



Make a Difference

By Joan Schrammeck
Sound Water Stewards

SOUND WATERS UNIVERSITY: A ONE-DAY UNIVERSITY FOR ALL

The first Saturday of February each year, Sound Water Stewards of Island County delivers to the public a full day of science-based classes to connect people with the local marine environment, shorelines, bluffs, wildlife, forests, watersheds and ecosystems. The event brings together a variety of subject matter experts, organizations and individuals. It is a day to learn, to share knowledge, and to connect with others who are passionate about caring for Whidbey Island and the Salish Sea. Now in its 27th year, this event is called Sound Waters University, a "one day university for all."

The event begins with a keynote speaker followed by choices for high-quality classes taught by professionals from throughout the region, including many favorites who return year after year. Lunchtime and breaks allow for visiting with exhibitors and learning about programs sponsored by government, tribes, nonprofits and private entities.

In recent years, this event has maxed out all of the available space at South Whidbey High School in Langley eclipsing 60 classrooms, the auditorium, cafeteria and all common areas. A full-capacity crowd of 700 people attended and more were turned away. Putting on the "university" took more than 40 volunteers who cumulatively contributed nearly 2,000 hours of time.

Sound Waters University Goes Virtual

Fast forward to the year of the pandemic. Because of COVID, the next Sound Waters University will be a virtual event Saturday, Feb. 6. By utilizing a virtual platform, attendance will not be restricted by room capacity or geography. Registrants will be able to watch all of the classes offered, either live the day of or the recorded versions later, or jump from class to class.

Keynote: Dr. Peter S. Ross

The purpose of Sound Waters University is to inform and encourage people to put their new knowledge into action. The SWU 2021 keynote speaker exemplifies this purpose. Dr. Peter S. Ross is the vice-president of research at Ocean Wise and the executive director of the Coastal Ocean Research Institute (CORI) which are based at the Vancouver Aquarium in Vancouver, B.C. Ross oversees 10 research programs at Ocean Wise with a focus on conservation science and is an international authority in the area of ocean pollution. In his talk, "Sea of Trouble – Taking Action On Plastics Pollution," he will describe the dangers of microplastics which today are found in every ocean, on the highest mountains and in the air, and outline steps we can take to turn around the problem.



Wide Range of Classes

Four subsequent sessions round out the diverse class offerings for 2021. Topics include: Ocean Acidification with Dr. Brooke Love of Western Washington University; Conservation of the Endangered Tufted Puffin with Dr. Peter Hodum of University of Puget Sound; Stopping the Invasive Asian Giant Hornet with Cassie Cichorz of Washington State Department of Agriculture; Understanding Treaty Rights and Tribal Sovereignty with Ryan Miller of Tulalip Tribes; Explanation of Tides and Currents of the Salish Sea with Jack Hartt, author and retired State Park Ranger; and Understanding Forest Health in Western Washington with Kevin Zobrist of Washington State University. This is just a sampling. A complete list of speakers and topics along with exhibitors can be found on the website at www.soundwatersuniversity.org.

Registration is now open

Saturday, Feb. 6, sessions run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Registration for Sound Waters University is now open. Early bird tickets are \$45 until Jan. 15, then the price goes up to \$50. Since anyone can attend, you are invited to share the details and website with interested persons far and wide.

This annual event is presented by Sound Water Stewards, a mission-driven nonprofit organization, as a means of delivering high quality environmental education, inspiring stewardship and promoting citizen science in support of research.

For more information, see www.soundwatersuniversity.org and www.soundwaterstewards.org.

Guide Book makes a great gift

Sound Water Stewards recently published *Getting to the Water's Edge*, a guide book to 69 public access beaches in Island County. At only \$20, it makes a great gift. The book is found at local bookstores, gift shops and hardware stores or may be purchased online at the Sound Water Stewards website.



SOUND WATERS UNIVERSITY 2021

February 6, 2021

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