

# Corps News



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## IP Spotlight: Taylor Schmuki .....

By Taylor Schmuki, WCC AmeriCorps Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group IP



Hey y'all, I'm Taylor Schmuki and I serve as a WCC AmeriCorps individual placement with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG). I'm originally from Phoenix, Ariz., and I received my degree in Wildlife and Wildlands Conservation from Brigham Young University. I've done anything from

tracking Gambis quail, counting rare flowers, drawing blood from an iguana, designing kit fox habitat maps, and drying off bats to help pay for school. I was fortunate to find so many wonderful opportunities in my area of interest, but I didn't want to stay in Utah — I didn't want to be confined to the desert for the rest of my life.

So my husband and I took a risk: I accepted my first unpaid internship with a wildlife rehabilitation center, and relocated to Washington. As my internship was nearing its end, I knew that I wanted to go back to focusing on the big picture and being outside again. That's when I stumbled across an Urban Forestry Crew in Washington Conservation Corps, and the rest is history.

I'm now serving as the SFEG Restoration Assistant. SFEG was founded back in 1990 by Washington Fish and Wildlife, along with 13 similar organizations, to deal directly with our Pacific Salmon in Washington State. Our goal is to track, restore, and engage people in helping protect and preserve salmon and their habitat. As a result, my position can be broken down into three main objectives: plan, act and engage.

### Plan

That's right! I have a cushy part where I get to sit inside in front of a screen. I do anything from prepping planting plans, creating maps (and I LOVE maps), analyzing data, to planning our Earth Day event. When I was on a WCC crew last year, we typically showed up to project sites and were given a set number of plants to plant or an area to grub, along with a general explanation about the project background. Now I'm the person who decides how many plants should be planted or what area should be attended to first—I'm not going to lie, guys, it's pretty cool.

There is so much more behind the scenes than I ever realized, and it's so nice to feel like my opinion matters! There are definitely times when I feel like I am drowning (especially when I seem to confuse Mock Orange and Cascara ever so often), but that's the beauty of WCC as an educational experience.



Taylor and WCC alumni Bengt Miller, who served with the SFEG in her position in 1999. Photo submitted by Taylor Schmuki.



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# A Day in the Life of a Corps Member

By Steven Quick, WCC AmeriCorps Crew Member, Tacoma/ Pierce County Spike Crew



Mastermind behind the WCC's latest blog series: Steven Quick.  
Photo by Laura Schlabach.

*Greetings faithful readership! Tacoma/ Pierce County Spike Crew WCC member Steven Quick has intrepidly proffered to author a series of blogs detailing the daily life and service of WCC members. Steven hopes that a perspective straight from the trenches will equip potential recruits with some of the knowledge he had trouble finding back when he was applying to the program. This entry and others will be featured throughout the year on the worldwide web, where they will be more readily accessible to the public. Of course, I wouldn't want the rest of the Corps to miss on some great writing, and I'm sure neither Steven nor I would mind if a newsletter found itself plopped into the lap of an intrigued citizen while your team is out serving, so without further ado, Mr. Steven Quick:*

## October 3, 2016 – December 8, 2016

After nearly a year applying for positions at the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), I'm now a full-term corps member on a spike crew supervised by Junior Fuimaono. Projects are not necessarily glorious, but it's not a bad gig either! So far, we've served mostly on planting and wetland rehabilitation projects at Dash Point, the city of DuPont and the city of Orting. We've also done eight-day service spikes for the Kitsap Conservation District (KCD), one before attending orientation training at Cispus Learning Center and one after. I'll never forget orientation week at Cispus because it was a tremendous learning experience and a great chance to meet hundreds of other WCC

AmeriCorps members from all walks of life.

There are a number of different WCC crews throughout Washington State, but a spike crew is intended to go where a sponsor needs extra hands on deck, or fill-ins if the normal crew is deployed on disaster response. We've only spiked at KCD so far, planting plugs and live stakes. During spikes we are allotted money for meals, and lodging is arranged by the WCC program. For our KCD spikes this meant we received \$140 for lunches and dinners and stayed at a local, family-owned inn in Poulsbo with breakfast every morning. However, when we spike on Mt. Adams or Mt. Rainier, the experience will be a lot different, I'm told.

For every spike so far, we arrive at our crew lockup in Tacoma at 7 a.m. like any other day, and pack up the truck with tools based on what services we'll be providing (planting, falling trees, etc.), such as a chainsaw, Pulaski, rock bar, stake pounders, loppers, and shovels. Then we head out to the project site to meet the sponsor, put in a good day's worth of service, and then get groceries before checking into the hotel that evening. I like to try to enjoy the local scenery or art if possible after a day in the field, but the crew normally brings a board game or something that occupies our time as well.

