

# Cypress Island State Aquatic Reserves



## Site History

The Cypress Island site includes the tidelands and bedlands surrounding Cypress Island, Strawberry Island and Cone Islands. The upland of Cypress Island is a Natural Resource Conservation Area. Cypress Island and the surrounding marine areas are unique natural resources in the San Juan Islands. In addition, several prehistoric sites have been identified on the island.

This site was formally withdrawn from leasing by Commissioner of Public Lands Jennifer Belcher on November 17, 2000 and dedicated in honor of former Commissioner Brian Boyle.

## Aquatic Reserve Program

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages about 2.4 million acres of aquatic lands on behalf of the public. DNR established three types of reserves (WAC 332-30-151) to help ensure environmental protection for public aquatic lands – Education, Environmental and Scientific Reserves. Using this authority the Commissioner of Public Lands withdrew six sites from leasing to be considered for Aquatic Reserve status during 2000.

During 2002, DNR developed an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Aquatic Reserves Program. The final EIS was adopted in September 2002.

## Site Evaluation

All six sites withdrawn from leasing in 2000 will be evaluated for Aquatic Reserve status during 2003. Sites will be evaluated using designation criteria identified in the programmatic EIS. Guidance for the use of these designation criteria is currently being developed by DNR with the assistance of an external peer review committee.

Evaluation of the sites will be completed by a Technical Advisory Committee. DNR is currently collecting all available information regarding each of the six reserve sites through research and public meetings. The committee will evaluate this information and visit each site before making their recommendation to the Commissioner of Public Lands.

## Natural Resources

With relatively little upland development, the island is nearly pristine with late successional forests covering much of the island. The waters surrounding the island are also relatively free of impacts. Bald Eagle nests are common near the shorelines. Endangered marbled murrelets feed in the waters surrounding the island.

The waters surrounding the island include several areas of complex rocky subtidal habitat that are home bottomfish include lingcod and rockfish. Sea urchins and other invertebrates can be found in abundance around the island.

## Site Management

Following the determination by the Commissioner of Public Lands regarding Aquatic Reserve status, DNR will begin a State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) public process to develop management plans for each site. This process will occur for sites designated as Aquatic Reserves as well as those that will no longer be part of the Aquatic Reserve Program.

DNR expects to work with many partners, including other agencies, tribes, local governments and organizations to develop and implement management plans for Aquatic Reserves.

## Aquatic Reserve Timeline

