

State of Washington  
Joint Legislative Audit and  
Review Committee

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# Washington Conservation Corps Sunset Review

## Report 98-5

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October 6, 1998

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for persons with disabilities.*

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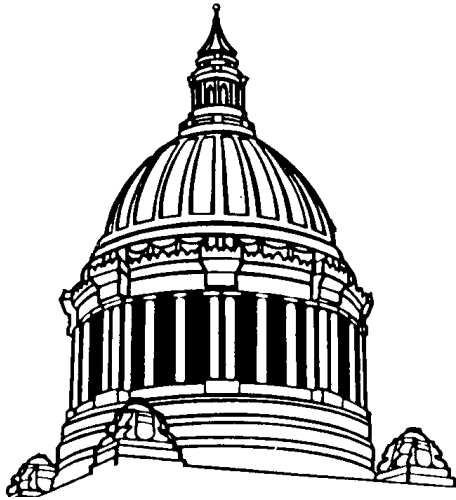


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The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee**

Established by Chapter 44.28 RCW, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (formerly the Legislative Budget Committee) provides oversight of state funded programs and activities. As a joint, bipartisan legislative committee, membership consists of eight senators and eight representatives equally divided between the two major political parties.

Under the direction of the Legislative Auditor, committee staff conduct performance audits, program evaluations, sunset reviews, and other types of policy and fiscal studies. Study reports typically focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of agency operations, impact of state programs, and compliance with legislative intent. As appropriate, recommendations to correct identified problem areas are included. The Legislative Auditor also has responsibility for facilitating implementation of effective performance measurement throughout state government.

The JLARC generally meets on a monthly basis during the interim between legislative sessions. It adopts study reports, recommends action to the legislature and the executive branch, sponsors legislation, and reviews the status of implementing recommendations.



State of Washington  
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# WASHINGTON CONSERVATION CORPS SUNSET REVIEW

## Summary

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### INTRODUCTION

The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) was created in 1983 and is described in state law, Chapter 43.220 RCW. It provides the state's youth, who are 18 to 25 years of age, with work experience and skills in projects that support conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources.

Four agencies have implemented the program since 1993. These four agencies are: Department of Ecology (Ecology), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Fish and Wildlife), Department of Natural Resources (Natural Resources), and State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks). During the last five fiscal years, the four implementing agencies have received approximately \$12.3 million for their Washington Conservation Corps programs. WCC members are usually hired for 6 to 12 months. They are paid the state or federal minimum wage, whichever is higher.

This is a mandated sunset review of WCC under the state sunset law (RCW 43.131.383). The review analyzed program information covering three biennia (1993-95, 1995-97, and 1997-99). We reviewed the program and answered a set of questions that are listed below. Our answers and analysis follow each question.

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Program  
serves 18- to  
25-year old  
youth

## Has the program complied with legislative intent as outlined in chapter 43.220 RCW?

The four agencies involved with the WCC program have generally complied with legislative intent that is reflected in Chapter 43.220 RCW and subsequent budget provisos. However, a part of legislation relating to the use of funds for economically distressed areas is not clear. Ambiguity in the language leaves open the question of whether the criteria for employing corps members from distressed areas, and funding projects in distressed areas, must be met simultaneously. As a result, it was difficult to fully assess the agency compliance with legislative intent for the use of such funds.

## Has the program been implemented in an effective manner?

The program has been implemented in an effective manner to the extent it has provided WCC crews opportunities to do conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement work of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources. However, the program lacks necessary data to assess its impact in developing the state's youth resources through meaningful work experience and training. Furthermore, the program does not have the necessary data to evaluate the impact of its efforts relating to economically distressed areas.

Before establishing such a system, the four agencies should first do a cost-benefit analysis of alternatives for assessing program impacts. Policymakers and program managers could then use the results of the cost-benefit analysis to decide which, if any, outcome measures are appropriate and would add value to the program. This should be a realistic process in which the benefits outweigh the costs. Furthermore, the four agencies should contact similar programs in other states and Canadian provinces to identify "best practices." Appendix 4 includes the results of our survey of such programs.

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**Program lacks necessary data to assess its impact**

**Has the program been implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner? Has the program unnecessarily duplicated efforts of other public agencies or the private sector?**

Overall, the WCC program has been implemented in a cost-effective manner. However, in some cases, the program needs to improve data management and monitoring of its projects and activities. Furthermore, the program has not conducted a formal assessment of current needs relating to the program's role in economically distressed areas. Finally, although similar programs exist in the public sector, the WCC program does not appear to unnecessarily duplicate efforts of other public agencies or the private sector.

**Is the program still needed? Would there be an adverse effect on public health, safety, or welfare if the program is terminated or modified in a way that curtails program authority or resources?**

If the program's purpose is to employ young adults as trainees/apprentices in the conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) has served that purpose. The anecdotal information and program outputs generally reflect positively on the program. Therefore, the legislature should continue the WCC program with the modifications suggested in this report.

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**Program outputs are generally positive**

The report recommends that the implementing agencies report to the legislature before the 1999 Legislative Session regarding the need for any type of targeting of WCC resources in the future. The legislature may assess those recommendations in considering the reauthorization of the WCC program.

## **AGENCY RESPONSES**

We have shared the report with the Office of Financial Management (OFM), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Ecology (DOE), the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and Washington State Parks and Recreation



Commission (WSPRC), and provided them an opportunity to submit written comments. They have generally concurred with the report's recommendations. Their comments are attached as Appendix 2.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We appreciate the cooperation extended to us by the staff of the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Natural Resources, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

This study was conducted by Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) staff member Rakesh Mohan. The consulting firm of Sterling Associates was retained to conduct the financial part of the study. Bob Thomas and Ron Perry served as project supervisors.

Thomas M. Sykes  
Legislative Auditor

On October 6, 1998, this report was approved by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee and its distribution authorized.

Representative Cathy McMorris  
Chair

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary

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### ***Recommendation 1***

The legislature should continue the Washington Conservation Corps with modifications indicated in recommendations 2 through 5 of this report.

Legislation Required: Yes  
Fiscal Impact: Estimated \$3.64 million in General Funds based on the actual expenditures for the 1995-97 Biennium  
Completion Date: 1999 Legislative Session

### ***Recommendation 2***

Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks should establish a cost-effective performance measurement system for the Washington Conservation Corps, consistent with the requirements of the Budget and Accounting Act (Chapter 43.88 RCW).

Legislation Required: No  
Fiscal Impact: None  
Completion Date: June 30, 1999

***Recommendation 3***

Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks should conduct an assessment of need for the Washington Conservation Corps and make a recommendation to the legislature before the 1999 Legislative Session whether program resources should be targeted in the future.

Legislation Required: No  
Fiscal Impact: None  
Completion Date: January 1999

***Recommendation 4***

Based on the outcome of recommendation 3, the legislature should consider whether to dedicate any portion of the general fund appropriation for the Washington Conservation Corps for targeted areas or populations. If such targeting is desired, agencies should establish a process to track those expenditures in order to demonstrate compliance with legislative intent.

Legislation Required: Yes  
Fiscal Impact: None  
Completion Date: 1999 Legislative Session

***Recommendation 5***

Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks should establish a reliable database (similar to Ecology's) that will allow Washington Conservation Corps program information to be used for effective management decision-making.

Legislation Required: No  
Fiscal Impact: Minimal  
Completion Date: June 30, 1999

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# INTRODUCTION

## Chapter One

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The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) was created in 1983 and is described in state law, Chapter 43.220 RCW. It provides the state's youth, who are 18 to 25 years of age, with work experience and skills in projects that support conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources. This is a mandated sunset review of WCC under state sunset law (RCW 43.131.383).

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## Summary

## METHODOLOGY AND STUDY LIMITATIONS

We followed the general sunset criteria (RCW 43.131.070) in conducting this review. (See scope and objectives in Appendix 1). The criteria place the burden of proof on agencies to demonstrate the extent to which they have complied with legislative intent, effectively provided needed services, operated the program in an efficient and economical manner, and not duplicated efforts of other public agencies or private sector. In addition, the program under review needs to show its continuing need. We asked program officials to provide us with information that directly answers the study objectives that are based on the sunset criteria. (For additional description of methodology and study limitations, see Appendix 3).

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Although state law, RCW 43.220.020, authorizes six agencies to implement the Washington Conservation Corps program, only four agencies have implemented the program since 1993. These four agencies are: Department of Ecology (Ecology), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Fish and Wildlife), Department of Natural Resources (Natural Resources), and State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks).

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### Four agencies implement WCC

The Department of Agriculture (Agriculture) and the Department of Employment Security (Employment Security) are the other two agencies that were authorized but have not implemented the WCC program during the last three biennia. According to its Director, Agriculture eliminated its WCC program on December 1, 1991, as part of a budget reduction ordered by the governor. Agriculture decided to eliminate the WCC program rather than reduce funding of its other General Fund programs, which are regulatory in nature and serve to fulfill the agency's primary mission of protecting public health and safety.

