



**Education,  
Research,  
Stewardship**

# Beach Log

AUGUST 2008



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
ISLAND COUNTY EXTENSION

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## Meehan Moves On

It was 26 years ago that I came as the WSU Extension agent to Island County from Okanogan County. My primary duties then dealt with Gardening and Family Living, and, of course, the administration of the office. At the time we had three other faculty working in Island County, one dealing with Dairy, one with Livestock, and one with 4H. They all were serving other counties and based from Skagit County. Before I arrived, the 4H agent left, and I quickly found myself immersed in overseeing the 4H program.

Life actually was simple back then. Three people worked in the office in Coupeville; Jan Coffman, Donna Hurlbert, and myself. We did not have computers. I am guessing we had about 100 volunteers on board, primarily 4H leaders and a handful of Master Gardeners. The only source of funds for our work was from the County. Our office was located in the old courthouse in two hallway closets on each side of the entrance. Space was so tight that we held meetings in the hallway.

Our county program was quite traditional, typical of WSU Extension from the previous 65 years in Island County, dealing with Agriculture, 4H, and Home Economics. Most of the time I found myself out in the field helping farmers and gardeners, writing newspaper columns, and conducting workshops. The population in Island County was about 44,000 people back then. I think there was only one stop light in the whole county. We were rapidly changing from a rural area to a bedroom community for the mainland, with an expanding military presence. We were one of the fastest growing counties in the state, and everyone wanted to own a piece of shoreline.

Today, our office supports close to 800 active volunteers. We have ten staff members working in three different offices, one of which is the Admiralty Head Lighthouse, perhaps the most unique Extension office in the nation. Two-thirds of our funds come from sources other than the County. We put heavy emphasis on natural resources protection, as we should, for we live in a marvelous place. Now, I spend most of my time pushing paper, finding funds, dealing with attorneys and commissioners, and bragging about our great programs to anyone who will listen. There are more traffic lights in the county than I have fingers. About 77,000 people call this place home and about 1% of them are presently on our WSU team, working to improve our community.

On August 31, I will retire from 26 wonderful years of being part of our terrific island communities. I can say without hesitation that working in Island County has been the best of the best jobs one could have. It has been all about the people and this place. I am not going to recite the things that one might think I have accomplished here; I only want to say that what has been accomplished during my tenure was really about **you**, who have given selflessly of yourself to our community, to make it better. Frankly, it is a bit hard leaving the “*being in the middle*” of the wonderful things you all do. We have done good things together! I only hope that you feel I have helped somewhat, in your quest to make a difference. Always know that I always wanted to help you more.

The people who have done most of the work and who have made me look good were often the program coordinators. I can only thank them for their superior dedication; it is rivaled only by the efforts you volunteers have made. Thank you all for being so wonderful to me and to our community.

*Don Meehan*



## The Problems with Plastic . . . Grant

All of you have probably seen our beautiful "Problems with Plastic" brochure. It was completed to fulfill one requirement of our Plastics Reduction Education Grant—commonly, infamously . . . and ominously . . . known as The Plastics Grant. According to this grant, we will conduct plastics reduction education with \$48,000, as tasked by the Washington State Department of Ecology. .

Many of you have asked me the purpose of this grant, the requirements of the grant, and where volunteer creativity and individuality comes into play when working under the seemingly heavy hand of such a grant. Just using the word "grant" inspires fear in the hearts of many fearless volunteers. In the worst case, it means working to meet someone else's requirements, oftentimes distasteful requirements. In the case of this grant, the requirements were developed by Kristen Cooley to accommodate what we do already: education, community outreach, stewardship, and research. Required tasks include:

**TASK 1: Project Coordination.** This includes the joint effort by staff and volunteers to attend events and keep a record of public outreach.

**TASK 2: Public Outreach Activities.** These activities include our already well-established Sound Waters and Beach Naturalists, as well as presentations and our Green Bag project.

**TASK 3: Publicity and the Media.** Simply stated, we are required to advertise and publicize our events in writing and on the web.

**TASK 4: Products and Learning Tools.** This task commits us to make displays and supporting materials for informational talks and other presentations.

