



VISITING THE BELL PROPERTY AND THE BARNEY LAKE CONSERVATION AREA

Why was the Bell Property conserved by Skagit Land Trust?

In 2012, a fundraising campaign helped Skagit Land Trust (SLT) expand the Barney Lake Conservation Area to protect important wildlife habitat, agricultural land and open space just outside the City of Mount Vernon. The adjacent Bell Property went on the market soon thereafter and SLT identified protection of this property's forest, wetlands and section of Nookachamps Creek as a priority. A 2014 campaign successfully raised the funds for purchase of the Bell Property in May of 2014 and Skagit Land Trust is in the final stages of completing the purchase. This conserves the essential wildlife habitat and scenic values that this land contributes to the Barney Lake area.

What's next for the Bell Property?

The first stage in incorporating this property into the Barney Lake Conservation Area will involve site restoration on the developed portion of the property at the roundabout intersection of Highway 9 and College Way. The restoration plan will include demolition of the house, trash clean up, and plantings of native trees and shrubs. This will occur in the summer and fall of 2014 and continue into next spring.

How can I visit the Bell Property?

SLT's long-term goal is to ensure the public can see and enjoy the beautiful Bell Property. However, the developed site (house site) at the roundabout is not a legal place for public parking per the WA State Department of Transportation. Therefore, until further notice visitors to the Bell Property must be accompanied by a Skagit Land Trust staff, board, or designated volunteer. We are working on a plan for future public access including collaborating with Skagit County Parks on long-term plans for The Centennial Trail that will border this property. This will include the possibility of a foot trail for bird watching, nature study, and wildlife viewing.

Where can I currently access the Barney Lake Conservation Area?

SLT's Barney Lake Conservation Area is accessible for low-impact visitation. Access points include: 1) The western portion of Gunderson Road off Highway 9 provides access to Barney Lake's eastern grasslands and wetlands. Travel down the undeveloped road to the SLT sign and park (note: there is only space for 1 car); and 2) Signe Place off of Swan Road (about 1 mile west of Francis Road) provides access to the northern perimeter of the lake. Park along the pavement on the west edge of Signe Place then walk down the grassy strip towards the forest perimeter of the lake. To access other parts of the Barney Lake Conservation Area, please call the Trust at 360.428.7878. We have a lease agreement with a farmer on some parts of the property and some areas have limited access due to wildlife sensitivity.

What are the long-term access plans for the Barney Lake Conservation Area?

The 368-acre Barney Lake Conservation Area provides critical habitat for a wide array of wildlife and plant species and provides scenic beauty that exemplifies Skagit County's natural heritage. Long term management plans for public access to the conservation area include:

- Link the conservation area with other local open spaces and trails as they are developed.
- Provide nature study, stewardship and research opportunities for the community and schools.
- Cooperate with plans to develop Skagit County's Centennial Trail project.
- Provide for low impact public access at several sites on the property; including the possibility of a view area overlooking Barney Lake and foot trail to explore other parts of the conservation area.

Questions: Stewardship Director Michael Kirshenbaum at 360.428.7878 or michaelk@skagitlandtrust.org