



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



Water Stewardship

2025

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.

BY THE NUMBERS

Beach Naturalists:

- 29 new trainees
- 45 volunteers reported over 1,156 hours
- 19 free beach explorations across 9 beaches totaling 1,085 attendees

Stream Stewards & Salmon Docents:

- 44 new trainees
- 34 stewards volunteered 1,394 hours

Septic Sense:

- 3 free workshops educating 112 homeowners about their septic systems

Kitsap Salmon Tours:

- 8 sites, 19 partners
- 72 Salmon Docents volunteered 190 hours
- 1,505 attendees

Additional:

- 7 environmentally focused educational events delivered

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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 two 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. One trainee said “the energy and knowledge of our guides, whether in class trainings or out in the field” was one of the best things about our program!

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, **142** trained residents contributed over **2,500** hours volunteering for organizations throughout the county. In addition, during the summer, our small team of Beach Naturalists led nineteen free beach explorations for the general public at eight different beaches across the county, talking with and answering questions from over **1,085** members of the public. During the fall, seventy-two Salmon Docents, stationed streamside at eight sites for our annual Kitsap Salmon Tours, talked with and answered questions from over **1,505** members of the public, passing along their knowledge of salmon and their importance to our neighborhoods.

After our Septic Sense Workshops, one hundred and twelve 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

2025 program trainees said:

- “Bremerton Beach was perhaps the best of all, mostly because of the lucky day we had to view so many living organisms in the water. Our guides have been so very helpful and full of knowledge to identify what we observed that day, and all other days too. Gorgeous!
- “I am fairly new to the area and it provided me a wonderful way to see and appreciate all the beauty. It also gave me the inspiration to keep learning about our oceans and life, so much we cannot see without such close aberration. thank you!
- “You're doing such impactful work, with a great sense of humor. This program will be life changing for me. What you do matters!
- “Super informative and well done. Great to know that the Kitsap Public Health resources are available--I wasn't aware of this before the webinar. Thank you!