

Steward

Whatcom Land Trust: Preserving the Nature of Whatcom County since 1984

Volume 20 Number 1

Spring 2011

A Pretty Good Year for Salmon on the South Fork —120 Acres Conserved

Acquiring Elk Flats

Rand Jack

"It may be in Skagit County, but it is our river," said Eric Carabba, Conservation Director for Whatcom Land Trust. Many people are surprised to learn that the South Fork of the Nooksack River loops south into Skagit County after leaving the slopes of the Twin Sisters and before heading north again to join the main stream of the Nooksack. Despite being out of the county, the prize was just too great to ignore—perhaps the best Chinook salmon spawning grounds on the South Fork.

After years of trying, Whatcom Land Trust finally purchased 80 acres straddling the South Fork of the Nooksack in Skagit County. In addition to habitat for endangered Chinook, the property is also critical for runs of bull trout and winter steelhead, both federally listed as threatened with extinction, as ...continued on page four



photo: Eric Carabba

The South Fork of the Nooksack seen from Elk Flats.

Saxon Riparian Helps Protect Habitat

At the end of May, Whatcom Land Trust purchased a key 40-acre property with a half mile of frontage on the South Fork of the Nooksack River for salmon habitat preservation. With over \$200,000 in grant funds from the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and \$60,000 in privately donated acquisition funds, the Trust purchased a critical river-corridor parcel linking the Trust's Salmon Eagle Elk properties. The Trust reached an agreement with Brian and Linda Knutzen after many years of negotiating.

All five species of salmon use the South Fork of the Nooksack River for holding, spawning, and rearing. Lummi Nation is planning instream work this summer to install engineered log jams to form deep pools for holding salmon and to provide channel stability to help form forested islands and side channels. Dozens of eagles feast on the salmon runs, and a large cottonwood on the property contains a bald eagle nest. In the fall through late spring, the Nooksack herd of elk move up and down this South Fork river corridor.



Thank You, Karin

Since September, WLT has had the great fortune to have Karin Grimlund as our AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator. A native of Minnesota, Karin had connections to Bellingham since it was her father's home town, and her family would yearly visit their simple cabin in the San Juans. By accepting the WLT AmeriCorps position, she hoped to deepen this connection, and indeed she has!

While with Whatcom Land Trust, Karin has organized numerous work parties with a variety of community groups, coordinated the auction volunteers, and created a conservation book group in collaboration with Village Books. On top of that, she's been a perfect team player with our staff.

In her free time, Karin volunteers for Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Association, gardens, bicycles, hikes, weaves baskets, learns about mushrooms and enjoys other earthy activities. Karin's AmeriCorps tenure with WLT will end July 30th (although she's promised to help with a few subsequent events). We are very sad about her departure, and would like to express our sincere appreciation for her work and her spirit of curiosity. We encourage you to join us at the Downtown Sounds concert on July 27th to say goodbye to Karin and wish her well.

E-News

For the latest news and events, join our E-News list by entering your email address in the upper right-hand corner of our website (www.whatcomlandtrust.org).

Elections

Officer elections were held at the annual board retreat. Mary Dumas is the new President, Simi Jain is Vice-President, Harte Bressler and Rod Burton retained their positions as Treasurer and Secretary.

The Great Outdoors Auction

The 11th annual Great Outdoors Auction was held May 7th at the Lakeway Inn ballroom. Over 300 guests and volunteers gathered to bid on a wide variety of unique items and experiences. Outdoor gear, weekend getaways, arts and crafts, garden plants and products, local food baskets, and much, much more vied for the bidder's attention. Over \$78,000 in gross proceeds was raised through a combination of live and silent auctions.

Master of Ceremonies Chuck Robinson and Auctioneer Manca Valum got the night off to a rousing beginning, harkening back to their disco days, all while urging attendees to bid heartily for the opportunity to be the first in line to choose one of the delectable and stunning desserts. Board President Mary Dumas warmly welcomed the crowd, reflected on the organization's recent successes, and reminded everyone of the heritage of conservation we are leaving for future generations. The live auction featured unique experiences ranging from sailing excursions and picnics to fine dining and chocolate tastings, and was characterized by much competitive bidding. An Italian villa stay, a Glacier Bay cruise, and an evening of fish tacos generated a great deal of excitement as our guests clapped and urged each other on to higher bidding.

The biggest highlight of the evening was the outpouring of support for the organization during the Fund the Work portion of the live auction. Over \$15,000 was raised in just under

10 minutes to assist the Land Trust in continuing the protection and stewardship of the 11,000 acres that have been acquired in the last 27 years.

