

The SeaDoc Society: From Conversation to Conservation

What do you do when one threatened species eats another? Wildlife veterinarian and research scientist Joe Gaydos posed the question last fall in a presentation to the Puget Sound community.



Joe Gaydos pilots SeaDoc II.

Washington State has a mandate to bring back a viable population of sea otters, which daily eat 20 percent of their body weight in abalone and sea urchins. Yet the state's population of Northern abalone is in danger of extinction, and sustaining a viable commercial sea urchin harvest is of economic importance. The SeaDoc Society, a marine ecosystem health program administered by the school's Wildlife Health Center and directed by Dr. Kirsten Gilardi, is funding a study to see if the red sea urchin spine canopy hides and protects abalone juveniles.

Dr. Gaydos, the SeaDoc Society's regional director, is carrying out the research and equally important, is bringing stakeholders in the Puget Sound region together so that when faced with complex ecosystem problems, everyone can think of the end game.

"We're in the business of overcoming the cynicism and doing something about it," he says. The SeaDoc Society catalyzes conversations in which everyone is a part—tribal representatives, state biologists, federal fisheries agents, and Washington State endangered species leaders—and creates synergy by making connections with other agencies, advisory boards, public and private donors, and citizen scientists with the passion and the equipment to carry out important research.

"The public-private partnership model is very successful in bringing basic science into policymaking, management, and conservation, and is applicable to many areas in need of scientific study," he says. "Information is great, but only if it gets into the hands of people who can put it to use." The challenge, he says, is keeping up with demand for research and communication.

"People want living natural resources—to fish and harvest crabs, to see whales. If I am willing to limit the crab harvest to five versus six, or only allow Wednesday–Saturday harvesting versus all week, I can keep the crab population sustainable for my kids—it's a balance," he says. "There's no reason we can't have healthy ecosystems and marine populations. We just need to make it a priority."

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

REMOVING CALIFORNIA'S DERELICT FISHING GEAR

"It Takes Decades to Disintegrate, but Only Seconds to Report" announces a colorful poster going to dive shops, marinas and other boat-friendly venues encouraging the public to report sightings of abandoned gear as part of a pilot clean-up program.

Lost or abandoned fishing nets, lines, pots, traps, and other commercial and recreational fishing items that rest on the sea floor, float or get caught on rocky reefs pose extreme hazards to marine wildlife, people and boats.

The SeaDoc Society is managing agency for the California Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project launched in 2005 in partnership with the California State Coastal Conservancy, the Northwest Straits Commission, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to remove gear from key locations along the California coast. Certified SCUBA divers are trained to extract gear from near-shore waters in a safe and environmentally sensitive manner.

Private support helps sustain the SeaDoc Society mission. For more information visit www.seadocsociety.org.



STUDENT SUPPORT

PATHOLOGY GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP HONORS DONALD DUNGWORTH

The Donald L. Dungworth Graduate Student Memorial Fund serves as tribute to both the man and his philosophy of lifelong learning.

Educator and researcher Donald Dungworth served on the School of Veterinary Medicine faculty for 31 years. Following his death in February 2005, his wife, Terri, daughter, Dawn Elsbree, and son, Duncan, established the memorial fund as a way for friends and colleagues to honor his memory. The endowment, created with more than \$45,000 in gifts from family and friends from around the world, will support outstanding pathology graduate students as they travel to scientific meetings and publish their research.



The first awardee will be selected in October by vote of the pathology faculty. In addition to encouraging graduate students to present their work at national

meetings, the award will promote academic careers in pathology and graduate education to advance pathology research.

During his UC Davis tenure, Dr. Dungworth gained an international reputation as an expert in the field of inhalation toxicology and pathology. His collaborative research provided key information for standards established in the Clean Air Act of 1990.

To make a gift to the Donald L. Dungworth Graduate Student Memorial Fund, contact the school's development office at (530) 752-7024.

As part of the SeaDoc Society's California Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Program, deck hand Kenny Hill winches aboard a derelict lobster trap floated to the surface off Santa Catalina Island by SCUBA divers. During a 10-day period last May, 222 items were removed from the sea floor.