

Community Engagement Committee

Skagit Watershed Council January 26, 2021, 9:30 am – 11:30 am via Zoom

Present: Stacy Dahl (SLT), Kristi Carpenter (SCD), Lucy DeGrace (SFEG), Pete Haase (SMRC), Olivia Hubert (SFEG), Cindy Pierce (SCD), Beck Pittman (ACFL), Michelle Quast (ECY), Allison Roberts (Kulshan Services), Scottie Schneider (SWC), Karen Summers (SCEA and ECONet), Sylvi Thorstenson (WSU Skagit Extension), Holli Watne (SWC).

1. We approved the November 2020 meeting notes. Approved unanimously.

2. Group updates

SFEG

- Lucy announced SFEG's 30th anniversary this year! A virtual celebration and annual meeting is planned for February 11, 6:30 – 8 pm. She'll be posting it on their website soon.
- Work parties are scheduled from Feb 27 to the end of April every weekend primarily with youth groups, but not schools. Potting and planting parties will be posted on their website.
- She announced they are advertising for Sue's replacement as [Restoration Ecologist](#). It's not too late to apply for employment. They also have a [Riparian Restoration Internship](#) position.
- Olivia – Salmon in the Classroom focus right now. Partnered with Children's Museum of Skagit County. They are reading a children's book that goes along with each stage of the salmon's development. LaConnor school also got eggs although not part of the program. Olivia posted video on their Facebook and Holli will share it.
- Recently posted on their FB page, Jessica Newley snorkeler shared amazing curriculum and 360 video she's doing with Friends of the San Juans.
- Earth Day is April 24 and they will have some events.
- Potting Days are happening too this spring. Must RSVP.
- [Lucy DeGrace's recent blog](#) was complimented.

Concrete Youth Activity Day (update by Scottie)

- The event will be Thursday, July 22nd, 2021
- Currently being planned as a drive-through event, but subject to change depending on COVID safety protocols.
- Participating organizations are encouraged to tie in Concrete Elementary School's summer reading theme : "tails and tales". Other theme suggestions include unity and world travel.

Skagit CD

- Kristi reported that Stream Team and Storm Team are going strong. They can socially distance and do their volunteer work. Kristi has been doing a lot of year-end reports.
- Kristi is continuing the "Poop Fairy" social marketing campaign for Skagit. Anyone who needs the logo or info can contact Kristi. With support from Parks and Recreation staff, they have posted 300 signs posted around the county. It's part of the stormwater education program focusing on urban environments. Kristi added that receptacles are needed where people walk their dogs.
- The Backyard Conservation Short Course was cancelled last year, it will happen this year.
- Cindy Pierce – mid-plant sale pre-orders. They cut it back by half and already they have sold out of three tree types which have been extraordinarily popular.
- The deadline to apply for Board Elections is January 27. Cindy is also responsible for annual training for the Conservation District Boards. She's looking for more interaction with employees statewide

and providing education materials. Unfortunately, she's not getting feedback on these materials from schoolteachers.

- Watershed Masters may be offered this fall depending on restrictions due to COVID.
- Storming the Sound is this Friday, January 29.
- SCEA's Skagit Water Weeks will be happening throughout May. Organizations are encouraged to offer water-related events. Much of it will be online or with limited-size work parties.

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

- Ecology Stream Temperature video project – The video group has met 4-5 times since June 2020. We reviewed existing audience research about increasing awareness in the community about reducing water temperatures and reviewed messages that have resonated with people in Skagit. Ecology conducted an online survey in the fall of 2020 across Skagit County with a total of 260 responses. The survey is now closed and Michelle is correlating survey responses. She will share results with this group once in final draft form. Already the information has revealed that 40% of the people who took the survey were totally unaware of water temperature issues in Skagit. People also expressed interest in the video and other outreach materials. Ecology also established relationships with a couple landowners who will allow drone footage for the video series.

SKAGIT LAND TRUST

- The SLT auction in the fall was pretty successful.
- Stacy reported they reduced volunteer opportunities for the fall and winter. They are doing small work parties more frequently. Land Steward Aides sign up online to volunteer. Anyone who is interested can [apply](#). The Anacortes Honor Society has expressed interest in volunteering this way.
- Their annual meeting is in March (TBA) with a speaker and SLT business conducted via Zoom.
- They will be at [Tope Ryan Conservation Area](#) every day from Feb 8-26. This property protects 16 acres of former agricultural land including 900 feet of shoreline along the Samish River north of Burlington. She is working on signage there about planting vegetative buffers which serve as a filter between farms and shade.
- Book Club has been popular. Their conversation about *The Overstory* resulted in largest participation ever. On March 11, they'll discuss *The Sun is a Compass* which is about a scientist who leaves laboratory work and does a 4,000-mile human-paddled trip to Alaska.
- They continue providing seasonal Nature Bags for the Kulshan Neighborhood Program. Winter bags had wreath-making material, binoculars, and a backyard birding brochure for neighborhood watching. In March they are planning a nature scavenger hunt. Summer activity planning is delayed, but they anticipate it will be about close-to-home and neighborhood walks. Usually the group does Mountain School at NCI in the summer. It is unclear if this will be allowed this year.

