

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

New Shark Exhibit Opens on March 9<sup>th</sup> in Downtown Gig Harbor, Washington

Gig Harbor, WA - A new shark exhibit is set to open its doors on March 9<sup>th</sup> in downtown Gig Harbor, Washington. The exhibit, titled "Sharks of the Salish Sea," will feature a variety of shark species from around the world and aims to educate visitors on the importance of these fascinating creatures in our ocean ecosystems.

The exhibit, located at the *Skansie Visitor & Interpretive Center*, will showcase all 14 species of sharks found in the Salish Sea including the sixgill, sevengill, salmon and dogfish sharks. From the sharp jaws of a sixgill to the massive tail of a thresher shark – visitors of all ages will be able see, touch, and learn about the unique characteristics of each species, as well as the importance of worldwide conservation efforts for these vulnerable creatures.

"Sharks are top predators that play a critical role in maintaining the balance of marine life," said Rachel Easton, the Education Director at Harbor WildWatch, "but there is a lot of fear fueled by misinformation and sensationalism. We hope visitors will see sharks through a new lens after visiting this exhibit and walk away with steps to protect them and their habitat."

In addition to the exhibit, the Harbor WildWatch team will host a variety of educational programs and activities focused on sharks for the next few months. Most notably, their *Cocktails & Fishtales* event on March 15 will feature Lisa Hillier, Senior Scientist at the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. As our local shark expert, Lisa will discuss her work surrounding the management of coastal pelagic resources in the Pacific Northwest for the past 19 years. This 21+ program will be held at Ocean5 from 5:30-7pm and is free for Steward Club members and a suggested donation of \$5 for non-members.

"The exhibit and associated programs are sure to be a hit with visitors and locals alike, and provide a great opportunity for families, students, and ocean enthusiasts to learn more about these incredible animals and threats to their survival," says Easton.

The "Sharks of the Salish Sea" exhibit will be open from March 9<sup>th</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup> and is free for residents and visitors of all ages.

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*Harbor WildWatch is a 501(c)(3) environmental education organization based in Gig Harbor, WA. Their mission is to inspire stewardship for the Salish Sea by providing equitable learning opportunities about the environment to the local community and beyond. Through interactive programs each year, Harbor WildWatch educates thousands of residents and visitors about local marine life and their role in protecting them. Visit [www.harborwildwatch.org](http://www.harborwildwatch.org) to donate or learn more.*