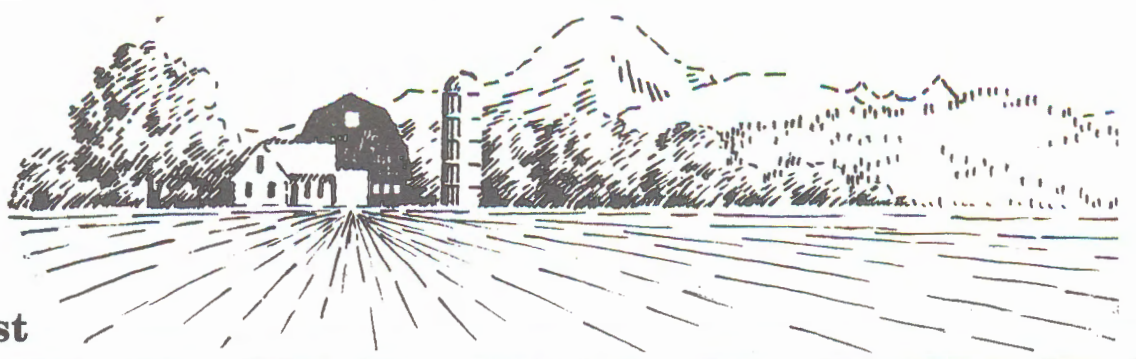


Whatcom County Land Trust



Volume 4, Number 1.

Newsletter

Spring 1994

IMPLEMENTING THE NATURAL HERITAGE PLAN

By Robyn duPré

The *Land Trust* is now well into its contract with Whatcom County to implement the Natural Heritage Plan. This is to tell you about this interesting program and how the *Land Trust* is working to meet its goals.

The Natural Heritage Task Force was given the mission to *identify irreplaceable natural and open spaces, preserve wildlife habitats, protect unique scenic vistas and preserve public access to waterfronts on our lakes and sea shores.* To address these ambitious goals, Whatcom County has contracted with the *Land Trust* to explore voluntary approaches to land conservation in the county.

The Natural Heritage Plan is a broad, visionary document. It identifies many of the lands that make Whatcom County special, and calls for their preservation. There are six types of land identified in the plan: open space including agriculture and forests; habitat areas; river access sites; saltwater access sites; large tracts of saltwater shoreline and trail networks. The Natural Heritage map shows large areas dedicated to open space and habitat, with a comprehensive trail network following river corridors and railroad right-of-way. River and salt water access sites dot the map along the Nooksack River and the county's undeveloped marine shorelines.

As a first task toward implementing the plan, meetings were held with planners, biologists, business people, land owners, developers and environmentalists to learn what areas they saw as priorities and how we might work together for preservation. From these sessions came a sense of how people in the county view the land and their relation to it. It also became apparent the program would require more than simply putting conservation easements on as much land as possible. It would require education and outreach as well.



Robyn on the Nooksack - Photograph by David Scherrer

Program implementation happens on three levels:

- **Conservation for individual pieces of property.**

This requires working with individual and corporate property owners on conservation plans to protect the lands in their care and identifying conservation opportunities for specific sites. Conservation easements are the primary tool used, reflecting the *Trust's* traditional emphasis.

- **The landscape approach.**

The Natural Heritage Plan identifies landscapes of importance i.e. forests and watersheds, ridges, mountains and valleys that make this county

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Michael Durbin for THE WHATCOM COUNTY LAND TRUST

The past winter has been a season of change for the *Land Trust*. The Board of Directors extends its thanks to Ann Eissinger for her years of service to the board as our first, and for a long time our only employee. Ann's dedication to the mission of the *Trust* provided the board with much needed continuity of support through the Land Trade and other efforts of the *Trust* during the years of her employment as coordinator for the *Trust*. Ann is with us once again on a contract basis to help produce this newsletter.

We would also like to introduce our two new employees, Robyn duPré and Joe Arnett. Robyn has been with the *Trust* since last fall as Conservation Coordinator for our project with Whatcom County and Joe has been with the *Trust* for three months working under a special private grant to preserve lands on Lummi Island. Robyn and Joe have articles describing their projects in this newsletter. Welcome to you both!

The season of change for Whatcom County never seems to end. The mission of the *Land Trust* is to save unique lands in Whatcom County forever: to meet that mission the *Trust* must continue to evolve as the land use policy and political climate of Whatcom County evolve, and continue to find ways to uncover new conservation opportunities while assuring that our existing conservation obligations are being met. As land values increase, the benefits and importance of the preservation of natural and agricultural lands also increase. While the work of Robyn and Joe represents the latest and perhaps most concentrated effort of the *Land Trust* to preserve lands, it is only the understanding and support of the citizens of Whatcom County that give life to the *Trust*.



