

Community Engagement Committee

Skagit Watershed Council November 28th, 2023, 1-2:30pm, @ this [Zoom link](#)

Minutes

Present: Stacy Dahl + Sydney Benson (SLT), Erin Merklein + Liam Chamberland (BPNERR), Bob Gillespie (NPS),
Melissa Ciesielski (SITC), Jeff O (SAS), Lucy DeGrace (SFEG), and Holli Watne (SWC)

1. We approved the Sept 2023 notes
2. Roundtable of updates
 - a. Skagit Audubon Society – Made multiple connections with help from the CEC this year. Appreciative of this group. Thinking of tabling/sponsoring Storming the Sound. Exploring the possibility of hiring a tech person for an AV program at Padilla Bay.
 - b. Swinomish Indian Tribal Community - will be presenting on story-telling at Storming the Sound. Will be presenting at a Washington/Oregon higher education conference on Monday. Programs continues in LA Conner School. Participating in Salmon in the Classroom this year.
 - c. Skagit Land Trust – Loss of entire stewardship team. Will be hiring soon, starting with director. Work parties will be light in the meantime. [Swanrise events](#) start in January. In these popular events, we take folks into non-public areas at dawn to watch swans take off to fields to feeds. Sydney is the new community engagement AmeriCorps member. Work parties: 12/2 march point, 12/15 Tope Ryan bever fence removal. MLK day of service work party at little Mountain will be announce soon.
 - d. Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve – Erin is the new education staff who also does volunteer coordinator for the Salish Sea Stewards program. Liam is the education AmeriCorps member this year. Helping put on the Youth Earth Summit on 12/8.

- e. Native Plant Society – Bob is the new program coordinator for our local chapter (Salal). He wants to do more outreach. Currently developing a plant propagation workshop.
- f. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group – Lots of upcoming events. Potting/ planting season starts on Feb 24th. Downsizing nursery, outsourcing more plants. Last salmon sightings this Saturday. Dec 15th “Big Babies release” – children’s museum releasing salmon that they’ve had in their tank since last spring. They will be getting 200 new eggs in Dec. Jan 13th (tentative) presentation at the Skagit River Bald Eagle Interpretive Center. La Conner HS will be participating in Salmon in the Classroom. We usually work with 5th grade, but they didn’t have the capacity to manage the tank this year. The High Schools will present to 2nd graders about what they learned about salmon development.
- g. Skagit Conservation District (emailed in by Cindy Pierce)-
 - i. Our Skagit CD quarterly eNews will be go on December 1. You can sign up to receive these at <https://www.skagitcd.org/>.
 - ii. Our annual native plant pre-sale store opens on December 15. It is a first-come, first-serve basis.
 - iii. We will be participating in the [WSU Country Living Expo](#) on January 27. It is a great event and if you want to attend or table at the booth.
 - iv. We will have a table at the Storming the Sound on January 25, 2024.
 - v. We are looking for assistance at the Skagit Youth Conservation Tour. If you would like to host a station or assist in any way, please let Cindy know. The dates are May 7 & 8, 2024 at Pomona Grange Park in Burlington.
 - vi. Carla is gearing up for the 2024 Backyard Conservation Short course in March/April 2024. She will also be hosting an LID workshop in February/March 2024.
 - vii. The Soil and Water Stewardship poster contest will be held in March of next year for K-12 grades.

- viii. Watershed model presentations are currently underway. Spring is typically the heaviest ask for these presentations.
 - h. Skagit Watershed Council -.Gearing up for a busy season of luminary programs. We have just started the process of interviewing for our new Executive Director.
3. We approved the schedule for next year's meetings:

January 30th, Feb 27th, March 26th, April 30th, May 28th, June 25th, July 30th, Aug 27th, Sept 24th, Oct 29th, Nov 26th. All will be hybrid with an option to join at the Skagit Watershed Council Office, from 1-3pm.
4. Erin Merklein gave a presentation to summarize the results of Padilla Bay NERR's recent needs assessment for their education department, which includes a market analysis to discover gaps and overlap in estuary education topic and audiences in the central Salish Sea. This process is required for them every 10 years. 1803 regional teachers were invited to participate in a survey, 191 responded. Here are some findings of interest:
 - a. Students are 40-90% white. Hispanic is the most common minority. Spanish is the primary non-English language.
 - b. Usually, teachers plan their own field trips. Some schools have teams that work on this for the school. District-level planning is uncommon.
 - c. About half schools require at least 2 classes participate in field trips. Some require the whole grade to go.
 - d. The best time for teachers to do professional development during spring breaks or during the school day with substitute.

Upcoming events:

- [Surge](#) (MoNA exhibit about local impacts of climate change), including an interactive [display by PBNERR](#), Oct 14th to Jan 21st
- Storming the Sound @ Maple Hall in La Conner, January 25th
- Illuminight Winter Walk, downtown MV, January 26th
- WSU Country Living Expo on January 27
- Sound Waters University, Feb 3rd
- Skagit Youth Conservation Tour, May 7 & 8, 2024 at Pomona Grange Park in Burlington.