



Ocean Friendly Restaurants Act to Save the Sea

Partnership helps South Sound restaurants and diners reduce plastic, choose sustainable seafood and more

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov.19, 2018

It begins with a single straw.

Twenty South Sound restaurants have committed to protecting the ocean and its creatures from plastic pollution, overfishing and the effects of climate change – and the number is growing, thanks to the Ocean Friendly Restaurants campaign gaining traction around Puget Sound.

The campaign aims at raising awareness of problems that threaten the health of both the wider ocean and our own Puget Sound, and is a partnership of the Surfrider Foundation and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium through Metro Parks Tacoma.

“Our ocean is a treasure, full of incredible animals and vital to our survival,” said Andrea Smith, President of the Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners. “We have to step up together to protect it.”

Every year nearly 9 million tons of plastic wash into the ocean from streets, drains, recycling stations and landfill. Humans are generating more and more plastic, and it persists in the ocean for a long time, never breaking down. Instead, much of it breaks up into smaller and smaller pieces, known as microplastics. These accumulate toxins and are ingested by marine animals and birds, eventually killing them or continuing into the food chain.

Fish, sharks and other marine animals also are threatened by overfishing, depleting their populations to dangerous lows. Ocean warming and acidification, linked to climate change, also harm ecosystems.

It’s a big problem – but the Ocean Friendly Restaurant campaign aims to address it one diner at a time. By joining, restaurants commit to a series of ocean-friendly actions such as eliminating Styrofoam and plastic bags, using reusable plates and silverware, offering alternatives to plastic straws, sourcing sustainable seafood and reducing energy use.

“We seek to minimize the waste that ends up in prized marine waters while saving businesses money and supporting sustainable operations,” said Brice Boland, Washington Field Manager for Surfrider. The national nonprofit is dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of ocean waters and beaches, and spearheaded the Ocean Friendly Restaurant campaign, now numbering hundreds of participating restaurants nationwide.

Local Ocean Friendly Restaurants include Cosmonaut Coffee, Devil’s Reef, Social Bar and Grill, The Bair Bistro, Dirty Oscar’s Annex, Duke’s Chowder House, Engine House No. 9, Millville Pizza, Peaks and Pints, Primo Grill, The Swiss Restaurant and Pub, Table 47, Zodiac Supper Club, Broken Spoke, Camp Bar, The Melting Pot, The Fern Room, and Alma Mater’s Honey and Matriarch. Pickled Fish in Long Beach is also a participant.

“Duke’s has been sourcing sustainable seafood for decades,” said owner Duke Moscrip “And we’d already switched to paper straws and compostable to-go containers. It’s absolutely critical that every restaurant and restaurant-goer understands that the ocean is a valuable resource that has to be conserved.”

Tacoma’s Alma Mater, home of Honey and Matriarch restaurants, is the newest restaurant to join up.

“We believe in sustainable and earth-friendly practices wherever possible,” said Sayde Heminger, hospitality and facilities coordinator. “We joined the Ocean Friendly Restaurant program to inform our customers that we care about the environment, and to hold ourselves and our patrons accountable to the most earth-friendly practices we can.”

“This is a wonderful way to raise awareness of ocean health among people who can really make a difference to it,” said Karen Povey, Conservation Engagement Manager at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. “Every time you eat out, you can choose an Ocean Friendly Restaurant to help protect our ocean and its amazing creatures.”

Joining the program isn’t difficult, says Povey. Some businesses may already meet the requirements, while some may qualify immediately by making some simple changes like eliminating plastic straws and Styrofoam

Participating restaurants agree to:

- Avoid the use of expanded polystyrene packaging, aka Styrofoam.
- Recycle.
- Limit on-site tableware to reusable items, and provide takeout utensils only if requested.
- Don’t put takeout orders in plastic bags.
- Provide straws only on request.

Additionally, they commit to at least two of the following five conservation measures:

- Sell no beverages in plastic bottles.
- Offer discounts to customers who bring their own cups or bags.
- Regularly serve vegetarian and vegan foods; offer only seafood derived from sustainable sources.
- Implement water conservation efforts.
- Implement energy efficiency efforts.

For more information, go to pdza.org/ocean-friendly-restaurants

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world’s resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

The Surfrider Foundation is dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world’s ocean, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network.

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