



The challenge of stewardship

Rand Jack

To be sound stewards of forest and other land, we must mold our management to be compatible with natural systems.

The following address was delivered by Rand Jack during the "Wealth in Our Woodlands" workshop at Bloedel Donovan Community Center, May 30, 1996. This program for small private forest landowners was sponsored by the Washington State University science extension program for Whatcom County.

How many of you own forested land?

How many of you expect to be around 100 years from now?

How many of you expect your land to be around 100 years from now?

And therein lies the challenge of stewardship. How do we account for our impact on something much older (and perhaps much wiser in its ability to sustain itself) than we are, something that will be here long after we are gone? Something which we and future generations ultimately depend upon for our well-being—the land. The land not in the sense of soil, but in the sense of an integrated biotic community rooted in the soil, a web of living things.

Land differs from our cars and clothes in that it will continue to be needed longer than we can see into the future, long after our cars and clothes have again become part of the land.

We depend on the longevity of land as a productive biotic community not only to provide products such as wood fiber, food and Christmas wreaths, but also to give us clean air

and water, to stabilize climate, maintain the carbon cycle, and to maintain its own health. Given this dependency, it is incumbent on us, especially we who are forest landowners, to care for our lands. That relationship of care I call stewardship.

I would like to first mention the problem posed by stewardship, then address the ethical attitude essential to become successful stewards.

Stewardship requires a reversal of this approach. Stewardship requires that we alter *human* systems, including how we manage our forest lands, so that we do not undermine the functioning of natural systems. Rather than just asking what we want from the forest, we begin by asking what must we leave in the forest so that it can continue indefinitely as a healthy natural system? Only then can we decide what to take out, and how to take it out.

Turning again to Genesis, people have found here, and in the story of Noah, support for a stewardship relation to land. Twice God tells Eve and Adam to have dominion over the earth and over all the fish and birds and everything that creeps on the earth. Going back to the Hebrew roots, dominion can be understood to mean *safeguarding or protecting* the earth, not destroying it or merely exploiting it. After all, according to Genesis, everything that God created was "good" in the beginning.

To be sound stewards of forest and other land, we must mold our management to be compatible with natural systems. Thus, one task for a steward is to gain some understanding and technical advice regarding how those natural systems work, something which the science of ecology can provide. We need to study land, resource and forest management, as well as land economics.

Now the second point: Our ethical attitude. To be stewards of the land we need to

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Land Trust slide show soon available

As part of our community outreach program, a slide show presentation of Whatcom County properties and Land Trust conservation methods is being designed by Board members Joan Casey and Bob Keller.

We are looking forward to presenting this new program for the North Whatcom Rotary Club, on February 20.

We welcome invitations to speak at other organizations and community events. If you are involved with an organization which would be interested in hearing more about the Land Trust, please call our office.

Tax strategy books for landowners

Several issues of *Preserving Family Lands*, by Stephen Small, have been purchased for the Land Trust office. This book is a simple introduction to tax issues in land ownership. You may find this book helpful:

- If you think you will be leaving land to your children
- If you think you will be inheriting land from your parents
- If you have land you care about and don't want to lose it

Books cost \$6.00 each. Please call our office if you would like a copy for yourself or your family.

Can you help?

Occasionally, we rely on the generosity of our supporters to fill specific Land Trust needs. Please call us if you can provide one of the following:

- Legal size file cabinet
- Slide projector
- Volunteers to spend an afternoon or evening with us stuffing envelopes. (Refreshments will be provided!)

Memorials and Gifts in Honor Of

Are you looking for a way to honor someone in a very special way? A gift to Whatcom Land Trust in honor of birthdays, anniversaries, etc., may be the answer.

When you give a gift in honor of someone, we will send them a special acknowledgment indicating that a gift has been made for the special occasion. Gifts also may be made in memory of an individual.

Let us know what you think

You'll soon receive a Membership Survey in the mail with the annual fund-raising campaign materials.

We truly appreciate our supporters and we hope every one of you will take the time to fill out the membership survey form and return it to us with your donation. Let us know how we're doing. Your support is important to us.

Stewardship

Continued from page 1

change our ethical consciousness and to enlarge the scope of our ethical obligations.

