



SKAGIT LAND TRUST

Saving Land for Tomorrow

Spring 2010

SKAGIT UPDATE

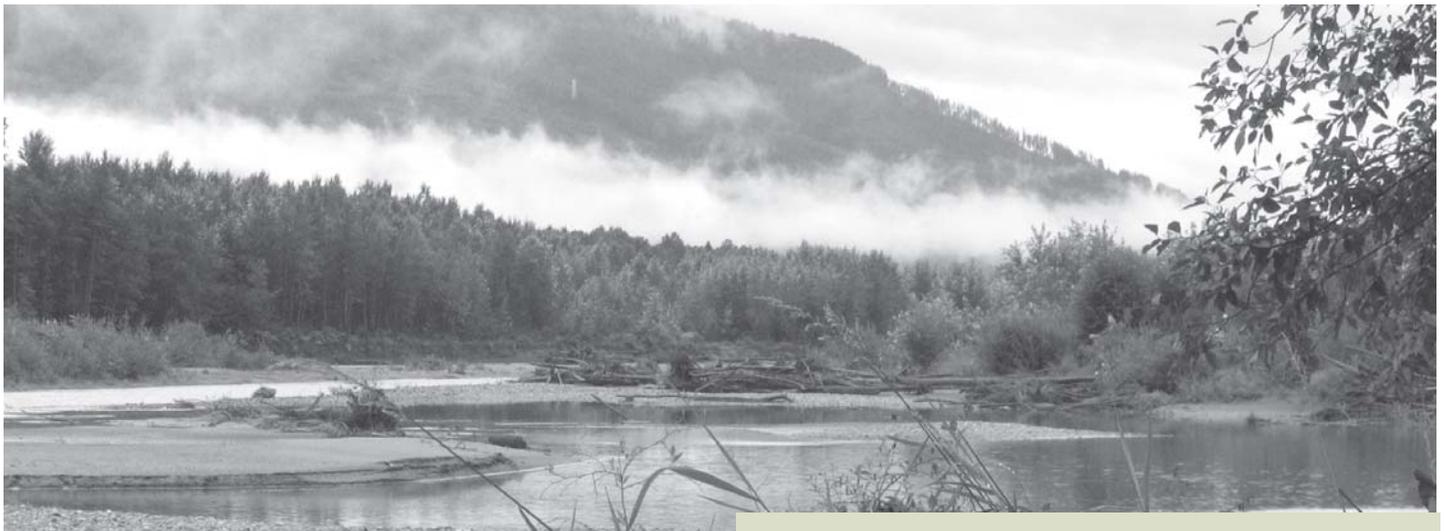
NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT LAND TRUST

Nichols Bar

Conservation Partnership Creates New County Park Near Lyman

As the weather warms and the sun shines, thoughts turn to walking along the river and digging toes in the sand. As a result of a partnership between conservation organizations and Skagit County, there is

use. Brian Adams, Director of the Parks Department was excited about the project. "The Board of County Commissioners embraced this opportunity to support the Chinook Recovery Plan. Given this parcel's



now a new place to take a spring-time stroll along the Skagit River.

For many years, Skagit Land Trust had been interested in acquiring 33 acres of prime Chinook salmon habitat and lovely shoreline west of Lyman. The Trust had promising discussions with various landowners of this parcel, but obstacles kept coming up. Recent landowners did not live in the Lyman area and the property became an illegal dumpsite for cars, trailers, TVs and household garbage, despite the landowners' efforts to prevent this. "As the habitat and river shoreline continued to be degraded through illegal dumping and off-road vehicle trespass, the need for action became greater" says Jane Zillig, Skagit Land Trust's Land Specialist.

Skagit Land Trust contacted Skagit County Parks and Recreation to explore a partnership to conserve this land not only for its habitat value but also for public

There is a now a new place to take a spring-time stroll along the Skagit River. Skagit Land Trust worked to secure a 33 acre riverfront property and arranged for it to become a new Skagit County Park.



proximity to the Cascade Rails to Trails and its river access, it also helps meet the public's desire for more walking trails and river access" says Adams. The Board of County Commissioners joined with Skagit Land Trust in a partnership in which the Trust worked to acquire the land and Skagit County agreed to own and manage it.

