

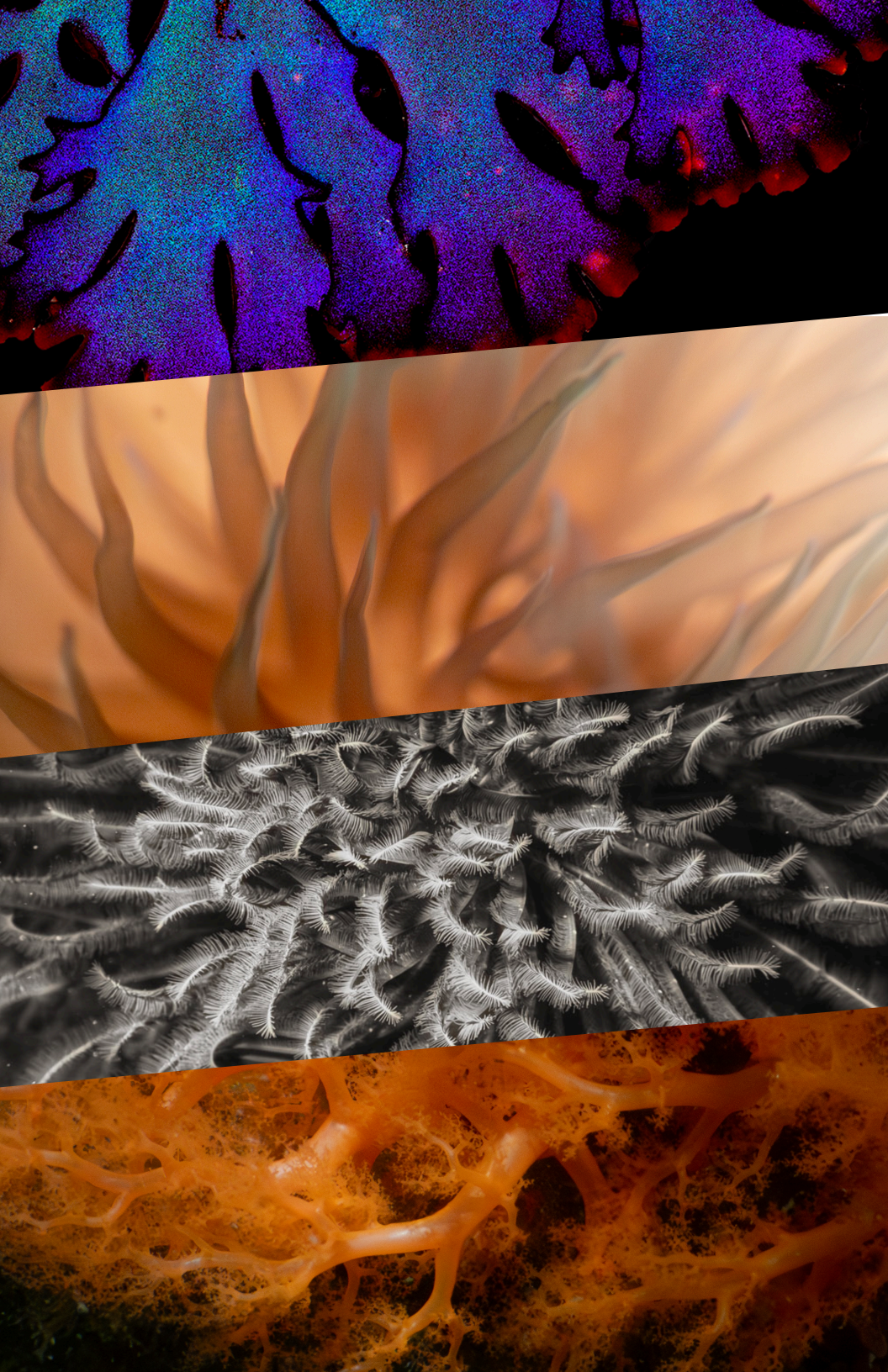


2021-2025 HIGHLIGHTS

EST. 1979

Friends
of the San Juans

Protect this Place



LOOKING CLOSER

Through the lens of Robert Dash, award-winning photographer, author, and Friends of the San Juans member, the hidden worlds of the islands and surrounding Salish Sea come alive. Using micro-imaging techniques that blend science and art, Dash reveals the intricate forms, colors, and patterns that sustain life beneath the surface. His images, captured throughout the San Juan Islands, have been featured in National Geographic, Time, and exhibitions around the world. *Friends* thanks Robert Dash for generously sharing his stunning imagery, reminding us of the vibrant ecosystems that surround and sustain the islands and Salish Sea.

I go underwater to explore the mysteries, patterns, and wonders of our liquid planet. Underwater patterns, textures, and colors help me stay enchanted and balanced. It's so important to celebrate natural beauty and to rise to the occasion to protect it.

— Robert Dash

*Images at left and on the cover courtesy of Robert Dash. From top to bottom, Seaweed (*Gloiocladia laciniata*), Anemone Tentacles (Order Actiniaria), Feather Duster Worms (Family Sabellidae), Orange Sea Cucumber (*Cucumaria miniata*)*

NEARLY FIFTY YEARS STRONG, FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

Dear *Friends*,

As we near our 50th year, I am reminded daily that real, lasting protection depends on relationships: connection to each other, to this place, and to the living systems that sustain us all.

As you turn the pages of this report highlighting our 2021–2025 strategic planning period, you'll see more than a reflection of accomplishments. It is the story of how thousands of people—

Friends' staff and board members at a strategic planning workshop in 2025 on Orcas Island.



Photo, Liza Mahler

Friends

Protect this Place

workers, scientists, students, partners, landowners, and donors—came together to ensure that what makes the San Juan Islands and the Salish Sea extraordinary will endure. From tangible protection policy to inspiring the next generation of island and water stewards, every success you'll read here began with relationships: people choosing to step into reciprocity, to act, and to stand for what moves their hearts and minds about this special place.