The city assignments we undertake are just as valuable to our personal enrichment as the services we ultimately provide. Serving in the city of DuPont was an extremely enlightening week, because it was the first week of the crew year, and it broke every single standard I had set. It was something to get used to, considering I've never had a position this laborious, but I adapted quickly. It was fun to mingle with other public service workers, make connections, and create relationships for the future. Junior said on our first day, "Treat these people well, they could be your future employers." After meeting so many different people through the projects we've accomplished, I already regret not networking more!

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Orientation training at Cispus Learning Center in Randle, was an unforgettable experience that nearly every crew in the state attended (a few crews were away on disaster response). Orientation involves a four-day spike week in the woods of Mt. Rainier, where we were given the rundown on AmeriCorps expectations and attended additional courses to prepare us for our year in the WCC. We go back to Cispus again in March and June for extracurricular training courses for resume enrichment, for which everyone is really excited. Orientation, though, was particularly fascinating to me because of the sheer diversity of people and the chance to network and hear ideas. In fact, the concept for this blog series was conceived at Cispus; I met the outreach and recruitment coordinator face-to-face who was more than happy to help me make this idea a reality.

Ultimately, the lesson I've learned the last three months (and the time I spent waiting and applying before that) is to prepare and persevere. My supervisor, Junior, told me to take advantage of the networking opportunities this position offers, and I encourage prospective applicants to do the same, even if they haven't been interviewed. Find someone willing to talk and answer your questions!

Before WCC, I met two Corps members that offered their recommendation, I followed countless profiles to piece together ideas of what the next year would look like, and I spoke to people about how I could do more. I volunteered, I wrote, and I researched. Junior says this position is for those who will benefit most from it, but I think anyone can really grow in this program; it is what you make of it.



Recent plantings — a testament to a hard day's service.  
Photo submitted by Steven Quick.



Several of Steven's crew mates pose decked out in WCC gear and ready to get things done.  
Photo by Steven Quick.



Corp members Ashleigh Hicks and Jareth Utter dismembering a log for easier transport.  
Photo by Steven Quick.

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**Act**

This part of my job should be familiar to most of y'all because even though I do have a desk covered in rubber ducks, I still plant, grub, build and survey with the best of them. Most of my time in the field evolves around salmon and trees. I do weekly spawner surveys which consist of wading up glacier creeks in search for redds or deceased fish. This may be my favorite part of my position, because the fish are just so adorable. I also spend a lot of time in SFEG nursery pulling trees for plantings, building capillary beds and making sure our baby trees survive the elements. The nursery is probably the hardest part of my position so far, since I'm new to these species of plants, and winter is upon us.

**Engage**

SFEG does have an outreach intern who is in charge of our volunteer parties (her name is Lindsay and she is with Washington Service Corps.) Yet, if it has to do with the nursery, trees or plantings, I get to be a part of the celebration too! I often help with preparation such as making sure we have trees to plant, tools to do the planting and area to plant in. Although, my favorite part of the parties is probably teaching people how to plant properly or explaining to them the ecological benefit of the work they are performing. I am discovering that I really enjoy collaborating with the landowners and volunteers. Everyone has such unique backgrounds, and each individual brings new perspectives, questions or challenges to the table. It also might help that I like interacting with people in general.

As you may have been able to deduct, I really enjoy my position. I highly encourage anyone that is interested in similar things to come volunteer or shadow me here at SFEG.

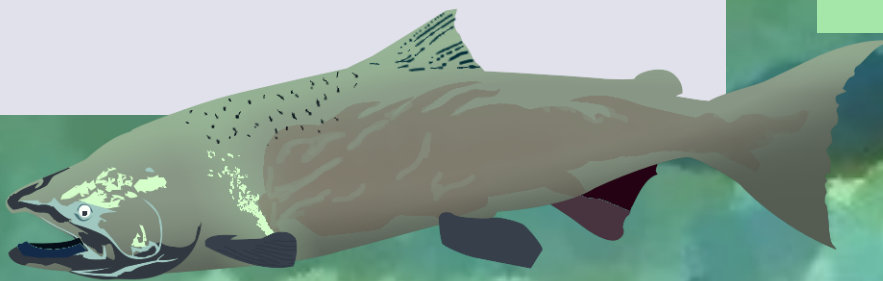
I do promise that I have a life outside of SFEG. As I mentioned earlier, I have a husband named Robert and a dog named Amber. We love going hiking, skiing, running, biking and pretty much anything outside. If adventure is out there, I hope to be a part of it. So if someone is looking for an exploring buddy, hit me up!