**TASK 5: Project Evaluations and Administration.** We must keep records of what we do—to include recording volunteer hours and timesheets for paid employees, conducting and keeping surveys of those who host and attend events, and tracking the numbers of brochures we distribute.

These tasks, while occasionally tedious—after all, who likes recording hours and counting pennies?—are really very much in support of our long-term work. And we must not forget plastics reduction in our efforts. But isn't this something within our scope of awareness as we do our work anyway? The creativity and innovation of our volunteers is written right here—within the language of the grant. We can communicate with the public, young and old, develop eye-catching visual aids, write papers, present our findings, share, learn, grow and love our Puget Sound.

*Sarah EW Martin, BW Coordinator*





# Cleaning up a Mess of Monofilament

At Lake Campbell, folks are looking for the lunker. At Key-stone Spit, fishermen are sending their lines out for salmon. And among Beach Watchers, Waste Wise and Beach Watcher volunteer, Jill Hein, is fishing for the monofilament that re-mains when the fishermen have all gone home. Jill was in-spired to initiate a monofilament recycling program while doing research for our Plastics Grant. About her inspiration, she says:

“I found out about the program when re-searching information for the plastics bro-chure, and figured it was something we should – and could - be doing here in Island County. Florida Fish & Wildlife were eager to share their knowledge – they sent me in-formation on how to get the program started, how to build the recycle containers and also supplied the stickers that we’re us-ing (we paid for them). (I in turn shared with them some of my seal entanglement photos), <http://fishinglinerecycling.org/startup.htm>”

Since the 1930s, plastic fishing line has been the fisherman’s best friend. It is both dura-ble and enduring and has the added value of being nearly in- visible. It disappears into the murky waters where the big fish lurk, waiting to become the fodder for fish tales around the dinner table. When lost, however, it remains in the murk, waiting to entangle unwitting passers-by. Fish, fowl and ma- rine mammals lose life and limb each year as a result of lost monofilament line. Humans, too, are affected by loosed line—divers, swimmers, and boaters may all become entan-

gled in this mess of monofilament. Monofilament, the mira- cle of anglers, is also the nightmare of marine life.

The Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program (MRRP) is an innovative project that began in Florida and is dedicated to reducing the environmental damage caused by discarded fishing line. According to the MRRP, monofilament fishing line lasts up to 600 years in the environment. This invisible

line, usually coupled with a barbed hook, can also obstruct the digestive tract of hungry marine life. And some plastics emit poisons that compromise a healthy marine environ- ment as well.

The goal of Island County Beach Watchers and Waste Wise is to implement a monofila- ment recycling program modeled after the MRRP and supported by a grant from the Department of Ecology. To reduce the amount of monofilament fishing line left in the environment, the Monofilament Recy- cling Team on Whidbey Island has put in place a pilot program around Whidbey Is- land to attempt to capture unwanted mono- filament fishing line and recycle it.



Jill believes: “Most fishermen already clean up after them- selves, but the good part about the program is that the line is not going into the trash, it will be recycled. We’ve been greeted most enthusiastically by people when they see the containers, especially neighbors who live close to public ac- cess fishing beaches. I don’t think fishermen will be per- turbed at all about the program, the Fly Fishing Club is fully behind it and we even have a couple of them monitoring con- tainers!”

