

SKAGIT UPDATE

NEWSLETTER OF THE **S**KAGIT LAND **T**RUST

SUMMER 2014

Natural Expansion Trust Adds Land to Four More Conservation Areas

Utopia - A place for fish, frogs and farming

In May the Skagit Land Trust added the 43-acre Bishop property (picture above) to our Utopia Conservation Area on the Skagit River

east of Sedro-Woolley. We'll plant native trees along the river to enhance fish habitat and we will maintain pasture land for farming. Utopia funding and restoration partners include the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Skagit Watershed Council, Seattle City Light, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Puget Sound Energy.

FAR RIGHT Board and Stewardship Committee members search for amphibian egg masses in the wetlands at Utopia.





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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

I was cc'ed on this email the other day;

Michael and Regina,

I can't stop thinking about what a wonderful day yesterday was. When we did the big climb up towards USFS property and paused to enjoy that magnificent grove of old-growth trees, all that exertion was well worth it. And to have discovered three bobcat lay-downs, come upon Ms. Ruffed Grouse and her little ones, and bonded with Michael's fresh bear scat instruction (three times!), well, what can I say. Thank you.

Rick

Now if that doesn't make you want to jump up from behind your desk, I don't know what does! We love our volunteers. Our work and our days are enriched by them. So I am delighted when I hear how they also enjoy the work and the people. We can't promise Michael's bear scat instruction on every outing, but it is common to hear how teams bonded in the field over an adventure or just satisfying work, well done.

This past month I had the pleasure of working at our Cumberland Creek Conservation Area to open up trails alongside all of Emerson High School







on a glorious spring day. They chopped and cut and pulled and chatted and laughed - in at least two languages! The forest was abuzz with youthful joy. Land Steward Jim Johnson and other adult volunteers wore big smiles watching people of all ages not only working together, but truly enjoying the day and each other's company.

Recently I had the privilege of helping to orient four "newish" board members to the Trust -Warren Walz, Anne Winkes, Hal Lee and Carolyn Gastellum. Our board members work hard for 7-12 hours a month, for three to nine year stints (and then there is Keith Wiggers - let's just say, forever), for free. They are clairvoyant, generous, fun, astute, dedicated, honest, and they care deeply about this special part of the world. They care deeply about staff, members, partners and other volunteers. I know we don't thank them enough, but I hope they understand their huge impact. They are our foundation.

Volunteers - <u>thank you</u>. What you do for us and for the land is priceless. If <u>you</u> would like to volunteer for the Trust, give us a call. We'll find the perfect place for you, with or without the bear scat option.

Molly

"New" board members above, from top: Anne Winkes, Hal Lee and Warren Walz



Cascade River - keeping it wild!

This purchase in January joins a Trust - owned property to the beautiful Keller - Karlberg conservation easement on the Cascade River. The property purchase was made possible by funds from Washington State's Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Seattle City Light match.

Hurn Field - The field that keeps on growing in size and popularity. Not only did we add 10.5 acres to this conservation area in March but Cascadia Weekly readers voted it the best stop on the gateway of the North Cascades Highway. The Hurn Field Conservation Area now encompasses 111 acres and connects to other protected lands serving as a sanctuary for fish, elk, songbirds and other wildlife.

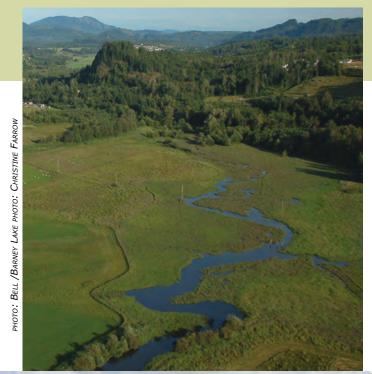
PHOTO: HURN FIELD JOHN SCURLOCK



Bell - Barney Lake grows to 367 acres.

Your support and grants from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Martin Miller Fund of Seattle Audubon, The Skagit Community Foundation and the Norcliffe Foundation all have pulled together to add this spectacular property to our Barney Lake Conservation Area. We can't thank you enough! **Come tour the Bell property June 21st.**

RSVP: at 360-428-7878.





Jane Zillig, Land Specialist, and Maya Cough-Schulze, Americorps 2013-14, found the fish and wildlife habitat on the Cascade River property to be in excellent condition.

Citizen Scientists Help us Understand Amphibians and Herons

by Isabel Beavers, Americorps Volunteer Coordinator

It has been a busy spring at Skagit Land Trust with two monitoring programs.

Amphibian Monitoring

During March, April and June teams of 3 to 5 volunteers headed out to seven Skagit Land Trust conservation areas in search of amphibians and their eggs. Most egg masses can be found in shallow water, attached to small sticks, or other vegetation (braces) while some float along the top of the water. Northwestern Salamander, Red Legged Frog, Pacific Tree Frog and Long-Toed Salamander are among the more common species found. The data is shared with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and contributes to the larger picture of amphibian range and dispersal throughout Washington. Because amphibians are sensitive to environmental pollutants, their abundance in Skagit Valley is an indicator of ecosystem health and the ecological integrity of Trust properties.

