



SUMMARY AND PREVIEW  
2020/2021

In a typical year, Ikkatsu Project annual reports don't come out until January or February. It's difficult to do an accurate assessment of anything while it's still underway and when the programs are as diverse and unique as these are, it's best to wait until a break in the action before trying to get them all down on paper. These times, however, are anything but ordinary, as good a time as any to take a look back at what this year has brought and the ongoing plans and adaptations that are coming up in 2021.

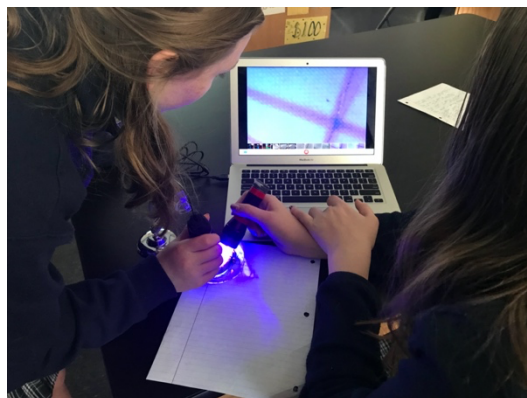
After years of active community work and discussions with our elected representatives, at several different levels, attending more meetings, online strategy events and community outreach sessions than I can count, Washington state finally banned single-use plastic bags, statewide. The law is due to go into effect on January 1st, 2021. While the ongoing covid crisis means some uncertainty as to whether it will all happen on time or not, this was a huge step forward. Single-use bags aren't the only issue, of course, and there are many steps left to go in this journey, but this is a good start.



As the year began, there were several school programs on the calendar for March and April. These are primarily microplastics workshops, four-day classroom sessions where Middle-School students collect and analyze water samples taken from various points in and near their own communities, counting the plastic filaments and fragments in each sample. These programs began in 2015 and have been a valuable addition to our work in the years since then, in several different school districts and private schools in the Puyallup River watershed. Other presentations and classroom lessons for elementary students – an especially rewarding and enjoyable part of the Ikkatsu outreach mission – were scheduled for April-June.

When the schools shut down in the second week of March, all of these plans changed. None of the scheduled programs took place in any of the schools and other sessions that were to have happened in other locations (YMCA Camp Seymour, Foss Waterway Seaport, for example), were also canceled.

The 2020 Tacoma Shoreline Survey suffered a similar fate. (The city of Tacoma has approximately 13 miles of shoreline that are inside the city limits. The goal of this annual survey and cleanup is to count and collect all of the debris from those beaches in a one-day push, using volunteers and a network of nonprofit partner organizations to get the job done.) Originally on the calendar in April, it was rescheduled to September because of lockdown and social distancing guidelines. and it was organized so that it could be done as a virtual event. A video was made and distributed that explained how to document the debris that was collected and how to share that information between all the participants as well as with the NOAA national database.



Unfortunately, the particular Saturday in September that it had been rescheduled for turned out to be right when the smoke from the Oregon and California wildfires was at its thickest in the region. The air was deemed unhealthy for outdoor activities and area parks and shorelines were mostly closed for the weekend. The 3rd annual Tacoma Shoreline Survey, it seems, was not meant to happen, not this year.

The South Kuiu Cleanup, the Ikkatsu Project's regular trip to southeast Alaska to survey and clean debris from remote wilderness beaches, was also in danger of being completely shut down this year. Because Alaska had a mandatory 14-day quarantine in effect for out-of-state arrivals that lasted until early July, there was really no way to ensure a safe visit for staff and volunteers – volunteer positions for both weeks were completely filled – and little confidence that any good data could be gained or significant cleanup could be accomplished. It looked like another program that wasn't going to happen.

But in the early days of August, after the quarantine order had been lifted, a small group of Cape Decision Lighthouse Society (CDLS) board members made a one-week, last minute trip and Ikkatsu volunteer Lucas Drawdy was able to accompany them. Lucas is a skilled naturalist and veteran of hundreds of beach cleanups. This was his third year at the lighthouse and his familiarity with the area and the survey process proved invaluable. During the



brief stay, time marked by inclement weather and other difficulties, he was able to finish the annual deposition survey at the Landing beach just north of the lighthouse. The deposition study is turning out to be one of the most valuable data-collection activities we're doing in Alaska and by getting it done this year we are able to keep this data stream going and get a clearer picture of when items are coming ashore and how long they persist. More on deposition studies later; for now, a big thank you to Lucas and the staff and guests of the CDLS for getting it in the books.

