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Executive Summary

The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) is an AmeriCorps program that addresses the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) priority areas of disaster services, environmental stewardship, and veterans and military families. This funding will provide full-time service opportunities for 250 AmeriCorps members. These members, along with 3,000 volunteers, will complete environmental and disaster services in 16 counties in Washington and nationally through federal disaster declarations. CNCS funding helps the WCC provide opportunities to young adults and veterans, prepare and deploy up to 250 members on disaster response, and improve 1,200 acres of critical ecosystems. Our request of \$3 Million dollars in funding will be matched by \$6 Million dollars in support from our host sites and parent agency, Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology).

Rationale and Approach

a. Needs

Need: Responding to local and national emergencies

With frequent wildfires and annual flooding in Washington, our State Legislature realized the importance of trained disaster responders and required our members "be available at all times for emergency response services" in our founding legislation. The WCC averages at least two major responses each year. During our last service year, we responded to seven wildfires, two floods, and Fukushima Tsunami debris removal along our coastline. Over the past decade, our disaster services have extended to ten states, from California to New York. Following a national disaster declaration, our teams deploy quickly, outfitted with equipment like chainsaws, water pumps, generators, and hand tools. These items are difficult to attain in the weeks following a disaster. By arriving fully equipped and professionally supervised, our teams are able to adapt to meet the needs of disaster survivors.

Need: Creating opportunities for young adults and veterans

Our State Legislature established the WCC in 1983 to address an exceedingly high unemployment rate for young adults. The Legislature expanded the WCC in 2011 and 2012, after the state's youth unemployment once again hit record levels, with 25 of 39 counties suffering from an unemployment rate at or above the national average (www.esd.wa.gov). A year of service in the WCC provides a

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living allowance for young adults and military veterans who may otherwise be unemployed and offers opportunities for career exploration, professional development, and job placement assistance, thereby increasing our members' chances of securing employment post-AmeriCorps. The federal agencies we collaborate with, including Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and National Parks Service, are also invested in creating opportunities for youth. Through the Public Land Corps Act, these agencies have set targets to increase youth hiring by 50 percent through partnerships with Conservation Corps programs, including the WCC.

Unemployment disproportionately affects young adults and military veterans in this age group suffer from an even higher unemployment rate near 30 percent (www.bls.gov, 2011). Washington State has more veterans than the national average and our military veterans suffer from an unemployment rate 22 percent higher than the national average for veterans (www.jec.senate.gov). The WCC dedicates at least 5 percent of our funding to provide service opportunities for Gulf War Era II veterans who receive career counseling, guidance on utilizing the G.I. Bill, and services to facilitate their transition from military to civilian life.

Another important demographic we serve are opportunity youth. Youth with less than a high school diploma face an unemployment rate of 14.1% and high school graduates with no college have an unemployment rate of 9.5% (www.bls.gov, 2011). The WCC dedicates 5 percent of our funding, along with a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to support opportunity youth who participate in 4 weeks of additional training around College Readiness. Topics include placement exams, college admissions, financial aid, and remedial English and math.

Need: Protecting and Restoring the Environment

The health of our natural areas directly affects our economy and the health and safety of our communities. Our natural resources support more than one-third of Washington's economy. Improving and protecting at-risk ecosystems is vital to rural jobs and small businesses including forestry, farming, recreation, and waterborne trade (www.governor.wa.gov). Past practices of deforestation and overdevelopment throughout Washington has led to degraded ecosystems.

Wetlands and streams are the primary ecosystems that WCC members restore. This restoration

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creates habitat for fish and wildlife, prevents flooding, and protects our water supply by retaining pollutants that would otherwise flow into our ground and drinking water. Trees and shrubs planted by our members provide shade to cool water temperature and filter toxins. They also trap silt that otherwise settles to create shallower rivers and streams that cause frequent and severe flooding. By restoring wetlands and stream banks, the WCC reduces the risk of flooding -- the number one natural hazard in Washington (<http://wa.water.usgs.gov>).

b. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems

All of our 250 full-time members will serve on environmental stewardship and disaster response projects within their local communities beginning in October 2013. In their 12 months of service, they will gain an immense amount of hands-on experience and complete an impressive amount of environmental and disaster services.

