

Date: September 1st, 2015

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Curtis Kukal, Park Ranger & Environmental Programs Coordinator
Geoff Bradley, Environmental Programs Supervisor

Subject: 2015 *Well KEPT* Program Brief

INTRODUCTION

The City of Bellevue's *Well KEPT* (Kids Environmental Project Training) program has completed another successful summer serving the Bellevue community. For 29 years, Bellevue Parks & Community Services has engaged youth and invested in our city's future by providing valuable employment opportunities to Bellevue youth through *Well KEPT*.

The *Well KEPT* program is a summer youth employment internship offered through the Bellevue Parks' Natural Resource Division. The program is designed to provide Bellevue youth with education, job skills, and career development training in the field of park resource management. The work focuses on parkland restoration and maintenance. This summer, a typical project included forest enhancement, wetland restoration, and trail construction. *Well KEPT* combines on-the-job work experience with environmental education and career development to instill strong self-esteem, good work habits, and sound environmental ethics.

2015 PROJECTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Invasive Species Removal:

- *Mercer Slough Nature Park*: removed approximately 15 yd³ of purple loosestrife.
- *Coal Creek Park*: removed approximately 3 yd³ of tansy ragwort.
- *Parkland Estates Trail*: removed approximately 10 yd³ of policeman's helmet and spotted jewelweed.
- *Hillaire Park*: removed approximately 15 yd³ of Himalayan blackberry, laurel, and English holly.
- *Lewis Creek Park*: removed approximately 3 yd³ of tansy ragwort.
- *Zumdieck Park*: removed Himalayan blackberry, laurel, English holly, and English ivy from 25,000 ft².
- *Chism Beach Park*: removed approximately 6 yd³ of English ivy after discussing the negative environmental impacts of noxious weeds with city staff.



Above: Well KEPT Trainees are seen here during construction of a new trail at the Mercer Slough Nature Park.

(Continued; Invasive Species Removal)

- *Kelsey Creek Park*: removed Himalayan blackberry from approximately 15,000 ft², approximately 3 yd³ of policeman's helmet from the wetland area, and approximately 3 yd³ of tansy ragwort.
- *Lake Hills Greenbelt*: removed approximately 3 yd³ of morning glory and Himalayan blackberry from an on-going restoration site.
- *Larsen Lake*: participated in a large-scale restoration project with Earth Corps to remove dense Himalayan blackberry from approximately 12,000 ft², and continued preventative maintenance in a 2014 restoration site by removing Himalayan blackberry.
- All of these projects fostered growth in the following skills: work ethic, teamwork, plant identification, invasive species awareness, and the importance of wetlands.

Mercer Slough Connector Trail:

- Created a critical educational resource through the construction of 550 ft of trail, starting on the Bellefields loop trail and connecting to the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center Loop Trail.
- Transformed a social trail into a safe & scenic trail while connecting two existing trails.
- Coordinated with Pacific Science Center and city staff to ensure that trail placement maximized value to their educational programs.
- Trail placement highlighted local resources on the trail for parks customers, such as vegetative archways or environmental assets deserving recognition.
- Students enhanced their understanding of Bellevue's natural environment while gaining new tool experience.



*Top Right: Trainees carry away piles of invasive weeds at Zundieck Park
Left: Mercer Slough Connector Trail during Construction.
Right: The Well KEPT crew presenting the trail after completion.*

Woodridge Connector Trail:

- Created a valuable neighborhood connection through the construction of 175 ft of trail, starting at the end of SE 10th St and connecting it to the Woodridge Open Space trail system.
- Trail design minimized erosion inherent in social trails through structuring a post-retained foot path.
- Assisted city staff to construct a connecting bridge which provides a safe crossing to the trail system while maintaining site hydrology.
- Students enhanced their understanding of Bellevue's natural environment while gaining valuable experience working as a team.



*Left: Lakemont Conveyance channel during construction
Right: The new trail at Woodridge Open Space following completion*

ENVIRONMENTAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

The *Well KEPT* student internship provides educational opportunities to Bellevue youth. Educational seminars provided the students with more information about their projects, improved their environmental awareness, and developed essential career skills. Educational seminars conducted during 2015 are listed below:

Seminar/Workshop Topic

Aquatic Invasives: Background & prevention
Trail-building techniques
Kelsey Creek Park: Restoration orientation
Regulated noxious weeds
Aquatic invertebrates & stream health
Chism Beach Park: English ivy orientation
Native plant identification
Urban forestry
Workload planning
Personal finance
Resume, cover letter & interview skills
Wildlife science
Larsen Lake: Wetland restoration orientation
Lakemont Park: Conveyance channel orientation
Soils

Instructor, Organization

Kit Paulsen, COB
Chris Vandall, COB
Ryan Popke, COB
Patrick Sowers, King County
Laurie Devereaux, COB
Jim Bennett, COB
Curtis Kukal, COB
Melissa Kerson, COB
Dan Acker, COB
Natasha Popoff, COB
Natasha Popoff & Amber Davis, COB
Curtis Kukal, COB
Geoff Bradley, COB
Mark Doherty, COB
Chuck & Crystal, USDA-NRCS



Above: Laurie Devereaux (COB) shows the trainees a sculpin from Coal Creek Natural Area.

Right: Chuck Natsuhara (USDA-NRCS) discussing the soils of Lewis Creek Park.



ONE CITY

The City of Bellevue is committed to our community's excellence. In 2015, *Well KEPT* fulfilled the following city goals:

Responsive Government:

- Addressed community needs including park maintenance and youth unemployment.

Improved Mobility:

- Connected two existing trails with in the Mercer Slough Nature Park.
- Connected a neighborhood to the Woodridge trail system.

Economic Growth & Competitiveness:

- Student interns gained skills and experience for future employment.
- Provided local youth with a first job opportunity and career development.

Healthy & Sustainable Environment:

- Worked to restore local parks by removing noxious weeds.
- Fostered environmental awareness in Bellevue youth and their parents.
- New trail connections help preserve natural resources by discouraging 'social' trails.

Safe Community:

- Provided a safe walking trail between neighborhoods that prevents trespassing on private property.
- Provided a safe connecting trail for the youth education programs at the Mercer Slough Nature Park.
- Provided a productive and safe summer activity for local youth.

Innovative, Vibrant, & Caring Community:

- Fostered a group of young adults dedicated to improving community sustainability.
- Engaged local youth in community pride through local park improvement projects.

Quality Neighborhoods:

- Local youth became more active members of their community.
- Helped to slow the spread of noxious weeds that degrade neighborhoods.
- New trail connections contribute to communities with a higher standard of living.

CONCLUSION

Bellevue's *Well KEPT* program is a unique and innovative program that provides an exceptional first employment opportunity for Bellevue youth. The program serves many adolescents who may otherwise have limited opportunities for career development. *Well KEPT* is an integral component of the Natural Resource Division's environmental education and community outreach that inspires citizens to engage in the stewardship of Bellevue's Parks. By instilling strong environmental values and a positive work ethic in tomorrow's leaders, the *Well KEPT* program provides cost-effective stewardship of our City in a Park.



Left: Well KEPT trainees put in a hard days' work.... in any weather!

Right: Hammering in poles to prevent erosion on the Woodridge trail