We feel "ethical" obligations toward those with whom we share a community of interests. To have an ethical obligation to others suggests that, in at least some circumstances, we put their interests above our own. This is most apparent with family. Mothers and fathers regularly put the interests of their children above their own. Most of us feel a further sense of ethical obligation well beyond our family, extending perhaps to neighbors, fellow workers, church members, the homeless, people in our town, other American citizens, our nation, and perhaps all of humanity. Individuals and cultures draw lines and shape their ethical obligations as they feel appropriate and as they are taught by religion, elders and tradition.

Most people probably limit ethical obligation to only include humans, and perhaps to include animals for whom they have special responsibility, such as their pets and livestock. I believe that stewardship requires us to expand this circle of obligation to include land and forests—to follow what Aldo Leopold described nearly 50 years ago in *A Sand County Almanac* as a "land ethic." For Leopold, "the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. . . . a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land community to being a member and citizen of it. It implies respect for the fellow members, and respect for the community as such."

At some point, we might even need to put the land's interests above our own.

Including land within one's ethical community changes our relationship to land. Land no longer is just an economic object but rather something for which we have obligations of care, obligations to help insure the healthy functioning of the land's natural systems. At some point, we might even need to put the land's interests above our own.

Stewardship expands ethics, particularly to include the land with which we have a special relationship because it is "ours." Previously we have thought of ownership as meaning that we could do nearly anything we pleased with our land, within the limits of law. We now realize that ownership has a more profound meaning, one that includes ethical obligation, an obligation of stewardship.

Today we are rethinking the relationship between our personal interests and the interests of the forest. In doing so, we must rethink the relationship between our short term self-interest, usually measured in economic terms, and our long term self-interest measured in clean air and water, a stable climate, the diversity of life, and the remarkable ability of natural systems to perpetuate themselves. Our families, our fellow workers, church members, people in our towns, the unborn, all share these interests. Indeed, our own fate and that of all other people depends on long-term interests which are the object of stewardship.

And thus, interestingly, the land ethic of stewardship comes full circle to confront our ethical obligation to other members of the human community.

Why should you become a Land Trust member?

Second annual fund-raising campaign begins October 28

Julie Carpenter

This year, the Whatcom Land Trust has developed a membership policy to complement our annual fund-raising campaign. You'll soon receive a newly developed Membership Survey in the mail along with the annual request for your hard-earned dollars.

Why should you join?

When you join the Land Trust you are supporting voluntary land conservation of special places in Whatcom County.

Your membership donation helps us provide conservation counseling and information resources to land owners and the community at large. The more support we receive, the more we are able to work with private land owners and local government to protect wildlife habitat, scenic, recreational, timber, open space, and agricultural lands.

When you join the Land Trust you are supporting voluntary land conservation of special places in Whatcom County.

As a member, you will continue to receive this newsletter, *The Steward*. You will be invited to special member-only activities such as private tours of conservation properties not open to the public, (see photos on page 6), invitations to plays, film series, and other events.

Most importantly, as a Land Trust member you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you are a vital part of helping to "keep Whatcom County green," today and for future generations.

Our goal:

To be a member-supported organization

The Land Trust continues to be primarily a volunteer organization. Lawyers, planners,

realtors, photographers, homemakers, scientists, designers, and private business people donate their skill and time -- hundreds of hours a year -- to promote the work of the Trust.

Because of our volunteers, and the WLT Board of Directors' commitment to minimizing the cost of basic operations, **our goal of becoming a membership-supported organization is attainable.** We can sustain our organization with regular contributions from within Whatcom County.

If 400 Land Trust members gave \$50 each, that's \$20,000, enough to run the office for a year. If, five members give \$500, 25 members give \$250, 50 members give \$100, 100 members give \$50, and 100 give \$25, that will work as well. These numbers show that you are critical to the success and stability of the WLT.

Recently, WLT had the good fortune to receive a grant from the Seattle-based Wilburforce Foundation. This money is being used for "organizational development," including establishing a Land Trust office and part-time staff. **Our ability to continue maintaining an effective organization depends on Land Trust members donating generously every year.**

Are you currently a WLT member?

Just what does "membership" mean?

The Fund-raising and Membership Development Committee defines a WLT member as anyone who supports the Land Trust financially, by in-kind donation, or by volunteering.

Committee members have also determined no one should be denied the Land Trust newsletter or related information due to inability to contribute. While the Trust is in the process of streamlining our data base to eliminate anyone not truly interested in the work of the Trust, we will certainly retain the names of everyone who wishes to remain informed.