As you turn these pages, you will see what our community of '*Friends*' has accomplished during the past four years. You will also glimpse what is ahead—communities standing together, science informing smart planning and restoration, advocacy shaping law, and education empowering action.

Looking to the next fifty years, *Friends* will continue to protect through relationships, linking people and place, science and story, communities and coasts. Thank you for being part of this enduring circle of care for the San Juans and the Salish Sea.



Warmly,

Eva Schulte

Eva Schulte

Executive Director, Friends of the San Juans

OUR MISSION

Friends brings people and nature together to protect the San Juan Islands and the Salish Sea through education, science, policy, and law.



ROOTED IN COLLECTIVE IMPACT & ACTION

HUNDREDS

of transboundary collaborators from nonprofits, research institutions, Sovereign Nations, and regional agencies, each strengthening networks that advance the shared protection of the Salish Sea bioregion.

500 YOUTH

each year gaining science skills and communication tools to protect the future health of island communities and waters.

1 IN 3

San Juan County residents engaged and invested in *Friends*' work—fueling community-led advocacy and restoration across the islands.

THOUSANDS

of people activated each year through action alerts—driving stronger local and regional protections, and shared accountability for the health of *people and place*.

6,000 FEET

of shoreline restored, reviving forage fish spawning habitat and eelgrass meadows that sustain salmon and orcas.

\$10 MILLION

in restoration funding leveraged for island communities—creating jobs, advancing science, and strengthening long-term ecological health.

OUR VISION

Friends' multifaceted approach to environmental protection ensures the San Juan Islands and the Salish Sea remain a sanctuary for biodiversity and sustainability for generations to come.

WE PROTECT...

