



The Ecology Food Bank Garden in full bloom. Photo by Kate Nagel.

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2014 ENVIROTHON!

By Erika Redzinak, Rob Hermann, Shanna Hobbs, David Marcell, Shea Scribner, and Sarah Tomt (supervisor), King Conservation District Crew

On May 21st-22nd, the “Renton Murder” crew took a break from the usual spring maintenance and volunteered at the 2014 State Envirothon competition, hosted by the King Conservation District (KCD). Every year the teams are presented with topics: forestry, aquatic ecology, soils/land use, wildlife, and this year’s current issue, sustainable agriculture and locally grown food.

After months of intensive planning, the KCD IP, Nikki Marschke welcomed our help setting up the five testing stations for each team to tackle.



High School students compete in the 2014 Envirothon. Photo courtesy of Erika Redzinak.



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WCC IPs: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AT ITS BEST



Larry Montague, North Olympic Salmon Coalition (NOSC) IP, demonstrating bare root planting with Esme Berger (daughter of Miranda Berger, NOSC's Development Director) at a planting event with Habitat for Humanity on Chimacum Creek. Photo credit: Elizabeth Becker.



Larry Montague, NOSC IP, and Dylan Kelly, Port Hadlock WCC crew member conduct chum spawner surveys on Chimacum creek. Photo credit: Charles Espey.



Larry Montague, NOSC IP, plants trees at Morse Creek in Port Angeles with students from Franklin Elementary School.



Anna-Mai Christmas, Padilla Bay Education IP, teaches a group of children about fish. Photo courtesy of Patrick Barnes.



Earth Day event coordinated by Melanie Anderson, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group IP. Melanie recruited 74 volunteers, who removed 500 square feet of ivy, and planted 1200 native trees and shrubs!



Andy Noone, former Sound Salmon Solutions (SSS) IP, instructing students.



Andy Noone, former SSS IP, taking a group of students through an educational activity by the river.



Kelley Govan, SSS IP, teaches students about salmon while on the Lower Snoqualmie.

THE WCC, RESTORING THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE CHANGING LIVES

By Sarra Tekola, Former WCC Crew Member, Current Student at the University of Washington School of the Environment and Forest Sciences

Being accepted into the WCC was nothing short of a miracle and my time with the program forever changed the course of my life. Before I started working with the WCC, my life was at a crossroads. I was seventeen, in an early college program with no idea what I wanted to go to school for. On top of that, I was battling a drug addiction and faced with potential jail time. That is why I saw my acceptance onto the King County crew, under supervisor Kris Buitrago, as a miracle. Here was my second chance, I could not mess it up. Immediately upon acceptance into the WCC I went sober. I realized if I was as worthy as the college graduates I competed with for my new position, my life was too valuable to risk on drugs. Thus began the start of a paradigm shift in my life.

My time at the WCC built both character and muscle, through restoring the earth, I restored myself. Previous to the WCC I had a very arrogant attitude and an unprofessional demeanor, but through social influence from WCC team members, I became more humble and conducted myself more professionally. Both the trainings and the quarterly professional development plans helped me develop a path for my future.

AmeriCorps taught me the importance of volunteering. Volunteering, whether planting trees or rehabilitating wild

animals, gave me the endorphins I once sought out in other unhealthy places, and it made the world a better place. I became a volunteer junkie. To date I have volunteered at eleven different places, including as a Cedar River Salmon Naturalist with Friends of the Cedar River, Master Urban Naturalist with the Seward Park environmental center and as a Beach Naturalist with the Seattle Aquarium.

I put my AmeriCorps scholarship towards an additional year in community college working on my associates of science. I transferred to

“My time at the WCC built both character and muscle, through restoring the earth, I restored myself.”



Sarra plants a hemlock tree during a restoration project in King County.



Sarra electrofishing with fellow WCC crew members. Electrofishing can be used as a way to survey fish species.

the University of Washington and have a year left to complete my bachelors of science in Environmental Science and Resource Management. I have conducted independent research about climate change at the Friday Harbor Marine labs in the San Juan Islands and at Purdue University in Indiana.

I also co-lead a group called UW Divest, where we worked with the UW Treasury to move \$25 million of their endowment out of fossil fuel stocks and invest it into renewable energy stocks. Through the combination of my newfound love of volunteering and the AmeriCorps scholarship, I have earned additional funding for all of my education. I have secured \$54,000 in scholarships, fellowships and research stipends and I should be able to graduate without any loans. This all started with the WCC AmeriCorps program.

