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Snohomish County Receives Private Donation for Derelict Boat Removals

Phil and Kelly Johnson, of Everett, want to support local restoration efforts

EVERETT, Wash., April 5, 2021 – In November 2020, Everett residents, Phil and Kelly Johnson read about Snohomish County [Surface Water Management's \(SWM\) derelict boat removal program](#) in the [Daily Herald](#). They had heard of the program, but their interest was piqued when they read that the annual budget for vessel removal had been depleted by the four boats removed in 2020. To support the removal of more derelict boats from the estuary, the Johnsons donated \$50,000 to the [Northwest Straits Foundation](#), a non-profit conservation and funding partner of [Snohomish Marine Resources Committee \(MRC\)](#). The MRC is a citizen's advisory group that works with and is coordinated by the county's SWM division.

Since 2014, SWM has partnered with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to remove derelict vessels from the Snohomish Estuary. To date, SWM has removed 11 boats and contributed to the removal of additional boats, led by other jurisdictions. There are 24 more known in the Snohomish Estuary and it is estimated it would cost approximately \$1 million to remove all derelict boats in the estuary.

"Improving the safety and cleanliness of our waterways will have a long-term impact on our quality of life," said Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers. "We are very grateful for the generosity of the Johnson family and their support to protect and enhance aquatic habitat. I would encourage others to help us with this important mission."

"It takes a village to work towards a cleaner natural environment, and derelict boat removal is no exception," said Gregg Farris, Snohomish County SWM Director. "Strong partnerships are required to get this work done and not one entity could complete the work without support from the others."

The funding of Snohomish County's derelict vessel removal program is a collaborative effort. The county foots the bill, sometimes with support from other local jurisdictions, and submits for partial reimbursement from DNR. This creates a revolving fund for derelict boat removal. With the Johnson's donation, the funds for this work have been doubled.

“The Snohomish Estuary is one of the county’s most precious assets that is often overlooked,” said Phil Johnson. “My intent is to leave my community better than I found it and this looked like a good place to help.” Added Kelly Johnson, “With so much attention on everyday life, the broader picture tends to take a back seat. These environmental concerns have been creeping up on us for many years. I don’t think many people know about the long-term effects of these derelict vessels.”

Derelict boats can pollute waters by leaking oil, other fluids, and debris, polluting marine habitat and contaminating wildlife. Drifting, beached, broken-up or sunken vessels can threaten human safety and navigation, and impact aquatic habitats by physically resting on it.

“Thanks to generous neighbors like Phil and Kelly Johnson who are making an investment in our community, the Snohomish Estuary will be an even cleaner ecosystem for people and salmon,” said Snohomish County Councilmember Megan Dunn. “Removing derelict vessels benefits both our residents and the marine ecosystem by reducing the potential for pollutants to enter our waters.”

If you have a boat at the end of its useful life or want to report an abandoned or derelict vessel, learn more [here](#).

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About Snohomish County Conservation and Natural Resources

The Snohomish County Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) includes the Division of Surface Water Management; the Division of Parks, Recreation and Tourism; the Office of Energy and Sustainability and the Office of Agriculture. DCNR works in support of thriving communities; a clean and healthy environment to foster environmental stewardship; ensuring food security; supporting a green economy, and strengthening communities by providing regional parks and infrastructure; protecting the region's water, air, land and natural habitats; enhancing agriculture and recreation; and reducing flooding. <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/5758>