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Contacts

Paulina Lopez, Community Engagement Manager, DRCC/TAG
paulina@duwamishcleanup.org
206-251-2038.

Tracy Stanton, Ambassador/
Coordinator, Green Duwamish-Urban
Waters Federal Partnership,
tstanton@me.com, 301-520-0668.

About the Organizations

The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group (DRCC/TAG) works to ensure a cleanup of the Duwamish River that is accepted by and benefits the community and protects fish, wildlife, and human health. DRCC/TAG provides the community with engagement opportunities and empowers these affected communities to use their voices on all aspects related to the cleanup of the river and pollution source control.



The Duwamish Valley Youth Corps Green-Duwamish Urban Waters Federal Partnership Seattle, WA

The Setting

The Duwamish is Seattle's only river. It is a 5.5 mile long Superfund site that flows through Seattle's Duwamish Valley – a highly developed urban and industrial center south of downtown. It suffers from a legacy of pollution that has accumulated in the river's sediments and throughout its food chain. Eighty percent of Seattle's industrial lands are located within the Duwamish Valley and over 7,000 people live in the immediately adjacent neighborhoods of South Park and Georgetown. Most affected by the contamination are Seattle's most marginalized and impoverished communities – low-



Credit: The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition

income, homeless residents, immigrants and tribal fishing families. In addition to residents, three Tribes use the river for fishing and/or cultural ceremonies, and low -income, immigrant and homeless families from throughout King County harvest seafood from the river for subsistence, and to maintain cultural and community traditions. Over 20 native languages are spoken throughout the valley. For all these reasons, attaining environmental justice is one of the driving forces shaping the community's river cleanup and advocacy efforts.

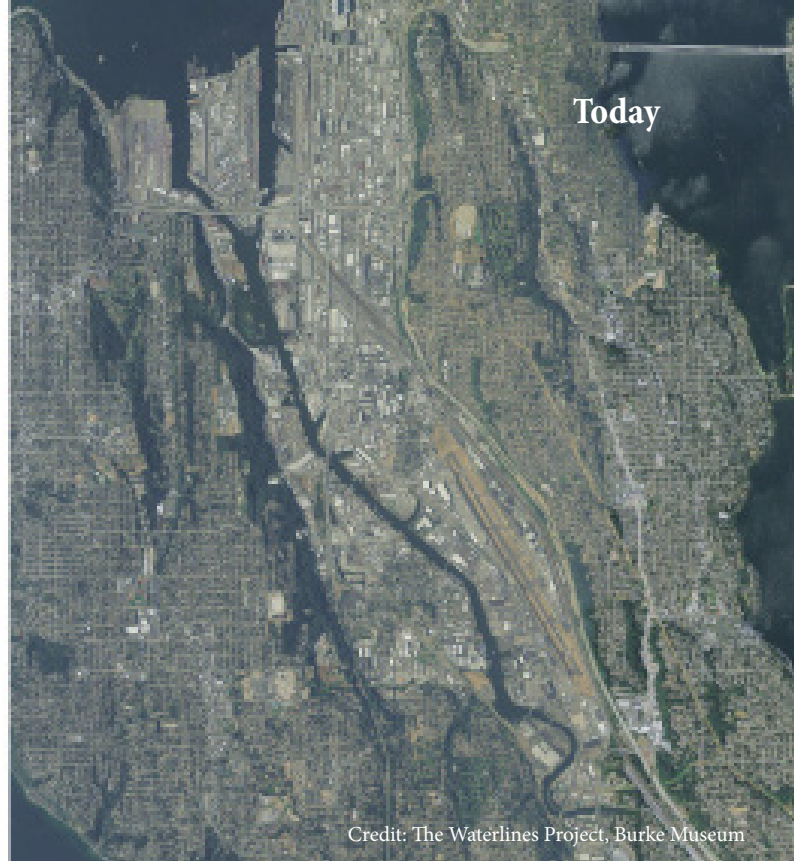
The Duwamish Valley Youth Corps

In 2014, the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition Technical Advisory Group (DRCC/TAG) founded the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps (DVYC) with support from the Forest Service's Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The DVYC supports environmental improvement projects identified by residents in the Duwamish River Valley. With a focus on urban forestry, river restoration, and green infrastructure, the program is equal parts environmental science, job skills training, stewardship, and hands-on restoration.





Mid 1800's



Today

Credit: The Waterlines Project, Burke Museum

The Duwamish River has been massively altered over the last 150 years. What was once a meandering natural landscape has been transformed into a filled, channelized industrial corridor. Native ecosystems and traditional food sources such as salmon were severely disrupted.

Restoration and cleanup efforts on the Duwamish such as the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps will not only restore some of the healthy ecological function to the river, but also aid in reconnecting adjacent neighborhoods and communities to the river.

The Duwamish Valley Youth Corps has three main goals:

- Empower the community by implementing their prioritized environmental health projects;
- Engage youth in hands-on environmental restoration projects with tangible benefits to their community;
- Provide meaningful, paid training work, leadership skills, and career pathways to youth in a diverse, low-income urban neighborhood.



In 2015, the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps served 55 youth through three cohorts. It was amazing to see what these youth accomplished for and in their community in just one year:

- Organized and hosted a youth-led environmental forum attended by 85 youth, families and community members;
- Planted 250 trees in the river adjacent urban neighborhoods of South Park and Georgetown;
- Constructed and maintained 8 large rain gardens in South Park;
- Installed over 200 native plants at the “Happy Trail” River City Skate Park, and Duwamish Waterway Park;
- Picked up 4-1/2 truckloads of trash and debris from neighborhood parks and streets;
- Assisted 45 residents in building high-quality home air filters to improve their indoor air quality;
- Discussed community concerns and priorities during urban environmental justice tours for the City of Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and Washington State Governor Jay Inslee.

Credit: The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition

The Impact

Alma, a DVYC program graduate, told Seattle's Mayor Murray, "DVYC helped me understand how important it is for us to be involved, to be active in my community and make it better. Also, because of my new skills, I got hired and now have a JOB!"



Credit: The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition

In addition, two Duwamish Valley Youth Corps youth were appointed by Mayor Murray as Sustainability Ambassadors for the City of Seattle. Eight youth have been offered employment with the City or King County since graduating from the program and will rejoin the program as paid mentors in 2016. As further evidence of the impact of the program, Washington's Governor Inslee quoted DVYC youth at climate forums in Washington, D.C. and Paris.

In 2016, the DVYC will continue to engage the youth of South Park and Georgetown, launch a leadership training program, organize the second annual Environmental Education Youth Forum, and host three cohorts for over 50 youth throughout the year.



Credit: Robin Fay

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For more information about the Learning Network visit www.UrbanWatersLearningNetwork.org
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