

The



Newsletter of Whatcom Land Trust
Whatcom County, Washington

Steward

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

Volume 22 Number 2

Summer 2014

Encouraging Resiliency on the South Fork

Eric Carabba, Director of Lands



photo: Alan Fritzberg

Looking east at Riverstead toward the south fork of the Nooksack River.

Whatcom Land Trust is committed to preserving, protecting, and restoring the special places where land meets water – wetlands, riparian areas on creeks and rivers, and coastal shorelines. These areas support a diversity of human endeavors and interests, provide natural beauty that draw people, and crucial habitat for fish and wildlife.

These lands are impacted by man-made and environmental stressors. Over the years, the problems these areas face are often compounded one upon another and are not easily alleviated. Many who care deeply for riverine areas grow discouraged and wonder how much longer the integrity and resiliency of the land will hold under the weight of modern day pressures.

...continued on page 3

Making a Difference at Maple Creek Reach

Nick Saling,
Director of Stewardship

For a year now, Maple Creek Reach Preserve has been in the Whatcom Land Trust spotlight. This 111-acre stretch of land just off of the Mt. Baker Highway in Maple Falls is a conservation treasure. It does however, need a bit of restoration work to return it to the conservation rock star status it is capable and deserving of.

Whatcom Land Trust is facilitating two phases of work at MCRP: the 'dirt work' and the riparian buffer establishment work. The restoration work will realign all the natural elements the preserve needs for long term conservation success. Fortunately, the preserve already hosts a diverse fish and wildlife community.

Maple Creek is one of the few creeks that support all five species of Pacific salmon, as well as winter Steelhead, Cutthroat trout



Volunteers are the backbone of WLT's restoration work and ongoing stewardship of preserves and conservation easements. Volunteers were all smiles at the 2014 Earth Day work party at Maple Creek Reach Preserve.

and Bull trout also known as Dolly Varden. Because of the diversity of the fish species found in the creek and because of its high water quality, Maple Creek has been used by the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, since 1944, as an Index Stream. The creek is used to measure the quality of salmon spawning in other portions of the North Fork. Maple Creek Reach Preserve is home to beavers who make themselves busy ...continued on page 5

Thoughts on Turning Thirty from the Executive Director



more phone lines, more shovels and weed whackers and more staff to take care of the 10,000 acres that are in WLT's daily care.

Richard Eggemeyer donated part of his commission to the Trust.

Recently, an opportunity arose that we couldn't pass up. A nearby law firm closed its doors and pounded a for-sale sign in the front yard. Tom Resick and Brian Hansen were supportive sellers and were willing to offer us a good deal and we were given unbeatable terms by our lender. To make a long story short: WLT, like many 30-year-olds, has bought a home—a place where we can grow, a place where we can host the community, a place where we plan to be 30 years from now. The tipping factor in our decision to buy was the loan offered by Whatcom Educational Credit Union. Our monthly expenses will increase minimally as a result of the favorable terms offered by both WECU and the sellers. Then, when we thought it couldn't get any nicer, our real estate broker and consultant

In the coming weeks and months, we will keep you updated on both our progress and our needs as we prepare our new home. The building is in great shape, but as usual, it needs a coat of paint, flooring, some new windows, a refreshed landscape—the typical things new homes require. We will publish specific needs on our website and will be grateful for any donations or bargains you can help us get.

Best of all, we are looking forward to the first of what we hope will be a regular series of open house events. We take a lot of calls about what we do, and we mail out newsletters and reports every year, but we'd love to stand around a map with you, answer your questions, hear your views and enjoy a little community fellowship.

Whatcom Land Trust is turning 30 this fall. Thirty year-olds in Whatcom County today may not realize that the beauty of this place is not the result of mere luck or accident. They've been enjoying the Chuckanut Trail System, Teddy Bear Cove and Squires Lake since they were little kids. While still in high school, they discovered the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve, visited the Deming Homestead Eagle Park and maybe hiked through the Canyon Lake Community Forest. They've been eating and even occasionally catching salmon without thinking about where those fish spawn and why the streams are still clean and wild. Some of Whatcom's 30-year-olds have already taken their own kids to explore Racehorse Creek, Point Whitehorn, or Lily Point Marine Reserve. Whatcom Land Trust's long-term mission to protect the county's natural assets "for future generations" is already being fulfilled: the first of those future generations is arriving now.

