



Our mission is to protect and restore Puget Sound  
and the Northwest Straits -- our living waters,  
the land and our common future.

ORCAS BY MARK SEARS



# Think Like a Paddler: Citizen Science for Sea Kayakers

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# *Spartina* Survey Program

- Working to control invasive *Spartina* in Puget Sound
- Surveys were needed, large regional kayak community
- From 2007-2010:
  - 123 volunteer sea kayakers contributed 1,106 hours
  - Surveyed 267 miles of shoreline in Puget Sound for *Spartina anglica*
- Surveys conducted by volunteers and staff-led outings
- Generated media coverage AND steady funding
- Inspired pilot program in British Columbia, Canada



# Why, What, Where?

- Why Kayakers?
- What research?
- Where can kayakers paddle?
- What will the board think?

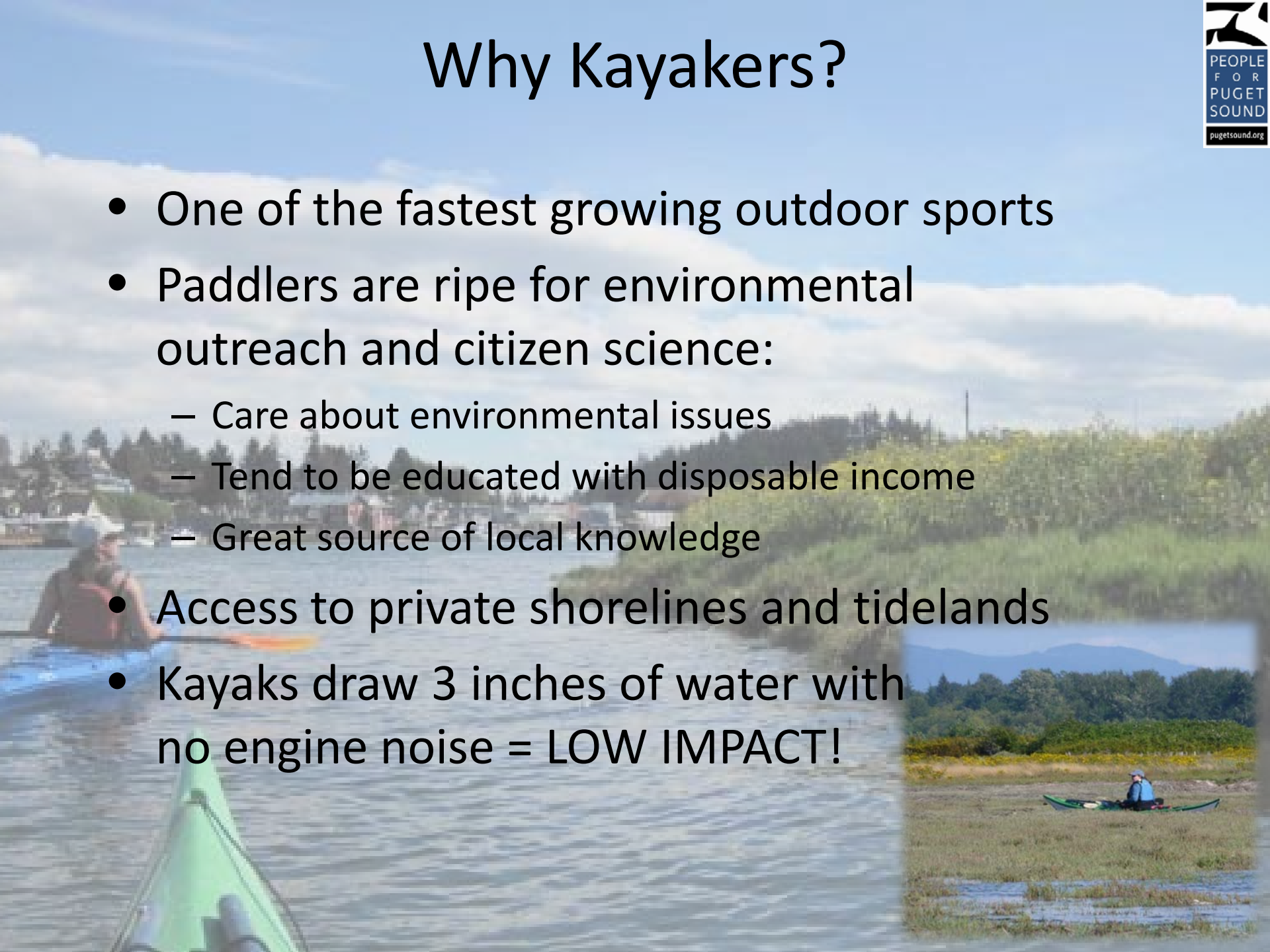
## How?

