



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information:

Paul Bergman
Puget Sound Partnership
360-628-2428
paul.bergman@psp.wa.gov

Seth Boettcher
City of Black Diamond
360-886-2560 extension 211
sboettcher@ci.blackdiamond.wa.us

Curt Hart
Department of Ecology
360-407-6990
curt.hart@ecy.wa.gov

Unprecedented Coalition Launches Effort to Save Puget Sound

More than 300 organizations get behind 'Puget Sound Starts Here' to tell residents of Puget Sound's impending death – and what can be done to halt it

Black Diamond, Wash. (October, 2009) –The City of Black Diamond, as part of a coalition of more than 300 Puget Sound organizations, including other cities and counties, environmental and stewardship groups, businesses and universities, recently launched a ground-breaking public education campaign to stop the daily flow of 140,000 pounds of toxic chemicals from entering Puget Sound. Local waterways such as Ginder Creek, Rock Creek and Lake Sawyer are also affected by these pollutants.

The campaign, ***Puget Sound Starts Here*** (www.pugetsoundstartshere.org), tells residents how changes in their everyday actions can help save local waterways and the Sound. The effort is the largest in history to save Puget Sound, and is led by the Puget Sound Partnership, S.T.O.R.M. (Stormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities) and the Washington Department of Ecology.

“Puget Sound is dying, and many of us don’t realize that our own actions are contributing to its decline,” said David Dicks, director of the Puget Sound Partnership. “The ***Puget Sound Starts Here*** campaign illustrates the severity of the problem and explains how each of us can be part of the solution by changing a few everyday activities. Everyone who lives in the Puget Sound region can make a difference.”

Puget Sound's increasingly polluted waters threaten the region's economic health and quality of life.

- The Sound's fishing and shellfish industries, conservatively valued at \$147 million a year, are at risk.
- The \$9.5 billion annual tourism industry is in jeopardy.
- Transient and southern resident orca whales are considered to be among the most PCB-contaminated mammals on the planet.

Puget Sound Starts Here initially focuses on four common behaviors that most residents can easily adopt to reduce pollution from entering the Sound.

1. Take cars to a commercial car wash, where wash water is properly handled. Car wash water can kill fish and be as potentially toxic as some industrial wastewater discharges.
2. Fix car leaks, or place cardboard under the car in the short term to catch leaking oil or fluids.
3. Use compost – instead of fertilizers or pesticides – to grow a healthy lawn and garden.
4. Pick up pet waste with a bag – both in the yard and in public places – and place it in the trash.

Each of the behaviors addressed in ***Puget Sound Starts Here*** support the message that the Sound's problems start in our own backyards. Water from washing the car in a driveway or street carries oil, zinc, lead, copper and soap into storm drains that empty into rivers and streams that ultimately lead to Puget Sound. Stormwater runoff – which occurs when rainwater is not absorbed into the ground – picks up oil from car leaks, toxic yard chemicals from pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, along with bacteria such as fecal coliform from pet waste. These harmful substances are also washed down storm drains. Washington's Department of Ecology estimates that 75 percent of the 140,000 pounds of toxic chemicals entering the Sound each day are carried by stormwater runoff.

Many people believe that wastewater treatment plants or other means clean the water flowing into storm drains before it reaches local waterways and Puget Sound. This is not

the case. Five hundred forty-nine (549) rivers, streams and lakes throughout the region suffer from poor water quality and in many cases polluted stormwater runoff is a contributing factor.

The City of Black Diamond is also implementing efforts to educate local citizens about how they can help. Check out the City's website for information www.ci.blackdiamond.wa.us.

"We all enjoy this beautiful part of the world that is Puget Sound and want to protect it for future generations," said Seth Boettcher, Public Works Director. "There is something that each one of us can do either personally or as part of the roles we have in society to protect the local aquatic environment which in turn will help protect Puget Sound. We each just need to learn and be willing to change our behaviors".

The ***Puget Sound Starts Here*** campaign launched on Sept. 17 and includes television ads, a Web site and tools such as PowerPoint presentations for public outreach to local communities. Many organizations offer events that are free to the public, along with volunteer opportunities to support protecting Puget Sound. In the City of Black Diamond these include stream-side planting and clean-up events. For more information contact Aaron Nix, Natural Resources/Parks Director at 360-886-2560 extension 220.

For other ways to become involved with ***Puget Sound Starts Here*** and more information about the program, contact Seth Boettcher, Public Works Director at 360-886-2560 extension 211.