

Taking Care of Moody Mother Earth

By Jim Beard, Fisheries Biologist, Thorne Bay Ranger District

The Annual Prince of Wales Island Earth Day Celebration was held April 21 at the Craig Community Association Building in Craig. Driving to the event from Thorne Bay, I could not help but think about Gaia (a.k.a. Mother Earth) and how she can easily be mistreated by humans and our waste. During the hour long drive, she seemed to unleash a bit of her fury, as I passed through several types of bizarre weather, including rain, sleet and snow, hail, and occasional glimpses of blue sky and the sun peaking out from behind the clouds.

The theme of this year's Earth Day celebration was *Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle*. The celebration was hosted by the Craig and Thorne Bay Ranger Districts, as well as the Island Tribal Environmental Coalition, which consists of tribal environmental programs from the Craig Community Association, Klawock Cooperative Association, Organized Village of Kasaan, and Hydaburg Cooperative Association. In addition, the City of Thorne Bay, City of Craig, Prince of Wales Tribal Enterprise Consortium, and the Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation also participated.

Students from all four school districts on POW Island participated in the day-long celebration. Of the 433 people who attended, 367 were kids. The remaining 66 adults included teachers, teacher aides, and the general public. Woodsy Owl was a hit with the kids, and passed on the messages of *Lend a Hand, Care for the Land* and the *4 Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot [Compost])*.



Brian Barr, Craig RD Hydrological Technician, instructs students in watershed dynamics using a stream table.

Forest Service booths and displays:

- *What is your Carbon Footprint?* Tori Houser, Craig RD Recreation Planner
- *Invasive Species*, Kristen Lease, POW Ecologist
- *Celebrating Wildflowers, their Medicinal, Aesthetic, and Subsistence Food Uses*, Brandy Prefontaine, Thorne Bay RD Fisheries Technician
- *Watershed Dynamics*, by Brian Barr, Craig RD Hydrological Technician
- *Salmon Recycling and Reuse*, Kevin Foley, Thorne Bay RD Fisheries Technician
- *POW Soils and Composting*, Becky Saari, Craig RD Soils Technician
- *POW Canopy Gap Studies*, Mike Ausman, Thorne Bay RD Wildlife Technician
- *Woodsy Owl and the 4 Rs*, Jim Beard, Thorne Bay RD Fisheries Biologist, and Craig student Steven Peavey

Other booths and displays:

- *Recycling Efforts in Craig and Reusable Lunch Boxes*, Craig Community Association
- *Smoke-Free Zones, Make Less Waste, and Paper Bag Coloring and Environment Education Coloring Books for Kids*; Klawock and Hydaburg Cooperative Associations
- *Recycling Efforts in Kasaan, and Trash 'N Fashion*, Organized Village of Kasaan
- *Simple Composting and Trash Compaction at the Thorne Bay City Dump*, City of Thorne Bay
- *Computer Recycling and Building Electronic Arms*, Prince of Wales Tribal Enterprise Consortium
- *Ocean Trash & Beach Debris*, Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation.



Woody Owl poses with kids at the 2009 Prince of Wales Island Earth Day Celebration in Craig.

Overall, the students and the public walked away with a heightened awareness about reducing, reusing, recycling, composting, carbon footprints, invasive species, and ways to efficiently use resources on POW Island. The Organized Village of Kasaan is to be commended as they are the first entity on POW Island to actively collect not only aluminum cans, but also paper, cardboard, plastics, and glass. The City of Thorne Bay's dump is unique in that it is the only entity on POW Island to compact, bale, and place its trash in cells, significantly saving landfill space. The City of Craig is using wood waste to heat the Craig elementary and middle schools and the city pool. Other cities and school districts on POW Island are also looking into the feasibility of using wood waste to reduce costs and consumption of fossil fuels.

Driving back to Thorne Bay after the event, I hoped that Gaia would appreciate the efforts beginning to take place on POW Island, and the seed that was planted in the kids and adults today. She even seemed to have lessened her fury, as the weather was much nicer on the drive back. During the following week, schools in both Craig and Thorne Bay worked with their respective city governments and conducted trash pickups in their towns. It looks like it is a good start toward shaping the stewards of today and tomorrow.