



Spring 2013

SKAGIT UPDATE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT LAND TRUST

The Nature Conservancy Stewardship Partnership

The Sauk . . . the Cascade . . . the Suiattle . . . and, of course, the Skagit. These are the rivers in our neck of the woods that have been federally designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System, a recognition of the untrammled character and unique importance of these waterways to our ecosystem and sense of place. This also indicates how special these rivers are since less than 1/4 of 1% of our Nation's rivers are protected under the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. The banks of these great rivers in the Skagit are also home to a new Trust project: stewarding fourteen beautiful The Nature Conservancy preserves in partnership with the local Conservancy office.



Mossy Talus: Phil Kincaire (left), Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Skagit River Programs Assistant, and Skagit Land Trust Stewardship Director Michael Kirshenbaum collect data at The Nature Conservancy's Trillium Preserve, just outside of North Cascades National Park.

Beginning last year, Skagit Land Trust was contracted to apply its stewardship practices honed during years of management of our own 24 conservation areas to the Conservancy's preserves. The first step was one of discovery – hours of bushwhacking through riparian vegetation, scrambling up talus slopes, wading across tributaries, and studying aerial imagery of the preserves to begin to learn their characteristics. Working closely with local Conservancy staff, the Trust began to expand upon the store of knowledge of these special places and developed interim management plans and baseline biological data for each preserve.

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From the President

Dear Members,

I am deeply honored to bear the title "President of the Board of Directors" following Bob Boudinot's excellent service. I am in the unique position of having observed Skagit Land Trust from many perspectives over the past 15 years: member, volunteer land steward, professional wildlife biologist, staff member and now board member.



During those 15 years I witnessed the Trust's transition from having a very small staff and a board that implemented much of the project work, to a highly professional organization with a board engaged and very active at the guidance level. This growth has enabled the Trust to

take on larger projects than we could not have imagined 15 years ago as well as a greater diversity of projects, from partnerships with public entities to ecosystem-based projects furthering the goal of preserving the natural processes that make our county so special.

For the next year we have a lot on our plate, as always. The Trust will be applying to renew its accredited status. Thanks to the leadership of Marlene Moore, former board member and Regina Wandler, our Stewardship Associate, we already know what we need to update in our policies in order to accomplish this. We will also complete our new Conservation Strategy that will help us identify key lands to conserve. In a world of diminishing natural resources, expanding population, and limited budgets, it is essential that our efforts to conserve local biodiversity and wildlife habitats be guided by the best available science. We are also seeking input from you and other members of our community about places that touch the heart and need to be conserved to retain our Skagit sense of place. Lastly, we will begin the process of updating the Trust's Strategic Plan, not to be confused with the Conservation Strategy. The Strategic Plan describes organizational goals, identifying where we want the Trust to be 5 years from now.

As always, the heart of Skagit Land Trust's work is land protection and the stewardship of that land. None of this would be possible without our members, nor would it be as meaningful. Knowing that Skagit Land Trust has had a role in protecting so many places people love gives me great pride as a member and real hope for our future. Thank you for supporting Skagit Land Trust.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Cunningham". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Brenda Cunningham, *Board of Directors, President*

Continued from page one

Getting to know the Conservancy preserves has been like meeting long-lost family members. Many of them are sister properties to Skagit Land Trust conservation areas, protected for similar goals of salmon habitat preservation, wildlife habitat connectivity, floodplain integrity and public enjoyment. The origins of each preserve encompass a range of conservation intent – from a family donation in 1979 of an island near Marblemount in memory of loved ones to the many properties acquired via the current publicly-funded effort to restore Puget Sound's wild salmon runs.



Similar to the Trust's conservation areas, stewarding the Conservancy's special places requires long-term thinking and careful decision making about how best to use limited resources to protect the preserves' core features, while at the same time seeking out opportunities to restore degraded wildlife habitat or enhance the preserve's accessibility to the public. To that

end, the next year will find Skagit Land Trust working closely with the Conservancy's local office to write detailed long-term management plans for all 14 preserves, with the goal of ensuring their future as part of this great wild and scenic landscape.



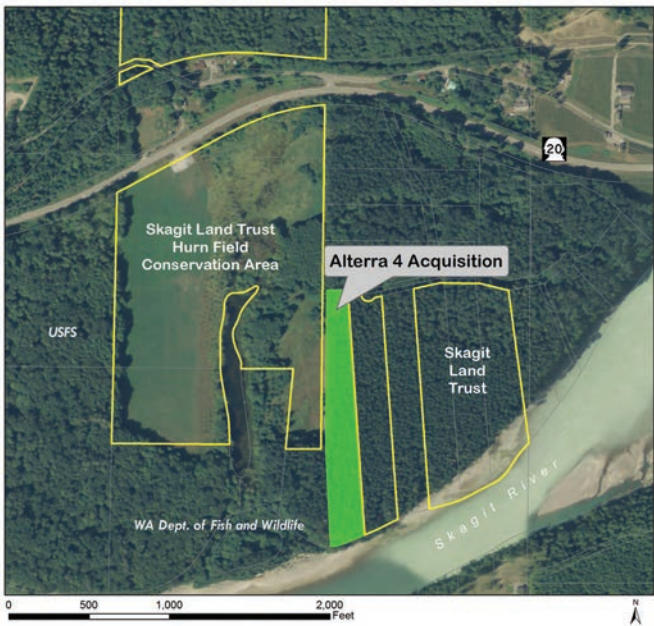
TOP PHOTO: Looking at the Kahn Preserve from along the Skagit River. This property is located near Skagit Land Trust's Cascadian Farm easement. MIDDLE: Prime salmon and steelhead habitat can be found along the 1.4 miles of river frontage at the South Cascade Preserve.



