



Barney Lake Conservation Area Grows Again

For the third time in the past year, our members and partners helped Skagit Land Trust add land to the Barney Lake Conservation Area. Five forested acres bordering the wetlands were bought in December, bringing the Trust's total ownership at Barney Lake to 376 acres of wetlands, farming fields, and forest.

"This property has been in the care of the same family since 1976," says Conservation Director Michael Kirshenbaum. "They were happy to know the cedar trees which form a natural buffer on the edge of the lake would be protected."



The mature forest found on the property

Barney Lake is one of the Trust's oldest and largest conservation areas. The Nookachamps River weaves through the property before reaching the Skagit River. This helps fill seasonal Barney Lake in the winter. A variety of wildlife find refuge here including Trumpeter swans, great blue herons, beaver, river otters, salmon, and a variety of other fish and migrating waterfowl. The Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board assisted with the purchase because the property also serves as Chinook salmon habitat.

Throughout 2022, the Trust shone a light on this wildlife

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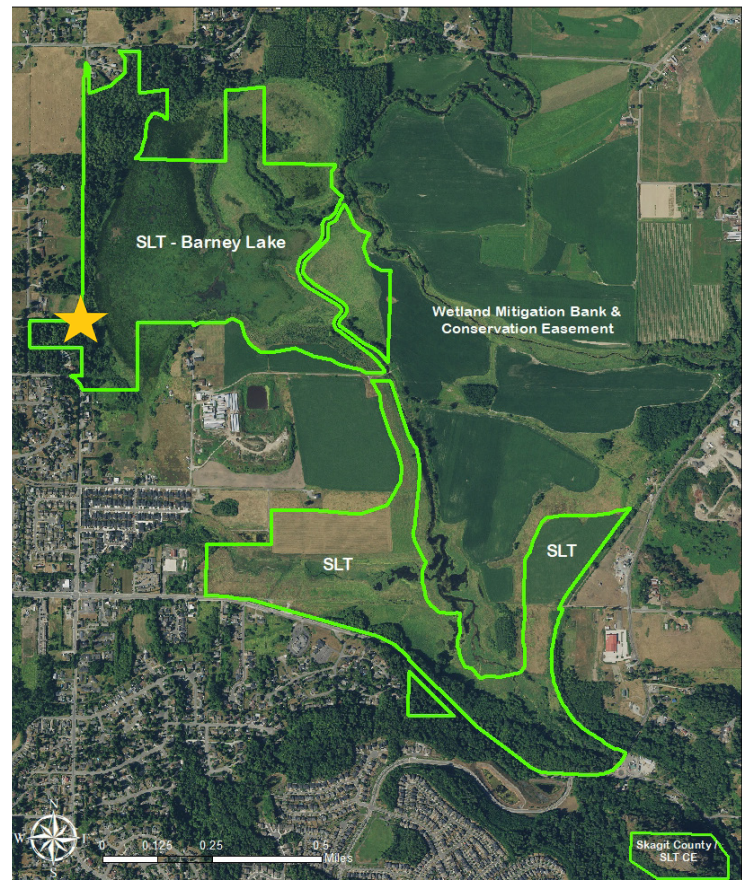


sanctuary. SLT hosted member and community walks and events, gathered feedback through online surveys, and engaged youth in learning opportunities on the land. This past fall the Trust held a fundraising social on the land to kick off a campaign to support the next 30 years of conservation at Barney Lake. Several online presentations also shared the vision for future conservation efforts on the property which lies just beyond Mount Vernon.

Members heeded the call, donating over \$160,000 to conserve land and explore wildlife compatible public access. In 2023 the Trust's Stewardship Department will review and incorporate feedback we received from Trust members and the community into Barney Lake's long term management plan.



"These plans are where we develop our vision and outline the actions we will take to get to that vision," says Stewardship Director Regina Wandler. "We are excited to incorporate thoughtful public access opportunities into this plan that keep the needs of wildlife as the priority into the future."



From top to bottom: Local youth learn about beavers on the property during a community walk; Guests tour along the Nookachamps during the fall fundraising social; Guests listen to a presentation on the last 30 years of conservation at Barney Lake and a vision for the next 30 years; participants on an early morning Trust tour to view swans; map with star showing expanded protection at Barney Lake.