Today, WLT has more than 20,000 protected acres on its roster—lands we own, lands we protect through conservation easements and parklands we helped public agencies acquire. As our responsibilities have grown, so too have our needs: more filing cabinets,



Whatcom Land Trust is moving into its new home at 412 N. Commercial in August. We're growing up!

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Stories Begin Outdoors

The Great Outdoors Auction is a time to celebrate our collective love of the wild, beautiful, exquisite places that connect us as a community and define us as individuals. Everyone has a story that makes them unique in the world. What would our stories be without the great outdoors?

The trees we have climbed, rested beneath, and admired for their sheer beauty; the rivers, streams and creeks we have fished, floated, skipped stones across, hiked alongside, dipped our toes in and waded into on hot summer days have made us feel alive, tingling

from head to toe with the raw realness of it all. The fish and wildlife that we have encountered over the years intrigue, surprise, thrill, awe, cheer, humble, feed, amuse, and amaze us. All these experiences find their way into our own personal stories in ways that are quite simply priceless. Protecting the great outdoors is not without cost, but oh, is it ever worth it!

Please join us on the Summer Solstice, it's the longest day of the year, it's the perfect day to support something we all want to last forever. It's going to be fun and it's for all the right reasons. We hope to see you there!

Make your reservation today, call: 360-650-9470 * For more information visit us online: whatcomlandtrust.org



The trail at Edfro Creek is rather glorious, we think.



This beaver makes its home at Wildcat Reach.



Wetlands are places to treasure and protect.

South Fork Continued from page one

Whatcom Land Trust acknowledges that conservation is at times a daunting task, but we also know that each conservation success is a step in the right direction.

Thirty years of conservation work in Whatcom County is informing the development of our stewardship plans for two properties located along the Nooksack River's south fork. The plans build upon our experience and represent exciting new strategies aimed at encouraging resilience in the areas where land meets the water.

Christie Creek

When the opportunity to conserve 3,400 feet of prime South Fork of the Nooksack River shoreline became available, WLT worked to secure it. The \$221,100, 53-acre parcel of land was

purchased in September 2013, with the help of a Washington State Recreation and Conservations Office salmon recovery grant that was matched with a \$75,000 National Fish and Wildlife Spirit of Conservation grant from ConocoPhillips.

South Fork Christie Creek, as the property is called, sits across the river from Skookum Creek Fish Hatchery near Acme. It is surrounded by WLT's 138-acre Port Blakely Preserve, and is downstream from the 135-acre Edfro Creek Preserve.

The land is defined by craggy cliffs, a floodplain terrace, springs, wetlands and the Christie Creek Falls. Visitors to Christie Creek – given the right season, might be treated to hooded mergansers bobbing in the river current, kingfishers chattering, and bald eagles sitting in their ...continued on page 6

Alan Fritzberg Shares His Love of the Land



Alan Fritzberg, WLT Board Member, outdoor enthusiast and photographer.

I was born in Everson in 1943. I grew up along the Nooksack River between Everson and Lynden. The river and backwater sloughs were my main playground and provided the formative experiences for my love of the outdoors and nature. When I was a teenager, a friend and I built a raft and floated it from Everson to Ferndale. It was our version of a Huckleberry Finn experience. My view of the world was shaped by stories of my dad, uncle and brother driving logging trucks, as well as by my own experiences picking raspberries and working on our family potato farm. One summer, my mother encouraged

me to pick blackberries and sell them to Kale Cannery. We used the proceeds to experience a bird's eye view of the Cascade Mountains from Bellingham to Seattle aboard a DC 3.



photo: Alan Fritzberg

An eagle's view on a clear fall day just east of Maple Creek Reach Preserve, looking east past Slide Mountain to Wildcat Reach Preserve along the south side of the river.

