



Photo: Debbie Schouten

## ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT

# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

ARNOLD SCHOUTEN EARNS THE COASTAL  
IMPACT WAVEMAKER AWARD



By: Gus Gates, Washington Policy Manager

Arnold Schouten is a legend amongst his peers in the surfing and conservation community along the Northwest Coast of Washington state, but you wouldn't know it from talking directly to him. A humble guy who leads by example and inspires many through his actions, Schouten's response to achieving the prestigious Coastal Impact Wavemakers Award was that he didn't think he deserved it as he was just doing what he feels is right. The non-annual award is presented to a person who displays outstanding efforts to make a positive impact on our oceans and coasts.

Schouten's passion for the natural world and coastal ecology began at an early age. He grew up on Long Island in the Great South Bay area in New York and biked to the beach as a kid, collecting critters and cool shells. At that time, the area was still fairly rural and the wetlands hadn't been filled in by

development. When he started surfing in 1962, there were only a handful of surfers in the area. He was part of a pioneering era for surf around the Hamptons.

After serving in the Navy for four years during the early 70s, Schouten traveled with his wife Debbie around the country for a year before settling in Port Angeles, WA. They were struck by how unique the area seemed with the Olympic Mountains and Strait of Juan de Fuca in such close proximity.

Today, the Schoutens run a waterfowl breeding and research facility on their property, having recently retired from owning and operating two local hardware stores. In their operation, they work closely with zoos, universities, government agencies and private breeders. They have been involved in breeding and recovery efforts of endangered waterfowl, specifically



ABOVE & NEXT PAGE: Arnold and the Capitol/Olympia Chapter cleaning up the Washington coast. Photos: Debbie Schouten

sea ducks, and have worked on the rehabilitation of oiled waterfowl from three oil spills. Schouten witnessed first-hand the devastating impacts of the 1985 Arco Anchorage oil spill in Port Angeles to sea ducks, local wildlife and water quality, as well as the resulting prevention of area residents from surfing many of the local spots. The oil spills were a strong catalyst for his seabird recovery efforts. Rather than just keeping birds to look at in zoos, Schouten believes it is important to rebuild wild populations and restore and protect essential habitats from the multiple threats they face.

When the Olympic Peninsula Chapter formed around 2000, Schouten got involved and has since served as the Chair and Co-Chair, maintaining steady leadership throughout. He has spearheaded numerous large-scale coastal cleanups in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, Makah Tribe, and Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. He has been instrumental in attaining Coast Guard support for lifting large volumes of debris off remote beaches with a helicopter. Schouten has also played a key role in securing beach access to many surf spots by developing positive relationships and

providing stewardship of the trails. Arnold has raised awareness about water quality stressors through the Clallam County Marine Resources Committee, and has even been key in chapter efforts to provide sani-can toilets in isolated coastal access points to help ensure clean water.

“Coastal public access in Washington is something that we have to work on constantly,” said Schouten. “It’s here today, gone tomorrow. We need to work together to respect private property rights, strengthen personal relationships, be good stewards, and partner with other groups in efforts to improve beach access for everyone to enjoy.”

In addition to playing a lead role with the Olympic Peninsula Chapter, Schouten has been a member of the Clallam County Marine Resources Committee for more than 10 years where he has also played a lead role in establishing a training program for oil spill responses and has been a strong advocate for emergency preparedness. Additionally, he volunteers his time with the North Olympic Land Trust and the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society.