BOTTOM LEFT: Candyflower, a spring blooming native plant. BOTTOM RIGHT: Stewardship Assistant Regina Wandler prepares to walk a roly-poly log bridge found while exploring the Dupuis Preserve, along the Sauk River.

HURN FIELD ADDITION

Two new recent acquisitions this spring add 14 more acres to the Hurn Field Conservation Area. In conserving these parcels along the Skagit River, we help to protect the high quality fish habitat found in this area. The Hurn Field Conservation Area now totals 95 acres and the diverse landscape found here makes it an important part of our conservation efforts in the Middle Skagit. House Slough and the surrounding woodlands and fields found at Hurn Field provide forage and shelter for elk, neo-tropical migrating songbirds and amphibians. A large portion of Hurn Field also remains in agricultural hay production.

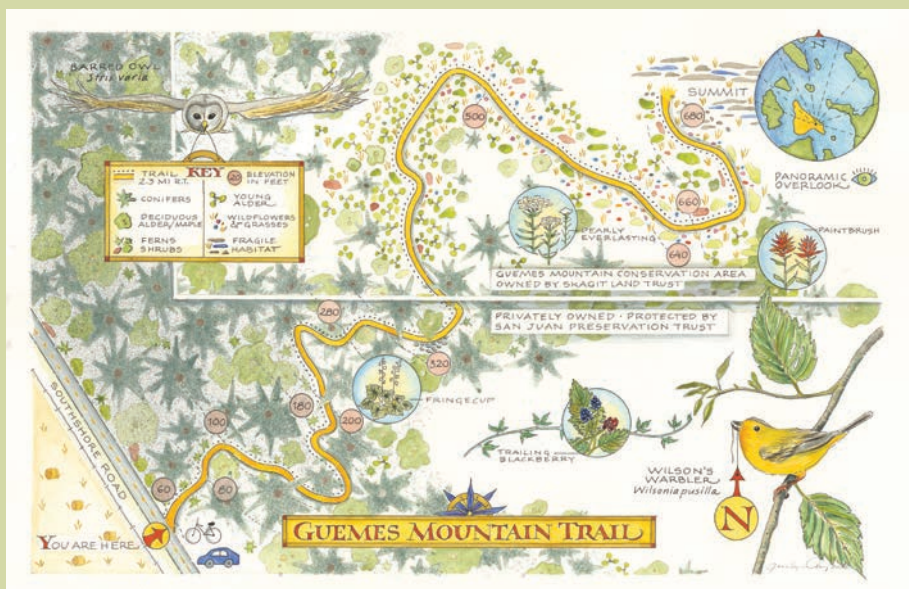


These acquisitions were funded by a grant from the WA State Salmon Recovery Funding Board with support from Skagit Watershed Council and Seattle City Light.

New Interpretive Signs along Guemes Mountain Trail

In January, Skagit Land Trust installed three interpretive signs along the trail up Guemes Mountain. These beautiful signs were created to help orient visitors to the property, tell the story of protecting Guemes Mountain, and to share images and information regarding the area's natural history. They include plant and animal species you might encounter along the way. We hope you enjoy reading the signs on your next visit to the mountain!

Thank you to all of the wonderful folks who assisted with the creation of the signs over several months, and to our dedicated installation crew for working hard to get the signs in the ground on a rainy winter day: Tim Manns, Jocelyn Curry, How It Works, Chris Farrow, Gregg Thompson, Steve Businger, Phil Green, Josh Parrott, Ferdi Businger, J.B. Smith, Russ Dalton, Ian Woofenden, Rick Machin, Sally Stapp and Dick Brigham.



Illustrated Map by Jocelyn Curry



Volunteers Joan Hanson (left) and Fran Hansen arrange fresh tulips for the tables at this year's 7th Annual Auction and Dinner.



A Great Party for a Good Cause

Skagit Land Trust's 7th Annual Auction and Dinner on March 2nd netted \$104,000 for local land conservation – thank you to all who contributed time, talent, items, and money! Mark your calendar now for March 1, 2014 to attend our **8th Annual Auction and Dinner** at the St. Joseph Center in Mount Vernon. Would you like to help this event reach its full potential? Contact Auction Director Fonda Downs at fondad@skagitlandtrust.org with questions about donating an auction item, becoming an event sponsor, or volunteering to help make the event a success.