Member Activities: Responding to local and national emergencies

With 46 crews and 20 IPs serving throughout the state, we are in position to respond to nearly any disaster. In addition to leading WCC teams, our supervisors often lead other AmeriCorps teams and volunteers on response activities. Our lead disaster response supervisors have worked with us for several years and have responded to multiple disasters. This experienced leadership makes WCC teams an asset on response.

Our members are also well prepared to take a lead role on disaster response through advanced training. In addition to preparatory courses provided to all members at orientation, 100 members and all of our supervisors attain advanced disaster service certifications (e.g. Wildland Firefighting and Hazardous Waste Operator). Because of this preparation, disaster agencies have come to trust the leadership and skill of the WCC.

In the summer of 2012, this investment in training proved critical when the WCC deployed over 60 members and 10 supervisors certified in wildland firefighting to respond to seven wildfires throughout Central Washington. Activities include managing fire crew camps, delivering equipment and supplies, undertaking engine crew work, and constructing fire line. Our teams play a significant role in these

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responses, especially in late summer when many seasonal firefighters return to school or other commitments.

At the time of this grant submission, 106 of our members and 22 of our supervisors are responding to Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey. Our teams began this response serving in shelters, providing life-sustaining services for vulnerable populations. Specific activities included shelter setup, meal service, supply management, and elderly care. After meeting the immediate need for shelter, our crews have now moved on to recovery work that includes "mucking out" houses and clearing debris which will allow displaced residents to begin the process of rebuilding.

Member Activities: Protecting and Restoring the Environment

We will place 230 AmeriCorps members on WCC crews consisting of 5 members and a crew supervisor employed by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). The remaining 20 members will serve their year as an Individual Placement (IP) stationed at a non-profit or governmental environmental service organization. IPs will coordinate ecosystem restoration projects, plan volunteer events, and educate students of all ages. IPs fill a critical role at non-profit organizations who lack funding for staff. For example, our IP stationed at North Olympic Salmon Coalition assists four full-time staff. The IP recruits and manages hundreds of volunteers to complete environmental restoration which allows staff to focus their efforts on planning future projects, conducting required monitoring, and managing this small non-profit.

Crewmembers install over 750,000 native trees and shrubs, clean or improve 1,200 acres of public or tribal land, and construct 300 miles of trail. Constructing trail and removing invasive species like Himalayan blackberry is a grueling task. For this reason, volunteer events that involve this work typically last for just a few hours. Our members have incentives to stay engaged including the Eli Segal Education Award, their living allowance, and an encouraging crew supervisor to make the work educational and fun.

Public involvement is vital to restoring and protecting our natural areas. Our AmeriCorps members will increase public involvement by creating over 300 miles of trails for the public to enjoy, teaching environmental education topics to over 5,000 students, and managing 3,000 community volunteers.

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This engagement results in community members enjoying our natural areas and making investments to protect them.

c. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact

Outputs/Outcomes: Responding to local and national emergencies

The WCC will continue to provide disaster services to communities throughout the U.S. by preparing 250 members in flood response and triage. In addition, at least 100 members will attain advanced disaster services certifications and a projected 50 members will deploy on disaster response or recovery. Although disasters are unpredictable and specific targets are difficult to establish, the WCC met or exceeded these goals during our last grant cycle. In 2012, 155 members attained a disaster response certification and 85 members responded to disasters. This preparation, along with our supervisors' abilities to lead and motivate members, results in high-quality response services to distressed communities. We project 500 displaced residents will be able to return to their place of residence or begin the process of rebuilding after a disaster because of our members' preparation and service.

We receive regular feedback from incident command leaders to ensure excellence with our response efforts. After wildfires, for example, the unit commander provides feedback to agencies using a performance rating report. In a July 2012 report, WCC teams received a rating of excellent and the unit commander added that ours was the "best crew" they have ever worked with. Often times, our response teams receive recognition from the communities we serve. After the 2011 Joplin tornado, the Missouri Legislature passed a resolution to recognize the services provided by AmeriCorps teams, including the WCC. Shortly afterwards, the Washington Legislature also recognized our disaster responders.

Outputs/Outcomes: Creating opportunities for young adults and veterans

We station crews in counties affected by high unemployment, designated Community Empowerment Zones, Urban Renewal Communities, and in areas adversely impacted by management of federal lands (e.g. areas with decreased opportunities in timber and fishing). By stationing crews in these

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communities, we provide opportunities to young adults disproportionately affected by the economic recession.