It is from these beginnings in Whatcom County that I relate to and care for the Nooksack River system. From the river itself, to the foothills, to the agriculture, including the logging communities of Whatcom County, I view it as a uniquely connected community. It is rewarding to be on the Whatcom Land Trust board and to help advance its work in the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat, the restoration and care of the Trust preserves, and in the support of farmland preservation in Whatcom County.

I especially enjoy the time I spend on Whatcom Land Trust preserves. Each has its own appeal and opportunity for outdoor discovery. I enjoy photography and love capturing the unique beauty, seasonal changes and people energized events as they occur at any given time on Whatcom Land Trust lands. It's a bonus that my photography can be used by the Trust to share the work they are doing and to convey the importance of land protection and conservation. If my photography is appreciated by, and is compelling to someone who hasn't had the opportunity to visit a Trust preserve, that makes me happy. If it compels them to visit a Land Trust preserve to see it and to experience it for themselves—that is a bonus on top of a bonus.

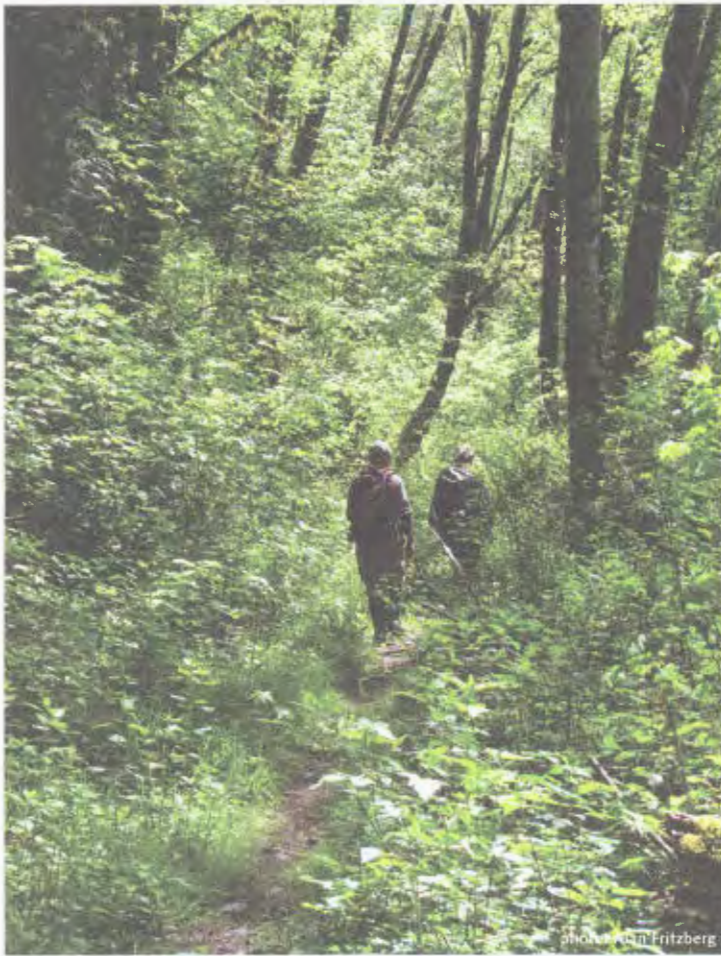


photo: Alan Fritzberg

Walking the trail at Edfro Creek Preserve toward Dye's Canyon with John Bremer and Allan Richardson. The trail runs eastward along the S. Fork Nooksack River.



photo: Alan Fritzberg

A July view of the South Fork Nooksack River as it runs past Edfro Creek Preserve. Not glacier fed, it develops this beautiful clear water much earlier in the year than other spots.

Maple Creek Reach Continued from page one

falling un-caged trees along the creek. Eagles, hawks, owls and smaller birds make use of the forested riparian habitat for hunting, nesting, and foraging. The field is visited and used by roaming bobcat, cougar, bear, deer, elk, and small mammals.

