NEWS RELEASE

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Get Ready to Be WOWed

On June 8, World Oceans Day, Washington Sea Grant (WSG) will launch Washington on Water (WOW), a new Web-based tool to help teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade zero in on marine education resources available statewide. WOW can also provide scientists, industry, government agencies and others with a connection to schools and an opportunity to explain their work to students and their instructors.

The central importance of the ocean and its resources to Washington’s culture and economy is not reflected in the low priority placed on the marine sciences in many of the state’s public schools.

“We recognized an important niche that needed to be filled,” says WSG Education Specialist Nancy Reichley, who, along with Education Coordinator Julie Hahn, developed the WOW Web site. “By facilitating connections among educators, scientists, industry, government and nonprofit organizations, we believe WOW can help improve marine science literacy in the state,” Reichley says.

WOW will provide information on regional marine science topics, from interior watersheds to the outer coast. The WOW database also contains information on national marine education resources that are relevant to the Pacific Northwest. By linking marine educators and resources, WOW will nurture partnerships among organizations either offering or seeking marine science and education programs.

The WOW Web site offers an interactive database featuring four categories: Classroom Resources, Field Activities, Professional Development and Funding. The simple user interface allows quick identification of available resources. For example, teachers looking for a marine science field activity for fourth-graders can go to the WOW site, click on Field Activities and get a search page. If they select “land-based”, enter the keywords
“beach walk”, click on “grade 4” and then hit “search”, they will get a list of several different age-appropriate activities provided by diverse organizations, including the Seattle Aquarium, Western Washington University and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. Each entry has a brief description of the activity offered and a link to the organization’s Web site for more details and contact information.

“Call it a clearinghouse or one-stop shopping,” says Reichley. “It basically puts a lot of valuable information right at the user’s fingertips.”

Recognizing the significance of the oceans to the region and the world, WSG chose World Oceans Day to launch the site. Washington’s $8 billion ocean economy is the fifth largest in the United States. More than $500 billion of the world’s economy is tied to ocean-based industries such as coastal tourism and shipping. The oceans’ vast mass of water helps regulate the global climate and ensure that a constant flow of vital nutrients is cycled throughout the biosphere.

“Through research, education and outreach, Washington Sea Grant addresses important marine issues, provides better tools for managing marine resources and supports partnerships within the marine community,” says WSG Director Penny Dalton. “WOW aligns perfectly with every aspect of that mission.”

Reichley says that she and Hahn will continue to fine-tune and add new WOW resources to ensure the database is both comprehensive and current. She encourages education providers to contact WSG to ensure their marine education opportunities are listed on WOW and to suggest innovative programs and contributors.

WOW: http://www.wsg.washington.edu/wow

*Based at the University of Washington, Washington Sea Grant provides statewide marine research, outreach, and education services. The National Sea Grant College Program is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce. http://www.wsg.washington.edu/*