

December 2011

ECO Net Overview

This document provides background information on the Puget Sound-wide network called ECO Net (Education, Communication and Outreach Network); information on the structure of the regional and local ECO Net organizations; the roles and responsibilities of the local and regional ECO Net coordinator; and ECO Net opportunities.

I. Description

ECO Net is a collaborative network of environmental education, outreach and communication professionals whose work helps to engage the public in the recovery of Puget Sound ecosystem. It draws on the combined experience, skills and community-level knowledge of local organizations and individuals while linking to and benefiting from regional resources and a comprehensive vision for restoring Puget Sound. The ECO Net fosters collaboration, increases information exchange, builds and strengthens relationships among organizations, and develops the social capital necessary to achieve Puget Sound recovery goals by tackling tough environmental and social problems.

II. Background

The statement of purpose below reflects the charge given to the original Puget Sound Partnership by Governor Gregoire - to dramatically increase public awareness of Puget Sound issues and broadly engage the public in its recovery. ECO Net was developed to fulfill that assignment - building a network of the locally grounded organizations that reach and engage people on-the-ground with greater depth and breadth. ECO Net was also designed to help advance the individual and collective programs of its members, through increasing collaboration, resources, training and technical assistance.

The development of ECO Net began in 2006. It has been endorsed by the Governor, prioritized in the Action Agenda, given committed leadership by the Partnership, and enthusiastically embraced by members/partners. Over time, the structure has evolved and has been enhanced by strategic regional guidance and the feedback from participants.

III. Statement of Purpose

By bringing together, the skills, resources, talent and relationships of the many groups working on environmental stewardship, education, communications and outreach around Puget Sound, the ECO Network will seek to:

- Build connections amongst and capacity within the Network's participant organizations by increasing the sharing of resources and information among members.
- Improve the ability of Network participants to more effectively deliver programs and services to protect Puget Sound.
- Engage participants in the work of the Puget Sound Partnership, particularly in development and implementation of the 2020 Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Partnership's Stewardship program.

So that...

- Environmental awareness about Puget Sound increases among Washington's citizens.
- Numbers of people engaged and levels of on-the-ground public involvement in protecting Puget Sound increase.
- Human behaviors that improve and protect Puget Sound's environmental and human health increase.

IV. Network Structure

Broad Network

The broad range of committed organizations in the ECO Network will continue to be an inclusive, diverse group of education, communication, outreach and stewardship professionals. Members are encouraged to participate in their Local ECO Net but where this is not practical they are encouraged to keep connected with the ECO Net as a whole to stay up to date on regional issues and events.

Membership criteria

1. Affiliated with an organization/school that is involved with education, communication, outreach or stewardship of environmental themes in Puget Sound.
2. A teacher, program coordinator, volunteer, or other staff person involved with providing education, communication, outreach or stewardship programs in Puget Sound.
3. A desire to work with others towards saving Puget Sound by improving and increasing the coordination, communication, and partnering between education, communication, outreach and stewardship program providers in Puget Sound.

4. Ability to work positively with members and act on the concept and spirit of networking and collaboration.

Member Roles and Responsibilities

- Communicate with members in an open, effective, and positive manner; provide input upon request.
- Share information with constituencies, and solicit feedback from them.
- Participate in ECO Net meetings, trainings and workshops.
- Engage, to whatever extent is practicable, in sharing of information and resources with other ECO Net member organizations.
- Convey Partnership and Action Agenda goals to the general public and the press; facilitate public participation in the process, where possible.
- Join [My Puget Sound](#) to add events and information that the public can use to become more engaged.
- Join the ECO Network group and any relative Local ECO Net groups in [My Puget Sound](#).

Local ECO Nets

For the purpose of more actionable and relevant collaboration sub-regional ECO Nets were created where it is geographically and socially logical. Five similar networks existed before ECO Net in the Hood Canal area, Kitsap, Thurston, Snohomish and San Juan counties. These existing networks were invited to become their local ECO Net and all accepted. Meetings are held in the local area at least quarterly and at the most every month. Coordinators have been identified and selected by the membership to facilitate the activities and manage the logistics. A small grant from the Partnership helps to offset the costs of this coordination every year.

Membership criteria

Criteria for Local ECO Net membership is the same criteria listed above under Broad ECO Net Membership. Membership will be managed by ECO Net Coordinators through the online tool, [My Puget Sound](#).

