

# Sound Water Stewards of Island County

October 2023



**MISSION:** Sound Water Stewards are **trained volunteers** working in and around Island County (Whidbey and Camano Islands) for a healthy, sustainable marine environment through **education, science, and stewardship**.

**VISION:** A healthy marine environment as defined by diverse natural ecosystems and sustainable human communities.

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**400+ Stewards ■ 14 Community Science Projects ■ 6 Education Programs ■ 6 Stewardship Actions**  
**196 Miles of Shoreline**

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Through **community education**, we help children and adults build a connection with the marine environment and learn about interrelated ecosystems which inspires them to care for what they know and love. **Sound Waters University, a “two-day university for all”** is SWS 30-year signature event annually. Redesigned to meet virtually during Covid, the all-things-Salish-Sea classes will be back in-person in 2024.

Through **stewardship**, we offer opportunities for direct involvement in beach cleanups, monofilament line collection and recycling, and we deliver volunteers to help with shoreline and habitat restoration projects.

Through **community science**, we augment professional workforces by collecting data for scientific decision-making. Public participation in science by trained volunteers results in more data than professional staff alone could generate which can accelerate research while keeping costs down. Data integrity relies on solid training. One of our training techniques is designing and implementing our own community science projects called Intertidal Monitoring which we have done for 25 years.

**Stewards are the “boots on the ground”** for universities, government agencies, tribes and researchers. We follow their protocols in community science research and stewardship activities, and we call upon partner experts to present at our education events. **In all three programs**, partners guide SWS actions to ensure accuracy and consistency with ongoing programs led by a wide range of agencies.

The marine ecosystems of the Salish Sea face intense challenges. In the past 150 years, human-caused pollution and over-use have damaged marine ecosystems degrading habitats and threatening native species to the point of extinction. All Salish Sea species rely on a healthy marine food cycle which is currently threatened. Estuaries, marine waters and shorelines need help. There is not a moment to waste.



Sound Water Stewards operates with two staff members who coordinate members on each Island (Camano and Whidbey) in Island County. Annually we **train 50 new Stewards** who commit to 100 hours of training plus 100 hours of giving back. SWS, a non-profit organization, is governed by a nine-member board of directors from Camano or Whidbey.

**Donations and grants are critically important to support the work of the organization.**

## Sound Water Stewards engage with partners for:



### Community Science

- Bluff Erosion Monitoring – USGS, Washington Sea Grant
- Bull Kelp Survey – NW Straits Foundation & Island County Marine Resource Committee
- Coastal Observation Seabird Survey, COASST – Washington Sea Grant
- Crab Larvae Abundance – Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group
- Forage Fish Egg Survey – NW Straits Foundation & Island County Marine Resource Committee
- Green Crab Survey & Molt Search – Washington Sea Grant, WDFW
- Marine Mammal Stranding Network
- Mussel Monitoring – WDFW & WA Dept of Ecology
- Northern Giant Hornet trapping – WA Dept of Agriculture
- Pigeon Guillemot Survey – Salish Sea Guillemot Network – Puget Sound Partnership (Vital Signs Indicator Species)
- Sound Toxins – Washington Sea Grant, WA Dept of Health
- Stormwater Monitoring – Friends of Skagit Beaches – reported to local cities including Ork Harbor and Anacortes

### Community Education

- Coupeville Wharf Display – City of Coupeville
- Discover Iverson Spit Preserve – Island County Parks
- Discover Camano Island State Parks – State Parks
- Intertidal Species Identification – specialized pages of SWS website
- Junior Steward, Low-Tide Walks, School Field Trips, Hikes, Videos - State Parks
- Printing and distribution of *Getting to the Waters Edge* guidebook
- Sea Life & Microscopes – South Whidbey School District
- Sea Life & Microscopes, Nature Journals & Art – Readiness to Learn
- Shellfish Harvesting – WA Dept of Health
- Sno-Isle Libraries: Geology Field trips, numerous presentations, art exhibit
- Sound Waters University – classes and field trips

### Stewardship

- Beach Cleanups – WSU Island County Extension
- Camano 101: tools for living on an island – numerous co-sponsors
- Crabber Education – NW Straits Foundation & Island County Marine Resource Committee
- Monofilament Fishing Line Collection and Recycling – County and State boat launches
- Tree Planting, Watering, Weeding, Mulching – Freedom Park, Pacific Rim Institute
- Weed Education & Removal at Greenbank Farm – numerous co-sponsors
- Whidbey 101: tools for living on an island – numerous co-sponsors

**Adding up to about 20,000 hours of Sound Water Stewards time annually!**