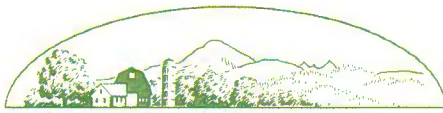


The



Newsletter of Whatcom Land Trust
Whatcom County, Washington

Steward

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

Volume 22 Number 1

Fall 2013

The Great Whatcom County Reconveyance



Recreation for all seasons.

photo: Daniel Probst

Rand Jack

Some things in life are well worth waiting for—finding the right partner, developing special skills, growing a business, the birth of a child. For our community, the Great Whatcom County Reconveyance—the birth of an 8,844 acre forest reserve park in the Lake Whatcom watershed at Bellingham’s doorstep—certainly belongs on that list. The process has been long and sometimes difficult, but the end result will forever enhance our quality of life and that of future generations.

The reconveyance saga began in 2005 when then County Executive Pete Kremen made a bold and imaginative proposal for a huge land transfer from DNR to Whatcom County under the reconveyance statute. The proposal met many challenges along the way but now all signs indicate that the protracted reconveyance process is drawing to a successful ...continued on page 4

Maple Creek Reach, Future Jewel on Hwy 542

Natalie Whitman

Most WLT supporters and partners who have met our Director of Lands, Eric Carabba, likely think of him as an earnest, focused man. Big dopey grins and skipping just aren’t a part of Eric’s typical professional demeanor. So when he skipped through the door late on a Thursday in August and teased his co-workers through a big dopey grin, it was clear that something really, really good was going on.

Eric had just returned from Maple Creek where he observed four of the five Pacific salmon species all sharing about four cubic feet of water. Up and down the shallow side channels that braid through a portion of WLT’s Maple Creek Reach Preserve, Chinook, Pink and Sockeye salmon were thrashing their way toward the perfect spawning spot—many of them finding it right at that spot. Unfazed by the presence of these relatively enormous predators, three-inch Coho calmly schooled—somehow aware that spawning fish don’t eat.



Chinook (King), Sockeye and Pink salmon, spawning in Maple Creek. Just out of the frame is a school of Coho fry whose parents spawned here last winter, alongside Chum. The water here is less than one foot deep.

When the team headed out to witness this wonder, Kingfishers scolded incessantly over the disruption to their hunting among the several crystal-clear beaver ponds that contain more of those small Coho—wary Coho, though, as these share the ponds with Rainbow and Cutthroat trout who aren’t fasting. In the treetops, a pair of bald eagles rested, digesting their ample brunch of spawned-out fish. Coyote scat and otter tracks appeared in the path. ...continued on page 5

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Bob Keller Retires From Board: A Tribute

Rand Jack

When Bob Keller joined the Whatcom Land Trust Board in 1994, we had no office and no employees; our phone was the home phone of the president, and our budget was \$30,000. With Bob playing a major role, all of this would change in the coming years.

Typical of a recently retired professor, Bob began with a question, a question that guided his 19 years on the board: "Where can I contribute?" Though Bob contributed in many ways—passionate commitment to our mission, tireless work, dependability and sound judgment, a moral compass—he identified reaching out and building relationships with the community as a major need of the Land Trust. In service of this theme, Bob created three major projects that are milestones in our development.

1. In 1996, Bob proposed that WLT publish a book, not a pamphlet as many land trusts had done, but a real book that came to be named *Whatcom Places*. For Bob, the purpose of *Whatcom Places* was to spread a message in the community: "To put the importance of what we do in concrete form."

The vehicle for reaching out into the community was not only the book, but also the process by which the book came into being. In what became a hallmark of Bob's work with the Trust, he formed the Book Committee of largely non-board members from the community who would make all of the major decisions regarding the book. This was a vital introduction to WLT for community members, two of whom subsequently became board members.

