

Puget Sound Project: Discovering Puget Sound

Introduction

Puget Sound is a region enormously rich in natural resources. Our timber, hydroelectric power and fisheries are world famous. Puget Sound is also a region beset by increasing conflict over the allocation, and in fact, the very future of those same resources.

Discovering Puget Sound, part of the Puget Sound Project, focuses on Puget Sound as an ecosystem; including rivers and watersheds as well as saltwater environments. It also highlights the difficult and complex choices Puget Sound residents must make concerning the management of our natural resources. Presented through student activities focusing on the shorelines of Puget Sound, several of the issues have implications for all of us who live in the northwest today.

Take a minute to thumb through the lessons in **Discovering Puget Sound**. You will find that activities in this unit include materials from across the curriculum that allow students to investigate the shorelines of Puget Sound holistically. In the first lesson, students contemplate the discoveries of early people living in Puget Sound. Students then quantify the miles of coastline as they become familiar with the geography of the Sound. Investigations of beach sediment, the interactions of fresh and salt water at the shoreline, the interdependency of marine organisms that inhabit the shoreline follow. The unit culminates with a look at actions each of us can take to assure the health of this magnificent body of water.

Some of the lessons include more than one activity. Within a given lesson, each activity will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete, unless indicated otherwise.

This curriculum has been written to be most useful in a kit "format", where the required materials are provided to the teacher from a central location. Nonetheless, the **Discovering Puget Sound** curriculum, for the most part, may be readily used where centralized support is not available. However, note that some very important pieces are not included in the guide. These include the eelgrass slide show (Lesson 9) and the photographs used in Lessons 4 and 6. In an effort to support your teaching about

Puget Sound, the Marine Science Center in Poulsbo has limited copies of these materials available for loan by calling (206) 779-5549.

Puget Sound's natural resources are important to all of us residing in the region as well as to our visitors and nation. Various groups assign different levels of importance to individual resources. As a result, some of the groups conflict with one another. In attempting to understand some of today's controversies surrounding Puget Sound's natural resources, it is valuable to look at practices of the past which have had a major impact on those resources. It is not our goal in presenting these issues to inflame negativity against one group or another, but to present the relationship of people to the natural environment as the complex picture that it is.

The Puget Sound Project curriculum also looks at the increasing pressure which we place on our natural environment. Environmental issues these days are inevitably disturbing. We are living at a time when natural balances on many fronts seem to be tipping. Our society as a whole seems to be inclined to make decisions for the present without much regard for the future. On one level, this is not surprising; most of us are preoccupied with the daily struggle of "just getting by". But the consequences of this kind of short-sightedness to future generations are frightening to think about.

All of us, especially today's youth, need to understand the compromises our society is making with its environment. We need to recognize the consequences of today's actions on the quality of life for future generations. Most of all, we need to acknowledge the role we, as individuals, play in the degradation of our environment and look for steps to responsible action. We encourage you to take every opportunity to focus your students' attention on how the future - their future - is being shaped by our actions, how the root of our problems usually turns out to be our own lifestyle decisions, and how the solution to our problems also lies in our own lifestyle decisions.

One way to help your students make the connection between the topics raised in this unit and the events in their own lives is to encourage them to watch for articles in the newspapers which deal with the issues addressed. Almost every day, local and regional newspapers run articles on such topics as water quality, habitat degradation or enhancement, resource allocation, or land use controversies. Discussing these relevant local issues and events will add depth to the material in this unit.

We hope you and your students will find **Discovering Puget Sound** both enjoyable and thought-provoking. As you use these materials, we hope you will take the time to give us feedback on their appropriateness, and their effectiveness in your classroom. Comments will serve as the basis for improving this curriculum. Thanks for caring enough to incorporate these materials into your teaching.