



## RESEARCH BRIEF – ROI PROJECT

# Washington Conservation Corps

[AmeriCorps.gov](https://AmeriCorps.gov)

### Program Description

Washington Conservation Corps is implemented by the Washington State Department of Ecology to protect and restore natural areas throughout the state of Washington. WCC operates under the AmeriCorps State and National program in the environmental stewardship focus area. WCC is an environmental service program providing opportunities for young adults aged 18 to 25 years old to protect and restore natural habitats for state- and federally listed species.

### Return on Investment Analysis

To better understand the impact of WCC in relation to the program's costs, AmeriCorps commissioned a return on investment (ROI) analysis by ICF, an independent research firm. ROI analyses of national service programs estimate the monetary value of benefits that a program generates for per dollar invested.

**AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteerism and national service, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency invests more than \$800 million in grants for local nonprofit, community, tribal, and state organizations; places more than 250,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles; and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://AmeriCorps.gov).**



The ROI analysis estimated Washington Conservation Corps' ROI to be between \$0.20 and \$33.90 per funder dollar, depending on how long WCC AmeriCorps members experience increased earnings as a result of program participation, as well as the range of estimated benefits from improved ecosystems. The return on each dollar of federal support for the program is even higher, between \$0.69 and \$118.09.

## Overview of Benefits and Costs

To calculate the ROI, the program benefits were identified, quantified, and compared to the program's costs. Benefits of WCC include:

- **Increased ecosystem service value per acre of WCC restoration sites.** Restoration sites increased native coverage by 9.2 percent and reduced noxious weed coverage by 14.2 percent one year after WCC's planting intervention, which increased its ecosystem service value per acre.
- **Additional earnings by AmeriCorps members.** Serving in AmeriCorps leads to increased wages and reduced unemployment post-national service through skill acquisition, as well as increased educational attainment post-service.
- **Living allowances and education awards.** AmeriCorps members receive living allowances during their national service and receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award after successful completion.
- **Increased tax revenue for government.** The government receives more income tax revenue from increased AmeriCorps member earnings post-service, as well as additional sales tax revenue related to those earnings. Government also realizes tax revenue from the taxable living allowances and education awards provided to AmeriCorps members.
- **Reduced lifetime spending on corrections, public assistance, and social insurance.** Because of the increase in secondary and post-secondary educational attainment for AmeriCorps members, government spends less on these items.

**Ecosystem service values.** Ecosystems are dynamic environments housing plants, animals, microorganisms, and the nonliving interacting as a single unit. Services rendered naturally by an ecosystem can benefit humans who ultimately value these services. This ROI study used the extensive literature on ecosystem service values to measure benefits from ecosystem improvements by WCC.

Funding for the WCC program totaled \$13,170,346 and came from the following sources:

- Federal Government (AmeriCorps) - \$1,704,842
- Other Federal - \$1,054,012
- State Funding - \$3,950,499
- State Interagency Agreements - \$2,642,618
- Private/Local/Tribal Governments - \$3,818,375



## ROI Results

The table below shows the ROI results for WCC. Each row represents a different ROI calculation depending on which benefits are considered (total benefits or only benefits to the federal government) and which funding is considered (federal funding only, or all funding including contributions and non-federal grant, other contributions, and program fees).

The ROIs are presented as dollars returned for every \$1.00 of investment. The analysis used three different scenarios to estimate benefits under different assumptions. Specifically, the study assumed that increased earnings attributable to the programs last for one year (short-term scenario), 15 years (medium-term), or 30 years (long-term).

For each of the two ROI calculations that include benefits based on ecosystem service values, the analysis used low, average, and high estimates of ecosystem service values.

ROI Calculation		ROI Scenario		
		Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Total Benefits per Federal Dollar	Low	\$0.69	\$4.66	\$6.88
	Average	\$1.80	\$18.21	\$29.13
	High	\$6.20	\$72.39	\$118.09
Total Benefits per Funder Dollar	Low	\$0.20	\$1.34	\$1.98
	Average	\$0.52	\$5.23	\$8.36
	High	\$1.78	\$20.78	\$33.90
Federal Government Benefits per Federal Dollar		-\$0.04	\$0.36	\$0.53

The magnitude of the ROI estimates are driven by the following factors:

- **The wide range of ecosystem service values by various land cover types.** The analysis used low, average, and high estimates of ecosystem service values based on the literature.
- **The employment outcomes of HFH AmeriCorps members.** Past studies establish that AmeriCorps members experience increased employment and increased earnings post-service.

For more information, please contact [evaluation@cns.gov](mailto:evaluation@cns.gov).