

NORTHWEST DISCOVERY CENTER

Discovering and Sustaining the Natural Wonders of our Region

The NorthWest Discovery Center is a new breed of living museum, science center, research and education facility, community resource and world-class destination attraction. A fun place, full of movement and color, the not-for-profit Center draws families from all over to explore together.

- Its scope is the natural environments of the Pacific Northwest from the Cascade Mountains through the Nooksack and Fraser River valleys to the submarine world beneath the San Juan and Canadian Gulf Islands.
- Its story is the interface between natural and human communities in the past, present, and future. Beginning with our waterfront, and expanding to explore the whole region, the Discovery Center blends science, art, and history to convey a sense of place, with nature as its focus.
- Its mission is to awaken wonder, inform, and promote stewardship of this region's environment through engaging exhibits, public education, and wildlife rehabilitation.
- It benefits the *economy*, through the economic stimulus of a central tourism attraction; the *community*, as an educational and recreational resource; and the *environment*, through education, research, and practical applications.
- Its five divisions are Exhibits, Education, Research and Development, Wildlife Rehabilitation, and Regional Resolution and Conferencing Center.

EXHIBITS

- Visitors enter a striking building, of 75 to 100 thousand square feet, with soaring atrium, café, quality gift shop, and views over Bellingham Bay and the San Juan Islands. The building has been designed as a showcase of sustainable architecture and engineering, echoes the past, and points to the future.
- Engaging exhibits, hands-on displays, recreated natural habitats filled with living inhabitants, touch tanks, and small and giant aquariums lead visitors to discover our region's natural systems and get close and personal with the creatures that live here. Visitors learn how we have interacted with nature in the past, and explore options for a sustainable future.
- Play-stations and "discovery laboratories" are staffed by trained interpreters to help visitors of all ages inquire, explore and discover.
- Exhibits and programs extend beyond the building through outside exhibits, restored natural areas in a park-like setting, and interpretive centers in the field.

EDUCATION

- Education is at the core of the Discovery Center's mission, permeates every aspect of the Center, and is designed to be fun as well as meaningful.
- Exhibits are created to engage and inform all ages, with "layers" of information available for repeated visits.

- **In-house programs and activities--with curriculum developed in collaboration with local school systems, universities, and institutes--are run by Discovery Center education staff and volunteers, using exhibits, laboratories, and classrooms.**
- **Extended education programs include internships, teacher workshops, tours and excursions, and adult community programs.**
- **Reference Center, media library, and call-in center provide a community resource for comprehensive information about the region's natural assets and environmental issues and concerns, with links to volunteer opportunities.**

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Primary and practical research, in collaboration with scientists throughout the area, addresses issues important to the region's marine, fresh-water, and forest habitats and the human communities they border.**
- **Research takes place in-house, using the Discovery Center's laboratories and reference library, as well as in the field and partner laboratories in the region.**
- **Research is integrated into the exhibits and educational programs, so visitors and students can connect with real science as it happens.**
- **As a direct outgrowth of Discovery Center research, in cooperation with local agencies, a range of practical applications and specific projects are developed to address important ecological and economic issues in the region.**

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

- **At the on-site wildlife rehabilitation clinic--working with off-site clinics and release facilities--injured, diseased, orphaned or abandoned wildlife are nursed back to health and released.**
- **Wildlife that cannot be released are housed in the living habitats of the Discovery Center whenever possible.**
- **A "window" into the operations of the Rehabilitation Clinic is part of the exhibits of the Discovery Center, and opportunities for volunteering are available.**

REGIONAL RESOLUTION AND CONFERENCING CENTER

- **Utilizing state-of-the-art fiber-optic videoconference technology, this flexible conferencing space accommodates groups as large as 400, or may be broken up into smaller rooms for small conferences and meetings.**
- **The center includes a theater for public lectures and media presentations.**
- **The Regional Resolution Center is a neutral arena where scientists, governmental, tribal, and other agencies and stakeholders can debate issues, resolve conflicts, and explore our capacity to collaborate across political/cultural boundaries to restore and sustain ecosystem integrity.**