

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

Media Release

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ORTING — On September 11, WDVA's Veterans Conservation Corps will team up with Expedia, The Mission Continues and WestCare, bringing up to 300 volunteers to perform land restoration and improvement work.

The Washington Soldiers Home Campus in Orting covers 180 acres. While some of the land is used to provide long-term care to veterans and in some cases their spouses or widows, much of the land is undeveloped and has become overgrown with invasive species such as blackberry bushes and Japanese knot weed.

On September 11, volunteers from Expedia, The Mission Continues and WestCare, as well as from the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs will start on the first phase of land clean-up and veterans' farm development. A majority of the supplies being used by volunteers on both September 11 and September 18 are being provided through a generous grant from the Home Depot.

The second wave of volunteers will arrive on September 18 from the Home Depot and WestCare to finish trails, build benches and create wildlife interpretive stations for residents and visitors alike.

Here's what you can expect to see:

- September 11: Up to 300 Volunteers from Expedia, The Mission Continues, Westcare and WDVA will clear land and begin the work on areas 1, 2 and 3 (pictured below).
- September 18: Up to 300 Volunteers from the Home Depot, WestCare and WDVA will create trails, install sprinkler systems and complete other activities in work areas 1,2 and 3.
- Three work areas, which correspond to the numbers on the picture are:
 1. **Prairie Restoration:** Removal of invasive species such as blackberries, ragwort, Japanese knotweed and Scotch broom.
 2. **Native Tree Nursery and Agripreneurship:** Creation of six half acre Veteran Farm Plots, where veterans can contract with WDVAs' VCC to learn about and gain practice in

farming. At a later date, a natives nursery will be built to cultivate native trees and plants (blueberries, salmon berries, willows, salal etc.).

3. **Wetland Mitigation and Preservation:** Restoration of wetland, including planting native moisture-loving species such as blueberries, and clearing paths for development of interpretive trails.



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