From the outset, Bob was committed to financing the publication of *Whatcom Places*. Having no fund-raising experience, he did what any good academic would do. He bought a couple of books on fund-raising. One called *How to Master the Art of Selling* declared, "You have to believe in your product." And he did. "The way I thought about it was that Whatcom Land Trust and the book were for everyone in the county. I was actually helping people, benefiting the donor, by



Bob Keller and Pat Karlberg on the porch of their Marblemount cabin.

asking them for money." With this attitude, Bob raised \$70,000 to finance the book. Photographs, writing, design—everything but printing and proofing was donated.

Featured Funder: Thank you REI!

WLT has enjoyed the support of REI for years. Grants from the REI Gives program have funded habitat restoration projects, volunteer programs and recreation enhancement projects. REI employees have come out in force to eradicate invasive plants and install natives. Rewards and prizes for volunteer workers, items for our benefit auctions and even a big ol' pot of chili for a rain-chilled crew are among other generous donations WLT has had the opportunity to appreciate. We couldn't be more grateful and we look forward to many happy years of partnership.



REI sponsors our Earth Day work parties, this year held at our Catalyst property in Acme.

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Nick Saling, Roger Weiss, Natalie Whitman

Many businesses, foundations and individuals contributed to the making of Whatcom Places, including some of the most prominent businesses and individuals in the community. For Bob, fund-raising was just another form of community outreach. He surprised himself that he “actually enjoyed fundraising, going out into the community, meeting new people and bringing them into the fold.”

In 2006, Bob formed a new Book Committee and replicated the process to produce *Whatcom Places II*.

2. With *Whatcom Places* in hand, Bob created the Business Partner Program composed of businesses pledging sustained financial support to the Land Trust. Again Bob formed a committee from the community to help develop the program, this time the Fundraising/Outreach Committee. Both the committee and the Business Partner Program “created personal connection between Whatcom Land Trust and the community.” Before turning the program over to a new staff person, Bob had recruited 33 business partners as the financial backbone of WLT.

3. In 2001, before Whatcom County was overrun by auctions, Bob initiated the first WLT Great Outdoor Auction. The tool for implementing this and the first several auctions was, you guessed it, the Auction Committee. For Bob, “the primary purpose of the auction was not fund-raising but community relations and outreach.”

When asked to look back, this is what Bob described:

“I have been fortunate in my life to be doing what I enjoyed. Working to implement our mission has been personally engaging, rewarding and fulfilling. Looking at the list of what the Land Trust has done over my 19 years—Canyon Lake Creek, Lily Point, Stimson Nature Reserve, Point Whitehorn, etc.—the results of what I worked on are tangible and concrete. When we walk on the trails, this is the result of what I helped accomplish. It’s right under your feet.

The historical and current view of our society is exploitive and destructive of nature. This is part of our culture that needs to be counteracted and changed. Whatcom Land Trust is a local and immediate part of this change. This thinking led me to propose

adding “stewardship” to our mission statement. Working with other people who share this concern and value has been rewarding and sustaining for me.”

Bob placed a conservation easement on his 44-acre Wild and Scenic Cascade River property. “This made me feel ethically consistent with my work for the Land Trust.

If I am telling people about it, I should be willing to do it myself.”

Filling Bob’s shoes on the board will not happen any time soon. Most of us could crawl in and take a nap in his shoes—if only he would change his socks.

Thank you Bob for providing us a model of how to be the best possible board member. ▲

Current Business Sponsors

(Cash Funders)

- Blossom Management
- Acme Ice Cream
- Rocket Donuts
- Pacific Survey and Engineering
- Phillips 66
- Rotary Club of Bellingham



