



The Outstanding Cascade River Gains Protection



SLT staff Kari Odden stands next to some of the larger trees on the new property.

Too silty, too warm, too stagnant – a lot can go wrong when it comes to salmon habitat, especially if you're a mother salmon looking for just the right place to dig a "redd" (gravel nest) to lay her eggs. Although salmon may seem less maternal than bears or birds, these amazing fish have their own ways of protecting their offspring. Avoiding muddy or silty gravel keeps the eggs from getting smothered. Good water speed makes sure the eggs stay sufficiently cool and oxygenated. The right size and shape of gravel also matters for incubating and protecting the eggs.

Many of the Cascade River's side channels and tributaries meet mother salmon's strict criteria. This is one of many reasons that Skagit Land Trust (SLT or the Trust) has conserved 1.9 miles of Cascade River shoreline. Last month, we purchased over seven more acres of lovely, forested land in the river's migration zone, near Marblemount.

Part of the property lies above the 100-year floodplain and features substantial conifers and a lush, ferny understory with relatively few invasive plants. The portion within the floodplain protects 285 feet of the north bank of the Cascade River and 450 feet of Lyric Creek, a salmon-bearing tributary that runs through the property.

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Board President's Letter to Members

Dear Friends and Supporters of Skagit Land Trust,

As we enter the season of joyful giving and gratitude, I am especially thankful to live in this beautiful place and be part of a community that values the protection of the special lands we have here in the Skagit. These gifts enabled me to travel with my granddaughter last summer up into the majestic North Cascade mountains and down to the magical shores of the San Juan Islands. I shared her delight in walking forest trails, finding huge trees, seeing moss-covered logs, learning about plants, playing in the sand, and spotting fish as we paddled over eelgrass beds. In thinking about her future, I am struck by the need to continue protecting and caring for these lovely places.

Skagit Land Trust members have helped to preserve thousands of acres of land and miles of shoreline since our beginnings 32 years ago, and those numbers grow each year. Since the Trust is also responsible for stewarding the land and resources that have been entrusted to us, our stewardship needs also grow as our conserved areas expand. There is continuing work to protect plants and wildlife, restore habitat, remove non-native plants, monitor for illegal uses such as dumping, check boundaries for encroachments, and help people learn about the land.

Stewardship can be defined as careful, responsible management. It is also a way to express our love and gratitude for the lands under our care. We must continue this work to ensure that future generations get to enjoy these special places as well. Perhaps the best gift I can give my granddaughter is not only a love of visiting these places, but also a sense of shared responsibility in stewarding them. In working with all of you, I find joy in knowing that our lands will be here for many generations to come. Thank you for doing this work with us.

~ Kathy Thornburgh, Board President



Engaging Future Stewards of These Lands

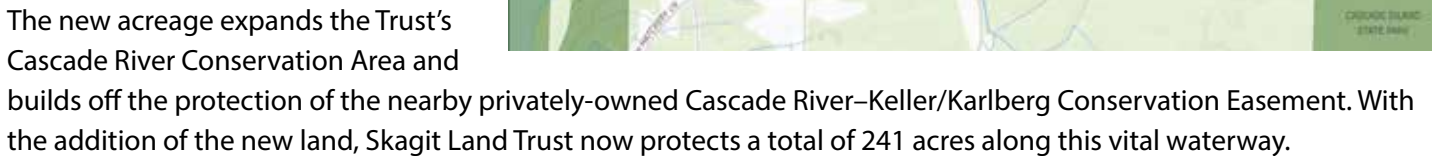
When kids in our youth programs visit a Trust property for the first time it can be much like Alice Through the Looking Glass. You watch their cautious steps into an unknown environment turn to bold exploration as they run to see what is around the corner of the trail. They are curious to learn more about the world around them.

Through monthly field trips with the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Youth program, spring visits to our Utopia Conservation Area by Sedro-Woolley second graders, and local high school students using Barney Lake to gather real data for classroom learning, we are working to connect youth with the natural landscape of the Skagit. These experiences build a sense of place for students. They also connect the dots between clean water in the river and clean water at their kitchen sink.

