Kitsap County
Washington State University Extension

WATER STEWARDSHIP

2020

BY THE NUMBERS

- Trained 75 new volunteers- 50 Beach Naturalists, and 25 Stream Stewards.
- Reached 111 new participants through the Salmon Docent webinars.
- Over 1,500 contacts were made at Kitsap Salmon Tours through the kitsapsalmontours.org website.
- Trained volunteers committed 1,566 hours to improving local ecosystems through education, stewardship and community science, during a pandemic.

PARTNERS

City of Bremerton, Chico Salmon Park Stewardship Group, Clean Water Kitsap, Clear Creek Task Force, Kitsap County Parks, Great Peninsula Conservancy, Harbor WildWatch, Keta Legacy Foundation, Kitsap County, Kitsap Conservation District, Kitsap Public Health District, Kitsap PUD, Kitsap Regional Library, Olympic College, City of Poulsbo, The Kitsap Sun, Washington Sea Grant, and more.

ISSUE

With approximately 250 miles of marine shoreline, over 10,000 acres of public lands managed by Kitsap County Parks, and hundreds of streams that feed into Puget Sound and Hood Canal, Kitsap County supports a wide array of diverse ecosystems. Kitsap is also home to a steadily increasing population, and in 2019, population density reached the third highest density of any county in Washington state, estimated at 635 people per square mile. The land and water resources that make Kitsap such a beautiful place to live are threatened by this growth and urban development. The Puget Sound Institute estimates that 52,000-66,000 pounds of pollutants are released into Puget Sound each day, and this cost of stormwater pollution is expected to exceed $1 billion over the next ten years. Pollution and habitat loss threaten some of the Pacific Northwest's most iconic species including the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale and Pacific salmon populations. The road to ecosystem recovery is long, and education and citizen engagement are essential components of the strategy to protect, preserve, and recover our region for future generations.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Water Stewardship program is to cultivate environmental stewardship in Kitsap County through education and engagement opportunities.

RESPONSE

The WSU Extension Water Stewardship Program provides Kitsap residents with educational training programs, volunteer opportunities, and educational events to help turn environmental knowledge into action.

WSU Kitsap Extension employs a three-pronged approach to tackling water and natural resource issues:

1. We teach people to value and protect our natural resources through public events and three in-depth training programs led by staff and local experts.
2. We train people to be volunteer educators, to share knowledge and inspire a stewardship ethic in others.
3. Through partnership with local agencies and governments, we connect people with local restoration, enhancement, and monitoring projects.

kitsap.wsu.edu

Amy Smalley, Water Stewardship Program Coordinator

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QUOTES

"I gained a better sense of place, a lens to see the community/my surroundings, an ecological overview centered around our watersheds and as a relative newcomer to Kitsap County, a better understanding of the place I live and opportunities to contribute here."

"Citizen Science has become such a critical resource for widely varied subjects. This [Beach Naturalist] training not only informs but also motivates the public to become part of solutions needed in the environment."

"I am now much more knowledgeable about the marine ecosystem on so many levels. With that knowledge I can do more to protect that ecosystem and volunteer to be a part of the teams that work to protect and reestablish the life and shoreline. I can also now share my knowledge with friends and people I meet to bring awareness to them about the issues we face. The [Beach Naturalist training] gave me hope and motivation and a connection to the groups that are already involved in making a difference."

"It was great being able to get a Kitsap-centric perspective on salmon life history. As the Pacific species and runs are so diverse in their life histories (and of course the larger species and larger rivers get most of the attention), it is sometimes hard to figure out what the patterns are for the low elevation, smaller stream runs in Kitsap and what environmental factors our salmon have adapted themselves to."

IMPACTS

In 2020, the Water Stewardship Program trained 75 new volunteers across the Stream Steward, and Beach Naturalist training programs. The Salmon Docent training program was held as a free educational webinar series this year due to COVID-19. The Salmon Docent webinars reached 111 new participants. Collectively, trainees engaged in 52 hours of instruction, 47 presentations, and 15 classroom training sessions. Post-training evaluations indicated that the vast majority of trainees across the three programs (97%) plan to share what they learned in the training with others and to apply what they learned in their personal lives.

Presentation topics varied based on training focus, and in 2020, examples of these included:

- Stream Stewards- Low impact development, stream invertebrates, watershed geology and hydrology
- Salmon Docents- Salmon life cycle and physiology, stormwater and climate change impacts
- Beach Naturalists- Salish Sea oceanography, intertidal invertebrates, local mussel research

From volunteering to protect water quality to preserving Kitsap salmon habitat, trainees recognized a clear path from their training experience to taking action. Alumni of the educational trainings contributed more than 1,566 hours of service to improve Kitsap ecosystems through education, stewardship and community science.

In 2020, a few examples of how alumni volunteered to make a difference include:

- Educated the public: Participated in Salmon in the Classroom program; training for salmon release and assisting at stream bug stations for field trips.
- Stewardship: Removed invasive scotch broom from Newberry Hill Heritage Park and joined in native plantings at Harper Park and Chico Salmon Park. Improved shoreline habitat through area clean-up.
- Community science: Monitored Kitsap Memorial Park beach for sea star wasting disease. Analyzed plankton samples in search of toxic algal bloom species.

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