Pacific Surveying & Engineering



Current Business Partners

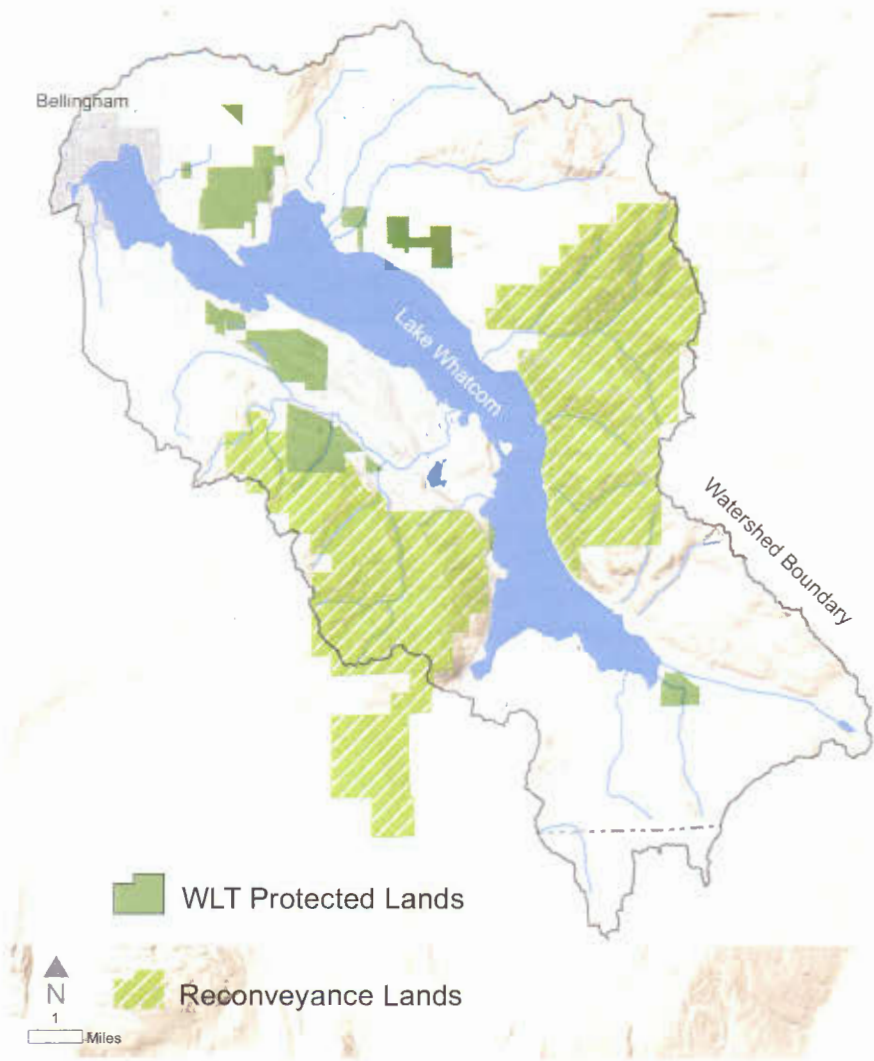
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- 7c Creative
- Acme Ice Cream
- AdventuresNW
- Element Solutions
- Harkness Contracting
- John Blethen of New Whatcom Interiors
- Lithtex NW
- Mark Vondrachek of Raincountry Refrigeration
- Metcalf Hodges PS
- Pacific Survey and Engineering
- Rocket Donuts
- Roderick C. Burton – Art & Design
- Rebecca Reich of The Muljat Group
- Zender Thurston PS

Planned Giving

Earlier this year, WLT was honored to learn that Dr. Patricia Otto, owner and exemplary steward of the Agate Pond Preserve on the east side of Squalicum Mountain, has bequeathed her land and home to us. Upon her passing, WLT will take up the reins and ensure that her forest and ponds and all the plants and animals that rely on them continue to thrive.

Dr. Otto is not the first to bestow such an honor. Bequests through planned giving have historically been crucial to supporting WLT’s day-to-day operations and land protection programs. Planned giving is a great way to ensure that your investment in Whatcom County continues beyond your lifetime. To find out more about planned giving, contact Natalie Whitman at 360 746-3164 or Natalie@whatcomlandtrust.org If you have named us in your will, please let us know so we may have the opportunity to thank you.