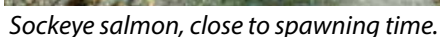
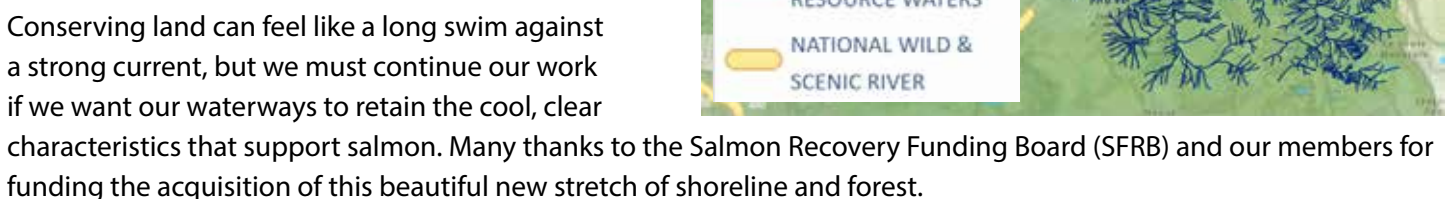
Nature has an extraordinary capacity to recharge us and connect us to a broader world. It reduces stress and anxiety and improves mental and physical health. When students help us plant trees or tug out ivy, the pride in their work shows on their faces. They also develop a sense of responsibility for the care of their environment. We see their gratitude in the thank you cards that arrive after these fieldtrips. These are just a few of the impressions we get each year. We wanted to share them to thank our members and partners for making these moments in nature possible. You are inspiring the next generation of stewards!



"It's a very fishy place – all five species of salmon and steelhead can be found here," says Conservation Project Manager Jessica Lange, who worked on the purchase. The Cascade River holds so much value for salmon that Washington State's Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) prioritizes protection and stewardship of properties like this new acquisition.



STATE AND FEDERAL CONSERVED LANDS



Cascade River, on a sunny fall day - picture courtesy of Steve Philbrick.

Thank you for all the ways you support conservation here in the Skagit!

As a member of Skagit Land Trust, you are protecting the lands, waters, and wildlife habitat that make Skagit County special. When you volunteer for the Trust, shop at a business that supports the Trust, and share our posts online, you are spreading the word about the great work we are doing together.

Donations also come to the Trust in a variety of forms, and we are grateful for each of them. Below are a few popular ways to support the work we are doing together. You can get more information on all of these options by clicking on the donate button on our website, www.skagitlandtrust.org. If you have questions about donation options, please contact Development & Outreach Director Laura Hartner at 360-428-7878 or laurah@skagitlandtrust.org.

If you have recently made, or plan to make, a gift through one of the options below, please let us know.

Sometimes we receive checks for these types of gifts with no information on the donor or if the gift is intended for a specific project. This means we are unable to direct the gift to the desired project or send the donor a thank you letter acknowledging their gift. **If you recently made a gift to Skagit Land Trust but haven't received a thank you letter, please contact us** at 360-428-7878 or info@skagitlandtrust.org.



Make a QCD from your IRA

If you are 73, you can make a **qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA account** directly to the Trust. That gift counts towards your required minimum distribution. Studies show that gifting directly from your IRA is one of the most tax beneficial ways of giving to causes you care about. While donations can't be claimed as a charitable deduction, donors can realize substantial benefits by reducing their taxable income. You can make a one-time QCD gift, set up a recurring gift, or designate the Trust as a beneficiary of your IRA. **QCDs need to be received and deposited by SLT by 12/31/24 to count for 2024 taxes.**



Donor Advised Funds

For many donors, **DAFs are an excellent way to both simplify charitable giving** and facilitate strategic philanthropic goals. A donor may be able to itemize and thus take a tax deduction by making a larger gift to a DAF in one year, from which annual gifts can be made over several years.

DAFs can be funded through gifts of cash or securities. Contributing appreciated securities provides added tax savings as there are no taxes on the capital gains. The money you give is directed over the course of several grants to the charities you recommend.



Donate Stocks or Securities

Transferring appreciated stocks is one of the most powerful and tax-savvy ways to contribute to Skagit Land Trust. If you were to cash out your appreciated stocks and make a cash gift, you would have to pay capital gains taxes. However, **if you transfer the stocks directly to the Trust, you may avoid the tax and deduct the full amount of your stock as a charitable donation on your tax return!** Donating stocks, bonds, and mutual funds can be an easy way to give to the Trust. Many of our supporters choose to take advantage of this smart way to give. Please contact the Trust for forms you can give your broker.



Make a Recurring Gift

Skagit Sustainers give automatic monthly or quarterly donations rather than making one annual membership contribution. This minimizes our mailing costs and paper use, which allows us to do even more with your dollar. Knowing a steady source of revenue will be coming in helps us stretch. We can put a down payment on a property, plan for stewardship projects to restore habitat, connect more of our community with our lands and waters, and inspire the next generation to continue to conserve and care for the magical Skagit. Gifts can be set up online or by calling us at 360-428-7878.