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## Dates to Remember

### Upcoming Camano Island and Whidbey Island Events and Other Items of Interest



#### CAMANO ISLAND

- Aug 14 Intertidal Monitoring-Sunny Shores** 8:00 am to 10:00 am Camano Island (TBD Lines) -0.7 tide at 10:07 AM (Tide-Kayak Point) Contact: Skip I. This is re-scheduled from July 16.
- Aug 15 Intertidal Monitoring: Mabana** 9:00 am to 1:00 pm Camano Island: Mabana (TBD Lines) -0.8 low tide at 10:43 am (Tide-Sandy Point) Contact: Barbara B. This is re-scheduled from June 30th.
- Aug 22 Camano Is - tour of Dyke and drainages** 9:50 am to 11:50 am Skagit valley tour Time set by high tide. Will be joint with Skagit Beach Watchers. Contact Paul L. for more info.
- Sept 4 Camano - Steering Committee meeting** 10:15 am to 12:15 am Camano Is - Cama office Note - this may change due to retreat.
- Sept 8 Camano Is Monthly Meeting** 9:00 am to 11:00 am Camano Is - Camano Center
- Sept 24 Salmon and Forage Fish** 141 N.E. Camano Dr Camano Island WA Speaker to be announced. This is the sixth in the lecture series. Starts at 7 pm. More information: [www.beachwatchers.wsu.edu/island](http://www.beachwatchers.wsu.edu/island).
- Oct 2 Camano Is - Steering Committee Meeting** 10:15 am to 12:15 am Cama Beach

#### WHIDBEY ISLAND EVENTS

- Aug 11 Breakfast w/ Beach Watchers** 8:00 am to 9:00 am Neil's Clover Patch in Bayview, Whidbey Island Monthly Beach Watchers Breakfast! Mark your calendars and come out and meet with your friends over coffee.
- Aug 14 to Aug 18 Island County Fair** Langley, Whidbey Island Come attend Fair University <http://www.island.wsu.edu/fairuniversity.html>. Or volunteer to staff the WSU Extension booth!
- Aug 16 Digging for Dinner: Learn how to dig for clams the right way!** 9:00 am to 10:00 am Double Bluff Beach Parking Lot, Whidbey Island
- Aug 19 Advisory Council Meeting** 10:00 am to 12:00 pm Call 360-679-7391 for current months location Whidbey
- Aug 19 LEP Board Meeting** 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm WSU Extension Office, Coupeville Monthly LEP meeting
- Aug 19 Sustainable Living Workshop** 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm Hayes Hall-Room 137 (across from the library) at Skagit Valley College, 1900 SE Pioneer Way, Oak Harbor  
Bike, Bus or Biofuel
- Sept 8 Breakfast w/ Beach Watchers** 8:00 am to 9:00 am Neil's Clover Patch in Bayview, Whidbey Island Monthly Beach Watchers Breakfast! Mark your calendars and come out and meet with your friends over coffee.
- Sept 16 Advisory Council Meeting** 10:00 am to 12:00 pm Call 360-679-7391 for current months location Whidbey
- Sept 16 LEP Board Meeting** 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm WSU Extension Office, Coupeville Monthly LEP meeting
- Sept 30 Sustainable Living Workshop** 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm Hayes Hall-Room 137 (across from the library) at Skagit Valley College, 1900 SE Pioneer Way, Oak Harbor ,



## Beach Watchers Events

**8/14-17. Island County Fair.** We still need volunteers for The Island County Fair, particularly on **Saturday**. The Fair University and WSU Extension booth volunteer opportunities are as follows:

**Fair University**

1PM - 5PM, Friday

9AM - 1PM and 1PM - 5PM, Friday and Saturday

10:30AM-2PM and 2PM - 5PM, Sunday

**WSU Extension Booth**

3:30PM - 7:30PM, Friday (Only one spot left!)

12:30 - 3:30 and 3:30 - 7:30, Saturday

10:30AM - 1:00PM, 1:00PM - 3:30PM and 3:30PM - 6:00PM on Sunday

If you are able to volunteer during any of the times listed above please contact Nancy in our front office at [n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us](mailto:n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us) or by calling her at 360-240-5558. You will receive a pass to the fair during your day of volunteering

**8/22. Strawberry Point Potluck, 6-8 pm** Volunteers, particularly from North Whidbey needed to show Beach Watchers presence at potluck. Contact Scott Chase for more information, [schase@wsu.edu](mailto:schase@wsu.edu).

**8/27. Goosefoot Picnic and Don's Farewell, 5-8pm** Please save the date! Goosefoot will be celebrating the staff and volunteers of WSU Extension. There will be live music, and food and beverages, to include beer and wine, will be available for purchase

**9/6. Dance on the Prairie.** Mark this date! More information to follow.

### Volunteer Opportunities at Whidbey Watersheds

Help Whidbey Watershed Stewards maintain and track progress at our five completed creekside restoration sites. Using the beach monitoring program as a model, we will hold periodic work parties, ask volunteers to photograph sites as plants grow, let us know when plants need replacing, and check that new culverts are working. An initial training for Site Stewards will be held this fall.

