

SHORE STEWARDS NEWS

April 2005 Island County, Washington

Issue No. 6

Water, Water Everywhere

“Water, water, everywhere, and all the boards did shrink; Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink.” These lines, from *The Ancient Mariner*, remind us that although we live on an island surrounded by water, we cannot drink it or use it in our homes. Estimates are that 70-80% of the county’s residents rely on groundwater for their potable drinking water. The exception is the Oak Harbor area, whose water is pumped from the Skagit River near Mt. Vernon, and which is dependent on Cascade Mountains snow pack. Relying on reports done by the Water Resources Advisory Committee, it is estimated that residents of Island County use approximately 1 billion gallons of water from our aquifers each year. It is anticipated that an additional ½ billion gallons will be used by 2,025, when the county is expected to have a population of 100,000.

Our wells that draw on our island aquifers are not as dependent on annual rainfall as many might expect. The aquifers are for the most part deep and are recharged slowly. One year of low rainfall might be offset by another year with high rainfall, so the concerns of drought are not as great as for those who rely on snow packs in the mountains. That does not mean we don’t have to think about conservation. Conservation measures are always important to ensure that we have enough water to drink in this year and future years.

Other concerns about our water can range from man-made problems to naturally occurring ones. Non-point pollution, which can be anything from fertilizers on our lawns to oil leaks from cars, is a major source of concern, and is being addressed by the Watershed Committees on both islands. A naturally occurring chemical, arsenic, is also a problem, as 18-20 percent of all Island County wells tested in recent years exceed the new federal limit of 10 parts per billion, which will take effect in 2006.

For more information on our Island County water situation, come see county hydrogeologist Doug Kelly at a free public program. Sponsored by the WSU Beach Watchers and Shore Stewards, this program will be on Thursday, May 5th, at 7 pm at the Camano Center, 141 N. East Camano Drive. Doors open at 6:30; early arrival suggested.

Email: shorestewards@wsu.edu, or contact Scott Chase at schase@wsu.edu
Phone: 360-629-4522, ext. 6012 (Camano); 360-321-5111, Ext. 6012 (S. Whidbey); 360-678-5111 (N/C Whidbey). This Program is supported by the Washington State University Extension and the Island County Marine Resources Committee

“Where Am I?” A Guide to Island County Maps

One of the greatest things you can find on the Island County Government website is an assortment of maps of Whidbey and Camano. These maps are fantastic in their scope and detail, and you would be wise to visit the site and explore. [Island County Maps](http://www.islandcounty.net/planning/maps) If you can't use the link, the website address is <http://www.islandcounty.net/planning/maps.htm>

You will find 1997 County Aerial Photographs, LiDAR Map, Zip Code Map, AICUZ Noise Zone Map, RAID Map, Countywide Zoning Map, and Critical Areas maps of both islands, plus a Shoreline Designations Map. This is definitely a site worth exploring, and a good example of how our County can now offer services online that used to require a personal visit to the County offices.

Gardening on Your Beach

“Gardening on your beach? What are you talking about planting, anyway? Clams?”

Surprisingly, the answer is yes! Clams, oysters, and other bivalves can be planted on your beach for harvest later, just like other agricultural products. And the WSU Beach Watchers and Shore Stewards program will show you how in a free evening program.

“**Shellfish Seeding on your Beach**” will be presented by Bill Dewey, Public Affairs Manager for Taylor Shellfish Company and owner of Chuckanut Shellfish, Inc. Mr. Dewey will present information on small scale shellfish gardening, including how to get started, treaty rights issues, water quality, paralytic shellfish poisoning, and other important considerations. This discussion is also free and will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 25th at the Camano Center, 141 N. East Camano Drive, Camano Island. (Blue building between the tennis courts and the CASA Animal Shelter.)

