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Important Dates:

- February 16:
 President's Day,
 scheduled day off
- February 23-26:
 Assistant Supervisor
 Training, Seabeck WA
- March 9-12:
 Elective Training,
 Seabeck WA

Outstanding Corpsmembers Recognized

Each quarter, WCC Crews and Individual Placements are recognized and rewarded for their outstanding efforts. For the 1st Quarter of the 2008-2009 service year (October-December), The Ellensburg and Stilly Snohomish Crew and the Skagit Fisheries Individual Placement have stood out among the rest and named Corpsmembers of the Quarter.

Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force Crew

They have stuck together without a Crew Supervisor through some tough times and have continued to do excellent field work and remain a cohesive crew. They have dealt with crew problems by collaboration and group discussion and have continued with high standards expected by WCC. Blake has communicated well and been a great temporary leader of the group while we take time to fill the Supervisor position. The project sponsors have been pleased with the work the crew has accomplished and thrilled with the attitude on the crew. Congratulations Blake, Karina, Jessica and Zach.



Stilly Snohomish Crew- October 2008
 Left to right: Karina Mahoney, Jessica Smith, Zach Shirk and assistant supervisor Blake Schnebly

Ellensburg Crew

Congratulations to Scott Cobb, Nichole Hansen, Anthony Lieb, and Devan Petersen-the Ellensburg crew-for being selected as Crew of the quarter. From day one the crew exhibited a genuine desire to

complete each project with enthusiasm and attention to detail. They have a good sense of humor, work well as a team, work hard and have fun. When their supervisor left for a new job in Wyoming at the end of November, the crew was not deterred. Rather, they raised their level of responsibility and worked together to accomplish every project with vigor and commitment. Thank you for embodying the true spirit of the WCC and AmeriCorps.



Ellensburg Crew
 Left to right: Devan Peterson, Scott Cobb (Nichole Hansen and Anthony Lieb not pictured)

Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Individual Placement

Congratulations to Corinne Hughes! A second year Corpsmember with the WCC, she is devoted to her community and a great asset to the Washington Conservation Corps. In addition to the service she provides the salmon community in Skagit County for her sponsor, she has volunteered over 50 hours of her own time during the first quarter of the service year to learn more about the natural world she inhabits. She spends her free time learning about bald eagles, migratory birds and northwest mushrooms. She devotes 40 hours a week to the Skagit watershed for her sponsor, and even spends some of her weekends completing spawner surveys. Now that is what it means to, "get things done" and take up space in your community. Nice job, Corinne!



Skagit Fisheries IP- October 2008
 Corinne Hughes



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What an Invasive Monster Can Teach You

Article by: Joseph Ladd, Corpsmember- Olympia Spike Crew

It was on a dreary fall day when I began work with the Washington Conservation Corps. I was joining a 5 person spike crew based in Olympia. As we made our journey away from home and into the beautiful cascade foothills, I was not sure what to expect. I was oblivious to all that I would learn and the friendships I would form. Upon arrival at a private landowner's site in North Bend, the crew that I was soon to become an intimate part of was greeted by a Himalayan blackberry bramble measuring 15 feet x 20 feet and towering well above our heads. My eyes widened to the size of silver dollars when it was announced that by the end of the week we would transform the invasive occupation into an expanse of diverse native vegetation. I thought to myself, "there's no way..."

After a brief tour of the site and a description of the area's history we armed ourselves with brush cutters and prepared to battle the overgrown enemy. To my surprise we made short work of the invasive monster. After piling the remains of the onslaught in a massive mound adjacent to the battleground, our work was done for the day. Upon our return the next morning we began the "grubbing" process and had removed all of the root wads of the slain blackberry by day's end. The removal of the intruder's roots had left us with a clean slate the next day, allowing us to initiate the takeover

with native plants. Our crew then revived the land by planting over 350 native berries, shrubs and trees. Ahead of schedule, we had ridded the land of an invasive beast and properly restored it with native beauties.

An overwhelming sense of pride had engulfed me as we drove out of the foothills, knowing we had taken a small step towards the management of a horribly aggressive noxious weed. It was then I began to grasp what it means to be a part of a crew. I had formed bonds with all of my crewmates and felt as if I was a part of something real. I had also learned a tremendous amount of new information; what the King Conservation District does, the Washington Trail Association's role in conservation, and the Latin names of several plants. Though the work was daunting and physically demanding, I look forward to all that we as a crew will accomplish over the next year and all that I will learn from the invaluable experiences to come.



