



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA CSREES
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Beach Watchers

Summer 2005
PNWWATER 066

The WSU Island County Beach Watchers Program has expanded into a northwest regional program involving Jefferson, Clallam, Snohomish, Skagit, San Juan, and Whatcom counties. Jefferson County is incorporating the Beach Watchers program into its long-standing Water Watchers program to join the other counties in a unified effort. Beach Watcher volunteers attend over 100 hours of classroom and field training in a wide range of topics including forestry, coastal geology, natural processes, watersheds, septic systems, toxics, marine biology, beach monitoring, marine estuaries, fish, and shellfish. Volunteers then share their knowledge with the public and spend at least 100 hours in community outreach, education, and science-based programs. Over 400 Beach Watchers and Water Watchers have been trained in Island and Jefferson counties to date and this number will expand rapidly with the expansion into additional counties.



Hugh Shipman, Ecology, leading a Beach Watcher field trip. Photo courtesy of Pat Pearson, Jefferson County Extension.

Beach Watchers come from all walks of life and bring a rich cross-section of backgrounds, experiences, service, and talents.

All county Beach Watcher programs follow the identical Beach Watcher model and have consistent training materials, but each county develops its unique projects and volunteer involvement dependent on community needs, interests, partners, and opportunities. Beach Watchers are dedicated to protecting and preserving the fragile environment of Puget Sound through research, education, public awareness, and example.



Water/Beach Watchers assembling 300 rain barrels for sale for community water conservation. Photo courtesy of Pat Pearson, Jefferson County Extension.

The expansion of Beach Watchers to the northern Puget Sound counties is designed to also offer Washington State University (WSU) trained volunteer assistance to the seven Marine Resources Committees (MRCs) of the Northwest Straits. These MRCs are county commissioner appointed citizen advisory committees that assess the marine conditions and needs in their respective counties and develop on the ground projects to protect marine resources. Volunteers are needed on all levels — planning, research, education — to accomplish these projects. After assessing



Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Coordination Project Partners

Land Grant Universities

Alaska

Cooperative Extension Service
Contact Fred Sorensen:
907-786-6311

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/water/index.html>

University Publications:

<http://www.alaska.edu/uaf/ces/publications/>

Idaho

University of Idaho
Cooperative Extension System
Contact Bob Mahler: 208-885-7025

<http://www.uidaho.edu/wq/wqhome.html>

University Publications:

<http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/Catalog/catalog.html>

Oregon

Oregon State University
Extension Service
Contact Mike Gamroth: 541-737-3316

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/>

University Publications:

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

Washington

Washington State University
WSU Extension

Contact Bob Simmons:
360-427-9670 ext. 690

<http://wawater.wsu.edu/>

University Publications:

<http://pubs.wsu.edu/>

Northwest Indian College
Contact: Michael Cochrane:
360-392-4299

mcochrane@nwic.edu or

<http://www.nwic.edu/>

Water Resource Research Institutes

Water and Environmental Research
Center (Alaska)

<http://www.uaf.edu/water/>

Idaho Water Resources
Research Institute
<http://www.boise.uidaho.edu/>

Institute for Water and
Watersheds (Oregon)
<http://water.oregonstate.edu/>

State of Washington
Water Research Center
<http://www.swwrc.wsu.edu/>

Environmental Protection Agency

EPA, Region 10
The Pacific Northwest
<http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/>

Office of Research and Development,
Corvallis Laboratory
<http://www.epa.gov/wed/>

For more information contact
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the success of the Island County Beach Watchers, a special appropriation was secured at the federal level for the Beach Watcher expansion by Washington Senator Murray and Congressman Larson. Funding partners include EPA, Coastal Zone Management Grants, WSU Water Quality funds, and Lighthouse Environmental.

Beach Watchers Make a Difference IN the Community

- ◆ Publicize environmental information and speak to community service groups
- ◆ Recruit property owners to join Shore Stewards
- ◆ Serve on citizen committees
- ◆ Promote a stewardship ethic among the public
- ◆ Lead interpretive tours
- ◆ Create educational activities at festivals

ON the Land

- ◆ Develop protocols to measure/record scientific data about beaches, estuaries, streams
- ◆ Assist in the preparation of marine specimens for study and display
- ◆ Encourage composting, water conservation, recycling, and waste reduction
- ◆ Maintain newsletters and web sites
- ◆ Publish environmental guides and training manuals

IN the Classroom

- ◆ Participate in school science days and teach sustainable land use
- ◆ Publish teachers' handbook on how to conduct successful beach field trips
- ◆ Organize annual, one-day community universities on the environment
- ◆ Develop community education programs

ON the Beach

- ◆ Monitor the biological health of beaches
- ◆ Collect shoreline and coastal data and assist agencies as needed
- ◆ Survey shorelines for artificial hardening (bulkheading)
- ◆ Promote beach etiquette to protect fragile beach plants and animals

ON the Water

- ◆ Evaluate water quality
- ◆ Monitor marine estuaries streams and watersheds
- ◆ Remove invasive weeds from estuaries
- ◆ Help with salmon reintroduction, habitat/shellfish restoration

National Water Quality Program Areas

The four land grant universities in the Pacific Northwest have aligned our water resource extension and research efforts with eight themes of the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension System.

1. Animal Waste Management
2. Drinking Water and Human Health
3. Environmental Restoration
4. Nutrient and Pesticide Management
5. Pollution Assessment and Prevention
6. Watershed Management
7. Water Conservation and Management
8. Water Policy and Economics

CSREES is the Cooperative States Research, Education, and Extension Service, a sub-agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, and is the federal partner in this water quality program.