

Washington Conservation Corps

CORPS NEWS

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A panoramic view of a WCC worksite on the Palouse. Photos Courtesy of Adam Hein's Wenatchee Spike crew.

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WORKING IN THE PALOUSE

By Nick Gale and Evan Oliver, Spokane Spike Crew Members

In the month of April, our crew had the opportunity to work for Smoot Hill Nature Preserve, stewarded by Washington State University. Over the course of two weeks we planted 2,500 plants for Palouse Conservation District. These were placed in areas designated for wildlife habitat and erosion control. The nature preserve is a beautiful hillside full of wildflowers and pine trees. The hills were tall, a mile hike to the top.

Days began with preparation of plants and gear, and a safety meeting. Then it was onward up the hill; an arduous way to start the day but worth it when it was over. The summit provided a stellar view of the Palouse hills and beyond and the wildflowers had just

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Nick Gale loosens the soil on a beautiful, clear day in the Palouse.



WCC JUNE ELECTIVE TRAINING!



The Wetlands class takes a photo break. Back row: Darrell Borden, John Pankonian, Gavin Gilroy, Jessie DeBock, Adrian Ettlinger, Branden Ellsworth, Justin Striker.

Front row: Ruby Stacey, Laura Schlabach, Genevieve Shank, Kallie Doeden, Michelle Bahnick, McKinzie Ashpole, Danielle Perez, Cara Germain, Kayla Markay, Megan Brennon. Photo courtesy of Dana Mock.



Alicia Kellogg put on an excellent after hours résumé building workshop for members interested in improving their résumés.



A slide from the Mycology class shows the microscopic structure of a mushroom.



The WCC Olympics kicked off with a bang this year. The opening ceremonies included a flame flinger, sparklers, bucket drums, and team flags.



Nick Moser and Shawn Beach show off their WCC Olympics team flag.



Erika Redzinak speeds her way through the pot stacking challenge.



Expert boot tossers, Zach Shirk and Rob Crawford, aim for the pole.



Cody Hendrix tosses a boot with finesse while Eddie Hughes looks on.



Lauren Fisch focuses during the chainsaw challenge.



Amelia Bethke, Natasha Lozano, and Anna-Mai Christmas compete in one of the heats for the pot stacking challenge. Competitors learned that speed, strength, and balance are all important in this new WCC game!

The 10th annual WCC Olympics were held in the evenings during the June Elective Training at Cispus Learning Center!

WHERE WCC MEETS NCCC: COLLABORATION ON THE TRAILS WITH THE NATIONAL CIVILIAN COMMUNITY CORPS

By Karen Frankenfeld, Mountains to Sound IP



NCCC "Team Blue 2" after an exciting day on Rattlesnake Mountain, May 2014.

all the way from humid Florida to snowy Maine, even the dry crackling deserts of Arizona. This team consisted of people who had never even been to the Pacific Coast or worked on trails. Needless to say, they were in for a surprise!

Washington was a little shocking for the group at first. At the beginning of our

collaboration together, things were a little rocky as the NCCC team was forced to adjust to the physical rigor of trail work mixed with the glories of incessant (yet refreshing!) Pacific Northwest rain. Hiking up miles of trails and wielding Pulaskis for hours on end while nearly developing trench foot truly tested the character of Blue 2. Luckily they were rough and tough and acclimatized quite quickly.

Within a couple weeks they were on the trails like professionals: identifying drainage issues, constructing stream fords, and building turnpikes and culverts. The learning curve and improvement in physical ability was astonishing. And, even more importantly, I got to see how each one of them became more connected with Washington's natural landscape and

"Hiking up miles of trails and wielding Pulaskis for hours on end while nearly developing trench foot truly tested the character of Blue 2."

It was a rainy day in March when I learned that my sponsor, the Mountains to Sound Greenway, had acquired a national AmeriCorps crew to work for our trail program. I would get the sparkling responsibility of being their site leader for a handful of projects through the upcoming spring months. I was incredibly excited about the chance to work with a group of AmeriCorps volunteers (because, after all, we're *all* awesome) but I wasn't sure exactly what the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) was or how it differed from WCC. I quickly learned that the NCCC is a federal AmeriCorps program with "teams" of volunteers who live together, eat together, and physically train together. Each team is composed of people from all corners of the country, and composed of nine incredibly diverse people. The "Blue 2" NCCC team had members who hailed

ecology. From the taste of licorice roots and oyster mushrooms to the universal smell of skunk cabbage, every aspect of Cascade forests started to become as familiar and endearing as home for Blue 2.

The various projects we worked on improved specific sites within the Greenway tremendously—the first project completed involved the creation of a trailhead on Squak Mountain’s May Valley Loop, and the second project included constructing new trails on Cougar Mountain. Work eventually included a stint deep into the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River where we removed trail obstructions and did heavy rock work. Through their individual projects I could visibly see how the members of Blue 2 started taking pride and ownership in the land.

They all started as strangers to the area, but quickly became stewards of the land. It really struck me that AmeriCorps can provide that opportunity for people all over the nation.

Collaborating on the trails physically, mentally, and emotionally strengthened each NCCC team member as well as myself. We went through the various trials that all crews must endure, and there was never a single moment that our NCCC team didn’t stay true to each other. I have rarely seen such strong bonds.