The Salish Sea

Shoreline Ecosystems

Island Communities & Resources

The Future Through Education

THROUGH

Advocacy & Policy

Science, Mapping, & Restoration

Immersive Community Education

Community Mobilization & Legal Action



OUR COMMITMENT TO SOVEREIGN NATIONS OF THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS AND THE SALISH SEA

Friends deeply respects and values the leadership of Indigenous Sovereign Nations. We work hard to build right relationships with Tribes and First Nations connected to the San Juan Islands and Salish Sea—our work is guided by a reverence for their stewardship and expertise with the waters and lands we strive to protect.

Our offices are located on Northern Straits Salish territory, and much of our work focuses on the San Juan Islands, which hold deep cultural significance and are homelands for the Northern Straits Salish language community. Our work extends across the broader Salish Sea bioregion, home to more than 80 Sovereign Nations including lands where Tribes were displaced from important sacred sites.

We remain committed to supporting Land Back transactions, showing up as a *Friend*, listening, and pressing decision makers to respect tribal sovereignty and treaty rights—grounding our work in collaboration, inclusivity, and gratitude for Indigenous knowledge.

Photo, Jen Strongin



LISTENING, SHOWING UP, PARTNERING

- For 21 years, *Friends* has supported modern-day canoe journeys, learning alongside Indigenous leaders in solidarity, celebration, and shared care for the Salish Sea. Building on that commitment, *Friends* also served as fiscal sponsor for Gathering of the Eagles for five years.
- From 2021 to 2025, our staff, board, and advisors dedicated thousands of hours to Indigenous-led learning experiences that have deepened how we plan projects, communicate, and advocate—equipping *Friends*' work to align with Tribal priorities, acknowledge traditional territories, and support Indigenous stewardship throughout the Salish Sea.
- We are grateful to the following Sovereign Nations and Tribal organizations for their support, and for believing in our mission: Lummi Nation, Samish Indian Nation, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, The Tulalip Tribes, Suquamish Tribe, Saanich First Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nation, and Se'Si'Le.

VICTORIES + IMPACT

BIG WINS 2021-2025

These accomplishments are yours. They are the result of people like you who protect this place, coming together *as guiding lights* for stewardship and action.

- **POLICY WIN FOR ENDANGERED ORCAS**
Friends played a leading role in advancing science into policy, mobilizing public and private support for new laws requiring boats to stay 1,000 yards away from Southern Resident killer whales. This landmark protection is especially important for mother whales and their calves.
- **REBUILDING RESILIENT SHORES**
Strengthening the resilience of shorelines for future generations, *Friends* advanced coastal restoration through three large-scale projects that restored more than 1,000 feet of forage fish spawning habitat, 81 mooring buoy upgrades protecting eelgrass meadows, and the removal of four derelict overwater structures from vital herring spawning areas.
- **COMMUNITY-ROOTED ADVOCACY**
Friends shaped two San Juan County Comprehensive Plan Updates (2022 and 2025) to protect natural resource lands, ensure responsible and affordable growth, and include a Climate Element. Through workshops on five islands and dedicated action teams, *Friends* led over 450 islanders to engage in the update processes, adding new voices to these important conversations.
- **PREVENTING ADDED VESSEL TRAFFIC**
Friends' legal efforts held powerful industry players accountable through a legal victory and two settlement agreements, prohibiting major increases in refinery vessel traffic and strengthening protections for people, salmon, and Southern Residents.
- **TRIPLED EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH**
From classrooms to beaches to the state capitol, *Friends'* Education for the Future program has grown threefold—inspiring 2,500 youth and adults to protect the Salish Sea through immersive video, community science, and experiences that connect people to nature.



FOCUS AREA / PROTECTING THE SALISH SEA

Keeping our seas healthy takes vigilance and proactive action. The Salish Sea is a vibrant, complex ecosystem, home to over a hundred endangered species and countless communities that depend on its health. *Friends* safeguards these waters by monitoring industrial expansion and advocating for limits on vessel traffic, pollution solutions as well as improved oil spill prevention and preparedness requirements at all levels of government—policies that protect wildlife, habitats, and people.

We continue to track refineries, pipelines, and terminal proposals across the Salish Sea, providing data and technical reviews to strengthen environmental protections and inform agency decisions.

