

Big Lake's Lake Creek Wetlands Protected

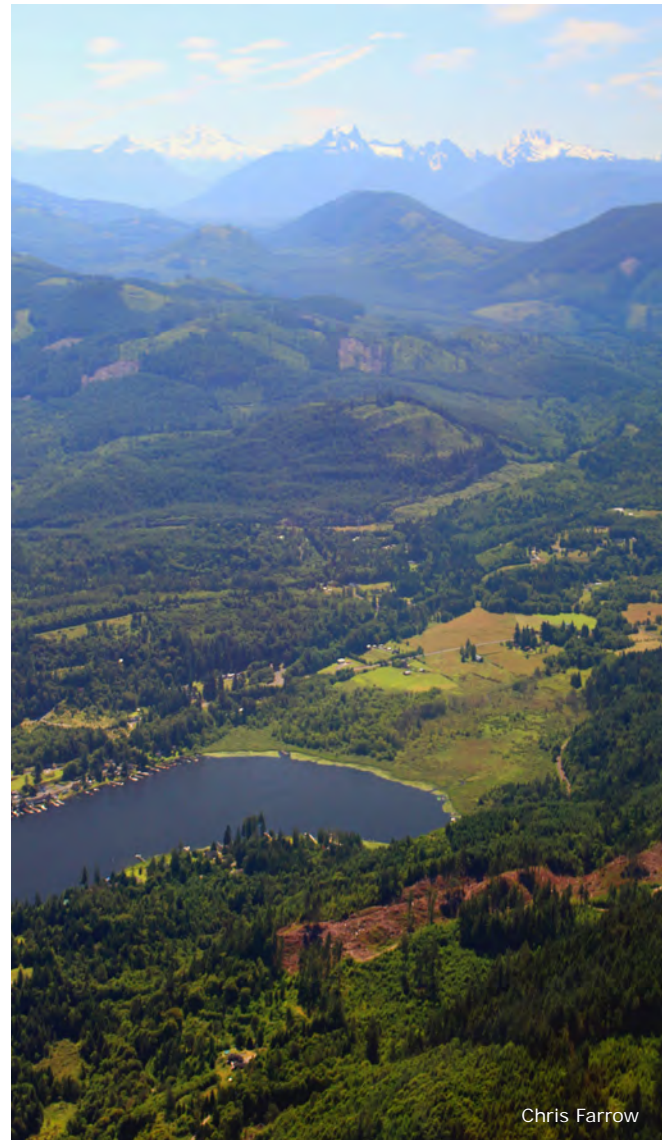
There are beautiful wetlands at the south end of Big Lake that can be heard before they are seen for the frog song emanating from them. Over the years many ideas were devised about what the future of these wetlands could be, including a site of 200 homes, a retirement residence complex and a crawdad farm. Finally, the opportunity arose for Skagit Land Trust to acquire 67 acres of land where Lake Creek enters Big Lake, and keep the wetlands and a ribbon of older cedar uplands in their naturally rich and wild state. The Trust recently purchased two properties with the help of funding from the North American Wetland Conservation Act, the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Washington State Department of Ecology and several generous community members.



Trust Conservation Specialist Kari Odden says "the combination of extensive emergent scrub-shrub and forested wetlands, as well as the numerous braided creeks running through the wetlands, provide breeding and feeding areas for numerous neo-tropical migrant birds and waterfowl, as well as resident

bird species. The creeks are high quality steelhead and Coho salmon habitat. Based on historic photos, the wetlands appear to have been undisturbed over quite some time."

You can view the wetlands from West Big Lake Boulevard. Stop your bike or car on the shoulder and listen and watch - it is amazing. We ask that people not enter into the wetlands on foot for your personal safety and to protect the wildlife habitat. Our neighbor to the south, Andrea Xaver, has a long family history in this area and provided us with a fascinating recount of the area's legacy and priceless photos.



Chris Farrow

Skagit Land Trust's new Lake Creek Wetlands Conservation Area is 67 acres of wetland habitat important for steelhead, Coho salmon, and a variety of birds and amphibians.

