WSU Kitsap Extension 2021 Annual Report

Stream Stewards and Salmon Docents

Cultivating environmental stewardship in Kitsap County through education and engagement opportunities.

About: The WSU Extension Water Stewardship Program provides Kitsap residents with educational training programs, volunteer opportunities, and educational events to help turn environmental knowledge into action.

Objective 1: Coordinate Stream Stewards Program

The Stream Steward training is a primary mode for recruiting new volunteers. The program specializes in training and continued engagement for a committed force of citizen volunteers. Once trained, these volunteers work on multiple projects throughout the year and across the county. They are engaged and keep their training current through a variety of classes and field excursions offered by WSU and its partners. In replace of field excursions due to covid-19 we added a naturalist component to the training and encouraged participants to explore and observe the natural world that surrounds them.

<u>Strategy 1. Coordinate Stream Steward and Salmon Docent Trainings</u>

1. **Stream Stewards Training.** January - February 2021 ~ 6 weeks ~ 26 hours ~ 25 new trainees
   - **Audience:** New trainees and existing alumni (18 alumni returned for a refresher in 2021)
   - **Topics:** Watersheds, streams, invasive, wetlands, stream restoration, stream invertebrates, forests, septic systems, ground water, best management practices, green stormwater solutions.
   - **Engagement:** Training included 6 classroom sessions and 5 naturalist courses with self-guided activities. Self-guided activities took place Thursday after having a naturalist speak on a specific topic, from there participants were asked to safely explore the natural world that surrounds them and look for signs and/or try to identify species that were talked about.
   - **Classroom Locations:** 6 classroom sessions and 5 naturalist sessions were all held via Zoom. Self-guided activities took place on the participants own time in a place of their choosing.

"Stream Stewards helped connect me to all sorts of volunteer opportunities to be actively involved in enhancing and improving Kitsap ecosystems and natural resource protection. The course was inspiring and motivational too."

"I'm not sure I can put how valuable this training is into words - except to say that I wish this material was mandatory for all students; that somehow this information was taught in every school to every student every year from kindergarten through high school, and that volunteering was required as well. Imagine what our world would be like if kids grew up more understanding of how our actions affect the health of the earth and wildlife around them."

-2021 Stream Steward Trainees

2. Salmon Docent Training

This training prepares volunteers to act as streamside Salmon Docents at Kitsap Salmon Tours.

Track I: October 19, 21, and 26, 2021 ~ 3-days ~ 9 hours ~ 33 participants

- **Audience:** New and existing volunteers; 30 new trainees and 3 alumni.
- **Topics**: Salmon biology, anatomy, habitat, species, life cycle, local challenges, salmon and climate, and stormwater impacts.
- **Engagement**: Training included 2 Zoom class sessions and 1 outdoor lab and field excursions. During the 6 class zoom hours, trainees enhanced their knowledge from local experts about salmon in Kitsap County and the importance of habitat and clean water for the salmon life cycle. Trainees spent 3 hours in an outdoor lab, dissecting salmon viewing the anatomy of the salmon through a scientific lens. Trainees then explored the habitat at the Rhododendron Preserve and where they could connect the knowledge gained in the class with in-person exploration.
- **Classroom Locations**: Outdoor lab set up at Rhododendron Preserve.

Track II: 1-day, 3 hours: 25 trainees, October 14

- **Audience:** Olympic College students
- **Topics**: Salmon biology, anatomy, habitat, species, life cycle, and Salmon Tours logistics

- **Engagement:** Salmon dissection
- **Classroom Location:** Olympic College biology lab

Strategy 2. Increase citizen awareness and action by publishing involvement opportunities in monthly newsletter

The e-newsletter was distributed once per month and serves as a powerful tool for retaining and motivating volunteers. Volunteers craft their own experience by choosing from among the activities advertised like tree planting, salmon counts, benthic invertebrate monitoring, and opportunities to educate the public. In 2021, the average open rate was 44%, well above the industry average of 16%. The number of newsletter subscribers has increased over the course of the year, and as seen in the graphs below, the number of unique opens increased over 2021 as well. Compared with past years, the number of opens in 2021 has reached the highest point since the start of the newsletter in 2013.

Strategy 3. Encourage and Track Volunteer Participation

1. **Volunteer enrichment:** To ensure continued participation in Water Stewardship Programs, several continuing education and involvement opportunities are coordinated throughout the year. In 2021, 6 events were coordinated, totaling over 15 hours of continuing education.

