



Dear Salish Sea Expeditions community,

As President of Salish Sea Expeditions Board of Directors, I am writing today to make you among the first to know of the next exciting step in our work to engage, educate, and inspire youth through hands-on science on the Salish Sea: Salish Sea Expeditions is merging with the Northwest Maritime Center (NWMC).

If you're not familiar with them, NWMC is arguably the closest thing to a critical mass of maritime education that our region has to offer. With their main campus in Port Townsend and a satellite facility in Seattle, their mission is to connect people to the powerful experiences of the sea, and their programs span all ages and a wide range of learning outcomes; from engaging people in the maritime world, to training the next generation of mariners, to inspiring others through adventure-based experiences and learning on the water. Their offerings for youth are a mix of school programs and extended education programs. They've also partnered with the Port Townsend School District in creating the first maritime-centered school district in the country. The goal was to align the K-12 curriculum to authentic, place-based maritime science, and in doing so, increase the relevance and effectiveness of classroom instruction.

Seth Muir, our outgoing Executive Director, approached both organizations with the notion that rather than rehire for his position, why not blend Salish Sea Expeditions with the Northwest Maritime Center. Re-casting Salish Sea Expeditions as an integrated but independent part of a larger organization would reduce administrative costs and leverage the strengths of our collective programs.

With six months of due diligence, we discovered that beyond efficiencies, there are great returns in terms of impact: increased program quality through better specialization; decreased staff turnover with the prospect of more year-round employment; and the opportunity to rapidly scale STEM outcomes by incorporating student-led, hands-on science into NWMC's programs, doubling our science education goals in a single year. Following a recent joint board meeting, we committed to work through a final list of transition tasks and, barring any unforeseen issues, Salish Sea Expeditions will officially become part of the Northwest Maritime Center on July 1st.

What this means for Salish Sea Expeditions is greater impact and stability. The organization will remain a standalone program under Northwest Maritime Center. We'll still have our own website, 501(c)(3) status, and teachers will still sign up for all Salish Sea Expeditions programs under our name. What changes is that our core, four-person staff will now have the support and expertise of all 40 NWMC employees. The efficiencies of this scale will give us the bandwidth to better serve youth.

The ink is barely dry on the agreement and already it's paying dividends: I am proud to announce that **we will be providing scholarships for more than 200 youth from under-resourced schools this fall, effectively doubling our impact in these communities.** While we were taking steps to work towards this outcome, the merger has contributed significantly to making it happen.

After 18 years serving as a volunteer with Salish Sea Expeditions, I can say with complete confidence that this partnership with NWMC is more important now than ever for the students we serve. Our merger is a wonderful outcome for a program that is tremendously effective in offering our regional youth an innovative and inquiry-based STEM learning environment that not only provides the opportunity to experience the Salish Sea but also enhances their sense of adventure, wonder, capacity for growth and grit. We welcome your continued support as we embark on this new chapter.

Sincerely,

Trina Wellman, Board President Salish Sea Expeditions
Steve Oliver, Board President Northwest Maritime Center