



# Washington Conservation Corps Corps News



July 1, 2005  
Volume 1, Issue 4

## Important Dates:

- July 4: Independence Day
- August 31st: Last Day
- September 5th: Labor Day

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## Going Above and Beyond

Congratulations to Ted Dewees and crew for being selected as Crew of the Quarter for Spring 2005. Whether it was organizing a 10 day community service trip to Costa Rica, spending 8 day spikes on a new section of the Wonderland trail at 7,000 feet in horrible weather on Mount Rainier, completing an outdoor learning area with Komachin Middle School students, or crawling on hands and knees in search of the elusive weed, crupina, along Lake Chelan, this crew has defined the phrase "exceeding expectations". This crew tackles every project with the same motivation, efficiency and work ethic. The WCC has received a commendation from every sponsor they have worked for this year. Thanks for an awesome job!



Melody Abel, Julie Holder (former crew member), Ted Dewees (sup), Anna Hicks, Ryan Price, Brett Matulis, and Jordan Trader (not pictured)

The WCC would like to congratulate Nick Saling's City of Bellingham crew for being selected as Crew of the Quarter. Although this is a group award, the efforts of the individuals on this Bellingham crew have been extraordinary throughout the year. Nick Mott, Field Operations Coordinator says "Nick Saling's crew exemplifies what it means to get the most out of opportunities and give the best of efforts to each task. This group epitomizes the WCC

at its best and has been a great pleasure to work with." Thanks for your efforts and keep up the great work.



Nick Saling (sup), Michael Budds, Nathan Clark, Leslie Ahlgren (not pictured), Sara Mosser, & Sunita Sinclair

Jordan Ottow has been awarded "Corpsmember of the Quarter". Jordan is currently serving as an Individual Placement for Snohomish County, where he acts as volunteer coordinator, native plant steward, newsletter editor, and much more! There have been several innovative projects that Jordan implemented this year, including creating a new, highly successful system for tracking crew projects and acting as lead volunteer coordinator at the 2005 Society for Ecological Restoration-NW Regional Conference. This conference attracted over 500 participants and required a large amount of coordination. Jordan limited volunteers to interns, college students, and other WCC members. These volunteers earned free conference time for hours served. He felt this demographic of volunteers would be best served by the networking opportunities available at the conference.



Jordan Ottow

## The Second Year

Article by Nathan Clark, Bellingham crew member

At the end of August, I will be completing my second term with the WCC. Now that the end is in sight, I have often wondered if serving a second year in the WCC was the right decision. Well, that is an interesting question, indeed.

If you are considering a second term, be careful to consider all of your options. Your second year is not only your last chance to be involved with the WCC, but more importantly, with AmeriCorps. Once your second term is finished and you receive that scholarship money, your days with AmeriCorps are over. . . forever. So it's a good idea to consider all the programs available before simply re-signing with your current team.

Many states throughout our beautiful country have AmeriCorps programs similar to ours, including: California, Montana, Alaska, Colorado and Nevada. In addition to the state level, AmeriCorps offers national programs, the main one being the National Civilian Conservation Corps (NCCC).

The NCCC is a year-long program with five campuses throughout the United States. Members are assigned a home campus for training before traveling to different jobs. Work includes, but is not limited to: teaching, environmental work, construction, and emergency response. NCCC crews receive room and board as well as a small stipend for spending money. If you are interested in traveling, NCCC crews work all over the U.S. NCCC members participate in jobs ranging from 1-3 months before traveling to a new work site.

As for myself, I wish I had been more informed as to what my options were, but I am not disappointed with my choice. The WCC is a great opportunity, but it is just one of the opportunities AmeriCorps has to offer. Be sure to think about all the possibilities before making your decision.

## Spencer Island Sitka Spruce Project

Article by Jordan Ottow, Snohomish County IP

A twenty minute boat ride through the Snohomish River Estuary to get to project sites each day allowed several new experiences for the Snohomish County WCC crew. Traveling through the meandering assortment of waterways has made the Spencer Island Project one of the most exciting, educational, and massive projects the crew has worked on all year. The various inlets and outlets, islands, wildlife, and array of unique and unfamiliar vegetation kept everyone's eyes peeled while riding to work.