Protecting A Place Loved Since Childhood

"I've been coming to Guemes Island since I was a small child," says Anne Casperson. "My husband Gary wanted to live in the San Juan Islands. I told him to check out Guemes. He toured around the Island and found this place."

That place was the southeastern point of Guemes Island, looking out over Saddlebag Island. Anne and Gary built their house in 1979 and began their life on the island. Over the years they purchased surrounding properties to keep the natural character of the point intact. After Gary passed away in 2006, Anne began thinking about a permanent way to protect her property and ensure it would remain mostly undeveloped for the wildlife and plants that lived there.



"The thing is, once these undeveloped places are gone – they are gone," says Anne.

Anne reached out to Skagit Land Trust in 2020 to explore ways to protect her land. She ultimately decided a conservation easement was the best fit for her. Conservation easements allow landowners to protect important parts of their property while still living on the land.



"Anne's conservation ethic shines through when you visit her property," says Kari Odden, Conservation Project Manager for the Trust. "The forest is well cared for. Anne has been a great steward and has kept her footprint on the land small."

The Casperson Conservation Easement protects a mature, mixed hardwood-conifer coastal forest with scattered rocky outcrops. The conservation easement includes 350+ feet of rocky shoreline, including a small, rocky pocket beach. It also protects open space on this prominent marine point, part of the viewshed from Guemes and Levant Channels, the Cascade Marine Water Trail, and Saddlebag Island State Park.

"I'm grateful that the conservation easement process is available for people who want to protect their land," says Anne. "Every little bit we can do to protect land helps. The more trees, wild spaces, and habitat we can preserve the better off we're all going to be."

If you would like to learn more about doing a conservation easement for your own property, please reach out to Conservation Director Michael Kirshenbaum, michaelk@skagitlandtrust.org, or call 360-428-7878.

*From top to bottom:
The view from
Casperson Point;
Stewardship Director
Regina Wandler and
Conservation Project
Manager Kari Odden
meet up with Anne
onsite; Casperson Point
is a well-known scenic
view from the water.*



Looking to the Next 100 Years on Samish Island



For thousands of years the Coast Salish people approached Samish Island through a wide slough that connected two bays and was surrounded by tidal marsh. The slough was named S7amésh Seqelích (Return to the Bay) by the Samish Indian Nation. In the 1930's Skagit County put fill across the last quarter mile of marsh to improve a dirt road on the Alice Bay (east) shoreline. A farmer diked his land to the west on Padilla Bay. And since then, Samish Island has been connected to the mainland by an isthmus.

For the past 25 years Skagit Land Trust (the Trust) has been working to conserve the land and waters at the entrance to Samish Island. We began with landowners donating conservation easements on forested uplands. We purchased the Samish Flower Farm in 2019 and the Samish Island Entrance Property in 2021, which

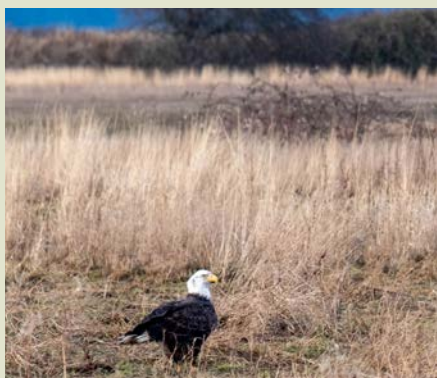
together form the Samish Island Conservation Area. In December, the Trust bought 28 adjacent acres. This spring, the Trust hopes to buy another 45 acres which will bring the conserved lands at the entrance of Samish Island to 170 acres.

Thanks to a potential partner and future funding opportunities, the Trust only needs to raise another \$105,000 for these recent acquisitions. Due to generous donors, \$65,000 of that has already been donated. We are only \$40,000 away from reaching our goal that will support the purchase and stewardship of these expansive properties on the approach to Samish Island. Our generous members are the reason we can stretch to purchases properties like these that will benefit all generations of people and wildlife, forever.

