

2011 Skagit Watershed Letterbox Trail Clues

Letterboxing is a form of recreation that is fun for the whole family. Someone hides a distinctive box, and then gives clues to others in hopes that they may find the box. We've hidden 17 educational boxes up and down the Skagit Watershed area at 16 different sites. You can start by getting a small journal, ink-stamp, and inepad. Our boxes contain a logbook and a stamp or sticker for you to stamp into your own personal logbook, and then stamp yours into our logbook. Find them all. This adventure continues until October 13, 2011 this year. Leave your contact info with info@skagitcleanwater.org to receive information about the wrap-up party.

Call 360-428-1054 or email the "info" address above to report missing/damaged boxes. Also try www.atlasquest.com and Face Book for any clue updates and to record your successes and comments.

1. North Cascades National Park – National Park Service

Venture up the Skagit Watershed along the wild and scenic river as far as Goodell Creek. Near Milepost 120 you will see the turn south across the river to the North Cascades Visitor Center.

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Your journey begins in a national park with waters falling from rising peaks

As you know, water will flow.... Downstream.

A visitor center beckons, a ranger speaks

Your questions are answered; it's an explorer's dream!

The American people saved this special place

But our climate is changing, it's the start of the race

Don't be a greenhouse gase-r

Become a Junior Ranger and avid recycler!

** Talk with a ranger about our age-appropriate Junior Ranger Program. Our letterbox is near the campground recycling center.

2. US Forest Service; Shadow of the Sentinels Nature Trail

Driving Directions: From I-5, take the Cook Road exit #232 toward Sedro-Woolley. Turn east onto Cook Road. Continue 4 miles and turn left at the intersection onto Highway 20, North Cascades Highway. Continue on Highway 20 for 17 miles and turn left onto Baker Lake Road. After 13 miles, look to the right for the Shadow of the Sentinels Nature Trail sign and parking area.

**\$5 Northwest Forest Day Pass required at Trailhead. They are available along Highway 20 at the following locations: Mount Baker Ranger District Office in Sedro-Woolley, Cascade Mercantile in Lyman, and Baker Lake Grocery in Concrete*

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

For 500 years these Sentinels have lived,

Growing through all the snow and sun that nature gives.

Journey through time but stay to the right,

Watch as the warblers and chickadees take flight.

Under two giants you will find a meeting place,

Where benches provide a welcoming space.

Look beneath the boardwalk near the Douglas Fir,

now your letterboxing can occur!

3. Marblemount Hatchery – Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

From I-5, travel on Hwy 20 east 46 miles to Marblemount. At the right angle turn, bear slight right onto Cascade River Road and cross over the Skagit River. Turn right onto Rockport Cascade Road, cross over the

Cascade River and then right onto Fish Hatchery Road. Continue on Fish Hatchery Road, and park in the far (west) end of the lot. Find the large letter **A** and locate the letterbox by following the riddle!

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

“Riddle me this riddle me that, can you find our habitat?

A place *where creeks and the river meet*, makes for a healthy salmon retreat.

Walk along ‘**A**’ trail and you’ll see a powerful view of me.

Habitat is a place to live, that elements from the surroundings give

Water that is clean, cold, clear, and plants that hold the soil here.

Gravel in the stream will hide our young—take a walk and have some fun.”

Still stumped? The wooden fence *where creeks and the river meet* makes a nice spot to admire the native plants...

4. Tope Ryan – Skagit Land Trust

Bring your rubber boots for this letterbox! Take the I-5 Bow Hill exit #236, and go east on Bow Hill, continuing along it when it turns into Prairie Rd, for about 3 miles. Turn right onto Grip Road. The property is the first driveway on the left, as indicated by a Skagit Land Trust sign. Park in front of the gate and walk into the property.

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Follow the path to the edge of a stream, surrounded by tasty trees.

Turn right – do you see the letterbox, in front of a busy animal’s home?

Be careful where you step –

the animal has dug water paths under the grass to get around faster!

