



PUGET SOUNDCORPS: Putting youth and veterans to work in aquatic reserves

JOBS FOR PUGET SOUND RECOVERY

Puget SoundCorps members work on projects that help restore and protect water quality in Puget Sound. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) employs 8 to 10 teams of young adults and returning veterans throughout the Sound year-round. Projects include restoring habitat at toxic cleanup sites, repairing damaged stream habitat, and conducting inventories and removing forest roads that are polluting streams with sediments.



Some DNR Puget SoundCorps members work specifically for DNR's **Aquatic Reserves Program**. The six-person team conducts baseline monitoring, cleanup, and education and outreach projects to support Puget Sound recovery.

The following projects highlight the important work by DNR's Puget SoundCorps members in Washington's seven **aquatic reserves**:

Forage Fish Beach Spawning Surveys

Forage fish, such as Pacific sand lance and surf smelt, are an important prey species for salmon and birds and are critical to a healthy nearshore ecosystem.

Knowing where and when these forage fish spawn is important in assessing the health of their populations.

Every month, SoundCorps members and citizen scientists collect sediment samples from all seven aquatic reserves. SoundCorps members analyze these samples for the presence of eggs and report their findings to DNR and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Puget SoundCorps members survey seagrass in Birch Bay. Photo: Geoffrey Mayhew / DNR

SeagrassNet Surveys

Four times a year, SoundCorps members participate in SeagrassNet, a monitoring protocol used globally to assess the health of seagrass habitats—generally, eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) in Washington. Surveys take place at transects in five of DNR's aquatic reserves during low tides and involve estimating percent of eelgrass cover, measuring shoot density, and taking core samples. Understanding how seagrass beds change over time is crucial in responsibly managing these productive and diverse communities. Learn more: www.seagrassnet.org.

COASST

SoundCorps members take part in the monthly Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) surveys in three aquatic reserves. The team visits their survey sites monthly, identifies and counts the number of beached birds encountered, and takes note of human activities on the beach. COASST, managed by the University of Washington, has volunteers from Alaska to North California, making it the world's largest beached bird monitoring project. Learn more: depts.washington.edu/coasst/.

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Washington State Department of Natural Resources • Aquatic Reserves Program
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Marine Debris Cleanup

SoundCorps members organize beach cleanup events, partner with other SoundCorps teams, and consistently collect marine debris as they perform other data collection duties.

In 2013, the team removed more than 12,000 pounds of debris from beaches in Aquatic Reserves! These cleanup efforts not only raise the aesthetic value of the beaches, but also provide a safer environment for people and nearshore flora and fauna.



Puget SoundCorps members clean up the beach at Piner Point in the Maury Island Aquatic Reserve. Photo: DNR

About the Puget SoundCorps

The Puget SoundCorps program creates jobs while cleaning up state-owned aquatic lands and uplands across the 12-county area that makes up the Puget Sound basin.

SoundCorps members are young adults (18 to 25 years old) and military veterans who are serving a year of service as AmeriCorps members. Age restrictions may be waived for military veterans.

Puget SoundCorps is part of the broader Washington Conservation Corps program administered by Washington Department of Ecology in partnership with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The Washington Conservation Corps is supported through grant funding and Education Awards provided by AmeriCorps.

For more information about the Puget SoundCorps program, visit: www.ecy.wa.gov/wcc/psc.html

About the Aquatic Reserves Program

DNR is establishing aquatic reserves throughout the state to protect important native ecosystems. The Aquatic Reserve Program promotes the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of state-owned aquatic lands that are of special educational, scientific, or environmental interest.

The seven aquatic reserves:

- **Cherry Point**
- **Cypress Island**
- **Fidalgo Bay**
- **Maury Island**
- **Protection Island**
- **Smith & Minor Islands**
- **Nisqually Reach**

More information about DNR's Aquatic Reserves Program: tinyurl.com/DNR-aquatic-reserves



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