Photo, NOAA Fisheries West Coast, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



2021 THROUGH 2025 IMPACT

- To confront the very real risk that a major oil spill poses to the Salish Sea, *Friends* created an interactive map showing where over-water oil transfers occur—informing Tribes, agencies, and communities to strengthen oversight and protection.
- To address growing water quality concerns, *Friends* is working with state legislators and leading a coalition to support a bill that would require ocean-going ships to use low-sulfur fuel. This would eliminate toxic pollution from ships' use of heavy fuel oil in combination with exhaust gas cleaning systems, better known as scrubbers, in Washington State waters.
- *Friends'* diligent tracking exposed oil tankers' use of routes and anchorage areas in Washington's waters that were not evaluated for environmental risks in the permitting of Canada's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. *Friends* is sharing these findings with state and federal leaders to expand areas where tug escort requirements could prevent spills if a ship loses power or steering.

KEYSTONE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT /

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED ORCA

Southern Resident killer whales, *Orcinus orca*

These highly social, fish-eating whales are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. They live in close family groups and rely almost entirely on Chinook salmon as a food source—which are themselves endangered and threatened by habitat loss, pollution, and changing sea conditions. Together, these species are a mirror for the Salish Sea's health. Their survival depends on quiet, clean waters and abundant fish from healthy habitats. The conditions they need to thrive tie them to nearly every aspect of *Friends*' work—from restoring shorelines and reducing vessel traffic, to inspiring behavior change among industry and boaters alike.

Friends acts with courage and steadfastness to address the threats facing Southern Resident killer whales—advancing partnerships in education, science, policy, and law to make the Salish Sea's waters safer, cleaner, and quieter for the orcas who call them home.

“You have family on land as you do in the sea... Being a caretaker of the earth begins with taking care of the water that all life depends on.”

— Quoted from *The Whale Child*, by Chenoa and Keith Egawa, Lummi and S'Klallam storytellers.