By the end of 2009, Skagit Land Trust had secured the property with help from conservation – oriented citizens and subsequently assigned ownership to Skagit County. This acquisition was funded by a grant from

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Guest Editorial by Jim Johnson, Land Steward

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This last November when the pink run was past its peak, Ellie Rogers and I, to acquaint her with the property, walked the Cumberland Creek Conservation Area. Along the shore, reachable at only a few points because of high water, lay scattered spawned out pinks—thousands, maybe tens of thousands of them. It was strangely exhilarating, all those dead fish, and they got me thinking about abundance.

Two years earlier, on a hot August afternoon, my daughter and I sat resting along the Cumberland oxbow.

In our drowsiness we noticed the grass along the water's edge waving in the absence of all save the slightest breeze.

Curious, we investigated. There in the grasses hid and hopped red-legged frogs so thick it took an effort of balance and agility not to step on them. I picked my way to higher ground and walked a few hundred yards on down the oxbow and there in the grasses swarmed still more frogs.

Now pinks and frogs aren't nearly as glamorous as eagles or swans or snow geese, but there is something about abundance, about profligacy in all these species that is, in this decade, heartening. Maybe the earth is healthier than we had thought. To that end, a group of maybe a dozen of us gathered on a September evening to watch for Vaux's Swifts roosting in the chimney at Northern State in Woolley. Despite reports of four hundred or more spotted the week before, we saw only one straggler. Still, I'll be out there next fall in the dusk in what will likely become an annual ritual.

In this thirst for abundance, I suspect I'm at bottom nostalgic for the hordes of buffalo on the Plains that I've only

read about or the clouds of Passenger Pigeons that still darkened the skies prior to the opening of the last century. I want their reassurance. Of course the spotting of a Lazuli Bunting or Bullock's Oriole or even hearing a Pileated Woodpecker in the Cumberland woods is of no less value. Abundance and scarcity can coexist; likely, they need each other.

Opting for scarcity is, however, out of the question for a steward. In

February of 2009, a group of volunteers (led by Jim Owens, and including John Seehorn, Lynn Postler, Lester Bradford, Sue Edelberg) and I came down on the side of abundance, putting up seven Wood Duck boxes

along the oxbow. This fall when Jim, Hal Lee, and I checked the boxes, we found that 29 ducklings had hatched out. And because they hit the water almost from that moment of hatching, we were jubilant. Choosing for the moment to ignore the possibility of looming disease, starvation, and lurking predation, we backslapped and high-fived. An observer might have thought we had won the Super Bowl. More importantly, I think, this congenial group of volunteers had helped nudge some tiny bundles of beauty toward more abundance in the world along the middle Skagit.

Tempering my enthusiasm, however, is the resonant and troubling phrase "shifting baseline syndrome" that I ran



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the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Clean-up efforts were conducted by both Skagit Land Trust and Skagit County.

Skagit Land Trust and Skagit County could not have done this without the support of the Skagit Watershed Council and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Many thanks also go to the generous spirit of key supporters who recognized the conservation value of this land and helped Skagit Land Trust bring this project to fruition.

The new park is located on Robinson Road. The road ends at a small gated parking area that was designed and installed by Skagit County Public Works. This allows for foot traffic to access the river. This land is open for low-impact recreational activities that are not detrimental to salmon habitat such as walking, birding and fishing in season. Motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Directions: Take Highway 20 east out of Sedro Woolley; veer right on to Lyman-Hamilton Road. Turn right on Robinson Road and take it to the end of the road. A small parking lot is located at the end of the road. Trails to the west head to the river bars.



Skagit County Commissioner Sharon Dillon cuts the ribbon at our newest county park.

