

SKAGIT UPDATE

FALL 2017

Restoring a Creek, Connecting a Community

In the Pacific Northwest, every neighborhood has its own relationship to water. There's likely a local stream, shoreline, drainage channel, or the mighty Skagit itself on your block, the other side of your farm field, or maybe even in your backyard.

These precious waters define the west side of the Cascades, provide clean drinking water for our communities, irrigation for our fields, and habitat for salmon and countless other wildlife species. There are so many creeks and streams here in Skagit County, sometimes we don't even know their names, even if we pass them every day.

Trumpeter Creek is one of those unknown wonders. Its headwaters start in a wetland complex behind a grocery store in Mount Vernon. It then flows past back yards, apartment complexes, and under roads, until it enters Skagit Land Trust's Barney Lake Conservation Area. There it joins with the waters of Nookachamps Creek and ultimately the Skagit River on its way to Puget Sound.



Students from Emerson High School using nets to relocate fish from the existing ditch to the restored Trumpeter Creek.



Skagit County natural resource partners Emily Derenne and Jeff McGowan at Trumpeter Creek, before the channel was restored.

When Skagit Land Trust acquired the land over which Trumpeter Creek flows to Barney Lake in 2012, the creek made an unexciting entry onto the property. Having been straightened decades ago to improve drainage, Trumpeter Creek beeline-lined to the Nookachamps, incised in a deep ditch choked with weeds and lacking in the variety of plant life that streams and rivers need to support fish, wildlife, and clean water.

The Trust immediately saw that Trumpeter Creek offered an opportunity to nurture both the land and the community. In 2014, the Trust entered into a partnership with Skagit County Public

Works, the Washington State Department of Ecology, and Ducks Unlimited to restore Trumpeter Creek to its original channel. In October, students and staff from Emerson High School, along with volunteers from Skagit Land Trust and partner organizations worked to transfer fish from the existing ditch to the restored

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From the Executive Director

The Power of Local Passionate People

This summer I got a call from land steward, Jim Johnson. He had written a short essay. "It's not much," Jim said, "but maybe it will be interesting to someone." Well, like most things from Jim, that was an understatement. He had written an elegant piece on paths (which you can read on our website), highlighting a new trail being built on the conservation area Jim stewards at Cumberland Creek. Many of the great things that have happened at Cumberland – teenagers designing and maintaining trails, the reconnection of the historic channel – are thanks to Jim's imagination, passion, and hard work to fuel a new reality.

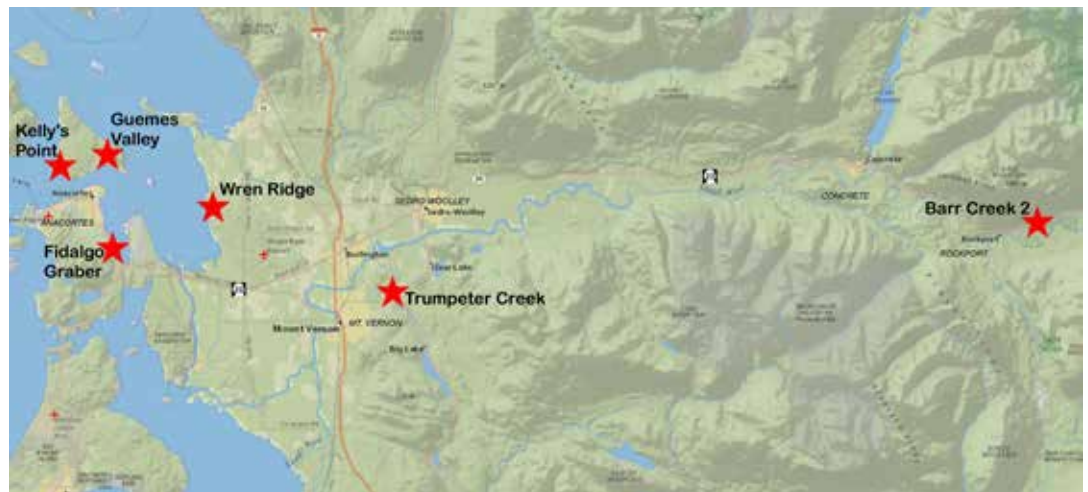
From landowners who reach out to protect their special property, to auction volunteers arriving with one-of-a-kind items, Skagit Land Trust is defined by the vision and effort of passionate people. Every corner of our work benefits. Pete Haase inspires, volunteering through his photographs. We toast friends in a lovely native garden at our office planted by Brenda Cunningham and crew. Each spring, ducklings, like tiny base jumpers, make a leap of faith out of duck boxes installed at Trust properties by Jim Owens and his team. Hal Lee sees anything broken and fixes it. Maggie Sullivan and many others' phone calls to constituents and legislators are a key reason Blanchard Mountain will hopefully be saved. Brad Solomon, newly retired to Skagit Valley, rang our doorbell and said, "I think it would be fun to make videos for you."