The crew came to the Snohomish River Estuary to monitor Sitka Spruce trees that were planted by last year's crew. The trees were planted along the ridge of a dike that had helped enclose Spencer Island from tidal flux and flooding. Early settlers had constructed dikes throughout the estuary to dry up the wetlands for agricultural purposes, but in exchange caused destruction to fish habitat. The dikes took away valuable habitat by barricading water from spreading throughout the estuary, drying up wetlands where young salmon stay before heading to the ocean. The loss of the wetlands also limited the filtering of silt and toxins, which has led to poor water quality in the estuary. Fortunately, the dikes have begun to breach around Spencer Island naturally and purposely by Snohomish County. This is allowing small portions of the estuary to begin returning to a more natural condition. Snohomish County and the WCC crew are helping to restore the estuary to further this process. *(Continued on page 5)*



Nathan Clark

For more information visit:  
[www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)



(L to R) Jesse Holt, Leah Bennett, and Lilly Wescott

# NW National Service Symposium

Article by Giovanna Marcus, King County Crew member

The Northwest National Service Symposium took place May 16th -17th at Portland State University. This was an opportunity for AmeriCorps members to present and expound upon their service. Presenters included AmeriCorps members from an impressive spectrum of work; including those laboring to undo institutional racism and poverty to those acting as mentors to children of domestic violence. Presenters were not limited to focusing on their AmeriCorps service, in fact, about half of the seminars were based on creative outlets—video art, knitting, musical compositions, poetry, and visual art.

The symposium attendants were given a schedule and free reign to attend seminars that appealed to them. The choices were rich with political topics such as "Homophobia Against Children of Lesbians and Gays" and "Children in the Foster System". Lighter subjects were also discussed, for example, presentations were given on "How to Survive as an Artist on an AmeriCorps Budget" and "Instruction on Creating Mockumentary Videos". There was a seminar for performance art and also an art exhibit. A banquet was held for the 250 attendants to eat and socialize until it was time for recipients of the Jury's Choice awards to read their personal stories, essays, and poems. There was also a screening of a short film. Attendants took home a collection of the written submissions called "Stories of Service".

This event was a perfect synthesis of AmeriCorps' demonstration of extraordinary service. It was a time for national service participants to reflect, learn from their peers, and network with one another.

Giovanna was one of the Jury's Choice recipients. She read her poem below and presented a collage, pictured above.



"The Carcass of a Truck"

## Things Are True Until They're Not

The pulse of the land proves that nothing is static.  
A river shifts and shrinks and swells,  
adaptive management at its best.  
Its molten will once bent over anvil,  
the water worked the hammer over time,  
over neat rows of crops  
and the frowning men stomped  
and staked them with their flags  
and lay their own hammer down.  
Stopped that river in its tracks.  
A turbidity of silt and thought,  
and they stacked that silt up into  
concrete embankments of levied land.  
The floodplain dissolved  
into the happy hands of those who worked it  
and changed the fate of the landscape.  
I believe they meant for the best  
when they dreamt at dusk until it was time  
to sow in the sun.

The river was usurped for industry's sake  
and the sake of the salmon was abdicated  
their meaning at the time being sorrowfully misjudged.  
it's not for nothing that I rise at 5  
with muscle fibers torn, with raingear as my suture  
and grit for my mid morning meal-  
what if we'd just followed the salmon  
like they follow the scents and the stars...

A carcass of a truck was discarded  
left to rot and rust on what once was prime land for only  
what it could give to us-a money tree and food to eat  
Its body cast a shadow into the side channel  
and shed light on me.  
I pried open the rusted door  
through the driver's side window knocked free of glass,  
given to the springs in the seat below.  
I climbed inside to feel what memory felt  
and heard the gills quietly gasping  
and saw stars still giving light, despite no fish were there  
and all the stars wanted was to guide them.  
The truck stood like a tattered flag after the fight.  
But was who won who was right?

## International Service

Corpsmembers were challenged to design and implement a service project this year that went above and beyond “typical” WCC duties. Recent projects include food and clothing drives, Habitat for Humanity homes, Toy collection during the holidays, and firewood distribution to needy families. Corpsmembers Bret Matulis, Melody Abel, Anna Hicks, and Ryan Price (pictured on front cover) decided to take their project international by heading to Costa Rica for a service Project with a group of rangers there who were in need of some assistance.

