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Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA NIFA & Land Grant Colleges and Universities

University Sound Partnership:

Educating the Public for the Health and Recovery of Puget Sound

The Challenge

Puget Sound is central to Washington's heritage, culture, and quality of life, contributing billions of dollars to the state's economy. The Sound's key social, environmental, and economic importance is tied directly to its well-being and wealth of natural resources. Unfortunately, many of its natural resources are declining and others are threatened. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the health of Puget Sound is the lack of awareness and understanding by the general public. Further, by 2020, the region's population is expected to grow by 1.4 million from the present 3.5 million. Such growth will put increased pressure on the Sound and, without action now, could jeopardize its environment.

Governor Gregoire established the Puget Sound Partnership in late 2005, bringing together Washington leaders to develop a strategy for protecting and restoring the health of the Sound. The Governor stated, "Cleaning and protecting Puget Sound must be at the top of our agenda. But I know from experience that state government can't do it alone."

Recognizing that citizen involvement would be critical to its success, the Partnership commissioned an analysis of public opinion about environmental issues in the region and across the nation. The results of that analysis found no sense of urgency or great concern for protecting and restoring Puget Sound. We know, however, that people are most likely to take action when they are fully aware and understand problems and when they believe they can make a difference.

The University Partnership

We propose to leverage the knowledge base of the state's two research universities to engage the public and change harmful behaviors toward Puget Sound. Together, the University of Washington and Washington State University can provide comprehensive and complementary science, education, and outreach:

- University of Washington scientists lead the world in research on fisheries, oceanography, biology, and water resources. For almost four decades, the Washington Sea Grant advisory service has conducted outreach and education programs to apply university science for use in the marine environment.

- Washington State University Extension couples practical expertise with applied research and specialists in environmental science, agriculture, and water resources. WSU Extension engages residents in each county around Puget Sound, working through community-based educational programs like Beach Watchers and 4-H youth development.

Washington State University
Oregon State University OSU
University of Idaho
A LEGACY OF LEADING
Northwest Indian College
UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks
United States Environmental Protection Agency
National Institute of Food and Agriculture USDA

Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Coordination Project Partners

Land Grant Universities

Alaska
Cooperative Extension Service
Contact Fred Sorensen:
907-786-6311
http://www.uaf.edu/ces/water/
University Publications:
http://www.alaska.edu/uaf/ces/publications/

Idaho
University of Idaho
Cooperative Extension System
Contact Bob Mahler: 208-885-7025
http://www.uidaho.edu/wq/wqhome.html
University Publications:
http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/Catalog/catalog.htm

Oregon
Oregon State University
Extension Service
Contact Mike Gamroth: 541-737-3316
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/
University Publications:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/

Washington
Washington State University
WSU Extension
Contact Bob Simmons:
360-427-9670 ext. 690
http://wawater.wsu.edu/
University Publications:
http://pubs.wsu.edu/

Northwest Indian College
Contact Charlotte Clausing:
360-392-4319
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http://www.nwic.edu/

Water Resource Research Institutes
Water and Environmental Research Center (Alaska)
http://www.uaf.edu/water/

Idaho Water Resources Research Institute
http://www.boise.uidaho.edu/

Institute for Water and Watersheds (Oregon)
http://water.oregonstate.edu/

State of Washington Water Research Center
http://www.swwrc.wsu.edu/

Environmental Protection Agency
EPA, Region 10
The Pacific Northwest
http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/

Office of Research and Development, Corvallis Laboratory
http://www.epa.gov/wed/

For more information contact Jan Seago at 206-553-0038 or seago.jan@epa.gov

- Both universities are tied to local governments through issue-based programming driven by community needs. This strong working relationship is embodied in successful collaborations like the Policy Consensus Center, forest resources extension, and Center for Urban Horticulture.

Approach

The University Sound Partnership will be an education, outreach, and advisory program to catalyze measurable local responses for conserving Puget Sound. Our goal is to implement pragmatic solutions to high-priority concerns, such as managing stormwater, reducing pollution, protecting and restoring habitat, preserving freshwater, protecting fish and wildlife, and promoting sustainable development. We will collaborate with tribes, government agencies, schools, environmental groups, businesses, and other constituents.

Over the next five years, the University Sound Partnership will:

1. Build and train a 10,000-member volunteer network to serve as stewards and educators in communities throughout Puget Sound.
2. Establish a diverse team of scientific experts on critical Puget Sound issues to support field staff and engage and educate communities.
3. Develop an effective system for university faculty and students to translate science into usable information for delivery to the public.
4. Create and disseminate materials and programs that engage teachers and students of all ages in critical thinking and practices that change behavior.
5. Monitor and evaluate the education, outreach, and advisory program's positive effect on public behavior.

Outcomes

Over the next five years, the University Sound Partnership will work to ensure that:

1. Puget Sound residents give more than 1 million hours in public service like restoration, research, monitoring, and education.
2. Homeowner implementation of shore and watershed stewardship guidelines, including guidelines on septic systems, water conservation, lawn applications, and low impact development, increases ten-fold.
3. Public understanding and support for science-based action to conserve and protect Puget Sound improves measurably.
4. Twenty thousand K–12 students receive three-hour intensive education experiences on the Puget Sound environment and their impact on it.
5. At least half of all farms, marinas, and maritime businesses implement best management practices to protect critical areas and improve water quality.

For more information visit the Washington Sea Grant web site at: wsg.washington.edu, or contact Penelope Dalton, director of the Washington Sea Grant, by phone (206-543-6600) or email (pdalton@u.washington.edu).

National Water Quality Program Areas

The four land grant universities in the Pacific Northwest have aligned our water resource Extension and research efforts with eight themes of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

1. Animal Waste Management
2. Drinking Water and Human Health
3. Environmental Restoration
4. Nutrient and Pesticide Management
5. Pollution Assessment and Prevention
6. Watershed Management
7. Water Conservation and Management
8. Water Policy and Economics

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