



Make a Difference

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WE CAN WEATHER THE FUTURE TOGETHER AS STEWARDS

As folks in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) have geared up and survived yet another heat wave, many are discussing the now-tangible evidence of extreme climate events. Perhaps serendipitous timing, as the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its report titled "Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis" on Aug. 9. Highlighted for the Pacific Northwest area, a region identified as "Western North America" in the IPCC report, residents should anticipate sea level rise; increased drought and fire weather with high confidence; and increases in extreme precipitation events being very likely, as well as river and pluvial flooding with medium confidence. Sounds daunting, no? Especially when we think of ourselves as individuals within a larger societal body: "What could I possibly do that might make a difference?"

Mistakes of the past cannot be undone, yet we can listen to the wisdom of those that have lived in harmony with nature for millennia: Indigenous Communities. On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, experts of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) urged governments to learn from the environmental examples set by indigenous communities.

"Biodiversity loss and climate change, in combination with the unsustainable management of resources, are pushing natural spaces around the world, from forests to rivers to savannahs, to the breaking point," said Siham Drissi, Biodiversity and Land Management Programme Officer, UNEP. "We absolutely need to protect, preserve and promote the traditional knowledge, customary sustainable use and expertise of indigenous communities if we want to halt the damage we're doing – and ultimately save ourselves."

A Community of Stewards

Environmental stewardship is considered the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to enhance ecosystem resilience and human well-being. The truth of the matter is, environmental stewardship starts with each and every one of us taking responsibility for our actions. In fact, thinking of our homes, properties, and communities as an ecosystem is a great start. Yet, to make a real global impact, we need every business, investor and citizen to commit to stewarding the ecosystem in which we live.

This generation has the ability to make things right by stewarding their lands and community's ecosystems. Yet, what does this look like for the average person, particularly those of us living on Whidbey Island? No matter where you live, there are a multitude of actions you can take.

How We Can Each Make a Difference

First and foremost, become familiar with where you live. Not just the streets, conveniences and people; think about the environment in terms of natural resources, such as water, air, soil, wildlife, and plants. Consider what has noticeably degraded in the ecosystem in the time you've been living here, and what is contributing to it. This is invaluable information and an important action you can take is speaking with your local Representative(s) about it. If they don't know, they can't act on our behalf and the larger societal body.

Another opportunity is to find ways to contribute to the sustainability of our own community, in whatever way you are able. This could mean reconsidering your landscape to foster better soil health or fire resistance; choosing a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) box with fresh produce from local farmers; volunteering with an environmental group of your choice; or taking stewardship of your own home.

Last but not least, learn and prepare. Inform yourself about the data and projections of these extreme weather events. The PNW is expected to experience sea level rise; milder winter temperatures with increased heavy-rain events and less of the classic Seattle "drizzle;" warmer summer temperatures with more heat waves and forest fires; and, more winter flooding, as a result of the heavy storm events. With any of these projections, consider how you can steward your home to make it more resilient. For more information, look at the PNW Tribal Climate Change Network, as they are currently working on the Cascadia Climate Adaptation Strategy.

Truly, most of us who have moved to Whidbey Island have done so because we fell in love with the forests, beaches, views, hikes and community – we fell in love with the ecosystem on Whidbey Island. This is the reason it is important we take care of our ecosystem first, speak with our Representatives, and learn from the Indigenous Communities how to become stewards that take responsibility for the sustainability of our natural environment, its resources and people.

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FACT #3: The Delta variant can cause more severe illness than previous strains in unvaccinated people.

FACT #4: COVID-19 is now attacking our children.

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