



PNW DSO Meeting

January 14th, 2026



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Meeting ID: 246 124 888 387 94 Passcode: Co65Et7t

Dial in by phone [+1 564-999-2000,,934844663#](tel:+15649992000) United States, Olympia
Phone conference ID: 934 844 663#

8:30 – 9:00 Coffee, tea, pastries, & name tags

9:00 – 9:20 Host welcome
Agenda overview + meeting objectives

Organizational Updates

9:30 **PNW DSO Group timeline** Derek Smith & Nate Schwarcz

9:40 **AAUS 2026 Update** Derek Smith & Drew Morgan

AAUS questions

9:55 **Tribal Update** Megan Russell, Courtney Hart, Julie Barber
Tribal questions Annie Raymond, Henry Kouba

10:15 **CAUS 2026 Update** Hailey Shchepanik

CAUS questions

10:30-10:45 **15-minute break** (stick to it folks!)

Presentations and Discussions

10:45 **Integrating Multiple Dive Safety Programs in a Complex Project**
Kevin Buch & Co., OSU, Reef Check, ORKA, OIMB

[Post-talk discussion topics](#)

- Programmatic diving safety & administration
- Multi-program reciprocity & liability coverage
- Pooling resources
- Safety procedures for specialized, unusual, remote, or “off-campus” research projects

11:45	Innovations in Diver Training <i>Doug Batson, Oregon Coast Aquarium</i>
	Post-talk discussion topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student/employee training• Safety certification training• DAN vs RescueX vs other certs• Training qualifications - Are they standardized throughout the region? Across programs?• Safety procedures for specialized or unusual research projects• Overdue buddy protocol
12:30	Lunch! 🌮 Taco bar catered by La Esquinita 🌮
1:30	Occupational Safety from the Regulator's (pun intended) Perspective <i>Chris Mercado, Washington State Dept. of Labor & Industries</i>
	Post-talk discussion topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requesting a variance from L&I (may pertain more to Washington but can be extrapolated to other regions)• Do individual diver workers comp claims go through someone like Chris?• How to stay "above board" with your regional occupational safety administration
2:15	Remembering Dive Safety Officer Jeff Christiansen <i>Joel Hollander, Seattle Aquarium</i>
2:20	Lessons Learned: Dive Incident in Seattle Aquarium Exhibit <i>Joel Hollander, Seattle Aquarium</i>
	Post-talk discussion topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-house diving safety & administration• Lessons learned from your program• Volunteer diver utilization• Incident response training• Incident Learning & Risk Management<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Case studies on dive accidents and incident management◦ Near-miss reviews and lessons learned◦ How to evaluate new or unfamiliar project types safely

3:00

Group Discussion – Snorkeling

Moderators: Katie Sowul, Heidi Wilken, Pema Kitaeff, Nate Schwarck

Discussion topics

- Dive programs have seen increase in snorkel project proposals
- WDFW's efforts to re-start snorkel program
- FHL & UW's current draft policy/program development
- Shannon Point Marine Science Center's current protocols
- AAUS efforts over past several years to adopt snorkeling under AAUS umbrella
- Temperate vs. tropical scientific snorkeling guidelines
- Is it even a dive issue?!
- Freedive vs Snorkeling
- Program development
- Training
- Risk management

3:35 – 3:45 **10-minute Break**

3:45

Group Discussion – Research and Technical Advancements

Moderators: Taylor Frierson, Doug Batson

Discussion topics

- Has your agency/program/tribe required higher levels of tech?
- New(er) dive technologies
 - [Nautilus pros + cons](#)
 - [Garmin pros + cons](#)
 - New [Garmin Descent Comms Buoy](#)
 - Underwater sound systems, ie [OceanEars](#)
 - [RescueX Rapid Extraction Board](#)
 - [Human Factors in Diving \(HFID\) class](#)
 - [Shearwater Avelo System](#)
 - How do DSOs handle new divers coming into program with Avelo cert?
 - Using Apple watch/Garmin watches as dive computers
- Any unique/emerging scientific diving methods

4:15

Group Discussion – Future of PNW DSO group

Moderator: Derek Smith

Discussion topics

- Website development
 - What access do we want to give members vs “the public”?
- What do we want this group to be?
 - 501c3
 - LLC
 - “Just a regional club, no labels man!”
- Next year’s host!
 - Olympia on an annual or bi-annual rotation?
 - Planning committee will be here for you!

After conference:

Head on downtown for Social Hour @ ilk Lodge!

Look for the octopus-salmon underwater mural!