



## **COVID Statement**

As of today, 9/28/21, there have been many changes in the landscape of COVID-19 in the past 2 months, due mostly to the rise of the delta variant and the stress on local hospital systems. We are also now seeing disturbing (but still thankfully rare) cases of younger individuals contracting severe COVID<sup>8</sup>. On August 18th, Governor Inslee announced **all people must be masked indoors regardless of vaccination status**<sup>1</sup> that went into effect on August 23, 2021 **and now also extends to outdoor gatherings larger than 500 people**<sup>2</sup>. Surrounding counties including Clallam and Jefferson counties are now requiring proof of vaccination for indoor dining and King County recently announced such measures as well on 9/16/21<sup>3,9</sup>. On September 10th, President Biden vaccination requirements for a large swath of the population including health care workers, federal workers and contractors and vaccination for employers that have 100+ employees or require weekly testing<sup>4</sup>. Further recommendations at the state level surrounding **vaccine requirements** that will affect volunteerism at Washington State Parks are currently being investigated by staff. Once it is fully clear how this will affect us as an organization, the board will be sure to let you know hopefully during next month's scheduled update.

We are all watching developments very closely the recommendations for boosters in the future with Pfizer being the first to have FDA approval for a booster dose with further recommendations for Moderna and Johnson and Johnson boosters pending. The HHS and CDC now recommend booster shots for those who received Pfizer for those people with moderately to severely compromised immune systems and those who are aged 65 and older, those that are 18+ with certain underlying medical conditions and those that work and live in high-risk settings<sup>5</sup>. Further recommendations from the CDC and FDA advisory panels are still pending at the time of this writing<sup>6</sup>.

As of 9/21, ~55% of Island County is vaccinated, ~52% of Whidbey Island\* and ~60% of Camano island is vaccinated. The most highly vaccinated age group is between 65-79 with a vaccination rate of ~75%. Younger peoples remain less vaccinated likely owing to several factors but the rate of children 12-15 that have now been vaccinated has surpassed national averages and are surpassing young adult age ranges 18-34<sup>7</sup>. We continue to encourage those that cannot vaccinate or choose not to vaccinate to maintain 6 feet of social distance outdoors and to continue to wear a face mask (reminder, **masks are now REQUIRED by Washington State when indoors**). Continue to keep in mind that some people have a lowered immune response due to immunocompromised states or are taking medications that lower their immune

\*Oak Harbor's vaccination rate (and therefore Whidbey Islands vaccination rate) is disproportionately impacted by the segregation of federally distributed vaccines from the Washington State WAIS system that provides the information in this report.

response and those falling in this group may continue not be fully protected even if fully vaccinated. Given the new recommendations and requirements, **Sound Water Stewards is requiring masks or face shields in ALL SETTINGS when gathering with others outside of your household**. We have refrained in the past from approaching this practice but given the current climate and stress on our local medical systems, we believe it is the right thing to do to protect everyone in our community especially when on field trips we cannot guarantee that proper social distancing protocols can remain in place. The board is in ongoing discussion regarding vaccinations requirements and/or proof of a negative COVID test before indoor gatherings.

The Board of Directors will plan to revisit this statement monthly and update you with information and guidance as it regards to Sound Water Stewards activities. Given the almost daily changes in information, this statement should not supersede any announcements from the Island County Health Department, Washington State Health Department or the Centers for Disease Control or other medical entities.

Our job on the board is to serve you as volunteers. If you have any questions/concerns or require special accommodations for any activities in the field, please reach out to us.

Thank you and best wishes

Sound Water Stewards Board of Directors

1. <https://medium.com/@GovInslee/inslee-announces-educator-vaccination-requirement-and-statewide-indoor-mask-mandate-a2f5a47d8a31>
2. <https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/masks-required-at-large-outdoor-events-in-washington-state-starting-monday/281-ee372a4d-a1a2-4db1-ae89-40f90e595979>
3. <https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/vaccine/clallam-jefferson-counties-requiring-proof-of-covid-19-vaccination-restaurants-bars/281-c9376eb1-1bda-4790-a386-60014213e4d7>
4. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/covidplan/>
5. [https://getvaccineanswers.org/question/vaccine-expectations?gclid=Cj0KCQjwkIGKBhCxARIsAINMioLiyvbuG2RvOUbbygprHkxgzvVVAEIEs-VIFXdIXx4TSArz3ZltkAkaAkdnEALw\\_wcB#will-i-need-a-covid-19-booster-shot](https://getvaccineanswers.org/question/vaccine-expectations?gclid=Cj0KCQjwkIGKBhCxARIsAINMioLiyvbuG2RvOUbbygprHkxgzvVVAEIEs-VIFXdIXx4TSArz3ZltkAkaAkdnEALw_wcB#will-i-need-a-covid-19-booster-shot)
6. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2021/09/13/covid-19-vaccine-booster-shots-who-can-get-them-when-still-uncertain/5773405001/>
7. [https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Health/COVIDDOCS/August%20Vaccine%20Report\\_08.08.21.pdf](https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Health/COVIDDOCS/August%20Vaccine%20Report_08.08.21.pdf)
8. <https://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/news/unvaccinated-teen-recovers-after-month-in-hospital/>
9. <https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2021/September/16-p roof-of-vaccination-negative-test.aspx>