NOTICE: SPRING MEMBERSHIP TOUR . . . everyone is welcome

The Whatcom County Land Trust is hosting its second annual membership tour. Everyone is welcome to join us Saturday June 11th and 18th to walk and talk land conservation.

The tours include:

- June 11th, 10:00 a.m. — Teddy Bear Cove and Clark's Point: led by Sue Webber and Bruce Smith
- June 18th, 9:00 a.m. — Nessel Homestead: led by Michael Durbin and Gordon Scott

Please sign up by phoning 733-9078 for June 11th tour and 676-1506 for June 18th tour. Bring a snack, wear boots and dress appropriately for the weather . . . See you there.

Implementing . . . (Continued from Page 1)

unique. This requires a holistic view of conservation goals and human activity in these areas. It means that one must examine the landscape with a view to conservation of natural areas, protection of wildlife habitats, trail creation and enhancement of outdoor recreational opportunities while recognizing that its human use is growing. This approach is exciting and has great potential for conserving larger areas and integrating appropriate human uses into conservation planning.

• Information.

It is important that county residents become informed about the importance of land stewardship. In an ideal future, we will not need Land Trusts, because everyone will recognize the importance of sound stewardship. Unfortunately, that is not yet the case.

As part of this component, the Conservation Coordinator meets with individuals and groups to discuss the natural values of our land and how we can live on it with a light touch. As part of this outreach program, meetings are held with various county organizations in order to spread the gospel of land conservation and stewardship. If you would like such a session, call Robyn duPré at 676-2436.

The program is a collaborative effort among the *Land Trust*, county government and the people of Whatcom County. To be effective, it must have your support! As coordinator of the program, I need your help! Hot tips about that piece of property down the road, requests to speak to your organization and information about lands that are special to you are all welcome.

Together we can make a difference in Whatcom County's natural heritage.

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR NEWSLETTER SPONSORS:

The View From Lummi Island

By Joe Arnett

It is clear on Lummi Island that there are absolute limits to space, and accordingly, all natural resources. There is only so much land: open space, suitable building sites, land for agriculture or forestry. Strange as it seems for an island, there is very little public access to the shore.

Like people in the rest of the County, Lummi Islanders are feeling the pressure of development. The bottleneck of ferry lines makes population growth even more evident; numbers of trucks and passenger vehicles signal in obvious ways the degree of change that is occurring.

Early this year the *Trust*, funded by a local grant, acted to support the conservation efforts on the Island. I was contracted to serve as the Lummi Island conservation coordinator. My job, in supporting the mission of the *Trust*, is to identify and prioritize land suitable for protection, establish and maintain contact with land owners, and represent the *Land Trust* in the Lummi Island planning process.

The Island community has a history of commitment to environmental protection, and my work is a continuation of the efforts of many others. Past successes of the Islanders, and allies from the mainland, include the development of the 1979 Lummi Island Plan, the purchase of significant wildlife habitat from the Trillium Corporation by the Washington Department of Wildlife, and the transfer of School Trust lands to a Natural Resources Conservation Area designation.

I am nearing the end of a three month initiation period of identifying areas with potential for conservation easements or other protection, talking with Islanders about their concerns and ideas, and contacting landowners to inform them of the purposes of the *Land Trust*. There is a sense of great possibilities; people are certainly aware of the need for conservation and enthusiastic about the help the Land Trust has to

offer.

Voluntary compliance with a comprehensive Island plan could be an important part of the overall process of shaping the development of the community. Island residents are working together to develop a plan that is a continuation of work completed in 1979. This plan will address aspects of the local ecology such as groundwater, wildlife habitat, and trail plans that are not generally apparent to realtors, developers or newcomers in the community. Below are some of the priorities we identified for the Island:

Develop more access to the water: One paradox of life on the Island is the lack of access to the shoreline. Several land owners have expressed interest in granting public access to private shoreline, and we are examining the potential tax benefits and liability of such permission.

Maintain the natural quality of Lummi Mountain: The State (DNR and Dept. of Wildlife) and the Federal government own much of the land on the wild south end of the Island, interspersed with a few large