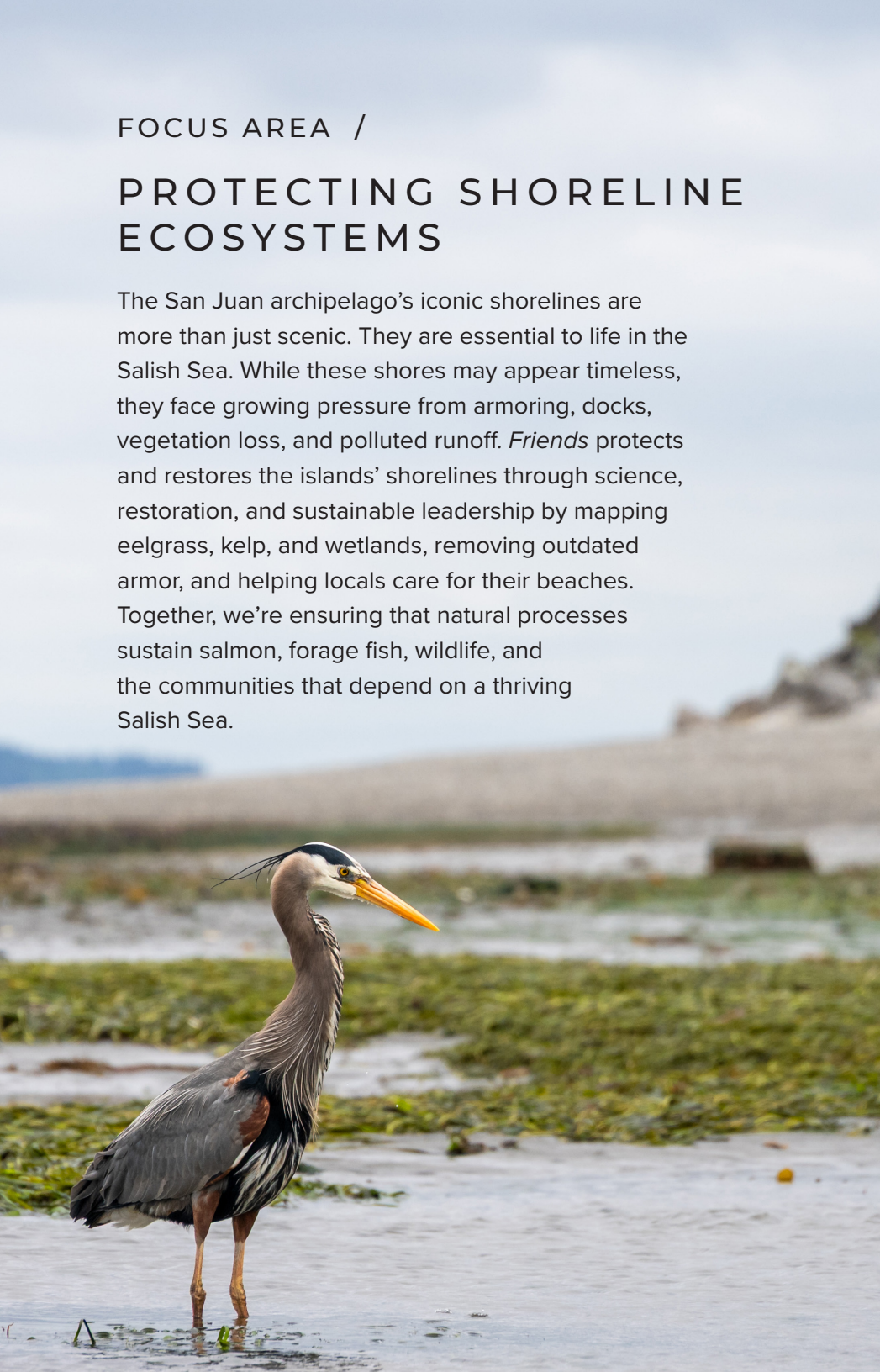
2021 THROUGH 2025 BIG WINS FOR ORCA

- Through updated Salish Sea Vessel Traffic Projections every two years, *Friends* provides expert research showing how industrial shipping increases risks for endangered orcas—from noise and oil spills to vessel collisions. These findings informed Washington State's permitting process and helps decision makers on both sides of the border see the bigger picture of major shipping expansion.
- *Friends* helped make orca protection part of Washington's Environmental Policy Act review process for marine vessel-related projects. Applicants are asked to assess underwater noise, disturbance, and cumulative impacts with the state's new Orca Checklist, a change introduced in the Orca Task Force's Recommendation 27, which *Friends* initiated.
- *Friends* led advocacy in Washington State's 2025 Best Achievable Protection process for spill response, securing commitments to address whale tracking, monitoring, and deterrence measures needed to keep endangered orca away from an oil spill.

FOCUS AREA /

PROTECTING SHORELINE ECOSYSTEMS

The San Juan archipelago's iconic shorelines are more than just scenic. They are essential to life in the Salish Sea. While these shores may appear timeless, they face growing pressure from armoring, docks, vegetation loss, and polluted runoff. *Friends* protects and restores the islands' shorelines through science, restoration, and sustainable leadership by mapping eelgrass, kelp, and wetlands, removing outdated armor, and helping locals care for their beaches. Together, we're ensuring that natural processes sustain salmon, forage fish, wildlife, and the communities that depend on a thriving Salish Sea.



2021 THROUGH 2025 IMPACT

- Over 420 people joined *Friends*' shoreline ecosystem programs, including landowners, contractors, and community members, learning hands-on ways to care for beaches and protect nearshore habitat.
- 40 community scientists helped document 22 new forage fish spawning beaches, giving stronger protections to 12 miles of critical shoreline.
- *Friends*' 10-year change analysis of 400 miles of shoreline armor informed new state legislation requiring updated aerial and on-water mapping of Puget Sound shorelines, advancing science-based planning and habitat protections statewide.
- To protect and restore shoreline habitats, *Friends* reached more than 5,000 waterfront property owners and conducted over 50 personalized *Shore Friendly* home visit consultations—helping landowners understand erosion, natural processes, and restoration options that benefit people, infrastructure, and ecosystems. These efforts set in motion 5 additional restoration projects.