Join the talented crew of Maxwelton Outdoor Classroom volunteers (including many Beach Watchers) helping grades 3-5 learn about the environment through hands-on activities. Themes for this fall are the salmon life cycle and the dynamics of water and streams. We provide all training to make your teaching a success. It's fun and rewarding!

Teacher training is September 17 or 18, 2008 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., followed by a catered lunch. Choose the Wednesday or the Thursday training date. Session dates are September 30 to October 30, in either the morning or early afternoon. Volunteers are asked to teach one 3-hour block a week, if possible. Classes are divided into three small groups, for individualized learning.

For more information or to sign up, contact Whidbey Watershed Stewards at 360-579-1272, or [education@whidbeywatersheds.org](mailto:education@whidbeywatersheds.org) . Driving directions and more information is available at [www.whidbeywatersheds.org](http://www.whidbeywatersheds.org) .





## Look out for Sharks!

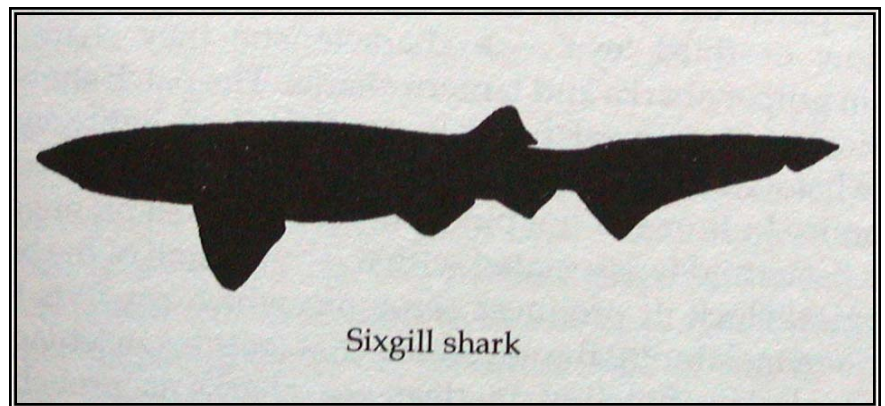
Our multi-talented Standing network Group Leader from Langley, Veronica von Allworden, recently attended a conference about cow sharks at the Seattle Aquarium. Quoting from her conference notes: “Very slowly more and more is being learned about Sixgill sharks and other cow sharks. From the evidence that’s been collected by tagging and DNA samples, through NOAA, WDFW and the Aquarium, it looks more and more like Puget Sound is being used as a nursery for these sharks.—a fish that lives in the deepest parts of the Sound—affected by pollution and the environmental changes from an ever increasing human population. The samples taken from Six gills all show very high levels of mercury and other heavy metals.”

“One of the sharks that had washed up in Tacoma turned out to be a gold mine of information. She was pregnant with 71, near term, pups. So the Aquarium now had 72 (including the mother) DNA samples. It turns out the baby sharks had eight different fathers. Half of the pups were from one father and the other half from another seven fathers. Pretty amazing stuff!”

“One other thing that has been found with quite a few dead sharks is that they died after eating crab trap bait boxes. These are not the commercial crab bait but the small wire cages used in recreational crabbing. The wire boxes erode through the side of the stomach and often into other organs.”

I added a few tidbits of general information about Sixgill sharks from a wonderful book entitled “The Private Life of Sharks—The Truth Behind the Myth” by Michael Bright.