Himalayan blackberry (*rubus discolor*)

Pursuing a Dream

Article by: Josiah Ethington, Corpsmember-Snohomish County Crew

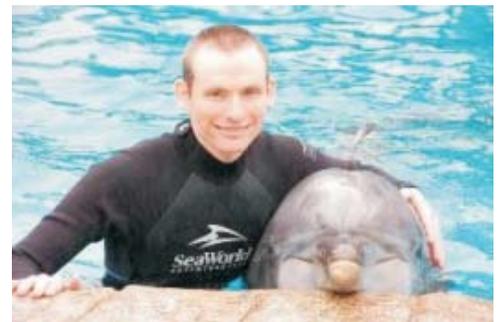
At first glance, being a WCC Corpsmember and being a dolphin trainer at Sea World may seem to have nothing in common. That, however, is far from true. I aspire to be a dolphin trainer for many of the same reasons I joined the WCC.

I've always been fascinated with animals; from snakes and turtles to giraffes and elephants; I find them all amazing and beautiful in their own ways. Marine mammals, such as, sea lions, dolphins and orcas, truly inspire me. All these amazing creatures must live in the same world as we do; a world that is rapidly changing, where global climates are shifting and industries and countries continually expand, putting strain on many of the earth's natural resources, from disrupted water supplies to the destruction of habitat. This would be a terribly lonely and desolate world if all that inhabited it was us (humans)...and I'm determined to do my part to help stop the slide to disaster.

My first step to making a change in this world was to join the WCC to help restore critical salmon habitat and reintroduce the native plant growth that is necessary to maintain a healthy

ecosystem. My second step to making a change in this world I accomplished over Christmas break, when I visited SeaWorld.

I joined their "Trainer for a Day" program. I wanted to know what working with dolphins was like hoped to learn how to prepare for a job in this unique field. One emphasis I took note of was a message of conservation. Dolphin trainers, and other marine mammal trainers, allow visitors to see some of the amazing beings that inhabit the world we live in, and show them that there are things out there worth saving. I got the chance to meet and interact with some of the dolphins face to face, and it was truly an amazing experience. It is my hope to someday inspire others to take on greater efforts to help heal the world we all share.



Josiah Ethington pursuing his dream

Mycelium Swimming

Article by: Corinne Hughes, Individual Placemen- Skagit Fisheries

In the past year, since moving to the state of Washington, I have become fascinated by these strange, gooey things on the forest floor: mushrooms! What started last fall as a small passion for the delicious edibles has grown and I began to learn more and more about them. First, I learned that mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of a larger organism: mycelium. Then I learned that mycelium is one of the greatest filters on earth. I learned about mycoremediation, using fungi to degrade or remove toxins from the environment.

However, what does all this have to do with salmon? If you have met anyone involved with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (my WCC Sponsor), you know that every one of them is obsessed with the connection of everything in the world around us. Education events express the importance of remembering the connection between trees and salmon, birds and salmon, insects and salmon. Well, consider another connection: mushrooms and salmon. During the first volunteer planting party this fall at Cascade River Park in Marblemount, I noticed a significant number of mushrooms growing in the pots. Ever since, I have kept a close eye on the amount of mycelium we plant. Almost every single pot has the white, web-like growth of mycelium attached to the soil. As good as it is to plant trees, I feel a tremendous boost in confidence by planting mycelium with them.

First, mycelium is good for the trees. Mycorrhizal fungus attaches to the roots of trees, sometimes growing into the roots, to attain access to the carbohydrates produced during the tree's photosynthesis. In exchange, the tree attains access to the mycelium's large surface area. Mycelium transports water, minerals, and nutrients in the soil and fixes carbon into the air. Mycorrhizal plants are often disease-free and drought-resistant. One of the best examples of this type of relationship is shown in hemlocks. Have you ever noticed that hemlocks are one of the first trees growing out of old stumps? That is because the rotting wood is a host to mycelium breaking it down. Hemlocks connect with the mycorrhizal fungus and absorb nutrients even above the forest floor! These nutrients are inside the mushrooms too. When they rot, they provide nutrients to insects, slugs, and bacteria as well.

