

Minkler Lake Protected for Wildlife, Fish and Our Community

When driving east on Highway 20, before you get to the town of Lyman, have you noticed Minkler Lake on your right-hand side? It is a lovely gem—barely hidden from view—glinting through the alders and salmonberry brush. With the help of the Skagit Watershed Council and the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Trust recently purchased 107 acres of prime fish and wildlife habitat in and around the lake.

Minkler Lake is a mile-long freshwater pond, which long ago was an oxbow of the Skagit River. Historically it was used as a millpond and pilings are still visible from Highway 20. In recent years the lake has been left alone and undeveloped, and fish and wildlife have thrived. The quiet backwaters are accessible to Skagit River salmon through Childs Creek. This type of habitat is particularly important to juvenile Coho salmon, which spend a year in freshwater before migrating to sea, and need refuge from winter flood events.

The land that was purchased by the Trust is a long narrow parcel that encompasses most of the lake. It can be best viewed from the county's Cascade Trail, heading west from Lyman.



Volunteer Steward Coordinator Ralph Heft at newly purchased Minkler Lake. This lake is particularly important for juvenile Coho Salmon.

“We are excited to add this land to our protected natural areas – it is teeming with wildlife of all sorts,” said Molly Doran, the Trust’s Executive Director.

The property was purchased from the Estate of Beulah Dickinson. The purchase price was \$228,000, which was determined by a fair-market appraisal.

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Skagit Update

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From the Executive Director

“...Land is the community to which we all belong”. Aldo Leopold

When Skagit Land Trust protects a property, as we just did Minkler Lake, I am fascinated by the land’s history as well as its natural amenities. Of course, they are inextricably intertwined. Skagit’s people are linked to geography, topography and environment and together with the natural world form a diverse heritage and sense of place.

Minkler arrived a little over 130 years ago in the Skagit when the land that now houses highways and malls was still wilderness, yet a peopled wilderness. He had quite an adventure getting past the logjams at what is now Mt Vernon and up the thickly forested river but he apparently fell in love with the valley immediately. It is noted he was guided by “Indians” up the river. In fact, Minkler was part of a ‘bridge culture’ - the first wave of our current ‘Euro-American’ culture coming to settle in the valley. Today’s definition of wilderness (a place without people) is of course a misperception when used historically- the Salish tribes had called this area home for centuries and had their own influence on Skagit land.

According to Upper Skagit records, Minkler Lake was in the vicinity of an Upper Skagit village *buh-see-kwee-GWEELTS* translated to mean “people of the big rocks”. Could they have imagined Birdsey Minkler and his friends arriving to settle or what a sawmill could do? And could Birdsey ever have imagined that there would be a group such as ourselves that would buy the land just to allow it to rest - what a concept – especially when the land must have seemed to go on forever. Before that, well, the USGS says Minkler Lake delineates an edge of a volcanic lahar. Might it have been part of the one that washed debris down Mt Baker into the Skagit and then formed the base for the logjams limiting exploration until the 1880’s.

Charting the passage of time over the same valley or river or piece of land brings home Aldo Leopold’s philosophy that land is the community, to which all of us belong. I feel honored that Skagit Land Trust with the help of our partners and members, is able to protect such places, steeped in community and natural history.



Molly Doran

Executive Director



Minkler Lake Purchase
Continued from page 1

“We are really excited to add this land to our protected natural areas. It is teeming with wildlife of all sorts.”
- Molly Doran, Executive Director.

The appraised value included reimbursement to the seller for the existing rights to build a house on an upland portion of the property located next to Minkler Road. The Trust, of course, will not exercise these development rights, but intends to restore this area to native habitat.

Eighty-five percent of the project costs were provided by a generous grant from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, with the remainder provided from private donations. Last year, when the Salmon Recovery Funding Board was facing the difficult decisions about where to grant limited state acquisition funds, Shirley Solomon and the Skagit Watershed Council worked tirelessly to support the Trust’s proposal for this project.

A three-acre area near Minkler Road is now abandoned pasture. The Trust plans to plant trees in this area soon – keep your eyes peeled for our announcement of a tree-planting party. And, on September 25th the bus tour described in this newsletter will stop to admire this latest Skagit Land Trust acquisition.



