

My name is Kaia and I'm a high school sophomore currently interning at Friends of the San Juans. My grandpa, San Olson, is a longtime resident of Lopez Island. From a young age, I saw my grandpa working alongside other members of the community, taking steps towards a cleaner future. This is what I want to do too.

My generation is growing up in a world where science has become politics, where eight-million tons of plastic enter the oceans annually, and where a pandemic isn't the only crisis we're faced with.

Amid a pandemic and a climate crisis, it is easy to become overwhelmed under the tidal wave of issues. But where there's change, no matter how small, there's hope. And so, I implore you to change your use of single-use plastics. This is something we all can change, it is tangible and the benefits will be strongly felt in the Islands.

Use of single-use plastic is skyrocketing during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it doesn't have to. Studies show that the virus can survive for 72 hours on plastic as opposed to 24 hours on paper and fabrics (New England Journal of Medicine). The plastics industry has been encouraging the misconception that single-use plastic is safer than reusables when in fact, cleaned properly, reusable alternatives are far safer than plastic. I hope you will join me in refusing to let decades of progress towards a plastic-free world be unraveled by an industry's desire to make money.

Going *single-use plastic free* is a journey. Fortunately, there are hundreds of small, everyday changes you can make that are manageable. You can learn these tips and find other resources at the Plastic Free Salish Sea's newly launched website: www.plasticfreesalishsea.org. The website is a resource for local information related to solid waste, recycling, and how to reduce your dependence on single-use plastics.

The most important thing to remember is that we don't need a handful of people going perfectly plastic-free, we need many trying. Sure, you may forget your reusable silverware once or twice and use a plastic one, it happens to all of us. I speak for my entire generation when I say this: thank you for your desire to help. By moving away from plastic and towards a greener world, you make us proud.

Sincerely,

Kaia, Friends of the San Juans' Summer Intern