Second, mycelium is good in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems for its decomposition of plant material, filtration, and erosion

control. Each mycelium hyphae, or branch of mycelium, break down plant material by secreting enzymes onto a food source to break it down until it is absorbed into the mycelium and transported. These enzymes are powerful enough to break down lignin and cellulose, making mycelium one of the only organisms on earth with the ability to break down wood. If mycelium were not able to do this, all fallen trees would simply pile up into a great big mess. This massive system also acts as a giant filter in the forest floor and provides stability in the soil by balancing the water concentration. Mycelium filters pathogens (including protozoa, bacteria, and viruses), silt, and chemical toxins from the watershed and breaks them down. Fungi actually disassemble molecules into simpler, less toxic chemicals. In Skagit County, this process is vital to control the amount of E. coli entering the water system from dairy farms.



Third, mycelium is good for salmon! While the salmon make their nests in the cold, clear, consistent water of the Pacific Northwest, tiny white webs pump beneath the forest floor to keep the trees above them healthy, the soil around them strong, and the water engulfing them pure. Perhaps, it is a large jump to think of those tiny white button mushrooms we buy at the store for our salads saving salmon, but, in a way, it is true. However, it is not the buttons; it is the chanterelles, the oysters, the angel wings, the shaggy manes, and the morels.

The season of fall fruiting for mycelium has ended, though you might still find a honey mushroom or a looming stropharia below a fern. I encourage anyone to study their local mushrooms or join a mycological society. To help you with identification, I recommend David Arora's All that the Rain Promises and More. For more information on mycoremediation, read Mycelium Running by Paul Stamets or visit his website at www.fungi.com. Give a nod to the next pot you find covered in the white grip of mycelium. Salmon may not be able to know how much they love the mushrooms, but we can!

Time to Say Good-Bye

Erin Keith

My short time with the WCC has come to an end. Since April of last year, I have been responsible for the outreach, training, and Individual Placements for the WCC. I will soon be working in the Water Resource Program for the City of Lacey. Sometimes great opportunities knock on our doors which force us to make really

hard decisions, and leaving the WCC is one of those hard decisions I have been faced with. The WCC is a program that I owe much of professional successes to, as I started my environmental career with WCC in 2004. I feel fortunate that I have been able to begin to give back to the WCC as a Program Coordinator, and will not forget the relationships I have worked to build and the Corpsmembers that remind us all to have hope, stand up for what we believe, and keep moving forward...no matter what.

New Nature

Article by: Mike Tillotson, Snohomish County Individual Placement

On some winter nights the lights of the East Side are muted. The persistent south wind lays calm for a few hours and a mist begins to materialize. At first it's thin. The lights, the constant companions of modernity begin to blur. Twinkling headlights fade in to a single stream, indistinguishable from the holiday decorations that scar the fading landscape. Stop lights, porch lights, all the lights of stumbling but unstoppable development succumb to the thickening fog. And eventually the world is still. I watch the lake on most days; I try to listen to the story it tells. On nights like these I hear a story of creation. I watch as the lake and its shoreline return to infancy. On the blank slate of the night I allow my wandering mind to redraw what once was; or at least I try. I picture old growth forest and fertile flood plains. I see eagles and salmon, clear water and blue sky. I'm unfortunately not a very good artist, even in my mind. The image I paint is contrived, informed mainly by Disney and the Seattle Public Schools. Despite my best efforts I cannot conjure a satisfactory rendering.

In many ways it is easier to see the future of the lake than the past. Count the acres of concrete, the dozens of high rises and the endless string of waterfront development and multiply. A watershed paved until it resembles the shiny ceramic of a toilet bowl. All the residues of humanity swept down the drain in to what was once Lake Washington. This is a picture I'd rather not keep and certainly a reality I hope to never see. But I worry...

As the sun rises and the south wind awakens, the world comes back in to focus. As moving air provokes the lake's surface dark waters respond in frothy, white protest. The rolling waves pound against bulkheads and bridges. When winter storms arrive it seems as though the lake is trying to swallow its concrete shackles. It strives to sink every dock and wash away every million dollar mansion. It is now that the lake is most wild. And yet, in truth this is a controlled chaos. The waves wage a fruitless war, their destructive potential largely made impotent by careful water level control on the lake. This is the paradox of Lake Washington. If we look below the surface, Seattle's greatest natural treasure is not so natural after all.