Reconveyance continued from page one

conclusion. On March 12, 2013, by a 5 to 2 vote, the County Council adopted a resolution formally requesting the Board of Natural Resources to transfer 8,844 forested acres from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to Whatcom County. This is the last action required of Whatcom County. On July 2, 2013, the State Board of Natural Resources approved the transfer. The Growth Management Hearing Board dismissed a challenge to the reconveyance on July 17, 2013.

The 8,844 transfer is called a reconveyance because the land is being returned or re-conveyed to its previous owner, Whatcom County. Whatcom and other counties obtained forested tracts in the early part of the 20th century when owners cut the timber and then stopped paying taxes. The legislature required these properties be deeded over to the State, but provided that the counties could have the land returned for park purposes. And that is what Whatcom County has done.

From the beginning, County Parks and Recreation Director, Mike McFarlane, has guided the complicated and at times emotional reconveyance process through the local and state political mazes with sound judgment, intelligence, fairness, openness, candor, and calm. Now he has another task, creating the new forest reserve park. As he has said: "The reconveyance is an incredible addition to the County's

park system for both recreation and resource preservation. The sheer size of the area helps preserve the natural processes and important wildlife habitat around Lake Whatcom while providing new opportunities and places to explore and enjoy the great outdoors here in Whatcom County. Over time the forest will take on a more natural character and function as it matures. Like the Chuckanut Mountain area, a well-constructed trail system will lead users throughout these lands providing an experience rarely available in other communities."

County Council chairperson Kathy Kershner likewise looks forward to people enjoying this marvelous acquisition. "We are fortunate to live in what I believe is the most beautiful place on earth. Being part of the opportunity to create the new Lake Whatcom park that will preserve and allow us to enjoy that beauty is something that I am truly proud of. I would like to see that the old and the young alike are able to enjoy this beautiful area. We want to preserve the uniqueness while allowing the maximum enjoyment by everyone."

As indicated by Eric Brown, Director of Advocacy for the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition and an avid mountain biker and trail builder, user groups are ready to help: "Our future park will become an amazing trail network with loops through beautiful 2nd growth forest that will now mature to old-growth. The connectivity from Bellingham through Galbraith all the way down to Squires Lake will allow trail users to have big days in the woods without even touching their car! The good news is the WMBC has always rolled up our sleeves to build and maintain trail and we'll be ready to help create this future gem for our county and visitors alike."

When Pete Kremen asked if Whatcom Land Trust would support the land transfer, we responded enthusiastically. The benefits of the reconveyance were overwhelming: a huge and maturing forest reserve park, unsurpassed recreational opportunities next door to the county's largest urban population, protection for an invaluable source of drinking water, conservation of wildlife habitat, an amenity attracting energetic entrepreneurs and skilled workers to our community. All of this came at a cost to the County of about \$35 per acre and the loss of virtually no timber jobs because the land being returned to Whatcom County was reconfigured to move the best parkland to local control and leave the most productive public timberland in the Lake Whatcom watershed in the hands of DNR.

Kremen put the accomplishment in perspective: "When I first embarked on a massive transfer of forestland in the Lake Whatcom Watershed from DNR to Whatcom



Trails for feet, bikes and hooves.

County, I knew it would not be easy. Now, eight years later, we have final state and county approval. Of all I have accomplished in 29 years of public service, I am most proud of the reconveyance. It will help protect the lake and its watershed and provide amazing recreation opportunities for posterity. One hundred years from now, the community will still be enjoying the benefits.”

WLT has worked with Conservation Northwest to facilitate a coalition of conservation and recreation groups supporting the reconveyance. We have been at the forefront in providing accurate information to the County Council and responding to concerns expressed by council members and opponents. Orally and in writing we have participated in public meetings in Bellingham and Olympia and have worked cooperatively with the County at every step of the way.