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across just a couple of weeks ago in OnEarth, the journal of the Natural Resources Defense Council (winter 2010). It suggests, as I understand it, that we measure most things (the environment, politics, the cold of winter weather, the vitality of our hometown) against what we remember from our past, perhaps reaching back to our childhood. It's likely, for example, that our fondly remembered childhood backyard wilderness is "only a degraded version of what our grandparents knew which in turn was a degraded version of their grandparents' baseline." We may then be apt to mistake what is more accurately environmental impoverishment and degradation for health. And so an uptick in the population of a given species, say Trumpeter Swans, while welcome, might when viewed in a broader context be cause for only muted rejoicing. Similarly while early salmon returns this fall are encouraging, my father, who as a young man fished commercially off Point Roberts, would probably have found the returns disastrous. In short, one human life span or perhaps several are not enough to accurately measure environmental change.

Even so, an oxbow empty of Wood Ducks is an invitation to reconstitute the world, acting always with humility, because we can't be certain what was once here, when, and in what numbers. Lest this



photo by Bertha Bridge

sound too lofty, think on how such work can leave you muddled, cold, and wiping raindrops from your glasses or nose. And when I consider that the two Salmonid species most threatened locally, coho and Chinook, are those that spend the most time in fresh-water, what I am hearing is less an invitation than a command to get busy restoring our streams, guided always by a sound and evolving science. Those folks planting trees or hacking back invasives or stewarding a property, whether or not they have ever articulated it, are operating out of the same beliefs held by the poet Elisabeth Costello when she writes, "I believe in what does not bother to believe in me..."

All this blathering aside, next fall holds out the promise of roosting swifts and in only a couple of months, a group of us will be lugging a ladder and packing fresh shaving for those seven nesting boxes.

Jim is a retired high school English teacher. He has been the land steward of the Trust's Cumberland Creek Conservation Area for seven years. Volunteer land stewards adopt one of Skagit Land Trust's properties and act as eyes and ears for the Trust, visiting the property regularly. Many, like Jim, care for their property in a manner far beyond what the job requires. Without stewardship, conservation land is not truly protected for wildlife and for current and future generations. The dedicated crew of land stewards who donate their time to Skagit Land Trust's properties are essential to our conservation program. As a board member commented, "From the land trust perspective, they wear halos around their heads."

Barr Creek Conservation Area Gets New Hegg Benson Trail

On these clear spring days, our gaze gravitates toward the still snow-covered mountains. Everyone's pining and planning their summer adventures — which trails to hit, when. In that spirit, we are excited to announce great progress on the new Hegg Benson trail at the Barr Creek Conservation Area just east of Rockport. Although not complete, members and



friends are welcome to check out the new path on the east side of Sauk Mountain which will eventually connect with the old, unmaintained Forest Service trail to the top. Currently, the new trail takes a short jaunt (less than ½ mile) through lovely ferns and forest and ends at a lush, cascading waterfall. It has been built entirely by our wonderful volunteers who have donated over 225 hours of trail time to this project!

Skagit Land Trust was able to purchase this Barr Creek property in late 2008 with generous donations from our members and a grant from – the Washington Department of Natural Resources, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The forest in this area provides a night roost for bald eagles, and has been identified as emerging habitat for spotted owls and marbled murrelets, among other species.

All of the trail-building events have been led by SLT land steward of Barr Creek, Russ Dalton. Currently working for North Cascades National Park, Russ has years of experience managing and working on trails. Russ has expertly scouted and designed our route, as well as helped to teach some us novice trail-builders the art and craft of rock removal, grading, and polishing the perfect path.

