



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



Water Stewardship

2024

THE ISSUE

Water quality is at the forefront of our minds as we look at our county with over 250 miles of shoreline (both stream and marine), one of the highest population densities of the WA counties, and an ever-increasing population. We rely on clean drinking water within our streams just as Pacific salmon populations and shellfish beds do (both vital economic and cultural resources). Threats to our water quality include septic system failures, pet waste, stormwater runoff, agricultural runoff, habitat degradation (loss of stream buffer zones) and more. All of which are impacted by our actions as a community.

THE RESPONSE

With this issue in mind, we provide trainings, classes, and miscellaneous educational events with the sole focus of increasing environmental literacy within our community. Funding from Clean Water Kitsap supports Stream Steward and Salmon Docent trainings, and the organization of Kitsap Salmon Tours and Septic Sense workshops. Funding from Kitsap County supports Beach Naturalist training and free public beach explorations. In partnerships with over 29 local and state organizations to make these programs happen, we hope to inspire people to help protect and conserve water assets by connecting accessible science and research to the community members that need it. One 2024 Stream Steward stated "because the only source of water for drinking and other uses in Kitsap County comes from ground water, it is essential for community members to understand the impact of their actions on our water."

BY THE NUMBERS

Beach Naturalists:

- 25 new trainees
- 44 volunteers reported over 1,680 hours
- 22 free beach explorations across 9 beaches totaling 811 attendees

Stream Stewards & Salmon

Docents:

- 46 new trainees
- 68 stewards volunteered over 3,150 hours

Septic Sense:

- 3 free workshops educating 83 homeowners about their septic systems

Kitsap Salmon Tours:

- 7 sites, 19 partners
- 45 Salmon Docents
- 2,039 attendees

Additional:

- 8 environmentally focused educational events delivered

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WSU KITSAP EXTENSION
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THE IMPACTS

The impact of these programs is reflected in the knowledge and awareness gained by attendees and the volunteer efforts they then put forth. Seventy-one residents attended our trainings, gaining knowledge on watershed and riparian issues, Pacific salmon lifecycle and conservation, and/or shoreline processes and monitoring sea life on the beach. They also gained what many attendees called “a sense of place and identity in the ecosystem we reside in.”

After completing training, most graduates continued to give back to their community through their volunteer efforts: doing public outreach/education, stream restoration, invasive plant removal, scientific monitoring, etc. Of those that reported their hours to us, one hundred and twelve trained residents contributed over 4,830 hours volunteering for organizations throughout the county. In addition, during the summer, our small team of Beach Naturalists led twenty-two free beach explorations for the general public at nine different beaches across the county, talking with and answering questions from over 800 members of the public. During the fall, forty-five Salmon Docents, stationed streamside at seven sites for our annual Kitsap Salmon Tours, talked with and answered questions from over 2,039 members of the public, passing along their knowledge of salmon and their importance to our neighborhoods.

After our Septic Sense Workshops, eighty-three homeowners with septic systems went home with a better understanding of how their septic works, how to care for their system, and what to plant in their drain field. The greatest takeaway from these workshops was how failed septic systems are responsible for our water quality.

QUOTES

2024 program trainees said:

“The training provides information to connect the community with the natural environment in which we are surrounded and the tools to help protect and preserve these precious habitats.

“Each of us needs to be a good steward of our environment. Without this training, I would not be aware of the volunteer opportunities that are available to me so that I can facilitate my desire to work towards a cleaner environment.

“Citizen scientists, armed with information, knowledge and a desire to contribute, can make the Kitsap natural world a better place.

ADDITIONAL

In 2024, the program received funding from The Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT) which will positively impact Beach Naturalist efforts in 2025 and beyond.