The Sixgill or cow shark is broadheaded and green-eyed and can live at depths down to at least 6000 feet and can grow to 25 feet in length. The shark has a single dorsal fin and a long flat tail with smaller lower lobe. The retina of the eye has no cones for color vision. The teeth of the upper jaw are fang-like but the lower teeth are slanted and comb-like, a more primitive feature. There are two known species of Sixgill shark—cow-shark (*Hexacanthus griseus*) found in all the world’s oceans and the 7 foot bigeyed Sixgill shark (*Hexacanthus vitulus*) which lives mainly in warmer waters and at lesser depths. One conspicuous feature of the shark is the pale patch on top of the head, known as the pineal window or “third”. This shows the position of the pineal body, a small ball of light-sensitive tissue, below the surface of the skin, linked directly to the brain. In deep sea sharks this is probably to detect light from the surface. A six gill shark can have as many as 108 embryos in a single litter, 16-19 inches each.



A shark washed up a few years ago at Ft. Casey and another, trophied shark, at Lagoon Point in August 2003. This one was unidentifiable because the anterior end had been cut off behind the gill slits and the tail had also been removed. But the mid-section portion remaining was about 4 feet long. Unfortunately we were not aware at the time of the need for DNA samples, so we did not collect any tissue.

If you find a shark washed up. Count the number of gill slits—Sixgills have 6, Sevengilled has seven and dogfish have 5. Measure the length from tip of jaw to tip of longest lobe of tail. Secure the carcass with a rope or something heavy to keep it from washing out to sea. Call Susan Berta, Sandy Dupernell or Veronica(360-221-7417).



## Become a Climate Steward



The scope and repercussions of climate change are global and the issue is of special concern to governments, scientists, and citizens alike. In Skagit and Island Counties, the Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA) is partnering with WSU Beach Watchers and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (Padilla Bay Reserve) to launch a new volunteer program: Climate Stewards.

Climate Stewards will follow the successful training-for-service model of WSU Beach Watchers. Participants will receive approximately 20 hours of FREE professional training from local experts on a variety of topics and issues. Training will familiarize participants with the science of climate change, impacts of global warming, and actions that reduce global warming pollution as well as provide them with project development skills and community outreach tools. Padilla Bay Reserve's educational staff has substantial experience in presenting educational topics to diverse audiences and has organized the training curricula for Climate Stewards.

In return, Climate Steward volunteers will contribute at least 20 hours of volunteer service over the next 8 months. With continued support, volunteers will work to develop and implement outreach projects within their own communities. Climate Stewards will participate in meaningful community projects that increase public awareness about the issues of climate change and prompt community actions that decrease global warming pollution. Potential projects include (but are not limited to):

- Developing and implementing a public climate change lecture series focusing on the issues of global warming and actions that reduce global warming pollution.
- Organizing community Green Power Challenge registration drives.
- Community Energy Conservation Projects:
- Encouraging Energy Star Building and Appliances: Distribute information on rebate programs, potential cost savings and sources of Energy Star Appliances to increase conversions from less efficient models.
- Educating the community about conservation efforts like reducing phantom loads, turning equipment off when not in use, etc.
- Organizing household energy audit classes.

WSU Beach Watcher staff in Skagit and Island Counties will support Climate Stewards volunteers as they engage in climate change education projects in their local communities. This support will include: project planning assistance and prioritization, volunteer coordination, communication, and continuing education opportunities.

The Climate Stewards program offers in-depth climate change training and avenues for effecting change. The time to address climate change and its causes is now! Join a community of concerned citizens and take action! Applications are now being accepted from Island and Skagit County community members who want to participate in the Climate Steward Volunteer Training Program. To register online (pre-register by Sept. 10) or for more information, visit [www.padillabay.gov](http://www.padillabay.gov). If you would like a registration form mailed to you or have additional questions, contact Sarah Martin at [sarah\\_martin@wsu.edu](mailto:sarah_martin@wsu.edu) 360-679-7391.

*By Adria Banks and Sarah Martin*





## 50th PERFORMANCE CELEBRATION



### “LITTLE, BUT OH MY!

**AUGUST 16 7:30 PM**  
**DECEPTION PASS STATE PARK**  
**41229 SR 20 -OAK HARBOR ON WHIDBEY IS-**  
**LAND**



Five years ago, “Little, But OH My”— the story of Berte Olson opened on Whidbey Island. Since that time the show has played all over northwest Washington and in California and Oregon as well

Now, for it's 50th performance, the show is “coming home” to a location that is actually part of the story. “Before the bridge, “ says creator and performer Jill Johnson, “Berte and her husband, Augie ran the little Deception Pass Ferry Company. Johnson, storyteller and actress, spent two years researching Berte's story. “Those little ferries could take only 12 - 16 cars, but the ferry ran - rain or shine.”

