

# THE UNDERSTORY

SLT LAND STEWARD NEWSLETTER      DECEMBER 2009

## WELCOME TO THE NEW LAND STEWARD NEWSLETTER!

*This is not an appeal for more of your time. And it is not first and foremost a reminder for you to turn in your monitoring reports (although we'll do that every chance we get). This is primarily a thank you.* It is your new land steward newsletter, which will hopefully be a place for the 22 of you to trade tips and share stories as you wrestle back blackberry, clear trails, and wander in your woods; as well as for you to hear from us more often. We'll make sure to include important information on upcoming events, updates on Skagit Land Trust happenings, and news regarding your fellow land stewards and lands.

We can't thank you enough for being our stewards. I've been amazed, heading out to these properties with you, at how much you do that we don't hear about. You haul away trash. You find friends to remove invasive species with you on your weekends. You come out with your lunch and walk the perimeter. I'm so glad that you also feel like this

land is yours, that you can go birding, sit by the creek, and enjoy these places. Still, it is an incredible commitment.

We're calling this newsletter "The Understory" because that's probably where you'll be and have been during your time as a steward -- wending your way through brush beneath spruce and fir, alder and cottonwood in that quiet place beneath the canopy.

The name works on many levels. Skagit Land Trust could not steward these properties without volunteers to take on long-term commitments like that of the land steward. The work you do is on the ground. It binds the dream of conservation with the constant, muddy foundations of caring for the land. Yours is the behind-the-scenes, wholly necessary work that helps make Skagit Land Trust successful. Yours is the understory.

So enjoy this quarterly reminder in your mailbox of how grateful we are for all you do.  
-Ellie Rogers, Volunteer Coordinator



## SKAGIT LAND TRUST INSIDER NEWS FROM MICHAEL KIRSHENBAUM

*This winter will be a busy one for SLT's stewardship program. This is usually the time of year when we plan for the spring/summer field season, and this year will be no exception. Here's what to expect over the next few months:*

**Guemes Mountain:** With the recent successful purchase of Guemes Mountain -- and thank you to everyone for their support -- it's now time to plan our stewardship of that wonderful property. Skagit Land Trust will be working closely with the San Juan Preservation Trust, which holds a conservation easement on the property, and the Guemes Island community, to develop a management plan. A first step will be to provide better public access to the mountain via a new one-mile trail up the north side of the property. *We'll be designing that trail this winter and likely start work on it within the next few months.*

**Barr Creek:** The Barr Creek Conservation Area near Rockport will also be a focus over the next year. In October, a work party

of eight intrepid volunteers and staff, led by Land Steward Russ Dalton, braved the beginning of the fall rains to clear a parking area and construct the first of three new trail segments on the property. Once all the trail work is complete, the public will have easy access to over a mile of walking through beautiful mature forest, a waterfall view of Barr Creek and a connection to the historic Sauk Mountain Trail. **Look for trail building work parties throughout 2010 at Barr Creek.**

**SLT Outreach Activities:** Outreach and fundraising continues to be critically important to Skagit Land Trust, especially during these difficult economic times. Although we have had great success raising money for large preservation projects like Guemes Mountain, support for general operations, and stewardship, is much harder to come by. **Towards that end, Skagit Land Trust will be holding its annual auction on February 27th at McIntyre Hall.**

## DONT FORGET TO SEND IN YOUR FOURTH QUARTER MONITORING REPORTS!

One of the most important things you do is help us keep up-to-date files on each property. Even if there is not much to report, we want to hear about it. For an electronic template, or to send in your fourth quarter report, email Ellie at [erogers@skagitlandtrust](mailto:erogers@skagitlandtrust).

## SPOTLIGHT ON MINKLER LAKE AND ROBIN LARUE

Minkler Lake is a mile long freshwater pond, an oxbow of the Skagit River. Historically, the lake was used as a millpond for the Lyman Lumber & Shingle Company built by Birdsey Minkler and his partner Frank Ries at the turn of the 19th century. The mill burned down under mysterious circumstances in 1920, leaving only a few pilings as evidence of the mill site. In 2004 the Skagit Land Trust acquired 107 acres of land including most of Minkler Lake from the Estate of Beulah Dickinson. This property bounded by State Highway 20 on the north and the Cascade Trail on the south became the Minkler Lake Conservation Area.

Robin LaRue has been the Land Steward for the Minkler Lake Conservation Area from the beginning. Prior to being assigned the Minkler Lake property, Robin was the Land Steward for the Shaw property on the South Skagit Highway. After almost ten years, Robin is retiring from the ranks of Land Stewards. Robin said he still plans to be active with the Skagit Land Trust, visiting the Grandy Creek and Lyman Slough Conservation Areas with his friends and Land Stewards John Freeman and Dick Raisler, as well as attending work parties at the Land Trust's other properties.



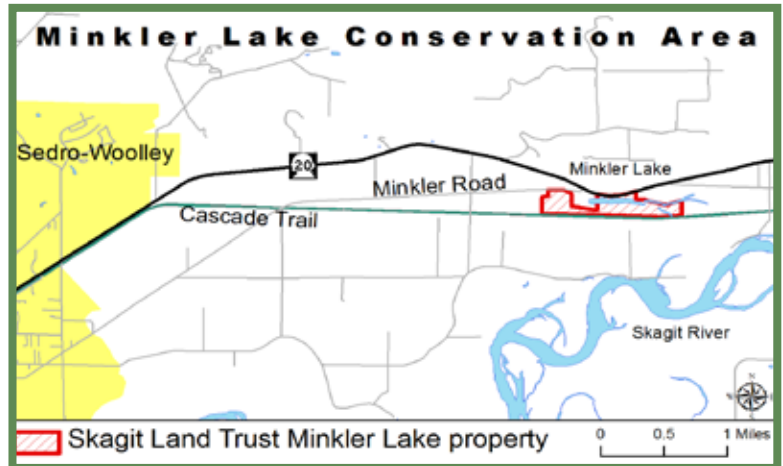
Above: Robin with a healthy young sitka spruce he planted four years ago at Minkler Lake.

**THANK YOU, ROBIN,  
FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE!**

Below: A map of the Minkler property.

### SKAGIT CONSERVATION AREAS AND THEIR STEWARDS

Barney Lake - Tim Manns and Brenda Cunningham  
Barr Creek - Russ Dalton  
Butler Creek - Jim Owens  
Cumberland Creek - Jim Johnson  
Day Creek (Berquist) - Stan Zyskowski  
Day Creek Kosbab - Skagit River System Cooperative  
Day Creek Slough - Hal Lee  
Grandy Creek - John Freeman  
Green Road Marsh - Scott Andrews  
Hurn Field - Ed and Carolyn Gastellum  
Lyman Slough - Dick Raisler  
March's Point Heronry - LaVerne and Jim Scheltens  
Minkler Lake - Robin LaRue - 2009, Hal Lee in 2010!  
Mud Lake - Lloyd Brown  
Samish River - Carolyn Sutton  
South Skagit (Shaw) - OPEN!  
Tope Ryan - John Day  
Upper Skagit - Steffany Raynes and Lin Skavdahl



### SLT BY THE NUMBERS

**CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: 30**  
**TRUST-OWNED LANDS: 19**  
**TOTAL ACRES PROTECTED: 5563**

If you have sketches, reflections, photos, journalings, essays, poems, or anything else from your time out as a land steward, we would love to feature them! Otherwise you'll just have to hear Ellie's reflections each quarter. Send to [erogers@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:erogers@skagitlandtrust.org).