A new program for 2020 was the 2-Minute Meeting. After a couple months of lockdown and after realizing that nothing was going to return to the way it was anytime soon, I started putting together a short weekly video, focused on some aspect of the Salish Sea watershed, as a way to keep a conversation going during a time when face-to-face contact wasn't an option. Topics from kayaking to forest ecology to shoreline geology were presented in brief two-minute episodes and the response was overwhelmingly positive. People have to know their environment before they can love it and they have to love it before they can protect it. Hopefully this program is moving the needle, in that respect. (All of the 2-Minute Meetings are archived and available for viewing online. You can find the links on the web site.)

While the hope for 2021 is that everything will go back to "normal" and that in-person events can get underway again the way they used to, it's hard to know what will happen. As Yogi Berra put it so well, "It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future." With our current reality in mind, the programs are set to continue next year, but some changes are in order.

The biggest change is going to come in the Middle School workshops. Over the course of this year, work has begun on standardizing the class outlines, producing short informational videos and assembling lab materials into a kit that will enable classroom teachers to present the microplastics course on their own, where it makes the most sense in their existing curriculum. Because it's





probably going to be quite some time before guest instructors or adjunct faculty are going to be able to come into a class to teach, it's important to give classroom teachers the tools and the information that they need to keep these programs going. Some of this work has been done during this past year and starting this coming spring,



we're hoping to have two complete kits that teachers can use in Middle Schools up and down the Puyallup watershed.

In a related effort in the same area, there are three separate river trips on the calendar, destined for the White, Carbon and Puyallup Rivers. Together, these three comprise the major waterways between Mount Rainier and this part of Puget Sound and each of them have a unique history and story to tell. The Three Rivers Expedition will travel from the source of each of these rivers to the Sound, taking water samples along the way, tracking the health of the rivers as well as their stories and the interactions that people have with them, for

better or worse. One of the main focuses of the Puyallup River study will be sediment sampling, examining ongoing effects of the devastating 2020 release of artificial turf fragments and millions of rubber pellets from a dam project near Electron, in the upper portion of the river.

The Tacoma Shoreline Survey is also on the schedule for next April, and the hope is that it will be an in-person event. If not, we are already set up to organize it as a virtual gathering. Amelia Abernathy, TSS Volunteer Coordinator, has been a huge part of the success so far; expect to start hearing from her early next year as she starts matching people with beaches, getting the volunteers to where they are needed most. So far, this program has removed almost a ton of debris from Tacoma beaches and it remains a great reminder of what a community can achieve when it works together.

With the success of the deposition study in southeast Alaska and the realization that the rate at which plastic comes ashore is one of the most important things that we still need to understand, next year is going to see the establishment of two deposition studies here in Washington state. One will be on the coast, near Neah Bay, and the other will be here in South Puget Sound. A series of regular monitoring visits is expected to give us usable information that we don't currently have. (When the Ikkatsu Project began in 2012, a lot of attention was given to the types of debris that were washing up, and the specific kinds of objects we were finding. With those questions largely answered, the next thing we need to know is the rate at which items accumulate. This should be an exciting addition to an already interesting schedule.



The South Kuiu Cleanup is again on the calendar, and the emphasis next year will be on setting up another deposition beach study, this one on the other side of the island where storm effects tend to be stronger and the total amount of debris is larger and incredibly diverse. Beyond this task, work will continue on new beach surveys and removal and disposal of the remaining items that were collected in 2019, still in supersacks at several beaches that have been cleaned and surveyed over the past couple of years.

The 2-Minute Meetings will continue, typically once a week, and topics will continue to reflect interests and issues affecting the Salish Sea. The Three Rivers Expedition will also be a subject for a video presentation and together, these projects are expected to engage more people, raising awareness and inspiring action on a variety of programs around the bioregion.

When the State government returns to Olympia, the Ikkatsu Project plans to again be an integral part of the Environmental Lobby Day, as well as being available to meet with lawmakers and provide testimony on issues related to plastics legislation. The bag ban was a good start, but that's exactly what it was: a start. This is a process and there is still much to be done.

All of these endeavors take time, effort and money. Funding for environmental issues is always tight and the Ikkatsu Project relies on a mix of grants, corporate donations, and the critical contributions of individuals. Nothing that gets done happens without the support of the people and organizations that share our love of the ocean and our commitment to the health of the Salish Sea. The Ikkatsu Project typically engages in a single fundraising event each year, organized around the Giving Tuesday event, held just after Thanksgiving. This year, Giving Tuesday falls on December 1<sup>st</sup>, and in the weeks leading up to that date, we are making appeals for funding that will help all of these goals become reality in 2021.



Thank you for your support. Because of your help, the important work that the Ikkatsu Project does will continue through next year and beyond, with exploration of the issues that affect us all and committed engagement toward making the places we love cleaner and greener. Together with community members and other nonprofit partners, we expect 2021 to be a year of ongoing cooperation, environmental activism and positive results. Thank you for being a part of this important effort.