For me personally it was so wonderful to work with such a great team of people and to feel like I was on a crew again, as Blue 2 had accepted me into their family. Collaborating between WCC and NCCC left me with an unforgettable experience. I have to thank AmeriCorps for its ability to cross lines and transcend to allow people from all over the country the chance to work together and learn to love Washington, which I hold so dear. I could not be more grateful to have had the chance to be a surrogate team member to such a group of caring, intelligent, and diverse people. I will now always be “Blue 2 True” in my heart forever.

“They all started as strangers to the area, but quickly became stewards of the land.”



NCC Members, Alicia Mullings and Madison Martinez cut a fallen Maple using a cross-cut saw on Squak Mountain.

A DAY IN A DOG SUIT

By Kelley Govan, Sound Salmon Solutions IP

This month I did something for the first time in my life—I wore a dog suit! One of the projects we are involved in requires a mascot attend every volunteer/family event we host. The mascot we decided on is Scooby Doo. His purpose is to a) be cute and cuddly and pose in photos, and b) to remind and encourage people the importance of picking up pet waste in order to help keep water ways clean.

The day my coworker, Andy, and I each wore it for the first time, we were attending two events the same day. He wore the suit at the first event. The suit is actually very impressive and well put together. Once he was suited up, we headed out to see how the planting was going. There were a fair amount of younger kids there, so some were into it (one girl squealed in excitement when she saw him!) and some were way too cool for school. We tromped around for a while; turns out it's a little awkward and weird accompanying a human in a dog suit. Andy eventually got out of costume and returned his alter ego to the box. By the way, Andy LOVES the dog suit, he is very excited whenever it comes out now.

Later that day we drove over to Marysville, where I was to don the suit and get my dog on. I'm a little shorter than the average person, so the suit was a wee baggy on me, and the hands didn't like to stay on. The head was surprisingly not that uncomfortable, and I could almost see more than just straight ahead. Suited up, I stepped out from behind the truck and started walking across the farm field to greet everyone at the activity booths and tables. Not five minutes later, I discovered the true consequences of limited sight and absolutely no depth perception. Poor little dog-suited Kelley stepped in a hole in the field and fell face first in front of an entertained audience. Luckily, the head stayed on (my secret identity remained safe!), and received a round of applause with my bow. Who knew dog suits were so dangerous!

So you might be thinking that the dog suit might get a little warm. It does. Especially when you wear it in the sun for close to an hour. When it was time to take it off, I was very ready.

All in all, walking around in a dog suit was pretty fun. The audience at that event was older; the adults got a kick out of the suit, but most of the teenagers were not enthusiastic. Their attempt to be "cool" just made it more fun to get them to give me high fives and pose for pictures. Overall, my first dog suit experience was fairly eventful: I took 1 fall, made 1 kid cry (he didn't trust the big dog), posed for numerous photos, wore an EarthCorps hardhat, made friends with 1 real dog and 1 real horse.



Kelley wearing the dog suit and posing with admirers!

PALOUSE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)



Wenatchee Spike Crew Members, Ian Tate, Nick Gale, Sierra Mazie, Josh Knight, and Evan Oliver.

begun to sprout. Once we reached the summit, we began staging plants in their designated areas. The following six to seven hours were filled with scalping, planting and carrying on.

While working at Smoot Hill we met Lewis, the man in charge of the daily maintenance and security of the 800 acre preserve. Lewis has worked at the hill for over 20 years. No one else could have given such a detailed historical account of the land and how it became a preserve. From farmland changing hands to a wildlife preserve, it was amazing to think that this chunk of land in the middle of the Palouse could have such a storied history. He kept the crew entertained with story after story of life in and around the preserve. It was easy to get turned around hiking in and out of the work site but Lewis knew the area like the back of his hand. He could tell you how to get to the highest points, where the best flowers grew, where the wetlands were and where the wildlife liked to hang out. It was great education about a place that wouldn't have been given such thought without his presence.



A river flows through the Wenatchee Spike Crew worksite.



The golden hills of the Palouse make for a stunning work location.

“This was one of the coolest work sites we have had the opportunity to work this year.”

This was one of the coolest work sites we have had the opportunity to work at this year. It would be great to make it back there soon. Smoot Hill is truly a hidden gem in the rolling farmlands of the Palouse, and a great place to visit again.



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Washington Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600
www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc

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THE 2014 GARDEN SEASON HAS BEGUN!

By Kate Nagel, Garden Coordinator and Outreach Assistant IP



Volunteers plant winter squash.

The 2014 garden season started off with a flurry of activity for the Ecology Food Bank Garden. After a plant sale and the spring planting event, the garden is ready for another season of growing vegetables for our community.

Plant Sale

At Ecology, we love our plants. The Earth Day Plant Sale was a great success, raising over \$1,700, with all proceeds directly funding the Food Bank Garden. Sale items ranged from charming little bags of flower seeds to highly sought-after Japanese Maple and Curly Hazelnut trees, and everything in between. All plants at the sale were generously donated by Ecology employees and two local nurseries, Puget Sound Plants and Sound Native Plants.

Planting Party

Thirty volunteers braved the off and on rain showers to plant several hundred winter squash starts in the garden. It was quite the group effort with a variety of tasks, including weeding to prepare rows, pouring fertilizer, and carefully planting the squash.

Alongside Ecology employees were several high school students as well as a group of elementary school students whose classes helped start a few trays of squash. There were also several WCC members and staff present! Ecology employees also donated time, energy, and space in their homes to start the squash prior to planting.

What a great feeling to finally have all 500 of our baby squash planted in the ground!



A beautiful squash start planted and ready to grow.

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 320 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