



Shore Stewards News

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Jefferson & Clallam Counties

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Photos and article by Scott Chase, Island County Shore Stewards Coordinator

The Problem with Creosote

Living in a marine environment, we are all familiar with the look and odor of wood that has been treated with creosote. Creosote logs are used in building bulkheads, piers, and bridges. You see them used in ferry terminals and marine pilings. Creosoted poles are used for your telephone, cable and power lines, and treated lumber is often used for walkways and stairs leading to the beach. However, thousands of tons of creosote soaked wood — pilings and debris — litter Puget Sound and its beaches. When out for a beach walk, you'll often see pieces of creosote logs in the form of driftwood, or possibly the remnants of someone's dock that has broken up during a storm and washed up on the beach.

Originally used since the 1850s for protecting railroad ties, creosote has also been used for more than 100 years as a marine wood preservative. And it has been quite effective in killing the wood-damaging critters that would otherwise damage our bulkheads, piers, pilings, and other structures. But more than a decade of research is telling us that the toxic chemicals that do such a good job of killing organisms that are destructive to structures *also* leach out into the surrounding environment and are a danger to the health of animals and people. Evidence shows that the toxicity of creosote causes damage to the eggs of small forage fish and other organisms that are the foundation of the food web, and which are essential to salmon, birds and other wildlife. Because of this, removal of creosote from our beaches has been a priority of our state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Northwest Straits Commission, and the Marine Resources Committees (MRC) in many Puget Sound counties.

Creosote Log Removal: One Volunteer's Story

When Ken Urstad looked out onto his community beach near Greenbank Farm on Whidbey Island this summer, he was understandably dismayed by all the creosote logs and treated lumber that had washed up and accumulated along the shoreline in recent years. Ken has been a member of the Island County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) for eight years, and a Shore Steward and WSU Beach Watcher since 2005. For the past 3 years, Ken has been instrumental in helping rid Whidbey Island's shorelines of creosote logs, working closely with Beach Watcher volunteers, DNR, and the Island County MRC. Though Ken had helped in the removal of over 700 tons of creosote logs and treated lumber in the past few years, mostly on the west side of Whidbey, he understood that DNR was as much of a victim of budget cuts as most other government agencies, and could probably not afford the crews and helicopters that they have used in the past. Yet Ken did not want to leave those highly toxic logs on the beach, as he understood how many dangerous chemicals they contained, and how they affected the marine life around them.



Though he knew DNR did not consider his beach a high priority use of their limited funds, over the years he had worked with Lisa Kaufman, the DNR Reforestation Manager in charge of creosote removal for the Orca Straits District, and gave her a call, with the idea of a local community being involved in removing creosote logs from their beach. She approved of the idea, and the local community chosen was the North Bluff Association, where Ken, and his Beach Watcher wife Peg, live on land that has been in their family for many decades. Using the hydrology permit obtained from the Department of Wildlife,

other permits obtained from the Department of Ecology and protocols that were set up by the DNR, Ken began marking the logs on a half mile stretch of beach, towing them by boat to a central location where a 20 yard refuse (shipping) container, had been dropped off. Ken stacked the logs and lumber onto large blue tarps to contain the toxic sawdust. About 35 man-hours and 3 boat hours were put into this part of the operation.

On the day that was chosen to cut and load the logs, the “crew” gathered to perform their duties. Ken was in charge of cutting the logs, making sure none exceeded six feet in length. Saw chains soon became dull, and Ken had replacements sharp and ready to use. He and Scott Chase, Shore Stewards Coordinator for Island County, rolled and pushed the logs into the scoop of the backhoe operated by neighbor Ron Wimmer, who then dumped them into the container, where the logs were periodically adjusted to fit neatly together. As the blue tarps were cleared of logs, they were rolled up like tortillas, trapping the toxic sawdust, and then folded into bundles. These bundles were dropped into the container, with logs and lumber placed on top to secure them when they were hauled away. Part way through the operation, Peg Urstad came to watch and offer moral support, and towards the end they were joined by Lisa Kaufman and Tammy Olson, Whidbey Island DNR Marine Manager, to supervise the final loading.



