



Birch Bay Tidelands – Photograph by Chris Moench

Trust Granted Birch Bay Tidelands

By Robyn duPré

Mrs. Jessie Vail of Mt. Vernon has generously donated a Birch Bay tideland parcel to the *Land Trust*. While the parcel is small, the *Trust* is hopeful that this donation can be used to add momentum to efforts to gain other tidelands in Birch Bay. In order to promote public ownership of our fragile tidal areas, the *Land Trust* will transfer the recently received donated parcel to Whatcom County Parks for inclusion in a nearby County held intertidal area.

Because of their aesthetic, recreation and habitat values, shorelines and intertidal areas figured prominently in the county's Natural Heritage Plan. These fragile areas are under increasing threat from human activity. Public ownership of these lands will help to ensure consistent management. Our innovative partnership with Whatcom County places the *Land Trust* in an ideal position to accept donations like Mrs. Vail's and then work with the county to ensure sound stewardship of these lands into the future. The *Land Trust* wishes to thank Mrs. Vail for her gift and for her concern for Whatcom County's unique natural heritage.

The Renius Easement Wildlife Habitat and Open Space

By Chris Moench

We are pleased to announce that Vern and Carol Renius have granted a conservation easement to the *Land Trust* on their six acres of woodland located west of Chuckanut Drive southwest of its intersection with Renius Road.

The property is currently home to Vern and Carol who have spent the last several years constructing a log house embraced by the land's second growth Douglas firs. Originally containing three lots, each with its own building site, the conservation easement consolidates the three lots into one and assures that no additional buildings will be constructed.

The primary focus of the conservation easement is protection of a steep sided wooded ravine on the south side of the property. This ravine forms an important corridor for wildlife movement from Chuckanut Mountain through developed areas along Chuckanut Drive to Chuckanut Bay. While this easement protects only a short stretch of the ravine, the Renius' and the Trust's Board of Directors hope that this action will inspire adjacent property owners to take similar steps.

Our hats are off to Vern and Carol for their farsighted and generous gift!!!



*Vern and Carol Renius with their forest
Photograph by Chris Moench*

President's Message

By Chris Moench

It has been a dramatic year of change for Whatcom County and for the *Trust*. The last two elections swept less conservation minded politicians into office; coupled with tight government budgets on the local and state levels the possibility of government purchase of natural areas and park lands is very unlikely.

Though we are concerned the new political wind will leave a scar on our environment, we are striving to fulfill the Natural Heritage Plan which was created by the good work of citizens in earlier years. Working toward that goal, our Conservation Coordinator Robyn duPré has contacted hundreds of citizens and land owners. She has several important conservation projects near fruition. Likewise, our Lummi Island Conservation Coordinator, Joe Arnett, is making rapid strides toward conservation of some of the best loved places on the Island.

That this past year hasn't produced any *big deals* speaks of our changing role in conservation work. There is an inevitable *come down* from the thrill of engaging and completing massive projects like the 1993 Whatcom County Land Trade which involved thousands of acres, half a dozen agencies, three governments and a major corporation; we on the board realize such thrills are rare. We are renewing our dedication to helping individual land owners achieve their conservation goals. In that vein we are happy to report the Renius Conservation Easement in this newsletter.

Increasingly our work is directed toward stewardship education for the community. Land stewardship has no political stripe and knows no class or economic status. Stewardship thrives where there is open communication, good will and cooperation among all concerned. Robyn and Joe's work is invaluable in this regard, as was the October workshop and field trip to the Canyon Lake Creek old growth forest led by James Agee. On January 6th in Bellingham, and January 7th in Deming the *Trust* is co-sponsoring two performances of the play *In the Heart of the Wood*. We hope the play will engender informed and sensitive dialogue among all those concerned with forest and logging issues. I encourage *Trust* members to get tickets early.

Also in this issue you'll find an opportunity to purchase property covered by a conservation easement. Hugh and Judy Ansley are leaving their beloved land at the confluence of the North and Middle Forks of the Nooksack River. While we are sad to see the Ansleys go, we are eager to help them find new stewards for their 14 acres of Elk habitat.

We wish Hugh and Judy our best as they take up new residence in South Carolina. They are visionaries whose love of the land and dedication to community will be felt in Whatcom County for years to come through their gift of a conservation easement.

As always I hope our members and other readers of this issue find it informative. If you would like to know more about any aspect of the *Trust* don't hesitate to contact Robyn duPré at 676-2436, or me at 734-9472.



Land Trust Presents!

IN THE HEART OF THE WOOD

In January the Land Trust will co-sponsor two performances of an outstanding new play, *In the Heart of the Wood*, which had an extended run in Seattle last summer. It is currently being performed at the Seattle Repertory Theater. The drama was also received with much enthusiasm when performed in Forks during August. The co-sponsor is the Trillium Corporation. We are co-sponsoring because we seek an audience that includes people from well beyond the usual *environmentalist* community.

