



STILLWATERS ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

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I know how fortunate I have been in my life, and I feel a strong compulsion to share, with as many as possible, something of the wonder, the peace, that I have found in the forest. And I want people to understand why animals are such a rich part of our human heritage and not only need, but deserve, our love and help. Perhaps it was to this end that I was given a gift — and a gift it certainly is for it was untaught: the ability to communicate.

— Jane Goodall

Dear Anna,

What a difference a year makes in the cycle of life! We are wondering what effects will be seen from the warmest summer in the Salish Sea. Warming oceans are bringing the reality of our changing climate with the stronger, bigger hurricanes, desert temperatures that equal those of Death Valley, and the explosion of fires from dry, dry weather.

As you know, I like to communicate about our ecosystems of the Puget Sound lowland streams all around Kitsap, but especially the marsh, estuary, woods, and wetlands of our Carpenter Creek watershed. But I like to communicate with solid, factual information, with integrity.



We are creating windows into the secret life of the Carpenter Creek salt marsh and watershed. The watershed is a 3-mile long Puget Sound lowland stream, in which exists a complex of wetlands, beaver ponds and dams, a rare sphagnum moss bog and lake, a salt marsh, and an estuary — all FULL of secrets. It's a watershed small enough to wrap your mind around the whole system, and small enough to study up close. Studying is what we have done — from water quality to worms living in the mud. We are driven by curiosity and the fact that little is known about some of these areas and how climate change will affect them over the next 50—100 years.

But why is this study so important? So much more important than just satisfying our curiosity?

Conservation is a state of harmony between (human) and land. Despite nearly a century of propaganda, conservation still proceeds at a snail's pace; progress still consists largely of letterhead pieties and convention oratory. On the back forty we still slip two steps backward for each forward stride. The usual answer . . . Is "more conservation education." No one will debate this, but is it certain that only the volume of education needs stepping up? Is something lacking in the content as well? . . . Obligations have no meaning without conscience, and the problem we face is the extension of the social conscience from people to land. No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. . . . In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial.

Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

What our studies accomplish is weaving a thread of *common sense* into the fabric of our common life together on this planet. In the Pacific Northwest, coastal wetlands support a wealth of ecosystem services, including habitat for wildlife and fish and flood protection.

At Stillwaters, we have scratched, clawed, and begged for restoration funds to complete the removal of the two undersized culverts on South and West Kingston Roads. Now we are looking again for support to continue this long journey of restoration into the future, with greater knowledge and confidence that these restorations have not been in vain. *Knowledge is power!*

We are not the FBI, or private investigators on an intriguing case. Nor are we FEMA workers rescuing folks from the ravages of climate change. But we are investigators with questions that long to be answered, questions about places that need our special attention and protection. We are investigating:

- ⇒ The value of salt marshes and estuaries to the whole ecosystem.
- ⇒ Does restoration bring more fish back to the system?
- ⇒ How will the plant community change with naturally flowing tides?
- ⇒ What will more water in the marsh mean for micro-organisms and macroinvertebrates, the bedrock of the food web?



Any and every question drives a new investigation, which raises more questions. Many college interns are learning the skills to keep delving at the answers to these questions! And in doing this investigative process, we are writing the Salt Marsh and Estuary Dossier — for the generations to come, so that they can protect it for their grandchildren, also.

Thank you for joining our quest for solid information, with integrity, which can be the foundation of making *“internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions.”*

And I hope to see you at our Dinner on November 5, when we will commemorate the accomplishment of estuary and marsh restoration — “New Life for the Marsh—Making it Whole Again”. Although the second bridge on West Kingston isn’t quite done, we are ready to celebrate!

Warmly,

Joleen Palmer, for the
Board and Staff of Stillwaters Environmental Education Center:
Beth Berglund, Fredrick Branchflower, Fawn Harris, Marilyn Love, Naomi Maasberg, Alicia Olivas, Joleen Palmer,
Ken Patterson, Patti Pearson, Linda Streissguth

PS. Please check out the inserts with this letter. And please take a moment to purchase your tickets or make a donation — you can do that online, if you like, through our website — www.stillwatersenvironmentalcenter.org. If you are buying tickets, just say “dinner tickets” in the comments box.