

For Immediate Release

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**The ALERT Project and Friends of San Juans to Co-Host
Oil Spill Response Public Engagement Event**

On Saturday, October 26, 4:00 PM at Brickworks, oil spill veteran and activist Dr. Riki Ott will present, “Oil Spill Response: An Opportunity for Change.” The in-person event will hopefully be livestreamed.

Dr. Ott will discuss the importance of public involvement in oil spill response planning, with a focus on the need to ban the use of outdated dispersants—chemicals used to break up oil slicks—that are no longer manufactured and have known health risks. This issue is particularly relevant in the San Juan Islands, which fall under a case-by-case dispersant use zone.

Drawing from lessons learned during the BP Deepwater Horizon spill, Dr. Ott will highlight the systemic issues in the U.S. disaster response approach. While the President’s Commission on the BP disaster recommended better public oversight, stronger health protections, and the formation of citizen advisory councils—proven effective in Alaska—these changes have not yet been implemented locally or nationwide.

Dr. Ott will be joined by Lovel Pratt, Marine Protection and Policy Director for Friends of the San Juans, to discuss how San Juan County residents can play a pivotal role in protecting coastal communities during disasters. Friends of the San Juans has been galvanizing islands residents and across the Salish Sea on proactive actions to protect the special place. Attendees will be offered ways to engage at the state and federal level.

Riki Ott founded and directs Earth Island Institute’s ALERT Project and co-chaired the 2023 Health and Safety Task Force chartered by Regional Response Team 10 and the Northwest Area Committee.

Lovel Pratt leads the Friends of the San Juans Salish Sea Protection work as the Marine Protection and Policy Director. Friends of the San Juans has protected the San Juan Islands and Salish Sea for 45 years.

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