Heron Nest Count and Breeding Season Behavior Monitoring

The Trust's March Point Conservation Area and the Samish Island - Squires Conservation Easement are home to two of the largest heronries on the west coast. In December, the annual heron nest count kicked off the heron monitoring season. During March through July, dedicated groups of volunteers visited the two heron colonies weekly to observe the nesting and breeding-season behavior of the birds. The Trust heron monitoring program employs a citizenscience protocol, developed by biologist Ann Eissinger, as part of a long-term monitoring effort throughout Western Washington. Heron colonies fluctuate naturally, but protection and monitoring

by the Trust and others, year after year, can inform and educate interested groups in the patterns of Great Blue Heron distribution and habitat needs. This provides data critical to the conservation of the herons. *Thank you volunteer monitors!*





TOP: Amphibian monitors at Barney Lake use poles to probe the ground before they make a step. LEFT: The Trust's Festival of Frogs drew kids from Children of The Valley, local neighbors and Girl and Boy Scouts.

This Festival was Frog-tastic!

The Festival of Frogs was an educational amphibian day in April. The Trust hosted the festival on its Utopia Conservation Area with partners the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and North Cascades Institute. About 100 kids and adults attended and learned about amphibian monitoring, made origami frogs, viewed amphibian egg masses and learned about amphibian and salmon habitat. As a bonus, they learned how to make music with grass!

Check out Eye on the Heronry online



We are loving watching herons on work breaks and you can too! Thanks to a project initiated in 2006 with the help of a Leadership Skagit Team, thousands of people enjoy and learn from a remote heron "cam". During nesting season from March to August the heron cam beams live images from the Trust's March Point Herony to Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Interpretive Center. Last year, when the initial project camera's functionality diminished, after seven successful years, grants from the D.V. and Ida J. McEachern Charitable Trust, Shell Puget Sound Refinery, The Mountaineers Foundation, The Nysether Family Foundation and help from several volunteers enabled Skagit Land Trust to complete necessary upgrades to this wildlife camera system. It now continues to beam remote images of nesting behaviors in the West Coast's largest heron colony to the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center and online at padillabay.gov/education_heron.html and skagitlandtrust.org. Check it out!

Annual Auction a Success



The 8th Annual Have Fun, Save Land Auction & Dinner on March 1st raised \$109,000 (net) for local land conservation. <u>Thank you</u> to

the 270 guests, hundreds of business & individual donors and the many volunteers that helped make this a successful evening. Save the date for our next auction at the St. Joseph

Center on March 7, 2015. Interested in helping make this a fantastic evening in support of Skagit's natural lands? Contact Development Director Lynne Jordan at (360) 428-7878 or lynnej@skagitlandtrust.org.

Mark you calendar for March 7th, 2015!



Help us connect you to our natural Skagit

How well do you know the mission of Skagit Land Trust? Do you feel informed about

land conservation in Skagit County? Do you know others who would like to get involved? We are conducting a member engagement survey and value your input. This short survey will take just 10 minutes of your time and can be completed online at skagitlandtrust.org or you can request a copy be mailed to you by calling (360) 428-7878. The survey will also be mailed to donors who make a donation between June and December of 2014. Thanks in advance!

Take our Member Engagement Survey Visit skagitlandtrust.org or call (360) 428-7878 to request a copy by mail.

Leave it to Nature, Forever

Learn how a gift through your estate will preserve Skagit's wildlife habitat and green places for generations to come. View Skagit Land Trust's Guide to Planned Giving online at skagitlandtrust.org or contact Executive Director Molly Doran at (360) 428-7878 or mollyd@skagitlandtrust.org to request a brochure of ways you can give a Legacy gift.



What is GIS?

GIS is short for Geographic Information System. This is a computer software tool that combines database and mapping technologies. It's 2/3rds Information Systems (data and other information) and 1/3rd Maps. Basically it's asking questions about some phenomena of the landscape, using a computer to do an analysis, and as needed mapping the results

• How is GIS Changing Land Conservation?

We are taking lots of science, transforming the way the information is used and presented, and transferring it to people by way of maps and other means. This helps us make more informed decisions. More information about a specific place is getting out to others. In the past a lay person would have to read a 300 page document to get that same information. Now, we can make that information more accessible. However, the caveat is that we (the technicians) still need to read the 300-page document so we know what the data means.



The Conservation Strategy Working Group answers some questions about GIS: (LEFT TO RIGHT: Kari Odden, GIS Specialist / Conservation Planner; Sara Young, board member; Brenda Cunningham, board member; Martha Bray, Conservation Director.

• How Does Skagit Land Trust Use GIS?

We use GIS in our Conservation Strategy, which is how we prioritize which types of land are most at risk and in need of protection. GIS helps us focus our efforts where we can do the most good and evaluate potential projects.

• What Are Some of the Biggest Surprises?

GIS is excellent for showing big trends and putting it in picture form. Plus it is up datable. However the quality and depth of information is not consistent, especially at smaller scales. A lot more can be done from the computer than a decade ago, but ultimately we still need to put on the gum boots and do some ground truthing.



Anonymous

Thank you to the 250+ donors and partners who helped us purchase the beautiful Bell Property and expand the natural legacy of the Barney Lake Conservation Area for all generations.

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MISSION STATEMENT:

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.

SAVING LAND FOR TOMORROW

Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 21st

Bell Property Tour, 10am - 11:30am, RSVP to Diane at 360-428-7878 or dianeb@skagitlandtrust.org.

Saturday, July 26th

Annual Members Picnic & Tours, Guemes Island (Check our website for details)

SAVE THE DATE - Thursday, November 13th Conservation Social: *Images of the Skagit* at the Museum of Northwest Art La Conner, 5 – 7PM

Check our website for upcoming & volunteer events.

Forty-five Emerson High School students and teachers cleared the trails at our Cumberland Conservation Area on Arbor Day - Thank You!



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