According to its Assistant Secretary, Employment Security has not exercised its role in the implementation of the WCC program during the last three biennia. Though authorized, Employment Security has never been appropriated funds to operate the WCC program.

Corps members are usually hired for 6 to 12 months and are paid the state or federal minimum wage, whichever is higher. During the last five fiscal years, 1866 young men and women enrolled in the Conservation Corps program at the four participating agencies.<sup>1</sup> The average age of those corps members ranged from 20 to 22, and 74 to 83 percent of them were male.

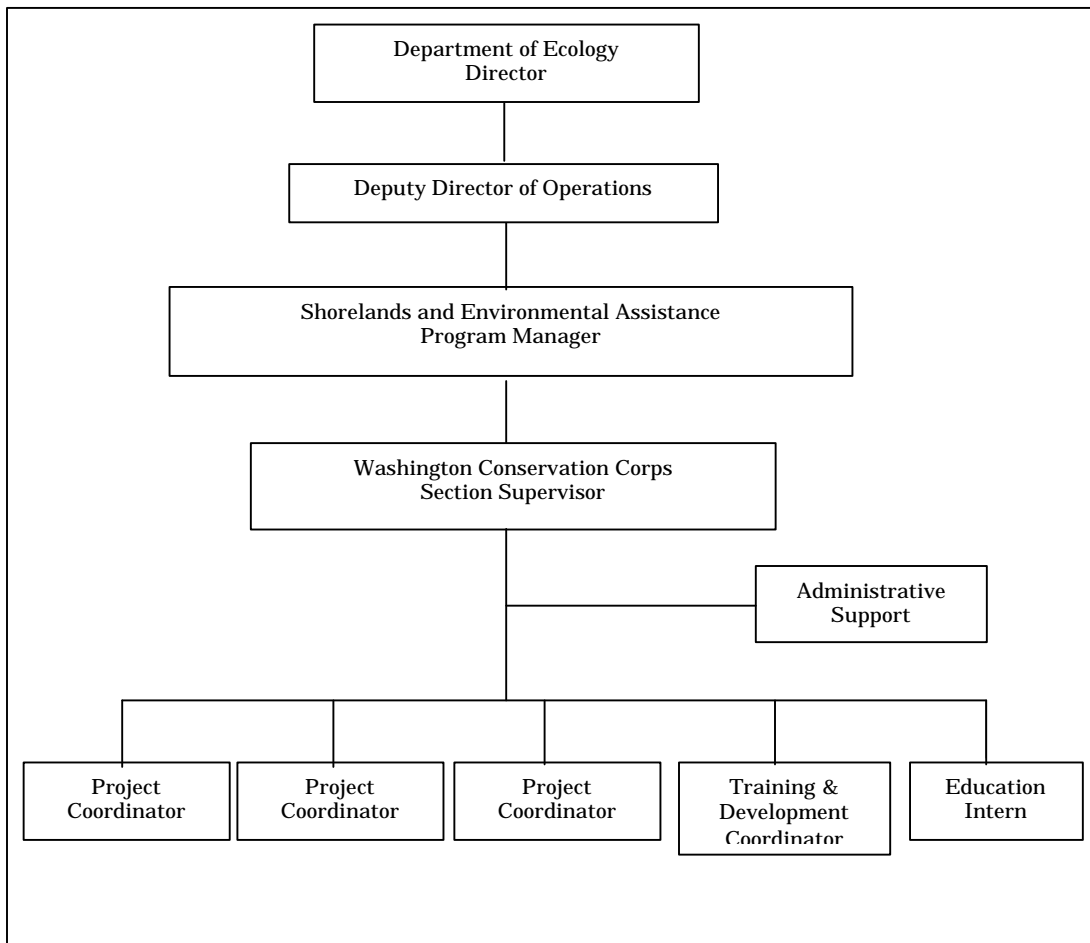
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<sup>1</sup> Number of corps members: 411 for Ecology (as of 3/31/98), 246 for Fish and Wildlife (as of 5/8/98), 357 for Natural Resources (as of 2/28/98), and 852 for State Parks (as of 5/31/98).

## Program Organization

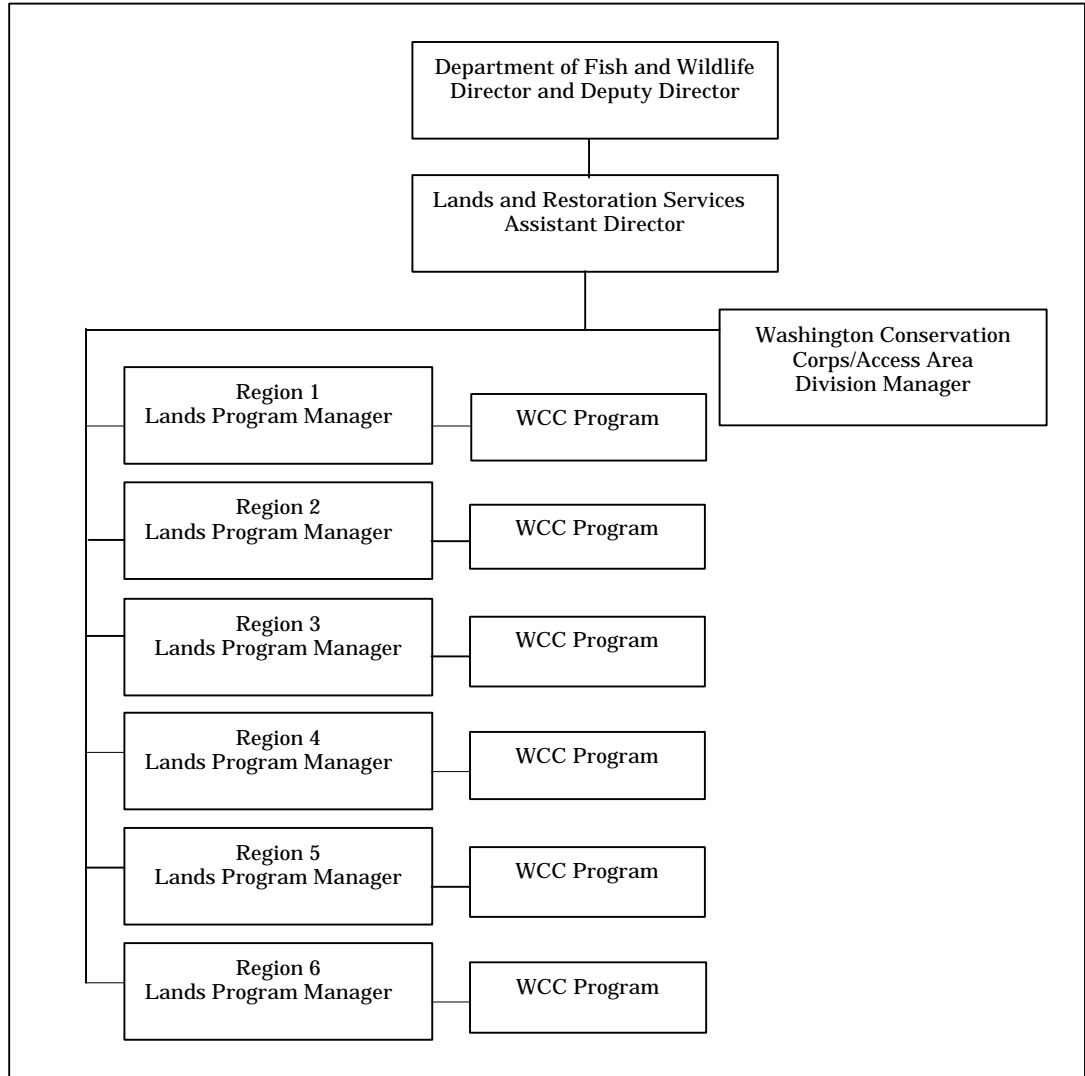
As shown in Exhibits 1 through 4, the WCC program is structured differently in each of the four agencies. Ecology manages a centralized program; however, the other three agencies—Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks—manage programs with varying degrees of decentralization.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Organizational Chart of the**  
**WCC Program at Ecology**