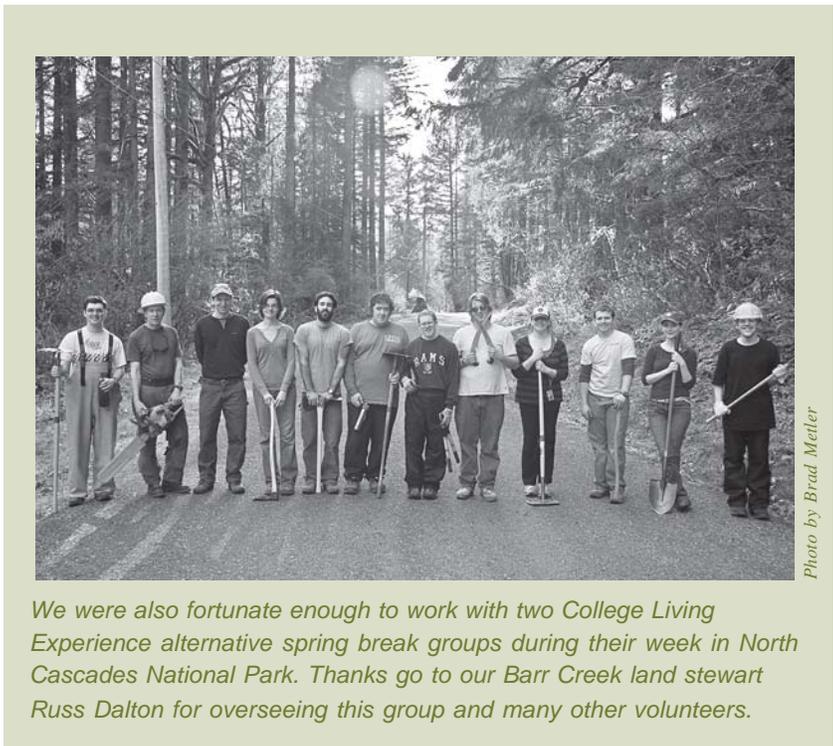


Photo by Brad Meiler

We were also fortunate enough to work with two College Living Experience alternative spring break groups during their week in North Cascades National Park. Thanks go to our Barr Creek land steward Russ Dalton for overseeing this group and many other volunteers.



Next steps include creating a parking pullout and signage, finishing the link between our trail and the old trail, and eventually letting the public know about this gem for all to enjoy. Major trail work is slotted to be completed by the fall of 2010.

With one more event scheduled for May 8, we're pretty sure the first leg of the trail will be in good shape for adventurers by summer. In fact, Executive Director Molly Doran's two-year-old hiked it in April. He approves.

Thanks to everyone who has helped so far! See Skagit Land Trust's website for directions and more information.

Skagit Land Trust volunteers have come out to four Saturday work events since late last fall, pioneering their way with pulaskis and adze hoes, mattocks and McLeods.

Anacortes Community Forestland Conservation Easement Program Meets It's Goals

In March, 1999, Skagit Land Trust partnered with the City of Anacortes and Friends of the Forest to begin preserving forestland within Anacortes' city limits. The 1st conservation easement protected 30 acres. In April 2010, the 25th conservation easement was recorded, protecting 45 additional acres. A total of 1,680 acres have now been preserved for present and future generations. Skagit Land Trust holds the easements. The City owns the land. Friends of the Forest is key steward and educator.

The program is close to meeting the Conservation Easement goals set out by the Anacortes City Council. This program is an example of partnership in the best possible sense. "We value the partnership we have with Skagit Land Trust and Friends of the Forest. We plan to continue to work together to pursue protection of additional tracts of land as opportunities present themselves and willing landowners approach us" said Jonn Lunsford, City of Anacortes Forestlands Manager.

Meet two of the Trust's Newest Board Members

This spring we were glad to formally bring two new members onto the Skagit Land Trust board. Both Sara Young and John Hunt have already proven to be valuable additions, in their fresh perspectives. The experiences and skills they bring will help steer our work over the next three years.



JOHN HUNT found the Skagit by sailboat in 1977. Having lived in the Silicon Valley and then Seattle after college, he and his family were always attracted to Anacortes. He and his wife of 47 years, Linda, knew they would someday call it home, and in 1999 they couldn't wait any longer. John continues in semi-retirement to do the work he has done since receiving his BSCE and MSCE from Stanford in 1966, which is alternative dispute resolution on construction projects. When not working, John enjoys photography, fly fishing, sailing, travel, and time with family.