This funding request will provide expanded service and training opportunities for military veterans and opportunity youth. After serving their year in AmeriCorps and undergoing career counseling, veterans will work with our staff to produce strong résumés and complete job shadows or informational interviews to ensure they are prepared to enter their chosen profession, post-AmeriCorps. Opportunity youth will attend 4 weeks of training in College Readiness to prepare them for post-secondary education after their AmeriCorps term.

Outputs/Outcomes: Protecting and Restoring the Environment

The WCC helps local communities restore critical ecosystems. We accomplish this through established partnerships with environmental nonprofits and government agencies that prioritize our projects to meet the needs of the communities we serve. In selecting partners, we target outreach to rural and urban areas that are distressed, environmentally and/or economically. The projects established by our host sites and completed by WCC crews must meet strict state and federal standards. Evaluation is required upon completing a restoration project to ensure we have achieved our stated purpose and have complied with permit obligations. External evaluators assessed the effectiveness of our restoration activities during our last grant cycle. This study rated over 92 percent of our restoration sites as fully self-sustaining after 3 years and rated the remaining sites as on the way to self-sustainment.

The WCC will continue to utilize our aligned performance measure around environmental stewardship. We will track the projected 750,000 native trees and shrubs planted by our members, then return to these sites to record plant survivorship after 1 and 3 years to measure long-term sustainability. In addition, we adopted two national performance measures in this focus area. Each year, the WCC will clean or improve 1,200 acres and create or improve 300 miles of trail on public or tribal lands. We have met or exceeded these targets in past years and are increasing our goals for this grant cycle.

d. Member Recruitment

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Our reputation for providing excellent service and training opportunities for young adults assures success with recruitment. In 2012, we received over 1,600 applications after spending just \$50 dollars in advertising. A large amount of our advertising is free; over one-fifth of our applicants hear of the WCC through positive recommendations from past members. The WCC also utilizes My AmeriCorps, recruitment boards at schools, and the WorkSource recruitment system (unemployment office).

The two demographics that require targeted recruitment are opportunity youth and military veterans. While advertising online is now the most effective means for recruitment, we have determined that traditional methods of listing at unemployment offices, on community boards, and in press releases are best at reaching opportunity youth who may not have access to the internet. Recruiting for military veterans requires in-person recruitment at job fairs or at resource offices. Fortunately, word-of-mouth is beginning to help in our efforts to recruit this target population as the number of military veterans who have served in our program is steadily increasing.

The WCC trains our supervisors to hire and manage a diverse group of members. A typical crew is comprised of members with a high school diploma or less and members with some college or a college degree. This results in positive mentorship amongst the members themselves. Housed within Ecology, we have the same diversity goals as the agency and are fortunate to have access to the agency's diversity resources. This includes liaisons with Washington Ethnic Commissions and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and collaboration with community groups focused on diversity, including the Urban League of Seattle, Latino Education Achievement Project (LEAP), and Asian, Hispanic, African American, and Native American (AHANA).

e. Member Training

Crew supervisors and host site staff orient members on their first day to service activities, the communities they are serving, and their service sites. During this orientation, supervisors review expectations, including prohibited activities. Members agree to adhere to these and all AmeriCorps rules by signing a member contract.

A weeklong orientation follows which provides our members with lessons on Ethics of Service and

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Civic Responsibility, Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention, Introduction to AmeriCorps and Rules on Prohibited Activities, Financial Literacy, and First Aid. Several workshops orient members to their service, including Shelter Operation Simulation for disaster response, Chainsaw Safety for saw work, Backcountry Basics for trail crews, and a Habitat Restoration Overview. Our orientation workshop on Ethics of Service and Civic Responsibility includes sessions on volunteer recruitment, volunteer retention, and guidelines on coordinating a project during the Martin Luther King Jr. Week of Service. This workshop allows members to develop a project of their own on issues important to their community, while ensuring that they, and their recruited volunteers, do not participate in prohibited activities.

After orientation, members gain valuable skills through providing direct service. Our members become adept at identifying hundreds of native and invasive trees and shrubs. They also learn about various ecosystems and the plants that thrive in each. Our members learn basic carpentry, machinery operation, and environmental assessment. The WCC is currently developing a Pathways Project that will standardize these skills and result in college credit and seniority when applying to positions at natural resource agencies.