Vern Olson, the show's music director, will reprise the show's original music. Along with celebration activities, will be a special guest of honor: 91 year old Ivan Olson, Berte's son.

The performance will be at the Park Amphitheater and is FREE Bring a cushion (bench seats) and a blanket if needed. Come and help us celebrate this special occasion! For more information, please contact Adam Lorio at 360-675-2417.

The show was part of Humanities Washington's “Inquiring Mind” series and a CD of the show won an “Honors” designation in a national Storytelling World competition.

## Whidbey Speaker Series Thank You

Thanks to Nancy Bartlett (B.W. 07) and Kevin Brutsche (B.W. 08), WSU Beach Watchers and the community were treated to the first of several lectures in an upcoming series. William Dietrich who was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on the Exxon Valdez disaster spoke to a sizable audience at the Trinity Lutheran Church on July 17. Mr. Dietrich, who resides in Skagit County, is a part-time writer for the Seattle Times Pacific Northwest Magazine and teaches environmental journalism at Western Washington University.

In his presentation, he discussed and clarified many of the important and controversial issues regarding the health of Puget Sound. He was able to present a concise historical perspective of the evolution of the problems (pollution, habitat destruction, transportation, and population), the attempted solutions, the successes and failures of policy, and the outlook for the future problem and conflict resolution.

Mr. Dietrich is the author of a number of fiction and non-fiction works featuring a wide array of subjects including history, intrigue, and environmental perspective. In his books the reader may find themselves in the Roman Empire during its decline, Antarctica, Egypt, the Holy Land, or here in the Pacific Northwest. His most recent work is the novel *The Rosetta Key*.

Kevin Brutsche has coordinated our next speaker, Joe Laxon, from Island County. He will speak on new septic regulations and septic systems at the Coupeville Recreation Hall on August 28, 2008 at 7:00pm.

*Jim Somers, BW Class of 2004*





## Volunteer Opportunities

**Help for Sammye at Rosario.** Sammye has a few great volunteers helping her at Rosario with the tidepools. She communicates with the public about what lives in the tidepools and how we treat that microcosm with respect. She would also like to take a few days off this summer to spend time with family. Please, please consider getting in touch with her, learning what she does, and try this opportunity on for size for one day! You may find it a great fit. Please get in touch with Sammye at [sammyek@iglide.net](mailto:sammyek@iglide.net)

**Coupeville Arts Festival Volunteers at the Wharf . . .** The Coupeville Arts and Crafts Festival is coming up. This festival is primarily for the arts. However, the wharf remains open to everyone throughout the festival. Kids and families are welcome here! So this is an opportunity for us to touch these folks, whether it's showing them how plastics affect our marine environment or letting kids touch shells they've never encountered before. It is an opportunity to show people what we do and to recruit a few more supporters. In the grand scheme of things, assisting Sammye at the festival is a step in thinking about docents at the wharf and in our parks. Again, you are encouraged to try this one on for size by contacting Sammye at [sammyek@iglide.net](mailto:sammyek@iglide.net)

**Newsletter/journal for all Beach Watchers?** I've been told that our newsletter needs more. As someone who likes to write, I agree. However, I cannot do this myself--not entirely. So I need **writers, photographers, editors, artists and anyone with good ideas for the future** to get in touch with me. Someday, it would be nice to offer a subscription to a substantial newsletter to those within and outside of Beach Watchers. We have talent not only in our education and stewardship, our citizen science and our research, but also in our creative abilities. Please get in touch with me if you want to play a role or take the lead.

