

OPINION

VIEWPOINT | Please, do one thing for the environment

Jan 2, 2016 at 6:00AM

By **LINDA ADE RIDDER**

Sound Water Stewards of Island County board president



Thirteen years ago, my husband and I moved to Whidbey Island from the Midwest to be closer to the sea and mountains. Our new home is shared with wonderfully diverse life from eagles and wrens to deer, fox and squirrels. We have views of the ever changing, beautiful waters surrounding us. But, beneath the waves is another world that's full of life. Walking the beaches and seeing crabs scurry about or a seal pup resting on the shore, and observing dolphins pop up from the water or a whale spout reminds us of the incredible life all around us above and below the water's surface. Many other life forms share this planet with us, and our lives are intertwined. What we do impacts their world as well as our own.

As a new resident, I wanted to know how to garden here, how to kayak here, and most of all, how to live here respectfully. I pick up beach or road litter and feel good that I'm helping keep plastics, cigarette butts, soda cans, and other debris out of our streams and seas, but I wanted to do more. Attending Sound Waters University, a one-day conference, I was inspired to become a Beach Watcher volunteer. Beach Watchers, now Sound Water Stewards, was a natural draw.

I believe it is our nature to try and protect what we love — children, families, friends and pets. In order to love what is around us, we need to know and understand it. I've worked the last eight years on the volunteer team that puts on Sound Waters University. For me, this one-day event offers an opportunity to inspire friends and neighbors to learn more about where we live with the hope that they will also fall in love with this place and will work to restore and preserve our land and waters for future generations.

During the past year, I've led a team looking at how our organization could better focus on local priorities in Island County; the result — Beach Watchers is now a new nonprofit, independent organization called Sound Water Stewards which will continue to provide more than 200 active trained volunteers working in and around Camano and Whidbey Islands for a healthy, sustainable

Puget Sound environment. Organization volunteers monitor our beach and nearshore flora/fauna, eelgrass and kelp beds and baby salmon. They help restore wetlands and pull noxious weeds. Volunteers gather data for government and university scientists. They help educate the public at large formal events, in local schools and outdoor classrooms, in our parks and at festivals, and one-to-one about tide pools and healthy beach environments.

If each of us does just one thing to help protect and preserve our planet home, it will collectively make a difference that impacts not just our lives but all the other forms of life all around us.

What can you do?

- Wash your car at a car wash that treats the water, keeping copper, zinc, other heavy metals, and oils from running off into streams and ultimately into the sea.
- Don't litter – from your car or boat.
- Keep plastics out of the water and waste stream.
- Pick up your pet's poop.
- Learn more about your island environment at Sound Waters University 2016 on February 6th at South Whidbey High School (soundwaterstewards.org/sw).
- Consider becoming a Sound Water Steward.

Find this article at:

<http://www.southwhidbeyrecord.com/opinion/363858081.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.