The previously subdivided preserve was acquired in three different land transactions. In 2003, the initial 78 acres were donated to Whatcom Land Trust by the Washington State Department of Transportation. Seven years later, Whatcom Land Trust purchased 12 acres to the east of the founding property. In 2012, the final 21 acres were purchased to complete the preserve.

The land consists mostly of open fields with wetlands and numerous groundwater springs supporting thousands of feet of Maple Creek and its tributaries. Maple Creek itself is a major tributary to the North Fork of the Nooksack River. Fresh water flows across the flat preserve before reaching the river to the south.

As part of past agricultural practices on the recently acquired parcel of the preserve, a tributary stream was diverted into pipes and confined to a ditch. The process drained the wetland. At the time, the habitat value of the wetland was not recognized. The practice of diverting streams and reconfiguring them is not uncommon and is often done to accommodate development and/or to create fields for planting. Combined with the removal of shading trees, water that has been "ditched" heats up and is too hot to support a healthy fish population. The good news is that we can fix the damage and restore the wetland.

Over the summer and upcoming fall, WLT will complete the first phase and continue work in the second phase of its two part restoration plan. The first phase or the 'dirt work' consists of removing culverts (pipes) that are barriers to fish passage; taking out and replacing an old creosote timber bridge; and adding a second bridge to enable people to access all parts of the preserve. Phase one supports the movement of fish and people at Maple Creek Reach Preserve.

The second phase of the work entails reestablishing riparian buffers along the stream and tributaries to support salmon recovery efforts on the Nooksack River. Some of this work has already been completed by volunteers at our annual Earth Day work party in April.



Volunteers plant willows and other trees and shrubs at Maple Creek Reach Preserve at WLT's annual Earth Day work party. Their smiles tell the rest!

With the culverts removed, the second phase of work will commence on the west portion of the preserve. Restoration includes creating a meandering stream channel with complexity and riparian buffer plantings. A wetland area will also be restored. This will increase the water holding capacity for the tributary stream. It will also improve water flow during summer, directly improving the stream environment for fish to spawn, rear and hold (hang out).

WLT is working in partnership with the Whatcom Conservation District, Washington Conservation Corps, and Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) to do this work. Funding for the work has been provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Once begun, the transformation is swift and dramatic. If you love 'before and after' stories and you have not yet visited Maple Creek Reach Preserve, you still have time to visit the 'before' version of the preserve. But do so soon! If you want to witness the transformation in person and even take part in it, there will be opportunities in the fall to attend a Maple Creek Reach Preserve work party. As a member of the work party, you will help plant the riparian buffer along the new stream channel! Watch for information on our website regarding fall work parties.

Visit Maple Creek Reach Preserve, 7611 Mt. Baker Highway:

- Head east on Mt. Baker Highway 542
- Pass through the town of Maple Falls
- Just after crossing Maple Creek ► TURN RIGHT onto the preserve
- Parking is on site

South Fork *continued from page three*

roosts watching over anglers trying for silver salmon migrating up river.

WLT is encouraging and aiding the natural processes of a healthy floodplain. WLT will coordinate volunteers, crews, and contractors to remove old and dilapidated cabins, debris, and culverts.

WLT will partner with Lummi Nation on an instream restoration project to remove rip rap and install engineered jams to create deep pools with complex and sheltered cover for salmon and other fish to thrive.

WLT will manage the forest to, over time, become a rich old growth forest by thinning an old timber plantation and interplanting mature deciduous forests. Finally, crucially, WLT's stewardship of Christie Creek—the continuous care of the land over time—will safeguard restoration work and build resiliency into the land itself by encouraging and supporting natural processes.

Riverstead

Last summer in 2013 – a property presenting a unique conservation opportunity came up for sale. Whatcom Land Trust acted quickly to purchase and conserve the land that is ideally situated next to WLT's 236-acre Catalyst Preserve. The 75-acre Riverstead property has 1,500 feet of south fork Nooksack River frontage and more than 4,000 feet of tributary stream connecting Catalyst's restored streams to the south fork.