Ken Urstad looks out from inside waste container, where logs had been neatly stacked

Over a few hours, 4½ tons of creosote logs and treated lumber were cut and loaded into the container, which was hauled to a special landfill in eastern Washington. The total cost to DNR was \$795, a small fraction of what they usually spend to remove creosote logs, yet added to the more than 6,000 tons of logs DNR has been instrumental in removing since 2003. Marine life most likely benefitted from the removal, and Ken and Peg enjoy the satisfaction of having a creosote-free beach... at least until new logs drift in with the tides. For more information on why DNR removes creosote logs, see their article from October 2010 at

<http://washingtondnr.wordpress.com/2010/10/06/science-behind-the-choices-why-dnr-pulls-creosote-laden-wood-from-marine-waters-and-beaches/>

Resources

1. Literature Review, Computer Model and Assessment of the Potential Environmental Risks Associated With Creosote Treated Wood Products Used in Aquatic Environments. Prepared for: Western Wood Preservers Institute, 7017 NE Highway 99, Suite 108, (360) 693-9967. Prepared by: Kenneth M. Brooks, Ph.D...
2. Brief Science of Creosote, Washington Department of Natural Resources, 2008.
http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/aqr_cleanup_creosote_brief.pdf
3. Science behind the choices: Why DNR pulls creosote-laden wood from marine waters and beaches.
<http://washingtondnr.wordpress.com/2010/10/06/science-behind-the-choices-why-dnr-pulls-creosote-laden-wood-from-marine-waters-and-beaches/>
4. Seattle P.I. article: Many Working To Restore Puget Sound, November 22, 2002.
http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/96481_sound22.shtml
5. Northwest Straits Projects: Creosote Removal. <http://www.nwstraits.org/Foundation/Completed-Projects.aspx>
6. Washington DNR Map Showing Creosote Removal Locations in Puget Sound
http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/aqr_cleanup_creosote_overview_map.pdf

Jefferson County Creosote Update

Beach Watchers and other volunteers in Jefferson County have been very active in creosote log removal. Here are some highlights:

- Beach Watchers started the creosote log survey project for the Department of Natural Resources in 2006.
- DNR returned in 2008 and asked for support in locating rogue logs using GPS and bagging smaller debris for removal at the Fort Flagler dock.
- DNR also asked for help at the Boat Haven site for small debris removal, and a PR event coinciding with the removal of the Flagler icon with then land commissioner Doug Sutherland.
- Although there is no funding for log removal, Beach Watchers inventoried logs on the beaches of SE Marrowstone in the fall of 2010. They located 19 logs in 1.5 miles ranging in size from 2.5 feet to 60 feet totaling 386 linear feet of logs. They also found 6 tires, 9 large foam blocks and packed 2 large bags of refuse off the beach.

Here are a couple of stories about log removal in Jefferson County:

<http://www.peninsuladailynews.com/article/20081003/NEWS/810030302>

<http://www.ptleader.com/Main.asp?SectionID=4&SubSectionID=4&ArticleID=21557>

Jefferson County EVENTS

Applications Now Being Accepted WSU Jefferson County Beach Watcher Training!

Class is filling fast! Apply today!

The 2011 WSU Beach Watcher Training for Jefferson County **begins March 1st**. Classes will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 4:30pm through March 31. This fast paced class will provide you will an overview of the activities, issues and organizations involved with water in Jefferson County and beyond. Participants will gain new skills, learn from experts, meet new people and join in a tradition of service to the community. You will also have a wonderful time, meet new friends and make a difference! It is a GREAT opportunity for Shore Stewards!

After graduating, you will be provided with a wide variety of exciting options to complete your 100-hours of volunteer service. Classes will be held at WSU Extension in Port Hadlock on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 4:30pm through March 31. For more information and an application, please email Darcy at darcym@wsu.edu or call 360/379-5610 x230.

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*Your Shore Steward Coordinators are Pat Pearson and Darcy McNamara.
Contact them at 360/379-5610 x230 or email darcym@wsu.edu*

