



## PNW DSO Meeting January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026



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### Microsoft Teams - [Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 246 124 888 387 94      Passcode: Co65Et7t  
**Dial in by phone** [+1 564-999-2000](tel:+15649992000), [934844663#](tel:+1934844663) United States, Olympia  
Phone conference ID: 934 844 663#

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8:30 – 9:00 Coffee, tea, pastries, & name tags  
9:00 – 9:20 Host welcome  
Agenda overview + meeting objectives

### Organizational Updates

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9:30	<b>PNW DSO Group timeline</b>	Derek Smith & Nate Schwarck
9:40	<b>AAUS 2026 Update</b>	Derek Smith & Drew Morgan
	<i>AAUS questions</i>	
9:55	<b>Tribal Update</b>	Megan Russell, Courtney Hart, Julie Barber Annie Raymond, Henry Kouba
	<i>Tribal questions</i>	
10:15	<b>CAUS 2026 Update</b>	Hailey Shchepanik
	<i>CAUS questions</i>	
10:30-10:45 <b>15-minute break</b> (stick to it folks!)		

### Presentations and Discussions

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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**

*Doug Batson, Oregon Coast Aquarium*

#### Post-talk discussion topics

- 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**

*Chris Mercado, Washington State Dept. of Labor & Industries*

#### Post-talk discussion topics

- 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**

*Joel Hollander, Seattle Aquarium*

2:20

### **Lessons Learned: Dive Incident in Seattle Aquarium Exhibit**

*Joel Hollander, Seattle Aquarium*

#### Post-talk discussion topics

- In-house diving safety & administration
- Lessons learned from your program
- Volunteer diver utilization
- Incident response training
- Incident Learning & Risk Management
  - 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**

## **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!