5. Cumberland Creek - Skagit Land Trust

Take the S. Skagit Highway 12 miles east from Highway 9. Turn left into the driveway 34183 (it’s tricky to see as you drive past – make sure you don’t go too far!). Park in front of the (locked) gate and walk in.

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Pick up an interpretive trail map and head to the Oxbow pond.

Look carefully in the trees as you walk –

Can you find a home for a special bird that lives at Cumberland Creek?

The letterbox is on the ground nearby!

6. Taylor Shellfish Farm– Taylor Shellfish

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Heading north on I-5 (from Mt. Vernon), take exit 231. Head north on Chuckanut Drive (Hwy 11) for 10 miles to the Oyster Creek Inn Restaurant (just past the hairpin turn). The entrance to the farm’s driveway is in the corner of the restaurant’s parking lot. Drive under the sign, across the bridge and down the hill. It’s about a half mile to the facility. Please be careful crossing the railroad track. For **Directions to the Letterbox** park where you can find a spot and head to where you can buy shellfish and there you will find the rest of the clue!

7. PUD Main Office – Skagit Public Utility District #1

Skagit PUD’s office and operations facility is located at 1415 Freeway Drive along the west side of Freeway Drive in Mount Vernon, WA. The PUD facility provides the community with several beneficial amenities for recreation and education. The PUD’s primary public parking facility is bounded along its westerly border with several athletic fields, which provide the youth of Mount Vernon an opportunity to participate in organized

recreational activities. Additionally, the PUD's facility has received recognition through the National Wildlife Federation and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as an official Certified Wildlife Habitat. The PUD is also committed to expanding and utilizing a low water use landscaping technique referred to as xeriscaping that allows for the elimination of supplemental irrigation for plantings.

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Directions: From Interstate 5, take the College Way (Exit 227). Head west on College Way before turning left on Freeway Drive, continue south for approximately ¼ mile to the PUD's Main Office, located on your right. From the main parking lot, find the blue rain barrel. Consider the water inside the barrel; it could contain molecules that dinosaurs drank. Head north and go around to the east side of the building to the front lawn. See the fountains? Two of the three fountains have a vine maple tree planted next to it. Locate the correct tree and under it you will find the letterbox. Now, take your shoes off and put your toes in the water! Look to the east for the Cultus Mountains, which is where this water came from.

8. WSU Discovery Gardens – Master Composters/Recyclers

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Go to the WSU Research and Extension Center at 16650 SR 536 just west of Mt. Vernon.

Delicious Decay:

What's delicious to me, may not be to you.
Grass clippings and leaves, food scraps old and new.
I am an animal, but I don't live in the zoo.
I slither and munch turning garbage to poo.
Find me where soil is becoming anew!

9. Friday Creek Habitat Stewards & Skagit Conservation District

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Pomona Grange Park, 5625 Old Highway 99 N., Burlington, WA 98233

Directions: Heading either north or south on I-5, take the Bow Hill Exit #236. Head east on the Bow Hill Road and follow to stop sign at intersection with Old Hwy. 99 N. Turn left (head north) on the Old Hwy. 99. Pomona Grange Park will be on your right. **There are two letterboxes at this site.**

Directions to the Letterboxes:

Clue #1 – Find the kiosk with the “Living Roof.” Note trail just to your left (and behind the kiosk) that leads to the creek. Take this trail. Turn right at “T.” Note bench on your right. Go 36 paces past bench. Note big tree with ivy growing on it. Now look to your right for two nurse stumps that sit back from the trail. Walk so you are standing between the two cedar stumps. Now look at the stump on your right - the roots hold what you are looking for.

Clue #2 – When you leave box #1 turn right back on the trail and continue following the main trail. Find the “Red Alder” sign post (which will be on your left) and take a sharp right here. Follow this native plant trail until you find a sign on your left that says, “When the big leaf maple fell, it became a living nurse log. The branches became trees, supporting moss and licorice fern.” Walk 18 steps into woods at this sign. Look for the nurse log – your treasure can be found under a mossy fallen log.

10. Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

From State Route 20 take a right at Bay View - Edison Road Rd. Follow this road about five miles to the Padilla Bay Research Reserve on the right at 10441 Bay View Edison Road. Enter the Breazeale Interpretive Center; it is open Wednesday to Sunday 10 AM to 5PM and admission is always free! Head into the exhibits and come learn about the estuary. Make your way to the aquaria room at the end. After spending some time with our local critters look for the exit door next to the two owls that faces southwest to Padilla Bay. Go through this door to the courtyard outside, the letterbox will be hidden in an island local plants. One of the plants hummingbirds are particularly fond of (when blooming!).

11. La Conner Chamber of Commerce/Skagit County Historical Museum

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

From I-5 take exit 221 if coming from the South or exit 230 if coming from the North, follow the signs leading to La Conner which lead you to a roundabout at the entrance to town. La Conner is the oldest town in Skagit County, established in 1867.

Head west on Morris Street 5 blocks until you reach 2nd Street. Turn left on 2nd Street and drive 2 blocks to Benton Street. Notice the view of the Swinomish Channel and Swinomish Indian Reservation from this vantage point. The Swinomish Tribe has lived along the Swinomish Channel for over 700 years. Turn left on Benton Street and drive 2 blocks to 4th Street. Turn left on 4th Street and park at the end of the street in front of the Skagit County Historical Museum. Enter the museum and look for the letterbox in the lobby.

HOURS OPEN: Tuesday-Sunday 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM. CLOSED Mondays & Holidays.

12. Anacortes Community Garden

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Take SR 20 west to Anacortes and then head north on Commercial Ave. Turn right onto 28th street (Jack in the Box on adjacent corner), Arrive at 28th St & Q Ave. The garden is located directly behind Storks Restaurant and Bowling Alley.

Grow Your Own:

What do we do when the power runs low?
We stock up on water, and let candles glow.
But what do we do when the oil runs out?
Put up solar panels and ride bikes all about!
Best part of all, is what we will eat-
Growing with friends, right under our feet

13. Skagit Conservation Education Alliance (SCEA)

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Take State Route 20 west to Anacortes. Before the end of the highway in Anacortes turn right onto “R” Ave heading north. Immediately down the hill take the first right onto 34th Street heading east. Take 34th St. to “V” Ave; just past “V” Ave is a crosswalk; this is the Tommy Thompson Trail.

Hike or bike the trail south for about ¼ mile. On the way you’ll pass several landmarks:

- 1) a sign about the Fidalgo Bay Plywood Mill Cleanup Project;
- 2) the Rotary Old Mill Park;
- 3) an otter sculpture;
- 4) a “Forage Fish” interpretive sign;
and the most important one
- 5) a pair of cedar trees about 6 feet apart and 15 feet tall on the shore side of the trail.
Stop here and look for a good place to get down to the beach.

Then walk back to the 2 cedar trees and look for a tiny cave in the rocks hiding the letterbox.

14. Washington Park – WSU Skagit County Beachwatchers

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

From I-5, take State Highway 20 to Anacortes, and then follow the signs that lead you through town 4 miles to the San Juan Ferry. Just before the entrance to the Ferry Terminal, move to the left lane and follow Sunset Avenue a little more than ½ mile to the entrance to Washington Park. Once you are inside the park, take the first road to the right signed “Beach Area” and park as soon as you can.

There are 2 signs that say “Day Use Parking 6 AM – 10 PM No Trailers”. Go to the northernmost sign.

From the sign, walk East about 20 steps into a lightly wooded area. Look for a group of 4 trees which includes two cedars close together. Walk through the salal and sword fern 18 steps, ending up in front of the two cedars. You will be facing the park shop building.

The letterbox is very close. If you think you’re “stumped”, get over it!

15. Wylie Slough Skagit Wildlife Area, Fir Island –WSU Skagit County Beachwatchers

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Take Interstate 5 to Exit 221, just south of Mount Vernon in Skagit County. Go west from the freeway and take the first right onto Fir Island Road, following the sign for Conway/La Conner. In 1.8 miles, turn left onto Wylie Road and continue for 1 mile to a T-intersection and a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife sign. Turn left onto the unpaved entrance road. Drive a short distance to a T-intersection and turn right. In a short distance, turn right again to reach the parking lot. Park and walk over to the large, open-sided shelter beside the parking lot. As you face the shelter, go to its front right support post. Look to the right and ahead (at about 45 degrees away from the building) and notice the place where open grass extends into the thicket and tall shrubs border the grass on either side. Stand facing that place with your back against the building post. Take 43 steps across the grass towards where it enters the thicket. The letterbox is on the ground under a tall shrub (an elderberry) on your left.

