Water Quality and Natural Resources 2023

IN NUMBERS

2

New raingardens were installed in collaboration with WSU Volunteers and the Jefferson County Marine Resource Committee.

6

Raingardens were renovated

42

New volunteers trained: 22 Beach Naturalists & 20 Stream Stewards

376

Subscribers to the monthly North Olympic Peninsula Volunteer Opportunities newsletter

ISSUES

East Jefferson County includes 950 stream and river miles, 317 lakes, 45 recreational shellfish beaches, and over 200 miles of shoreline that border the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet and Hood Canal. This region has vast forest lands that provide water storage and filtration. Although many waterbodies are relatively undisturbed, impacts from human activities and development are a growing concern. Non-point source pollution, generally resulting from stormwater runoff, is the leading cause of water quality issues. Freshwater harmful algal blooms are an ongoing problem. Climate change poses additional water quality concerns, with the Pacific Northwest experiencing drier summers, reductions in snowpack and glacial mass, higher spring and lower summer river flows, and a more acidic ocean. Addressing these threats hinges upon the broader community becoming well-informed and actively engaging in stewarding our water and natural resources.

RESPONSE

We provide environmental education training programs, public events, and resources for those interested in stewardship of our streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries and marine waters. We provided a workshop series that included over 14 in-person presentations 2 virtual presentations, as well as over 16 field events to train volunteers in a survey protocol to detect the invasive European Green Crab and report the data in a specially developed app.

In 2023, the Water and Natural Resources Program trained 42 new Clallam and Jefferson volunteers through the Stream Stewards and Beach Naturalists programs. Presentation topics varied based on each training. Examples of these included:

- Stream Stewards: Watershed systems and hydrology, salmon identification and life cycles, stormwater management
- Beach Naturalists: Salish Sea oceanography, intertidal invertebrates, community science opportunities (Crab Team, Sound Toxins, etc.)

Quotes

"This class is just wonderful and has really inspired me and made me fall in love with my new home here in the PNW."

"I feel so much more informed about these beaches I walk daily and feel more able to share some really important and interesting information about our area."

"The Dungeness River trip and WA noxious weed pamphlet inspired us to permanently retire our butterfly bush. Thanks to the Stream Stewards class!"

"This program definitely enlightened me - and I thought I knew a lot."

IMPACTS

Volunteers trained through WSU Jefferson County Extension reported hundreds of service hours to improve local ecosystems through education, stewardship, and community science. In 2023, a few examples of how alumni volunteered to make a difference included:

- Stewardship: spread clean shell at Discovery Bay to support Olympia oyster habitat enhancement efforts, installed and maintained rain gardens with the Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee, pulled weeds with the Clallam County Noxious Weeds program.
- Community science: surveyed salmon with the North Olympic Salmon Coalition and WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, monitored crab traps with the WA Sea Grant Green Crab Team, documented backyard weather observations through CoCoRaHS, monitored water quality with PTMSC and DOH using mussel cages.
- Public and self-education: guided public members on beach explorations, assisted with the NOSC Real Learning Real Work program for middle school students.

Through partnerships with local organizations and governments we connect community volunteers with environmental stewardship opportunities across the North Olympic Peninsula. We also provide administrative and technical support for the Jefferson County Marine Resources committee https://www.jeffersonmrc.org/

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION