



Island County

Serving the communities of Camano & Whidbey Islands

Island County Natural Resources Newsletter September 2025

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Natural Resources Newsletter

September 2025

Announcements



Preserving the Legacy of a Deceased Gray Whale

Island County Natural Resources first got involved with the project when the deceased gray whale was discovered near Ebey's Landing in mid-July. We worked with NOAA, the Marine Mammal Stranding Network, Washington State Parks, the Island County Marine Resources Committee, and others to provide public notice, safety and health guidance, physical beach signage, and additional outreach regarding the whale.



When the currents picked up, transported, and eventually deposited the whale a few miles south on the beaches of YMCA Camp Casey, ICDNR then had the opportunity to work with Camp Casey staff, Sound Water Stewards, and numerous other volunteers to process the decomposing whale in order to preserve the skeleton for future scientific education. Members of the DNR staff hauled blubber, cleaned bones, organized efforts, and provided other technical support for the day-long event held on August 8th.

The skeleton will be cleaned, processed, and re-assembled in an outdoor display in the coming months.

Why are Seasonal Streams Vital to Island County?



Did you know that streams don't have to run year-round to provide many of the same functions and values as rivers and larger streams? Seasonal streams are vital components of the local ecosystem!

According to the EPA, seasonal streams:

- are hydrologically and biologically connected to downstream waters.
- provide many upstream and downstream benefits; protection against floods, filter pollutants, recycle potentially harmful nutrients, and provide food and habitat for many types of fish and other creatures
- play a critical role in maintaining the quality and supply of our drinking water, ensure a continual flow of water to surface waters, and help recharge underground aquifers.

On Whidbey and Camano Islands small coastal streams provide rearing and growing habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon. Most juvenile Chinook Salmon use pocket estuaries and small streams in the months of January through May (Beamer et al. 2003; Beamer et al. 2006; Beamer et al. 2013) when these small seasonal streams are running. The two small seasonal streams that run into Race Lagoon are a great example of this. This past water year, these streams flowed from December through May with peak flow rates in March, coinciding with juvenile salmon use. In September, no water is flowing through these stream channels, but you can see the importance of protecting these habitats!



Noxious Weeds: Tips and Tricks



Fall is a great time to prepare your property for a weed-free season next year!

Here are some things you can do to control noxious and invasive weeds, dispose of them properly (and for free!), and help minimize regrowth next season.

Control and disposal tips:

- Removing noxious weeds before they produce flowers or seeds is always the most effective means of conducting control and eradication work. If possible, conduct work during spring or fall months as plants are smaller or past prime, soils are loose for easier removal of rooting system, and aren't actively producing new plants, flowers, or seeds.
- **FALL SEASON TIP:** If plants are going to seed, clip seedheads and immediately place in a bag to minimize new seed getting into the seed bank. Once you have removed seedheads from the plant, remove the rest of the plant using mechanical

or manual control methods. Ensure you use a sturdy contractor trash bag so you do not get tears or rips that might inadvertently spread seed.

- Be sure all your noxious weeds are secured (i.e., bagged or tarpred if in a pickup bed or trailer) so you don't accidentally spread reproductive material on your way.
- Composting plants is not recommended as heat generated from most home operations is not sufficient to destroy seeds and spreading the roots of the plant.
- Clean off all your gear and clothes when removal is complete. Use a brush on your boots and tools to ensure you are not bringing unwanted hitchhikers to new areas.

DID YOU KNOW? Any noxious weeds listed on the Island County Noxious Weed List qualify for our free disposal incentive program.

Weeds can be taken to any of our **County solid waste facilities** (Coupeville, Oak Harbor, Bayview, and Camano). In 2024, Island County residences disposed of **over 118 tons** of noxious weed material! This program allows landowners to safely remove plant reproductive material that may re-infest a site, at no cost to them.



Programmatic Updates & Events

September MRC Meeting

September 2nd, 2025 - WSU Extension (406 N Main St., Coupeville, WA) or via Zoom

Island County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) is an advisory body to county government established in 1999 and comprised of many community volunteers who represent diverse interests and industries, with the common goal to protect and restore marine resources in the Puget Sound area through scientific monitoring, restoration projects, and community education. They hold monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of every month.

Zoom information is available on the [MRC website](#).

Community Litter Cleanup Events in September

WSU Extension Community Litter Cleanup Program Volunteer Beach Cleanup events take place on **Tuesdays, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm**.

Volunteer Opportunity!

Beach Litter Cleanup



1. September 2, Freeland Park

2. September 9, Grassier's Lagoon/Cove

3. September 23, Oak Harbor Marina

4. September 30, Ebey's Landing

Learn more at:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/island/nrs/beachlitter/>

Learn + Act

Island Climate Stewards



Are you interested in climate education & action? Check out this program offered by Washington State University. Together with the WA Climate Education and Extension Team, WSU Island Extension is proud to launch Climate Stewards, a program designed to elevate climate literacy, expand community engagement, and build a resilient future across the state. To learn more, visit [Climate Stewards](#) | [Island County](#) | [Washington State University](#).

Shore Friendly Trivia

SHORE FRIENDLY

Shoreline TRIVIA!

What is one of the best natural defenses against coastal erosion?

- A) Concrete seawalls
- B) Driftwood and native plants
- C) Gravel driveways
- D) Beach raking

This design was prepared by the Island County Shore Friendly Program which is funded wholly or in part by the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program, and Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead.

Answer:

B) Driftwood and native plants

Natural elements like driftwood and deep-rooted native vegetation help stabilize shorelines, absorb wave energy, and prevent erosion—all while supporting fish and wildlife habitat.

[Shore Friendly Program | Island County, WA](#)

Shore Friendly Plant of the Month

Kinnikinnick is a versatile groundcover that helps with surface erosion. It grows best in well drained soils on gentle to steep slopes.

Do you have questions about your shoreline property? [Request a visit](#).






PLANT OF THE MONTH!

**DISCOVER THE KINNIKINNICK
(ARCTOSTAPHYLOS UVA-URSI)**



DESCRIPTION

Height: 6-12+ Inches
Leaves: Alternate, simple, oblong, up to 1 inch long, glossy dark green above and lighter below.
Flowers: Perfect (male and female), white with a pink tinge, and nodding urn-shaped.
Fruit: Bright red drupes may appear in late summer.



Kinnikinnick is a versatile groundcover that helps with surface erosion. It grows best in well drained soils on gentle to steep slopes.

**DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
ABOUT YOUR SHORELINE
PROPERTY?**





Kinnikinnick is a versatile groundcover that helps with surface erosion. It grows best in well drained soils on gentle to steep slopes.

Thank you for your interest in Island County Natural Resources.

For more information, contact Jen Schmitz: J.Schmitz@islandcountywa.gov or 360-914-0841.

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