I hope to see people soon!



The staff of the SFEG gather 'round to share their holiday cheer with the WCC! (Taylor in center)  
Photo Submitted by Taylor Schmuki.

Stay tuned next month for an interview with WCC alumni from the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group!



# Networking Through Volunteering: A Path to a Rewarding Career

By Kevin Farrell, WCC Regional Project Coordinator



WCC Regional Project Coordinator  
Kevin Farrell. Photo by WCC.

In 1993, having tried in vain to find good, career-oriented jobs in Montana, my wife and I journeyed west to Olympia — her to start a career using her biology degree at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and me to start college at The Evergreen State College (TESC). We arrived in Olympia not knowing anyone, but excited with the prospect of starting over in a location that had two National Parks within two hours (three if you count Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park in Seattle), a state forest literally in our backyard, and mile upon mile of open water for sea kayaking. We felt blessed.

Wanting to get a vibe for the local area and to explore what this new area had in store for us, we decided to attend an evening presentation on urban wildlife by an area wildlife biologist from the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. We arrived early, took our seats near the front and listened intently as the biologist talked about flying squirrels, urban deer (problems), owls, raccoons, fox, possum, frogs and more — but it was when he mentioned elk that my concentration kicked into gear. He discussed several studies currently underway in Western Washington including a summer range utilization study on various elk herds in the Olympic Mountains and genetic diversity within these populations. I thought it was a very interesting topic. I leaned over to my wife, Tracy, and whispered that I wanted to immediately volunteer on these projects. She smirked, rolled her eyes, and whispered back, “Whatever you say, honey.”

Once the presentation was over we immediately went up to the biologist and introduced ourselves. We started talking and I mentioned my interest in volunteering on the elk study. The biologist, Greg, stepped back and asked inquisitively about what type of volunteering I was interested in. As I had recently seen a PBS show on radio telemetry, and wanting to sound smart, I said, “Uhm, maybe some radio telemetry.” Tracy giggled. He again moved back a step or two, gave us the once-over, and reached into his wallet for a business card. He said “If you are serious about wanting to volunteer, then call me on Monday and we can talk about it.”

I dialed his number an hour later. It was only Saturday night. Tracy was chattering in my ear, “What are you doing?” He said to call him on Monday.” As the phone starting ringing I replied, “I don’t need to wait until Monday to know that I want to chase elk in the Olympic Mountains with WDFW.” Greg answered on the third ring. This was the beginning of an amazing journey into wildlife management.

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# Networking Through ..... Volunteering: A Path to a Rewarding Career ..... .....

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While attending TESC over the next couple of years, I worked on many captures, flew in helicopters and fixed wing telemetry flights over the Olympic Mountains, secured telemetry collars on huge elk, took blood and fecal samples, and experienced first-hand the life of a wildlife biologist. This was all volunteer time or work for credit at TESC. It also changed my life.

The day I graduated from TESC I was offered a full-time job as a wildlife biologist. For the next several years I worked out of the Region 6 Montesano Field Office on a wide variety of projects ranging from elk relocations, Mazama Pocket Gophers (even got bit by one!), wood duck management, public hunting access, shorebird habitat, and fisheries studies.

I tell this story for the benefit of all of you: the members of the Washington Conservation Corps. This all started with a handshake and a commitment. It was successful for me and can be for you as well. This is the prime time for you to go out and make a name for yourself. Network, volunteer, commit—and good things will come to you.

## Some resources to help you find opportunities to get involved:

<http://eyesinthewoods.org/index.php/en/>

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/volunteer/>

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Volunteer>

<https://wsg.washington.edu/community-outreach/volunteer-programs/>

<http://www.sarveywildlife.org/volunteer.aspx>

<https://www.volunteer.gov/>

<https://www.nps.gov/mora/getinvolved/vip-positions.htm>



1. Corps member Lucian Blue Pizzano takes a moment to smile and look up from a planting project. Photo by Laura Schlabach. 2. Members of the WCC Spokane Spike Crew pose with their day's handiwork. Photo submitted by Adam Hein. 3. Members of the WCC Tacoma crew scale an incline, tools in hand, using a rope system. Photo submitted by Stuart Johnson. 4 The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe/ Olympic National Park crew hiking natives down to Elwha river to be planted. Photo submitted Kaylene Raftis. 5. WCC Nooksack salmon Enhancement Group crew 'chilling out' in the snow. Photo submitted by James van der Voort.