Lake Washington occupies an ambiguous space in a man versus nature dichotomy. The attacks on a once pristine wilderness have been persistent. Centuries of development along the shoreline, massive hydrological interventions, countless introduced species and the toxic legacy of the industrial revolution have altered all aspects of the lake. Dirt tracks became interstates, forests became subdivisions and streams became sewers as the sprawling serpent of civilization entirely encompassed this massive water body. As man

conquered nature on the ground so too was it conquered in the psyche of Seattle's citizens. The once imposing barrier is now crisscrossed by behemoth floating bridges and all variety of pleasure craft. The isolated bergs that once dotted the rural east side erupted in a frenzy of subdivisions and strip malls. The foreign became familiar and the mystery of the lake was largely lost.

Despite humanity, the lake persists. For the most part it exists today as a playground for Seattleites lucky enough to own a boat. It exists as a picturesque view from the mansions that surround it. It exists as a minor inconvenience as traffic backs up along its bridges. While its past has been discarded in the minds of most of its citizens, Lake Washington has never truly been tamed. It has taken all civilization can muster and has created a new nature. The habitat, the hydrology and the inhabitants have all been altered, but in Lake Washington we see the resiliency of ecology. The reality of the lake today forces us to reconsider our notions of civilization and wilderness. What we see in North America's largest urban lake is a starting point for pondering just what it is we are trying to protect and what we are trying to restore in our environment.

The so called natural state of this water body will never be known. Some of the lake's most prized species today (i.e. sockeye salmon) were introduced by early Seattleites. So what then, if anything is natural? What should be protected? As we seek to protect and restore our environment we would all be wise to take a moment to ask what it is we are working towards. Take a moment to look at Lake Washington, or for that matter any other lake, stream, field, valley, meadow...you will find that humans are intricately interwoven with the ecology that surrounds us. Adhering to rigid definitions of recovery, proper functioning condition or restoration causes us to miss the point at times. These methods of measuring success often lead us to define nature as separate, but as Lake



Lake Washington and the Seattle skyline



Lake Washington and the 520 Floating Bridge

Washington shows, this definition has no basis in reality. At the end of the day the goals we work towards should reflect the interconnectedness of ecology and society. We cannot be bound by the rigid dichotomy of civilization and wilderness.

Today I see a pale orange behind the Cascades. A bright, cool winter morning begins as the lake reflects the sun's first rays. A bald eagle sits on a piling, carelessly picking apart the days catch; a smallmouth bass. The sun has risen and set for time immemorial. The mountains it now rises over have been here for millions of years. The eagles have flown for eons. Smallmouth bass have only been around for a century or so; introduced at some unknown point, likely by a fisherman with the best of intentions. The piling was driven by my grandfather 50 years ago; I have been here barely over 20. We all combine now at this point in history to create the new Lake Washington; the new nature. "New nature" is our society reflected in our environment and vice-versa. New nature is what we must all learn to value if we truly hope to stop the marching development, the spread of persistent chemicals and the disappearance of salmon. In the new nature we - society and ecology - are all one and we will flourish or fail as such.



Fling a Fish...Make a Wish...

Article by: Eric Chabot, Skagit Crewmember

The Tuesday before Thanksgiving, I had the opportunity to volunteer at a local fish hatchery. My crew and several members of the neighboring Bellingham crews assisted the staff of the Marblemount Hatchery with the 'processing' of the week's batch of Coho salmon. Driven upstream by spawning instinct, both wild and hatchery-born fish had arrived at the concrete tanks and ponds of the hatchery, ready to nest, spawn and die.

For the Coho, an aluminum baseball bat was the ultimate end of a hard-fought journey up the Skagit River. Strapping on chest waders, three other workers and I corralled several dozen fish at a time in a large net. As they churned the water white, we reached in, struggling against cold and salmon slime to grasp the two and three foot flailing fish. Once I had a grip on a fish's tail, I held the struggling creature steady while another worker dispatched it with one blow from the baseball bat--a merciful death compared with the slow decay that fresh water inflicts on a spawning salmon in the wild. Next, sperm and eggs were harvested from select fish, mixed, washed in iodine and placed in incubating pans of running water. Once these fertilized eggs have developed sufficiently, they, the next generation of Coho, will be released for the journey to the salt water. Those lucky enough to survive and mature may someday return to the hatchery in their turn. After the eggs had been harvested and fertilized, we used long poles to fling the carcasses into the cascade river. This messy process returned the nutrients in the salmon to the river's food chain. The flesh itself is a valuable source of protein for scavengers, while the leftovers decompose, providing a nitrogen boost for forest plants.