We wish to extend special recognition and thanks to our auction sponsors: Pacific Surveying & Engineering, Whatcom Educational Credit Union, ConocoPhillips, Lithtex Northwest, Village Books, and the Lakeway Inn. We are privileged to receive

Congrats on such a very well organized, productive and fun Annual Auction.

—Julie Carpenter

the support of many businesses that make the Great Outdoor Auction possible. In fact, we could not succeed without the support of local businesses, but our sponsors truly help make the evening a success. Additionally, we wish to recognize the assistance we received from Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro and Whatcom Sound.

Lastly, we need to recognize the efforts of our volunteers—many began as early as January planning and preparing for the gala which was coordinated by Jennifer Fredrickson. The auction committee was led this year by board member Carl Prince while the desserts were arranged and coordinated by Carol Rondello and Laurie Bomstad Heck. Our super volunteers were Barbara Brandt, Rod Burton, Jean Calhoun, Jayme Curley, Tom Emrich, Margo Gillaspay, Julia Kerl, Cindy Klein, Cynthia Millar, and Rebecca Reich. Special thanks to staffers Connie Clement, Karin Grimlund, and Kelly Pederson. We are already looking forward to next year. Give us a call if you wish to help make the next auction bigger and brighter!

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President's Message

One of the wonderful things about my new post as the President of the Whatcom Land Trust Board is the opportunity to thank so many people, each and every week, who contribute their time, talents, and resources to the work that we do. Just as diverse as the 11,000 acres the Trust and landowners have preserved, are the partners and supporters who work with us as visionaries, contributors, and stewards of an invaluable legacy of preservation into perpetuity.

The office is a beehive of activity these days with staff combing through the past archives to prepare our application for national certification. See the update below for more details. The 2011 auction helped us secure the essential operational resources to power the stewardship, acquisition, and outreach duties that bring our mission to life. These outstanding volunteers, led by capable staff and an organized leader, have contributed countless volunteer hours to respond to the changing landscape in which we do our work.

We take seriously our job of connecting people of all ages to the land, and hopefully inspiring higher levels of stewardship and care for what makes Whatcom County unique. So take us up on the offer to get to know Whatcom County's gems. This may be on a working farm or forest in our rural communities, a marine shoreline on the Salish Sea, or a quiet, shaded riverbed in the forested uplands of the Nooksack River. Check out this summer's tour schedule and the Junior Stewards program to discover a new gem you might not have noticed yet!

We are privileged to meet so many people who have a deep regard for Whatcom County's beauty. Join us this summer for one of our events and introduce yourself to someone you may not know. You'll be among some of the fine folks who help us get this work done. While you might find yourself among unlikely allies, we are all partners in a higher, common good.



Whatcom Land Trust Seeks National Accreditation

Work is underway to complete the Whatcom Land Trust's application for accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). The Commission awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands. To date, a total of 130 land conservation organizations from across the country have earned this important distinction. In 2012, the Whatcom Land Trust aims to add our name to this list.

The Commission conducts an extensive review of the applicant's policies and programs. As an LTA member since 1994, Whatcom Land Trust board and staff members are familiar with the best practices in the field of land conserva-

tion; many have presented seminars at national and regional LTA conventions and served on advisory panels. The opportunity to seek accreditation has only been available to land trusts for the last 4 years. Whatcom Land Trust is seeking accreditation status to further strengthen our organization internally and within the conservation community.

Whatcom Land Trust welcomes the opportunity to seek accreditation and demonstrate the high standards employed by the organization over the last 27 years. A public comment period is now open on our application. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how Whatcom Land Trust complies with national quality

standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards, see www.landtrustalliance.org/training/sp/lt-standards-practices07.pdf.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 112 Spring Street, Suite 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments on Whatcom Land Trust's application will be most useful by December 30, 2011.

Elk Flats continued from page one

well as Coho, chum, pink, and sockeye salmon, eagles, and elk. The Land Trust has named the property Elk Flats.

Elk Flats is surrounded for miles on each side by commercial forestry lands. For years the former owners lived off the grid in a 60-year-old cabin, sharing the property with abandoned vehicles, auxiliary buildings, machinery, debris, three mobile homes, 30 derelict travel trailers, and a mule. The travel trailers served as housing for visitors who came to Elk Flats to fight paint ball wars, race ORVs, and pan for gold.

In 2007, the State Salmon Recovery Funding Board awarded Whatcom Land Trust a grant of \$500,000 to acquire the property and remove buildings and debris. Despite an appraisal, the owners wanted over twice that amount. Finally, at the end of last year, the owners agreed to sell the property for \$500,000. With the Salmon Grant and an additional \$100,000 matching funds, the Land Trust purchased Elk Flats. Under the terms of the sale, the prior owners removed most of their belongings, including the mule. Whatcom Land Trust has had the buildings demolished and removed. The Land Trust will then work with the Lummi Nation to improve in-stream habitat and restore riparian areas, wetlands, and forest—to restore Elk Flats to its full ecological glory.



photo: WLT staff

This debris on the Elk Flats property has been cleaned up.