Shingle bolts floating on Minkler Lake near the mill owned by the Minkler family.

Photo courtesy of Skagit River Journal of History & Folklore
<http://www.stumpranchonline.com/skagitjournal>

What’s In a Name? Minkler Lake

Birdsey Minkler was one of the first up river pioneers on the Skagit and had a strong influence on the river community. His life accomplishments include being a representative in the first Washington legislature and a state senator. His love of the Skagit began in 1877 when he paddled and poled up river with Native American guides until he found an unclaimed piece of wilderness beside the fast-flowing Skagit. He set about starting a successful mill business. He founded the town of Birdsvew, originally known as Minkler’s Landing for the sternwheelers that could navigate that far up the river. His first homestead was at Grandy Creek and his first saw mill was across the river at Mill Creek (coincidentally Skagit Land Trust has protected lands on both of these creeks). Later the family moved down river to Lyman and Birdsey founded another mill at Minkler Lake with Frank Ries. They also built a new village on the south end of the lake with a post office for which the Minklers were the namesake. The mill burned to the ground in 1920 in mysterious circumstances and all vestiges are gone except for pilings you can see as you drive by on Hwy 20. There are no traces of the town, but this pioneering family’s name remains on our newly protected Minkler Lake Conservation Area. *Information compliments of Skagit River Journal of History & Folklore, 2002.*
www.stumpranchonline.com/skagitjournal



Thank You

Al Craney - of Skagit Conservation District for helping to make the Hurn and Ryan riparian area restoration projects successful.

Skagit Valley Food Co-op – for the proceeds of their 4% Friday program.

Jim Johnson, Ralph Heft, Gene Earnest, Peter Jepson, Tim Manns, Peggy Ratermann, Pete Haase, Bonnie Dawson, Dick Raisler, Arn Thoreen, Lucy Slocum and Lyman and Judy Dudley – for removing trash and a small building on Day Creek Slough property.

Emerson High School students and staff - for planting nearly 400 native trees along the Nookachamps;
Sky Nursery - for donating the trees; *Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group* - for supporting this project.

Crown Pacific - for donating 1,000 native trees for plantings and *Nitty Gritty Garden Club* - for donating 180 native trees.

Peter Jepson, Keith Wiggers and Ralph Heft - for installing a fence and gate at our Grandy Creek Property.

Catapult Heavy Construction - for their assistance in planning for a Hurn Field educational pullout.

Concrete Nor'West - for donating fence-building materials for Grandy Creek Conservation Area.



Judy Gamble plants donated native trees along Young Slough, an area protected by a conservation easement.



Diane Bednarz ferries Molly Doran and her bundle of willows at a planting on Butler Flats. Check out the ponds on Green Road.



Thank you Brenda Cunningham, Tim Manns and Jan & Keith Wiggers for leading the wildlife boat cruise and Trevor Kyle for taking pictures. We plan another cruise next year.

It took volunteers most of the day to demolish an old camp on the Day Creek Slough property. But they had fun doing it!



Peter Jepson constructing a fence along the bountry of Trust property at Grandy Creek.

Volunteers Make a Difference

Landowner Bob Keller and Stewardship Director Brenda Cunningham review his conservation easement along the Casade River.



Herb Sargo puts the finishing touches to the new logo sign on the Trust's office door.



Students and staff from Emerson High School celebrated Earth Day by helping to plant native trees along the Nookachamps River on Trust property.



What Exactly is a Conservation Easement?

We often get asked, "What exactly is a Conservation Easement?" Good question.

As a landowner, you have the right to do a lot of different things with your property. For instance, subject to laws and regulations, you can build houses or commercial businesses, put in roads, plant trees or cut them down. For people who have land with significant conservation values on their property (such as fresh and saltwater shoreline or large tracts of native forest or farmland), the gift of a conservation easement to Skagit Land Trust involves voluntarily giving up some of these rights forever.

