



## GETTING THE NEXT GENERATION EXCITED ABOUT NATURE

Voices of excited children rang out along the Skagit River as participants in the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Youth Program visited Skagit Land Trust's Marblemount Conservation Area this fall. It was the end of a Pink Salmon run and the shore of the river was littered with salmon carcasses. This offered our staff the opportunity to talk about the importance of conserving land along rivers and streams.



Our partner, Glacier Peak Institute, led the group in foraging for licorice ferns to make tea during the visit. This trip, part of a series of monthly field trips with residents of three Mount Vernon apartment complexes, is one of the many ways that Skagit Land Trust engages with the next generation that will steward the lands we protect.

During the past year, 332 second and third graders from Sedro-Woolley visited our Utopia Conservation Area to learn about elk, beavers, birds, and macroinvertebrates. High schoolers from State Street High School in Sedro-Woolley, and Advanced Placement Environmental Studies students from Mount Vernon High School used

*Top to Bottom: A Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Youth Program participant getting ready to look for macroinvertebrates along the Skagit River; Oak Rankin from Glacier Peak Institute shows the rhizome system of a licorice fern to a fieldtrip participant.*

*Continued on page 4...*

## LETTER TO MEMBERS FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MOLLY DORAN

As members, partners, and landowners, you helped us achieve significant conservation and community successes in the past fiscal year. Thank you! Due to your support and help, twelve land conservation projects were completed, protecting 587 acres of land and almost two miles of marine and freshwater shoreline.

You helped us purchase or receive gifts of seven properties containing native forests, wildlife habitat, wetlands, farmland, and marine shoreline. Three new, permanent protection agreements (conservation easements) now protect more forest, marine areas, and wildlife habitat. Two projects assisted partners to protect land for future habitat restoration and parks. For these projects, we took out loans and used restricted funds and our reserves to hold properties and bridge finances for partners until they could secure grant funds to purchase them. This is the main reason that our annual expenses in the financial pie charts below are significantly higher than our annual income.

Your support ensured our stewardship program had the resources to monitor and manage 7,700 acres in 85 distinct conservation areas and conservation easements. Work included invasive species removal, planting thousands of native trees & shrubs, trail building, wildlife habitat enhancement, & removing dilapidated structures, vehicles and debris from conservation areas. Restoration or public access planning was carried out on the Samish Island isthmus, at Barney Lake and other areas, often working directly with nearby communities. Our stewardship team advanced new collaborative projects with landowners, tribes, conservation partners, businesses and public agencies.

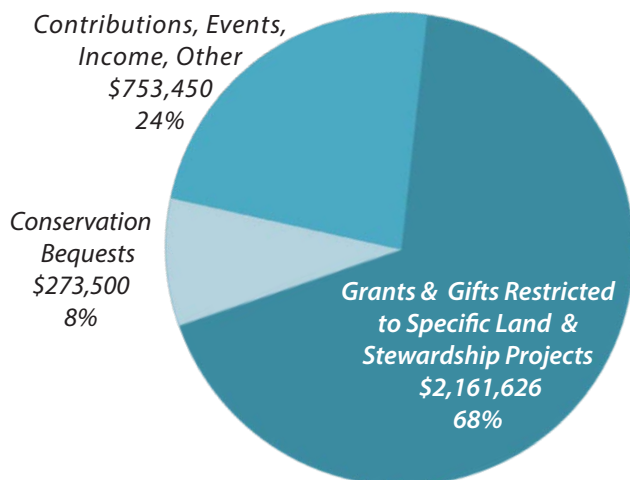
We know that community engagement builds better, more sustainable projects and encourages a conservation-minded community. This was a focus for us this past year. 358 volunteers gave a combined 5,880 volunteer hours to Skagit Land Trust through land stewardship, education, events, and governance and committee work. We partnered with over 40 schools, tribes, organizations, and agencies. We are delighted that 450 youth visited our conservation areas, as part of our Conservation Classroom program. We expanded a heron-monitoring program for the March Point Heronry with volunteers. We engaged in planning and policy education on sea-level rise and climate change impacts in local plans, and gave input on plans affecting sensitive wildlife habitat. Field events, educational seminars and special events helped us engage directly with you.