The crew spent their own money to travel to Costa Rica and donated 160 hours of labor to the Rangers of Corcovado National Park. Some of their tasks included: completing minor repairs to the ranger station, maintaining signs along the trails, clearing a fallen tree, and unloading supplies. The WCC members also gained from this experience, as they spent many of their evenings conversing with the rangers and learning from their experiences.

### Two Corpsmembers reflect on their service in Costa Rica:

**Melody:** Hola! Recently, four brave souls set off on a "dangerous" adventure in a (gasp) third world country. The destination was Corcovado National Park, located in Southwest Costa Rica. If you have an urge to be bitten by insects, chased by urine-reeking peccaries, cross rivers full of crocodiles and sharks, or desire to be awoken at four a.m. by the ever-vocal howler monkeys, then the Osa Peninsula is for you. If this does not sound exciting, Costa Rica also offers crowded beaches and over-priced rum.

Personally, I would rather camp with the locals amidst the jungle. Corcovado National Park boasts 41,788 hectares of rainforest, swamps, rivers, lagoons, marshes and paradisiacal beaches. Nested inside the protected boundary flourishes 500 species of trees, 140 species of mammals, 40 species of fresh fish, 117 varieties of amphibians, and 367 types of birds. Unfortunately for travelers, some 6000 species of insects also call this park home. The diversity is AWESOME. And, Costa Rica may be a third world country, but I found its people and customs more welcoming than Seattle, where I have lived for years. Plus, Seattle does not have Tapirs!

**Brett:** Some people might say that volunteering in a foreign country defeats the purpose of it. The idea is supposed to be that you are giving back to the community in which you live. An immediate benefit is seen and, ultimately, you live in a better place because of it. Today, however, our world is much smaller and our community is much larger. Within seconds we can speak with somebody in China and within hours we can travel to Africa. We are now a part of a global community. This doesn't make it any less important to serve your local community. We just have greater responsibilities. We have to think about what makes us better citizens of the world. It might be more difficult to observe the benefits of international service, but there is no doubt that they are there.



*Corcovado National Park is located in southeastern Costa Rica. Courtesy of [www.nps.gov/centralamerica/](http://www.nps.gov/centralamerica/)*



### What are Tapirs?

It is estimated that 1-3 hundred Tapirs live in Corcovado National Park. These animals are typically timid creatures, though a mother protecting her young may be quite aggressive. Their strange noses are prehensile; or adapted for grasping, similar to an elephant's trunk. When eating, a Tapir will use its flexible nose to roll up leaves and vegetation (their food of choice). Tapirs are often found near water and are excellent swimmers. They are currently classified as vulnerable due to habitat loss and over hunting by humans for their meat and hides.



*Photo Courtesy:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org>*

# Reflections on AmeriCorps—Then and Now

*Submitted by Nicole Ricketts,  
Former AmeriCorps Volunteer, WDFW*

As I reflect on the past 6 years, I can appreciate the impact that my participation within the AmeriCorps Program has had. My service has changed my life and directed my career. Born and raised in Arizona, this program was my introduction to Washington. I was assigned a WCC position with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) where, for two years, I traveled the state as an Individual Placement and taught in various communities about issues around salmon, wildlife, and the importance of volunteerism. I had an exceptional mentor who allowed me to mature and develop my skills so that I could develop the confidence to be an independent and effective staff member. This year, I accepted a permanent position at WDFW and am now in a position to make sure that those AmeriCorps interns that follow my own service are given the same opportunities.



*Nicole Ricketts and Jesse Moyer glue a transmitter to an endangered Western Pond Turtle at a Lakewood Wildlife research site.*



*Josh Brann allows the transmitter glue to dry.*

This year, I have been inspired and impressed by two of my fellow service volunteers. Everyday, Jesse and Josh (the “J” team!) come to their assigned posts ready to work hard to follow through with their goals of making Washington state a better place to live. They have taken on a variety of tasks around their interests and in the interest of the WDFW. I have truly enjoyed witnessing their leadership and initiative in honing their skills in field data collection and outreach to volunteers and students. Their work around sustainability has also contributed to our own agency an awareness of ways we can make a difference in the simple ways we carry out our mission. AmeriCorps has served for myself, and others, an opportunity to explore various career avenues as well as put to use their interest of serving their community. Josh and Jesse’s commitment to service is affirming AmeriCorps’ mission to improve our environment, enhance education, and increase an informed citizenry. They, as for many of us, participate in this program in order to build on their strengths, increase their knowledge, and live according to their values. I am proud to have served my state in this way, and am grateful to have had the opportunity.