# WCC Snapshots





Learn more on Facebook!

[www.facebook.com/washingtonconservationcorps](http://www.facebook.com/washingtonconservationcorps)

**Accommodation Requests:**

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology, 360-407-7248. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

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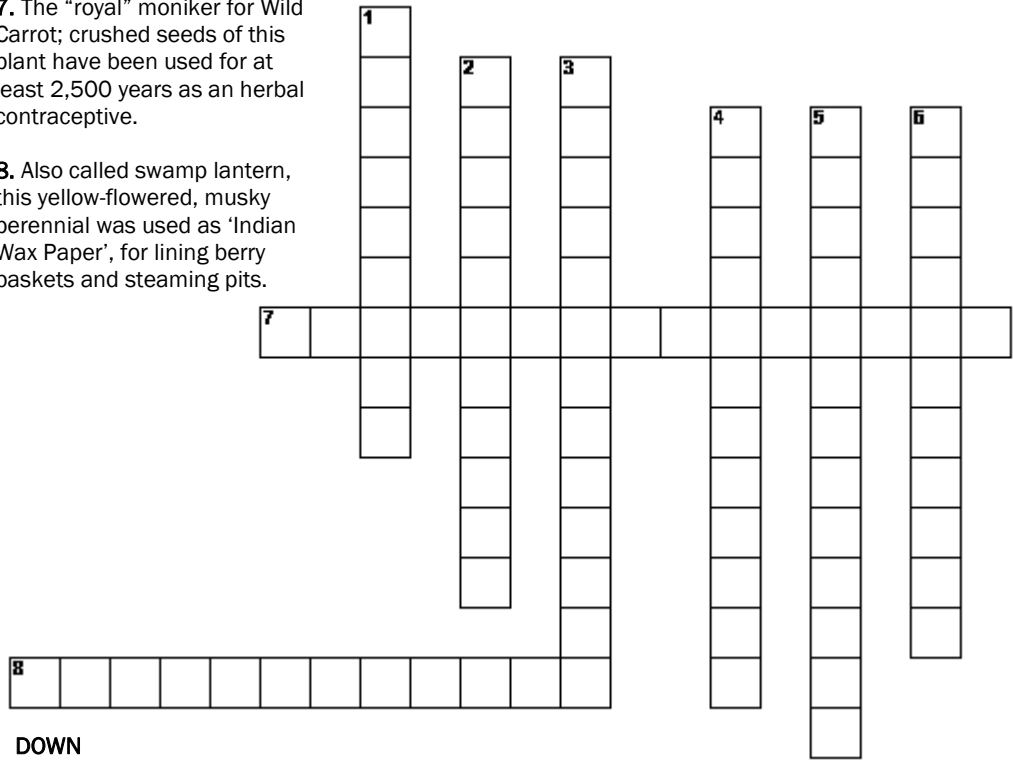
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State of Washington

# WCC Activities Corner

**ACROSS**

7. The “royal” moniker for Wild Carrot; crushed seeds of this plant have been used for at least 2,500 years as an herbal contraceptive.

8. Also called swamp lantern, this yellow-flowered, musky perennial was used as ‘Indian Wax Paper’, for lining berry baskets and steaming pits.



**DOWN**

1. This fern is known in many Puget Sound languages as the “pala-pala plant”, as it was traditionally used in a game called “pala-pala”, in which children vied to see to who could pull the most leaflets off the fern in one breath while saying ‘pala’ with each one.
2. This plant bears mushy, yellow or reddish berries and received its name from the fish alongside which indigenous groups of the PNW commonly consumed it.
3. National pink-purple flower of Scotland, this rhizomatous and slightly painful plant should leave Ecology’s food bank garden forever and go back to the maple-syrup-loving country it hails from.
4. The largest of its particular variety, this conifer is decidedly deciduous— its needles become bright yellow in autumn.
5. A shrub bearing bright-red berry-like drupes; although this plant’s fruits have been harvested and used in jellies and in wines for hundreds of years, the stems, bark, leaves and roots are toxic.
6. An invasive, spindly plant adorned with bright yellow flowers; its name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *brom* meaning foliage and was originally used for fashioning “besoms”, a traditional Anglo-Saxon tool for sweeping.

## 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 around 300 members serving 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](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc).