

Bonnie Bunning

Community Involvement, Education and Stewardship for Sustainable Salmon Habitat and Recreational Use on the Tahuya Peninsula

Biography

With 21 years experience at the Department of Natural Resources, Bonnie Bunning serves as the Director of Policy and Administration and responsible for legislative and governmental relations, including tribal relations, as well as administration of the Department.

After graduating with a B.A. in Geology from Smith College, she spent six years in mineral exploration in the private sector. Bonnie joined the Department in 1980 and spent eight years as a geologist in both Spokane and Olympia before working as a management analyst and reporting to the Department Supervisor.

For the last eight years, Bonnie served as manager of the Department's South Puget Sound Region handling both lands and aquatics issues.

Bonnie has successfully worked with the public to solve difficult problems and to improve environmental education. As Regional Manager, Bonnie was instrumental in forging a relationship with the North Mason School District to create the Students in the Watershed environmental education program. She has also worked with several local communities to come to agreement about public use of lands, especially in the Green Mountain area of Kitsap County and the Tahuya State Forest in Mason County.

Bonnie is married and has two daughters.

Presentation Abstract

In 1994, the Department of Natural Resources started to take a more active role in managing the 180 mile - mostly user built - trail system on the Tahuya State Forest. The Tahuya State Forest has the highest level of ORV use in Washington State during the spring and winter months which provides Belfair with 14% of their business economy (Gilmore Research Group, 1991.) The fundamental approach to this "active" management was to include the people who loved to use this popular forest setting as partners in its management. At the start of the "focus group" process many of the

recreationists were very distrusting of losing their beloved trail system. By honestly seeking their help, actively listening to their needs and including them in developing resolution to the issues, we, as partners, were able to gain sustainable results for the health of the salmon and the local economy in Belfair. Through various grants the trail mitigation and restoration efforts are nearly complete. Through the "Students in the Watershed" program, high school students have monitored the results of the trail mitigation effort and have provided excellent data showing that the new trail technology has significant results in keeping fine sediments out the streams. The users, the students, and the business community have given well over 10,000 hours of volunteer time to this collaborative process for sustainable resources and a sustainable community.

Gilmore Research Group. 1991. Recreational Use and Demand for the Tahuya State Forest. Washington Department of Natural Resources Report, PO Box 68, Enumclaw, WA 98022.