



Protecting Habitats and Harvests

Our vibrant farmlands fuel our local economy and preserve the scenic, rural beauty that defines Skagit County. But their value doesn't stop there. These lands also provide critical biodiversity—such as resting and feeding grounds for thousands of waterfowl including the iconic wintering swans and snow geese. Few land types can claim such a unique overlap of supporting our human livelihoods while playing an important ecological role. Our life support system needs both. Finding the right balance between the two isn't always easy, but it's vital.

Skagit Land Trust (SLT or the Trust) has conserved over 1,000 acres of farmland across 13 properties. Our focus is primarily on multi-purpose agricultural lands—the places where farming meets habitat conservation. These lands may host wetlands or sloughs, or they might be farmland that is not ideal for intensive production but is perfect for a mix of agriculture and fish and wildlife habitat. Increasingly, landowners approach us to protect and restore parts of their property for nature—especially as climate change and sea-level rise shift the landscape. The Trust focuses on this niche because Skagit County already has a strong county-run program that purchases development rights to ensure that high-value agricultural land stays in farming, not pavement.

One of Skagit Land Trust's newly protected agricultural properties lies where Edison Slough meets Samish Bay. In the growing season, most of the 120+ acres are farmed. Come winter, the area transforms into a haven for an array of birds, from gleaming trumpeter swans to keen-eyed raptors and plucky plovers. The longtime landowners, who live

Continued on page 3...

Executive Director's Letter to Members

Dear Members and Partners,

At Skagit Land Trust, we are deeply grateful for our volunteers, whose dedication helps us in so many different ways. Among them are our Land Stewards, who commit to assisting in the long-term care of one or more of our conservation areas. These volunteers often form deep connections with the places they watch over.

This year, we are proud to recognize Ron Lindsay and Theresa Connolly (pictured right) with our annual Stewardship Award, which recognized them “for their countless hours committed, in all conditions, actively caring for these and other conservation areas.” As stewards of both Kelly’s Point on Guemes Island and Hurn Field near Concrete, Ron and Theresa take on a significant commitment, managing these lands frequented by both people and wildlife.



Some land stewards transform the places they steward. Green Road Marsh outside of Burlington is a perfect example. What was once a field overrun with reed canary grass is now a thriving forest, thanks to the tireless work of Kurt and Janice Buchanan (left) and Heidi Nicols (right) before them. Over

years of effort — supported by SLT, family, friends, and volunteers—they oversaw the planting of more than 2,000 trees and the installation of 20 bird boxes, creating a habitat that will flourish for generations.

Another steward whose legacy will long be remembered is Jim Johnson (pictured below), who cared for Cumberland Creek along the Skagit River for nearly 20 years. Jim’s unwavering advocacy led to a significant restoration project in the area.



As Michael Kirshenbaum, our Stewardship Director at the time, recalls: “Jim truly loved every moment he spent at Cumberland Creek. The creek had been rerouted and shortened 80 years ago. For years, Jim persistently suggested restoring the creek to its original channel. I always listened but knew funding would be a challenge. Yet Jim kept the idea alive. Then, when Skagit County and the Army Corps sought a mitigation project, I remembered Jim’s dream and mentioned Cumberland Creek. The idea took hold, and today, that restoration is a reality—all because of Jim’s quiet persistence.”

Jim, who passed away this March, once wrote of this re-connection by quoting John Muir: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” Jim added, “If those ‘hitches’ grow frayed or worn, then mending and reconnecting them is worthwhile work.”

Jim’s legacy is a powerful reminder of how one person’s passion can shape the land and inspire us all. Thank you to every Land Steward—past and present—who dedicates their time, energy, and love to Skagit Land Trust’s conservation areas. Your work is invaluable, and we are honored to share in your journey.



Clockwise: Jim and Michael during the Cumberland Creek restoration project; Jim inspiring the next generation during a school visit to the Utopia Conservation Area.

Continued from page 1...

on the property and lease over 100 acres to a local farming family, approached the Trust with a vision. They wanted to protect their farmland, open space, and 1.4 miles of shoreline forever, while also allowing it to adapt as nature might require due to sea-level rise.

"After five years of discussion with the landowners on how best to preserve this working farmland and wetland habitat, we completed a Conservation Easement (CE) on the property. The landowners love this land and have ensured that it wouldn't be subdivided and further developed," says SLT Conservation Project Manager Kari Odden. The CE was funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service's National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and a private foundation.