Whatcom Land Trust board member Rebecca Reich said: “The Land Trust deeply appreciates the exceptional work of realtor and former Land Trust board member Julie Carpenter to make this important acquisition happen—way beyond the call of duty. Sometimes rich rewards require a lot of work. That was certainly true here. At least we didn’t get left with the mule. “

The Schornbush Forest grows with donation of the Farber Conservation Easement



photo: Eric Carabba

Light shines through the trees of the easement newly-donated by Dan Farber.

The Land Trust wrapped up 2010 with a donated conservation easement from Dan Farber. Dan committed to perpetual protection of the diverse low-land evergreen forest habitat on his 17.5-acre property, with majestic western redcedars and big leaf maple. Dan’s property backs up to the Van Zandt Dike and links the Land Trust’s 85-acre Schornbush Forest with the Jack Family conservation easement now protecting 142.5 acres of forestland at the base of remnant state-owned old growth forest. Thank you Dan Farber for your priceless donation to forever protect this special Whatcom forestland.



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photos: Eric Carabba

Above: WLT Board member Rand Jack inspects a legacy tree at the Watts Family Preserve.

Right: Lake Whatcom shoreline along the edge of the Watts Family Preserve.



Watts Family Preserve

In December 2010, the Watts family sold 17 acres of spectacular Lake Whatcom shoreline to the city of Bellingham to conserve this special property and thereby protect the water quality of the lake. It includes over 2000 feet of lake shoreline and a diverse mix of second growth forest. After purchase, the City granted a conservation easement to the Land Trust "...to protect the water quality of Lake Whatcom by preserving, and where needed, restoring natural ecological functions that act to maintain high water quality and reduce or eliminate sources of water quality degradation." The conservation easement will also allow for the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, preservation of open space, and will provide opportunities for passive recreation.

HAT's OFF

to Pete Coy, and the Whatcom Events gang who put on the Sea to Ski each year, helping more community members get connected to the diverse beauty of Whatcom County. And thanks to teams who elected to pay an optional fee to help offset the carbon impacts of the event. These donations are greatly appreciated and will help with acquisition of riparian and forest lands along the Nooksack.

Heartfelt appreciation also to Frank Culp, proprietor of Lake Whatcom Railway (www.lakewhatcomrailway.com). Frank donated a railroad tie for the gate post at the Ladies of the Lake Preserve. A big thank-you, too, to volunteers Jim Cool and Nick Saling who helped install the post.

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Endangered frog found on Land Trust preserve

Steve Walker, Property Steward



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Oregon spotted frog
(*Rana pretiosa*)

In March, field biologists from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), assisted by Whatcom Land Trust staff member Karin Grimlund, discovered Oregon spotted frog egg masses in a flooded field near the Samish River on WLT's Alpine Meadows Preserve. Prior to this finding, and one other during March near the Land Trust's Black Slough Preserve on the South Fork of the Nooksack River, the species (*Rana pretiosa*) was not known to be resident in Whatcom County.

The low-volume calls of the male Oregon spotted frogs resemble the sound of the distant tapping of a woodpecker. The frogs breed during late winter or early spring, with females laying their eggs communally in areas of shallow water and sparse, emergent wetland vegetation. Eggs hatch in 18 to 30 days. Tadpoles grow and develop for 13 to 16 weeks, with frogs maturing and beginning to breed at two or three years of age.

Oregon spotted frogs are almost entirely aquatic in habit, leaving the wetlands only occasionally and for short duration. Historically, the shallow floodplain pools that the frogs inhabited were drained, diked, and filled to accommodate human needs. In the Puget Sound lowlands, existing wetlands represent a small proportion of what was present in pre-settlement times. In addition, exotic plants like reed canary grass have changed the character of many wetlands and reduced their value as habitat for Oregon spotted frogs.

Historically, the Oregon spotted frog occurred from southwestern British Columbia to the northeast corner of California. Prior to the recent discoveries in Whatcom County, only three populations were known to remain in Washington. It is likely the species now lives only on 10% of its former range. Due to the limited populations, a status report written for WDFW recommended that the Oregon spotted frog be listed as a state endangered species. The surveys that revealed the presence of the frog on Land Trust property are intended to determine the need for federal listing as well.



photo courtesy WDFW

Field biologist photographs Oregon spotted frog egg masses.

