



Winter 2014

SKAGIT UPDATE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT LAND TRUST

Preserving and Expanding the Natural Legacy of Barney Lake

Skagit Land Trust seeks community support to protect a hidden jewel

On the heels of a successful campaign to protect Barney Lake, an opportunity has arisen to expand protection in the area by adding an adjacent property to our Barney Lake Conservation Area. The Trust has been presented with an immediate opportunity to purchase the 16-acre "Bell Property" that lies at the NW side of the intersection of Highway 9 and College Way across the road from Big Rock. This property

provides innumerable natural area benefits for our community and protects critical wildlife habitat. The Bell Property is where Nookachamps Creek enters the broad valley and wetland system that runs through Barney Lake and a series of lakes and sloughs on its way to the Skagit River. The mature 80-150 yr. old woodlands found on the



Skagit Land Trust is working to protect the Bell Property. We have \$100,000 left to raise by April 1st!

property are one of the few remaining

forest remnants in the Barney Lake area. The creek flows through a deep ravine and provides high quality sheltered forest and creek habitat for many species of birds, amphibians and fish. Skagit County's future Centennial Trail will border this property.

The Trust has until April 2014 to raise the necessary funds to acquire, protect and restore this property. Lead gifts from the Clarence Stewart Fund for the Environment and Charitable Programs at the Skagit Community Foundation the Seattle Audubon Martin Miller Fund, the Norcliffe Foundation, Skagit

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Managing Editor: Diane Bednarz
Editor: Molly Doran

Illustrations by Brenda Cunningham

Skagit Land Trust
PO Box 1017, 1020 South Third Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
voice: 360•428•7878
email: dianeb@skagitlandtrust.org
website: www.skagitlandtrust.org

From the President

Dear Members,

"...Grey is the price of neighboring with eagles, of knowing a mountain's vast presence, seen or unseen."

Denise Levertov



This classic image of winter in the northwest evokes rainy days of coffee drinking and book reading indoors. One of many "indoor" projects at the Trust is to write a new strategic plan for the organization. Our current plan was approved in 2008 and is in need of an update in 2014.

The existing plan has 7 large organizational goals, each with several strategies and action steps aimed at achieving those goals. I am pleased and proud to report that the Trust has done very well with implementing this plan. This took a lot of work on the part of staff and the board of directors, with the generous support of volunteers and members.

We have begun work on the new Strategic Plan, gathering input from staff, board members and major volunteers. We welcome comments from all our members. Specifically, we would like to know what you think the Trust does, and how it impacts your life. Do you know who our partners are? And do you know of others we should be partnering with? How did you learn about the Trust? How can we communicate better with you? And how can we reach more members of our community? Please consider these questions and let us know what you think.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Cunningham".

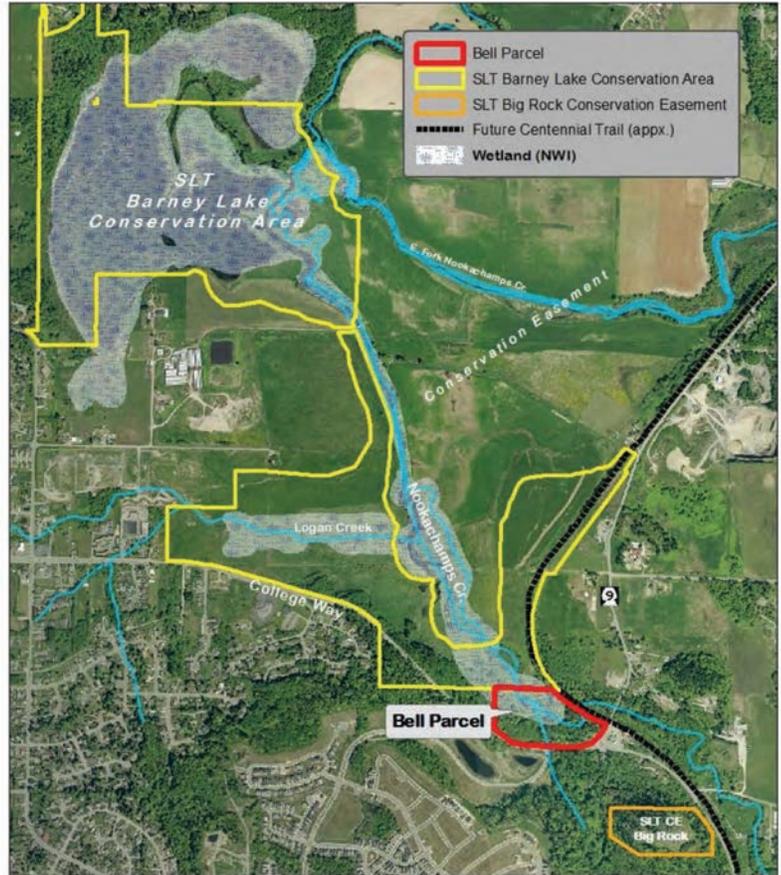
Brenda Cunningham,
Board of Directors, President



