



2023

Washington Conservation Corps Intern

Suzanne Krasle
Western Washington University

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Washington Conservation Corp

Student Name: Suzanne Krasle

Internship Dates: Jan. 17, 2023 - Sept. 17, 2023

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STUDENT SIGNATURE 

DATE: 5/12/23

HUXLEY COLLEGE INTERNSHIP REPORT

I. STUDENT/INTERN INFORMATION

NAME: Suzanne Krasle	W#: W01384878
MAJOR: Environmental Science	CONCENTRATION: N/A
INTERNSHIP TITLE: Washington Conservation Corp Member	
PERIOD OF INTERNSHIP: 1/17/23 – 9/17/23	
AVG. HRS. PER WEEK: 40	TOTAL HRS. WORKED: 480 during Winter quarter

II. HOST INSTITUTION INFORMATION

INST. NAME: Washington Conservation Corp	
INST. ADDRESS: Northwest Region Office: 15700 Dayton Ave. N., Shoreline WA 98133	
INST. MISSION: To conserve and enhance the natural resources of Washington while providing meaningful service opportunities to young adults and military veterans.	
SUPERVISOR NAME: Ashley Baltrusitis	SUPERVISOR TITLE: WCC Supervisor
SUPERVISOR CONTACT INFORMATION: (360)-701-3248 Asba461@ecy.wa.gov	

III. INTRODUCTION

I completed my internship credits by enlisting in a nine-month service term with Washington Conservation Corp (WCC). WCC is an AmeriCorps program under the Department of Ecology for Washington State. Opportunities for service through WCC include working on a trail, spike, or restoration crew, or as an individual placement. I worked on a restoration crew. Restoration crews focus on native planting, invasive species removal and mitigation, and implementation of erosion control techniques. My crew consisted of six WCC crew members including me and our supervisor, and we worked alongside our sponsor the Skagit River System Coop (SRSC). Since January, we completed planting projects along with some brush-cutting of Himalayan blackberry. In addition to working on the restoration projects, my role within WCC was to document our crew's daily work including site conditions and the number of trees planted.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Since starting with WCC I worked in at least 10 unique sites and learned numerous skills and techniques, but my daily responsibilities tended to remain the same every day. My workday began at seven a.m. at our lockup in Mt. Vernon, an office and workshop shared with us by our sponsor (SRSC). Our supervisor covered what our crew would be doing that day and then we would load the work truck with whatever equipment we needed for the day. The sites we worked at could be up to two hours away, so it was crucial to be prepared with extra gas for our power tools, plant bags, stakes, and flagging tape, not to mention a hearty lunch. After we completed a day of restoration work, which could include planting, live staking, brush cutting, we returned to the lockup to unpack the truck and clean up before we went home at 5 p.m. I worked Monday through Thursday for 10 hours each day, for 40 hours a week.

Because I began my term in January, my primary work was planting. My training in planting techniques prioritized the successful growth of the plant over speed. First, a hole was dug either with a hand auger or “dingo” and then a species was selected based on the soil qualities and light and water conditions. When planting, it is important to avoid “J-roots” which is when the tips of the roots curve to the sides when the roots are longer than the hole. If this was the case, I would break off the length of the root necessary to prevent this. Then, a cylindrical biodegradable plant protector (cage) was placed in the hole with the plant and the hold was filled in, compacting the soil to prevent air pockets. Each plant was marked with a flagged bamboo stake so they would be visible during any maintenance of the site (such as mowing or routine brush cutting). The most common species I worked with were Douglas fir, white pine, and grand fir, but we also commonly planted various native shrubs and deciduous trees, and occasionally Western red cedars which were always co-planted with blue spruce to prevent elk browse. On a typical planting day, we would continue this until it was time to leave, or we would finish the site based on the number of plants that were in the site plan. Each day I used GIS to map the area we completed and to record the number of trees planted and the type of work done to submit to WCC.

Winter is the planting season for WCC but as the season changes, we will be completing other projects such as spraying Plantskid (animal blood) with sprayer backpacks to prevent deer/elk browse, herbicide treatments, and we will be trained for different certifications. In March I will be completing my Wilderness Advanced First Aid certification and in June I will be trained in wetland delineation. During my continuing service term, I will be able to crew swap in order to further my experiences. I plan on swapping to a trail crew for a workweek to learn more about rigging and construction of trails.

V. OUTCOMES

From my first day with WCC in January until the end of February, my crew planted at least 8,000 trees in all weather conditions. Our work has benefitted the Skagit River system and improved salmon habitat by turning bare grasslands and pastures into juvenile forests and extending riparian buffers. I have watched as we have completely transformed landscapes one tree at a time for acres and acres.

An overarching outcome of my time with WCC so far has been personal growth with adaptability. I had never worked for such long hours doing such physically demanding tasks and I had to quickly learn the value of preparation. To complete this work, I must get enough sleep, prepare my lunches the day before, and make sure I have even extra gear to stay warm and dry. These things seem simple but there is no room for forgetfulness. Another example of this is how at any point during the day, work plans may change due to weather, equipment, or the sponsor's request. I learned to do many things I had never tried before quickly and at a moment's notice. I am grateful that I have now been trained to use power tools such as augers and brush cutters, but I had to put any fears or self-doubt aside to do these things. WCC expects that you are eager to learn and be proactive in participating in new things. I have learned that I can adapt quickly and have little use for self-doubt when it comes to opportunities to learn.

VI. ASSESSMENT

WCC prides itself on being a job training program, setting members up for success in their careers through hands-on learning experiences and opportunities to participate in trainings that would otherwise have to be completed in someone's free time and at their own expense. I have not yet completed my WFA training, but I will soon be certified in Wilderness First Aid after March 9th. This certification will make me a more competitive applicant when pursuing possible careers with DNR, national parks, or other outdoor jobs. In addition to providing training, WCC has given me experience in service work and government work, which makes me more likely to be accepted into the Peace Corps, a dream I have had since I was young.

VIII. APPENDICES

Appendix I:

HUXLEY COLLEGE INTERNSHIP REPORT

February 23, 2023

David Shull

Internship Coordinator

Western Washington University

Dear Mr. Shull,

I'm pleased to inform you that Suzanne Krasle has completed more than 150 hours for her internship with the Washington Conservation Corps, from 01/17/2023 to now. It has been a pleasure working with her and with WWU, and her participation has been essential to my crew's service this season.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley Baltrusitis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Ashley Baltrusitis, Washington Conservation Corps Supervisor

asba461@ecy.wa.gov

(360)701-3248