Three things made the day unforgettable: the texture of the Coho's tough, smooth and slimy skin, the look of their lower jaw hooked into a cruel and viciously toothed under bite, and



Fish Fling: Marblemount, WA - 2005

the distinctive fish-smell that clung to everything by the end of the day (including, unfortunately, clothing, hair and skin). Being able to hold, feel, and examine the living Coho had a special meaning for me as a member of the Skagit WCC crew. Contracted for much of the year by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and the Nature Conservancy, we do most of our day-to-day work to protect and enhance the salmon habitat along the Skagit, the only river to contain all five species of Pacific salmon.

We remove invasive weeds to enhance the composition of leaf-litter in the streams-leaf litter which feeds insects that in turn feed young salmon on their way to the ocean. We plant trees to protect banks from erosion, reducing the amount of sediment in the waterway-sediment that makes it difficult for fish to use their gills. The trees also provide shade, reducing the temperature of the water-cold water, containing more dissolved oxygen, makes for better fish habitat. It was quite a gratifying experience to be able to participate in the life-cycle of the beautiful (and tasty!) organism whose survival is the object of the labor we put in every day.

Notes from a Flood

Article by: James Tyson, Snohomish County Crewmember

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Trucks pulled up, with frantic faces; desperation and anguish contorting dispositions through the glare of the flood lights and the driving rain. Washington was flooding...again. We threw sandbags for hours.

He was a quiet man; with an air of authority yet simple and soft spoken. His glasses and white beard lent himself to this disposition. I didn't get his name. He was from Federal Way and he was helping because he had nothing else to do, "just earning my unemployment check," he stated simply. He lost his job selling dump trucks when the economy crashed, "no construction, no truck."

The president gave a speech this morning while I sat on my hotel room bed. He spoke of the deepening economic crisis. He called for unity and urged the people to put aside their personal aspirations and strive to do what was best for the nation.

Thursday, January 8, 2009

I was sitting on my front door step listening to the trees. The needs of trees are different than the needs of man; they do not care about the wars of humans, or the hardships of toil. Their reality is simple; one of soil and wind, humus and water.

It is January and the sun is finally striving to bless us with longer hours. A plane flies overhead and water trickles down a drain outside the garage, joining its brothers and sisters in the saturated floor of the valleys below; here though, I am alone.

2:30 pm, the call comes in; we are going out along the Snohomish River to save a farm. They need 20,000 sandbags. It's too bad you can't stop a faltering economy with sand bags.

Friday, January 9, 2009

The levee had burst at 2:00am and we arrived at 4:00pm. Already there were three teams of inmates bagging and throwing bags into the breach. The inmates had a fire line down along the river, across the already tossed bags, leading to the rushing water. The blare of stadium construction lights illuminated their silhouettes behind the backdrop of rushing water. We bagged thousands of sandbags together, and talked. They were happy to help, happy to be out of prison for the moment. Sometimes, freedom can be found in the simple acts.

By midnight, exhaustion had overcome most of us. The inmates had been relieved several hours before and we had two more WCC crews join us, the Everett crew and the Bellingham crew. We called it quits with the intention of returning the next morning. I am exhausted.

Training

Elective Training

Elective training is almost here! The first week of elective training is March 9-March 12. The second week of elective training is June 8-June 11. If you would like to see which classes you are signed up for and who else is in your classes, visit the WCC website at www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc and click on the "Current Updates" link in bar along the left side of the page. Here you will find a link to the Elective Training Roster.

Assistant Supervisor Training

This training will be held from February 23- February 26 at Seabeck Conference Center in Seabeck, WA. Assistants will learn the basics of leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and cultural competency. This is also a great time to meet fellow Corpsmembers from around the state.

Training responsibilities are being transferred to Jason Ouellette. For any training related questions, please contact him at (360) 407-7475.

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Appear in Corps News!

Seeking articles, creative writing, and artwork. Please send your work to your coordinator via Email or Snail mail to WCC Headquarters by the quarterly due date:

- April 15: Spring
- July 15: Summer
- October 15: Fall
- January 15: Winter

About Our Organization

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 a program offered through the Washington State 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.

The WCC provides work experience and skills to members through 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. Our partners include Federal, State, Local, and Tribal organizations. For more information, please visit our website.

If you need this publication in an alternate format, please call 360-407-7248. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.