When council members Kathy Kershner and Sam Crawford told us that they would not support the reconveyance unless the Mt. Baker School



photo: Conservation NW

A forest for everyone to enjoy.

District were fairly compensated for timber revenues lost due to the reconveyance, Whatcom Land Trust responded. We reviewed available information on future lost revenue and after several meetings agreed that a one-time payment of \$500,000 would fairly compensate the School District. The School Board unanimously approved the agreement. We raised half the money and

contributed the rest: Kershner and Crawford were part of the five person majority approving the reconveyance. Assessing the long and challenging process, Kremen observed: “An enthusiastic coalition of supporters and the dedicated work of County Parks Director Mike McFarlane were essential to bringing the reconveyance to a successful conclusion. In my mind, the commitment and persistence of Whatcom Land Trust stands out. The Land Trust helped keep the process moving, resolving obstacles that could have, and in one instance would have, brought things to a halt. Without the Land Trust, we would not likely be ready to enjoy the fruits of the reconveyance.”

Mike McFarlane shared a similar assessment: “While truly a community effort, the Whatcom Land Trust was instrumental in helping make the reconveyance possible. Throughout the long and complex process, WLT’s commitment to the project never faltered and provided critical support at key times during the past seven years.”

Though legal challenges are still possible, we hope that opponents are now ready to move on. DNR is finishing surveys and legal documents, and we expect the transaction to be completed before the end of the year. The people of Whatcom County can now look forward to enjoying the considerable fruits of the Great Whatcom County Reconveyance—by far the largest reconveyance in the history of the State. We are deeply grateful to five County Council members, 3 Democrats and 2 Republicans, who rose above the fray and had the courage and vision to vote for the long-term well being of our community - Carl Weimer, Ken Mann, Pete Kremen, Kathy Kershner and Sam Crawford. Something certainly worth waiting and working for. ▲

Maple Creek Reach

Continued from page one

A fish surveyor working for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife related a story about an amusing bear encounter she had on the creek last winter when the Chum—fifth of the five Pacific Salmon species—were spawning in the creek. By midday, big dopey grins had spread throughout the group. This dynamic ecosystem, thriving on just a portion of the Preserve, is what our Director of Land Management, Nick Saling, sees as the future of the entire north bank of this reach of the river.

Last summer WLT purchased 21 acres of prime North Fork river front in Maple Falls on Hwy 542. This purchase connected two other pieces acquired in 2010 and 2003. WLT had gone from conserving a bit here and a bit there to creating a single preserve all along the half mile of Maple Creek Reach.

Since then, we have removed a burned house, sagging barns and most of the old barbed wire fencing. The site has been thoroughly assessed for seasonal stream flow, flora and fauna present, and salmon habitat potential. A restoration plan has been completed for the entire Reach.

We will restore old farm ditches to their natural state as meandering channels, install large woody debris and plant the banks to keep the spring-fed streams cool. We’ll plant to encourage beaver, who will pitch in on the restoration by creating the ponds that provide perfect homes for rearing Coho and mature trout. Thickets of native plants will provide habitat for resident and migratory birds, native mammals and amphibians. The largest former pasture will remain a meadow habitat for many species, including elk.

WLT is actively seeking supporters for this project. This is an exciting opportunity to become part of a highly visible, accessible restoration project at its outset—at the “before” stage of a process that will produce stunning “after” outcomes for our children, grand children and great-grand children to enjoy. Watch our website, starting November 1, for details on this amazing project and on how you can be a part of it. Meanwhile, plan to join us for a work party at the Preserve on Saturday, November 23 and go to our website for video of the salmon spawning in Maple Creek. ▲



photos: WLT staff

Ryan Vasak of BTC's fisheries program conducts a survey of the fish in Maple Creek. In the bottom photo he's holding two Coho: a newly-emerged fry and a one year-old fingerling.