An underwater photograph showing a fish, possibly a rockfish, swimming through a dense field of eelgrass. The fish is positioned in the lower right, looking towards the camera. The eelgrass blades are long and green, creating a textured background. The water is clear and blue.

KEYSTONE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT /

EELGRASS *Zostera marina*


Eelgrass is a flowering plant that grows in shallow, sunlit marine waters. Its long blades support marine food webs by providing vital nursery habitat for herring eggs, juvenile salmon, crabs, nudibranchs, and more. Eelgrass beds are also important feeding grounds for birds. In addition to supporting wildlife, eelgrass helps protect shorelines by absorbing wave energy and trapping sediment—reducing erosion and strengthening coastal resilience.

“Eelgrass is essential for countless species that define life in the Salish Sea. Protecting what we have now is the surest way to keep these ecosystems alive.”

— Drew Harvell, PhD,
*Friends’ Board Member & Science Advisor; Professor Emerita
Cornell University; Affiliate Professor, University of Washington;
Resident Researcher, Friday Harbor Laboratories*


2021 THROUGH 2025 BIG WINS FOR

- *Friends* led and completed a 20-year study mapping eelgrass meadows across 21 bays and 140 miles of shoreline. This research revealed where eelgrass is thriving and where it’s under pressure—this data now guides local restoration, permitting, and long-term protection planning with regional partners.
- *Friends’* Green Boater program educated and inspired thousands about responsible anchoring and behaviors that protect wildlife dependent on healthy eelgrass. Through a multi-pronged approach, we installed 85 shoreline signs, presented to over 300 boaters at yacht clubs and groups, gained 150 Green Boater pledges and 22 ambassadors, and collaborated with regional partners to align anchor-out messaging and add eelgrass data and no-anchor zones to navigation systems across the Salish Sea.
- Eelgrass findings informed three of *Friends’* shoreline restoration projects that removed harmful structures and restored nearly 1,000 feet of natural shoreline, improving habitat for forage fish and juvenile salmon.
- *Friends’* leadership in eelgrass mapping and community science resulted in continued collaboration with the University of Washington’s Friday Harbor Labs and top-tier researchers, advancing understanding of these vital underwater meadows.
- In partnership with Alchemy Arts Center on San Juan Island, *Friends* brought eelgrass to life through art installations and storytelling with hundreds of participants—helping people connect tangibly with its ecological importance and inspiring them to become active stewards and protectors of this vital habitat.



FOCUS AREA /

PROTECTING ISLAND COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCES



Safeguarding our island communities, farms, water, and forestlands takes advocacy and community action. As development pressures grow, *Friends* works to maintain balance—protecting natural resources while supporting thriving communities. Through science-based policy, planning, and community engagement, we connect land, water, and people to ensure a resilient, sustainable future for the islands we call home.

Photo, Sarah Bernstein



2021 THROUGH 2025 IMPACT

- *Friends* led partnerships with Family Resource Centers and the Madrona Institute to engage islanders in Comprehensive Plan advocacy and ‘Climate Compass’ education. These workshops generated over 200 comments to San Juan County, helping ensure local policies reflect the voices and needs of islanders from all walks of life.
- To preserve working lands that support food, carbon storage, and the tree canopy, *Friends* defended resource lands from unnecessary development, closed a vacation rental loophole, and advocated for ecosystem safeguards to ensure renewable energy is responsibly sited.
- *Friends* advanced water health protections for groundwater and watersheds in local planning—helping ensure limited freshwater supplies remain available for communities, farms, and wildlife, and that marine waters are protected from land-based pollution.
- To protect natural habitats, *Friends* reviewed all roughly 500 county land use permits to ensure compliance with shoreline, wetland, resource lands, and critical areas regulations.