If you are interested in finding out where and when to purchase shellfish seed, information will be given at the program. If you would like more information on shellfish seed planting, you can go to their website at <http://www.taylorshellfishfarms.com/seedsales/pages/faq.html>

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Divots in the Sand

Have you ever been on a walk along the flat, sandy beaches of Camano or Whidbey and noticed very large depressions in the sand? Divots that look as if Paul Bunyan created them while trying to get his ball out of the sand trap? Most likely, what you saw was a feeding station for gray whales. The sand flats are often riddled with ghost shrimp holes, making it very hard to walk without sinking up to your knees. To the whales, however, this is like a Friday night seafood buffet. The whales are able to filter the sand out, leaving them with a mouthful of tasty shrimp. And leaving the beaches with these large depressions, which for many years mysteriously appeared without explanation.

Mother's Day Sail

If you saw the information in last month's newsletter about Camano 101, an event to welcome newcomers to the island and introduce them to the varied environmental groups on the island, it was a tremendous success! Approximately 90-95 people attended, many having lived on Camano less than a year.

Many of the same groups will be participating in the Center For Wooden Boats free Mother's Day sail, an annual event in which the public is invited to sail for free at Camano Island State Park. Park Ranger Jeff Wheeler invites people to park for free on that day. The event runs from 10 am to 4 pm and is in and around the newly enclosed beach shelter. When you enter the park, follow the signs that lead you to the boat ramp. Hope to see you there!

Important Programs for Beach and Bluff Property Owners

The Shore Stewards program and WSU Beach Watchers are excited to announce two important programs on Saturdays in June! Jim Johannessen, Licensed Engineering Geologist with Coastal Geologic Services, Inc., will speak on **"Beaches and Bluffs on Camano: Processes and Issues."** The workshop will introduce basic beach and bluff information, discuss natural and altered shoreline processes, recent shoreline mapping on Camano Island, and introduce issues of human modifications. The second workshop/field trip will be **"Vegetation Management for Bluff Property Owners."** This speaker will be Elliott Menashe of Greenbelt Consulting. Mr. Menashe will discuss how decisions we make in the development of our property, including the way we build our homes and businesses, landscape, and garden can affect the environment, which sustains our quality of life. Full details on these programs follow the calendar of events.

Whidbey Events and Programs Needed!

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If the new Shore Stewards on Whidbey Island notice that the majority of the programs and events mentioned in this newsletter occur on Camano, you have the opportunity to change that. If you know of any events or programs that might be of interest occurring during this spring and summer, please let us know! We would love to include them in the newsletter. (Same for those who live on Camano – please share your events.)

Shore Stewards programs are indeed planned for Whidbey. Since the program has just started on Whidbey, please know that it takes a bit of planning and scheduling to get the programs up and running. Your patience and understanding is very much appreciated!

Calendar of Events

April 20th, Wed, 7:00 pm: Backyard Wildlife Habitat sponsors a program titled “**Great Blue Heron Colony on Camano Island**”, with featured speaker Ruth Milner, Dept of Fish and Wildlife. Program at Camano Center, 141 N. East Camano Dr.

April 22nd, Fri, 7-9:00 pm: “**Why Orcas are Dying**” film at The Front Room Bayview Cash Store on Whidbey; (Bayview & Hwy 525). Free, open to public. Refreshments available.

May 5th, Thurs, 7:00 pm: **Water Resources on Camano Island: You and Your Well**. A free program held at the Camano Center, 141 N. East Camano Drive. More details later. .

May 8th, Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm: **Mothers Day Sail with Center for Wooden Boats**. Camano Island State Park. See details in this newsletter.

May 21st, Sat., 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. **Junk Tire Recycling**. Camano Road Shop, next to CASA Animal Shelter. WSU Waste Wise and WSU Beach Watcher volunteers help you get rid of your junk tires for \$2 for each off-rim passenger or light truck tire, \$3.75 on rim. Large truck tires \$6.50 off rim, \$15.75 on rim.

May 25th, Weds, 7:00 pm: **Shellfish Seeding on Your Beach**. Free program at Camano Center. Details in article in this newsletter..

June 11th, Sat, 10:00 am: **Beaches and Bluffs on Camano: Processes and Issues**. Program at Camano Center followed by afternoon fieldtrip. Fee for this program. Space limited

June 25th, Sat, 10:00 am: **Vegetation Management for Bluff Property Owners**. Program at Camano Center followed by afternoon fieldtrip. Fee for this program. Space limited.

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