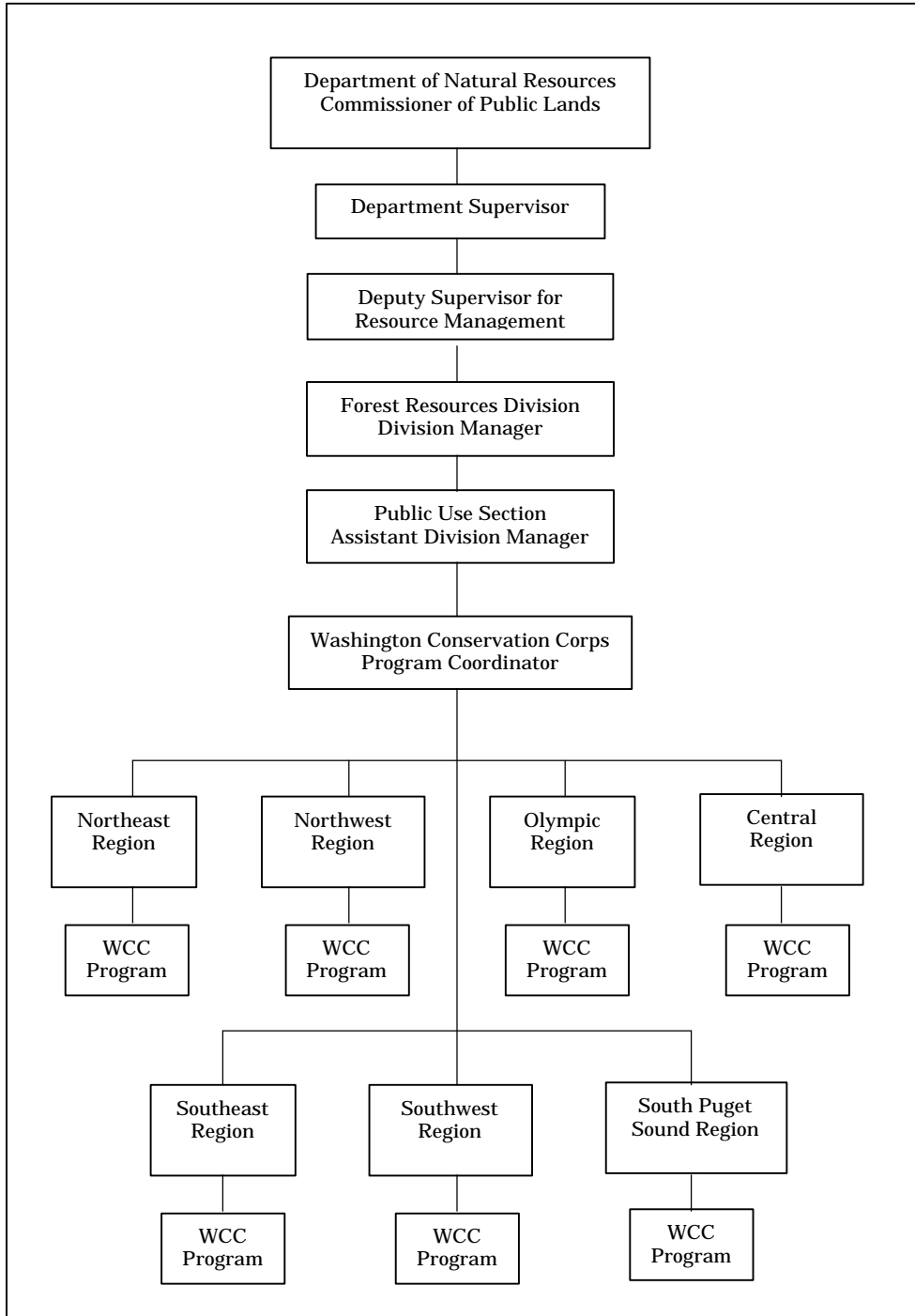
Source: Information provided by Ecology.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Organizational Chart of the**  
**WCC Program at Fish and Wildlife**



Source: Information provided by Fish and Wildlife

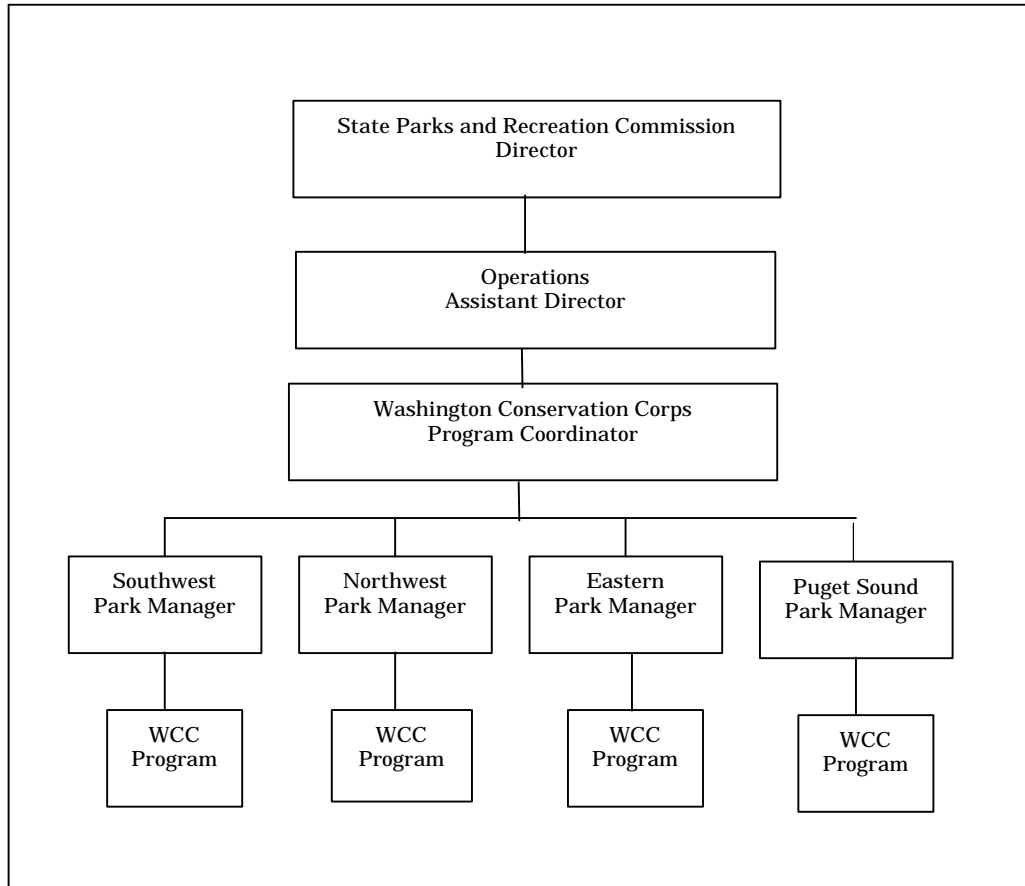
**Exhibit 3**  
**Organizational Chart of the**  
**WCC Program at National Resources**



Source: Information provided by Natural Resources.



**Exhibit 4**  
Organizational Chart of the  
**WCC Program at State Parks**



Source: Information provided by State Parks.

**Staff**

Full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions for administration and for providing direct services differ by agency. Direct services positions include WCC crew supervisors. Exhibit 5 shows the number of FTE positions for the current fiscal year.

**Exhibit 5**  
**WCC Staff Size for Fiscal Year 1998**

Agency	Administrative Positions (FTEs)	Direct Service Positions (FTEs)
Ecology	3	18
Fish and Wildlife	1	4.75
Natural Resources	0.82	8.0
State Parks	4 <sup>2</sup>	0

Source: Documents provided by the four agencies.

## Revenues/Appropriations

During the last five fiscal years, the four implementing agencies have received approximately \$12.3 million for their Washington Conservation Corps programs. This includes a total of \$9,596,891 from State General Fund. As shown in Exhibit 6, General Fund appropriations for the program have steadily declined during the last four fiscal years.

With the exception of Ecology, the other three agencies (Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks) received direct funding only from the State General Fund. Ecology received federal and local funding as well as State General Fund money. During the last five fiscal years, Ecology's federal and local funds were more than 70 percent of its total funding.

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<sup>2</sup> These are crew supervisors in the regional offices. They supervise crews and provide training, but do not work with crews.

**Exhibit 6**  
**WCC Expenditures by Agency for Fiscal Years 1994 – 1998**

Source of Funds/Agency	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY1996	FY 1997	FY 1998 <sup>3</sup>	Total
<b>State General Fund</b>						
Ecology	\$362,940	\$545,304	\$45,987	\$3,078	\$190,452	\$1,147,761
Fish and Wildlife	324,645	492,297	355,043	252,907	233,279	1,658,171
Natural Resources <sup>4</sup>	400,845	796,939	609,659	589,201	343,004	2,739,648
State Parks <sup>5</sup>	838,700	1,049,516	903,714	882,452	376,929	4,051,311
Sub-total	\$1,927,130	\$2,884,056	\$1,914,403	\$1,727,638	\$1,143,664	\$9,596,891
<b>Other Funds</b>						
Ecology (Federal Funds)	286,162	382,864	598,609	480,781	279,928	2,028,344
Ecology (Local Funds)	2,672	293,333	198,917	145,253	74,530	714,705
Sub Total	288,834	676,197	797,526	626,034	354,458	2,743,049
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$2,215,964	\$3,560,253	\$2,711,929	\$2,353,672	\$1,498,122	\$12,339,940

Source: Documents provided by the four agencies.

### Indirect Resources

Most indirect resources provided to the four agencies for the WCC programs are not systematically tracked or charged to the program budgets. Therefore, it is not possible to quantify total indirect resources provided to the WCC program. However, all agencies except Ecology report that a number of indirect resources are provided:

<sup>3</sup> Ecology (as of 1/31/98), Fish and Wildlife (as of 2/28/98), Natural Resources (as of 2/28/98), and State Parks (as of 3/31/98).

<sup>4</sup> For the 1993-95 Biennium, the WCC program received \$1,250,000 through budget proviso. In succeeding biennia, Natural Resources directed State General Funds to the WCC program.