Member Roles and Responsibilities

- Attend local ECO Net meetings
- Coordinate and collaborate with fellow ECO Net members (e.g. share event dates and information, share resources, work together on projects, and provide feedback to help increase effectiveness of membership.)
- Provide input, upon request, for the Partnership's Action Agenda implementation (in person, via email, and through other methods, as appropriate).

ECO Net Coordinators

Every local ECO Net selects an official coordinator on an annual basis. These coordinators are supported by the Partnership with a small grant.

Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

- Convene and facilitate local ECO Net meetings a minimum of three times per year.
- Attend in person ECO Net Coordinators meetings.
- Provide guidance and direction for the Partnership's work.
- Actively solicit participation by professionals in the education, communication and outreach field at the local level to ensure broad and inclusive representation.
- Help represent the ECO Net where needed at the local level. For example with the Local Integration Organization, Watershed groups, Marine Resource Committees, decision making bodies and with local elected officials, etc.
- Serve as liaison between ECO Network participants, the Partnership, and the public:
 - Maintain open, effective, and positive communication with ECO Network participants.
 - Solicit opinions and feedback from membership to help inform decisions.
- Focus on the larger goals of the ECO Network and the Partnership over individual organization/agency agendas.
- Manage local ECO Net group on MyPugetSound.net and keep information up to date.

ECO Net Manager

To support the work of the ECO Network the Puget Sound Partnership's Education and Outreach manager will provide facilitation and resources to the Network.

ECO Net Manager Roles and Responsibilities

- Provide day-to-day support for ECO Network activities.
- Provide resources and access to resources that will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of ECO Net members.
- Serve as a liaison between ECO Network participants and the Partnership, raising issues and concerns as needed.
- Help implement Action Agenda goals pertaining to the ECO Net.

V. Opportunities for Participants

1. Help implement the Action Agenda to save Puget Sound.

- Participate in the implementation of the Puget Sound Partnership's Stewardship program goals and priorities.
- Help translate and connect the public awareness campaign (Puget Sound Starts Here) to local communities and adapt the campaign to a wide variety of local settings.
- Work with other ECO Net members and Partnership staff to create strategic goals and priorities for messaging in each Action Area.

- Provide information, training and direct experiences to citizens who respond to campaign efforts and messages.
- Provide case studies and stories, and identify local volunteers, teachers, schools, and others to be featured in campaign messaging.
- Participate in the ongoing review of the Stewardship section of the Action Agenda and related initiatives.
- Provide advice, guidance and direct involvement on implementation of the 2020 Action Agenda.

2. Increase capacity, connections and sharing of information and resources amongst participating organizations through:

- An online *clearinghouse* of information and materials that:
 - organizes and makes available information and materials of use to participants;
 - serves as a resource for citizens, schools, and others who want to get involved in learning about and protecting Puget Sound;
 - provides access to social marketing strategies, professional communication materials and additional resources.
- Opportunities for more direct linkages and interaction and facilitating the exchange of ideas and information. This can be accomplished by:
 - participating in existing regional and statewide conferences
 - attending the ECO Net Summit and other networking opportunities
 - participating in the training and professional development opportunities provided to ECO Net
- Opportunities for training and professional development in program design, (specifically social marketing) and evaluation with follow-up support and access to resources.
- Ability to link to a regional campaign (Puget Sound Starts Here) developed and researched by professionals that increases exposure, decreases cognitive dissonance between programs and increase behavioral spillover.
- Opportunities to connect with regional partners working on similar issues and programs to promote effectiveness and increase efficiencies.
- Opportunities to engage with potential funding partners (for example, charitable foundations and service organizations). It is recognized that this is

- an area that will require focused attention and development of a strategy.
- A periodic electronic newsletter with timely updates on events, workshops and other information.

3. Connect Network participants with educators (K-12 teachers and professors at university educator programs) to improve the health of Puget Sound by:

- Helping educators develop outcome-based Puget Sound projects at school-sites and community sites for elementary, middle and high school students.
- Helping educators incorporate Puget Sound issues and actions into their instruction.

4. Help shape regional policy and practice in relationship to Puget Sound stewardship, education, communication, and outreach by:

- Serve a representational and advocacy role to the new Puget Sound Partnership and other decision-makers on behalf of Network participants.
- Providing advice and input where appropriate and requested.