Washington
CONSERVATION CORPS

Partner Handbook

2026-2027

Washington Department of Ecology

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WCC at-a-Glance

- WCC has more than 350 members and experienced staff statewide.
- WCC supports career development for young adults and military veterans through mentorship, hands-on experience, field skills, training, and community involvement.
- WCC members complete projects for over 100 partner organizations.
- In an average year, WCC members plant over 400,000 native trees and shrubs, improve 3,000 acres of habitat, build and maintain over 400 miles of trails, and respond to local and national disasters.

Program Overview

Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) is a state-based AmeriCorps program focused on environmental conservation and professional development. Administered by the Washington State Department of Ecology, WCC consists of two program types: field crews and individual placements (IP). Members in these positions support habitat restoration, environmental monitoring, and outdoor recreation projects throughout Washington.

WCC collaborates with over 100 partners annually, including federal, state, local, and Tribal governments, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, state and federal land managers, and conservation districts. We use a cost-share approach, leveraging grant funding and state funding to provide field crew or IP support at a reduced rate to partners. WCC has also piloted an environmental justice program that supports projects in overburdened communities by eliminating the cost-share for field crew time for partners meeting certain criteria. This results in a diverse range of projects, priorities, and learning opportunities for members and staff.

WCC members are primarily young adults (ages 18-25) and military veterans interested in community service and career growth. We prioritize hands-on skills training, mentorship, and leadership development for our members while providing affordable and quality environmental services for our partners.

WCC Core Values

We strive to create a welcoming and inclusive service culture that supports both personal and professional growth, and we expect all WCC members and staff to follow these guiding principles. As a career development program, partner interactions and networking opportunities are incredibly impactful to the member experience. WCC requests that partner organizations help foster a growth environment that exemplifies our core values: service, safety, inclusivity, integrity, and learning.

Service
Demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship, WCC, and our community.

Safety
Maintain vigilance around physical and emotional safety through awareness, education, proper personal protective equipment (PPE), and respectful behavior.

Inclusivity
Foster an inclusive culture by ensuring equitable access to opportunities and empowerment across all identities represented in a diverse organization.

Integrity
Exhibit accountability and ownership by understanding the purpose of projects and completing assignments to a high standard. Operate as a reliable, cohesive team through effective time management, punctuality, and consistent attendance. Establish a professional atmosphere by wearing the WCC's brand, knowing our elevator speech, and being responsive to community members.

Learning
Actively participate in continued learning, fulfilling experiences, professional networking, and career-transferable training. Provide clear and consistent communication by giving and receiving constructive feedback, offering encouragement, and regularly discussing goals.

Commitments

Washington Conservation Corps is committed to fostering an environment of respect and inclusion for members, staff, partners, and the communities we serve. While not a comprehensive list, the following statements reflect some of the areas where we are working to uphold this commitment.

WCC is committed to honoring how people identify, and we believe in diversity as a program strength. We support our members, staff, and partners as whole individuals and demonstrate respect by using preferred names and pronouns. Some norming practices are to include pronouns in verbal introductions, email signatures, and video communication screen names.

WCC is committed to building trust and respect with the Tribal Nations on whose lands we live and serve. We recognize Tribes as stewards of this unceded land since time immemorial. We are committed to continuous education on issues of Tribal sovereignty

and will strive to develop strong partnerships and relationships as we work together to enhance and protect ecosystems in Washington.

Member Experience

As a career development program, we have three main objectives for our members: personal development, career growth, and environmental awareness. To achieve these objectives, we focus on hands-on skill building, teamwork, community involvement, reflection, networking, and fostering a sense of connection to the local environment.

Our partners are integral to helping us achieve these objectives. Partners provide meaningful service projects with diverse tasks and learning opportunities. As part of this, we request that partners foster positive connections with WCC service members as they explore career paths and gain a better understanding of natural resource management. Many members go on to work in the environmental field, and the connections they make as members can be invaluable for navigating their future career.

We expect all partners to incorporate opportunities for personal development, career growth, and environmental awareness in addition to members' day-to-day service responsibilities. We ask that each partner provide education and background about their project sites and, when possible, be flexible and responsive to facilitate the inclusion of programing that fosters growth and development. Some examples might include:

- Conduct site visits to provide context for the project work, especially during long-term and multi-phase projects.
- Invite WCC members to participate in training and/or educational opportunities related to project work.
- Invite agency/organization staff and partners to engage with WCC members for networking opportunities and informational interviews.
- Support member career growth by participating in resume workshops and/or mock-interview workshops.
- When possible, support members in participating in continued learning opportunities facilitated by WCC.