We bring the play to Whatcom County because it explores a controversial land-use issue in a dynamic, complex, compelling manner that forces us to think, regardless of our personal position and interests. The land in question is timberland. A discussion will follow the performance.

Walter Parker, a professor at UW, wrote that *In the Heart of the Wood* was "an absolutely fine production . . . The play is so good (theatrically) and so educational (it is social studies) that the more people who see the play the better!"

Two Performances

January 6 at Whatcom County Museum and January 7 at the Mt. Baker High School

7:00 p.m.

Reservations call: 647-1223 or 966-5481

Adults \$7.00; Students \$4.00

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR NEWSLETTER SPONSORS:

Canyon Lake Creek Old Growth

By Sharon Digby and Rand Jack

On a sparkling first day of October, James Agee led participants in the *Land Trust* sponsored Canyon Lake Creek Old Growth Forest (CLCOG) Workshop on a walk through that ancient woods. After two hours discussing forest succession, fire disturbance and other factors of forest ecology, Agee, Professor of Forest Ecology at the University of Washington School of Forestry, set off with about twenty of us to experience in the woods what we had been talking about at the Welcome Senior Center.

The CLCOG was passed to the Trillium Corporation by the Department of Natural Resources as part of a large, complex, land transaction in 1993. While the *Land Trust* strongly supported the transaction with its numerous conservation benefits, we had substantial reservations about the transfer of this old growth parcel from public to private hands, reservations, incidentally, that were shared by Trillium. However, DNR insisted that the CLCOG remain in the transaction. In finally accepting this part of the transaction, Trillium made a commitment to consider seriously conservation alternatives that would protect old growth qualities, if such qualities were to be found in the forest. Trillium also committed to maintain a dialogue with the *Trust* about plans for the CLCOG.

Subsequently, the *Trust* and Trillium agreed jointly to hire Jim Agee to do a relatively rapid assessment of the CLCOG. Central to his assignment was to determine whether there are plant or animal species, or biological processes, occurring in the Canyon Lake Creek old growth which are not normally found in comparably located second

growth forest. Most surprising of his findings was that in this mixed forest of Yellow Cedar, Mountain Hemlock and Silver Fir, some of the Yellow Cedar trees were over 800 years old.

At the workshop, Agee explained that these Yellow Cedars and some Mountain Hemlocks had probably sprouted on this site about 820 years ago following a major fire. The combination of geographical location, northern exposure and heavy precipitation helped protect this stand from the devastating fires that historically have swept through western Washington, though Agee showed us charcoal evidence of a patchy fire in this forest about 80 years before Columbus arrived in the Americas.



Cedars at Canyon Lake Creek — Photograph by Rand Jack

As we stopped in the woods to talk, Agee took out a coring tool and took a core sample of a not particularly imposing Yellow Cedar. Apologizing for the small tool he had brought, he was able to reach less than half way to the center of the tree. Even with that, we counted and guesstimated about 400 growth rings.

The work shop provided an opportunity to gain some small understanding of an ancient forest. Though the trees are not large by Douglas Fir old growth standards, they nonetheless have stood their ground since the time of the Crusades. Their broken tops and bearded trunks, the mushrooms on decaying logs, form the stately cloak of an old growth forest.

Trillium has written that it would do nothing in the forest without first notifying us. We will continue our dialogue with them about the future of the forest.

We're All In This Together

By Rick Fackler

Recently there have been well publicized divisive statements by various well known residents of Whatcom County about development versus preservation in Bellingham and Whatcom County. While there are some obvious circumstances where a choice either to develop or preserve land must be made, there are many more situations where both interests can be accommodated. In my experience as the City of Bellingham's Greenway Program Coordinator, most of our community's *interests* recognize that compatibility.

In the past four years I have dealt with well over one hundred different property owners in Bellingham. This has included some of the most active developers, prominent businessmen and industrial landowners. I have found these people sincerely care about the quality of the community in which they live. They work to find *win-win* situations — where appropriate development is accommodated while key wildlife habitat, trail corridors, open space and park lands are preserved. Beyond that, almost \$1.4 million of land value has been donated to the City as part of the Greenways Program — virtually all of that from individuals who would be commonly labeled as *business* and *development* interests.

The *Land Trust's* experiences also reflect broad support for preservation from the *development commu-*

nity. Land has been donated by some of the County's best known business people. Red Haskell, Bill Herb and Jim Brooks gifted Plover Island to the *Trust* and North Cascade Audubon Society. The Clark family, of grocery store renown, granted a conservation easement on 78 acres of the most valuable shoreline in the state. The Trillium Corporation worked with great patience and good faith to execute the largest land trade in the State's history to help preserve the Lake Whatcom watershed and Chuckanut Mountain. Farmers, insurance and business people, attorneys, teachers — and many others work with the *Trust* to preserve lands they own and care about.