In the fall I will be applying to grad school and I plan to get a Ph.D. to study solutions to climate change. I am going to make a difference in the world and I know none of this would have been possible without the WCC giving me a second chance at life.

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ENVIROTHON

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

How do these teams get to the state competition level? High schools in each county compete in their Regional Envirothon. The team that wins regional's moves on to the state competition. At state, the winning teams compete against each other for the state championship title as well as a \$500 Best Buy gift card and bragging rights. The state champion team moves on to nationals. Unfortunately due to lack of funding, this year's winning team wasn't able to proceed to the national level.

Here are our experiences from volunteering and observing the competition:

Shanna: "It was great to see such a large number of young people from across the state excited to learn about the environment and the importance of protecting natural resources. Some of the kids we talked to were getting ready to go to college to study areas like forestry and environmental science, giving us hope for the future!"

Rob: "Tensions were high in the score keeping room which brought a fun edge of competitiveness to the event."

Shea: "The test's difficulty level was impressive - I hope the students continue to think critically and keep passionately working to solve environmental problems. This generation is inheriting a lot of responsibility and wielding a whole lot of power to make a positive difference in the world."

Sarah: "It was fun talking to all the future WCCers!"

Erika: "I got to be the paparazzi for the day and walk around to stations listening and watching how the teams interacted with each other as they were feverishly trying to figure out the questions/problems handed to them. Seeing the teams there at the competition made me optimistic for our future and got me thinking 'why don't more schools participate or at least take an interest in having more environmental events like this?' I wish I had this opportunity at my high school! I hope to see some of these kids working on future WCC crews!"

David: "I had a lot of fun getting to know more about soil/land use and volunteering at the table!"

As the competition rolled on, the crew decorated the work truck and set up a table with WCC information in the cafeteria. We wanted to get the kids pumped and enthusiastic about WCC and show them what positions exist, the trainings the organization offers, and what

opportunities they have once they are done with high school. We believe it was important to be there as role models and tell them what WCC is all about!



Rob Herrmann watches as a High School Envirothon team sorts through one of their challenges. Each task involved an environmental problem that needed to be worked out. Photo courtesy of Erika Redzinak.

WCC ALUMNI: MELISSA MCCALL WHERE IS SHE NOW?

Experience as a WCC member

Melissa McCall served on Peter Nevin's King County DNR crew.

"There were a lot of high points during my time with WCC. The education stipend allowed me to finish my degree. I really appreciated the two weeks of elective training where I learned GIS and got my HAZMAT training - both of which I have used for my current job. Another high point was the opportunity to job shadow someone in the environmental field to help me decide what career I wanted to pursue. Also, learning how to work 40 hours a week each week for a year, and how to really be a part of a team, to communicate and work together to complete tasks efficiently were extremely valuable lessons.



Melissa conducts PCB source tracing on Burnt Bridge Creek in Vancouver WA. They use CLAMS (continuous low-level aquatic monitoring submersible extraction samplers) to collect samples.

King County DNR does riparian restoration, and being outside each week was a challenge at times. When it's cold and wet, it can be tough to stay motivated, but when you have your fellow crew members out there with you, all working hard together, the job gets done, you grow, and are proud at the end of the day."

Where is she now?

Melissa is now working for the Washington State Department of Ecology as an Environmental Specialist II. "I work with the Persistent, Bioaccumulative and Toxic (PBT) team in the Toxics Studies Unit in the Environmental Assessment Program. We conduct scientific studies and provide analysis and assessment of the impacts of pollutants on the environment. I collect environmental samples statewide to be analyzed for toxics and review/summarize the data for initial reports of findings.

I still get to work outside for my job, mainly in the summer months. I also visit streams and rivers to collect water samples, and go out on a boat to collect freshwater sediment cores and fish lakes!"

Melissa's advice for current WCC members or job seekers

"Definitely consider the WCC! If at the beginning of my crew year I listed everything I wanted to get out of my crew member year, I would have sold myself short. I got so much more out of the WCC than I could have asked for. The camaraderie and personal and professional growth during my year were invaluable in preparing me for my current position and life in general."

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WILDFIRE RESPONSE



WCC AmeriCorps members Justin Beebe and Ali Trout coordinate supplies at one of the fire camps in Omak, WA.



Fire hoses, rolled and ready for deployment.

WCC crews and other responders for the Washington wildfires, camp out at the fairgrounds in Omak. There are currently around 70 WCC members and supervisors assisting at fire camps in Omak, Winthrop, and Leavenworth.



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