

September 30, 2011

*Celebrating 25 Years!*



*Maritza Franco, B.S. Marine Biology*

**When were you in the Corps and for how long?**

I was in the Corps for 2 years from 2007 – 2009. I worked various positions with the SEA Lab. We did a lot of different things, including: putting native plants in the sand dunes on nearby beaches, planting trees in local parks, and nursing animals back to health and giving them to the CA Science Center for their kelp exhibit. We also helped to restore the Abalone population; we kept them and fed them, and then the Department of Fish and Game would check to make sure they didn't have any parasites and could be released into the wild. The project that I got the most out of was when we helped M.B.C., a company that did heat treatments at local power-plants. We would weigh and measure fish that were trapped in the plant and in the process I learned to identify different species. It taught me a lot about all of the different fish out there – I learned that scorpion fish are poisonous, for instance.

**Please tell us about your life now, both professionally and personally.**

I just completed my B.S. at Cal State Long Beach in marine biology. I'm currently working for the Department of Fish and Game as a Sampler. My job is to go on boat trips and review what fishermen catch; we weigh and measure the fish and collect data on their catches. It's a yearly project of the Fisheries Commission and allows us to assess the health of different fish populations and helps us establish regulations and limits on certain fish. We also are helping to re-establish the White Sea Bass population, which was almost completely wiped out in California. Some time ago scientists raised a number of White Sea Bass in a holding pen. Once they had grown to 12 inches they were tagged and released into the ocean. Now, when we're reviewing catches we use metal detectors on the fish to check if they have tags. This helps us determine whether the project was successful.

In my personal life, I spend a lot of time hanging out with my brothers and helping them with their schoolwork. I'm also a self-taught bass player. For exercise I go bike riding and play basketball. My goals for the future are getting into a Masters program for either Fisheries, which relates fish and their biology to the economy, the community and local issues, or microbiology, which deals with the tiny and invisible critters in the ocean that you can't see.

**How did the Corps influence who you are and what you are doing currently?**

The Corps influenced me a lot. They really gave me a clear idea of why I was going to school and where I was heading with my degree. With the Corps I learned about fish, saw the way that education relates to marine biology, learned about the kind of research biologists often perform and saw the broad ways that marine biology could be applied – each of which involved passions for both fish and learning. This really gave me an idea of what career opportunities were out there for me. Most of the time you go to school and when you finish you don't know what you're going to do but working at the SEA Lab gave me experience in marine biology and made me familiar with some of my prospective careers – especially teaching and research.

I was always interested in fish but SEA Lab got me more interested in education. I used to be more of a quiet person; I just wanted to study fish and do experiments, and preferred not to interact as much with others at work. My time with

SEA Lab was spent teaching children, giving tours of the beach, helping groups understand marine ecosystems and how everything within them interacts (from birds to fish to humans), and taking our “traveling tidepool” to schools in underserved communities so that they too could learn about marine life. All of this helped me open up socially and become more confident speaking to large groups. Before doing all this I never saw myself teaching but now I’m interested in teaching at community colleges to get more of those students interested in marine sciences. Doing so would be great because a lot of students don’t even have the opportunity to take a marine biology class – many schools don’t even offer them – and as a female professor I could help get girls interested in the sciences.

### **Is there anything particularly memorable about the Corps that you would like to share?**

The Corps was just a really nice environment to be in – it was like a family. I’ve got so many memories from my time there, like, when we used to have to fresh-water-dip animals with parasites and would have to put them in a net and run from one tank to the other. One time I had to dip a 3 foot leopard shark and was running from one tank to the other with everyone yelling “don’t trip!” I almost tripped.

I also first became interested in plankton & microbiology because of SEA Lab. Our supervisor would always put up bulletins about classes, seminars, scholarships; one day I applied to one of them, the Marine Initiative’s Minority Undergraduate Program, and got an internship. If it weren’t for SEA Lab I never would’ve found out about the program. Through the internship I learned that the things in the water that you can’t see affect marine life too. For instance, if there are too many harmful algae in an area it can kill a lot of larval fish.

### **Paddle the Los Angeles River**

Last weekend wrapped up our Paddle the LA River Program. We hope everyone enjoyed themselves and hope to be back again next year!