An underwater photograph showing a dense kelp forest with long, dark stalks and green, feathery fronds reaching towards the surface. The water is a deep blue-green color.

FOCUS AREA /

PROTECTING THE FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION

The Salish Sea is like nowhere else on Earth. *Friends* connects students, lifelong learners, educators, and island residents and visitors to this extraordinary ecosystem through immersive video, storytelling, community science, and outdoor experiences that inspire care for the living world around us. With new tools like a 360° mobile dome, virtual reality headsets, and uniquely developed online curriculum modules, we're deepening understanding of the Salish Sea's intricate and interconnected ecosystems—turning curiosity into environmental responsibility from classrooms to beaches to the state's capital in Olympia.



2021 THROUGH 2025 IMPACT

- *Friends* reached over 1,600 community members through immersive Salish Sea education, underwater virtual reality, and hands-on experiences to inspire care and connection with nature.
- *Friends* partnered with regional high schools, Tribal schools, youth fairs, and all San Juan County schools to expand education programming that inspires communications, arts, sciences, and entrepreneurship.
- Almost 400 youth and community members joined *Friends* to tackle plastic pollution—turning education into real-world action. This advocacy played a key role in advancing Washington's Recycling Reform Act, a statewide win for waste reduction and circular economy solutions.
- *Friends* was the countywide leader for training and empowering over 100 community scientists across four islands to detect and report highly invasive European green crabs, strengthening and protecting shoreline ecosystems throughout the islands.

PARTNERSHIPS

Friends works within an *ecosystem approach*, because the health of our partnerships reflects the health of our natural ecosystems. Our interconnected efforts advance shared goals for the islands and the Salish Sea. We collaborate with Tribes, nonprofits, government agencies, and local residents who share our commitment to the Salish Sea and island communities. Rooted in respect, science, and action, our alliances reflect *Friends*' core values—interconnection, integrity, and courage—and remind us that lasting protection grows from shared purpose.

[SANJUANS.ORG/PARTNERS](https://sanjuans.org/partners)

Please visit our website for a full list of our active collaborations.



Photo, Rush Linhart

EARTHJUSTICE

Friends leads regional issues, and when legal muscle is needed, Earthjustice shows up with expertise. With representation from Earthjustice's attorneys, *Friends* is ensuring that industrial expansions with potential increases in vessel traffic receive a full environmental review, including mitigating conditions and accountability.

SAN JUAN COUNTY

From policy development to permitting, San Juan County relies on *Friends*' expertise, maps, and decades of data to guide shoreline planning decisions and projects, ensuring that science directly shapes community resilience and environmental protection. *Friends* also collaborates on educational programs, such as Plastic Free Salish Sea, with the County's Department of Environmental Stewardship.

NORTHWEST STRAITS FOUNDATION

Friends is the Northwest Straits Foundation's longest-standing *Shore Friendly* partner. Together, we lead on-the-ground restoration and outreach that turns voluntary stewardship into measurable shoreline recovery.

SAN JUAN PRESERVATION TRUST

Founded the same year by some of the same grassroots leaders—*Friends* and the Preservation Trust were created as two sides of the same coin: as separate organizations focused on long-term protection and long-term preservation. *Friends* provides shoreline science, policy, and landowner connections that help the Preservation Trust prioritize coastal protection. Together, we've substantially expanded conservation capacity across the islands.

SJI CONSERVATION LAND BANK

In the early 1990s, *Friends* helped start and advocate for the creation of the Land Bank, providing a foundation of policy and science, along with with a community-led conservation model. Today, *Friends* collaborates with the Land Bank on select habitat restoration projects, and also provides the Land Bank with science and data—continuing a shared legacy of protecting the islands' shorelines, forests, and farmlands for future generations.