Our ability to maintain an effective organization will rely on Land Trust members donating generously every year.

The Mission of the Whatcom Land Trust is to preserve and protect unique natural, scenic, agricultural and open space land in Whatcom County through acquisition of perpetual conservation easements or other land interest that insure the protection of the resource value.

Whatcom Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working for voluntary land conservation in Whatcom County. The Steward is published three times each year by the WLT. Your comments are welcomed. Complimentary copies are available by calling the Land Trust office, 650-9470.

Newsletter Committee Chair Chris Moench

Contributors Chris Moench, Rand Jack, Bob Keller, Julie Carpenter, Pat Karlberg

Desktop Publishing Sheri Emerson

Do you have a favorite Whatcom County place?

Whatcom Land Trust is producing a high quality photographic book featuring lands that make Whatcom County a special place to live. Board member Bob Keller chairs this project.

Your Favorite Place?

If you have a personal and unusual spot in Whatcom County that might be included in the Land Trust's new book, *Whatcom Places*, please let us know where it is. We are looking for those unique, rich and lovely locations or views that help define Northwest Washington as special.

Progress Report

A large share of the labor and creativity for this book is being donated. **Rod Burton of Pyramid Imagelab** will contribute all of the graphic design and layout. **Brett Baunton of Digital Photo Imaging** has offered the Trust reduced rates for digital scanning. **Premier Graphics** will donate the printing of a fund-raising brochure. Photographers who have volunteered their time and work are **Baunton, Burton, Tore Ofteness, Mark Bergsma, Lee Mann, Ann Yow, Rod Del Pozo, Gene Davis, Ira Spring and Jonathan Duncan**. The Trust also has access to photo archives at the **Port of Bellingham, ARCO**, and other business firms. **Steve Brinn of Trillium** is assisting with fund-raising.

Writing and editing of the book's text is also donated by **Aimee Trebon, Wendy Walker, Dave Peebles, Binda Colebrook and Ron Polinder**. **Ivan Doig** will write a special introduction on "The Sense of Place." We have

permission from **Annie Dillard** to extract appropriate sections from her book, *The Living*.

We are convinced that a high quality publication will increase appreciation for the natural wonder of Whatcom County while promoting awareness of how to protect it for the future.

Whatcom Places will be funded through contributions from individuals, foundations, and local businesses. If you have advice on potential major financial supporters, or on the content of the book, please call our office, 650-9470, or contact members of the Outreach Committee: **Chris Moench, Dave Peebles, Tom Wood, Ann Yow, Rod Burton, Bob Keller, Duane Sweeney, Cindy Klein, Julie Carpenter, Chuck Robinson, Wendy Walker, Scott Brennan**.

The Trust is deeply grateful to all the individuals and firms that have responded so enthusiastically to this project. We are convinced that a high quality publication will increase appreciation for the natural wonder of Whatcom County while promoting awareness of how to protect it for the future.

This view of the Nooksack river is one of photographer Brett Baunton's favorite places in Whatcom County.
(Photo by B. Baunton, Digital Photo Imaging)



One year later

Squires Lake has been "an excellent example of effective public and private cooperation"

The Whatcom Land Trust sent the following letter to Whatcom County Council members, past and present, thanking them for their role in acquiring and developing Squires Lake. Our gratitude goes to all the supporting players who helped obtain this tremendously valuable asset for Whatcom County Parks.

Dear County Council Members,

In May, 1995, the Whatcom Land Trust and the County Parks Department brought a proposal to the County Council to purchase Squires Lake, a beautiful 87-acre piece of property consisting of woods, wetlands and a 10-acre lake just a few miles south of Bellingham. The Land Trust secured an option on the property and found an anonymous donor who would pay \$300,000, half of the purchase price. The remainder of the purchase price would be paid from Conservation Futures dollars earmarked by law for park land and open space acquisition.

Neighbors and Council members raised a number of objections to the proposed purchase. The most significant of these were the inadequate dam at the end of the lake, safety and convenience problems posed by using the existing gravel road as primary access to a future park, and the cost of improvements necessary for a park. The Land Trust and the Parks Department advised the Council that these problems could and would be solved without public expenditure. The Council approved the acquisition by a narrow vote.

The dam has now been replaced with a pleasing structure approved by the Department of Ecology. The 12 X 24 inch beams across the top of the dam could support passage of Desert Storm troops. A new route for access to the future park has been obtained so that the existing gravel road will be used only for maintenance and handicap access. Needed improvements are nearly completed without expenditure of public funds and the Land Trust holds a cash account dedicated to future work and park maintenance.