**In Need of a Retreat . . . and Someone to Take the Lead.** We are in a time of change right now--I am new, Don is leaving, and a summer of activities is coming to a close--we have a great opportunity to make the changes for ourselves. What better way to coordinate for the future than to bring all Beach Watchers together for a retreat. While our tremendous effort to get to North Cascades Institute did not come to fruition, it is still important to come together to discuss things like: our past, present and future direction; goals as an organization; funding sources; how projects originate and are set in motion. Would anyone be willing to take the lead on researching some options? Finding out what we really want as a group and developing some options? [sarah\\_martin@wsu.edu](mailto:sarah_martin@wsu.edu)

**Got a Job to Advertise?** There is plenty of space available here. If you are working on a program within Beach Watchers, and you would like to advertise it, please email me, Sarah Martin, and I will put it out with the next batch of opportunities.

## Future Dates to Save

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**Beach Watchers Travel.** Beach Watchers is sponsoring two trips in 2009, and we invite YOU to join us. The first trip is to Patagonia (Argentina and Chile) next February with an optional 3-day post-trip to Iguassu Falls. The second trip is to the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia in May, 2009. For more information, contact Linda Ridder (phone: 360-579-2521 or 425-531-0236, or email: [ADE-RIDL@whidbey.com](mailto:ADE-RIDL@whidbey.com)).

**Save the Date for Sound Waters!** Please mark your calendars for Sound Waters on February 7, 2009 at Coupeville Middle School. Planning is ongoing. If you would like to assist, please contact Sarah Martin.

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## Clamming Must Continue

A child laughed at the jet of water that squirted from a nearly invisible hole near his mother's foot. A family of four filled a paint bucket full of colorful cockles for chowder. And the sun illuminated the stream of water that rinsed a host of marine life clean at water's edge.

Lifetime residents of Whidbey Island and their grandchildren, visitors from afar, and newcomers interested in getting to know the island converged on Penn Cove on Saturday morning to "dig for dinner" with Eugene Thrasher, Class of 1999. This occurrence was a repeat of Eugene's summer clamming program.

Armed with only my clam shovel, a bucket, and a sturdy pair of rubber boots (Oh, and my clamming license and parking permit for Penn Cove), I was amidst a group of 30 or so folks anxious to dig up dinner. That we did.

After a bit of instruction on the types of clams, methods for digging, and beach etiquette, the small hoard of people gathered in front of Eugene's table of shells and containers, shovels and Beach Watchers reference guides, moved to the water's edge. Several folks wanted to take our guides with them—wanted to buy them on the spot!

With my first shovelful, I released three sizable butter clams from their sandy hideaways. Holding the clam in my hand, I must have resembled a miner during the gold rush—treasured was this meaty little creature, squeezing itself shut against the cool breeze and sunshine. Along the edges of his shell was a beard of flesh, not unlike the color and texture of human flesh.

At first, this thought left me unsettled. I wanted to open up the hole that seeping water had already begun to fill and to bury this little creature, as Eugene says, "butt cheeks down, neck up" so that he might grow to gargantuan.

As a new associate of Beach Watchers, this disturbance of nature seemed unsavory. However, I remembered clams as my grandfather had prepared them when I was a kid in Cleveland—how magical these twin shells had appeared as they steamed open. And I reflected on the recipes I'd typed up for Eugene—Buttered Clams Fried, Special Steamed Clams, Broiled Butter Clams. I had to follow through. I had to enjoy nature to its fullest!

Once I "caught" my limit, and I *did* actually have to catch them as they tried to scoot away under the sand, I spent much of my time watching Eugene at work. He bent over one man's bucket of cherry stones, steamers and butters and examined them. The gentleman, not a member of this newly-formed union of clam diggers, looked up skeptically. Eugene smiled, "I was seeing if anyone was paying attention!" He pretended to walk away with the bucket. He joked a second time, "No, I'm just window shopping." Smiles bigger than butter clams broke out. His



Photo by Sarah Martin

Eugene Thrasher talks about clams



good humor warmed like the late morning sun. Eugene's passion, not only for clams, but also for life, shone through.