The two new property additions feature nearly a mile of shoreline on Padilla and Alice Bays. The tidelands outside the dikes include some salt marsh on Alice Bay. This gives us a glimpse of the habitat, now rare, that once made up most of the approach to the Island. The land that was created between the dikes has been farmed with various crops and grasses and is terrific bird habitat. It also serves as the only overland access to Samish Island.



Salt marsh on Alice Bay.



The dynamic nature of this isthmus environment was on full view during king tides coupled with low barometric pressure in December. The private dike on the Alice Bay side of the new property overtopped, flooding the county road to the island which lies below sea level, and severely eroding the dike. The event served as a reminder that the marine environment is powerful. Emergency repairs on this dike had historically been done by the county to protect the road, however they said they could no longer take on a flood control role.

A multitude of wildlife use the property for feeding and shelter. Bald eagles, great blue herons, and migrating Brandt ducks are a few of the many species that use this land.



Skagit Land Trust stepped in to arrange and pay for the emergency repairs on the area at risk of breaching due to the extreme situation. In other areas of overtopping, volunteers sandbagged low spots. We are grateful for the help of local contractors led by Arnie Svendsen Trucking Inc, Island residents, our members and volunteers including Steve Hopley who took a leadership role, and Dike District 5.

The event served as a reminder that the marine environment is powerful. Climate change will also increasingly impact infrastructure. Ongoing protection of a public road built below sea level is beyond the Trust's role. Those who live, work on, and visit Samish Island likely don't want to revert to the days when people timed their travel by the tide levels. Thus, the Alice Bay dike, meant to protect a buggy road almost 100 years ago, will need a good deal of further attention from all stakeholders working together to find solutions for the next 100 years. Recent, productive conversations with partners and the community, make us hopeful this can happen.



King tides showed the age of the private dike. Trust staff met with community partners to begin talks on solutions to the aged dike.

Conservation ownership of these lands provides significant benefit to the community. Skagit Land Trust has extinguished development rights behind these dikes. Skagit Land Trust's growing conservation work on Samish Island has only been possible with the help of Trust members and volunteers, along with support from numerous partners including Coast Salish tribes such as the Samish Indian Nation, former landowners such as the Squires and Murphy families, conservation easement landowners, The Conservation Fund, other nonprofits, as well as local, state, and federal grant partners. Support from this extended community has played an important part in the conservation journey of the entrance to Samish Island. That journey is entering a new phase.

Working with local partners, such as the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Samish Indian Nation, WA Dept of Fish & Wildlife, and Ducks Unlimited the Trust is excited to explore potential marine habitat restoration of the site's historic tidal inlet and salt marsh habitat. We are currently doing site studies and evaluating restoration potential while discussing short-term and longer-term partners to achieve a sustainable vision for all who rely on, or treasure, this beautiful land. The Trust hopes to share more information about these efforts later this year.

Only \$40,000 to go to protect more of the Samish Island Entrance!

Help protect and steward the beautiful approach to Samish Island. Please consider making a special gift today.

You can send a check or make a gift online - note that your gift is for Samish Island.

Join us for a tour of the property during the dates listed below. Come see what you helping to conserve for all generations of people and wildlife. RSVP online today.

March 4th at 10am

March 11th at 1pm

March 18th at 10am

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SKAGIT LAND TRUST
Saving Land for Tomorrow

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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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Join Us For An Upcoming Event!

Learn more & RSVP Online - www.skagitlandtrust.org

March 3 — Marblemount Planting Party — 10am-2pm

March 4 — Hurn Field Planting Party — 10am-2pm

March 4 — Samish Island Property Tour — 10am-11:30am

March 8 — Annual Meeting — 5:30-7pm

Online gathering with presentation on March Point & Great Blue Herons

March 10 — Skagit River Kahn Planting Party — 10am-2pm

March 11 — Samish Island Property Tour — 1pm-2:30pm

March 17 - Barney Lake Planting Party - 9am-1pm

March 17 - Suiattle River Planting Party - 10am-3pm

March 18 - Day Creek Planting Party - 10am-2pm

March 18 — Samish Island Property Tour — 10am-11:30am

April 20 — SLT Reads Saving Tarboo Creek — 5:30-7pm

****Save the Date for our NEW Skagit Summer Social Fundraiser — June 15th**
More information to come soon about this festive celebration on Lands We Love**

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.