Over on Fir Island, just half a mile from the north fork of the Skagit River as it spreads across the Skagit Delta, sits the Paul Farm which was recently left to the Trust in a will. Snow geese and trumpeter swans frequent this 26-acre farm, adding to the scenic quality of the valley's landscape. Previous owner Cornelia Paul and her son Leo's fondness for nature and healthy soils influenced the family's decision to donate the land. Above all, they wanted the land protected from anything that they felt would deplete the soil.

Healthy farmland plays an essential role in regulating climate by storing and filtering water and sequestering carbon. The Paul family saw that the longevity of farming as a way of life in the Skagit depends on healthy soil. Thanks to their efforts, the farm still provides great agricultural soil for the current farmer, who leases the land.



A litter of piglets takes an afternoon nap at the Paul Farm

Farther up the Skagit, the Elysium/Birdsview Conservation Easements protect 250 acres of forests and fields, including 115 acres of rich farmland. This area serves as a key wildlife corridor, allowing animals to move freely between the Skagit River ecosystem and the forested foothills. For some animals it is a seasonal stopover; for others, a safe passageway. This corridor ensures that species will not be cut off from these essential needs by development.

Birdsview's landowners recognize the importance of maintaining agricultural land and open space in the Skagit landscape. They share their grass with the wildlife, providing food for elk and other wildlife while reducing grazing impacts on other farms. "We want to produce high-quality hay, not just for farm animals, but because good grassland, protected forest, and water access combine to make functional wildlife habitat," explain the landowners.

From the Cascades to the Salish Sea, Skagit Land Trust is working with partners and landowners to protect Skagit's farmland and prime soils. Together, we are helping to safeguard places where agriculture, fish, and wildlife coexist and thrive.

Elk (bottom left) and sheep (bottom right) enjoy the rich grazing at the Elysium/Birdsview Conservation Easements.



Lands We Love Social June 7th 2025 2:00pm-5:30pm

Please join us for our annual fundraiser on the land at the beautiful Elysium/Birdsview Conservation Easement. This special private property has curving shoreline along the Skagit River and breathtaking views of the Cascade foothills, with chances to view wildlife.

At this festive gathering guests can catch up with friends, connect with board members, and talk with staff while enjoying delectable bites, wines, and beers.

The event will feature live music from One Eyed Cat, auction items, special excursion sign-ups, games, and a **raise-the-paddle fundraiser in support of local land conservation and stewardship**. Guests are encouraged to dress comfortably for this outdoor social.



All proceeds help conserve and care for Skagit's natural lands today and in the future. Tickets are on sale now at skagitlandtrust.org or call 360-428-7878.

Want to help make this event a success? Do you have...

- A cabin, condo, or boatripe, that could be offered as an experience?
- A connection with a business that might donate a trip or tour?
- A special skill you'd like to share through an experiential excursion or workshop?

Please email Development & Outreach Director, Laura Hartner, at laurah@skagitlandtrust.org if you are interested in hosting or donating an experience. Your generosity helps us continue protecting the lands we love. Thank you!

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

Sponsors of the Lands We Love Social allow us to put every dollar raised at the social into conserving and stewarding the lands and waters of the Skagit. We are grateful for their continued support of our event. Interested in sponsoring? Contact Development & Outreach Director, Laura Hartner, at laurah@skagitlandtrust.org

The Hugh and Jane
Ferguson Foundation



BANNER BANK



Convergence
FINANCIAL PARTNERS



Samish
Indian Nation



FOOTHILLS
TOYOTA



Your gift during GiveBIG will go TWICE as far to conserve and

On May 6th & 7th, you can make a big impact on conservation effort. For every acre is conserved, the next miles of shoreline is protected, the and the next child is inspired to care for the world around them.

The pressures on our natural lands are growing. The Magic Skagit solutions to knit our natural lands back together.

When you join us for GiveBIG, your donation will be doubled, make skagitlandtrust.org to learn more and spread the word!

Skagit Land Trust Hosts 33rd Annual Meeting

Many thanks to the 150 supporters who joined Skagit Land Trust on March 13th for our 33rd Annual Membership Meeting. Attendees enjoyed a presentation from guest speaker Sam Barr, Director of the Coast Salish Youth Coalition (CSYC), who works to empower Indigenous youth through cultural collaboration and stewardship of ancestral lands. Co-presenters Birch Beaudet and David Wertheimer of Dog Woods discussed their partnership and vision for this special 120-acre forest on Guemes Island.