When Kelly's Point went on the market we immediately received calls from locals. But they didn't say, "You have to save it!" Rather they said, "We have to save it - What can we do?" They enthusiastically jumped in and helped raise \$200,000 in just five weeks. The best collaboration happens when we listen to local passionate people and help them find the resources, or use our expertise, to realize a dream. It's how places from Cypress Island, to Barr Creek, now Kelly's Point, and so many more beloved places are protected. Thank you passionate people!



Molly Doran, Executive Director

Properties Highlighted in this Issue



Restoring a Creek....continued from page 1...

channel. The students were part of Skagit Land Trust's Conservation Classrooms program, which gives youth hands-on learning experiences in nature, connecting the subjects they are studying in the classroom to the real world. The program also instills stewardship ethics and shows students the difference they can make in their community.

Trumpeter Creek once again meanders its way more than 3,000 feet through the Barney Lake Conservation Area to its confluence with the Nookachamps. Future restoration plans for the creek include planting a canopy of trees to filter the water, cooling it for amphibians and fish, and providing habitat and foraging grounds for wildlife species ranging from Coho salmon to the creek's namesake Trumpeter Swans. Thanks to a generous donation from Ellen Rak and Bill Dunlap, who love the idea of connecting our community to Barney Lake, the Trust will soon develop low-impact foot-trails and wildlife viewing areas to welcome the public to the property.



Restored meandering creek. Soon native plants will line the banks.



Staff and volunteers dredging for fish to transfer to the newly restored creek. The crew also worked to remove invasive species and grasses.

The Barney Lake Conservation Area serves many parts of the Skagit community and will be there for generations of people and wildlife. In addition to the world class wildlife habitat Barney Lake provides, 50 acres of the fields are sustainably farmed through a lease between the Trust and a local farmer. Barney Lake's proximity to Mount Vernon, allows youth groups to visit the diverse habitats found there and develop a connection with nature. The wetlands, creek, and their reinvigorated

ecology are an ideal place for the Trust's Conservation Classroom program.

Perhaps in the near future visitors to Barney Lake and Trumpeter Creek will return to their neighborhoods and look at that little stream behind the store or under the road and realize it's tied into something much bigger and important. Anonymous no more, Trumpeter Creek is ready for its moment.



Soon trails and a viewing area will give the public access to Barney Lake.



Students bringing the classroom to the outdoors during a visit to the Barney Lake Conservation Area.

Places You Recently Helped To Conserve

Fidalgo Bay Conservation Grows



Working with numerous landowners and partners, the Trust continues to grow conservation in the Fidalgo Bay area. This fall Lee Graber generously donated 15 acres near Highway 20, west of the Carstens Conservation Area, and north of the Tursi and Fidalgo Bay Conservation Easements. The property, nicknamed Graber's Acres by Lee's parents, consists of a healthy native forest and two streams, one of which originates at Whistle Lake and flows through the land to Fidalgo Bay. The preservation of this land will reduce erosion, filter water before it enters Fidalgo Bay, and preserve the green viewscape as one enters Anacortes. The Trust and its partners have now protected 559 acres of Fidalgo Bay tidelands and shoreline.

Barr Creek Conservation Area Expanded

In October, thanks to generous donations from our members, the Trust was able to add close to four acres to the Barr Creek Conservation Area, in a bargain sale from Doris and Kermit Johnson. 125 feet of Barr Creek flow through this new property, supporting a variety of wildlife, including Steelhead trout and Chinook salmon. The property is adjacent to forest service land and the Bald Eagle Natural Area.



Kermit Johnson and Michael Kirshenbaum shaking on the sale



Wren Ridge Conserved Forever



This fall Libby Mills and Rusty Kuntze finalized a conservation easement with Skagit Land Trust, protecting 22 acres of shoreline, wetlands, meadow, and mature forest adjacent to the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center.