**Thank you to each and every one of you.** We are honored by your commitment to conserving and stewarding land for today and tomorrow. We look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

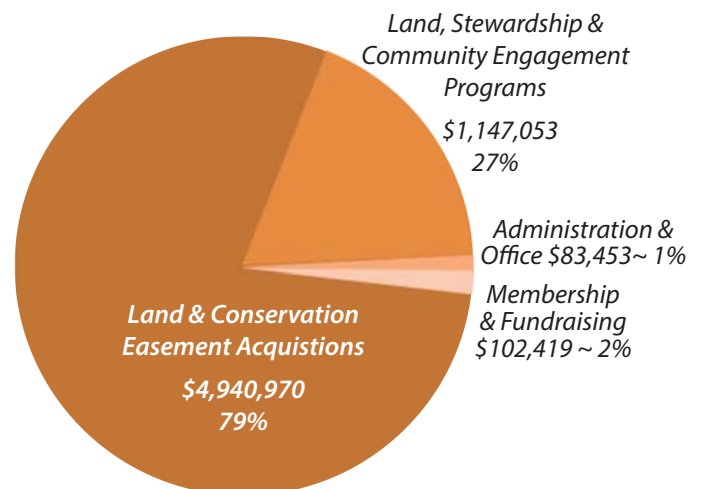


### Financials for April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023

#### REVENUE \$ 2,736,590\*



#### EXPENSES & LAND \$ 6,273,895



\*Not reflected above: Stewardship & Land Acquisition Funds Investments gain (loss)  
\$(451,986)

# Fiscal Year April 22 - March 23 Impact By The Numbers

**12** Properties  
Conserved Forever



Protecting **587**  
more acres



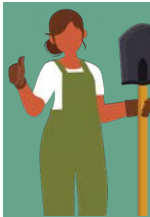
**5,880**  
hours worked by  
**358** volunteers



**2,000**  
native  
trees  
& shrubs planted



**85** Cedar Legacy Circle Members  
planned for nature for  
generations by including the  
Trust in their will or estate plans



**43**  
Conservation  
Areas Managed



**42**  
Conservation  
Easements Monitored



**450** local youth  
visited Trust  
properties during field  
trips and events



**1,400** Households supported Skagit Land  
Trust with a gift for local conservation

**97** Skagit Sustainers made recurring gifts to assist  
with ongoing stewardship & protection



Partnered with  
Organizations,  
Tribes, & Agencies to  
conserve and steward land

**40**



Continued from page 1...

Left to right: Skagit Land Trust staff member Stacy Dahl and a State Street High School student survey our Tope Ryan Conservation Area for amphibian egg masses; Students monitoring trees at the Barney Lake Conservation Area; Kulshan Program participants look for macroinvertebrates along the Skagit River; AmeriCorps member Gabby Jacunski teaches about beaver skulls to Evergreen Elementary School students at Utopia Conservation Area.



Trust properties to support their classroom learning. We also met with youth at Concrete's Youth Activity Day and Skagit Conservation District's Youth Conservation Tour.

*Connecting People and Nature* is part of our conservation strategy. We understand that sparking a child's sense of wonder and making a connection to nature early on often leads to active environmental stewardship later in life.

In the year to come, we have more youth field trips planned to Skagit Land Trust properties. If you are interested in volunteering with these events, please reach out to Volunteer & Education Programs Coordinator Stacy Dahl at [stacyd@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:stacyd@skagitlandtrust.org).



Linda and John Hunt on a visit to our Day Creek Conservation Area.

## Remembering John Hunt

by Molly Doran

John Hunt was Skagit Land Trust's board treasurer for 12 years. John passed away in October after an illness. We miss him greatly.

I think my email inbox has more emails from John Hunt than from any other board member...ever. He was diligent, dedicated and helped us create many of our financial systems. He was also one of the kindest people most of us knew.