In addition to this orientation and ongoing hands-on instruction, all of our members receive two weeks of formal training in topics of their choice during March and June. These are 40 or 80-hour courses and most result in a license or certification. Members choose from 13 courses based on their personal career goals. Popular courses include Wilderness Advanced First Aid (WAFA), Wetland delineation, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Cable Rigging and Safety Ropes, Ethnobotany, Wildland Firefighting, and Hazardous Materials Response.

During the third quarter of their AmeriCorps year, members gain training in an additional subject area or expand on their first training course with certifications like Wilderness First Responder (expanded WAFA course) or Wildland Pumps and Saws (extended Wildland Firefighting training). Experienced instructors from recognized training institutions teach our courses, which would cost members upwards of \$1,000 outside of the program.

We have selected these courses to prepare members for service activities and to provide members with skills and certifications to advance their future careers. While in the WCC, members use GIS to map

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restoration sites, install cable rigging to work on slopes, fight wildfires, and respond to spills and other disasters. After completing the WCC, these certifications and experiences have aided our alums in gaining employment as arborists, foresters, firefighters, spill responders, trail crew leaders, environmental consultants, and more.

Opportunity youth, veterans, and crew assistants attend our regular training program and additional courses specific to them. Members participating in our College Readiness initiative receive 4 weeks of college preparation. Veterans receive additional courses on career counseling, guidance on utilizing the GI Bill, and services to facilitate their transition from military to civilian life. Each crew has a crew assistant, a member who is typically serving in a second term that takes on a leadership role and acts as a supervisor when their regular supervisor is absent. Crew assistants attend a weeklong conference on leadership and team building to prepare them for this task.

f. Member Supervision

AmeriCorps members serving on WCC crews report directly to a crew supervisor who is a full-time state employee. This supervisor ratio of 1 to 5 provides mentorship opportunities and allows direct oversight to ensure adherence to state and federal policies. The WCC administrative staff works closely with these supervisors and their members. There is 1 coordinator per 12 supervisors, allowing for ample site visits.

Recruitment for crew supervisors focuses on professionals with experience in leading and motivating young adults. Once successful candidates pass criminal history checks, we invest in training them, as they are our best resource in providing meaningful service experiences for members. New supervisors receive a two-day orientation, which includes an in-depth manual outlining WCC and AmeriCorps policies. They undergo an evaluation after 6 months of employment and then receive evaluations annually, with a check in from their coordinator quarterly. This allows for feedback on performance and provides an opportunity for establishing goals. In addition to our regular training program, there are two weeklong conferences specific to staff - one in September to prepare for the service year and a second in February for renewing certifications and attending courses on member management.

A Coordinator supports our 20 IPs with weekly check-ins. IPs work directly with our partner sites

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who have been host sites for 5-10 years and are trained in member support. In addition, the WCC hosts meetings to provide IPs with networking opportunities, reflection on service, and a chance to share best practices on environmental education, volunteer management, and environmental monitoring.

g. Member Experience

We ensure our members realize the scope of national service by attending the AmeriCorps Launch event in October. This event brings together over one thousand AmeriCorps members from programs throughout Washington. At this event, AmeriCorps members are able to network, which encourages collaboration on service projects throughout the year. Our members have collaborated with City Year Seattle, Washington Service Corps, RSVP and Volunteer Center of Kittitas County, North Olympic AmeriCorps, and the Vet Corps. Disaster response also provides opportunities for interactions with other AmeriCorps programs. During our most recent response to Hurricane Sandy, our members worked alongside 12 different AmeriCorps programs.

Responding to disasters is a rewarding experience that can also be extremely challenging. We ensure our responders' mental and emotional needs are met through debriefing upon their return home. Other outlets for reflection include our quarterly newsletter that features member-written articles and artwork, our Listserv, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger). Our Facebook site currently has 710 fans who receive programmatic updates that also feed on Twitter. Additionally, our blog features in-depth stories on service. At the end of their term, all members present on their service experience at debrief events.

