occurred day in and day out. It was one of those times where things get so hard that you put everything else aside to gain clear communications and be positive.



Jay McMillen, crew supervisor, helps to clear a path for geologists to put monitoring equipment in place near the slide.

Eventually, Dyami Quilici's crew deployed to the Oso Fire Station to help with an overwhelming amount of donations, and Luke Wigle's crew deployed to Darrington to set up their own Logistics tent. I remember hearing a conversation between Amelia Bethke and Katz Kiendl (of Luke Wigle's crew) suddenly blaring out of my radio. My heart jumped out to them, though I had not seen either of them since March training. Small things kept us going.

About halfway through the deployment, Jay and Ernie had the opportunity to leave the ICP and go to the slide zone. They took Morgan and Dallas Barron (from Ernie's crew) and cut a trail along the East side of the slide for geologists to install monitoring

MEMOIR continued on page 7...

Read or listen to Gina Boland and Morgan Gilchrist's interview with NPR:
<http://kuow.org/post/live-hardest-minutes-working-mudslide>

OSO PROUD, OSO STRONG

By Scottie Meinke, Olympic National Park Trail Crew Member



WCC members take a shift at the debris field in Oso.

"Pack your bags, we are heading to Arlington bright and early tomorrow morning," our fearless leader, Luke Wigle, texted Team Cobra. We had just returned to Port Angeles from a four-day spike - it was 6:45 p.m.

Team Cobra is one of two trail crews sponsored by Olympic National Park. Trails we can build, plants we can plant, and tools we can sharpen, but little did we know we could be a camp crew for the Oso Landslide.

Yes, we are one of four disaster crews and the idea of going on disaster response was something the whole crew was interested in experiencing but I would be lying if I said I wasn't nervous when the concept became a reality.

After a sleepless night of frantically packing and mentally preparing ourselves, we set out to Arlington at 4 AM. We had no idea what we would be doing, but we were intrigued. The nervous excitement was buzzing around the restlessly sleepy crew rig. When we arrived, Luke was briefed by the Arlington Incident Command Post and we were quickly sent to the Darrington Fairgrounds, on the east side of the slide.

We were the only crew sent to Darrington, where the camp was being set up. The assignment was Camp Crew. This meant we would do all the necessary tasks that would facilitate a more comfortable living and working situation for the first responders.

We spent the first week running nonstop to set up as much of the camp as we could. We not only built Yurts, but also mastered them; we created, remade, and moved more signs than we could count. Supplies and tools were inventoried and organized to make some order in the chaos, radios were catalogued (and constantly needing battery changes) and the laundry location was moving from place to place while still being organized and completed in a prompt fashion. There was no time to think or process exactly what we were doing. But, the spirit and readiness to help was apparent and showed in the work we completed.

The appreciation and camaraderie we felt from all of the first responders and other camp members was overwhelming. To see individuals and different agencies come together for one centralized reason was not only inspirational but also powerful. There were so many positive moments that we all experienced. One example is when a group from Sedro Woolley pulled up to the supply cache with an 18-wheeler truck full of helpful donated items. The emotions were all over the place but the gratitude was apparent on many levels. I will never forget what it was like to work on the slide area. The somber moments intertwined with grand appreciation for life kept the motivation high.

I will always remember listening to an interview of one of the survivors explaining what her experience was like as I was driving with Luke next to the slide area. Hands down, I share that as one of the most surreal moments of the whole experience.

At the beginning of our second week, while the amount of work was at an all time high, Russell Greer's super crew based out of Nisqually joined the camp. Although there were now two crews, the amount of work continued to fill the 16-hour days. Not only did we get a chance to bond with the camp members but we were able to create a strong bond with a fellow WCC crew and the dynamic was effortless.

Although the two weeks were filled with long 16-hour days, it was also packed with laughter. Spirits were, for the most part, high and the sleepless giggles were a constant. Many times, we felt insane, especially when words and phrases began to slur and make little sense in our sleepless state. Laughter was had, tears were cried, frustrations were apparent, and friendships were created.

We drove back to the Olympic Peninsula excited to be home but also feeling as if we were leaving a new home. The Oso Landslide response will forever be an experience that Team Cobra will remember because we are Oso proud and Oso strong.



Luke Wigle's Olympic National Park Trail Crew in front of the responder camp at the Darrington Fairgrounds.

"The Oso Landslide response will forever be an experience that Team Cobra will remember because we are Oso proud and Oso strong."

EARTH DAY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Trimming Himalayan Blackberries.

With sunshine beaming through the patchy rainclouds, we soon had a load of debris bulging out of the bed of the truck.

Before launching our next beach attack at Portage Beach in Quartermaster Harbor, all volunteers were treated to a historical tour of the Point Robinson Lighthouse led by Captain Joe, the knowledgeable lighthouse keeper.

As ominous clouds loomed just ahead we piled into our trucks and rolled on to the next polluted beach, leaving Point Robinson a bit shinier than when we arrived.