In many cases federal tax law recognizes that it is valuable to the public to give up these rights for the sake of conservation. Thus, if a person donates a qualifying conservation easement, they can claim the value of the extinguished rights as a charitable gift on their income tax. This can result in substantial tax savings.

Conservation Easements do not have to allow public access to qualify as a charitable gift – the key is that the

landowner is providing public benefit by protecting the natural features of their land.

If a landowner donates a conservation easement on their land, they still own the land, and they can still sell it or leave it to their children. However, mutually agreed upon restrictions are permanently attached to the title of the property. Each conservation easement is customized to meet the individual landowner's needs and goals for their property. Easement donors sometimes reserve rights to use a portion of their land for specific things. For instance, they might identify the forest or wetland as "forever wild" but keep use of a family camping site on the property; or they might give up the right to do a residential subdivision, but reserve a site for a child's future home. Skagit Land Trust checks the land under easement each year.

Donating a conservation easement gives the landowner the immense satisfaction of knowing they are leaving a legacy of land protected forever — a place for future generations to enjoy and cherish, and a haven for wildlife.

Tax-Wise Giving Make Provisions to Make a Difference

Retirement Assets Can Create a Charitable Opportunity



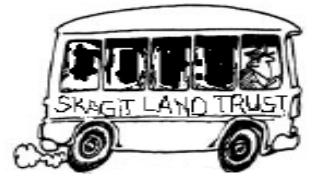
As the “baby boomers” generation and their parents’ age, one of the assets they should keep an eye on is undistributed funds from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA’s), 401(K) plans and other retirement programs. Without proper planning, a good amount of these assets could be lost to taxes – in some cases over 50%. At the same time, these funds also provide opportunities for charitable giving.

Because standard IRA’s and 401(k)’s are often funded by pre-tax income, disbursements from these funds are subject to income tax. If a person dies before the retirement fund has been exhausted, the remaining asset may be subject to federal income taxes, potentially estate tax, and in some states, state tax.

On the other hand, a bequest of the remaining assets in a retirement plan could avoid both estate and income taxes and help support a favorite cause such as Skagit Land Trust.

Since most people do not take their retirement benefits in a lump sum, many will die with retirement funds in their estates. Please consider naming Skagit Land Trust as a primary or secondary beneficiary of your IRA or 401(K) account. As a legacy, it will make a true difference to the world we leave to future generations.

Please call the office or email for our Tax ID #.



Sign up for a Guided Bus Tour of Skagit Land Trust Properties With Experts

Sign Up Now for a fall tour of Skagit Land Trust properties! On September 25th Skagit Land Trust will take you on the lovely backroads of Skagit County to see some of the seldom visited Trust properties that we are protecting together. Experience the beautiful autumn scenery and see wildlife while hearing from the experts about what makes these properties so unique. This 5-hour tour will include a delicious barbecue lunch and short walks on many of the properties. Space on the bus is limited, so call now to reserve your seat. Bring your camera, binoculars and a friend.

Only \$15 for members.
Donation of \$25 for non-members.

Call Diane at the Trust office for reservations, **360-428-7878**.

Yes! I want to protect Skagit County’s natural legacy!

Thank you for supporting
land conservation

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Please send me information on leaving a bequest

Thanks to New and Renewing Members

January 1, 2004 - June 30, 2004

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Saving Land for Tomorrow

Upcoming Events:

Stewardship on Butler Creek: August 16th

Help the Trust manage a young, replanted conifer forest on one of our properties by thinning out birches. This work will “release” the cedars, firs and hemlocks, quickening the return to a mature, evergreen forest. Three to 4 hours of work, with time to wander in the beautiful adjacent forest and along Butler Creek.

Bus tour of Trust properties: September 25th

Sign Up Now for a fall bus tour of Skagit Land Trust properties.
See details on page 6.

Skagit Land Trust Hats For Sale

Baseball Caps Classic and new contemporary Skagit Land Trust logo. Plus we have **Note Cards** for sale with watercolor landscapes of Skagit County, original artwork donated by Thais Armstrong



A rainy day doesn't stop volunteer Jerry Haegele from putting up a new sign at Hurn Field.

Mission Statement

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