While host sites do not directly oversee our crews, they do influence member retention by offering diverse projects to ensure a positive service experience. WCC staff work closely with sponsors to ensure they provide a variety of projects that offer ample development opportunities.

h. Volunteer Generation

The WCC provides both episodic and ongoing volunteer opportunities to create a diverse volunteer base. For volunteers seeking one-time events, the WCC provides opportunities at native plant sales,

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installation projects, and trail-building events. For individuals seeking recurring service, the WCC offers ongoing opportunities, including stream team monitors, weed warriors, or interpretive trail docents. Prohibited activities are excluded from any service that our members or volunteers perform and we ensure compliance through formal training and providing a list of prohibited activities in our agreements with members and host sites.

Our members recruit volunteers in a variety of ways, but often utilize social media and volunteer listing websites (e.g. AllforGood.org). They also distribute recruitment materials at community centers, schools, shopping centers, and bulletin boards. Members manage volunteers on sampling for water quality, planting native vegetation, removing invasive species, and cleaning up beaches and rivers. Through service, our volunteers develop a commitment to sustain these improvements within their local communities. Because we rely heavily on our volunteers, we understand the importance of volunteer recognition. Each year, the Washington Commission for National and Community Service (WCNCS) and the Governor's Office host a ceremony to recognize volunteers who assist AmeriCorps programs. The WCC has awarded several of our outstanding volunteers through this event. Additionally, the WCC highlights volunteer efforts on our website, in the WCC Newsletter, and at recognition events at service locations. WCC members will recruit or manage 3,000 volunteers, providing 12,000 hours of service to their local communities. The WCC has met this target in past grant cycles.

i. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

The WCC identifies itself foremost as an AmeriCorps program. Our members are required to wear service gear with the AmeriCorps logo prominently displayed every day. We provide our members with three t-shirts, a long-sleeve shirt, and a fleece to ensure we are displaying the AmeriCorps brand at every service site and project that our members work on. The WCC places a priority on the AmeriCorps brand and utilizes the AmeriCorps logo in all of our outreach including newsletters, brochures, on-line postings, and in educational curriculum. Our host sites do not conduct recruitment or outreach. Instead, our outreach coordinator creates and disseminates all of our public information to ensure consistent messaging and AmeriCorps branding is prominent in all publications.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background and Staffing

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The Washington Legislature established the WCC in 1983 to enhance the state's environmental resources while providing meaningful opportunities for young adults. The WCC became an AmeriCorps program in 1994, which allowed expanded services to communities throughout Washington, and deployments on disaster response throughout the country. In 2013, the WCC will enroll 250 members overseen by 46 field crew supervisors and 11 administrative staff.

Program Director

Nick Mott has been working in the corps arena since 1975, joining our administrative team in 1991. Nick has led several initiatives to improve the services we provide to our members and communities. He has developed community college partnerships, established fee-for-service criteria to enable program expansion, and designed and implemented new initiatives on disaster response and expanded service opportunities for military veterans.

Crew Coordinators

Kevin Farrell graduated from The Evergreen State College with an emphasis in Natural Resource Management. He has over sixteen years of natural resource experience, nine with the WCC, where he has held positions as a crew supervisor and project coordinator. Stephanie Jackson is the lead on our military veteran initiative. She has over fourteen years of environmental regulatory experience within the U.S. Army, U.S. Department of Defense, and at Ecology. Stephanie graduated from The Evergreen State College with a degree in Environmental Studies and joined our staff in June 2012. Roland McGill manages disaster response operations. Roland graduated from The Evergreen State College and has worked in the natural resource field for 30 years. He has been a forester for the Washington Department of Natural Resources, a wildland firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service, a crew supervisor for the WCC, and in his current position, as a crew coordinator, for 13 years. Along with his longstanding commitment to the WCC, Roland served in the U.S. Army for 3 years. Jason Ouellette has worked in the WCC for 17 years. He began his public service as an AmeriCorps member, and then became a crew supervisor. After several years in this role, Jason joined our administrative team, coordinating logistics, and then managing our training program.

Outreach, Development, and IP Program Coordination

Bridget Mason manages our grants and agreements, coordinates our IP program, and teaches courses

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within our training program. She served as an AmeriCorps member in our program for 2 years while completing her Bachelors in Urban Studies at the University of Washington Tacoma. Bridget joined our management team in 2003. Janna Sargent coordinates our outreach and training program. Janna completed her BA in French Literature and Language at Whitworth University in 2006, then went on to start an environmental education program at the Southwest Boys and Girls Club in Seattle. She then served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 2008-2009 in Mauritania, West Africa, as an environmental educator and became an AmeriCorps member with the WCC from 2009-2011. Janna became a member of our staff in fall 2011.