<sup>5</sup> For each 1993-95 and 1995-97 Biennia, the WCC program received \$1,800,000 through budget proviso.

- Fish and Wildlife – Indirect overhead resources provided by the agency to its WCC program are not charged to the program budget. This includes providing supervision to WCC crews by six Lands Program managers and providing some support in the form of agency cabins, tools, vehicles, and other project materials by the Stewardship program. In addition, Greater Lakes Mental Health Clinic has funded a crew supervisor position to supervise a developmentally-challenged crew.
- Natural Resources – Indirect overhead resources provided by the agency to its WCC program are not charged to the program budget. This includes 24 staff positions that provide assistance or support to the program.
- State Parks – Indirect overhead resources provided by the agency to its WCC program are not charged to the program budget. This includes some employees providing supervision to WCC crews on site.

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# COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATIVE INTENT

## Chapter Two

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**Study Question:** *Has the program complied with legislative intent as outlined in Chapter 43.220 RCW?*

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### Summary

**Answer:** *The four agencies involved with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) program have generally complied with legislative intent that is reflected in Chapter 43.220 RCW and subsequent budget provisos. However, a part of legislation relating to the use of funds for economically distressed areas is not clear. As a result, it was difficult to fully assess the agency compliance with legislative intent for the use of such funds.*

## AGENCIES HAVE GENERALLY COMPLIED WITH LEGISLATIVE INTENT

All four agencies involved with the WCC program have generally complied with legislative intent reflected in the program's enabling legislation (Chapter 43.220 RCW) and subsequent budget provisos. Legislative intent behind the WCC program is primarily discussed as program goals in RCW 43.220.030. The program goals include the following:

- Conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources;
- Development of the state's youth resources through meaningful work experience;

- Teaching of basic employment skills; and
- Teaching of the workings of natural, environmental, and biological systems.

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## Corps members gained work experience and training

**The four agencies cited program activities and outputs as evidence in support of their compliance with legislative intent.** The conservation corps program at each agency has a slightly different focus, which reflects the agency's mission and goals. During the last five fiscal years, the four agencies have completed numerous projects toward conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources. A number of these projects were sponsored by local, state, and federal agencies, including AmeriCorps, the United States Fish and Wildlife Services, the United States Forest Service, the Washington State Department of Transportation, and King County.

The four agencies have provided a variety of work experiences and training to corps members. Corps members performed routine, preventive, and maintenance activities at state parks and forests, campsites, and other public recreational facilities. The examples of work include planting rooted stocks; removing plant debris and stream barriers; laying erosion control matting; feeding elk; constructing and maintaining trails, campsites, access to recreational facilities, bridges, and fencing; and responding to oil spills, fires, and floods.

These projects enable corps members to get basic work experience that includes the following: lessons about the workings of natural, environmental, and biological systems; value of working with a public agency; importance of team work; and a chance to work with hand and power tools. Furthermore, the program offers corps members formal training on interviewing, resume writing, speaking/presentation skills, first aid, CPR, and defensive driving. Corps members at Ecology have an opportunity to be certified as an environmental restoration technician, which involves earning 15 college credits through Peninsula Community College in Port Angeles, Washington.

## PART OF LEGISLATION IS NOT CLEAR

State law (RCW 43.220.220) describes criteria for use of WCC funds relating to economically distressed areas. It states the following:

*Sixty percent of the general funds available to the youth employment exchange as prescribed in chapter 50.65 RCW,<sup>1</sup> and the Washington conservation corps shall be for enrollees and members from distressed areas and for projects in distressed areas.*

During our review, we found there was not a general understanding whether this legislative requirement meant funds had to meet both criteria (employing distressed corps members and for projects located in distressed areas), or if only one of the criteria was necessary. Also, it was not clear directly from the legislation whether all of a project's corps members had to be from a distressed area in order to meet the 60 percent criteria. Some minor amendments to the legislative language could help provide more clarity to agencies.

**Washington has seen a significant improvement in its overall economy since the Conservation Corps was established.** If the program is renewed, this change poses important policy questions for lawmakers. Should the program concentrate resources in a fewer number of places where the economic situation has not improved as much? Or, as unemployment generally improves, is the economy a less important factor to use as a criterion for directing the resources of this program? Answers to these questions may imply changes to the intent of the program, as well as to the legislative definitions for measuring which areas of the state have a relatively better or worse economy.

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Funds are targeted for economically distressed areas

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<sup>1</sup> The chapter relates to the Washington Service Corps.

***Recommendations***

*Two recommendations relating to the issue of targeting WCC resources are discussed at the end of Chapter Five.*



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# PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

## Chapter Three

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**Study Question:** *Has the program been implemented in an effective manner?*

**Answer:** *The program has been implemented in an effective manner to the extent it has provided Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews opportunities to do conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement work of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources. However, the program lacks necessary data to assess its impact in developing the state's youth resources through meaningful work experience and training. Furthermore, the program does not have the necessary data to evaluate the impact of its efforts relating to economically distressed areas.*

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## Summary

### AGENCIES USE PROGRAM OUTPUTS TO MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS

The program's impact or effectiveness was assessed in three areas:

1. Did program projects or activities provide desired results to their clients?
2. How successful has the program been in developing 18- to 25-year-old youth resources?
3. What has been the direct impact of the program in economically distressed areas?

All four agencies involved with the WCC program used program outputs to measure effectiveness of their respective programs. The agencies provided documentation to show the number of projects completed, the number of corps members who completed the program, and the types and hours of training provided. Though these measures provide useful information, output measures do not answer the questions about impacts or outcomes of the program.

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## Training provided; impacts unclear

For example, program data show that the four agencies provided a variety of on-the-job and formal training to corps members. However, the program does not have performance measures to assess the program's impact in developing the state's youth resources. Likewise, the agencies do not have measures to know the program's impact in distressed areas where approximately 60 percent of the program's General Fund appropriations are spent.

Depending on the nature of the program and the types of measures, establishing outcome measures may require considerable resources. A recommendation that addresses this issue is included at the end of Chapter Five of this report.

Generally, the information provided by the four agencies is useful in answering the first of the three questions mentioned above. In some cases, program staff provided outcome measures as evidence for program effectiveness. For example, these measures include number of corps members who were later hired by the agency as full-time employees; evaluations completed by corps members; and comments of clients, citizens, and public officials indicating satisfaction with the program. These measures only partially address the issue about the impact of the program. Following is a description of measures used by the four agencies.

## Ecology

**Ecology's corps members rated the program above average.** We analyzed all exit evaluations completed by Ecology corps members who were terminated from the program between January 1 through March 31, 1998. During this time period, 25 corps members terminated from the program. Program records showed that 13 members answered the questions on the exit forms. Termination includes five reasons—completed the program, new job, went to school, quit, and dismissed. Exhibit 7 includes key measures of program performance.

### Exhibit 7

#### Evaluation Completed by Ecology Corps Members

<b>Performance Measures Evaluated by WCC Corps Members</b>	<b>Corps Member Rating Scale: 1 (Worst) - 5 (Best)</b>
Time Spent With WCC – Quality of Project	3.6
Time Spent With WCC – Diversity of Project	3.2
Time Spent With WCC – Communication with Supervisor	3.9
Time Spent With WCC – Safety	4.2
On-the Job Training – Amount I Learned	3.5
Formal Training – Amount I Learned	3.6

Source: Documents provided by Ecology.

## Fish and Wildlife

**Forty-five percent of Fish and Wildlife corps members terminated from the program for positive reasons.** As discussed earlier, termination includes five reasons. We considered three of those as positive: completed the program, found a new job, and went to school. For our analysis, we used the data provided by program staff for the last four fiscal years. As shown in Exhibit 8, the average length of stay with the program was less than four months. Usually, the program hires corps members for a six-month period. Also, during the time of our review, there were at least four former corps members who were working as full-time employees of Fish and Wildlife.

### Exhibit 8

#### Performance Measures of Fish and Wildlife

<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>FY 1994 - FY 1998 (As of May 8, 1998)</b>
Number of Corps Members	246
Number of Corps Members Terminated	230
Average Length of Stay	3.6 Months
Number (Percentage) of Corps Members Terminated for Positive Reasons	143 (45%)

Source: Documents provided by Fish and Wildlife. The program database contained incomplete information. Therefore, numbers presented in this table should be considered as estimates.

## Natural Resources

**The number of Natural Resources corps members citing positive reasons for termination from the program ranged from 40 to 71 percent during the last five fiscal years.** Likewise, the average length of stay varied from 2.9 months to 4.9 months as shown in Exhibit 9. The program usually hires corps members for a six-month period. During the time period reviewed, there were seven former corps members who were working as full-time employees for Natural Resources.

One other performance indicator used by the WCC programs of Natural Resources is the closure of agency sites for public use due to lack of maintenance. Agency records showed that during the last five fiscal years, the agency did not have to close any of its sites for public use due to lack of maintenance. This is because the agency has been able to use WCC crews for maintenance work. Since fiscal year 1994, the WCC program has helped with maintenance and operations needs on recreation sites and trails, natural resource conservation areas, and natural resource preserves.