   - 4/10 – Plastic Free Kitsap Eco- Challenge – This was an online event that we started to connect with our volunteers during Covid-19 to give them another platform to get involved, get excited, and make a difference when it comes to reducing plastic.
   - 6/16 – Lunch and Learn – This event was opened to volunteers and the public. It was a virtual event to inspire the connections we make throughout our community with other program (in this case Harbor Wildwatch) and leave participants feeling inspired to be better stewards of our environment.

- 7/22 – Wetlands Walk with Kitsap Regional Library and Clear Creek – In this event volunteers worked with KRL and Clear Creek to provide wetlands education and outreach to the public as a "book a naturalist" event.
- 10/16 – Orca Recovery Day – This event was open to volunteers and the public. This was an in-person day to celebrate and educate all the things we can do to help protect the iconic endangered, southern resident orcas. This event features art taught from a local artist, an estuary talk from a marine ecologist, planting of trees and removal of invasive ivy in a community park.
- 10/1 – Kitsap Photo Contest – Hosted this contest using Woobox platform that was linked to Facebook. We received over 100 submissions. Winners received experiential prizes donated by local organizations as well as an educational book to encourage environmental discovery in our area.
- 12/10 – Lunch and Learn – This event was open to volunteers and the public. Mary Ryan, curator at the Naval Undersea Museum, spoke to us about the Marine Mammal Program. Her presentation looks at the missions marine mammals perform and the science behind their remarkable abilities.

2. **Volunteer Participation:** The pie chart below shows the number of hours tracked in each volunteer category for Stream Stewards and Salmon Docents. These volunteers would normally have a major presence at activities like the Water Festival and Salmon in the Classroom, unfortunately this year those events were canceled or not held at the same capacity with volunteer opportunities.
    - Although, within the **937.5 hours reported in 2021**, volunteers contributed to a wide variety of projects in our community including: Helping the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group with the summer chum count, virtual salmon and outreach projects with the Clear Creek Task Force, multiple socially distanced native plantings with different organizations, invasive removal projects, stewardship projects with Kitsap County Parks, and amphibian and macroinvertebrate monitoring to name a few.

Objective 2: Coordinate Salmon Tours and Volunteer Docents

The WSU Watershed Stewardship Program coordinator leads the Salmon Tours planning team efforts, composed of representatives from 17 agencies and organizations. Through this event, the team strives to raise awareness about salmon habitat and biology, while also highlighting human impacts to salmon through stormwater, fish passage barriers, and development.

- 2021 we pivoted back to an in-person Kitsap Salmon Tours event
- Kitsap Salmon Tours was held at 8 sites across the county on Sat., Nov. 6th, 10am-2pm
- Despite the windy wet weather, 1556 attendees were counted at the eight event sites. Note that it is possible that event attendees visited multiple sites, so these numbers represent the total flow of visitor traffic at all sites.
- Note that with Covid-19 continuing to be a concern in our community, we took this year to pivot back to in-person utilizing health and safety protocols as well as trying to keep the event the great public education event that it is known for and attempting to scale down by choosing not to advertise as much as has been advertised in the past.
- Salmon Docents staffed 51 shifts at the annual Kitsap Salmon Tours event to educate the public about salmon biology, habitat, and management. Additionally, dozens of staff and volunteers from other agencies and organizations staffed 25 informational booths across the county, including: WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, WSU Puyallup Research Center, Kitsap PUD, Great Peninsula Conservancy, Mid-Sound Fisheries, and many more.
- We updated the Kitsapsalmontours.org website to continue to utilize the videos and Zoom education content that was created in 2020. You can check that out here.
- BKAT created a new 2021 Kitsap Salmon Tours video, link here.

Objective 3: Facilitate Septic Sense Workshops

<u>Strategy 1. Facilitate 3 Septic webinars</u>

The Septic Webinars occurred:

- September 18th via Zoom from 10am-11am with 85 attendees
- September 22nd via Zoom from 6pm-7pm with 45 attendees
- September 28th via Zoom from 12pm-1pm with 71 attendees

As a result of the workshop:

- 90% of attendees said they could identify a failing system
- 85% said they know the basics of how their systems worked, and
- 96% said they know where to get more information about septic systems if needed.

"Great webinar! Very informative. Having a master gardener available to present and answer questions was very valuable. Thanks for doing this."