"When we bought this property back in 2006, it was with the plan to protect it from future development and logging, and instead to provide crucial habitat for future generations of two-legged, four-legged, winged and finned beings. We are grateful that Skagit Land Trust has helped us achieve our dream. For a nature lover and naturalist, it's just the place to explore every day. We have loved to learn this little piece of the planet." - Libby Mills and Rusty Kuntze

Knitting Together the Guemes Landscape



As the result of a generous gift of land, the Trust added 127 acres in Guemes Valley to its Guemes Mountain Conservation Area. The property, which

retains a conservation easement held by the San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT), connects to over 400 acres protected by Skagit Land Trust and SJPT, including Guemes Mountain. Guemes Valley is a key part of the expansive, green view seen when standing on top of Guemes Mountain looking west. The property holds one of the last remaining active agricultural areas on the island, an expansive wetlands, and extensive second growth forest that is well on its way to becoming an older forest ecosystem. The unique wetlands present on the property are critical for birds, insects, amphibians and Guemes residents. On Guemes, water is precious. The island

Let's Save Kelly's Point and Yellow Bluff Together

On the southwest corner of Guemes Island is a stretch of beach that holds treasures for locals, visitors, and wildlife alike. Kelly's Point includes 3,000 feet of pristine shoreline, towering Yellow Bluff, and a rare-to-find forest of mature trees sitting on top of the bluff.

This fall a group of dedicated community members joined with Skagit Land Trust to purchase and conserve this ecologically valuable place forever. We have until January 28, 2018 to raise the funds needed, or the property will go back on the market. There are private buyers interested, with plans to develop the property with structures, roads, and logging that would severely impact the natural processes of the area.

Kelly's Point hosts a rich variety of wildlife habitat from marine waters, to shoreline, bluffs, and mature coastal forest. Together these features provide nesting, breeding, and foraging grounds for shorebirds, migratory songbirds, raptors, and several unusual species, including Oystercatchers and a colony of Pigeon Guillemots. Throughout the ages, Yellow Bluff has been a landmark for boaters—from canoe journeys to modern day kayakers, boaters, and ferries. The colorful layers of the bluff are a geological showcase of glacial deposits,



Community members working to preserve Kelly's Point

chronicling the ice age history of the region, and is used as an outdoor classroom by geologists.

As the bluff erodes it replenishes neighboring beaches with sediment, and feeds the eelgrass beds offshore.

Yellow Bluff is listed as "feeder bluff exceptional" by the Washington State Department of Ecology. Only 2% of Puget Sound's approximate 2,500 miles of marine shoreline have qualified for this classification.

We are very close to making the preservation of this amazing natural place a reality, but we need your help.

Your donation to Kelly's Point today will be matched by a \$50,000 challenge gift from Trust members, Rick and Bonnie Rule. Please join us in saving this iconic landmark for generations to enjoy. Visit our website to learn more and add your support or call, 360-428-7878.

is identified by the EPA as having a sole source aquifer. The Guemes Valley Conservation Area contributes to the recharge of this aquifer. The property is a perfect example of where sustainable agriculture exists side-by-side with wetlands and a healthy native forest.

Guemes Island has a long history of visionary landowners undertaking voluntary land conservation. These protected lands add to the island's heritage. No matter the changes to Guemes Island over the decades, this area will remain rural and natural, and serve as a sanctuary for people and wildlife. Over the next year the Trust will seek input on stewardship of this beautiful land.



Glen Veal (right), who will continue to farm parts of the property, talked about the history of farming on Guemes Island on a recent public tour.

Trust Hosts Future Conservationists

This summer the Trust was proud to host a crew of LEAF interns (Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future). Run by The Nature Conservancy, LEAF works to grow the next generation of conservation leaders through paid summer internships for high school students. The program opens their eyes to career possibilities, builds self-confidence, work skills, and conservation literacy.

Isobel, Olivia, and Jackie ventured from Tacoma's Science and Math Institute (SAMI) with their mentor Carol, to help with many Skagit Land Trust projects,

including trail building, weed removal, and habitat monitoring. The LEAF Crew gained environmental stewardship experience and learned what land trusts are all about during their month with us. We're excited to host another crew or two next year!



Give The Gift of Membership

Looking for a gift for the person who has everything? How about a membership to Skagit Land Trust? Your gift in honor of a family member or friend can go a long way in protecting the places that make Skagit County so special. Here is what your donation will help fund -



Youth program rain gear



Duck nesting boxes



Native trees and plants



Bus stipend for school visits



Wildlife cameras



Stewardship supplies

Save the Date! Skagit Land Trust's Annual "Lands We Love" Auction & Dinner March 10th, 2018 5pm-9pm



Join us for our largest fundraising event of the year! Come celebrate and support the work of the Trust across Skagit County. Tickets will go on sale in January. Watch for your invitation in the mail. All proceeds help conserve Skagit's natural lands today and for the future.