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Illustrations by Brenda Cunningham

From the Executive Team

Public Policy: When and How We Get Involved

Dear Members,

Twenty-four years ago, Skagit Land Trust was formed with the simple goal to save the best of Skagit for future generations. We were so “non-partisan” that our three founding fathers included an articulate Democrat, a persuasive Republican and Keith Wiggers who said he stepped in to sideline “conversation” when it got too hot. Since those early days, the Trust has grown into an incredibly effective force for conservation locally and the diversity of our membership has proven to be one of our greatest strengths as an organization.

We use many tools in our tool box to do our work at Skagit Land Trust. One of those tools is advocating for public policies that support and encourage voluntary land conservation. To date, our policy focus has been very limited, but we have increasingly realized some decisions at the local, state and federal level have direct impact on our work. Think about it. Our elected representatives and the committees and processes they initiate and make decisions about can open huge opportunities for conservation — or shut them down. Often there isn’t a voice at the table representing the conservation land owner or citizen and so, at times, it falls to us to tell that story.

In 2007, our board adopted guidelines about when and how the Trust gets involved in public policy. The bottom line: there must be a direct impact on the Trust’s ability to accomplish its mission before we engage. This not only helps us to focus our public policy efforts, but it also allows our primary task to remain saving and stewarding land.

This year our top public policy priorities are: advocating to fund the protection of 1,600 acres on Blanchard Mountain along with a collaborative group of stakeholders; helping to create a path forward for Skagit County’s Open Space Plan which will lead to more trails, open space and wildlife corridors locally; and protection of the large Great Blue Heron nesting colony at March Point as the nesting site faces increasing industrialization.

Our public policy work allows us to present best-available science and our broad conservation experiences to decision-makers when the outcomes could have profound effects on places we protect. It also allows us to share stories and love of place in ways that can’t be measured. As Mardy Murie, one of the grandmothers of conservation, said as she stood to speak about the importance of protecting wilderness, “I am testifying as an emotional woman and I would like to ask you, gentlemen, what’s wrong with emotion?” By giving nature a voice, public policy marries head and heart and helps save the land we love.

Sincerely,



Molly Doran, Executive Director



Sara Young, Board President

The Swamp, by Andrea Xaver

Lake Creek Wetlands, an area recently named and partially acquired by Skagit Land Trust (the Trust), was always called “the swamp” locally. But it was – and is – much, much more. In 1890, the Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern Railroad completed a track from Seattle to the Canadian border. Lumber and shingle mills sprang up along this route and then the small towns of McMurray, Ehrlich, Montborne, Big Lake, and Clear Lake began. Ehrlich (pronounced Erlick) is about a mile south of the swamp. Peace through here was interrupted by the sounds of two round-trip passenger trains daily. Later, a timber company built a logging railroad and two “spurs” were eventually built to carry logs from the surrounding area to a log dump at the south end of the lake – now mostly encompassed by “the swamp.”

From 1886 to 1901, four families – Theiler (pronounced “Tyler”), Weppler, Frieschknecht (later changed to Fisher), and McInnis – were the first to buy and live on forest and farm land in Ehrlich and near the swamp. This wonderful place had grasslands and beautiful trees. But, it also had some rotting timber, burned trees and stumps from occasional lightning fires. There were and still are areas of abundant cattails, skunk cabbage, and wild roses. Families then – and today – heard countless frogs, saw gorgeous dragonflies, heron, eagles, ducks, geese, and other birds in their seasons. Bears, cougars, coyotes, bobcats, and deer still cross our pastures all year long which provide easy visibility for and access to their food. Undaunted by potentially dangerous wildlife, my aunts and uncles, as children, climbed into their canoes and plied the creek and the two downstream channels which soon forked into the swamp – much smaller then.

Historic tales mention many logs at the bottom of the lake, now swamp, – left behind for various reasons such as some type of unsuitability for mills further up the lake. A cautionary note here about how this swamp can look solid and safe, but is deceptive and dangerous to tread upon. Beavers continue to take down trees that once stood above the lake’s shore. Invasive Reed Canary Grass thrives, and as it falls over, it weaves in with these abandoned logs. Some folks have waded around and suddenly found themselves in water over their heads or caught in unseen branches.

Swamps slow the water flow. Drainage of our historic farms is a continuing concern, of course, but this swamp, Lake Creek, and our organic farms and forests have happily co-existed for many years. I am optimistic this will continue. Hopefully the constant threat of inclusion into city boundaries or other re-zoning will abate because of the Trust’s protection of this swamp and respect for our farms and forests.