John and his wife got involved as donors, members, and volunteers through their daughter Marcia, who works and lives in Anacortes and was active in the preservation of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. John also has a son (and granddaughter) living in Tucson. His care for future generations motivates him in his work with Skagit Land Trust. "As 'kids' we watched the Santa Clara Valley begin its transformation from the 'Prune Bowl of the World' to 'Silicon Valley', and we knew there had to be a better way to balance work and life. We see the Trust as helping to do that by preserving properties that will never be lost to future generations."



SARA YOUNG is a longtime Skagitonian. She grew up in Marblemount and returned to live in Conway in 2004. "I didn't realize how tied to the river I felt until we came back," Sara says. She arrived home with a Master's degree in Soil Science, specifically focused in near-surface hydrology, which has allowed her to work in a variety of jobs including private wetland and biological consulting, and assisting wheat farmers with resource conservation for the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District. Since her move home, she has worked as the Environmental Coordinator for Skagit PUD and is now serving as Manager of Planning and Environmental Services at the Port of Skagit.

Much of her career has involved working with environmental regulation, which she says has led her to really appreciate the place of voluntary land conservation. "It's just one more tool in the tool box, but such an important one. The Trust is preserving the library of biodiversity in our little county. I've been so impressed to see how much this land trust has achieved in the time since we joined." Sara, too, is invested in the next generation. She and her husband Wade have two young girls, ages six and two, that keep them busy when they're not volunteering or working.



GREEN ROAD MARSH CONSERVATION AREA GROWS

The Land Trust's Green Road Marsh Conservation Area grew a little bigger this year with a donation of two acres from **Mildred Callahan**. This increases the Trust ownership to approximately 44 acres. Now this important wetland complex can all be managed as one piece. The property is located north of Burlington in the Samish River/Thomas Creek watershed and is particularly important to waterfowl. Several years ago a significant restoration and enhancement project was completed at this site with assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Wetland Reserve Program. Bald Eagles nest nearby and the wetlands is always full of waterfowl. An interpretive sign was installed last year. It is a wonderful place to bird and enjoy nature.

Guemes Mountain Update

Now that Guemes Mountain has been protected, there are many exciting things happening or coming up in the near future.

New Trail Easement Signed! Skagit Land Trust is pleased to announce that we have signed a trail easement with a neighboring landowner on Guemes Mountain. Many thanks go to Dean Dougherty and the staff at The San Juan Preservation Trust who were instrumental in securing this easement. Under the trail easement, we will work together to add a beautiful new, mile-long path to the Mountain. The two trusts will be working with the Washington Trails Association to build the new trail. Trail construction will start in the fall. We look forward to working with islanders interested in volunteering on trail construction. Grants from the Boeing Charitable Trust and the Anacortes Parks Foundation are funding this project.



The new trail will wind through a mature forest on the mountain.

Management planning: In partnership with The San Juan Preservation Trust, we are developing a long-term management plan for Guemes Mountain. The management plan will determine how to integrate public access with habitat protection and will examine possibilities for restoration of disturbed areas. In February we held an open meeting with Guemes Island community members to get initial input. We look forward to more input from community members during our planning process.

Stewardship funding: Taking care of a special place like Guemes Mountain, forever, is a big responsibility. Skagit Land Trust has established a Guemes Mountain Stewardship Fund which will act as a quasi-endowment. The principal will generate annual earnings for stewardship, management, monitoring plus property and trail maintenance. This fund will also serve as a dedicated reserve in case of emergency expenses. Our current fund goal is \$200,000 and we are half way there due to the generosity of islanders and the community.

The Guemes Island Community was presented with Skagit Land Trust's Outstanding Community Partner Award at our annual meeting in March. Through this community's inspiring vision, determined volunteerism, and extreme generosity they were leaders in achieving the protection of Guemes Mountain for the benefit of all generations.

Fourth Annual Auction a success!

Our fourth annual auction and dinner "Have Fun – Save Land" was held at McIntyre Hall on February 27th. A sold out crowd helped raised a record \$44,000 (net) to benefit our land conservation efforts. This was a whopping 40% growth over last year.

Thank you to our **event sponsors**: BECU, Hexcel Corporation, Mike and Lisa Janicki, Oliver-Hammer Clothes Shop, Premier Graphics, Puget Sound Energy and Skagit Law Group who gave financial contributions to underwrite auction expenses. As a result of their generosity, auction proceeds directly benefit conservation.