Emerging out of trucks like troops on a mission, we frantically threw on raingear as massive drops pelted sideways on the debris riddled Portage Beach in Quartermaster Harbor. Gobs of tiny plastic particles, torn bits of plastic bags, and bottle caps filled our heavy duty trash bags as quickly as it took to drench our raingear. Just in time to catch the ferry, we had another heaping truck bed of trash ready for a trip to the dump.



Volunteers get drenched at Portage Beach.

“We removed over 720 pounds of trash from the two beaches on Maury Island.”

With the help of over 30 WCC members and volunteers we removed over 720 pounds of trash from the two beaches on Maury Island, making Earth Day 2014 a success! Thank you everyone for your diligent, hard work!



Trash from Pt. Robinson fills the pickup truck.



Garbage bags filled from Portage Beach.

MEMOIR (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)



WCC crew members assist excavators and SAR crews by digging trenches at the debris field.

equipment. Morgan said that, every so often, large crumbles of the slide still fell from the cliff.

By the time we were called into the field, we had been ready for a long time. Jay and Ernie took a few members each day, rotating us through so everyone would get the chance to experience field operations. After donning our suits and taping them to our ankles, we picked up tools and headed out to the zone. The objective was to drain standing pools of water to increase the solidity of the mud. With time,

this would make it much easier for the excavators and search dogs to get in and identify potential Search and Rescue (SAR) sites.

It was an incredible and terrifying sight to see the slide zone. We solemnly passed piles of belongings. The mud seemed to stretch on into an expanse. I could not wrap my mind around the scale, even standing right there. With each step, we sank up to our knees and had to work our way out. We were often within yards of the excavators that were doing SAR, each surrounded by a group of people monitoring every scoop. Any time SAR teams located someone, the entirety of the field operations came to a halt and we paid our respects in silence, hardhats on our chests. The reality of the situation settled in for us out there. At the end of each day, we gathered ourselves in groups to speak our minds about the type of work we were doing. Being able to talk to one another was comforting. There was an impeccable sense of community and friendship that I have never seen anywhere else.



President Obama addresses emergency responders and volunteers at the Oso Fire Station.

By the end of our deployment, we had made such strong relationships with so many people - it was hard to go. I was amazed at the number of resources I witnessed collaborating every day to help the families affected. It was such a privilege to be able to work with so many hardworking and dedicated individuals. My fellow WCC members and their can-do attitudes were an inspiration. They each handled the complicated circumstances with a graceful determination I have only seen in professionals. It was an honor to be able to come together and tell one another, "I am proud of you." OSO STRONG, OSO PROUD.

"The reality of the situation settled in for us out there."



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SOME ADDITIONS AND CHANGES

Snohomish DNR 6-Month Crews

For the third year, DNR is sponsoring two 6-month crews to maintain trails in the Reiter Foothills in Gold Bar. Projects include creating and maintaining both motorized and non-motorized trails, plus doing a few months of spray work on the Skykomish. Anyone interested in coming to work in these beautiful foothills and doing a crew swap can contact supervisors Alicia Kellogg (360-584-6596) or Jennifer Briggs (360-584-5981).

Skagit DNR 6-Month Crew

Josh Boswell, who completed his term as a WCC Assistant in March, is now leading a 6-month crew out of Skagit County. Stream habitat restoration projects with local organizations are the main focus of this crew.

Whatcom DNR 6-Month Crew

Alex McCarty, former WCC Assistant and Supervisor now leads this 6-month crew out of Whatcom county. This crew works primarily with Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and Whatcom Land Trust on riparian restoration projects. This includes planting and protecting/caging native plant species along rivers and streams.

6-Month Veteran Crew

Junior Fuimaono is running the new Tacoma-based veteran crew. This crew will be similar to the other vet crews, primarily monitoring and removing marine plastic debris. They will also host beach clean-up events.

Seasonal Mason County Spike Crew

John Longsworth was a WCC Assistant in 2008-2009 on

the Mount Rainier trails crew. After spending the past few years working with the Washington Trails Association, City of Olympia and as an arborist, he returns to our program as supervisor of the new Mason County Spike crew sponsored by DNR. This crew will spend a majority of their time on projects with the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board.

Supervisor Changes

Luis Yañez (formerly Maury Is. supervisor) is taking over the City of Tacoma crew previously led by Junior Fuimaono. Luis supervised this crew previously. He's also supervised crews in Nisqually and Bellevue.

Josh Williams, who completed his term as a WCC Assistant on the Elbe Hills crew in March, is taking over the Maury Island crew (formerly led by Luis Yañez). Josh previously served on the Maury Island crew and at Metro Parks in Tacoma.

Aaron Lasha was a WCC Assistant on the Yakima Spike crew before becoming a crew supervisor last year. He is returning to the WCC to take over for Jake Hanson as supervisor of the Ellensburg spike crew.

Pete Allen replaces Ed Shier as Supervisor of the Port Angeles DNR trails crew. He has a background in structural firefighter/EMT and industrial mechanical maintenance. He's travelled to Alaska, Patagonia, Argentina and Chile for natural resource work—including Fisheries and water quality testing.



Samantha Overmyer, WCC Member, plants trees on a hillside on Maury Island.

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.