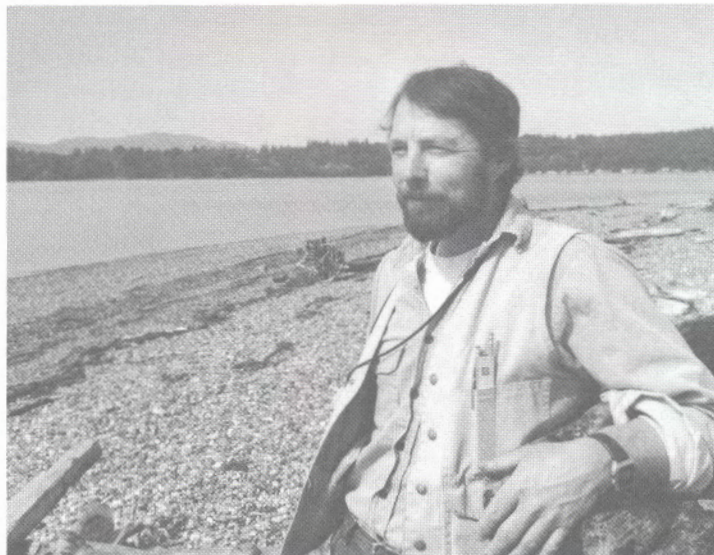
private holdings. This undeveloped land is a valuable resource for wildlife and recreation, and will be increasingly valuable in the future.

Protect significant wetlands: Availability of fresh water is a serious growth limitation. Water recharge, an important function of wetlands, was given priority in the 1979 Lummi Island Plan.

Protect the rural, agricultural quality of the Island: Much of the open land on the island is currently grazing land. Property owners are caught between the economic incentive to subdivide and the pressure of increasing taxes.

Develop a system of trails: Many Islanders think a system of footpaths is a wonderful idea, and an undertaking that could connect the community, literally. A group is working on this project.

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Joe Arnett - Photograph by David Scherrer

Whatcom County Land Trust Facilitates City Greenways Purchase

By Rick Fackler

The *Whatcom County Land Trust* played a significant role in the City of Bellingham's recent acquisition of an important Greenway link at the top of Samish Hill. The 19.7 acre parcel is strategically located on a major proposed greenway corridor, at the intersection of two major trails which will extend from Lake Padden Park to Whatcom Creek. The site will serve as park and provide a wooded back drop as the surrounding area develops.

The owner of this property originally approached the *Land Trust*, wanting to preserve the land, yet needing some financial return. He was uncomfortable involving a government agency. Robyn duPré, the *Land Trust's* conservation coordinator and board members met with the property owner, discussed alternatives for preservation through acquisition, and arranged a meeting between the owner and a Bellingham Greenway Program representative. Negotiations proceeded and the City acquired the parcel on March 1, 1994. This property had been identified as a key site by Bellingham Greenways and the *Land Trust's* attentiveness to City open space priorities and interests made the preservation of the site possible.

The View From Lummi. . . (Continued from Page 3)

Some of these ideas are realistic and even likely; some seem more like wishful thinking. Balancing individual needs, the requirements of the human community, and environmental health is not easy; it requires imagination and patience and practicality. But if the goals are described and understood, and the priorities clear, then perhaps the process to reach them will be less obscure.

Lummi Island is a unique place, and maybe the confines of the surrounding water can insulate a unity and cohesiveness of purpose not possible in larger, less defined communities. If we plan for open space and trails, if we protect agricultural and forestry land and ensure that people have access to the water, then everyone will benefit. Lummi Island will be a better place to live. And Lummi Island will also be a better place to visit. For information call Joe Arnett, 758-2902.

Fall Old Growth Workshop Planned

Dr. Jim Agee, Professor of Forest Ecology from the University of Washington, will lead a local workshop and field trip to one of the oldest forests in the Pacific Northwest. The 800 year old Canyon Lake Creek forest will be the subject of a morning lecture presentation followed by an afternoon field trip to the site with Dr. Agee. Details will be announced in the newspaper prior to the workshop or for more information call Chris Moench, 734-9472.

A Land Steward's Personal Statement

by Janet Taylor

Before I knew that the westside trail of Clark's Point was not open to the public, I frequently walked or ran the length of it, and always felt more *at home on the earth* there than anywhere else I have ever been. It is a very wild, dramatic landscape, but on a human scale, and it always left me feeling exhilarated yet safe. When I found out it was not a public trail, I was sorry for my sake but very glad for the land, because it seemed too unique and pristine a place to tolerate much human messing-about. I was strongly aware of what the land had given me, and I felt there was nothing I could give it in return except to stay off it. A funny kind of reciprocity: the land gives to me by sharing itself with me, and all I can give in return is to ignore it.

So I was pleased to become a land steward. Now I can actively share my life and human abilities with the land, which I do in a very mundane, ordinary way, by picking up litter regularly, and occasionally talking to people in the public area to increase their awareness of the need for respectful treatment of the land. My next task is to do what I can for the madronas of the Point. Arthur Kruckeberg has told me that the older madronas throughout Puget Sound are dying from a pathogen and that nothing can be done to save them. Nonetheless, I wish there were some way I could ritually on ceremonially acknowledge their impending doom. They are the natural form that has given the most to my eyes, hands and imagination, and it breaks my heart that I have no way to touch or help them in return.

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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 676-2436.