WSU SKAGIT EXTENSION

- Silvi has been participating in planning Storming the Sound. <https://www.pacname.org/regional-chapters/washington/storming-the-sound/>
- She has been doing an art exhibit about invasive species in lakes. She cited a project using an invasive water hyacinth that is making paper: <https://estesigal.wixsite.com/taller-delirio>. Silvi would love to hear your ideas for this project. There is potential for an artist exhibit. Suggested locations could be at the Grange, MoNA (InsideOut Gallery), Skagit Valley College or even Big Lake Golf Course (proximate to the lake).
- She got an inquiry about whether Shore Stewards could be an outreach platform for tsunami emergency management. She also shared a program on Toxics in Puget Sound: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/5030144>

SKAGIT WATERSHED COUNCIL

- Holli spoke about upcoming [Illuminight](#) virtual event this week. This year, she made 600 kits distributed through schools, Tri-Dee Arts and the Museum of Northwest Art. She was nervous about the Luminary arts contest, but she was thrilled to receive [50 entries](#)! The actual event will be streamed live on [SWC Facebook page](#).

FRIENDS OF SKAGIT BEACHES, PADILLA BAY, AND SHORE STEWARDS

- Padilla Bay has a number of online offerings, including [Kids on the Beach](#) with Annie Englund with Concrete, SW, Conway, and La Connor. They are doing most outreach online and hoping for school field trips late in the school year. This year they relied on well-scripted pre-recorded videos with good response. They did a mud-flat safari that could be used by teachers.
- Padilla Bay has the touch pool now. On Wednesday morning they do virtual “quick dips” to showcase what’s in the aquarium. The Interpretive Center is closed due to COVID with virtual classes offered through June 2021.
- Fidalgo Bay Day is anticipated to happen in late August 2021
- Friends of Skagit Beaches Winter Lecture Series held on the 3rd Friday of the month at the ESD have gone virtual. February’s event is called Long Live the Kings with Jacques White presenting.
- They may fund work with SLT’s interpretive signs along the Fidalgo Bay Reserve and Padilla Bay. With few public beaches, this is an important effort for this next funding cycle.
- [Sarah Brostrom](#) is now the Coastal Training Program Coordinator and is also coordinating the [Salish Sea Stewards](#) which starts February 23 on Zoom with field trip activities hoped for late in the season.
- Washington’s Padilla Bay Reserve is [celebrating four decades](#) in 2021.

FRIENDS OF THE FOREST

- Beck Pittman spoke about taking 1st through 5th grade kids out in the forest for 2-hours to measure canopy coverage. Wants to incorporate longer-term relationship building.
 - Their virtual programs offer a promising online ACFL Naturalist Program. In December, they did 3 classes on Saturday mornings with mixed-age groups. 1st course was Nature Journal, 2nd Course was dichotomous Key, and 3rd course was on compass work with maps. They do it in their virtual Treehouse Classroom.
 - They are partnering with Fidalgo Nature School with an outdoor preschool intro-program once a week for four weeks in spring and fall. Parents come with the kids and its co-op style.
 - Another partnering organization is Transition Fidalgo and Green Club at Anacortes HS where they can create real-world contextual studies on environmental sciences and monitoring projects. They will be the liaison between citizen science and kids. While still in the planning stages, they are looking to implementing it by the end of 2021.
 - They are planning on summer camps and regular school partnerships. Normally they would be in 3rd and 7th grade, but this year they are paring it down to 3rd graders with a virtual orientation utilizing the school grounds. They are working with the school nurse to ensure health and safety.
 - Strategically, they are offering a balanced virtual and in-person approach. They are trying to continue their speaker series which they had in the fall of 2020 and are hoping to do something in spring 2021. Anyone interested in doing a virtual presentation, they are open. In February, they have a members meeting and a speaker.
 - There will be no Salmon Festival in 2021. The committee wants to do something and/or tag on to an event. Perhaps the Letterbox Trail might work well with the Salmon Festival theme.
 - Pete Haase offered condolences about the Bald Eagle Festival demise due to COVID.
3. Pete asked if there was room for more collaboration on efforts for socially distanced outdoor adventure-oriented summer event such as a “Fidalgo Bay Day” scavenger hunt, and the Letterbox Trail concept.

- The group seemed positive about expanding to a collaborative approach around the Letterbox Trail which could roll out seasonally in spring, then summer, then fall.
- Holli suggested the group could investigate doing educational scavenger hunts through Geocaching. The group was not interested in following up with this idea.
- Letterbox trail will launch in May during Skagit Water Weeks. Karen will be on maternity leave, but she's hoping to get everything organized ahead of time. We all can help and add more trails over the summer.
- Beck suggested doing a virtual "Council of all Beings" in which participants represent a group of being (such as "loggers" or "beavers") and try to find a solution to a problem that works best for everyone. You figure out your position in the eco-system with a goal to come to consensus to create a better world for all being. If facilitated well, discussion and reflection can promote great conversations. This concept would use teams and break-out rooms. The group expressed some interest in this idea.

4. Set up a time for another virtual Green Drinks? March 17th
5:15 pm Wear green!

Adjourn 11:30 am