WLT's Stewardship Workforce Natalie Whitman

Sixteen Volunteer Stewards support our Director of Land Management, Nick Saling, in his mission as land steward. A dozen are assigned to preserves across the county, monitoring conditions, reporting observations, recommending management activities and acting as ambassadors to visitors to the preserves. Nick is actively recruiting new members to this corps. Volunteer Stewards complete a one-day training (the next will be offered this winter) and make a commitment to visit the property at least four times per year, attend work parties that might be scheduled for the site, and study both the natural and legal history of the land. They are invited to join a closed Facebook group where they can discuss the challenges and thrills they are experiencing and share information and strategies.

No special skills are required of our Volunteer Stewards, although two or three sites are best served by people of a certain temperament, as Carl Franz's recent Facebook post indicates:

...you can add me (as Volunteer Steward) to the Hutchinson inholding. In a burst of over-enthusiasm I decided to bushwhack to the property from Mosquito Lake Road. If you're interested in following my example I suggest that you get your affairs in order first. It was a hellwalk of historic proportions, enough mud, nettles and devil's club to discourage a Sasquatch!

Most preserves present much tamer terrain, so don't be shy—if Volunteer Stewardship sounds like an interesting prospect, watch for a training announcement this fall or email Nick@whatcomlandtrust.org. Details on the next training will be published in our monthly e-blast and on our website.

Our Volunteer Stewards:

- John Bremer: Rover
- Geoff Middough: Forestry consultant
- Monique Brewer: Ladies of the Lake and Racehorse Creek
- Carl Franz: Craver and Hutchinson Creek
- Bob Lemon and Annie Prevost: Wildcat Reach
- Dennis and Marilyn Marynick: Hogan
- Janet Murray: Ladies of the Lake
- Alex Rhoades: Overby Farmstead
- Alice Shilhanek: Pratum
- Steve Irving: Kelsey
- David Stalheim and Celia Kadushin: Bottiger's Pond
- Steven Harper: Ladies of the Lake
- Dave Church: Maple Creek Reach
- David Curley: Harrison (pending)
- Kim Clarkin: Port Blakely
- Michael Taylor: Maple Creek Reach (pending)

WCC crew photos: WLT staff

Washington Conservation Corps Crew

For the first time ever, Whatcom Land Trust employed a Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew to advance stewardship projects on a number of preserves. We only had them half time, but couldn't be happier with the work these six young people completed. They cleared debris, brushed out trails, removed a culvert, demolished a derelict building, prepped planting sites, installed transducers to monitor stream flow, learned chainsaw skills while thinning trees, and helped stage and supervise the muddiest and biggest planting party in WLT history. We look forward to meeting a new WCC crew this spring.



Crew members helped to coordinate the efforts of nearly 300 volunteers who completed the final planting at WLT's Catalyst property in Acme, and planted the millionth tree for Whatcom Conservation District's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).



Providing professional training is part of WLT's agreement with the WCC. What better way to get an old Christmas tree stand thinned than by hosting a chainsaw-training for our crew and five other regional WCC crews.



Megan, Russ, Jen, Michelle and Maggie pose here (Arturo not pictured) with an impressive array of clean-up trophies.

Tours, Activities and Work Parties

First Friday Field Trips

On any first Friday of any month, tag along with Nick Saling, WLT's Director of Stewardship, on a monitoring visit to a WLT preserve. This will be an opportunity to visit a new place, step behind the scenes at a familiar place, learn about WLT's stewardship goals and responsibilities and experience the life of a land steward first-hand. **Please email Greg@whatcomlandtrust.org (360 650-9470) to reserve a spot. Times and meet-up places vary and are announced the week of the outing.**

October 4: (Limit 6)

Visit Racehorse Creek and Bear Creek. Spend a full day in the woods! Racehorse Creek is a popular spot for local recreation, so you may get conscripted to haul out some trash and kick apart a fire ring or two, but it will be worth it. Fossils are abundant, the creek is, well—a racehorse of a waterway, and the geology is raw.

