

OPINION

VIEWPOINT | Eco champions to have their say in The Record

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In the 1960s I spent countless hours on our beach at Mutiny Bay serving as my neighbor Helen's "eyes" as she engaged in her favorite pastime of finding the tiny pearlescent shells in the tide line. We'd spend hours on the beach together and during those long summer days, she taught me to recognize the calls of the seabirds and to love the seals, otters and other life we observed together. So began my lifelong love affair with the "Waters of Whidbey."

Today, nearly 50 years later, I am extremely fortunate to still walk that very same beach on a daily basis. These days when I walk, I find that I am filling my pockets with pieces of plastic and styrofoam instead of those tiny shells. While the beauty still remains, I feel deeply the responsibility to care for this beautiful place — and know that truly, the health of Whidbey waters are in all of our hands.

Another way I am working to protect this place I have called home for so many years is through my work as coordinator of Whidbey ECO Network. Whidbey ECO Network is an umbrella network of individuals and organizations on Whidbey Island working to protect the health of Puget Sound and the environment. Over 50 local organizations — from county government departments, Orca Network, WSU Beach Watchers, to K-12 schools — belong to Whidbey ECO Network. The mission of our network is to "work together to spark action to improve the health of the waters around Whidbey." Both through our individual organizational missions and through collaboration and connection, we work to support "education, communication and outreach" related to the health of our local waters and environment.

To help realize that goal, I approached the *South Whidbey Record* about publishing a regular column spotlighting our member organizations and their work. I'm excited to report that the paper agreed. So, beginning with this introductory piece a spotlight article will appear every month in the opinion pages of *The Record*. Penned by different authors, each will share information, insights, tips and strategies on everything from how to care for your septic system to what are the most efficient watering systems for your garden.

"Whidbey Waters are in our Hands" is our current theme and through these monthly spotlights each of our ECO Network members will share their unique perspectives on this common goal of finding ways in our daily lives to protect and care for this precious place and the waters that surround it.

In addition to these monthly spotlight articles, we invite you to check out our Whidbey ECO Network website (<http://whidbey-eco.net/>) for a comprehensive calendar of environmentally focused activities, workshops and events and other informative and educational opportunities offered by

Whidbey ECO Network member organizations. You can also learn more about joining our network and becoming a part of this vibrant network.

We are deluged on a daily basis with the frightening and sometimes overwhelming realities of the condition of our planet. Through individual actions at our homes and businesses, we can make a difference in the future of the health of this place that our children will inherit. Our hope is that these spotlight articles can help, in a small way, to support positive action in our local community and remind us of the critical role we play as stewards of our local and global community.

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