



Great Peninsula Conservancy

Fall 2018

Protecting our lands and waters for generations to come



Protecting forever
the natural habitats,
rural landscapes, and
open spaces of the
Great Peninsula.

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Cover photo by Brenna Thompson
Back cover photo by Don Paulson
Interior photos by GPC staff

Turning the Tide for Puget Sound

Orcas and Climate Change

It's been a tough summer as we suffer through sad stories of starving and dying orcas and weeks of intense heat and heavy smoke. We are now forced more than ever before to come to grips with the changes happening to our beloved Puget Sound. What do we do?

We must recognize the urgency of the situation. We must pick up the pace of our conservation efforts and undertake new emergency tactics. We are at a turning point. Can we save the Southern Resident orcas, now down to 75 individuals? We don't know.

We do know that one of the biggest obstacles to recovery of these orcas is the catastrophic decline in Chinook salmon – their primary food. Survival of Chinook depends on vibrant spawning streams, a healthy ocean where the salmon spend several years growing to maturity, and undisturbed shorelines which act as nurseries for young salmon and spawning grounds for the forage fish upon which adult salmon feed. All three habitats face numerous threats.

Our home here on the Great Peninsula has one of the longest shorelines in Puget Sound. How we care for our beaches and tidal estuaries can turn the tide for orcas. Fortunately, Great Peninsula Conservancy has already saved over half a mile of shoreline this year, and we are on track to add double that amount in the coming months. Please help us accelerate this work with your donation today.

Can we stop or reverse the warming that has led to extreme weather and forest fires? Climate change feels big and hopeless. But I believe Initiative 1631: Clean Air Clean Energy WA offers us a realistic option. It imposes a fee on polluting oil refineries and utilities, not as a penalty but to create investments in clean energy and restoring healthy forests and shorelines. It gives me a voice. I plan to vote Yes on I-1631 in November and encourage you to do the same. Together we can stand up for Puget Sound, the salmon, and orcas. It may be our last chance.

Sandra

Sandra Staples-Bortner
Executive Director

Bremerton Urban Roots

Get Outside! Hands-On Learning Brings Teens Together



This past summer Great Peninsula Conservancy launched a new outdoor education program to help teens and youth learn about their local environment through hands-on service projects and outdoor environmental experiences.

Over the course of the summer, 30 teens joined us to explore tide pools at Kitsap Memorial Park, learn how to care for parks and nature preserves, meet a barred owl, kestrel, and opossum from West Sound Wildlife Shelter, plant a community garden at Marvin Williams Recreation Center, and much more.

The highlight of the program was a kayak trip to the Dosewallips Estuary on the western shore of Hood Canal led by Kayak Brinnon. For most of the students this was their first time kayaking, and for many it was their first time being on a boat other than the ferry. It was a rough start when we first set out in tandem kayaks, with lots of crossed paddles and colliding boats.

As students became increasingly adept at paddling and steering, they started to really enjoy spending time on the water. A lucky few spotted a river otter foraging along the shoreline, bald eagles soared overhead, and all around us seals popped their heads up to see what all the excitement was about.

It was a magical trip that helped the teens increase their self-confidence, improve their teamwork, and above all have fun in the great outdoors.

Bremerton Urban Roots was run in collaboration with New Life Community Development Agency and was supported by Russell Family Foundation, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group, and GPC members.





Photo by Don Paulson

Solving the Salmon Problem

To Save Puget Sound Orcas

This summer, millions of people followed the story of the mother orca J35, as she mourned the death of her newborn. For 17 days and hundreds of miles, she starved herself to carry her dead calf, diving into the depths to bring the infant back to the surface each time it fell.

Now we watch and wait as scientists try to help another orca in the Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW) J pod: the emaciated three-year-old, J50. At this point, another loss for the resident killer whales would be one more step toward extinction.