At Riverstead, WLT seeks to advance community and natural systems that will be resilient in a future of unprecedented pressures from climate change and development. We are building upon our existing salmon conservation and restoration efforts

and moving toward the pursuit of a Farming for Food and Wildlife initiative to take on the challenge of better integrating and advancing the often competing interests of farmland conservation, salmon recovery, and flood risk reduction.

The objectives are challenging, but not impossible. As Whatcom Land Trust evaluates other local and regional conservation and restoration successes and failures, we are planning to launch our own integrated programs to address the challenges of conserving farmland, restoring salmon habitat and making the community more flood resilient.

Whatcom Land Trust is working to implement a multiple benefits program for Riverstead. In doing so, we are looking at the Nature Conservancy's nationwide regional effort to advance the essential concept of 'Floodplains by Design.' With generous support from Whatcom Community Foundation's Sustainable Whatcom Fund, we are taking the first steps, in the south fork valley, toward connectively addressing the integration of farming, flood risk education and reduction, and wildlife habitat protection and salmon recovery.

What's good for the environment is going to be good for people. We believe that. We are looking at the past, learning from it, evaluating the present, and vision casting into the future to do our best to protect and conserve a resilient home that is good for people and good for fish and wildlife.

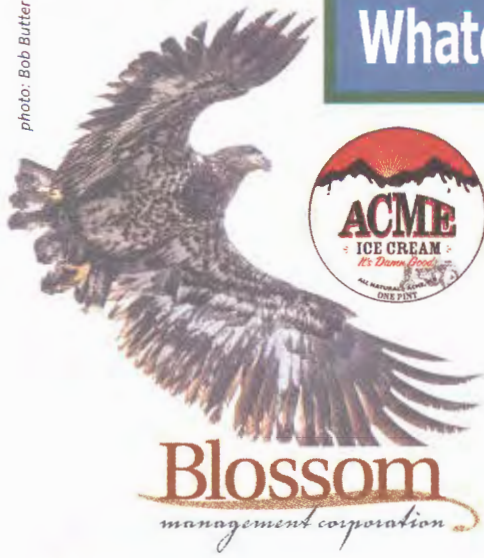
VISITING Whatcom Land Trust Preserves:

Land Trust Preserves are open to the public. We request that you explore on foot only. Thank you. Enjoy the summer and the many places in our county where land meets water.



Dedicated Whatcom Land Trust volunteer stewards join Nick Saling for the traditional canoe trip across the river to access Christie Creek. All for a day's work!

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Upcoming

Many of these businesses have made recent donations to

The Great Outdoors Auction: Summer Solstice Celebration

Thank you, to all of our Conservation Sponsors and Partners! We appreciate you! We appreciate all of our many loyal individual donors, supporters and volunteers too! Together we are all working together to make a difference. When you visit the above businesses please consider saying thank you for their support of Whatcom Land Trust.

Look what Dr. Stephen Nyman is studying on our Samish River Preserve...Oregon spotted frogs! This handsome guy is fighting for its survival. Watch for an upcoming email newsletter about the frogs at Samish River Preserve. If you aren't already on our email newsletter list and would like to be, email us at info@whatcomlandtrust.org and we will add you to the list to receive Dr. Nyman's article.





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Steward, Explore, Support WLT



VOLUNTEER! Stewardship opportunities start back up in the fall. Look online to see what dates work best for you. Or email info@whatcomlandtrust.org.

EXPLORE: Summertime is a great time to explore our preserves and protected parks. Check out Nick's suggestions on Page 5 of this newsletter.



Low Tide Explorations

- ▶ **Teddy Bear Cove**
June 14 • noon - 2 pm
- ▶ **Lily Point Marine Park**
July 12 • 10 am - 2 pm

The Great Outdoors Auction

*Summer Solstice
Celebration*



June 21, 2014
5:30 - 10:30 pm
BelleWood Acres

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Reservations: \$75

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