Make Twice The Impact for Local Conservation on Giving Tuesday

Mark your calendars for December 3rd

On Giving Tuesday (December 3rd), you can make a difference in the protection and stewardship of the Skagit. Your gift will power the work we are doing together to conserve and care for our lands, waters, and wildlife. Our natural world is one of the things that makes living in this part of Washington so special. We need your help to keep these ecosystems healthy, thriving, and preserved.



Your donation for Giving Tuesday will go twice as far, thanks to a \$30,000

challenge fund from a group of generous members! You can have a huge impact on local conservation in the coming year by making a gift during Giving Tuesday.



SLT's Volunteer and Educations Program Coordinator, Stacy Dahl, showing children a beaver skull at Barney Lake.

You can also plant the seed of a conservation ethic in the next generation

Here at Skagit Land Trust, one of our goals is to inspire the next generation to care about the natural lands of the Skagit. We do this by bringing students out to learn on Trust lands, and by supporting partners with their efforts to connect the community to the outdoors.

This year Skagit Land Trust is partnering with the Mount Vernon Parks & Enrichment Department on their "Explore Outdoors" program.

When you donate \$120 or more to Skagit Land Trust on Giving Tuesday, we'll donate a Skagit Land Trust field guide to the Explore Outdoors



program. Our goal is to have member support for 150 field guides to give to youth. This is a great opportunity to support two organizations working to connect and educate our community on the importance of natural spaces.

Want to make your Giving Tuesday gift help throughout the year? Rise to our Skagit Sustainer Challenge! We're looking for 50 members to become new Skagit Sustainers, who make a recurring monthly or quarterly gift to the Trust. Ongoing gifts from sustaining members allow the Trust to have funds on hand when the chance to save a special place arises.

Thanks to a generous match from a Trust board member, we have a dedicated \$6,000 match for all new Skagit Sustainers' gifts. Your recurring donation will be doubled for the value of your full year of giving and go twice as far to protect and care for lands in the Skagit in the year to come.



Children connecting with nature and each other at an SLT preserve on Samish Island.

Giving Tuesday is about looking for ways to support the issues you care about. Here at Skagit Land Trust, **we are grateful for your commitment to local conservation.** Thanks to your membership, critical natural lands in the Skagit will be here for generations of people and wildlife to enjoy.

Interested in making your Giving Tuesday donation through a gift of stock, IRA, or a Donor Advised Fund? Please contact Development & Outreach Director, Laura Hartner at laurah@skagitlandtrust.org.

Stewarding Barney Lake with Help from Beavers

Many of us have good meals on our minds as the holidays approach and the weather cools – and the beavers at our Barney Lake Conservation Area are no exception. In the fall, these industrious creatures prepare for winter by storing food underwater, near their lodges. While some of us may prefer holiday turkey or ham, beaver are strict vegetarians. They eat aquatic plants such as water lilies, sedges, rushes, and cattails, as well as the inner bark, twigs, and leaves of deciduous trees like willow, alder, cottonwood, aspen, maple, and birch.

Although they do not find coniferous trees as tasty, beavers do sometimes fell young conifers (as well as deciduous trees) when building dams.



A beaver pauses for a moment of rest next to its dam.



Resourceful beavers incorporate past SLT plantings into their dam at Trumpeter Creek.

Unlike some deciduous species, young conifers do not usually survive being cut by beavers. This creates a conundrum at Barney Lake, where Skagit Land Trust's (SLT's or the Trust's) stewardship team and volunteers have been planting species such as spruce and cedar to grow a natural, treed shoreline that will cool and shade the water that salmon rely on. Thus we have been installing temporary fences to protect the young conifers we replanted along the edge of Trumpeter Creek, which feeds into Barney Lake.

These plantings are part of a larger effort to support a riparian zone along Trumpeter Creek. Before the area came into the care of Skagit Land Trust, the creek had been pushed into a straight line and used as an agricultural drainage ditch. Several years ago, SLT and partners took the opportunity to re-meander the creek to restore water quality and fish habitat.

Since then, we also have replanted the area to create shade and habitat. At a recent work party in September of this year, two great teams of volunteers helped prepare fencing materials to protect our conifer plantings from those impressive beavers.