Safety & Protocols

WCC works to ensure a safe and positive service and learning environment for our members and supervisors. Partners must provide appropriate service conditions and comply with safety rules and regulations set by Labor & Industries, OSHA, and other applicable safety boards. For activities that are not described by these safety boards, we defer to WCC's Field Operations Handbook. This handbook provides specific guidance for

our field crews and individual placements regarding safety protocols and procedures. If your organization has specific safety guidance, we ask that our members and staff defer to the most conservative safety practice.

For field crews in travel status outside of regular business hours or in the event of extreme weather, smoke conditions, or other events where crews are serving without a supervisor, WCC provides an after-hours on call staff person to be contacted in an emergency.

WCC Program Needs

WCC partners with non-profit organizations and federal, state, local, and Tribal government partners to implement recreation and restoration projects.

Individual Placements

Individual placement (IP) members serve directly with non-profit or government partners. Projects may include supporting environmental research, conducting outreach, coordinating youth or volunteer environmental education events, designing habitat restoration projects, and others. IP schedules may vary according to the needs of the host site, and host sites provide any required technology or equipment.

Field Crews

WCC field crews consist of five members and a staff supervisor, along with a complement of basic hand tools and an extended cab WCC truck. Field crews complete projects that physically improve the natural environment or expand recreational opportunities for the public such as trail building, native plant installations, and wildland fire mitigation.

Regular crew hours are 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday. WCC field crews can serve extended schedules lasting up to eight days for remote or backcountry projects.

Partners can contract with WCC for field crew projects for a limited duration or for the full program year. If hosting a crew for the full program year, partners must provide space for the crew to store equipment, park vehicles, and access water and bathrooms.

Field Crew Supervisors

WCC works hard to reduce the number of administrative tasks our crew supervisors need to complete while in the field, however the nature of the role requires some time outside of project work to manage administrative work. WCC crew supervisors will take time to complete timesheets, purchase tracking, and performance reviews for members. Supervisors may also take time away from an existing project to prepare for an upcoming one, including site visits, partner meetings, food purchasing, etc.

In addition, supervisors may take time away from existing projects to conduct outreach and recruitment activities. Crew supervisors are responsible for reviewing applications and conducting interviews to enroll candidates and fill their crew positions. These activities take place primarily during the months of July through September in preparation for each new service year starting in the fall. However, some recruitment and enrollment activities may occur at other times during the year to fill any crew vacancies that have been created during the service term.

Field crew supervisors also support WCC program operations and improvements by serving on committees and pursuing specializations. Committee work may include advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, improving recruitment and enrollment processes, and supporting staff and member retention. Specializations include Disaster Response, Trails and Rigging, Habitat Restoration, and Saws. Committee and specialty work may require several hours per month depending on the season and specialty.

Appropriate Projects

WCC activities must physically improve the natural environment or expand recreational opportunities for the public. Specific activities may include:

- In-stream large woody debris placement, bank stabilization, or fish barrier removal
- Livestock exclusionary fence construction
- Manual and chemical invasive species suppression and removal
- Native and climate-adapted species installation and maintenance
- Trail, boardwalk, and recreational infrastructure improvements such as campgrounds, picnic shelters, etc.
- Wetland creation or restoration
- Wildlife structure installation
- Wildland fire mitigation, including thinning and fuels reduction

Examples of inappropriate projects are:

- Handling money or fund-raising activities
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Clearing hazardous waste
- Cleaning illegal dumping areas
- Supporting, promoting, or soliciting for an outside organization
- Promoting, conducting, or participating in an outside business or commercial enterprise for private gain

AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, staff, members, and program partners must adhere to AmeriCorps policies. An overview of AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities and other policies can be found in the AmeriCorps Program Handbook. Additional information about AmeriCorps programming can be found on the website for our state commission, Serve Washington.

Staff displacement is prohibited by AmeriCorps, which includes re-assigning tasks to an AmeriCorps member that a current or former employee may have been assigned. Program participants may not terminate, lay-off, or reduce working hours of any employee for the purpose of using a member with available funds.

For specific questions regarding AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities, contact your regional coordinator.

Agreements Process & Contracting

WCC plans crew time and IP positions on an annual basis. Prospective partners request service time starting in January of each year for the following October start date. WCC reviews applications in May and communicates with partners by mid-June to start the agreements process.

The agreements process typically takes 30-35 days. WCC can provide a template agreement for crew time or IP members, though we can also accept outside entities agreements. The first step in the agreement process is to confirm your crew time with your regional coordinator and/or IP members with the IP coordinator. After that WCC will send a template agreement outlining each party's responsibilities related to hosting a WCC crew or IP member, as well as the cost. Each agreement is written to stipulate expenditures will not exceed the total cost listed in the agreement. We can modify totals by submitting an amendment as needed.