### Exhibit 9

#### Performance Measures for Natural Resources

Performance Measures	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998 <sup>1</sup>
Number of Corps Members	64	114	82	49	48
Number of Corps Members Terminated	62	113	82	49	39
Average Length of Stay	2.9 Months	4.3 Months	4.3 Months	4.9 Months	3.2 Months
Number (Percentage) of Corps Members Terminated for Positive Reasons	25 (40%)	50 (44%)	49 (60%)	35 (71%)	17 (44%)

Source: Documents provided by Natural Resources. The program database contained incomplete information. Therefore, numbers presented in this table should be considered as estimates.

<sup>1</sup> As of February 28, 1998.

## State Parks

**The number of State Parks corps members citing positive reasons for leaving the program ranged from 67 to 76 percent for the period of 1993-97.** During the same period, only about one-fifth of all corps members hired by State Parks worked for six or more months. Usually, the program hires corps members for a six-month period.

**Exhibit 10**  
**Performance Measures for State Parks**

<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>FY 1994 &amp; 95</b>	<b>FY 1996</b>	<b>FY 1997</b>	<b>FY 1998<sup>2</sup></b>
Number of Corps Members	396	204	137	115
Percent of Corps Members Who Worked 6 or More Months	20%	21%	12%	Not available
Average Length of Stay	3.2 Months	Not available	Not available	Not available
Percentage of Corps Members Terminated for Positive Reasons	67%	76%	75%	Not available

Source: Documents provided by State Parks. Program staff provided this information. Because the program does not have a database at the headquarters, we were not able to verify any of this information.

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<sup>2</sup> As of May 31, 1998.

## Joint Training Academy

**Corps members rated the most recent joint training academy course very high.** The WCC programs at Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources jointly organized a one-week training academy for their corps members in May 1998. These and the other two agencies have also jointly conducted such types of training efforts for corps members and crew supervisors in the past. Program staff provided us with a summary of the evaluation results. Exhibit 11 includes cumulative ratings of training courses provided by the corps members attending the training. Between 71 and 94 percent of respondents rated the training courses either 1 or 2 on a scale of 1 (Excellent) to 5 (Very Poor).

### **Exhibit 11 Corps Members' Evaluation of the Joint Training Academy May 1998**

Types of Training	Number and Percent of Respondents Who Rated 1 or 2 on a Scale of 1 (Excellent) to 5 (Very Poor) <sup>3</sup>	
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
CPR	55	91%
Basic First Aid	58	93%
Stretcher and Scenarios	57	92%
Maps/Compass/Navigation	44	71%
Packing 101	45	73%
Instructors	59	94%

Source: A summary of evaluation results was received from Fish and Wildlife. Because of time constraints, we were unable to verify information with source documents.

<sup>3</sup> Total number of corps members who answered the question ranged from 61 to 63.

## PROGRAM'S IMPACT RELATING TO DISTRESSED AREAS IS NOT KNOWN

A critical component of the employment and training program is long-term monitoring. In the absence of data obtained from long-term monitoring of clients who received services from the programs, it is impossible to evaluate the impact or effectiveness of the program.

As discussed in the next chapter, the four agencies spent a significant portion of their funds on projects relating to distressed areas. However, none of the four agencies have made efforts to assess the impact of their WCC program efforts relating to distressed areas. A systematic tracking of client progress may incur significant costs. Therefore, the benefits resulting from such tracking should be assessed to determine if they justify costs.

### ***Recommendation***

*A recommendation relating to the issue of measuring program outcomes and assessing the impact of program in economically distressed areas is discussed at the end of Chapter Five.*



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# PROGRAM EFFICIENCY, COST-EFFECTIVENESS, AND DUPLICATION

## Chapter Four

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**Study Questions:** *Has the program been implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner? Has the program unnecessarily duplicated efforts of other public agencies or the private sector?*

**Answers:** *Overall, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) program is implemented in a cost-effective manner. However, in some cases, the program needs to improve data management and monitoring of its projects and activities. Furthermore, the program has not conducted a formal assessment of current needs relating to the program's role in economically distressed areas. Finally, although similar programs exist in the public sector, the WCC program does not appear to unnecessarily duplicate efforts of other public agencies or the private sector.*

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## Summary

### PROGRAM IS COST-EFFECTIVE

Based on estimates provided by Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources, WCC crews cost 35 to 40 percent less than maintaining comparable permanent crews. Specific details about the four agencies' cost-effectiveness are discussed below.

#### Ecology

As shown in Exhibit 12, program staff compared its WCC crew costs with five other entities—US Forest Service (USFS), US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), National Park Service (NPS), Washington Department of Transportation (DOT), and

## Measures of cost-effectiveness used by Ecology

Washington's Jobs for the Environment (JFE) program. Based on this comparison, they estimated that a WCC crew is an average of 40 percent more cost-effective than hiring a permanent crew.

In addition to cost comparisons, program staff provided the following measures of cost-effectiveness:

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness and decrease training costs by maintaining a core team of crew supervisors year around.
- Reduce vehicle mileage and travel time by hiring crew members and supervisors locally.
- Control per diem costs to \$10-12 per person, per day.
- Use existing resources in recruiting and training.
- Receive reimbursements from project sponsors for the cost of vehicles, tools, and equipment.

### Exhibit 12

#### Cost of Ecology WCC Crews Compared to Others

Position	WCC Cost <sup>1</sup>	USFS Cost <sup>2</sup>	USFWS Cost <sup>3</sup>	NPS Cost <sup>3</sup>	DOT Cost <sup>2</sup>	JFE Cost <sup>2</sup>
<b>Crew Member</b>	\$6.06 per hour	\$11.46 per hour	\$11.45 per hour	\$12.25 per hour	\$14.69 per hour	\$15.55 per hour
<b>Assistant Supervisor</b>	\$7.50 per hour	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Supervisor</b>	\$17.62 per hour	\$15.87 per hour	\$13.79 per hour	\$19.40 per hour	\$18.51 per hour	\$17.89 per hour
<b>Crew<sup>4</sup></b>	\$493.60 per day	\$731.70 per day	\$710.40 per day	\$806.50 per day	\$919.60 per day	\$956.40 per day

Source: Information provided by Ecology.

<sup>1</sup> Includes Wages + (Social Security @ 6.2% x Wages) + (Medical Aid @ 0.09195 x Hours) + (Medicare @ 0.0145 x Wages).

<sup>2</sup> Includes Wages + (Benefits @ 25% x Wages) for USFS, DOT, and JFE.

<sup>3</sup> Includes Wages + (Benefits @ 28% x Wages) for USFWS and NPS.

<sup>4</sup> Represents one supervisor and five crew members for one ten-hour day.

## Fish and Wildlife

Based on an average of 258 working days per year, program staff estimated an annual savings of approximately \$59,030 by using WCC crews instead of Fish and Wildlife staff. Exhibit 13 shows these cost comparisons.

In addition to cost comparisons, program staff provided the following measures of cost-effectiveness:

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness and decrease training costs by maintaining a core team of crew supervisors year-round.
- Supervise crew supervisors using regular agency staff.
- Use existing agency resources at regional offices and other agencies for recruiting, training, and conducting projects.
- Reduce vehicle mileage and travel time by hiring crew members and supervisors locally.
- Minimize per diem costs by using agency-owned cabins and purchasing groceries.

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Measures of cost-effectiveness used by Fish and Wildlife

**Exhibit 13**  
**Cost of Fish and Wildlife WCC Crews**

Position	WCC Cost <sup>5</sup>	Fish and Wildlife Cost <sup>6</sup>	Cost Savings
Crew Member	\$6.06 per hour	\$12.92 per hour <sup>7</sup>	\$6.86 per hour
Supervisor	\$15.62 per hour	\$17.62 per hour <sup>8</sup>	\$2.00 per hour
Crew <sup>9</sup>	\$338.00 per day	\$563.80 per day	\$225.80 per day

Source: Information provided by Fish and Wildlife.

<sup>5</sup> Includes Wages + (Social Security @ 6.2% x Wages) + (Medical Aid @ 0.09195 x Hours) + (Medicare @ 0.0145 x Wages).

<sup>6</sup> Includes Wages + (Benefits @ 26.3% x Wages).

<sup>7</sup> Fish and Wildlife Laborer.

<sup>8</sup> Fish and Wildlife General Repairman.

<sup>9</sup> Represents one supervisor and three crew members for one ten-hour day.

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## Measures of cost-effectiveness used by Natural Resources

### Natural Resources

Based on an average of 258 working days per year, program staff estimated an annual savings of approximately \$54,593 by using WCC crews instead of Natural Resources staff. Exhibit 14 shows these cost comparisons.

In addition to cost comparisons, program staff provided the following measures of cost-effectiveness:

- Manage crew supervisors using regular agency staff.
- Use existing agency resources at regional offices and other agencies for recruiting, training, and conducting projects.
- Reduce vehicle mileage and travel time by hiring crew members and supervisors locally.
- Maintain a core team of crew supervisors year-round.

