

Introduction

The forest, intertidal beach and salt water all come together at Seal Rock Campground. From a shaded forest with moss covered trees, to a sunny path edged with wildflowers, to a beach with dense natural oyster beds covering boulders, to a sweeping view of the deep blue waters of Hood Canal, the 30 acres of Seal Rock Campground are rich with educational opportunities.

The distinct but interdependent ecosystems of Seal Rock Campground achieve a natural dynamic balance. Fresh water rivers pouring in from the forested mountains and the salty tides pushing in from the ocean and Puget Sound create the unique Hood Canal estuary which gives life to a wide diversity of species adapted to this area. The forest, too, supports a complex assortment of terrestrial plants, birds, mammals, amphibians and invertebrates. Where the forest meets the sea, an intertidal ecosystem with its assemblage of plants and animals also struggles to live in balance. Together, these interlocking ecosystems provide essential food, water, shelter and space to thousands of species inhabiting this area.

The Seal Rock Marine Trail Curriculum, Grades 9 - 12 provides an opportunity for students to explore and understand how the dynamic balance is affected by natural and human-caused events. Students investigate the movement of material and energy within and between Seal Rock Campground ecosystems, build models of the campground food web, explore the campground from one end to the other and from its highest to its lowest points, gather and analyze data reflecting forest and intertidal diversity, and look at past and human interactions with the environment. Finally, they integrate all they have studied through an engaging simulation game in which they are asked to assume roles that represent a variety of individuals who use the area.

For thousands of years Native Americans lived in the Seal Rock Campground area, deriving a rich existence from these ecosystems while recognizing that they were also a part of those systems. In many ways we have lost sight of the fact that we are a part of the global ecosystem rather than apart from it. Like it or not, today people play an important role in maintaining the healthy balance of these ecosystems. It is only through an understanding and appreciation of the natural world that we can hope to move past a concern for the immediate future to a sense of where we as a species fit in the immensity of biological and geological time.

It is our hope that this curriculum will help teachers and students gain the understanding needed to become active stewards of Seal Rock Campground, its environs, and our greater environment as well.