John had many passions and was fun to be with. He appeared to love land conservation; driving fast cars; and resolving large, complex public project construction disputes, about equally. John's thinking and spreadsheets helped us analyze everything from the pace of land conserved versus our growth capacity, to how well our stewardship reserve funds may hold up 75 to 100 years in the future.

John believed that if we were going to protect land forever, we had better develop a system to fund that. He completely changed the way we think about stewardship reserves. Always data driven, he did not believe in magic formulas when selecting ways to guard and grow our donors' generous gifts. Under John's leadership, we professionalized our financial and investment systems.

John's love of the Skagit and the land was embraced by his entire family - who routinely donated gifts in honor of John, and his wife Linda, for birthdays and holidays and just because. He helped make us better, and he left a fantastic legacy here at the Trust.



Molly, Marcia Hunt, & John Hunt

## Skagit Land Trust AmeriCorps Make a Difference on the Land



*Former AmeriCorps Member and current SLT Staff Stacy Dahl leading a field trip to our Lyman Slough Conservation Area in 2018.*

From work parties to school field trips, our AmeriCorps members help Skagit Land Trust connect with and educate the community. For the past 15 years, the Trust has been an AmeriCorps sponsor in collaboration with Washington Service Corps. AmeriCorps' emphasis on fostering civic engagement through service and volunteering mirrors the work we do to connect and involve the community in protecting and caring for land in the Skagit.

We have seen many talented people getting their start in conservation work through their time at the land trust. We've even been lucky enough to have some of these AmeriCorps members move into positions at Skagit Land

Trust as the first step in their career journey.

A third of the Trust's current staff started as AmeriCorps members with us. During their time of service, they learned how land trusts work, the unending task of stewarding these lands, and the importance of engaging members and volunteers in caring for the lands and waters of Skagit County.

Skagit Land Trust also sponsors EarthCorps and WA Conservation Corps teams to accomplish restoration and stewardship projects on our properties. These programs are also part of the AmeriCorps system and provide hands-on experience for those starting in the field of conservation.



*EarthCorps and students from State Street High School planting at our Cumberland property.*



*Current and former AmeriCorps members on a recent field visit to Samish Island with Rep. Rick Larsen. From left to right: Hannah Williams Jonathan Worley, Rep. Rick Larsen, & Sydney Benson.*

This year we're excited to welcome Sydney Benson (she/her) as our 2023-2024 Community Engagement AmeriCorps member. Along with managing volunteer work parties, Sydney will be involved with youth programming, social media, and general communication and outreach for the Trust. She comes to the Trust from Minnesota with a degree in Environmental Science from Winona State University and professional work in invasive species management and water quality monitoring. While she enjoys being outside hiking, biking, or rock climbing, Sydney also loves to spend time cooking.

We are also welcoming back past AmeriCorps member Jonathan Worley (he/him) as our Stewardship Coordinator. This position is part of a team working to manage our protected lands. Jonathan joins us from California, where he recently completed the Pacific Crest Trail. On top of his AmeriCorps work for Skagit Land Trust, Jonathan also worked for the WA Conservation Corps. Look for him at upcoming work parties and hiking trails in the area.

Skagit Land Trust has been honored and grateful to host 16 AmeriCorps members. For many of these individuals their time at Skagit Land Trust was the first step in a long career in conservation that has taken them across the region, state, and country. We have heard that the Trust's ethic of collaboration and finding solutions has gone with them on these journeys, spreading the mission of saving land for tomorrow far beyond Skagit's borders.



*Former AmeriCorps Meagan Maillett and Zena Gavin on a field visit with former AmeriCorps & Stewardship Director Regina Wandler.*

## Required Minimum Distributions Open Smart Path to Supporting Conservation

For Therese Ogle, making a gift from her IRA to support conservation in the Skagit just made sense.



*Lilly, Therese, and John at the Anacortes Community Forest Lands protected by a SLT Conservation Easement*

“I was nearing the age where I had to take my required minimum distributions from my IRA. I realized this would increase my tax liability. My investment advisor suggested that, rather than taking the money and paying the tax, I could direct my advisor to pay the funds directly to a charity.”