Eugene approached a child, lifting a stone to observe what lived beneath. He explained to her Mom and Dad as well as this youngest of Beach Watchers the correct way of observing. "Always put the stone back exactly as you found it because, look at all those creatures! That's their home." As we walked away, he said, "I just don't want adults to stand by and let the kids learn bad habits." I replied, "And the adults may not realize. They just don't know." Now everyone in that family knows.

Gene and I listened to another family, "I've been clamming since I was a kid. My grandfather took me!" the dad said. A daughter pulled up a tiny steamer, and Eugene got out his machine-tooled scale. The dad took two clams and showed the little girl, "See? This one fits through, so we can't keep it. Plant it back into the sand, but not too deep. This other one fits! We can take him home!"

In a matter of hours, Eugene had shown people in the gentlest of ways how to care for our delicate marine environment while enjoying it to the fullest. In that time, families of adults and children, grandparents, guests and longtime residents became silent friends of Beach Watchers. And in that time, the next generation was irreversibly imprinted with an experience that will last a lifetime.



I was moved, as I am at each of our Beach Watchers events. I was moved by the beauty of our islands—our emerald jewels. I was moved by the complex environment that relies upon us as stewards. I was moved by one man's passion—and by the fact that this one person exists in many forms throughout Beach Watchers.

Next year, Eugene will be reducing his schedule. He needs help from us to keep this program going. If you can help, please call or email me, 360-679-7391 or [sarah\\_martin@wsu.edu](mailto:sarah_martin@wsu.edu)

*Sarah EW Martin, BW Coordinator*

## The Great Cama Comeback



It's been a long time coming, 18 years actually, but on June 21 Cama Beach officially opened, and the public's response to Washington's newest State Park has been overwhelming. On the day it opened, all the three dozen of the cabins had been reserved every day for the entire summer. Visitors and guests who stayed at Cama back when it was a private resort (1934-1989) have been amazed at the restoration. Except for a new bath house, all the waterfront buildings are original and from the outside look just like the old photos. Inside they all have new wiring and plumbing, new foundations, and electric heat (the old chimney's still cap the roofs, but the wood stoves are gone).

*Moon Snail and its dinner in the hands of a young Cama visitor.*





All of the cabins now have refrigerators, convection microwaves, coffee pots and running water--a few of the more expensive cabins have bathrooms. One new feature of the Park is that it is car-less--at least down at the beach. Day visitors as well as guests, park their vehicles in lots in the upland area and take a free shuttle (or walk) down to the beach. This has proven to be a great idea and has made the Cama experience a lot more tranquil for everyone who ventures down into this time capsule of a 1934 fishing resort. Guests bring their own bedding and food, although some food and supplies can be purchased in the Store. About 2 dozen Beach Watchers have been staffing what we call the Information Desk from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. seven days a week at the other end of the Store. "Our" end also contains a couple of the old glass counter display cases, now filled with historical artifacts from Cama's old resort days. There are also educational displays, new and old posters, a lending library, and a wealth of materials for visitors to peruse or take with them as well as materials from the Cama Quilters, a group of volunteers who made and donated over 100 unique quilts to the Park. So while guests do have to bring their own pillows, sheets and blankets, every bed has a beautiful handmade quilt on it.

The Beach Watchers working at the Info Desk handle any and all questions from day visitors and guests. Everything from identifying beach critters to estimating how long it takes to get to the Anacortes ferry. The "Camanistas" have also been doing informal low tide beach walks, and more formal educational programs for kids and adults. Our 2008 Training Class projects have focused on providing great educational resource for Cama. In exchange for all our volunteer activities the Beach Watcher volunteers have been given the Store's old office to use. So folks have been busy getting the office set-up with donated equipment: computer, printer, furniture.

The re-opening of Cama Beach has been a remarkable event. It has an exciting future with plans for two large piers, a new dining hall and eventually a lodge and perhaps a native cultural center. We hope all you Whidbey BWs will drop in for a visit when you're over this way or just wave at us from Greenbank, we're just across the water.

## WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY



*"In the end we will conserve only what we love; We will love only what we understand;*

*We will understand only what we have been taught."*

*~Baba Dioum, Senegalese ecologist*



**DEADLINE FOR NEXT BEACH LOG  
September 25, 2008**