



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Oregon-Washington
2022: Annual Manager's Report

San Juan Islands

National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

2022 was a year of big changes for the San Juan islands National Monument (the Monument). Brie Chartier started in her new position as the Monument Manager in May. Her immediate focus was to visit as much of the Monument as possible and to start to build relationships with the BLM's many partners in the islands. The Monument continues to see strong volunteerism with over 3,000 volunteer hours dedicated to the Monument by our amazing volunteers and partner organizations.

The BLM also completed safety inspections for all monument facilities and, with help from partners and volunteers, strengthened annual visitation information data collection and reporting. Pictured below is one of the long-time Lopez Island volunteers, who assists the Monument with conducting visitor counts.



Challenges

Staffing the Monument is a challenge due to multiple socio-economic pressures, including the area's extremely high cost of living. San Juan County's median home price is over \$850,000. The islands are only accessible via ferry and living on a small island can feel isolating for many. Despite these challenges, the BLM was able to fill the Monument Manager position in May and is working toward filling the vacant outdoor recreation planner position.

Visitor use issues related to fox photography and wildlife viewing at Cattle Point on San Juan Island created an early challenge for the new manager. Changes in management practices at the nearby San Juan Island National Historic Park pushed visitation to Cattle Point, where a very accessible fox den created both a wonderful opportunity for wildlife viewing and photography as well as challenges with limited parking, fragile habitats and impacts to the foxes from the constant attention. Management solutions are still being considered and the manager is closely monitoring the status for the 2023 kitting season.



Visitors

The Monument had 301,858 visits in 2022; this is a 156 % increase over the 117,902 visits reported in 2021. The increase is primarily due to a review of raw data and an adjustment in visitation formulas based on information received from San Juan Islands National Historic Park. The adjustments revealed that visits to Cattle Point had been undercounted in past years. In 2022, the BLM also conducted additional reviews of visits to Stewart and Patos Islands. In order to improve tracking of visitation, the BLM installed new visitor counters and plans additional reviews of visitor use formulas and counter data collection for 2023.



Partnerships

The new Monument Manager joined the San Juan Islands Terrestrial Manager's group as well as the Stewardship Network of the San Juans. Washington State Parks provided crucial transportation and knowledge sharing throughout the year supporting site visits and volunteer operations.

The Turn Point Lighthouse Preservation Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that opens the lighthouse and related buildings to the public for tours. In 2022, they opened the lighthouse for 54 days and welcomed over 8,000 visitors.

A group of 20 dedicated Lopez Island volunteers, led by Lopez resident Carla Chalker, monitored Iceberg Point, Chadwick Hill, Chadwick Wetlands, Point Colville, and Watmough Bight. In 2022, they dedicated 634 volunteer hours to this long running volunteer monitoring effort.



Science

In 2022, the BLM granted a research authorization to Kwiáht, a San Juan Islands-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit, to sample for ticks on monument lands as part of an islands-wide tick study. Preliminary data from the study showed that only one in ten ticks tested positive for a pathogen known to affect humans, dogs, or wildlife such as *Anaplasma*, *Mycoplasma*, *Babesia*, *Rickettsia*, and *Ehrlichia*. *Babesia* was found in five percent of the ticks tested; this malaria-like protozoan is a growing concern nationwide, and only a few years ago was thought to be absent in Washington State. By comparison, no island ticks tested positive for *Borrelia*, the cause of Lyme disease, which has been reported in several nearby mainland Washington counties.

The likelihood of contracting a tick-borne disease in the San Juan Islands remains relatively low in comparison with most of the rest of the United States. Precautions are recommended, especially during questing season for ticks, which in the San Juan Islands in 2021-2022 was February through June, with a peak in March or April when two-thirds of the ticks in the study were encountered.



Climate Impacts

Sea level rise is a major threat to the San Juan Islands, many of which are low-lying. The rate of sea level rise is accelerating, and it is expected to continue to do so in the coming decades. The impacts of sea level rise are already being felt on the San Juan Islands. The islands are experiencing more frequent and severe flooding, and erosion is threatening shorelines. Sea level rise is also making it more difficult to manage stormwater and wastewater, and it is increasing the risk of saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers.