During the meeting, the Trust welcomed new Board members Meagan Maillet, Denby Lloyd, and Chris Varela. We also awarded the following honors to volunteers and partners who have contributed significantly to the mission and community of Skagit Land Trust:

SLT Board President's Blue Heron Award: Brian Adams, Director of Skagit County Parks & Recreation

Conservation Award: Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Stewardship Award: Land stewards Ron Lindsay and Theresa Connolly

Development & Outreach Award: Swan event volunteers Tim Manns, John Day, and Paul Anderson

Golden Hammer Award: SLT Facilities Committee Hal Lee, Paul Ingalls, Phil McCloud, and Keith Wiggers

To read more about the Annual Meeting or watch the recording, please go to our website's news page.



Sam Barr, Birch Beaudet, & David Wertheimer talk about their partnership at Dog Woods.



Left to right: Jane Zillig, Brian Adams, and Michael Kirshenbaum



Left to right: Carolyn Gestellum, Marie & John Erbstoeszer, Steven & Robyn Johnson



Left to right: Kari Odden, Kim Ray, and Therese Ogle

Care for the lands, waters, and wildlife of this special place

orts in the Skagit. During GiveBIG you can ensure that next
next heron has an undisturbed place to raise their chicks,

is worth protecting. You can help Skagit Land Trust find

ing a BIG difference in the natural world around you. Visit



Gaining Ground in the Fight Against Reed Canary Grass

When settlers first began farming in the Pacific Northwest, reed canary grass was introduced as a potential food source for their livestock. The problem? It grew and spread faster than the cows could eat it. Left unchecked, this aggressive invader spreads rapidly, choking out native species and resisting removal efforts. It survives mowing, spreads underground, and even endures underwater for weeks.

Skagit Land Trust's Minkler Lake Conservation Area, located east of Sedro-Woolley, is a battleground in the fight against reed canary grass. Over many years and with the help of members, volunteers and state and federal grants, the Trust purchased 138 acres here. For 20 years we have worked to restore the site's wetlands, forests, and open spaces, which are home to numerous waterfowl, coho salmon, cutthroat trout, elk, and native plants like willow and cottonwood.

In 2024, we launched a major restoration effort against reed canary grass, with funding assistance from Skagit County's Voluntary Stewardship Program.

"Reed Canary grass does not do well in shade so we planted over 2,000 hardy trees to shade out the grass," says SLT's Stewardship Coordinator Jonathan Worley. "Our hope is that native species will control the reed canary grass and also boost Minkler Lake on its ecological journey."

Volunteers, alongside Washington Conservation Corps and EarthCorps, joined forces for the project. Trust staff and volunteers will continue maintenance over the next few years to help ensure the survival of the newly planted trees. We're excited to wait, watch, and witness nature taking its course in restoring the wetlands at Minkler Lake.



Summer or winter, canary grass dominates this part of the Minkler Lake Conservation Area.



Volunteers Pete Haase (left), Matthew Rikken (center left), & Emma Koelbl (center right), planting the next generation of native trees at Minkler Lake. SLT Stewardship Coordinator Jonathan Worley (right) checking on the plantings this Spring.

Welcome to Our New Board and Staff Members!

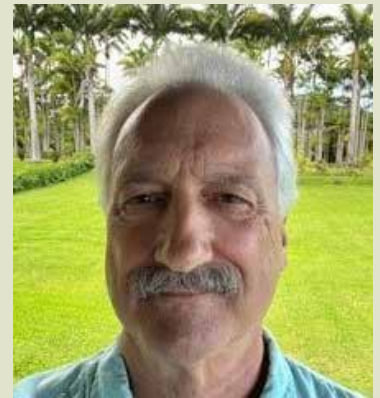
Chris Varela, *Board Member – Mt. Vernon*

Born and raised in Southern California, Chris now calls Skagit Valley home, where he works as a history teacher in Mount Vernon. He earned a BA in History from CSU San Bernardino and is currently pursuing a Master's in Social Studies at Ohio University. Passionate about both education and conservation, Chris has been volunteering with Skagit Land Trust since 2019 as a land steward and has served on the Development and Outreach Committee since 2021. When not in the classroom or working on conservation efforts, he enjoys spending time outdoors, exploring and appreciating nature.