#### Exhibit 14

#### Cost of Natural Resources WCC Crews

Position	WCC Cost <sup>10</sup>	Natural Resources Cost <sup>11</sup>	Cost Savings
Crew Member	\$6.06 per hour	\$11.35 per hour <sup>12</sup>	\$5.29 per hour
Supervisor	\$15.64 per hour	\$15.64 per hour <sup>13</sup>	0
Crew <sup>14</sup>	\$398.80 per day	\$610.40 per day	\$211.60 per day

Source: Information provided by Natural Resources.

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<sup>10</sup> Includes Wages + (Social Security @ 6.2% x Wages) + (Medical Aid @ 0.09195 x Hours) + (Medicare @ 0.0145 x Wages).

<sup>11</sup> Includes Wages + (Benefits @ 30% x Wages).

<sup>12</sup> Natural Resources Forest Worker I.

<sup>13</sup> Natural Resources Forest Crew Supervisor I.

<sup>14</sup> Represents one supervisor and four crew members for one ten-hour day.

## State Parks

According to program staff, the Puget Sound Region of State Parks completed 81 projects with the help of WCC crews. They indicated that if people who are hired at prevailing wages did the projects, the cost for these projects would have at least doubled. They also indicated that park rangers and maintenance staff make two to three times what WCC crew members make per hour.

## CURRENT NEEDS RELATING TO THE PROGRAM'S ROLE IN ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED AREAS ARE NOT KNOWN

None of the four agencies involved with WCC have conducted a formal assessment of current needs relating to the program's role in economically distressed areas. It should be noted, however, these agencies are not required to do so under the program's authorizing legislation. Also, it may be beyond the scope of the WCC program. Nevertheless, this information is important for assessing whether program resources should continue to be spent in areas using criteria established in the program's enabling legislation in 1983. Absent such information, the program does not have a systematic way of prioritizing program activities based on needs, such as recruiting corps members and deciding project sites.

**Program staff cited a 1992 report as an assessment of needs.** The report is titled "Legacy at Risk: State Wildlife and Recreation Lands Management Task Force Report."<sup>15</sup> According to the report, "The state's wildlife and recreation legacy is at risk. Failure to immediately and adequately address the lands management funding crisis will result in closed recreation sites, diminished fish and wildlife populations, and accelerated decay of the state's capital investment. If the downward spiral is not halted, quality of life and environmental health will erode, tourists and businesses will find Washington less attractive, and future generations will inherit far less than we have enjoyed."

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Current need for program in distressed areas is not documented

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<sup>15</sup> Legacy at Risk: State Wildlife and Recreation Lands Management Task Force Report.

Three of the four agencies provided additional measures of needs for their WCC program services. These measures are briefly discussed below.

- Ecology's WCC program is set up on a cost-reimbursement basis. According to program staff, all WCC projects are sponsored and funded by other public resource agencies. In addition, all training provided by the program is developed and coordinated with the sponsoring agencies.
- Fish and Wildlife cited SHB 2594 of the 1992 Regular Session, which defines the land stewardship for agency.
- State Parks provided agencywide planned maintenance and budget request documents. However, these documents lack specificity relating to the WCC program.

### ***Recommendation***

*A recommendation about the need for targeting the program in economically distressed areas is discussed at the end of Chapter Five.*

## **INADEQUATE PROGRAM MONITORING BY TWO AGENCIES**

The monitoring of WCC projects and activities varied among the four agencies. While Ecology and Fish and Wildlife provided evidence to show that they have an adequate monitoring process, State Parks' WCC Program Coordinator knew little about program details.

According to State Parks' WCC Program Coordinator, the WCC program is managed at the regional level, and he is responsible for the program oversight and budget. It should be noted that the coordinator assumed his responsibilities in January 1998. Lack of program monitoring could have fiscal and programmatic consequences, such as misuse or inefficient use of funds, non-compliance with legislative requirements, or ineffective program.

Natural Resources needs improvements in its monitoring process. Specifically, the program does not have a formal monitoring process. The program coordinator conducts site visits as time permits. The submission and content of the project progress reports from the regional offices are basically left up to crew supervisors.

As discussed under Recommendation 2 in Chapter Five, Natural Resources and State Parks should implement a formal monitoring process as part of tracking program performance and outcomes. This would ensure program efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance with law.

## **PROGRAM DATA LACK COMPLETENESS AND RELIABILITY AT THREE AGENCIES**

Except for Ecology, the other three agencies—Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks—need improvements in their program databases that would enable them to readily provide reliable information for decision making. The following findings for the four agencies are based on our review of a sample of files and database printouts:

- Ecology has a comprehensive and reliable computer database. However, the database has some limitations with respect to historical information on the quantity and types of work accomplished by corps members.
- Fish and Wildlife has a limited computer database that contains only information about corps members. It does not have information about projects or program outputs. Throughout the database, a significant amount of member information was missing.
- Natural Resources has a limited computer database that contains only information about corps members. It does not have information about projects or program outputs. Throughout the database, a significant amount of member information was missing.
- State Parks has an inadequate computer database at the headquarters. According to the program coordinator, the

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**Agencies  
need better  
data**

program is decentralized and program information is maintained at the regional level. Payroll/personnel related information for the WCC program is maintained at the headquarters. We visited one of the four regional offices and found that program information was maintained in individual corps member files.

Because Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks do not maintain information about the projects or program outputs in a readily available format, it is difficult to retrieve and use information for analyses or management decisions.

### ***Recommendation***

*A recommendation for improving program database is discussed at the end of Chapter Five.*

## **AGENCIES COORDINATED THEIR EFFORTS**

The WCC Coordinating Council is composed of the administrative personnel of the four implementing agencies. According to its members, the council took an active role in establishing the program during the program's formative years. During the last biennium, council members have met on an as-needed basis.

The four agencies have coordinated their efforts with each other on various WCC projects and training during the last five fiscal years. In addition, Fish and Wildlife has coordinated with the Greater Lakes Mental Health Foundation. This has allowed older, chronically mentally ill consumers to participate in the program.

## **AGENCIES LIMITED ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES TO 30 PERCENT**

As shown in Exhibit 15, administrative expenses of the four agencies for their WCC programs have stayed within the limit of 30 percent of the total expenditures as required by state law (RCW 43.220.230). Particularly, total administrative expenses for Natural Resources are significantly lower than the 30 percent



limit—ranging from 6 to 12 percent of the total program expenditures during the review period. The law categorizes administrative expenses into two groups:

- **Administrative Expenses Subject to a 15 Percent Limitation** – Examples of such expenses include program planning and evaluation, budget development and monitoring, personnel management, contract administration, payroll, development of program reports, normal recruitment and placement procedures, and standard office space costs and utilities.
- **Program Support Activities** – Examples include expenses for activities such as direct supervision of enrollees, counseling, job training, equipment, and extraordinary recruitment procedures necessary to fill project positions. These expenses along with expenses discussed above should not exceed the limit of 30 percent of the total program expenditures.

**Exhibit 15****WCC Expenditures for Administration and Direct Services**

Agency and Types of Expenditures	FY 1994		FY 1995		FY 1996		FY 1997		FY 1998 <sup>16</sup>	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
<b>Ecology</b>										
Administration	126,370	19.4	144,615	11.8	203,176	24.1	175,934	28.0	87,440	16.0
Direct Services	525,409	80.6	1,076,881	88.2	640,332	75.9	453,183	72.0	457,471	84.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>651,779</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,221,496</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>843,508</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>629,117</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>544,911</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Fish and Wildlife</b>										
Administration	64,807	20.0	63,829	13.0	54,583	15.4	68,205	27.0	42,779	18.3
Direct Services	259,838	80.0	428,468	87.0	300,460	84.6	184,702	73.0	190,500	81.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>324,645</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>492,297</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>355,043</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>252,907</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>233,279</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Natural Resources</b>										
Administration	26,849	6.7	72,893	9.1	36,622	6.0	71,226	12.1	31,991	9.3
Direct Services	373,996	93.3	724,046	90.9	573,037	94.0	517,975	87.9	311,013	90.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>400,845</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>796,939</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>609,659</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>589,201</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>343,004</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>State Parks</b>										
Administration	216,360	25.8	253,904	24.2	235,292	26.0	244,206	27.7	62,741	16.6
Direct Services	622,340	74.2	795,612	75.8	668,422	74.0	638,246	72.3	314,188	83.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>838,700</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,049,516</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>903,714</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>882,452</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>376,929</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Documents provided by the four agencies.

\$ - Amount of money spent on administrative activities that are limited to 30 percent of total expenditures.

% - Percent of total expenditures.

<sup>16</sup> Ecology (as of 1/31/98), Fish and Wildlife (as of 2/28/98), Natural Resources (as of 2/28/98), and State Parks (as of 3/31/98).