J35 and J50 brought worldwide attention to our endangered resident orcas and the threats they face. In the 1970s, aquariums decimated the SRKW pods to lock the whales in tanks for entertainment (killing many in their capture and transit attempts). In the following decades, destruction of habitat and overfishing of salmon, as well as pollution, climate change, and vessel noise and disturbance stacked the odds against these orcas.

Resident orcas are extraordinary creatures; they have large matrilineal pods with unique calls that differ by family. They work as teams, supporting each other and sharing food. They exhibit emotions, mourning their dead and “playing”: chasing porpoises and carrying them on their pectoral fins.

While transient orcas roam far and wide and eat large sea mammals, our resident orcas have an affinity for the Salish Sea and almost exclusively eat endangered Chinook salmon. Their pods will follow Chinook runs from as far

“Citizens of the Salish Sea are faced with a decision: dramatically change how we think about and invest in ecosystem restoration or risk losing Southern Resident killer whales forever.”

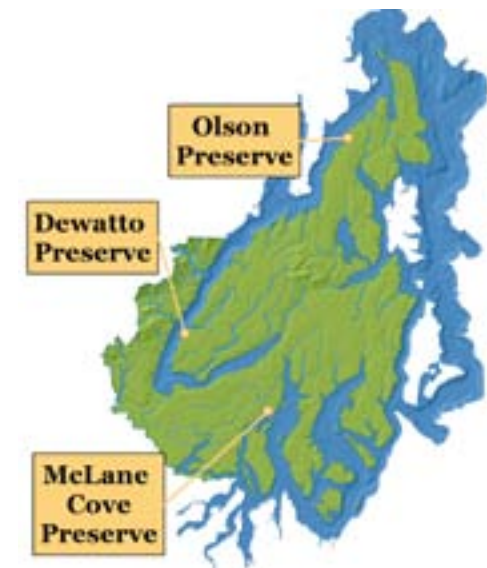
—Joe Gaydos, Science Director at SeaDoc Society

south as California, up past the Columbia and Fraser rivers, sometimes to the waters of Southeast Alaska. As they have more difficulty locating Chinook, it is becoming less and less common to see the residents in Puget Sound. A glimpse off a ferry or sighting in Haro Strait in the San Juans is rare. When we do see orcas in our waters, they are often transient groups hunting the seals that our residents don’t eat.

Ken Balcombe, the founder of the Center for Whale Research on Friday Harbor, puts it simply when he says, “Everybody loves whales, and we know they eat salmon. So let’s solve the salmon problem.”

In March 2018, Governor Inslee created a task force to identify immediate emergency actions to save Southern Resident killer whales. In an analysis of Chinook salmon runs, Puget Sound Chinook were identified as the highest priority for orca recovery.

While emergency measures to increase hatchery production of Chinook and remove dams along the Snake River are assessed, we must look to long-term solutions. Science Director at SeaDoc Society, Joe Gaydos said, “Citizens of the Salish Sea are faced with a decision: dramatically change how we think about and invest in ecosystem restoration or risk losing Southern Resident killer whales forever.”



Investing in Our Ecosystems

The waterways, shorelines, and estuaries of our Great Peninsula play a critical role in the lives of Chinook salmon. Long-term habitat restoration solutions can mitigate the crisis our salmon and orcas face. It’s been twenty years since the L pod spent a month in the waters of Bremerton’s Dyes Inlet delighting nearby neighbors. Now resident orcas are down 20 whales from that time, and their future becomes less certain every day.

With this in mind, Great Peninsula Conservancy is prioritizing the conservation of pristine shorelines and estuaries that act as nurseries for salmon and provide habitat for forage fish. Young salmon slowly make their way to the open sea by following Puget Sound’s shorelines and are especially attracted to estuaries where they find lower salinity levels, shade from overhanging trees, abundant food, and refuge from large predatory fish.

Since January, GPC has forever protected over half a mile and 80 acres of shoreline. The most recent project, McLane Cove in South Puget Sound, has nearly one-quarter mile of forested shoreline. Earlier this year, we focused on the protection of Hood Canal shoreline at our new Olson (pictured) and Dewatto preserves. With thousands of feet of shoreline, acres of tidelands and mature forest, and a salmon stream with fall chum, these properties will help insure a thriving food chain for Chinook salmon and orcas.