## Spencer Island Project *(Continued from page 2)*

The crew spent the first of two weeks on Spencer Island monitoring last year’s planted spruce trees. This process involved measuring: diameter, height, damage, and vigor (quality). The crew also did some tagging and mapping. Spruce was chosen for this project because the majority of the remaining original trees seen throughout the Estuary are gigantic Sitka Spruce trees. The other reason spruce were chosen was because they are generally disliked by beavers, which are quite common in the Estuary.

After monitoring last year’s plantings, the crew found that not only was blackberry competing with the spruce, but many of the trees had been topped off or destroyed by beavers. Much of Spencer Island had very few trees, and it was obvious the beavers didn’t mind which trees were present as long as there was something to chew on and wood to build with. After assessing the situation, it was decided that the trees would need protection from the beavers by staking four-foot cages around the trees. The second week on the island was spent constructing and placing hundreds of cages. It will be up to next year’s crew to assess the outcome of the caged spruce trees.

The Snohomish County WCC crew enjoyed this unique experience because it brought them to a remote location that few people ever see. Trips and experiences like these are what make working for the WCC and Snohomish County memorable.

# Training Updates

## North Cascades Natural History:

The WCC is holding weeklong training sessions at the North Cascades Institute. The entire program will cycle through, in groups of 20, over the course of the summer. During these sessions, Corpsmembers will participate in various training activities, including: ethnobotany, tracking, birding, natural and cultural history of the North Cascades, and sub alpine ecology. A group of Washington Service Corps members have also been invited to attend this training.



*Erin Meyer, Adam Morris-Cohen, Melanie Quigley, and blythe Mackey canoeing on Diablo Lake.*



*Nick Mott presents Michael Koenen with a Certificate.*

## Wildland Firefighting:

Forty Corpsmembers attended Wildland Firefighting training (FFT2) provided by the Kitsap Wildland Team of the Poulsbo Fire Department. This 40 hour training included hands-on experience with wildland hoses, tools, and pumps. Additionally, Corpsmembers already Red Card certified received training for Advanced Wildland Firefighter/Squad Boss. Staff of the Washington Conservation Corps recognized Bellingham crew supervisor, Michael Koenen, for his outstanding leadership at the training.

## Biodiesel Conversion

*Submitted by the Snohomish County WCC Crew*

The Snohomish County crew will be converting their ATV and tractor into biodiesel powered machines. This will be the first of such projects to happen in the county. This pilot project will be followed by the conversion of more diesel engines within the area.

Biodiesel is a clean burning alternative fuel produced from new or used vegetable oils or animal fats. Oils need to be chemically modified into biodiesel, but because of its growing popularity, there are more and more refueling stations available for individuals.

Conversion of a diesel engine to a biodiesel engine is relatively simple. Many newer engines come suitable for biodiesel, but for older engines a few simple changes may need to be made. Fuel lines and fuel pump seals that come into contact with the fuel might need to be replaced. The increased solvent effect of biodiesel improves engine lubrication, keeps the engine cleaner, and increases engine life better than normal diesel. However, as a result the fuel filter needs to be checked and replaced as debris is flushed out of the engine during initial use.

We are encouraged by this new step taken towards easing dependence on finite petroleum resources. We were surprised to find that our suggestion was so readily accepted by the county officials. Now as we restore the ecosystem we don't have to feel like we're polluting it at the same time. This proposition has given us newfound confidence in voicing ideas and having them heard. So the next time you have an innovative idea, voice it! You'll be amazed at what you can accomplish.

## Washington Conservation Corps

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## Photos, Suggestions, and Stories Wanted!

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## Did you know? We are on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc)

## About Our Organization

*The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) was established in 1983 as a job training program for young adults between the ages of 18-25. The WCC is a program offered through the Washington State Department of Ecology and continues the legacy left by the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s.*

*The program provides work experience and skills for projects that support conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of Washington's natural, historic, environmental and recreational resources. Today the WCC has nearly 150 members working on various projects in every part of the state. WCC partners include Federal, State, Local, and Tribal organizations.*