No need to worry, however – the Barney Lake beavers still have plenty of choices for snacking and dam-building. The area has some deciduous tree species like willow and dogwood, which often survive beaver activity by resprouting with multiple new stems. In fact, beaver activity in the fall often leads to greater growth the following spring as beaver-pruned trees can grow back bushier than before.



Volunteers put protective fencing around young conifers at Barney Lake.



A dogwood that has survived beaver cutting and regrown.

Beavers are a keystone species that create wetlands – an especially important ability now when we have lost an estimated 80%-90% of historical wetlands in the low-elevation areas of Puget Sound. Beaver activity enhances watershed resiliency by adding complexity to rivers and streams, storing sediment, and increasing groundwater retention. By slowing down water movement, beaver dams serve as refuges where fish such as juvenile Coho salmon can forage while saving energy. The dams create pond habitat for plants and invertebrates that attract amphibians and fish, which then attract birds and mammals.

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The Trust's stewardship team takes inspiration from the beaver and all the other wild beings who belong here in the Skagit. At Barney Lake and elsewhere, we do our best to work with beavers and other species and natural processes to create balanced ecosystems where all can thrive.

Stewardship work takes time and resources, but it is central to Skagit Land Trust's mission. We are grateful to care for this land for the benefit of all of the wildlife who live here and the people that benefit from these healthy natural resources.



Trumpeter Creek restoration plantings flourish along the creek bank with fencing in place.

Volunteer Spotlight: Phil McCloud

Like many of the members and volunteers drawn to the Skagit Land Trust (SLT) community, Phil McCloud has long seen the importance of conserving natural lands and wild areas. When he and his wife moved to Skagit County ten years ago, that focus turned to local action they could take. They became members of the Trust and attended events.

Soon Phil wanted to do more. "Kathy Thornburg helped me find a volunteer job with Skagit Land Trust that suited my talents," he says. "She got me assigned to the Facilities Committee and it has been a good fit for me."

Almost immediately, Phil was able to apply his carpentry skills to our buildings and structures because the facilities committee helps keep SLT's office in working order. During Phil's first summer volunteering with the Trust, the facilities committee replaced all the drafty office windows. This was the first big project Phil undertook for SLT, and it was much needed and appreciated by our staff as winter arrived!

Phil also brought with him 35 years of professional experience as an Agricultural Engineer for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. With a background in large wetland restoration, Phil has seen how restoring and preserving such areas has a positive effect on the environment and surrounding communities around them. This experience has helped him understand and appreciate the Skagit Land Trust's work.

"I admired the work of SLT from a distance, and getting more involved as a volunteer has deepened my appreciation," Phil says. "All of the people I've met through the Trust, whether staff or volunteers, have been great to work with." Needless to say, we feel the same way about Phil! We are extremely grateful to him for sharing his skills and experience with the Skagit Land Trust community.



Above: Phil (left), Hal Lee (center), and Paul Engels (right), installing new windows at the SLT office.

Skagit Land Trust's community is fueled by volunteers like Phil who bring their knowledge, talents, and time to support local conservation. Are you interested in becoming a volunteer? You are always welcome! Volunteering with SLT is a great way to connect with diverse lands and communities across Skagit County. You can visit our website to sign-up for a work party, or contact Stacy Dahl, our Volunteer & Education Programs Coordinator, to see how your skills can be used to further our mission of local conservation: stacyd@skagitlandtrust.org or call 360-428-7878 x212.

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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.

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www.skagitlandtrust.org • 360-428-7878

Upcoming Events

#OPT OUTSIDE:

Family Friendly Nature Walk @10am, 11/29: This event will offer some family friendly nature activities at a special SLT preserve on Samish Island.

WORK PARTIES:

March Point Heronry Annual Maintenance Visit - Rare opportunity to visit the heronry
Saturday, November 23rd @ 10am - 12pm

Planting Trees at Minkler Lake
Friday, December 6th @ 9am - 12pm

Barney Lake Conservation Area Stewardship Maintenance
Thursday, December 12th @ 9am - 12pm

Live Willow Stake Planting at Barney Lake
Friday, December 13th @ 9am - 12pm

SAVE THE DATES:

Iluminight 1/31/25

Swanrises and **Goodnight Swan Events** in January and February at our Barney Lake Conservation Area.



The lands conserved and protected by Skagit Land Trust have been inhabited and stewarded by numerous tribes and Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We recognize and respect the inherent, indigenous, and treaty rights of the Coast Salish People who have deep and abiding connections to these places. We seek to partner with local tribes as we conserve and care for these lands and waters.