County Parks and the Land Trust made a pledge to the Council, and we are pleased to report that our pledge has been kept - a dam, access, and an untapped public purse. This is an excellent example of effective cooperation between the public and private sector, of what can be accomplished when people work together by focusing on possibilities rather than being impaled by problems.

From every perspective, Squires Lake Park will be a wonderful asset for our community for decades. For making this possible, we thank the Council for their final vote of confidence and the private donors who gave so generously to this project -- the anonymous benefactors, Trillium Corporation, Cowden Gravel, Wilder Construction, Harold Simon of MKB Construction, Craig Cole of Brown & Cole, and Richard Eggemeyer of Coldwell Banker Miller Real Estate, Inc. We also thank Whatcom County Parks for sharing our vision -- Roger DeSpain, Larry Simkins, Steve LeCocq, and others who answer phones, punch the keyboards, paint the fences and clear the trails so that we can all enjoy the beauty that makes Whatcom County a very rewarding place to live.

Conservation Futures Levy update

Advisory vote may determine the future of park tax

November's ballot will include an advisory vote on the Whatcom County Conservation Futures Levy. Through this ballot, the County Council seeks to measure support for publicly funded conservation of our County's heritage of open spaces, shorelines, wildlife habitat and park land.

The ballot title will read: **Should Whatcom County continue to levy a tax of no more than 6.25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to fund a reserve from which to finance purchases of property or property rights for conservation purposes?**

Several important points should be noted:

1. Should the levy be **continued**? The levy was originally enacted by the County Council in January of 1992. This is a tax we have been paying for four years.
2. The amount of the levy is **6.25 cents per \$1,000 assessed valuation**. That works out to \$6.25 per year on a \$100,000 home, less than the cost of a cheap hair cut or five gallons of gas. At this rate the levy generates about \$500,000 per year for the fund.
3. The funds finance **purchases** of property or property rights. Land cannot be acquired with these funds through eminent domain. Citizens can honor property rights, by setting aside funds to pay for benefits we all receive.
4. The levy dollars accumulate in a fund that can only be used to acquire land, or interest in land, for **conservation**, to ensure that the present generation leaves a healthy legacy of natural lands to our children and grandchildren. The levy is the only locally collected and controlled source of funds for conservation.

As funds from Washington State become more limited, the importance of local public money has increased. Your vote to continue the levy makes a commitment to the quality of life your children and grandchildren will enjoy.

While the ballot is "advisory," a negative vote may lead the Council to terminate the Conservation Futures Levy.

Whatcom Land Trust

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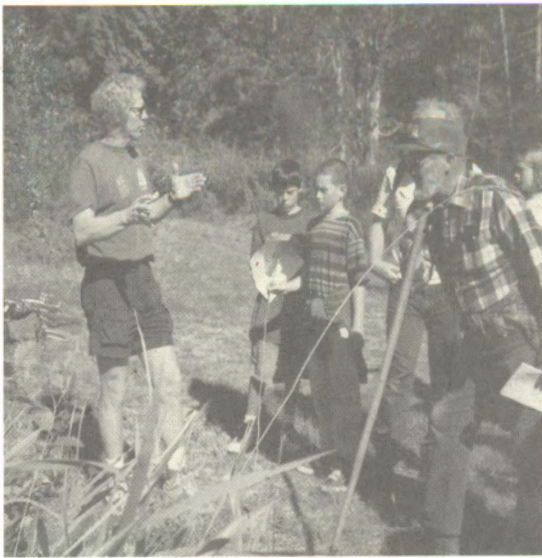
Mon.-Thurs.

Squires Lake Tour

Land Trust members enjoyed a private tour of Squires Lake on Sunday, September 29. Larry Simkins and Steve LeCocq of Whatcom County Parks led the tour around the lake and discussed the history of the property, as well as proposed changes for trails, parking and access for the future park.

Pictured at left: Larry Simkins (left) discusses the county acquisition of this property with Riley Manke, Jim Sullivan (behind) and Jim Futrelle.

The Land Trust will sponsor private property tours for our members next winter and spring. Phone the Land Trust office, 650-9470, for more information, (Photos courtesy of Joan Casey.)



WHATCOM LAND TRUST

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