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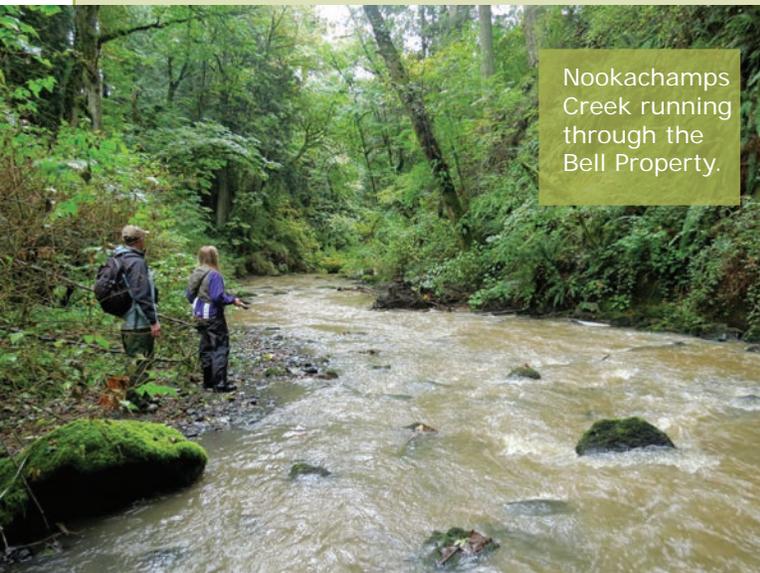
Audubon, several private donors and a pending wetlands grant have gotten us half way to our \$250,000 goal. We have **\$100,000 left to raise by April 1st!**

Skagit Land Trust will manage and permanently protect the Bell Property as part of the Barney Lake Conservation Area and development of the property will be eliminated. If Skagit Land Trust is successful in safeguarding the Bell Property, protected lands in the area conserved by the Trust and other conservation partners will comprise 900+ acres of contiguous land protection on the edge of Mount Vernon. By providing multiple conservation benefits including wildlife habitat protection and restoration, agricultural land conservation, low impact public access and natural floodwater storage, the Barney Lake area provides a model project involving public and private partners as well as landowners and citizens sharing scarce resources to create a vibrant, healthy and ecologically sustainable community.



How You Can Help:

- Contribute by mail to Skagit Land Trust, PO Box 1017, Mount Vernon, WA 98273, by calling (360) 428-7878, or online at skagitlandtrust.org. Be sure to let us know your gift is for the "Bell Property".
- Attend our Annual Auction & Dinner on March 1- all contributions made during the evening's "Raise Your Hand to Save Land" will go directly to the Bell Property project.
- Volunteer for field events to help restore and steward this property and other nearby properties – sign up for our e-newsletter online to receive event alerts or contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@skagitlandtrust.org.



Visit the Bell Property!

Skagit Land Trust will host two tours of this hidden forest ravine on Saturday, March 15th, 2014. Please note: to see the entire property visitors must be able to navigate muddy, steep, and uneven terrain.

Tour 1: Sat, March 15 10am – 12pm

Tour 2: Sat, March 15 1pm – 3pm

RSVP today as space is limited. Contact Lynne Jordan at lynnej@skagitlandtrust.org or (360) 428-7878 and provide your email address and/or phone number for confirmation.

Three Wildlife Conservation Areas Expanded

Skagit Land Trust recently acquired three properties to expand Skagit River shoreline, wetland, and forest protection. Funds raised at the Trust's 2013 Auction during the evening's "Raise Your Hand to Save Land" helped purchase 10 acres to expand Skagit Land Trust's 139-acre Minkler Lake Conservation Area, just west of Lyman. Minkler Lake is a mile-long freshwater pond, which long ago was an oxbow of the Skagit River. The quiet backwaters are accessible to Skagit River salmon through Childs Creek and numerous waterfowl and amphibians inhabit the property.

This past fall an inholding was also added to the Trust's 205-acre Cumberland Creek Conservation Area near Day Creek. This protection was assisted by the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), other public funds, and generous private citizens who worked with us over many years to make sure the property was conserved. Cottonwoods,

alders and big-leaf maples line the Skagit River here and provide nutrients to the water, as well as homes for many species of birds and amphibians. Cumberland Creek provides very important salmon habitat and hosts two miles of trails and a self-lead interpretive walk guide designed by students from Mount Vernon's Emerson High School.