**Agencies generally complied with the 15 percent limit on administration.** Administrative expenditures to which the 15 percent limit applies, generally include headquarters expenses that do not provide direct support to corps members. Following is a summary of this information for each agency for fiscal years 1994 through 1998:

- Ecology twice exceeded the 15 percent limit—16.3 percent in fiscal year 1996, and 15.7 percent in fiscal year 1997. Program staff for Ecology reported reduction in the overall program budget as the reason for increased administrative costs.
- Fish and Wildlife twice exceeded the 15 percent limit—22.4 percent in fiscal year 1997, and 18.3 percent in fiscal year 1998 (as of February 28, 1998). Program staff for Fish and Wildlife reported reduction in the overall program budget as the reason for increased administrative costs.
- Natural Resources consistently have spent significantly less than the limit—a range from 4.3 to 7.3 percent.
- State Parks has spent less than the limit—a range from 9.3 to 13.2 percent during fiscal years 1994 and 1997. For fiscal year 1998 (as of March 31, 1998), State Parks only spent 0.1 percent of its total expenditures on administration. This is because State Parks decentralized its administrative expenditures during fiscal year 1998. These expenditures now appear under program support activities.

**Agencies used WCC funds for other programs.** Two of the four agencies reported that some staff or funds from the WCC program were used for other programs during the review period. However, they were not able to quantify this information in all cases. Following is a summary of this information for both agencies:

- Ecology – The program has provided some services to wildland firefighting.
- State Parks – Several positions in headquarters, which do not exclusively perform WCC work, have at times been funded by WCC funds. Additionally, corps members in the

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## Limits on administrative costs

regions occasionally provide services to other programs, including training and other special projects.

## AGENCIES DID NOT ADEQUATELY TRACK USE OF PROGRAM FUNDS FOR DISTRESSED AREAS

State law (RCW 43.220.220) requires that 60 percent of the State General Fund available to the WCC program be used for enrollees and members from distressed areas, and for projects in distressed areas. However, none of the four agencies involved with the program track expenditures in a way that readily provides information to fully address this requirement. However, each agency provided some information to show their efforts in complying with the spirit of the requirement as discussed below.

### Ecology

Using a custom personnel report and project tracking database in combination with Employment Security distressed county information, we quantified Ecology's program efforts relating to distressed counties. Exhibit 16 shows the number of corps members hired from distressed counties, number of projects conducted in distressed counties, and number of crews operated in distressed counties during the review period.

#### Exhibit 16

#### Ecology's Program Efforts Relating to Distressed Counties

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998 (As of 1/31/98)
<b>Corps Members (Percent)<sup>17</sup></b>	68 (71%)	54 (74%)	55 (65%)	55 (56%)	21 (51%)
<b>Projects (Percent)<sup>18</sup></b>	15 (63%)	26 (60%)	39 (63%)	44 (58%)	54 (55%)
<b>Crews (Percent)<sup>19</sup></b>	6 (75%)	12 (86%)	13 (87%)	8 (67%)	9 (60%)

Source: Documents provided by Ecology.

<sup>17</sup> Number and percent of corps members hired from distressed counties.

<sup>18</sup> Number and percent of total projects conducted in distressed counties.

<sup>19</sup> Number and percent of crews operating in distressed counties.

## Fish and Wildlife

Of 246 crew members hired during the review period, the program hired 133 members (54 percent) from distressed counties. In addition, program staff provided information regarding amounts of funds spent on projects performed in distressed counties as shown in Exhibit 17.

### Exhibit 17

#### Funds Spent by Fish and Wildlife on Projects in Distressed Counties

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997
<b>Amount<sup>20</sup></b>	\$198,015	\$309,329	\$193,991	\$122,537
<b>Percent<sup>21</sup></b>	61%	63%	55%	49%

Source: Documents provided by Fish and Wildlife.

## Natural Resources

Using staff months spent in distressed areas, program staff estimated the amounts of funds spent in distressed areas for the review period as shown in Exhibit 18. The estimates included either crew members from distressed areas or crew time spent on projects in distressed areas.

### Exhibit 18

#### Funds Spent By Natural Resources in Distressed Areas

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998 (As of 2/28/98)
<b>Percent of Funds Spent<sup>22</sup></b>	49%	52%	67%	61%	58%

Source: Documents provided by Natural Resources.

<sup>20</sup> Percent of total expenditures spent in distressed areas.

<sup>21</sup> Percent of total expenditures spent on projects in distressed counties.

<sup>22</sup> Percent of total expenditures spent in distressed areas.

## State Parks

During the review period (fiscal year 1994 through March 31, 1998), using project and corps member information, program staff estimated that they have used \$1,866,710, or 46 percent of total program expenditures for corps members who were hired in and worked in distressed counties. The estimates included instances where either crew members were from distressed areas or crew time was spent on projects in distressed areas.

### ***Recommendation***

*A recommendation about tracking funds for distressed areas is discussed at the end of Chapter Five.*

## **PROGRAM DOES NOT UNNECESSARILY DUPLICATE EFFORTS OF OTHERS**

According to program officials of the four agencies involved, the WCC program does not duplicate services offered by any other state agency. They indicated that there are non-profit and private organizations that are capable of performing the tasks currently being accomplished by WCC members.

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### **No state or local duplication**

We contacted local government officials to determine if they knew of any other programs similar to the Washington Conservation Corps program. As a result, we did not learn of any such programs. Although we identified the following programs with some similarities and possible duplication, we do not think the WCC program unnecessarily duplicates efforts of others:

- The Washington Service Corps coordinates youth employment and training efforts.
- The Jobs for the Environment program funds environmental restoration projects and provides family-wage employment to dislocated workers. The program provides funds to the WCC program at Ecology.

- The federal Jobs in the Woods program is funded and operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service.
- AmeriCorps is the national service program that allows people of all ages and backgrounds to earn help paying for education in exchange for a year of service. Ecology's WCC program receives AmeriCorps grants.

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# PROGRAM CONTINUATION

## Chapter Five

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**Study Questions:** *Is the program still needed? Would there be an adverse effect on public health, safety, or welfare if the program is terminated or modified in a way that curtails program authority or resources?*

**Answers:** *If the program's purpose is to employ young adults as trainees/apprentices in the conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) has served that purpose. The anecdotal information and program outputs generally reflect positively on the program. Therefore, the legislature should continue the WCC program with the modifications suggested in this report.*

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## Summary

### OFFICIALS CITED ANECDOTAL INFORMATION, PROGRAM OUTPUTS, AND A STUDY AS REASONS FOR CONTINUING THE PROGRAM

As mentioned in the previous chapters of this report, the WCC program lacked the following information necessary to assess whether the program is still needed:

- Formal assessment of current needs relating to the program's role in economically distressed areas;
- Program's impact relating to youth development through work experience and training; and
- Program's impact in economically distressed areas.



However, officials used anecdotal information, newspaper articles, a 1992 study,<sup>1</sup> and project accomplishments as evidence and/or criteria to demonstrate the program is still needed. A number of newspaper articles and letters from project sponsors, corps members and supervisors, public officials, and citizens described the importance and continuing need of the WCC program. Furthermore, program officials at the four agencies stressed that if the program is terminated or modified in a way that curtails program authority or resources, the maintenance of state parks, forests, campsites, and public recreational facilities would be affected significantly.

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## Program accomplishments

**WCC activities and projects are useful in managing state's natural resources.** As discussed in Chapter Two, most of the program efforts at the four agencies have been toward environmental conservation, preservation, and enhancement. These efforts include doing maintenance work at state parks and forests, campsites, and other public recreational facilities. From time to time, corps members have also responded to emergency calls relating to floods, forest fires, and oil spills.

As part of youth development efforts, the program has provided on-the-job and formal training, work experience, and environmental education to the state's youth aged 18 to 25. Finally, the program has also focused on hiring both youths and supervisors from, and conducting projects in, the state's economically distressed areas.

**Corps members and supervisors speak positively about the program.** We talked with these people when we visited a sample of WCC work sites (selected by program officials) for the four agencies involved. The purpose of the visit was to observe examples of work done by WCC crews. Everyone we talked with emphasized the importance of the program as it provided him or her with employment and training opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Legacy at Risk: State Wildlife and Recreation Lands Management Task Force Report.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report concludes that the Washington Conservation Corps has complied with legislative intent and generally met its goals, and we therefore recommend its continuation. However, it is unclear whether there is a continued need to target program resources for economically distressed areas. The following section discusses specific recommendations that address several program and policy issues.

### ***Recommendation 1***

*The legislature should continue the Washington Conservation Corps with modifications indicated in recommendations 2 through 5 of this report.*

A cost-effective, realistic process for measuring program performance is needed. Before establishing such a system, the four agencies should first do a cost-benefit analysis of alternatives for assessing program impacts. Policymakers and program managers could then use the results of the cost-benefit analysis to decide which, if any, outcome measures are appropriate and would add value to the program. This should be a realistic process in which the benefits outweigh the costs. Furthermore, the four agencies should contact similar programs in other states and Canadian provinces to identify “best practices.” Appendix 4 includes the results of our survey of such programs.

### ***Recommendation 2***

*Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks should establish a cost-effective performance measurement system for the Washington Conservation Corps, consistent with the requirements of the Budget and Accounting Act (Chapter 43.88 RCW).*

Sixty percent of WCC General Fund appropriations are currently earmarked for economically distressed areas. However, it is uncertain whether continued targeting of program resources is still needed.