"Very informative and very helpful. This is the first home I have owned with a septic system. Thank you."

"It was great! It was an easy way for me to get information I wanted without the hassle of leaving home and at a convenient time. Keep it up! Want more topics please!"

-2021 Septic Webinar Attendees

Objective 4: Collaborate with other natural resource professionals

- Attended 3 West Sound Partners for Ecosystem Recovery (WSPER) meetings
- Attended 4 KEEP Meetings
- Attended 4 CWK Education Partner Meetings

Green Stormwater Solutions (GSS) Program

Enhancing citizen knowledge and understanding about green stormwater solutions to enhance landscape management practices

About. The WSU Extension Green Stormwater Solutions program provides Kitsap residents with educational training programs, volunteer opportunities, and educational events to reduce water pollution and enhance landscape management practices.

Objective 1. Perform outreach to homeowners about green stormwater solutions to encourage installations

Fair Preparation

Rain gardens are one of the most versatile and effective tools to managing stormwater called low impact development (LID) or Green Stormwater Solutions (GSS). Directing water from roofs, driveways and other hard surfaces into a rain garden can reduce storm water run-off (and sometimes solve drainage issues) while also increasing the amount of water that soaks into the ground to recharge the local groundwater. This is also water than can contain pollutants that we wish to keep out of streams, wetlands and Puget Sound. WSU's Rain Garden Mentor (RGM) volunteers are recruited from existing WSU Kitsap Master Gardener and Stream Stewards programs, and therefore have a wide background in

native plants, water conservation tactics, shoreline stewardship, natural yard care, and least toxic gardening methods.

Strategy 1. Coordinate public outreach events staffed by WSU Staff & Rain Garden Mentor (RGM) volunteers

- 29 public outreach events took place with a total of 851 direct contacts

Waterwise Landscaping Training – April 10, 2021	○ 61 trainees
Composting/ Natural Yard Care – April 24, 2021	○ 61 trainees
Foundation vegetable start sales/donations	○ 200 direct contacts ○ 1500 indirect contacts
Rain Garden Webinar series – 11/4, 11/18, 12/2	○ 39 direct contacts
Advanced Training webinars – 3/11, 3/25, 4/8, 5/6, 7/27, 11/17	○ 179 direct contacts
Kids Cultivate Program – 7/14, 7/21, 7/28, 8/4, 8/11	○ 276 direct contacts
Virtual Plant Clinics – 1/10 – 12/26	○ 321 direct contacts
Organic Gardening Classes – 12 classes	○ 50 trainees
Kitsap Fair and Stampede – August 25-29	○ Open Hort – 42 volunteers – 245 hours ○ Heritage Garden – 42 ○ 1400 direct contacts

Strategy 2. Promote green stormwater solution information through various outlets

The program published 65 posts on WSU Kitsap Master Gardener Facebook page related to aspects of green stormwater solutions, along with dissemination through the Rain Garden Mentor classes; tours and outreach; to CWK partners & Stormwater Department Public Events; Natural Yard Care; and Organic Gardening.

44 Rain Garden Mentor volunteer hours
8,456.5 Master Gardener volunteer hours

Objective 2: Perform outreach to homeowners about Natural Yard Care (NYC)

Hoop House and Vegetable Donation – Heritage Garden

<u>Strategy 1. Disseminate natural yard card information through outreach events and Master Gardener/Rain Garden Mentor volunteers</u>

- 17 natural yard care outreach events and 5 training took place with 456 direct contacts and 4200 indirect contacts

Natural Yard Care training to Master Gardeners Feb. 21,2020	○ **32 new Master Gardeners trained** ○ **41 Alumni trained**
Master Gardener Zoom Chats	○ **15 sessions held** ○ **22** questions answered ○ **25** direct contacts ○ **350 indirect contacts**
10 Advanced Training sessions	○ **238** direct contacts

Objective 3: Train local building professionals in the design, installation, and maintenance of Rain Gardens

By the Numbers
From 2011-2019, 268 professionals have been trained who will now market what they learned into new services to the public

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Objective 4: Collaborate with other natural resource professionals

- WSNLA networking included attending monthly local Olympic Chapter meetings – 7/29
- Other networking: WSSOG NYC meetings – 2/10, 3/3, 3/10, 3/17, 3/24, 3/31, 4/7, 4/20, 6/15, 8/17, 10/19, 12/21
- CWK Education Partners Meetings – 3/3, 6/2, 9/1, 11/29