The Cumberland Creek Conservation Area has also been the focus of planning for a significant wildlife habitat improvement project, working with multiple partners to restore more than 4,000 feet of high quality spawning habitat for endangered salmonids and other species.

A third conservation acquisition expanded the Trust's 87-acre Hurn Field Conservation Area when 5.5 acres were added in September, again with funding from SRFB and assistance from Seattle City Light. This popular wildlife viewing pullout on Highway 20 west of Concrete allows people to appreciate Hurn Field's important fish and wildlife habitat. The Trust is excited to further Skagit River shoreline protection and will continue to work with partners and volunteers to restore the natural values of these properties for the benefit of wildlife and people for many generations to come.



above: These hardy volunteers spent the day "sawing" ivy at Cumberland Creek.



above: Cumberland Creek Conservation Area land steward Jim Johnson with Trust staff Michael Kirshenbaum & Jane Zillig

Have Fun, Save Land 8th Annual Auction & Dinner Saturday, March 1, 2014 5-9pm - St. Joseph Center

Join us at our liveliest fundraiser of the year with hundreds of items and experiences to bid on, appetizers by Gere-A-Deli and dinner by Max Dales, and many friends to mingle with! All proceeds will support Skagit land conservation and stewardship. Interested in donating an item or experience for inclusion in the auction? There's still time before our January 24 deadline. We are also actively seeking volunteers to help with activities prior to and during this event. For more information, contact Auction Director Mary Mae Hardt at (360) 428-7878 or marymae@skagitlandtrust.org.

Tickets will go on sale in late January and more information about the evening and our generous auction supporters is available online at skagitlandtrust.org. This annual auction & dinner would not be possible without the many businesses and individuals who donate goods, services, volunteer time, and financial support – thank you!





Please join us for our 22nd Annual Member Meeting

Friday, March 28, 2014

Hillcrest Park Lodge

1717 South 13th Street, Mount Vernon

6:00 - 7:00pm: Social hour, appetizers, refreshments

7:00 - 7:45pm: Year in review, board member elections and updates, by-law and articles of incorporation revisions and awards

7:45 - 8:30pm: "Comedy, Economics, and Climate Change"
Guest Speaker: Stand-up Economist Yoram Bauman

Stand-up Economist Yoram Bauman will present some comedy about economics and politics and then make his case for a BC-style revenue-neutral carbon tax as a way to tackle climate change and reform our tax system. Yoram performs regularly at colleges and corporate events and has appeared in TIME Magazine and on PBS and NPR, and is the co-author of the two-volume *Cartoon Introduction to Economics*. He is a fellow at Sightline Institute in Seattle and has a BA in mathematics from Reed College and a PhD in economics from the University of Washington. His website is www.standupeconomist.com.



Sights, Sounds and Stewardship

by Michael Kirshenbaum

Though Skagit Land Trust looks to the future as we revise our Conservation Strategy for the next decade, it's easy to forget about the changed ground we're standing upon. Discussion and dreaming often focus on the next acquisition that will help make this place we all love a little better, a little more protected. Forward momentum is how the land trust community has been able to pursue the vision that has led to the protection of over 6,000 very special acres in Skagit County. But if we can slow down for a minute, and look back for a second at our wonderful conservation areas, we see that the hard work and dedication of land stewards, volunteers, donors, members, staff and many others has changed our sense of place right under our feet, and for the better.

Take a look at the 110-acre Day Creek-Kosbab Conservation Area upon acquisition in 2003 and you'll see a pattern of geometric potato fields hard upon the salmon-rich waters of the Skagit; look again in 2013 and you'll see a riot of conifers, willows and nary a straight line on the property—helped along by industrious beavers and tromping elk. A few years ago, only a select few knew the way to the top of Guemes Mountain, or what could have become Guemes Mountain Estates. Now, a beloved trail ushers thousands a year to one of the best views in Skagit County, protected forever. And it's not just what we do, but what we prevent from happening: the forests of Cumberland Creek, Hurn Field, Samish-Ochs, Grandy Creek – and many others – thrive, mature and are watchfully protected from poachers. Our marked boundaries and green-and-white land trust signs not only stake a conservation claim on a property, but let people know these beloved lands are being cared for.

As a result, how many children and adults walk land trust property on trails, stumble along a gravel bar, or take in the stirring view of open meadows, wetlands and forests as they drive by? Let's keep dreaming forward, but also take a look back every so often and remember that what is, might not have been.



Leave It to Nature, Forever

Donor Profile: Robert Keller and Pat Karlberg

Bob and Pat donated a conservation easement to Skagit Land Trust on their 35+ acre property east of Marblemount, preserving forestland, several creeks and 3,900 feet of Cascade River shoreline. This beautiful property is protected from subdivision and commercial logging and provides important wildlife and salmon habitat. Bob and Pat have also included the Trust in their estate plans to ensure this special place will be cared for in perpetuity.