*Kayakers, including California State Senator Carol Lieu, paddle down the River on the last trip this year of our Paddle the River Program*

### **Young Adult Corps**

Today, the corpsmembers at our Admin office celebrated the completion of their Customer Service Training Program. Each corpsmember spoke about the different customer service skills they learned, and how they feel this will benefit them both in their professional and personal lives. They received certificates of completion for their hard work. This initial training has been an important part of the corpsmember program here at the admin offices and we are proud of their hard work and progress!



*Corpsmember Byron Villagran giving his presentation; Admin corpsmembers with Cheryl Petersen & Bruce Saito*

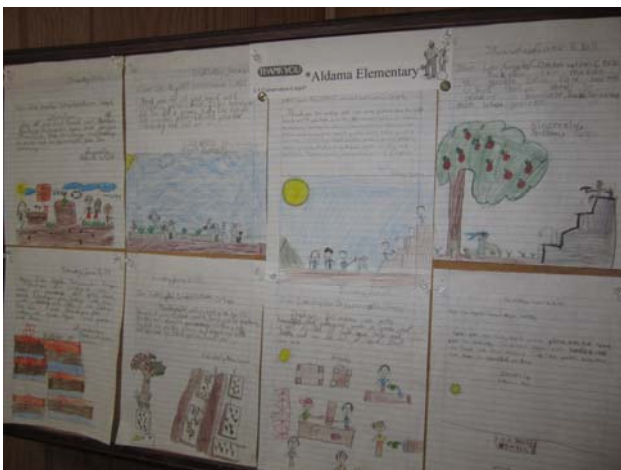
On Wednesday and Thursday a team of corpsmembers from the vocational department went to a senior living center in La Puente called Hojas de Plata to explain the new solar system that will be installed on their property. The solar panels will be installed through a partnership between LA Housing Partnership, SolarCity and the LA Conservation Corps. The corpsmembers explained how the system will work and how the residents can continue keep their bills low through energy efficiency and water efficiency measures. The residents also learned about free weatherization services through Southern California Edison and the Eastern Los Angeles Energy Assistance Team (ELEAT) to further reduce their bills. The presentation was made in both English and Spanish.



*Corpsmember Nikki Lumangyao explaining the efficiency of low-flow showerheads*



*Corpsmember Erik Renteria telling the residents how to sign up for the SCE Energy Management Assistance Program*



*Our East LA site received thank you letters from students at Aldama Elementary School for their garden*

This week, the Wildland Recovery Team members led a Fire Ecology and Wildland Fire Equipment public presentation to a YMCA after school club in Oak Park. Members discussed why wildland fires are good for the environment, the importance of fire safety, fire prevention tips, and presented the Type 3 and 4 Fire Engine. In addition the crew also led

hands on presentations allowing the kids to try on fire gear, shoot water from hoses and shared stories with almost 50 kids between the ages 5 and 12. The Wildland Recovery Team answered some very interesting questions from both the kids and staff, and made a lasting impression with the knowledge passed on to the children.



*Ryan Walker demonstrating how to use the fire hose to the YMCA after school program*

This is the last week for the current members of the 2010-2011 Wildland Recovery Team. We would like to thank and congratulate them all for their hard work and dedication. We wish you great success in your future career paths! The 30 new recruits will begin on October 3, including 9 from LA Corps.

### **2010-11 Accomplishments**

Did you know that during the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the LA Corps:

- Provided work, education and support services to 289 Young Adult Corps corpsmembers
- Trained 1,170 14- to 17-year-olds through the Clean & Green program
- Abated 2,041,976 sq. ft. of graffiti from City Streets
- Recycled 300 tons of beverage containers
- Planted, maintained, and distributed 89,489 trees
- Removed 378,151 sq. ft. of invasive species
- Developed 9,415 sq. ft. of new gardens
- Provided 11,830 middle school students with after school academic assistance, educational enrichment and recreation activities at least once during the year

And those are just a few highlights from our very long list of accomplishments! To see the full list, click [here!](#)

### **Recycling Across Los Angeles**

This weekend RACLA crews will be recycling at USC v. Arizona game at the Coliseum on Saturday. Also, a RACLA crew will be recycling at STAPLES Center on Saturday night.

**Please note that the Friday Night Update will be on hiatus next week. We will return the following week!**