While not everyone in Whatcom County feels that preservation of natural areas is an essential part of this area's growth, there was a sixty-eight percent favorable vote for the Greenway Levy proposal four years ago. That election had the highest turnout for a special election in the City in at least 30 years.

Those values are still alive in our community. We need to remember that we all live here, that we all have a role to play in determining the kind of community our grandchildren will inherit — and that more of us think about that than sometimes seems apparent today.

Land Trust Alliance National Rally

The *Land Trust's* Conservation Coordinator, Robyn duPré recently attended the Land Trust Alliance National Rally. This annual conference brings together land trusts, conservation and historic preservation groups, government conservation officials, estate planning professionals and conservation minded land owners. This year's event, hosted by the Tennessee River Gorge Trust in Chattanooga, was well attended — over 700 participants came from all parts of the country. Ms. duPré was able to attend due to a generous scholarship from the Land Trust Alliance and a donation from the Wilburforce Foundation. Thank you to both organizations for making Robyn's participation possible.

Here are two of the most informative workshops Robyn attended.

FARMLAND PROTECTION AND LAND TRUSTS: What do the American Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy and the American Cattlemen's Association have in common? They are working together to preserve fast-disappearing agricultural and range lands. These precious lands produce food and provide open space and view amenities and often provide habitat for migrating waterfowl and other birds. This seminar showcased successful farmland preservation projects by land trusts throughout the country. Robyn will apply this information to protecting the agricultural lands that give our area its rural flavor.

DEALING WITH MULTI-PARTY OWNERSHIPS IN CONSERVATION PROJECTS: This seminar served as a sober reminder for those that own or work for the preservation of land. Plan, plan, plan!!! That's what one family didn't do in time. They owned 3,000 acres of waterfront property with many family members having a stake in its disposition. They were going to discuss the property "*someday soon*." Sadly, this family will lose their land through court ordered sale. Whether you own 10 acres or 10,000 acres, if you love your land, work with your family, an estate planner and the *Trust* so that you can achieve your conservation goals and pass your land on to your loved ones.

FOR SALE — Welcome Confluence Easement

A RARE OPPORTUNITY

Eagles, elk, beaver, birds, meadows, woods, creek, rivers — the Ansley Conservation Easement sits in Welcome Valley on the Mosquito Lake Road at the confluence of the North and Middle Forks of the Nooksack River and Canyon Lake Creek. Wilderness foot trails follow elk paths through meadows, slough and woods to the site of the traditional Welcome steelhead hole near Welcome Bridge.

In 1974 the Ansleys acquired the property from the Barter family, who homesteaded the land in the 1930's. After raising their children there, the Ansleys decided to preserve the confluence environment for posterity. In 1990, they worked out a conservation easement with *Whatcom County Land Trust*, to preserve a historic railroad right-of-way running through the land and the wilderness behind it. The easement, which spells out permitted and restricted uses of the land, is held by *Whatcom County Land Trust* and passes on to each new owner. In this manner the confluence wilderness area will be preserved for all future inhabitants.

Nooksack legends speak of a summer campground near the creek and a prehistoric nursery for mothers and children in one of the meadows. Early in this century the giant cedars, whose stumps are still evident, were logged off. In 1914 a railroad was constructed and a logging depot was established on the land to transport logs from up the valley into Bellingham. In the 1930's, the Barters turned the property into a small farm, placing their homestead to the east of the railroad right-of-way. Today, the dynamic confluence environment to the west of the right-of-way is marked only by the foot trails of wildlife and a few human visitors.

The 14-acre parcel is for sale. It includes a two-plus acre homesite with a spectacular view of the Mt. Baker foothills. There is a modest trailer, with utilities, which would be suitable to live in while a more permanent home is being built. The asking price is \$93,900. For more information, contact Louise Roland of North Haven Real Estate at her home office (206) 592-2174.

THE LAND TRUST'S WISH LIST

The *Land Trust* is a non-profit organization which depends on its members and supporters for financial and material donations.

Currently the office is in need of the following items:

**FAX MACHINE
COPIER
LASER OR INKJET PRINTER
TYPEWRITER**

All donations to the *Trust* are tax deductible.

***The Land Trust
Depends On Your Support
Please Join Or
Renew Your Membership!***

To reduce mail and overhead, memberships are renewed annually. Please send your 1994 dues in the enclosed envelope.

Thanks for your support.



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WHATCOM COUNTY LAND TRUST

NEWSLETTER

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The **WCLT NEWSLETTER** is published biannually Spring and Fall. Complimentary copies are available by calling 876-2436.