We know that habitat restoration is a key component in solving the salmon problem and saving our endangered marine life. Great Peninsula Conservancy members are committed to investing in our ecosystem and in the salmon and orcas that bring them to life.



Recognitions and Honors



We celebrated **Kate Kuhlman** with our Conservation Award at GPC's Spring Dinner. Kate joined GPC's staff in 2001, after serving one year as GPC Vice President, and retired early this year. Her many years of dedication to Great Peninsula Conservancy and our mission have left a legacy of conserved lands.



Cindy Moore joined GPC as Finance and Operations Director in January after years in nonprofit management and the financial industry. Cindy loves the great outdoors. You'll often find her in her garden, watching birds or sitting by her pond feeding her snapping turtles.



Bryan Garcia joined GPC's board in August. He is a local business owner with a background in geology and surface mine reclamation. He loves to spend time outdoors boating, fishing, hunting, and hiking with his family.

Many thanks to **Peter Best** and **Kathy Peters**, our retiring board members!

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER

GPC-REI Port Gamble Park Stewardship Day Part One

When: September 29
9am - noon

Where:
Port Gamble Forest
Heritage Park: Upland
Kingston, WA 98346

Join us on National Public Lands Day to work on trails, build a viewpoint platform, and put up interpretative signage. Bring work boots and gloves. Lunch will be provided!

Project in partnership with Kitsap County and Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Stewardship Group.

OCTOBER

GPC-REI Port Gamble Park Stewardship Day Part Two

When: October 27
9am - noon

Where:
Port Gamble Forest
Heritage Park: Waterfront
Kingston, WA 98346

#OptOutside and make an impact! Continue Port Gamble Park stewardship work on the waterfront. Construct a kiosk and benches and plant native plants. Bring work boots and gloves. Lunch will be provided!

Project in partnership with Kitsap County and Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Stewardship Group.

NOVEMBER

Kitsap Salmon Tours

When: November 3
10am - 2pm

Where:
Mouth of Chico Creek
4270 Kittyhawk Dr NW,
Bremerton, WA 98312

Kitsap Salmon Tours will be held at 8 locations across Kitsap County! Join GPC at the mouth of Chico Creek to see returning salmon and the results of restoration work on the lower reaches of the creek. Boots are recommended to walk the muddy path to the delta.

Register for events on our new website! Visit GreatPeninsula.org



Memorial and Honor Gifts

In honor of **Elisabeth Bondy**
Natalie Bryson

In honor of **Gary & Marilyn Cunningham**
Gary & Celia Parrott

In honor of **Jake & Ruby**
Trudy Jones

In honor of **Jayne & Paul Larson**
Hilary Hamlin

In honor of **Wes Larson**
Jay & Suzy Wakefield

In honor of **Winnie Pedersen**
Benhard K. & Charlotte L. Pedersen

In honor of **Kathleen Peters**
Mary Koon

In honor of **Sarah Vines**
Ward & Jane Hinrichs

In memory of **Michael Barnett**
Peter & Ellen Barnett

In memory of **Natalie Bryson**
Joyce Merkel

In memory of **Bill Covington**
Bonnie Loop

In memory of **Virginia Cowling**
Janeen Dorsch

In memory of **Boyd Gravunder**
Jill Gravunder

In memory of **Alice Harris**
Gary & Celia Parrott

In memory of **Blanche Horne**
Ron & Bernadette Olson

In memory of **George Koehler**
Robert & Linda Welander

In memory of **Reni Moriarity**
Mark Runions

In memory of **Thorton Percival**
Bo Blakey

In memory of **Gordon Walgren**
Gary & Marilyn Cunningham
David & Briahna Murray
Sally Snyder Paxton
Bill & Sandra Walgren

In memory of **Donald Wilhite**
B.J. Wilhite



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