

Protecting Our



Liquid Assets

We drink rain. Rain feeds our streams, ponds and becomes our groundwater. These fluid features make up a hydrologic system that supports our way of life, the quality of the water we drink, the salmon in our waterways and the wildlife that share our Island.

Water is fundamental to our health, to our property values and our sense of place. Together, we Islanders can work to sustain the amount of clean water available to us and our surrounding environment. This mailer explores our “Liquid Assets,”—from the ditches along our roads to the geology beneath our feet. Join us

on this journey through our Island water landscape.

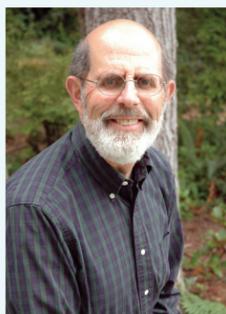
Vashon-Maury Island Groundwater Protection Committee Laurie Geissinger, Philip McCready, Jay Becker, James Dam, John Gerstle, Frank Jackson, Donna Klemka, Yvonne Kuperberg and Bill Riley (pending).

Island Stories

Islands are defined by water, so Islanders seem to have an unusual affinity for the stuff. Here are a few examples of the many swell things our neighbors are doing for water...

Neighborhood conservation

Mike Feinstein worked with three neighbors to bring nine contiguous parcels into the public benefit rating system (PBRs) in his Luana Beach neighborhood on Maury. The neighbors all agreed to retain most of their property in forest cover. They receive a tax benefit for protecting open space resources like critical aquifer recharge areas. By working together and bringing contiguous parcels under separate ownership into the PBRs program, the group received a greater tax benefit than they would have individually.



Restoration with native plants

Four acres of Martin Baker's parcel has been in pasture for 40 years and heavily compacted by large livestock. Martin is restoring a 30-foot perimeter of the pasture with native plants. He has a five-year Restoration Plan that qualifies for the Public Benefit Rating System tax incentive program. The tax savings have allowed him to purchase a rototiller and two years' worth of plants to implement the project. Besides providing habitat for wildlife, native plants are adapted to our climate and shouldn't require much watering once established. Converting the pasture has required de-compacting the soils, which will help rain-water infiltrate and recharge groundwater.

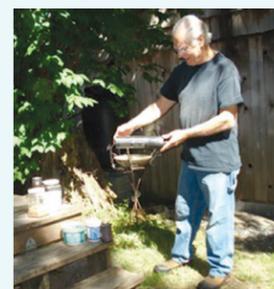


Pesticide-free property

Sapphire Blue has extensive gardens that are all pesticide-free. Her gardens, both vegetable and ornamental, include a labyrinth of contemplative spaces. The garden has been featured in 10 regional garden tours, proving that beauty and protecting water quality can go hand in hand.



BioChar



Ken Miller and Barb Adams walk the talk when it comes to their gardens, rain barrels and BioChar. Ken uses tin cans, a crimper, a can opener and tin snips to make a burner which he fills with scrap wood, blackberry vines, even avocado pits. He throws the burner into his wood stove during the winter. He then grinds up the baked material producing what looks like fine black ash. This is moistened and mixed with garden soil. He doesn't have statistics yet, but, his greens growing on BioChar-amended soil were 50 percent bigger and bushier than those in the same bed growing in regular garden soil. And, like compost, the BioChar soaks up and holds water.

Organic farms

Emily Beagle, an intern at Hogsback Farm, sells organically grown produce at Saturday Market. Organic farming focuses on building nutrient-rich soils without the use of inorganic fertilizers and pesticides, which can be flushed into our streams and groundwater. These soils are high in organic matter and hold water well, requiring less irrigation than conventional farming.



Conservation rebates

Water District 19 is a leader in water conservation. They have offered rebates to their customers for low-flow washers and toilets since 2007, averaging 17 washers and eight toilets replaced each year. The replacements use about half the water of the previous appliance. Melody Snyder, District 19 Office Manager, reports a noticeable decline in water usage. The District is committed to a policy of continued water conservation, which has included landscape audits for large water users and making suggestions for keeping plants green while using less water. Their customers can also get rebates on rain barrel purchases. Says Snyder, “It's a win for the Island water situation.”



At the end of this document in “Resources,” (pg. 9) find more places to dig deeper. There is an on-line version of this document, too with hot links to more info. Check it out at www.kingcounty.gov/groundwater

Drip irrigation

Many Islanders have started to water their gardens using drip irrigation systems on timers. The water goes where it is needed — to the roots of the plants — and isn't running down the driveway.



Well monitors

Joe Meeker and Greg Beardsley have been measuring the elevation of the water in their wells for 10 years. The data has been invaluable as we try to better understand how groundwater works on the Island.



Rain water collection

Michael Laurie fills 14 rain barrels during the rainy season. He is a Heights Water customer, so he watches for notices to conserve water and then uses his rain barrel water. This helps reduce “peak” demand for water during our summer droughts.



Underground gas & oil tank removal

When Silvija Paza bought the Old Colvos store, she didn't think that an old gas tank might still be underground. Under the advisement of clean-up consultants, she removed the old tank and surrounding soils. For homeowners with oil heat, it's a good idea to get free insurance offered by Washington State and bring heating oil tanks to the surface so that if they leak, you can fix it!



Low Impact Development

Carol Eggen is achieving the goal of having all stormwater absorbed on her property. All the rain from her roof is captured in a pipe and is taken away from her drainfield to a patch of native vegetation where it is allowed to infiltrate into the ground. Fifty percent of her surface water management fee is waived as a result of keeping all stormwater on site.



Don't flush the drugs

Vashon Youth and Family Services, working with the

Vashon Healthy Community Network, conducted “Operation Medicine Cabinet” in May 2010 and collected 84 pounds of unwanted or out-of-date medicine. Not only does this keep pharmaceuticals off the street, it keeps them out of our groundwater.



Manure management

Every day, Kathy Zapp picks up the manure from her two horses. The manure composts in the bins and, once composted, is used to augment Pacific Potager's garden soils. The manure piles can be covered with a tarp in the rainy season so that harmful organisms and nitrates aren't transported to our ground and surface waters.