Why is local land conservation important?

I (Bob) grew up near Mount Rainer and had an early interest in mountaineering. Being out in nature at its most natural state is exhilarating and I think it is important to preserve all types of natural lands. We have also seen the effects of unsustainable forest practices here in the Northwest and have lived in other countries that are able to harvest timber with minimal impact.



Tell us about your Cascade River property?

In the 1970s, we sought recreational property near our Bellingham home. We jumped at an opportunity to buy a parcel along the Cascade River that had been an active logging site and have since added acreage to this property as opportunities became available. This property with one cabin is actively used year-round for recreation and enjoyment by family, friends, and community members. For 40 years, we've observed a variety of wildlife and natural processes—deer, coyote, bear, grouse, eagles and other birds are frequent visitors; the forest steadily recovers, and the river carves its own fluid way over time.

What motivated you to place protection measures on this special place?

Four reasons led us to permanently protect this property through Skagit Land Trust:

- 1) I (Bob) served on the Whatcom Land Trust board for 19 years. Working with landowners in exploring conservation options for their land made me think we should do the same with our property and set an example consistent with the mission we believe in.
- 2) Philosophically, we believe that no one "owns" land. We humans are just caretakers of a place that also belongs to the wildlife, the trees, and the river. Property ownership provides legal recognition of who is responsible for the land. We have spent many years caring for this land and doing our part to help restore it to as natural a state as possible. Land trusts describe this as earth stewardship.
- 3) Between us, we have 5 children and 7 grandchildren. We want our family to enjoy this place knowing that it is protected without the complications that might arise in passing on land to the next generation.
- 4) Finally, we have a positive opinion of the Skagit Land Trust staff and volunteers and feel confident that our land will be protected with integrity.

To learn more about planned giving, contact Executive Director Molly Doran at (360) 428-7878 or visit skagitlandtrust.org. If you have already included Skagit Land Trust in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can thank you for your generosity.



right: Conservation Easement donors and landowners Bob Keller and Pat Karlberg on the banks of their Cascade River property.



Welcome Isabel our new Americorp Intern

During my years as an undergraduate at the University of Vermont I cultivated a love for conservation born out of a life-long infatuation with the outdoors. This obsession with the mountainous parts of the world has taken me from Massachusetts, to Vermont, New Zealand, Montana and finally to the Skagit Valley. I am fascinated by natural history, local ecology and the sense of place connected with natural spaces. To me, conservation is an important way to preserve our natural systems, and also a way for people to connect to each other and to their environment. I am so excited to explore this bountiful landscape and get to know the people who live, work, and play here!



Photo by Bill Pfeifer

Skagit Land Trust Participating in Elk Working Group

Skagit Land Trust was invited recently by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) to serve on the North Cascades Elk Working Group, which is advising the agency on future management of the valley's growing elk population. The Trust has a deep connection to the herd, mostly as a result of the popular Hurn Field elk viewing area on State Route 20 west of Concrete. The herd is estimated to be between 1,000 – 1,500 animals, a significant increase in recent years and an accomplishment in restoring a self-sustaining elk population to the Skagit ecosystem. The increase in both elk and people in the valley has raised some long-term management issues for WDFW, however, and the Trust is pleased to be able to work in collaboration with public agencies, tribal nations, and fellow citizens to provide advice for the upcoming new herd management plan. The most visible issue has been the conflict between rural landowners and elk, because of damage to fences, crops and other agricultural pursuits. Vehicle collisions with elk along State Route 20 are also a major concern. At the same time, elk provide natural and cultural resources to tribal members, residents and visitors. And many of us love seeing elk close to home. To address the various issues, the Elk Working Group is focusing on four areas: science & population research; public safety; forage enhancement; and private-land damage. Additional wildlife viewing opportunities are also being considered. The Elk Working Group will be meeting through 2014, with a final elk management plan expected to be issued by WDFW near the end of next year.



Photo by Bill Pfeifer



PO Box 1017
1020 S Third Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
www.skagitlandtrust.org



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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, February 22nd
Tree planting at Lyman Slough

Saturday, March 1st
8th Annual Auction & Dinner, *Have Fun-Save Land*
St. Joseph Center, 5-9pm

Saturday, March 8th
Tentative Amphibian Monitoring Training

Sunday, March 9th
Tree planting at Minkler Lake

Sunday, March 15th
Bell property tour

Friday, March 28th
Annual Members Meeting
Hillcrest Park Lodge, 6 - 8:30pm

Saturday, April 12th
Amphibian Day at Utopia property

To find out about upcoming stewardship field volunteer opportunities email Regina Wandler at reginaw@skagitlandtrust.org or check our website www.skagitlandtrust.org.



Photo: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group



Photo: SFEG