



Wave Action

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First printed in Lifestyles section Sunday November 12, 2000

IT IS A PHENOMENON that could power a disaster movie, an apocalyptic nightmare.

Imagine an ocean wave reaching halfway around the world, an onrushing mound that pushes 20 to 30 cubic kilometers of water through the Strait of Juan de Fuca, mercilessly churning the inland sea in its path and flooding the land around it.

It could happen.

In fact, it does happen, twice a day, a quarter of the flow turning into Puget Sound and three-quarters of it pouring north through the San Juans and east of Vancouver Island.

The flood is called the tide, and its cyclic circulation sustains the biology of what University of Washington oceanographer Richard Strickland calls, in his book on Puget Sound, "The Fertile Fjord."

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