This will be Nick's first visit to Bear Creek, so everyone in the group will get to discover it together. Expect some rough terrain (trekking poles are recommended) with some possible bushwhacking. Don't let that keep you home, though! You don't have to follow Nick into the deepest and darkest.

November 1: (Limit 8)

Visit our Rutsatz Salmon property on the Rutsatz Road off the north end of Hwy 9. Elk have recently been observed in the field above the river bed we will be visiting for half a day. We may intersect with the beginning of the Chum salmon run which draws eagles to the site by the dozens. Terrain includes a very short but steep descent into the floodplain of the North Fork of the Nooksack River, with its cobbled bed, brushy areas and soggy channel banks.

December 14:

Not the first Friday—in fact, not a Friday at all—this will be a (Saturday) volunteer appreciation event at Wildcat Reach. Keep an eye on our website's events page for details.



Chum and Eagle Tour

December 28 1-4p (Limit 20)

For 22 years WLT has protected salmon and eagle habitat along the Nooksack River. Late December is a great time to appreciate the results of this work. Chum salmon spawning on the North Fork lure eagles in large numbers; some have said that it qualifies as one of the best eagle-watching sites in the Lower 48. This is a great activity for your holiday guests visiting from out of state.

Join us for a tour of the spawning channels at our Rutsatz Salmon property near Deming. The terrain is quite varied and can be challenging at times for the less spry among us so consider bringing your trekking poles.

The Chum run is only somewhat predictable: they appear in this area of the river in the late fall to early winter but they don't tend to carry calendars with them, and so tend to arrive when they see fit. This may or may not coincide with our scheduled tour.

Contact greg@whatcomlandtrust.org (360 650-9470) to register for tours.

Work Parties

Contact Nick@whatcomlandtrust.org (360 650-9470) to let him know you're coming.

Saturday October 5

South Fork of the Nooksack near the Skookum Creek Hatchery. Trash patrol, flag large debris and generally assess need for ongoing work. *This will be a special work party that includes a few surprises.* Hint: If you have a canoe and can bring it, call Nick at 360 746-6967. The day will entail some bushwhacking and steep-ish terrain. A work party for the intrepid.

Saturday October 26 MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY

Planting party in partnership with Whatcom Conservation District and Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association at Canyon Creek near Glacier. Check our website in mid-October for transportation details—there will be a rally point!

Saturday November 9

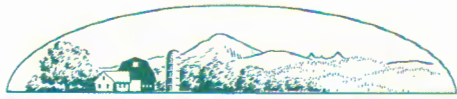
Maple Creek Reach in Maple Falls: Remove old fencing, remove old tree cages, engage in streamside blackberry wars. Meet at the Land Trust office (110 Central Ave) at 9am to consolidate vehicles and grab tools.

Saturday November 23

Samish River headwaters near Wickersham: Planting party! With the buildings gone and the culvert out, it's time to plant and tube conifers to restore the area to blend with the surrounding forested wetlands. Meet at the Land Trust office (110 Central Ave) at 9am to consolidate vehicles and grab tools.

Saturday December 14

Volunteer appreciation event at Wildcat Reach near Glacier. Check our website in November for details!



WHATCOM LAND TRUST

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- Contracted Bookkeeper
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WHATCOM LAND TRUST
LAND Fest

The first ever LandFest celebration was held at WLT's Ladies of the Lake Preserve, with land and nature tours, games, music, cider and ice-cream.

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Hay bales became a playfield for younger participants.



The Kronenbergs were raffle winners.



The music began with Richard Scholtz and Geof Morgan (shown), and finished with the "One Lane Bridge" ensemble of "Band Zandt."

photos: top and center: Alan Fritzberg; left: Jayme Curley; right: Roger Weiss

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