- Safety Concerns
- Recruitment and Outreach
- Think Like a Paddler: Tips, Tricks, and Tools



# Why Kayakers?

- One of the fastest growing outdoor sports
- Paddlers are ripe for environmental outreach and citizen science:
  - Care about environmental issues
  - Tend to be educated with disposable income
  - Great source of local knowledge
- Access to private shorelines and tidelands
- Kayaks draw 3 inches of water with no engine noise = LOW IMPACT!



# What research can paddlers do?

- Water quality/ocean chemistry studies
  - Water-based surveys
  - Pollution patrols
  - Shoreline/habitat mapping
- Education/outreach to fellow boaters
- Access outer islands/remote beaches

# Where...



## ...CAN we paddle?

- Any navigable water in the US
- Shallow draft allows access to challenging areas



## ...CAN'T we paddle?

- Regions with heavy wave action
- Shipping lanes and long, open crossings
- Tidal currents exceeding 3-4 knots

# What will the Board Think?

## AKA the Organizational Perspective



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- Unique and exciting program
- Generate interest and publicity
- Shoreline access to fill data gaps
- Affordable on-water research
- Low impact platform for sensitive areas
- Ecotourism/fundraising potential



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- Liability issues
- Small numbers of volunteers
- Events are tide and weather dependent
- Need sea kayaking biologist on staff!

# Safety Concerns

- Kayaking is a water sport
  - Inherent dangers: hypothermia, rough water and weather, dangerous wildlife, boat traffic, etc.
- Biggest danger is poor judgment and planning!
  - Tide, current and weather conditions...Know before you go!
- Need experienced kayaker to lead trips
  - Bring in a kayak guide part time or internship
  - Cultivate experienced volunteer
- Accept the responsibility of trip leader
  - Be prepared to lead, perform rescues and first aid
  - Carry safety equipment

# Volunteer Recruitment and Outreach

- QUALITY not QUANTITY
- Volunteers=Experienced kayakers with boat and gear
  - Skill requirement: practiced with self and assisted rescues
  - Make it official- put it on the release!
- Screen participants (and boats) BEFORE heading on the water - are they safe paddlers?
- Recruit via:
  - Kayak clubs
  - Flyers at outdoor shops, kayak tour companies
  - Presentations at regional kayak symposiums
  - Articles in industry publications
  - Social media and word of mouth

# Think Like a Paddler: Tips, Tricks, and Tools

- Design program materials with paddlers in mind
  - Waterproof, simple data forms with large blanks
  - On-water program materials laminated
  - Work on the deck of a kayak (not a trifold)
- Many paddlers have GPS units
- Use online tools such as Google maps
  - share routes, calculate distances, and communicate research priorities
- Lots of kayakers just need paddling partners
  - Connect volunteers via email lists, social networking, etc.
  - Lead frequent, informal on-water outings



# Wrap Up

- There is a vibrant sea kayaking community near you
- Unique vector to access challenging and sensitive coastal habitats
- Recruit through existing kayak clubs and other community gatherings/networks
- Safety first! Work with an experienced leader and volunteers
- Always plan outings with tide, current, and weather conditions in mind
- Make it simple: kayaker-friendly data forms and program materials
- It's a cool program- sell it!



*Thank You!*

*~~~~Happy Paddling~~~~*

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