Of the original buyers, descendents of two families – Weppler and McInnis – remain. I realize how incredibly lucky (and hardworking) our families were, and are, to maintain the magical lands here, while enjoying the wildlife which continues to use these farms, forests, and waterways. At times, I think I feel the spirit of the Noo-qua-cha-mish Indians who lived and traveled around the Big Lake area. I like to believe they check up on the lands which provided them with food, housing, furs, and tranquility. And, all, then and now, can continue to hear “my frogs” in “the swamp” – Lake Creek Wetlands.

~ Andrea Millward Xaver, 4th of 6 McInnis generations near Ehrlich and “the swamp.”



All eight grades of the Ehrlich school are gathered on this lightning-charred stump (c. 1908). Three of four early families are represented here: Theiler, Weppler, and McInnis. At the town’s peak population, over 30 children were in school. As the population grew, three schools were simultaneously built to accommodate the growth.



This logging train is shown by Ehrlich and is typical of those used for logging throughout the county. Timber companies built many of their own extensive railroads. Then, railroad spurs were built off of these temporarily to go further into the woods to harvest more timber as the local timber was used up. Logging camps were established in these more remote areas and the crews - often about 100 people - lived at the camps during the week. Photos provided by Andrea Xaver.

Protecting Skagit's Marine Shorelines

This spring, Win and Elaine Anderson generously donated a 36-acre conservation easement on their Guemes Island property, protecting it forever from future development. It is a beautiful place with a diversity of habitats – wetlands, a creek, forestland, and over 850 feet of marine shoreline. They feel close to nature here and want to protect the land's natural habitats and scenic open space. The Andersons moved to Guemes in 1977 and purchased the property in 1978. The land has an interesting history as the first homestead on Guemes Island. In the 1960's it was proposed as a location for an aluminum plant that thankfully was never developed. The Anderson property connects with over 540 acres of protected lands that include the Valley and Guemes Mountain.

In 2015, a grant from the *Rose Foundation for Communities* allowed Skagit Land Trust to develop tools to guide our coastal conservation work and to do outreach to marine shoreline landowners around Skagit County. One of the keys to improving and preventing further degradation of water quality of coastal wetlands, shorelines and nearshore waters in the northern Puget Sound is permanent, voluntary land conservation of strategic private lands. Most of Skagit County's marine and estuarine shorelines are in private ownership. Land conservation helps retain natural shoreline processes, such as erosion, deposition, and flooding by limiting shoreline modifications; and it contributes to the protection of habitat conditions, species, and vegetation communities.



The Guemes Island Anderson Conservation Easement has great diversity including wetlands and marine shoreline.

A New Partnership with the Town of Hamilton

When multiple benefits are achieved with one project, it makes us all smile. This is what is happening with a new partnership between the Town of Hamilton, Skagit Land Trust and the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB). The Trust reached out to a few landowners in Hamilton who expressed an interest in selling their land. After determining their properties were eligible for SRFB funds, the Trust decided it would be most appropriate for the Town to own these lands. After discussions with the Town Council, the Trust amended our SRFB grant to include the Town of Hamilton as a secondary sponsor able to hold title to these lands within town limits. One landowner recently sold his property and two more have agreed to sell their land.



The Miller property along the Skagit River was acquired and transferred to the Town of Hamilton in a new partnership.

The multiple benefits of this partnership include:

- Skagit River salmon habitat is permanently protected and shoreline restoration opportunities are expanded.
- Willing landowners in town with eligible property have another option for selling their land at current fair market value. Financing for acquiring lands in the floodway is often difficult, making it hard to sell.
- In owning SRFB-acquired lands, Hamilton is better able to meet their comprehensive plan open space goals.
- Flood water storage is increased when these lands will remain in a natural state forever. A win-win for all!

Barney Lake Conservation Area - Bigger and Better

Skagit Land Trust's largest conservation area, Barney Lake, continues to grow. The Trust recently received a land donation from Quadrant Corporation of 3.5 acres of forested wetlands along Nookachamps Creek, bringing the Barney Lake Conservation Area to 371 acres. This donation fills in a missing piece of the Trust's ownership of conservation land at Barney Lake. Now more than a mile stretching from the Big Rock roundabout down College Way is forever conserved for our community.