Individuals who have an IRA must take a required minimum distribution (RMD) starting at age 73. In addition to being taxed on these distributions, for some, the distributions can push the IRA holder into a higher income bracket. By making a Qualified Charitable Distribution, or QCD for short, directly from their IRA to a nonprofit like Skagit Land Trust, an individual can satisfy all or part of their RMD without increasing their taxable income.

“This is an amazing opportunity for those of us who want to support charities. This option allows me to support causes I care deeply about, like Skagit Land Trust, while also making a smart financial choice,” says Therese.

If you are interested in making a gift to Skagit Land Trust through your IRA, please contact Development & Outreach Director Laura Hartner – [laurah@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:laurah@skagitlandtrust.org).

\*\*\*Please let us know when you make a gift from your IRA. Sometimes we receive an IRA gift with no information on the donor or if the gift is intended for a specific project. This means we are unable to send the donor a thank you letter acknowledging their IRA gift. We currently have two unclaimed IRA gifts. If you recently made a gift to Skagit Land Trust through your IRA but haven't received a thank you letter, please call or email us, 360-428-7878 or [info@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:info@skagitlandtrust.org).

## Partnership for the Future of the Entrance to Samish Island Takes Next Step

Skagit Land Trust has facilitated the transfer of 73 acres on the Samish Isthmus (or “Samish neck”) to the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Skagit Land Trust will continue to own and manage 83 acres at the entrance to Samish Island.

In 2022 and early 2023, Skagit Land Trust was able to purchase these 73 acres. A wonderful opportunity presented itself when the landowner agreed to sell his land. However, the timeline needed did not align with securing grant funds. With the help of our generous members' gifts, our internal reserve funds, along with loans from The Conservation Fund, Skagit Land Trust made the purchase with the intent of holding the land for the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Padilla Bay Reserve applied for federal grant funds to purchase the land from us. In September of this year, the land was transferred to Padilla Bay. The grant allowed all but \$135,000 of acquisition and holding costs to be repaid to Skagit Land Trust - a sum well worth the investment for the future.

Padilla Bay and Skagit Land Trust are now working together and with partners on what may help the Samish Isthmus be more resilient both ecologically and for many other community needs. The partners are working to assess ways that the properties may help address the rapid loss of marine wetlands, intensifying climate change impacts, and community exposure to extreme weather events. The only road to Samish Island runs through the Isthmus, which is below sea level. Foresight, partnership, and wide stakeholder involvement will enable us all to plan for the future on this important part of the Samish Island landscape.



*Seasonal wetlands on the Padilla Bay side of the property*

## Thank you Regina!



Stewardship Director Regina Wandler started at Skagit Land Trust as an AmeriCorps Member in 2010. The organization was much smaller back then, just six employees and 3,853 acres that we managed and defended. Over 13 years, Regina has guided the growing stewardship of Trust lands from the Cascades to Cypress Island. The Stewardship Department now directly manages, restores, or defends nearly 8,000 acres and has helped our partners conserve 3,600 acres more.

“Regina’s leadership and integrity ensured that Skagit Land Trust followed through on our commitment to take care of the land we protect,” says Executive Director Molly Doran.

“She has tackled evolving stewardship issues with skill, creativity and often through partnerships. She found ways for people to access and love our lands, while protecting wildlife habitat. Regina also preserved our deep roots with volunteers and landowners. We all benefited from having Regina on our team for so many years. She is exceptional.”

Regina has always been ready to take on a new challenge. This fall she accepted a position as a Project Manager with King County Parks and Natural Resources. All of us on the Skagit Land Trust staff and board will greatly miss her leadership, but are excited for the new opportunity she has to learn and grow. To our delight, she will still live in the Skagit as the job is remote.



*Encountering braying wildlife on an easement monitoring visit.*



*Regina, Michael Kirshenbaum, & Mark Hitchcock on a site visit to the balds on Guemes Mountain.*

“I have deeply appreciated my time at Skagit Land Trust - it has been a privilege to work here since I started as an AmeriCorps member in 2010,” Regina says. “I have learned an incredible amount from the members of Skagit Land Trust and have made a lot of friends.”