Interested in donating or being a sponsor? Contact the Trust, info@skagitlandtrust.org, 360-428-7878.

Welcome Hannah and Stacy



Hannah Williams came to Skagit Land Trust as an AmeriCorps volunteer, helping to build our youth program. She became the newest member of our staff this summer. As Conservation Assistant she helps bridge the Land and Stewardship departments, keeping records and managing our conservation areas. Hannah has her B.A. in Environmental Studies from the University of Washington.



Stacy Dahl is the Trust's 2017/2018 AmeriCorps Member focusing on Youth Engagement and Outreach. Stacy moved to Bellingham from the Mojave Desert, where she spent six years as an environmental educator on the public lands surrounding Las Vegas. She is a graduate student, seeking a Masters of Biology. Stacy is married to King Dahl, has two sons – Miles and Jeremy, and likes to take hikes with her dog, Remo.

Celebrate the Year in Review with Friends

Please join us at **Fidalgo Bay Resort** (4701 Fidalgo Bay Rd, Anacortes) on **Friday, January 19, 2018 from 5-8pm** for our **Annual Members Meeting** and celebration of the past year in conservation. Renowned local artist **Leo Osborne** will give a presentation on how the nature of Skagit County have inspired his work.



The Trust will also present annual awards, hold board elections, and update members on current and future projects.

Members are encouraged to bring a friend who wants to learn more about the Trust. Visit our website for more information and to RSVP for the event, or call 360-428-7878.

Leaving a Legacy



"At this point it's about legacy," **Ellen Romick** told her sister a few weeks before she passed away. Ellen wanted to be part of protecting the lands she loved. Skagit Land Trust is grateful to Ellen for generously including the Trust in her will. She left a beautiful gift that will benefit people, plants, and wildlife for years to come.

Originally from Nevada, Ellen practiced as a nurse at St Mary's Hospital, where she helped start the first home

health and hospice program in Reno. Ellen moved to Orcas Island in the early 90's, working and living on the island for close to 15 years. She moved to Samish Island seven years ago and became an active member of the community and a nurse at Skagit Regional Hospital.

"Ellen sought beauty everywhere. It could be walking through nature, caring for her patients, or the art of fabric. She lived in the moment," said Ellen's friend.

She loved hiking and hiked with a group of friends every Thursday, hunting for wild flowers to photograph, identify, and draw. She was an avid quilter, making over 100 quilts in the past 20 years. She gave most of her quilts away, including donating many to local hospitals.

When her sister Sandy came to see Ellen, she took Sandy on a tour of her favorite places in Skagit County. Every day was a different hike to a different treasure that she was passionate about preserving for generations to enjoy. Because of Ellen's generous bequest, many more of these places will be saved.



This summer Skagit Land Trust lost a dear friend, dedicated board member, and tireless advocate for land conservation, **Kit Rawson**. Kit was a friend of the salmon and the people who cherished them, the whales, the Salish Sea, the rivers that fed the sea, and the land that surrounds them. Kit and his wife Kathy were the first caretakers of The Nature Conservancy's Yellow Island Preserve in 1980. Kit was a passionate salmon biologist who dedicated his life to promoting the preservation, protection, and recovery of salmon in the Salish Sea. For 30 years Kit advocated a science-based approach to salmon harvest management in policy, legal, and technical areas representing the Tulalip Tribes and other tribes at the local, state, interstate, and international levels.

Kit joined Skagit Land Trust's board in 2015. He was an extremely active member, assisting on marine projects, serving on the Trust's Public Policy Committee, and leading public bicycling rides to Trust properties.

Kit was never happier than when on a bike, whether riding to town for groceries or pedaling the length of Great Britain. He made a point to take a selfie at each Trust property he pedaled to. Below are a selection of Rawson's Awesome Selfies. The Trust will be forever grateful to Kit for the knowledge and enthusiasm he brought to preserving the special places of Skagit County.



Tope Ryan



Green Road Marsh



Bell Property



Skagit Land Trust office



Mud Lake



Cumberland Creek



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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 - Please RSVP online, or
call 360-428-7878 to sign up**

First Saturday and Third Friday Stewardship Events
at various properties each month from 9am-12pm

Annual Meeting - Friday, January 19th
Fidalgo Bay Resort from 5-8pm

Annual Auction & Dinner - Saturday, March 10th
WA Walton Event Center from 5-9pm

**Learn more about all of these events and
RSVP on our website, skagitlandtrust.org**

Help Us Save Yellow Bluff and Kelly's Point!
visit www.skagitlandtrust.org