On a beautiful Sunday this March, dozens of Trust members and volunteers initiated an exciting restoration project along the streams and wetlands at Barney Lake by planting over 800 trees and shrubs. This is just the beginning of several years of work that will transform more than 100 acres of degraded land into verdant habitat for salmon, waterfowl, herons and other species.

At the same time, Skagit Land Trust continues to work with local farmers who lease out higher-elevation agricultural land at Barney Lake, continuing the balance of appropriate uses that makes this special property a true community resource today and for generations to come.

Look for more volunteer stewardship opportunities at the Barney Lake Conservation Area coming soon.



Above: Quadrant Corporation donated 3.5 acres along College Way to Skagit Land Trust.

Below: Volunteers recently planted hundreds of trees and shrubs along the south shore of Barney Lake and the west edge of Nookachamps Creek.



Land Stewards Rock!

Without the additional 27 sets of eyes, ears, and boots on the ground it would be impossible for staff to monitor all of our conserved natural lands. Although the position of Land Steward is a voluntary commitment, all of our stewards dedicate a tremendous amount of time and energy to make sure 'their' conservation property is cared for to the highest standards.

So what does it take to bear the honor of being a Trust Land Steward? Well to start you must have the passion and compassion for protecting beautiful natural lands, and the interest in restoring those lands that have become degraded due to natural or human actions. Beyond that, a steward is someone willing to tromp around places such as shorelines, forests, and marshes to observe and record changes on the land, wildlife and seasonal changes in the flora.

Each year, these generous volunteers log thousands of hours of monitoring and maintenance on properties from Marblemount to Fidalgo Island. Land Stewards not only check in on their property to cut, pull, plant, mulch and more; they also help to care for all of our natural areas wherever and whenever an extra hand is needed. Thank you Skagit Land Trust Land Stewards past, present, and future!

To learn more about our Land Stewards and how to get involved, visit our website or e-mail volunteer@skagitlandtrust.org.



Cedar Legacy Circle Donor Profile:

Brenda Cunningham and Tim Manns

1. Tell us what interests you about natural area conservation?

We recognize an intrinsic value to nature, having its own value, regardless of the benefit to us. But we also see the clear benefit that the natural world provides to humans, from the ecosystems we depend on for life to the emotional benefits of observing nature every day. We both grew up in places and times where we had natural areas to play in, gardens and wild places, that provided us with a sense of wonder and awe.

2. How did you first get involved with Skagit Land Trust?

We joined the Trust after hearing about it from Keith and Jan Wiggers. We had moved to the area in 1992 and could see that a land trust was a good idea for Skagit County. In 1998, we became volunteer Land Stewards of the Barney Lake property.

3. What do you value about land conservation in our community?

We value being able to see and hear songbirds in our backyard. We value being able to take a hike in a forest within our community. We value being able to eat fruit from our trees, pollinated by insects that have found refuge locally. We value knowing that the Skagit River hosts all five species of salmon that bring nutrients from the sea to the forests.

4. Why did you choose to include the Trust in your estate plans?

We feel confident that Skagit Land Trust uses financial resources wisely and locally. Although we contribute to international conservation efforts as well, we feel our support will be valuable to this community that we have come to care about a great deal.

5. What do you hope for the future?

We hope that Skagit County will continue to be a place where people can enjoy wild places while living close to where their food is grown. We hope that sufficient land is conserved to provide homes for all the species naturally found in the Skagit.



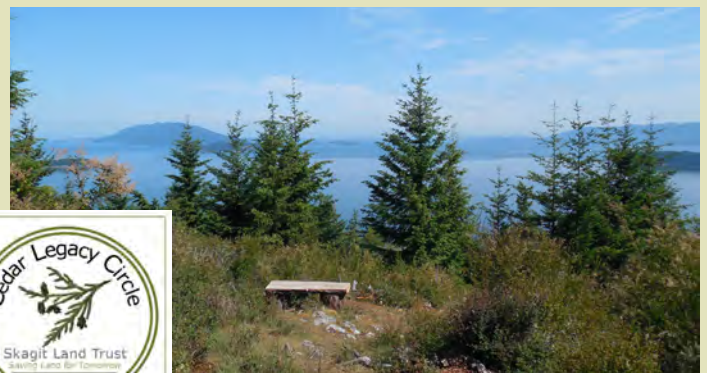
Brenda and Tim live in Mount Vernon and have been Trust members since 1994. Retired from federal and state natural resource agencies, both are active with numerous community groups. Brenda also was the Trust's first Stewardship Director and is a talented artist who donates artwork for Trust publications.