Auction committee members Marlene Moore, Fonda Downs, Glenn Bordner, Janice Martin, Andrea Xaver, Diane Bednarz, Ellie Rogers, Renata Hoyle Maybruck and Toni Ruhl went above and beyond to secure a record number of donated items. 191 local businesses and individuals donated items and services. Thank you!

Live auction items included stay-cations to La Conner, Lopez Island, Fairhaven and Anacortes; gourmet dinners at Land Trust members' homes; a mountain bike; an Eddyline kayak; a sunset cruise; garden bounty packages; original artwork by famous local artists; wine tasting and wines; tours with naturalists; our popular dance and desert; Guemes art tour packages; and vacation packages to Mexico and the Pico Bonito Lodge in Honduras. There were also 149 fantastic silent auction items.

The auction couldn't be done without **our hard-working event volunteers**. Thank you to Charlie Christenson, Brenda Cunningham, Ali Downing, June Jordan, Karen Krub, Katie Lohman, Marlene Moore, Mary Jo Newbury, Jessie Robinson, Toni Ruhl, Linda Sanford, Carol Sullivan, Clare Tatarsky, Russ Weiser, Jan Wilson and Andrea Xaver.

Next year's auction will be held on February 26, 2011 at **Saint Joseph's Center** in Mount Vernon. We have loved McIntyre Hall but are excited about growing into our new, larger, auction venue with more items, more guests and even more fun! Because of the move we will have a new caterer and other new partnership opportunities. Please consider joining us at this exciting event next year!

Have Fun - Save Land



Monthly Giving Pledges Protect Local Lands Automatically

You can help Skagit Land Trust protect beloved local lands by setting up automatic payments to the Trust. Simply choose a gift method (credit card or check) and select the frequency of giving and the total amount of the contribution.

What is the difference between a donation and a pledge? A donation is a one-time gift to Skagit Land Trust. A pledge is a promise to donate a certain amount of money over a certain amount of time. Both result in being a contributor and member of the Trust.

Why would I want to make a pledge instead of a donation? Pledge giving is an automated installment plan for donors who want ease and convenience in making donations and to stretch their giving over a year.

How do pledges help protect more land? Pledges help us plan ahead. Knowing what our donations will be ahead of time enables us to leverage your gift many ways to get more land protected.

Giving is easy and convenient as a monthly or quarterly donor:

- You give a fixed amount each month or quarter – and can change the amount or cancel at any time. Each year we will ask you if you would like to continue. We can do this via a phone call or via letter – your choice.
- With our automatic payment method your regular gift will appear on your credit or debit card statement every month (or quarter).
- You will receive a letter at the end of the year summarizing your annual giving.
- You will have the satisfaction of knowing that your gift is going where it is greatly needed, and in the most cost-efficient way possible.

Our critical conservation work wouldn't be possible with the loyal dependable support of our pledge donors. Thank you!

For more information or to set-up your monthly pledge, please call 428-7878 or email Diane Bednarz at: dianebed@skagitlandtrust.org.

Skagit Land Trust Members - Thank you for Your Support!

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Mission Statement

Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat, wetlands, agriculture and forest lands, scenic open space and shorelines for the benefit of our community and as a legacy for future generations.



Saving Land for Tomorrow

Upcoming Events

June 26th @ 2pm

Guemes Mountain *“Thank you & What’s Next”*
Murray Read Pavilion (next to Schoolhouse Park)

August 21st @ noon– 19th Annual Picnic

Walking tours start at 10:30am
Lyman Park

September 23rd @ 7pm Conservation Breakfast

CottonTree Inn

December 2nd @ 4-7pm Holiday Open House

Skagit Station

February 26th @ 5:30pm

Annual Auction & Dinner; *“Have Fun - Save Land”*
Saint Joseph’s Center, Mount Vernon



Americorp volunteer Ellie Rogers is not afraid to explore the mossy remains of an old growth tree on a property visit.