Photo, Liza Mahler

A FUTURE OF VIGILANT PROTECTION

As a leader in advancing long-term resilience and environmental protection in the San Juan Islands and Salish Sea, we're building towards five decades of science and advocacy with our members to ensure lasting protection for the islands.



2026–30 FOCUS AREAS

► LAND AND SEA RESILIENCE

Mobilize our community to protect what we love through:

- Expanding hands-on environmental learning across generations.
- Restoring critical shoreline and nearshore habitats.
- Reducing shipping impacts and spill risks in the Salish Sea.
- Safeguarding forests, farms, and freshwater.

► CIVIC RELATIONSHIPS

Deepen collaboration with partners, agencies, and Sovereign Tribal Nations to advance shared protection of the Salish Sea and island communities.

► ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

Strengthen *Friends'* foundation through thoughtful succession planning, financial growth, and membership expansion—ensuring long-term stability for a future of fearless protection.

OUR PEOPLE

BOARD

John Pierre van Dongen, MD, *President*
Tom Reynolds, MD, PhD, *Vice President*
Jan Knudson, *Treasurer*
Bob McPherson, JD, *Secretary*
Joseph Cohen, *At-Large Officer*
Natalie Baloy, PhD
Sarah Hart
Drew Harvell, PhD
Erin Licata
Raven Preston
Kai Sanburn, RN
Stephanie Solien
Ken Carrasco, *Immediate Past President*
Ron Zee, *Immediate Past Vice President*

*Staff, board, and
advisors listed
reflect positions
as of 2025.*

Photo, Sarah Bernstein



Photo, Sarah Bernstein

STAFF

Eva Schulte, *Executive Director*
Shannon Davis, *Deputy Director*
Isabel Alexander, *Executive Administrator*
Elise Cope, *Communications & Outreach Director*
Magali Cota, JD, *Staff Attorney & Legal Director*
Katherine Dietzman, *Shoreline & Mapping Specialist*
Kirsten Kane, PhD, *Salish Sea Strategy & Engagement Manager*
Jess Newley, *Community Science & Education Director*
Lovel Pratt, *Marine Protection & Policy Director*
Ken Putney, *Data & Gifts Administrator*
Jan Sanburg, *Finance & Operations Manager*
Tina Whitman, *Senior Science Director*

STRATEGIC ADVISORS

Peter Fisher
George Lawson
Janet Alderton
Lynn Bahrych, PhD, JD
San Olson

SCIENCE ADVISORS

Chuck Greene, PhD
Gary Greene, PhD
Val Veirs, PhD
Drew Harvell, PhD

PROTECT THIS PLACE WITH US!

By supporting Friends of the San Juans, you advance science, advocacy, and on-the-ground action that protects this special place we all love. Your gift ensures we have the expertise to inform environmental policy, restore vital habitats, and engage our community through education and sustainable leadership.

Individual donations make up more than half of our annual income, and you make it all possible! Together, we're protecting the San Juan Islands and Salish Sea for generations to come.

**Visit sanjuans.org/member
to start or renew your annual membership.**



Friends of the San Juans is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organized and operated exclusively for charitable, scientific, literary, and educational purposes. EIN: 91-1087153



FIDUCIARY AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Friends of the San Juans has a long-standing reputation for over-delivering on outcomes with a highly experienced, mission-driven team. Many staff have dedicated more than two decades to this work, providing continuity, expertise, and trusted relationships across our programs and community. *Friends* invests in retaining that depth of skill through professional growth, mentorship, and shared dedication to mission. Our partners and nearly 300 active volunteers further amplify the effectiveness of every dollar invested. Over the past four years, *Friends* has maintained a lean, efficient budget that keeps administrative costs low, directing an average of 83% of expenses to programs that deliver measurable results for the islands and the Salish Sea.



FINANCIALS

For *Friends*' recent financial statements, please visit sanjuans.org/financials



SANJUANS.ORG

Stand with *Friends* to protect this place.

Renew your membership, join as a new member,
volunteer, or sign up for action alerts.

Our strength comes from you.

Friends

Protect this Place