Brenda Cunningham

Leave it to Nature, Forever

Learn how an estate gift can preserve Skagit's wildlife habitat and green places for generations to come. View **Skagit Land Trust's Guide to Planned Giving** at skagitlandtrust.org or contact Executive Director Molly Doran at (360) 428-7878 or mollyd@skagitlandtrust.org for information on the ways you can leave a legacy gift.



Guemes Mountain Conservation Area

Member Events & Programs



SKAGIT LAND TRUST'S ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, July 30, 2016 11am – 1pm

Deception Pass State Park - Bowman Bay ADA Picnic Shelter

Watch for your postcard in the mail or visit skagitlandtrust.org for details

4th Annual Conservation Social

Thursday, November 10 5pm - 7:30pm

Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner

Join us for an evening of presentations and fun! This annual social event inspires us to participate in local land conservation by cultivating connections to the land via conservation-minded speakers from the arts community.

Ana Maria Spagna lives and writes in Stehekin, a remote North Cascades community. She's the author of five books including, most recently, *Reclaimers*. Her work appears regularly in journals and magazines such as Orion, Creative Nonfiction, Ecotone, Brevity, and High Country News.

Peregrine O'Gormely, a La Conner-based sculptor and carver, gained a deep appreciation for Northwest art during early travels to Alaska and Canada and was enthralled with the breathtaking landscape, its wildlife, and origin myths. Peregrine sculpts nearly all of his original work from local wood. Juniper, Western Red Cedar, Maple and Yew are his local favorites.



This is a free event with a *Call for Conservation* donation request during the evening. Reservations open in September – RSVP early as this is a popular event! Visit skagitlandtrust.org for details.

★ 10th Annual Have Fun, Save Land Auction & Dinner a Success ★

Thank you to the 257 guests who attended Skagit Land Trust's annual Auction & Dinner on March 5, 2016 and all of our generous auction donors and volunteers who helped us raise \$128,000 for local lands in one night!

**Save the date for our 11th Annual Auction & Dinner on March 25, 2017
at the Wa Walton Event Center at the Swinomish Lodge.**