Upcoming Summer Events

Downtown Sounds

July 27, 2011, 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm, at the corner of Holly and Bay

Come dance with us and celebrate this year's AmeriCorp Volunteer, Karin Grimlund, in her last official event! We'll be helping with Downtown Sounds, which is a series of free, live concerts for the entire family.

Point Whitehorn at Low Tide Hike

July 30, 2011, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Limit: 15

Join former Whatcom County Parks Manager and marine biologist Lynne Givler for this exploration of the beach at low tide (-2.0). She'll help us find and identify animals we don't normally see when the tide is in. The trail at Pt. Whitehorn is ¾-mile long, so a little walking is required. BYO snacks and drinking water. Call WLT at 650-9470 to reserve your spot on the hike and get directions.

Brew-Ha-Ha

Boundary Bay Brewery's beer garden is the site of Whatcom Land Trust's annual Brew Ha Ha on Saturday October 1st. The function celebrates the uniqueness of Whatcom places and is sponsored by ConocoPhillips Ferndale Refinery, Pacific Survey and Engineering, and the generous folks at Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro. We are seeking volunteers to assist in the planning and staffing of the event, so come join in the fun. Whatcom Land Trust has now preserved over 11,000 acres and created 14 county parks. We think that calls for a celebration! For more information contact the Land Trust office at 650-9470 or email jerry@whatcomlandtrust.org

Stewardship Hero: John Bremer

Alan Fritzberg

“Each week, I go to a Whatcom Land Trust property and work, but also walk around, which usually makes it an enjoyable and satisfying day. Friday, for example, I saw bear, coyote, and cougar tracks, a patch of beautiful bitter cress, a trillium blooming in the sun, more than 10 birds, and a Lorquin’s admiral butterfly. I collected litter, dug up blackberry, pulled herb Robert, and monitored some trees and cuttings we planted.”

-John Bremer.

From this quote of John’s, we can understand something of what motivates him to be regularly out on the land whether alone or as part of an organized group effort. In answer to the question of why, he said he likes working in the dirt, the physical effort, and a sense of payback for damage to the land. John has been stewarding Whatcom Land Trust properties since 2006. Before that

he worked with the Nature Conservancy in Illinois on prairie restoration projects.

While some of us help steward the Trust lands on an occasional basis, John Bremer is “always there” whether as part of an organized volunteer effort or by himself attacking Scotch broom, buddleia, blackberries, and other unwanted plants. On his own he has eradicated invasive plants from several Trust properties and in the case of the White Deer property, John initiated and carried out the removal of a large infestation of Yellow Archangel. While regular volunteers average about three hours per month, John puts in 70 to 90 hours per month.

In its 27-year history, Whatcom Land Trust has done an incredible job of conserving land vital to habitat for the wild creatures, our water supplies, and restoration the Nooksack River and its tributaries for salmon and trout. As the acres of protected land have grown,



photo: Alan Fritzberg

John Bremer at work at Maple Creek Reach.

so has the need for efforts to steward these lands.

We owe a large debt of gratitude to John Bremer for the effort he has made to help Whatcom Land Trust be responsible for the properties under its care.

Thank you, John!

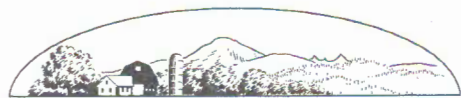
Maple Creek Reach Purchased

With substantial funding from the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Whatcom Land Trust in December 2010 purchased a 17-acre property near Maple Falls on the North Fork of the Nooksack River to restore and protect salmon habitat. Since the acquisition, the Trust has partnered with Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association to remove a sizeable patch of Scotch broom and re-establish a diverse riparian forest. Several work parties have been held to pull the weeds and prepare for planting.



photo: Eric Carabba

Purchase of this 800 feet of riverfront will help protect many species of salmon.



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Jr. Stewards Summer Program

Free Summer Environmental Education Program for Elementary-age Kids and their Families

Hey Kids! Want to visit some secret places and be surrounded by natural beauty? Then let's go! Whatcom Land Trust's Junior Steward Program is designed to help you and your family discover new places right here in Whatcom County! To participate, download the booklet from our website www.whatcomlandtrust.org or come by our office to get a copy. Complete as many of the four chapters as you can by visiting sites and doing activities.

Jr. Stewards Wrap up

August 19, 2011

Get your Reflect & Respond sheet turned in to Whatcom Land Trust so you can be entered into the drawing for cool prizes. This sheet will also provide the Land Trust with valuable information on where to hold our concluding work party event.

Jr. Stewards Culminating Work Party

August 27, 2011, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Location to be determined by Jr. Steward Reflect & Respond Sheets

Hey Jr. Stewards! Let's use the information you've gathered to make the land healthier. We'll work together for awhile and then celebrate the summer with refreshments and the drawing for super cool prizes! See our website for location.

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