Denby Lloyd, *Board Member – Anacortes*

Denby migrated to Alaska for college (biology) and graduate school (oceanography) and was fortunate to spend months at a time in remote field camps and aboard ship in many regions of the state. His career thereafter centered on fishery and natural resource management, ranging from field technician to land use permitter, research biologist to policy analyst, fishery manager to chief executive of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. After 44 years up North, Denby retired to the Big Island where he and his wife Laurie built a coffee, citrus and cacao farm. More recently they have moved to Anacortes to be closer to kids, grandkids, and other North American wildlife.



Meagan Maillet, *Board Member – Mt. Vernon*

Meagan Maillet holds a Juris Doctor from New England Law in Boston, Massachusetts, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Human Services with Minors in Environmental Studies & Communication from Western Washington University. After finishing law school, Meagan moved back to home to the Skagit where she was born and raised. She now works (remotely) as the Board of Review Staff Attorney for the Massachusetts Department of Labor & Workforce Development. Before moving to Boston, Meagan completed Skagit Conservation District's Watershed Master's Program and served as Skagit Land Trust's AmeriCorps volunteer in stewardship. The Trust is grateful to welcome Meagan back, now as a Board member!



Emily Schauble, *Stewardship Coordinator*

Emily holds degrees in Environmental Education (B.A.) and Environmental Science (B.S.) from Western Washington University. After graduation, she found herself nestled in the North Cascades working a variety of jobs, including some time as a park ranger for North Cascades National Park. Emily also sought experiences across the country, but after earning a Graduate Certificate in Environmental Education she was happy to return home to the Pacific Northwest. She is excited to build relationships with community members and partner organizations that support the mission of Skagit Land Trust. Emily lives upriver in Marblemount, and she loves recreating in the North Cascades. She also frequently visits family on the Olympic Peninsula. In her free time, Emily enjoys crafting, learning languages, and continually trying to perfect her gluten-free baking!



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kirk Johnson, *President*
Mount Vernon

Warren Walz, *Vice President*
Anacortes

Lynne Wenberg-Davidson *Treasurer*
Anacortes

Tim Manns, *Secretary*
Mount Vernon

Harold Lee, *Exec. Committee*
Mount Vernon

Brad Furlong
Fir Island

Jim Glackin
Mount Vernon

Mark Hitchcock
Samish Island

Steven H. Johnson
Anacortes

Karen Krub
La Conner

Mark Linnemann
Guemes Island

Denby Lloyd
Anacortes

Meagan Maillet
Mount Vernon

Therese Ogle
Samish Island/Anacortes

Kathy Thornburgh
Mount Vernon

Barbara Trask
Birdsview

Chris Varela
Mount Vernon

Keith Wiggers
Burlington

Anne Winkes
Conway

STAFF

Molly Doran
Executive Director

Michael Kirshenbaum
Conservation Director

Laura Hartner
Development Director

Max Morange
Stewardship Director

Jaz Strode-Elfant
Membership & Office Admin.

Jessica Lange
Conservation Project Manager

Kari Odden
Conservation Project Manager

Stacy Dahl
Volunteer & Education Prog Coord.

Sarah Gardam
Outreach Coordinator

Emily Schauble
Stewardship Coordinator

Jonathan Worley
Stewardship Coordinator

Oceanna Boulanger - AmeriCorps

Emma Koelbl - AmeriCorps

Leslie Menard - Accountant

Debbie Ensey - Event Coord.

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

Upcoming Events

SKAGIT LAND TRUST SPEAKER SERIES:

"Hiking Close to Home" with Jack Hartt (on Zoom)

Wednesday, May 14th @ 6pm - 7:30pm Register on our website, skagitlandtrust.org

Guemes Mountain Camas Hike with Jack Hartt

Sunday, May 18th @ 8:30am - 2pm (in-person)

WORK PARTIES:

Lyman Slough Invasive Plant Removal

Friday, May 2nd @ 10am - 2pm

Pressentin Ranch Invasive Plant Removal

Saturday, May 17th @ 10am - 2pm

Cascade River Invasive Plant Removal

Monday, June 2nd @ 10am - 2pm

SAVE THE DATES:

Lands We Love Social - JUNE 7th

Summer Solstice Bioblitz - JUNE 20th

Skagit Land Trust Annual Picnic - JULY 20th



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.