Tools and Logistics

Ted Dewees maintains our tools and equipment and teaches rigging and backcountry courses in our training program. Ted served two years as an AmeriCorps member in the WCC, left to continue his education, and then returned to lead WCC crews for 5 years on environmental projects and disaster response. He spent 2 months in Mississippi and Louisiana, responding to Hurricane Katrina, and one month in Missouri after severe ice storms. In 2008, Ted accepted a crew leader position with Mount Rainier National Park where he worked as part of the helitack crew and on search and rescue. Ted returned to the WCC in 2010.

Administrative Support

Marcee Peterson, Gen McMoore, and Toyah Ross are our administrative support team who provide a seamless support structure for our members, supervisors, and administrative staff. Marcee is our office manager and came to us from the Water Quality Program at Ecology. She has been with the WCC for 5 years. Gen joined our team in 2011, coming from the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency. She holds a Bachelors degree in Business Administration with a concentration in E-Commerce Information Systems. Toyah joined us in September 2012 after graduating from South Puget Sound Community College.

Crew Supervisors

Our 46 crew supervisors come from diverse backgrounds, but all possess experience in leading young adults on challenging outdoor projects. When recruiting for these positions, we seek supervisors with a background in environmental and disaster services who can provide positive mentoring, facilitate development opportunities for members, and demonstrate an ethic of service. On average, crew

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supervisors have worked 5-7 years within the WCC, and many have supervised AmeriCorps members for a decade or more. This diverse experience results in frequent learning opportunities for members, in addition to multiple weeks of formal training that we provide.

Organizational Support

Our staff receives training and feedback on a regular basis. Each fall, our administrative team and supervisors attend a weeklong conference on financial and programmatic procedures. A second event allows supervisors to renew certifications and attend courses on member management. Supervisors and staff receive annual evaluations that provide feedback and ensure they are meeting expectations.

Part of a larger state agency, the WCC is also evaluated on a regular basis. We have taken part in several audits, including an in-depth review by the Inspector General's Office. The most recent audit in 2011 by the Washington State Auditor's Office revealed no findings at the programmatic level and demonstrated the WCC uses sound systems to track payroll, revenue and receivables, and service requirements. The program has stringent internal controls to identify and correct errors and eliminate waste. In addition to agency-wide evaluations, we hire an independent evaluator to assess our program, each grant cycle. The WCC is currently in the process of hiring an evaluator to assess our College Readiness program to ensure we are meeting outcomes around opportunity youth.

The WCC receives excellent support from Ecology, including our human resources department, fiscal office, legal counsel, and more. This support ensures compliance with all laws and rules. We also receive support from our State Commission, WCNCS, who provide us with guidance on AmeriCorps policies and procedures. We have demonstrated regular compliance and responsiveness to WCNCS.

b. Sustainability

Over the years, our program costs have increased minimally to account for inflation. The reach of the program however, has broadened significantly. During the 2010-2013 grant cycle, the Washington Legislature authorized funding through the Washington Jobs Bill to expand the WCC program by 30 percent. This new funding enabled us to increase services to local non-profit and governmental organizations who have witnessed a decrease in their revenue base during the economic recession. While this funding enabled a temporary expansion of the WCC to 325 members, it is only short term.

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For this reason, the WCC has determined that, during the 2013-2016 grant cycle, decreasing to 250 members is more sustainable.

We will ensure continued sustainability by increasing the cost-share expected from our host sites. This next grant cycle, our host sites will provide nearly 60 percent of our total costs per member. State funding will provide 10 percent, and this grant request will fund the remaining 30 percent. By increasing local investment, we decrease our reliance on federal funds and ensure sustainability beyond this grant cycle.

We also assure sustainability through our investment in volunteers. Our members will recruit and manage 3,000 volunteers each year that will provide local communities with an additional 12,000 hours of service. Based on the CNCS-accepted wage of \$18 dollars per hour, this volunteer service translates to nearly \$490,000 dollars of additional support to local communities. Many of the projects completed by the WCC and our volunteers would otherwise be cost-prohibitive for small, community-based organizations.