One of Regina’s first projects when she started at the Trust was helping build the Guemes Mountain trail. The Guemes Mountain & Valley Conservation Area has continued to grow during her time at the Trust. For the past few years staff and volunteers have worked to protect the sensitive balds on the mountain top.

“I loved working on the bald assessments and trying to find ways to balance access with protection of the balds on Guemes Mountain,” says Regina.

Her passion and experience with forest management was put to work over the years planning and implementing forest restoration at many sites, including Cascade River, Diobsud Creek, and Tope Ryan. Regina found delight in exploring the land.

“Most of my job has been getting to know and explore the nooks and crannies of our protected lands all across the county, and that’s been lovely.”

We know Regina leaves big waterproof hiking boots to fill. We are seeking to hire our next Stewardship Director by the start of the new year. The position involves managing and working with a dynamic team comprised of staff, committee, board members and key volunteers to monitor and care for our conservation areas and conservation easements across Skagit County. For more information on the position, please visit our website or email [info@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:info@skagitlandtrust.org).



*Regina at a winter tree planting. She was always willing to jump in and get dirty to get the job done!*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kathy Thornburgh**, *President*  
Mount Vernon

**Mark Hitchcock**, *Vice Pres*  
Samish Island

**Barbara Trask**, *Treasurer*  
Birdsview

**Tim Manns**, *Secretary*  
Mount Vernon

**Roger Fuller**  
Anacortes

**Brad Furlong**  
Fir Island

**Carolyn Gastellum**  
Anacortes

**Jim Glackin**  
Mount Vernon

**Steven H. Johnson**  
Anacortes

**Karen Krub**  
La Conner

**Kirk Johnson**  
Mount Vernon

**Harold Lee**  
Mount Vernon

**Mark Linnemann**  
Guemes Island

**Therese Ogle**  
Samish Island

**Warren Walz**  
Anacortes

**Lynne Wenberg-Davidson**  
Anacortes

**Anne Winkes**  
Conway

**Keith Wiggers**  
Burlington

## STAFF

**Molly Doran**  
*Executive Director*

**Michael Kirshenbaum**  
*Conservation Director*

**Laura Hartner**  
*Development Director*

**Regina Wandler**  
*Stewardship Director*

**Jaz Strode-Elfant**  
*Membership & Office Admin.*

**Jessica Lange**  
*Conservation Project Manager*

**Kari Odden**  
*Conservation Project Manager*

**Hannah Williams**  
*Conservation Areas Coordinator*

**Jonathan Worley**  
*Stewardship Coordinator*

**Stacy Dahl**  
*Volunteer & Education Prog Coor*

**Sydney Benson** - AmeriCorps

**Leslie Menard** - Accountant

**Phil Buri, P.S.** - General Counsel



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Mount Vernon, WA  
Permit No. 195

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.

PO Box 1017 • 1020 S Third Street  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
www.skagitlandtrust.org • 360-428-7878

## Value Nature by Doubling Your Gift on Giving Tuesday

*Mark your calendars for November 28th*

On Giving Tuesday (November 28th) your donation to Skagit Land Trust will make a positive impact on the nature of the Skagit. It will protect places for wildlife. It will connect the next generation with lands they will care for in the future.

**And your gift will go twice as far!**  
**Generous members have provided a**  
**\$10,000 match for all Giving Tuesday gifts.**

Visit our website on or before Giving Tuesday to make a donation.

During this season we take time to reflect on what we are grateful for. Here at Skagit Land Trust, we are grateful for you. Thanks to your membership support, critical natural lands in the Skagit will be here for generations of people and wildlife to enjoy. Thank you!

Interested in making a stock, IRA or Donor Advised Fund gift? Many members have found these to be a tax-savvy way to support conservation. Learn more about these giving options on our website or email [info@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:info@skagitlandtrust.org).

*The lands conserved and protected by Skagit Land Trust have been inhabited and stewarded by numerous tribes and Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We recognize and respect the inherent, indigenous, and treaty rights of the Coast Salish People who have deep and abiding connections to these places. We seek to partner with local tribes as we conserve and care for these lands and waters.*