MEDIA RELEASE
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Harbor WildWatch is excited to announce the award of a $10,000 grant from The Rose Foundation to support educational efforts at Donkey Creek and Austin Estuary Parks in Downtown Gig Harbor through the 2017. This funding comes through the Foundation’s Puget Sound Stewardship & Mitigation Fund, which is designed to mitigate past pollution runoff by supporting community-based efforts to protect or improve the water quality of Puget Sound. Harbor WildWatch is an environmental education organization which focuses on the stewardship of Puget Sound and provides hands-on learning and volunteer experiences to the students, residents and visitors of the greater Gig Harbor region. The group has been delivering education programs at Donkey Creek and Austin Estuary since the completion of the major restoration project that restored traditional water flow in 2013.

With support from Pierce Conservation District and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Harbor WildWatch has delivered over 70 interactive education workshops to nearly 1,200 adults and students over the past three years. This includes public and student salmon tours, interpretive signage, educational film and citizen science projects that monitor and restore biodiversity at this unique location. The nature and variety of these hands-on activities has not only increased eco-literacy among the local population, but has attracted visitors to downtown Gig Harbor and provided an example of how environmental education programs can benefit the local economy.

Unfortunately, traditional grant funding for this project was not available until May 2017, but according to Science Specialist, Stena Troyer, a year’s gap would be detrimental to the overall project. “It would halt the momentum gained in the last three years and, more importantly, prevent us from fulfilling our commitment to analyze and share the biodiversity data we have collected with project partners and community members.” Enter The Rose Foundation.

Through their Puget Sound Stewardship & Mitigation Fund, The Rose Foundation awarded $10,000 to ensure programs at Donkey Creek and Austin Estuary will continue through April 2017. Funding will be allocated to public and student field workshops that communicate the role a functioning habitat plays in protecting and conserving our natural resources, as well as citizen science training sessions to teach adults to monitor water quality, shellfish, salmon and native plants to continue to establish a baseline of biodiversity. Finally, this funding will support a number of public presentations to share this biodiversity data with the local community – bringing the project full circle as it was intended.

Want to learn more about educational programs at Donkey Creek and Austin Estuary Parks? Contact our Program Coordinator, Rachel Easton, at rachel@harborwildwatch.org.

Harbor WildWatch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental education organization based in Gig Harbor, WA. Their mission is to inspire stewardship for Puget Sound by providing learning opportunities about the environment to the people in the local community. Through more than 600 fun and interactive programs each year, Harbor WildWatch hopes to inform residents and visitors about local marine life and elicit their involvement in preserving our natural resources. To make a donation or learn more about Harbor WildWatch, visit www.harborwildwatch.org.