Because these projects occur on public lands within the jurisdiction of the host site, sustained stakeholder investment is certain. Our local stakeholders are the lead on planning our environmental service projects; the WCC simply helps with implementation. Host sites also understand that the service we provide is temporary and highly valuable. In applying for assistance from the WCC, stakeholders must identify their plan for the long-term sustainability of the projects that our members complete. Most sites request our crews for the heavy lifting and then rely on volunteer groups for ongoing upkeep as needed.

c. Compliance and Accountability

Our direct professional supervision of members ensures compliance with all AmeriCorps rules and regulations. We are not an intermediary and we do not pass through funding to our host sites. Instead, host sites request crews or IPs on a fee-for-service basis. Our host sites understand that they do not directly supervise members and must direct all project requests to a WCC supervisor or coordinator. Our interagency agreement clearly identifies both parties' responsibilities, lists prohibited service activities, and specifies that either party can terminate the agreement for non-satisfactory

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performance.

Though the WCC has not had to terminate an agreement for noncompliance, we have removed a crew or IP when a host site failed to provide a positive service experience. In this situation, the WCC is fortunate to have several host sites requesting assistance so placing members at an alternative site is always an option.

We have successfully passed several audits and our State Commission evaluates the WCC annually. This evaluation includes a representative sampling of our member files and financial records. Based on multiple evaluations, the WCC has received a rating of "low-risk". This means we have demonstrated regular compliance to AmeriCorps rules for nearly two decades.

Our solid record for enrollment and retention demonstrates the quality of the WCC program. Our enrollment and retention rates for our last service year were 100 percent and 87.1 percent, respectively. While these rates are excellent for an outdoor youth corps program, we will work to improve member retention by ensuring excellent service experiences, clear communication, quality training, and ample support. In the last full year of our grant cycle, the one area that the WCC fell short of an AmeriCorps expectation was in meeting 30-day requirements in E-grants. There are some features in E-grants that make this requirement difficult to meet. For example, it prevents enrolling a member if a previous AmeriCorps program has not yet exited them. In this situation, the exit and enrollment period for the two programs may overlap or coincide. Our support staff documented this and other issues in 2011 and established our own deadline of 20 days for enrollment to ensure we meet the CNCS-requirement of 30 days. For the 2012-2013 service year, the WCC enrolled all members within the 30-day limit.

Special Circumstances: The WCC collaborates with agencies located in resource-poor areas, including communities with high unemployment and poverty (Clallam, Gray's Harbor, Kittitas, Mason and Yakima Counties) and Empowerment Zones (Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, White Center/King County, and Yakima). We focus recruitment for military veterans near military bases and on opportunity youth in communities adversely affected by Federal actions related to the management of Federal lands (e.g. fishing and timber industries).

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

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a. Cost Effectiveness

The WCC will continue to be a cost-effective AmeriCorps program with a cost per Member Service Year (MSY) of \$12,000 dollars. This request is lower than the CNCS expectation of \$13,000 dollars per MSY for a fixed amount grant and less than our previous grant cycle request of \$12,800 dollars per MSY. An estimated \$6 Million dollars will match the CNCS investment of \$3 Million dollars requested in this application, resulting in a match rate of 66 percent. These matching funds are a result of partnerships with over 60 local, state, federal, and non-profit organizations, and a state appropriation of nearly \$1 Million dollars.

The WCC is requesting 250 AmeriCorps MSY, a program size that our staff has a proven record in managing. The WCC requested this same number of MSY in the 2012-2013 grant year after our Legislature passed the Washington Jobs Bill, increasing funding allotted to cleaning up the Puget Sound, an inlet of the Pacific Ocean, and Washington's most precious resource. This funding is short-term with an end date of June 2013 so the WCC is requesting \$12,000 dollars per MSY to maintain a program size of 250 AmeriCorps members. We have also requested an extension of some funding provided by the Washington Jobs Bill, with a decision expected in April 2013. If extended, the Jobs Bill will provide the remaining support per MSY. In the event that the Jobs Bill is not extended, the WCC will turn to our host sites to provide a larger cost-share.

The WCC currently spends 85 percent or more of our funds on direct project costs, ensuring a cost-effective resource for the organizations served. Our cost effectiveness is clear to our host sites and the WCC currently has more requests for crew time than we are able to fill. This diverse community support allows the program to remain strong, even if there is a sudden decline in a specific revenue base. Over one-third of our partner organizations are non-profits and include a wide range of organizations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups. Another one-third of our partners are county or city government agencies. Because of our strong and diverse funding base, the WCC is able to provide services at a reduced rate to organizations operating in economically distressed or rural areas.