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Continue  
program  
with  
modifications

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Assess  
whether  
resources  
should be  
targeted

**Recommendation 3**

*Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks should conduct an assessment of need for the Washington Conservation Corps and make a recommendation to the legislature before the 1999 Legislative Session whether program resources should be targeted in the future.*

**Recommendation 4**

*Based on the outcome of recommendation 3, the legislature should consider whether to dedicate any portion of the General Fund appropriation for the Washington Conservation Corps for targeted areas or populations. If such targeting is desired, agencies should establish a process to track those expenditures in order to demonstrate compliance with legislative intent.*

Finally, there is an on-going need for some agencies to collect better information for management purposes. The Department of Ecology has a process in place that may be useful to the other agencies.

**Recommendation 5**

*Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks should establish a reliable database (similar to Ecology's) that will allow Washington Conservation Corps program information to be used for effective management decision-making.*

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# SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

## Appendix 1

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### **SCOPE**

The review analyzed program information covering three biennia (1993-95, 1995-97, and 1997-99). Because of the short timeframe available to conduct the review, the following objectives were addressed to the extent necessary program data were readily available:

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Determine if the program has complied with legislative intent as outlined in Chapter 43.220 RCW.
2. Determine the extent to which the program has accomplished the goals identified in RCW 43.220.030, including the following:
  - Conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the state's natural, historic, environmental, and recreational resources;
  - Development of state's youth resources through meaningful work experience;
  - Teaching of basic employment skills; and
  - Teaching of the workings of natural, environmental, and biological systems.

3. Determine if the program has been implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner, and has not duplicated efforts of other public agencies or the private sector.
4. Assess if the program is still needed and whether there will be an adverse effect on public health, safety, or welfare if the program is terminated or modified in a way that curtails program authority or resources.

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# AGENCY RESPONSE

## Appendix 2

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- Department of Ecology
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Natural Resources
- Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
- Office of Financial Management

To link to this appendix, click [here](#).

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# METHODOLOGY AND STUDY LIMITATIONS

## Appendix 3

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### BACKGROUND RESEARCH

As part this study, we conducted literature reviews, researched relevant Washington State laws and budget documents, and reviewed state agency documents. We contacted the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps for information on programs that employ and train 18- to 25-year-old workers through their environmental projects. We then surveyed other states and the Canadian provinces that appear to have programs similar to Washington Conservation Corps.

### STAKEHOLDER INPUT

To seek input from various stakeholders and learn about key issues relating to the Washington Conservation Corps, we contacted the following: legislators and legislative committee staff, Conservation Commission, Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Employment Security.

We also contacted the Washington State Association of Counties and Washington State Association of County Officials and sought the input of local officials through an April 1998 issue of *The Courthouse Journal*, a joint publication of the two associations. In addition, we talked with natural resources/environmental program officials of King and Thurston Counties.

## SITE VISIT AND FILE REVIEW

Fieldwork for the study included analyzing agency documents, reviewing a sample of project files, and interviewing program officials. To understand the program dynamics, we visited WCC work sites for each of the four agencies involved with the program. The site visits included reviewing the work done by WCC crews and talking with corps members and supervisors. The site selection was based on the crew schedule, availability of the program manager, and distance (from the JLARC office to the site). All of the sites were selected and suggested by agency program officials.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

JLARC contracted with Sterling Associates to research and analyze the financial portion of the study. Sterling Associates conducted initial and follow-up meetings with agency officials, researched the appropriations acts and other relevant resources to obtain information on the funding history, collected data from agency officials, and analyzed financial information relating to the WCC program.

The agencies participating in the WCC program were generally responsive in supplying information requested. However, there were some limitations in data supplied by agencies. The Parks and Recreation Commission has decentralized its WCC program, and referred Sterling Associates to its regions to obtain answers to several questions. Sterling Associates received responses from three of the four regions. The lack of response from one region limited, in some cases, the conclusions that could have been drawn for the Parks' WCC program as a whole.

None of the four agencies explicitly track or quantify indirect resources and funds from other programs. Agencies had difficulty addressing one of the expenditure questions, "What funds, in total and as percent of funds, have been spent annually for enrollees and members from distressed areas and for projects in distressed areas?" None of the agencies have tracked expenditure information related to enrollees and members from distressed



areas and projects in distressed areas in such a way as to readily and completely answer this question.

## Appendix 4

**We surveyed 25 other states and Canadian provinces that appeared to have programs comparable to the Washington Conservation corps. We received seven responses that are summarized below.**

<b>Conservation Corps Survey Responses</b>				
<b>Name and description of Program(s.)</b>	<b>Conduct needs assessment.</b>	<b>Process for measuring long-term impact.</b>	<b>Performance measures used to indicate success.</b>	<b>Standards for determining cost-effectiveness.</b>
<p><b>California Conservation Corps (CCC)</b> - Recruits 18-23 year olds for natural resource projects and provides them with experience and job skills. CCC has 11 districts, 40 satellites, and approximately 2,300 corps members. Almost half of the operating budget is earned through project reimbursements.</p>	<p>An assessment of whether CCC is needed has not been done. However, quarterly surveys of corps members, work sponsors, and staff conducted to assess ways to improve the CCC. As a result Corps member Development is undergoing major redesign.</p>	<p>The CCC tracks former corps members through their social security numbers for three years after they leave the program. Information tracked includes school enrollment, employment, and salary.</p>	<p>CCC is one of the four agencies involved in a pilot performance-based budgeting program.</p>	<p>Complete post-corps tracking effort to determine whether meaningful cost-benefit analysis can be performed.</p>
<p><b>Colorado Environmental Youth Corps</b> - Not funded by the state. A new youth corps initiative uses funds from the state lottery and contributions from private foundations. Seven youth corps are currently operating within the state.</p>	<p>No. Used Abt &amp; Associates 1995-96 study to compare local program effectiveness against national averages and for establishing needs assessment information.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Post-project evaluations from work sponsors; post-corps employment and education of corps members.</p>	<p>Project sponsors often provide information, which compares the cost of using corps members to the cost of using other sub-contractors or existing staff. This data is used in developing cost-effective information for future work projects.</p>
<p><b>Conservation Corps of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.</b> Recruits 16 to 27 year olds. Independent, non-profit governed by a board of directors. Receives state and federal funds.</p>	<p>An informal review is conducted annually, and all projects are formally evaluated.</p>	<p>Currently undertaking an "alumni survey."</p>	<p>Currently developing performance indicators; current measures include number of youth employed/trained, etc.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>
<p><b>Ohio Civilian Conservation Corps</b> - Provides opportunities to advance education and gain marketable job skills while accomplishing meaningful conservation/recreation projects that benefit the state. The program operates two residential and six non-residential sites.</p>	<p>Nineteen Corps members participated in a 1996 corps member expectation seminar. The information from the seminar has been used in planning the corps member development program.</p>	<p>Recently developed a comprehensive tracking system that includes member information for up to 48 months after the member has left the corps.</p>	<p>The tracking system includes such measures as employment, salary, benefits, and continuing education. It also includes staff and self-evaluation of corps members.</p>	<p>Not provided.</p>

Appendix 4 (Cont.)

## Conservation Corps Survey Responses

Name and description of Program(s.)	Conduct needs assessment.	Process for measuring long-term impact.	Performance measures used to indicate success.	Standards for determining cost-effectiveness.
<p><b>The Pennsylvania Conservation Corps</b> - Preserve and enhance natural, recreational, and historical resources; and build skills, self-confidence and employability of unemployed young adults.</p>	<p>Comptroller's office carried out a programmatic audit. Comptroller representatives interviewed corps staff and participants, reviewed and analyzed reports and internal processes, gathered data from similar programs, and identified a number of program areas for improvements.</p>	<p>In the development phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual amount of work accomplished.</li> <li>• Number of corps members who earn GEDs or other educational certification.</li> <li>• Number of corps members who find jobs after completing the program.</li> <li>• Corps member and project sponsor satisfaction as indicated in surveys and final reports.</li> </ul>	<p>Project sponsors are asked to provide the estimated appraised value of their completed projects. This figure is compared with actual project costs to arrive at a cost/benefit ratio.</p>
<p><b>Vermont Youth Conservation Corps</b> - Youth 16-24, adult leaders, quality work, small teams, comprehensive education.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Demand by communities and agency for crew time. Fee-for-service is \$2,500 - \$5,000 per week.</p>	<p>Value of work completed and job training.</p>
<p><b>Virginia - Opportunity Knocks</b> - Youth service/conservation corps provides experience and training in a full range of activities to meet human service and environmental needs in communities.</p>	<p>Conducted an assessment of needs in 1990 by compiling and reviewing census information such as size of the 18- to 25-year-old population, dropout rate, graduation rate, unemployment rate, crime statistics, and community needs.</p>	<p>Prepared a report in 1994 to gauge the effectiveness of the program by reviewing participant characteristics, activities, support services, and outcomes.</p>	<p>Placement in unsubsidized employment; school enrollment of former corps members.</p>	<p>By utilizing the Job training Partnership Act (JTPA) cost per-factors.</p>