MEMORIAL AND IN HONOR GIFTS

APRIL 1, 2015 - MARCH 31, 2016

In memory of Marjorie Anderson

Dan and Donna Brauer

In memory of Ric Boge

Gabriel Hall

In memory of Rick Boge, Jim Ross & Mike Bridgman

Frances Ambrose and Steve Hunter

In memory of Steffan Borseman

The Rodman Family

In honor of Victoria and Jim Brown

John and Linda Hu

In memory of Abby Miller Busche

Susan and Fred F. Miller

In memory of Lois and Cleve Chase

Rebecca Cannon

In memory of Patsy Thola Chamberlain

Louise Harris

In memory of Steve Clark

Bob Rose

In memory of Larry Cleveland

Robert and Barbara Meier

In memory of Rachel Damski

Mel and Susan Damski

In honor of Ann Dursch

Sheila and Ronald Pera

In memory of Gini Farmer

Nadene Frazier – Westphall

In memory of Rita and Don Fisher

David and Joanne Witiak

In memory of Rita Fisher

Gene and Bette Huff

In memory of Roslyn Glasser

Carol and Kit Harma

In honor of Elizabeth and Ethan Goldberg

John and Linda Hunt

In memory of Ralph Heft

John and Teresa Schmoe

In honor of John and Linda Hunt

Martha Wilson

James Hunt

Carrie Zerjav and Nathan Moore

In honor of Marcia Hunt and Steve Hulsey

Martha Wilson

James Hunt

In honor of Keith and Hal

Martha Bray and John Day

In memory of Jan Kozicki-Manhoff

Ann Magnano and Sheri Boddy

In memory of Carol Anne Kyle

Trevor Kyle

In memory of Art Larvie

Liz McNett Crowl and Todd McNett

In memory of Bob Leatherwood

Patty McClane

In memory of Bob Matchett

Holiday Matchett

In memory of Maurice Munch

Gordon and Joanne Odegaard

In memory of Gene Murphy

Ginny Murphy

In memory of Lynn and Russ Phillips

Nadene Frazier-Westphall

In memory of Siegfried "Fred" Poppe

Ingrid and Bruce McBane

In honor of Lenore Robb's birthday

Janice Place

In memory of Tim Rosenhan

Liz and Michael Bart

Peggy Flynn

In memory of Bruce Saunders

Laura Saunders

In memory of Robert Schaedler UDT 36 Team 1

Jean Hawkins

In honor of Fisher and Amaya Shasserre

Shasserre Family Fund

In memory of Sophie

Anne Braaten

In memory of Harriet Spanel

Jeanne Youngquist

Anne and Jack Middleton

Kitty and Darrell Mintz

In memory of Leon Slutsky

Ann Slutsky

In memory of June Thomas

Cecil Thomas

In honor of John Tursi

Jim Falk

Joyce Harrell

In honor of Ger van den Engh

Margery and Richard Trask

In honor of Warren and Linda Walz

Jan Hemme

In honor of Keith and Jan Wiggers

Molly Doran and Andrew Cline

Kathy Green

In honor of the Winkes Family

Gus Winkes

Mary Carr

In honor of Bill Woyski's Birthday

Janet Miller

In Memoriam of Beloved Skagit Land Trust Friends

January 2015 - April 2016

Agnes Ashback Earl Cahail Steve Clark Roslyn Glasser Paul Johnson

Loretta Pendrod Fred Poppe Susan Ramaglia Tim Rosenhan Harriet Spanel

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San Juan Preservation Trust

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Bow Hill Blueberries
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Campfire Samish
Canopy Conservation
Cascade Aviation
Cascadian Home Farm
Chad Fisher Construction
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COHO Liquidation
Columbia Land Trust
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Horizon Audio & Video
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Jumbled Pie

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Max Dale's Steak & Chop House
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Overlook Golf Course
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Skagit River Steel and Recycling, Inc.
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Skagit Soil & Water Conservation District
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Skagit Valley Gardens
Slough Food
Smith and Vallee
Snug Harbor Resort
Stevens Pass Mountain Resort

Stowe's Shoes and Clothing
Strauss Jewelers
Swinomish Casino and Lodge
T. Bailey Inc.
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The Wild Blueberry Restaurant
The Wood Merchant
The Woods Coffee
Train Wreck Bar and Grill
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Tweets
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Winthrop Mtn View Chalets
Wyman Park

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Anacortes Parks Foundation
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Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
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Satterberg Foundation
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Temcov Foundation
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WA State Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Matching Gifts

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Boeing Gift Matching Program
Fred Meyer Community Rewards
Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund
Microsoft Matching Program
Nordstrom Charitable Giving
PEW Charitable Trusts
Puget Sound Energy Foundation
Shell Oil Company Matching Gifts

Our apologies if your name is missing.
Please contact us if there is a discrepancy.

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Ruth Heft
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Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat, agricultural and forest lands, scenic open space and shorelines for the benefit of our community and as a legacy for future generations.

Saving Land for Tomorrow

Upcoming Events

Annual Picnic Saturday, July 30, 2016

11am - 1pm, Deception Pass State Park
Bowman Bay ADA Picnic Shelter

June & July events - visit our website for dates

June 16 - volunteer event at TNC Smith, near Marblemount
Volunteer event, Day Creek Slough, near Day Creek
Volunteer event, Tope Ryan, near Alger
Evening Geology Walk, Guemes Mountain Conservation Area
Volunteer event, Sumner Lake, near Big Lake

Thursday, November 10, 5pm - 7:30pm

Conservation Social, Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner

Visit our website at skagitlandtrust.org for details and other upcoming events



Volunteers helped build the new Tursi Trail connecting Deception Pass State Park to the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. Skagit Land Trust assisted Skagit County Parks & Recreation in securing trail easements across private lands to complete this trail project.