



Shared North Star Regenerative Water Principles

Here is an adoption-ready **Regenerative Water Principles for Whidbey** document — written so WIWSA, water districts, Island County, and Tribal and community partners could all endorse it as a shared north star. It's intentionally concise, values-driven, and grounded in the ecological and governance realities.

Purpose

Whidbey Island depends on a single, finite freshwater aquifer that sustains our people, ecosystems, and future generations. These principles articulate a shared commitment to stewarding that aquifer — and all connected waters — in ways that are regenerative, equitable, and aligned with the ecological realities of island life.

These principles are voluntary and non-regulatory.

They serve as a **guiding framework** for planning, collaboration, and decision-making across all water-related organizations on Whidbey.

1. One Aquifer, One Community

Whidbey's freshwater system is a single, interconnected whole.

Every well, every forest, every septic system, every roof, and every land-use decision affects the same aquifer.

Commitment:

We act with awareness that water is a shared commons, and we make decisions that protect the whole system, not just individual districts or parcels.

2. Regeneration Over Extraction

A regenerative water system replenishes, restores, and strengthens the aquifer over time.

Commitment:

We prioritize actions that increase recharge, protect natural infiltration, reduce withdrawals, and enhance the long-term health of groundwater and surface water systems.

3. Ecological Flows Are Essential

Healthy ecosystems — wetlands, streams, forests, and nearshore habitats — are integral to the water cycle.

Commitment:

We design water management to support ecological flows, salmon recovery, and the rights and responsibilities of Tribal co-managers.

4. Water and Land Are One System

Land-use decisions are water decisions.

Recharge, runoff, forest cover, soil health, and impervious surfaces directly shape water availability.

Commitment:

We integrate water considerations into all land-use planning, zoning, development, and infrastructure decisions.

5. Equity and Resilience for All Systems

Whidbey's water landscape includes large municipal systems, small districts, HOAs, mobile home parks, and thousands of private wells. Some have robust capacity; others do not.

Commitment:

We support the resilience of all systems — especially the smallest and most vulnerable — so every resident has access to safe, reliable, and sustainable water.

6. Shared Data, Shared Understanding

Regeneration requires a common picture of reality: recharge rates, withdrawals, contamination risks, climate impacts, and ecological needs.

Commitment:

We work toward transparent, island-wide data sharing, monitoring, and modeling to build a shared water budget and a unified understanding of our aquifer.

7. Collaboration Over Fragmentation

No single entity can ensure the long-term health of Whidbey's water.

Regeneration requires coordination across jurisdictions, agencies, and communities.

Commitment:

We collaborate across districts, County departments, Tribes, state and federal agencies, and community organizations to align decisions with the needs of the whole system.

8. Long-Term Stewardship Over Short-Term Convenience

Water decisions made today shape the island for generations.

Regenerative management requires foresight and a willingness to act before crises emerge.

Commitment:

We prioritize long-term aquifer health, climate resilience, and intergenerational responsibility over short-term pressures or convenience.

9. Transparency, Trust, and Public Engagement

Regenerative water management depends on public understanding and trust.

People must know how the aquifer works, what its limits are, and how their actions matter.

Commitment:

We communicate openly, share knowledge widely, and engage residents in stewardship and decision-making.

10. Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Climate change, population shifts, and new science will reshape Whidbey's water future.

Regeneration is not a fixed plan — it is an evolving practice.

Commitment:

We learn from new data, adapt to changing conditions, and revise our strategies to ensure the aquifer remains healthy and resilient.

How These Principles Can Be Used

These principles can guide:

- WIWSA's strategic planning
- Water district board decisions
- County land-use and climate planning
- Tribal–local coordination
- Grant proposals and funding priorities
- Community education and outreach
- Long-term governance exploration (including PUD or coordination models)

They are intentionally broad so each organization can interpret and apply them within its own mission and authority.

