

Gifford Pinchot National Forest — Recovery



USDA FOREST SERVICE

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Service Academy on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest

While high-profile Recovery projects like the installation of new bridges and high-tech interpretive upgrades get going throughout the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, young people continue to toil in summer heat on mountain trails for your safety and enjoyment.

On the South end of the Gifford Pinchot on the Mt. Adams Ranger District, a crew from the Northwest Service Academy (NWSA) is renewing tread, installing check dams to limit water flowing down trails and beating the heat any way they can to get these jobs done for American tax-payers.

ARRA Trail Projects Coordinator and Forestry Technician, John Kruse reported that this crew does not get to do the glorious stuff, but the bread-and-butter projects that sorely need completion. He said this is the stuff hikers notice, and they really like when they see the trails getting “dialed in.”

Jonathan Martin is the field-team leader for this crew. He said that the key-factor in this service based program is, “We’re all here for the right reasons – to give back to the forest because it has given so much to us.” He said there are so many beautiful places in our country with limited access where visitors will never go if they have to “bush-whack” to get there. “We want to make it easier for people to get out and enjoy these gorgeous areas that we just love,” Martin said.

Martin said his crew is not just out there for personal satisfaction, but to contribute to and uphold the missions of the NWSA and Forest Service by helping Forest visitors to gain the same appreciation which brought them out to do this kind of work. In the process, these young-adults get the opportunity to figure out what path to take in life. He added, “We’re not out here to make money. We’re out here to make a difference.”

Director of the Mt. Adams NWSA Center, Brendan Norman explained that developing community leaders while preserving and restoring the natural world in the process is a central mission of the academy. He said many latch onto this mission as a stepping stone to become leaders in resource management and conservation.

The Mt. Adams program started in 1994 and has run upwards of 1000 people through, with approximately 25 percent moving on to careers in related fields with land-management agencies or in the educational arena. He said this program is



Students From the Mt. Adams Northwest Service Academy retread the Coldsprings Trail at South Climb.

partially funded by an AmeriCorps grant which will not be awarded next year.

“Loss of the AmeriCorps grant for 2011 has really put us in a pinch,” Norman said. “With 50 percent of our funding gone next year, NWSA is in danger of having to close our doors at the end of this season. We are working collaboratively with our partners, including the Forest Service, to identify alternatives that will prevent that from happening. We really need to create more awareness of our mission and success, as well as the overall importance of the program.”

Americorp has now decided to provide reduced fund this group for 2011.

To learn how to become involved with the NWSA or to become a supporter, go to their website at <http://www.nwserviceacademy.org/> or <http://www.mtadamscenter.com/>.



Inside the GPNF

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Washington Conservation Corps Crews Work Hard for an Education and Your Safe Hiking Experience

VANCOUVER, WASH. – Thanks to \$627,000 in Recovery Act funding designated specifically for trails projects, additional trail crews are building more accessible and safe hiking trails for visitors to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

Among the many valuable partners working on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest under Recovery funding this year are some educational work organizations. Some of these are the Student Conservation Association, Northwest Service Academy, Northwest Youth Corp and Washington Conservation Corp (WCC). One WCC trail crew is working on improvements at Mount St. Helens.

WCC at Mount St. Helens

Nichole Hansen is the assistant WCC crew-leader working on Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument (MSNVM). She said they usually see at least one group of hikers a day, and most are excited to see them clearing heavy brush, renewing tread and removing obstacles such as large trees fallen across trails.

Forestry Technician and Recovery Trails projects coordinator, Sharon Steriti reported her Forest Service crew, as well as volunteer crews in her area, focus on trails that have had limited maintenance over the past ten years. She said these trail improvements should continue to pay off for a number of years.

“Our number one objective here is the safety of our visitors and trail-users,” She said. Steriti’s five-person Forest Service trail maintenance crew takes care of trails on the entire MSNVM, which covers over 400,000 acres in total. Steriti said they could not get everything done without the help of organizations such as the WCC and workers they field.

“The brushing and other maintenance work is never-ending,” said Steriti. “So, it helps immensely to have other crews helping us keep things in line.” She added the WCC crew will move on to the Loowit Trail in August.

Mount St. Helens has two WCC crews scheduled for trail work in 2011.

Participants in WCC spend six months working to receive an education grant for college. Some universities even match funding up to 100 percent depending on how students choose to use the grant.

WCC participants get two weeks of training and the option to receive professional certifications that may otherwise be financially out of reach for many youth without a sizable commitment on their part. Most projects are not out in the mountains as this AmeriCorps program provides community and ecological enhancement projects of many types, from urban settings to wilderness camps.

WCC workers make minimum wage 40 hours a week and earn comp-time for any hours over 40, which is used for paid vacation when they need it to recover from the hard physical labor involved. WCC Supervisor, Nancy Toenyan, with the Washington Department of Ecology said, “It is definitely hard work, but the rewards are huge.”

Learn more about how to support or get involved with the WCC at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc/index.html>.



WCC crew removes brush from Independence Pass trail on MSNVM.



New tread on the Coldwater boardwalk will increase visitor safety.



Popular trails such as the Eruption Trail at JRO will see much needed improvements.