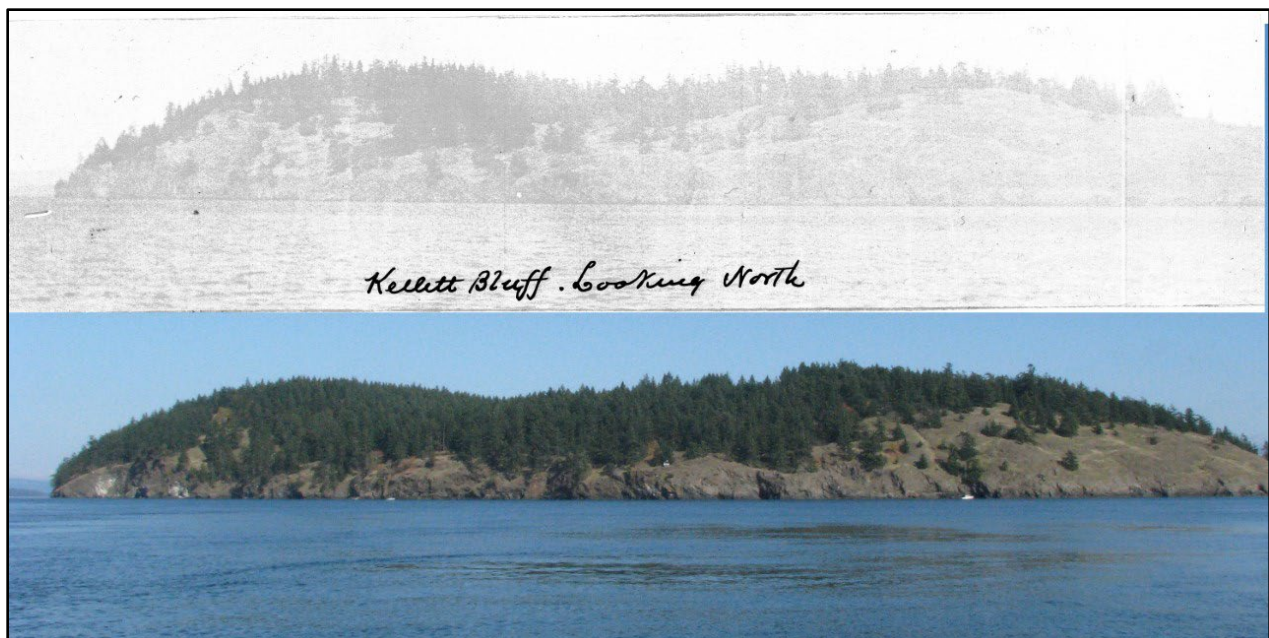


Climate Resiliency

Climate resilience is the ability of individuals, communities, and systems to withstand, adapt to, and recover from the impacts of climate change. It is about building the capacity to cope with the effects of climate change, such as more extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

The Presidential Proclamation that created the Monument charged the BLM with protecting its natural ecosystems. The BLM is working with partners to study local climate impacts and develop plans for landscape level restoration strategies. These strategies are not only good for the environment but can also help to mitigate the effects of climate change. In the years ahead, the BLM and its partners will consider many ways of building climate resilience. Some possibilities include:

- Designing infrastructure such as campsites, outhouses, and parking lots to withstand extreme weather events
- Educating people about the risks of climate change and how to adapt to them
- Supporting forest health through forestry actions such as selective thinning and restoration of pre-existing Coast Salish land stewardship practices. Many of the BLM's local partners are already field testing methods of creating climate resilient forests in the islands and restoring land health. The historic and modern photos of Kellett Bluff below demonstrate the loss of prairie over time due to conifer encroachment.



Social and Environmental Justice

In 2021, BLM staff entered into discussions with an area non-profit regarding the creation of a Coast Salish Youth Stewardship Corps. In 2022, the BLM continued efforts to finalize an agreement and create the youth corps. The intention is to engage Coast Salish youth from the San Juan Islands and surrounding areas in conservation and restoration projects on a landscape with close ancestral ties to the Coast Salish people.

The San Juan Islands are part of the ancestral territories of the Coast Salish peoples and input from Tribal governments is vital to the successful management of the Monument. In 2022, the BLM continued consulting with the 13 Tribal governments with interests in the San Juan Islands. The BLM consulted with the Tribes on projects related to cultural and natural resources; the creation of a Tribal Forum will further facilitate representatives of Tribal governments providing advice to the BLM.



Events

In 2022, the Monument once again hosted the American Hiking Society’s annual week-long work trip, which supported both the Monument and San Juan County Parks, by building a new trail at Shark Reef County Park on Lopez Island. The BLM also conducted multiple outreach events at the Lopez Farmer’s market and the San Juan County Fair as part of the Stewardship Network’s Green Village. At the fair, the BLM sponsored a presentation on lighthouse history presented by Keepers of the Patos Light.



Words from the staff

Hello, everyone!

I am very honored to have been chosen as the new Monument Manager for the San Juan Islands National Monument. I am excited to be joining the team and working to protect and conserve this special place.

I started the position in May and have been working diligently to get up to speed on the complex issues and unique challenges that come with managing a monument that locations spread over an entire archipelago. Since my arrival, I have taken boats to remote islands, engaged barges to transport vehicles and tractors from the mainland, learned to navigate the ferry system, visited the reservations of several sovereign Tribal nations, and met countless amazing people that support the Monument.

I am passionate about protecting the Monument's cultural values and natural resources, and I am committed to working with the community and the Tribes to ensure that the San Juan Islands National Monument is a place that will be protected for future generations.

The Coast Salish peoples are the original inhabitants of the lands and waters that make up the Salish Sea region. They have a rich culture and history and have a deep connection to the land and sea; I am committed to working closely with the Coast Salish tribes to develop sustainable best practices and implementation level plans for managing the Monument.

Thank you,

Brie Chartier
San Juan Islands National Monument Manager



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