Once the terms and total cost are agreed upon, WCC sends the agreement for signatures. First, they will be sent internally for approvals from Washington Department of Ecology, then to each party's signatory for final signatures via DocuSign. The internal review typically takes two weeks to complete, and when we are processing numerous agreements in late June and July this may take longer.

Each party receives a fully signed copy of the agreement once complete.

If there are specific needs for your agreement or questions about the process, please contact Josiah Downey, WCC Director.

Rates & Invoicing

WCC's rates are based on a cost-share between WCC partners and Ecology. The rates depend on Ecology's ability to provide funding. If funding from state or federal sources is withdrawn, reduced, or limited in any way, Ecology may modify rates prior to issuing agreements.

WCC issues invoices monthly through email. Invoices are for the prior month's scheduled time and are typically sent out around the 10th of each month. State partners will typically be issued invoices around the 15th of each month.

Travel: WCC calculates flat rates on a per day basis for the entire crew or the individual placement. These additional costs are applied for every day the WCC members are in travel status. This includes travel to or from a project and while on site. Additional expenses are applied evenly across the entire duration of the project. IP partners must provide travel (or mileage reimbursement) for IP members attending required WCC events including trainings and end-of-season presentations.

Special Circumstances: WCC does not adjust for weather related shutdowns. We encourage partners to have back up projects in place for sites that are prone to inclement weather. We do adjust for WCC initiated shutdowns and extended member or supervisor absences lasting 20 days or more or if a crew has two or fewer individuals available to serve. The partner agreement provides additional details regarding special circumstances.

For estimates and current rates please contact Josiah Downey.

Communications & Outreach

We want to share the impact of WCC far and wide. WCC uses social media and other publications to provide day-to-day glimpses into member service life and to share news about our projects, program, and partners. When sharing about WCC field crews or IP members on your pages, please consider linking to or tagging WCC.

- WCC website: ecology.wa.gov/wcc
- WCC LinkedIn: Washington Conservation Corps
- WCC Facebook: @washingtonconservationcorps
- WCC Instagram: @ecologywcc

To collaborate on joint stories, please contact WCC's communications coordinator, Rachel Wendling. Social media graphics, outreach and recruitment guidance, and printable materials for in-person outreach, as well as other partner resources, are accessible in our WCC Partner Toolkit on Dropbox. Contact WCC's outreach and recruitment specialist, Susanna Trimarco, for additional outreach support.

Performance Feedback

WCC welcomes partner feedback throughout the year. Feedback can be provided directly to your regional WCC coordinator or the WCC supervisor supporting your project. WCC also maintains an online feedback survey that can be completed at any time.

During the service term, WCC members complete a Performance and Development Plan (PDP) in tandem with their crew supervisor or IP host site supervisor. Along with personal and professional goal setting, this plan includes space for WCC members to provide feedback on the program at large and the projects and partners they serve with. Relevant feedback from PDPs as well as our member exit survey can be shared with partners to help strengthen partnerships and project selection.

WCC Contacts

Director

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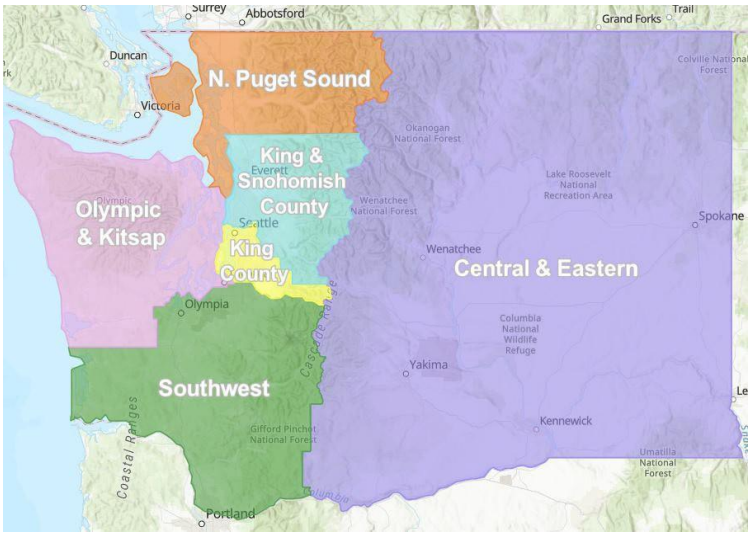

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