Experience the lands you help protect

Year round, Trust staff and volunteers lead nature tours and organize volunteer events at our conservation areas. We hope you'll join us to experience the special places we're safeguarding together forever. Want to keep up-to-date on the latest offerings? Visit our website at skagitlandtrust.org and view our events calendar. You can also sign up for our e-newsletter list on our website and get notices delivered to your inbox. This year, we are excited to launch our first annual *Natural Skagit Day* at Lyman Slough on Saturday, June 15. This family-friendly event will offer two guided hikes, a fly fishing demonstration, and volunteer opportunities!



above: Anne Winkes and Maya Cough-Schulze monitor nesting herons on Samish Island.
left: Tim Manns leads a bird walk for early risers at Barney Lake.

Leave It to Nature, Forever

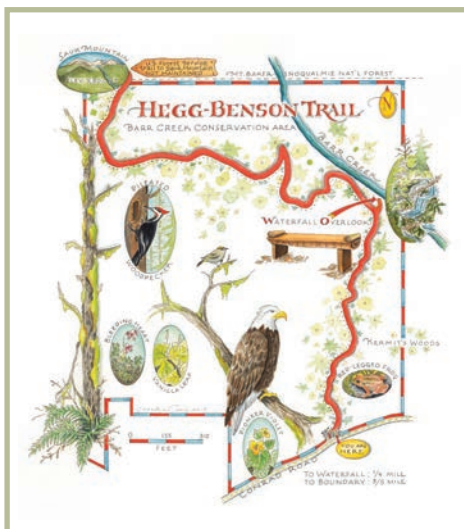
Legacy Donor Profile: Robert Brown and Pat Hegg Brown



Robert Brown and Pat Hegg Brown were long-time supporters of Skagit Land Trust and contributed to a legacy of protected lands across the West. This summer, the Trust will place an interpretive sign with map at the base of the Hegg Benson Trail (named for Pat's parents Pearl Benson and Earl "Fuzz" Hegg) at the Barr Creek Conservation Area. The Trust asked the children of Robert and Pat to share their thoughts about their parents' conservation leadership.

Why was land conservation so important to your parents?

Over their lifetimes, Robert and Pat developed an increasing appreciation of nature and land. They watched the San Francisco Bay Area be developed right before their eyes and saw the same negative potential in other areas of the country. Robert and Pat were outdoor people. They spent significant time in the Sierra Nevada Mountains hiking, backpacking and camping and were early members of the Sierra Club and the Committee for Green Foothills. In the 1960's, their travels expanded across North America to British Columbia, the Great Smoky Mountains, Mexico, New England and Eastern Canada. In the 1970's their travels led them across Europe, to South America, to Australia and to Asia. The more beautiful areas of this world they saw, the more they wanted to help save such lands from development. While their world travels continued into the 1990's, they purchased a second home on California's spectacular Monterey Peninsula where they were active in saving wildlife and safeguarding natural areas. Robert was also instrumental in establishing the Palo Alto Conservation Center, a building dedicated to providing office space for non-profit organizations dedicated to conservation.



What special qualities about Skagit's lands motivated them to support Skagit Land Trust?

Pat grew up in Sedro-Woolley. Her parents, Pearl Benson and Earl "Fuzz" Hegg, were also outdoor people and enjoyed hiking in the Sauk Mountain area. Camping trips to Lake Whatcom and steelhead fishing on the Skagit River were favorite activities. When Robert and Pat returned to the Skagit Valley to visit her family, they enjoyed the natural beauty but also were concerned about the impact of development. They appreciated the natural beauty of the Skagit area and had affection for the land from Pat's childhood.

Robert and Pat strongly believed in preserving land for future generations to use and appreciate. They appreciated the Trust's interest in providing public access to conserved lands and felt that they would be able to make a difference for future generations by helping to preserve a lovely forested piece of land with mature growth that could be enjoyed via hiking trail. Robert and Pat were excited to work with the Trust to identify a project that had meaning for our family and felt that Skagit Land Trust had the capacity to make it happen.

ABOVE: The Hegg Benson Trail map was designed by artist Jocelyn Curry and the sign shares information about local history & ecology and the trail's namesakes Pearl Benson and Earl "Fuzz" Hegg. Visit the Barr Creek Conservation Area 2 miles east of Rockport. From Hwy 20 turn left on Conrad Road and go .2 miles to a small parking area with Skagit Land Trust sign.

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Thank You for Your Support

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Forest Lands
Nitty Gritty Garden Club
Seattle City Light
Skagit Audubon Society
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Skagit Conservation District
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Education Alliance
Skagit County Parks
Skagit Watershed Council

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Skagit Gardens

*Thank you to our members whose donations
were received between April 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013*

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Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat,
agricultural 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

Saturday, June 15th

*Natural Skagit Day, 9AM - 1PM
Lyman Slough Conservation Area*

Check our website in June for these dates:

Butler Creek - Trash cleanup & blackberry cutting

Guemes Island - Geology walk let by Scott Magorien

Saturday, August 10th

Annual Members Picnic, Bayview State Park, 12 - 2PM

SAVE THE DATE - Thursday, November 14

Conservation Social: Words, Sounds & Images of the Skagit
at the Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner, 5 - 7PM

Photo by Ron Pera