NOTE: Beginning July 1, 2011, each vehicle parked at Wylie Slough, must display a Discover Pass (\$10/day or \$30/year), a Washington State fishing or hunting license, or a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Recreational Use Permit. The Discover Pass is a new requirement for visiting state recreation lands managed by Washington State Parks, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Beginning in June 2011, the Discover Pass may be purchased online, over the phone, or at many stores. Go to www.parks.wa.gov/discoverpass/.

16. Skagit Valley Food Co-op, 202 South First St., Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Directions and clues to the Letterbox:

Directions: From I-5, take Kincaid Street Exit west into downtown Mount Vernon. After the railroad tracks, turn right on 3rd Street, and follow it under the overpass, turn Left into the Food Co-op’s parking lot.

Young plants need water, sunshine, and good soil to grow strong and nutrient-rich. Skagit Valley is well known for its agricultural roots. Commercial seeds, potatoes, and berries are Skagit’s main crops now, but we used to grow others too, do you know what Skagit used to grow? Skagit is also the largest producer of Organic crops in Western Washington. Organic farms are often smaller, and grow a lot of different produce crops at once (this is called bio-diversity) instead of one main one at a time (monoculture).

How many plant starts do you recognize? How many have you tried eating or growing? Browse the wall of herbs and flowers on your way to the potting shed, where you will find another clue....

Pesticides and herbicides used to keep crops free of insects and disease also make their way from the fields into the rivers and sloughs, and into our bodies when we eat non-organic fruits and veggies. The **Clean 15 and**

Dirty Dozen is a list made every year by the EWG, to help shoppers stay clear of the most heavily treated fruits and veggies.

“**Certified Organic**” means no synthetic pesticides on the plants or in the growing soil for at least 3 years, and the farmers agree to yearly inspections and to keep good records!

“**Salmon-Safe Certification**” recognizes farming that is good for fish and water quality!

*Head into the store, past the seeds (don’t forget to read the Organic mural above the Dairy section) and toward the Produce Dept windows...

The cleverest monkeys will spy a letterbox on a shelf to the left of their favorite food...

Waiver of Responsibility and Disclaimer

Know and respect your limits. Research before you go: know how long and difficult of a hike the letterbox requires. Know the weather forecast. Learn from rangers the local trail conditions. And if you ever find yourself on a dangerously rocky part of a trail that’s wet and slippery, use common sense and turn around. No letterbox is worth the danger of getting injured! If you are lucky enough to see wildlife, do not approach or disturb it. Do not feed the animals – even if it is small, cute, and apparently harmless. If Animals lose their fear of humans, they can and will cause problems with future hikers and letterboxes. Trailhead break-ins are a possibility, so do not leave valuables in your car – or at the very least, keep them hidden from view. You are solely responsible for your vehicle and its contents. Do not let children hunt for letterboxes unsupervised. By reading and utilizing the letterbox clues on this sheet, you acknowledge the above conditions, accept responsibility for your own actions, and agree to hold non-liable the clue writers, website authors, and letterboxing organizations and further, agree to provide this disclaimer to any person with whom you share these letterbox clues.



A special thank you to the Skagit Valley Food Co-op for their sponsorship of the 2011 Skagit Watershed Letterbox Trail through the 4% Friday contribution program. 4% of the co-op’s sales on June 24, 2011 will go to SCEA to finance and manage the project from June 24 to October 13, 2011.

Look for other organizations the co-op supports with this program and shop 4% Friday!

Thank you!

Contact information

Telephone: SCEA Office 360-428-1054

Email: info@skagitcleanwater.org

Address: Padilla Bay Reserve, 10441 Bay View Edison Road, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

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