A benefit of our strong revenue base is our ability to respond at a moment's notice to natural disasters anywhere in the country. Additionally, we have tremendous support from Ecology, and the backing of

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our Governor's Office to help provide the necessary funding and logistical support needed for large-scale deployments. Often times, when federal funds are available, reimbursement may take several months and Ecology's support allows us to provide this vital service immediately, regardless of the wait time for reimbursement.

In the wake of marine debris washing up on our shores related to the Fukushima Tsunami in 2011, Ecology received a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to fund WCC crews for debris cleanup over the next several years. In 2012, WCC crews removed marine debris along 57 miles of coastal beaches and experts predict that debris will continue washing up on our shores over the next several years. These grant funds will be an important new resource in assisting coastal communities with limited resources available.

Evaluation is another budget item that can be cost-prohibitive for youth corps programs. In previous years, the WCC participated in the National Evaluation of Service and Conservation Corps at no cost to us. A grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is funding the current evaluation of our College Readiness program. During the 2013-2016 grant cycle, we will be seeking a cost-effective, external evaluation and have reserved up to \$30,000 dollars in our budget to meet this need.

The WCC utilizes the State Government's competitive bidding process to ensure purchases on items like program evaluation, member uniforms, member medical insurance, and training services are fair and competitive. The size of our program also helps us negotiate affordable prices. For example, member development is often a large expenditure for youth programs. The WCC is able to offer high-quality training while avoiding excessive costs by meeting higher enrollment requirements. Our training providers lower the per-participant cost because we are able to guarantee a large number of students.

We are a proven cost-effective approach to accomplishing environmental restoration. In 2011, the State Legislature consolidated WCC programs from four agencies and selected our program to house the one remaining WCC. Now, the Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and State Parks rely on us for restoration crews. Many organizations could not afford to accomplish environmental services without assistance from the WCC, as there are few affordable alternative models available. Inmate crews sometimes provide a lower cost to our service sites, but are only

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available at five locations and cannot work on certain projects or coordinate volunteers. NCCC crews based in California provide services to some of our host sites for a reduced cost, but are only available for a limited duration. Other AmeriCorps programs within Washington that perform environmental restoration have limited availability or geographic coverage.

b. Budget Adequacy

The WCC has a simple cost model. Our host sites provide 60 percent of the cost of operating a WCC crew or hosting an IP. This grant request will fund remaining member costs (30%), and Ecology funding supports our administrative staff (5%) and overhead costs (5%). We base our costs on several decades of WCC budgetary experience with projected increases for member health insurance, vehicle expenses, and member living allowance. We have also included funding to meet AmeriCorps requirements around criminal history checks, uniforms, and evaluation. In calculating our budget, we provide a minimum wage for our members, as mandated by legislation pre-dating AmeriCorps and approved by CNCS.

Our proposed budget provides competitive wages and benefits for our administrative staff and crew supervisors who are State of Washington employees. Our highly trained staff comes with a multitude of skills, experience, and demonstrated leadership. Our members benefit from this experienced leadership, as shown by our strong member support and excellent training program. We maintain this valuable resource by retaining experienced staff. Our proposed budget will adequately support our team at our current size and provide for continued programmatic improvements.

Our budget is sound and sustainable. In fact, our strong revenue base has enabled us to withstand many difficult times and even allowed an expansion during the recent economic recession. WCC funding is diversified, leveraged, expertly managed, and provides the foundation for success in all program areas. The funding provided by this grant application will allow us to expand opportunities for military veterans and young adults in distressed communities and allow our members to install more trees and shrubs, construct more trails, and clean or improve more acres of public or tribal land than in any previous grant cycle.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

During the 2012-2013 service year, an independent evaluator will complete an assessment of our

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College Readiness program. This evaluation will include member intake and exit surveys and comparison of pre and post-course assessments. The goal of the study is to measure the effectiveness of the College Readiness program in preparing opportunity youth for post-secondary education. Past assessments already on file with our State Commission include two independent assessments, including an evaluation of sustainability at our restoration sites and the National Evaluation of Service and Conservation Corps completed by Abt. Associates that measured member outcomes.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A