

Fun in the Mud and Sun Earth Day on Oakland Bay April 2010

Tracking the flight pattern of a killdeer. Pulling purple sea stars, geoducks and moonsnails from a touch tank. Squelching in the mud. Nearly 75 people enjoyed these activities and more at the first Earth Day held outdoors on Oakland Bay. The Earth Day Celebration was held this Sunday at the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife public access site on Oakland Bay near Bayshore. Coordinated by Stephanie Bishop of Mason Conservation District, the event included booths hosted by local natural resource-based organizations such as the Conservation District, Mason County 4-H, Mason County Public Health, Mason County Waste Management, Taylor Shellfish, WSU Mason County Extension, Capitol Land Trust, Native Plant Salvage Project, and PUD #3.



Several workshops were offered throughout the day. Local biologist Victoria Fursman Book set up her scope and led a workshop on birding. As the tide drifted out, several species of birds were spotted including an osprey swooping down to Oakland Bay for a mid-afternoon snack. Stephanie Bishop from Mason Conservation District led a workshop on the Nearshore environment, explaining the differences in plant colonies along the shoreline. This workshop culminated in mud exploration,

where many copepods, periwinkles, and barnacle-clad oyster shells were collected. A mud dissection revealed several polychaetes (segmented worms), marine pill bugs, and several varieties of clams. The third workshop was an introduction to shellfish led by Jennifer Hopper of Taylor Shellfish. Participants learned about the different types of shellfish that are grown in Puget Sound, including mussels, geoducks and the various types of native and

non-native oysters. All three workshops spoke to the unique natural beauty found here in Mason County. In addition to the workshops, Mason County Public Health offered sample water quality testing opportunities, Native Plant Salvage Project led a flower dissection, and Taylor Shellfish provided a saltwater touch tank as well as a free oyster barbecue.

The Oakland Bay Earth Day event took place at a marine waterfront site owned by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. This public access site is a popular local clamming destination. Much of the property recently underwent invasive weed removal and native plant restoration



in a project led by Karin Strelhoff from Mason Conservation District. On Sunday, additional native plants were available for attendees to plant in honor of Earth Day. The restoration site also provided a demonstration site illustrating the importance of keeping native plants along marine and freshwater shorelines. The plants help to protect water quality and provide important wildlife habitat.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. The official 2010 Earth Day is this Thursday, April 22nd. Whether you go bird watching, plant a native plant, or explore your own backyard, find some way to celebrate our amazing and wonderful natural world.