

Local Land Conservation as a Climate Solution

Skagit Land Trust has always had its eye on the future, permanently protecting and stewarding land to benefit wildlife, preserve our open spaces, conserve working lands and provide recreational access. We have a conservation strategy that guides our work, but do we need to include climate change in that strategy? YES! Land conservation is a natural climate solution that will help us prepare for the future.

Local Impact of Climate Change - Climate change is making some types of extreme weather more frequent and intense. According to the Washington State Climatologist, Skagit County is 1.3 degrees warmer today than in the early 20th century, driving other local changes. Average temperatures are expected to rise. The vulnerability of the Skagit River to flooding is rising due to shrinking glaciers, less precipitation as snow and more as rain, more severe storms, and increased glacial sediment eroding into rivers. Other climate change impacts felt locally include warmer and drier summers, more fires, and eroding beaches due to storm surges and sea level rise. Impacts of climate change can be overwhelming, but local land conservation plays an important role in reducing risk. Conservation work is a kind of insurance: an up-front investment that protects us against potentially devastating climate changes in the future.



Flooding last Thanksgiving in the Nookachamps watershed.

A New Conservation Priority – Since we can't stop climate change, we need to prepare for it. For the Trust, that means rethinking how and where we do land conservation. Planning enables us to focus on places that store carbon and will help wildlife and people survive in our changing climate. Our work includes both mitigation and preparation. Mitigation actions prevent or sequester emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Forests, soils and wetlands play a major role in storing carbon, so the Trust can help lessen local climate change impacts by protecting and carefully managing these types of lands.



Drought stressed Western Red Cedars.

Preparation includes actions that facilitate human, wildlife and natural systems' ability to respond and adapt, such as protecting wildlife migration corridors and large blocks of diverse habitat. Stewardship and restoration work must be climate-responsive.

Have you noticed dying Western Red Cedar trees? Stewardship Manager, Regina Wandler, believes it is due to cumulative years of drought stress. When planning restoration projects, Regina thinks ahead to what plants will survive drier, hotter summers. She uses a larger variety of species and plant stock that is more suited to future conditions.

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From the Executive Director

I am in awe of the power of all of you to join together to save land. A year ago we were in the final months of conserving Kelly's Point on Guemes Island with over 600 supporters. And you/we did it!

We had barely washed the champagne glasses when we began working with enthusiastic community members to save the Samish Flower Farm. We are close to preserving this property, thanks to you.

Meanwhile, hundreds of you wrote letters and called your legislators to ensure that \$10 million in state Trust Land Transfer program funds were allocated to finalize the conservation of Blanchard Mountain's forested core. Not only were those funds allocated, but the Department of Natural Resources is finalizing the conservation of these beautiful 1,600 acres as you read this. These locally led conservation efforts are not just energizing, they are critical to our community ecologically, culturally, and economically.

Your combined dedication does not go unnoticed beyond our walls. This year, we were honored when the Seattle-based Satterberg Foundation selected Skagit Land Trust for a three-year, unrestricted core support grant. Satterberg promotes a just society and a sustainable environment. 500 organizations applied - 60 organizations in Washington and California were selected. I know one of the main reasons we were selected was because Satterberg saw you in every step of our programs and accomplishments. This generous multi-year grant will allow us to start the protection of threatened lands that are currently just beyond our reach. It will help us grow the next generation of conservation leaders, and better reflect the make-up of our community in all we do.

This holiday season, I want to thank you for being a gift - to us, to the land, and to the future.

With gratitude,



Molly Doran, Executive Director



Above: The kickoff campaign to Save the Samish Flower Farm took place at the Samish Island 4th of July parade. Just four months later, you and others in the community have raised over \$600,000 for this project!



To the left: Each summer, The Trust partners with the Nature Conservancy's Leaders for Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) internship program. This program offers career development and hands-on environmental stewardship experiences to the next generation of environmental leaders. Stacy Dahl, Volunteer and Education Programs Coordinator, introduces the Trust's LEAF summer interns.

Skagit Land Trust's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 17-18

This past year our team grew stronger and our supporters hit it out of the ball park to help save and steward local lands.



8 land protection projects completed, including Kelly's Point (above)



20 restoration & stewardship projects



40 miles of shoreline now permanently protected.



400 volunteers helped steward Trust lands

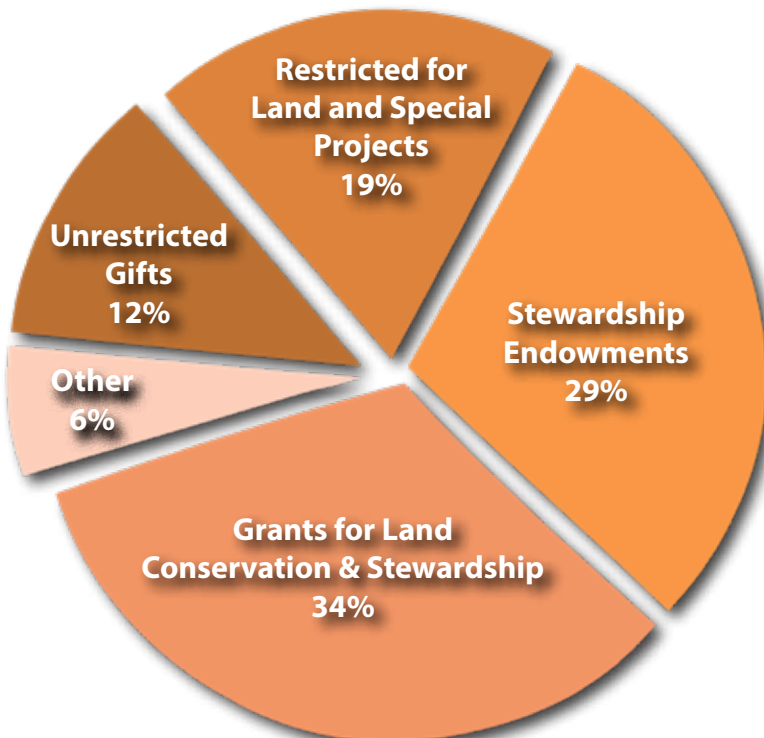


1,000 youth days logged

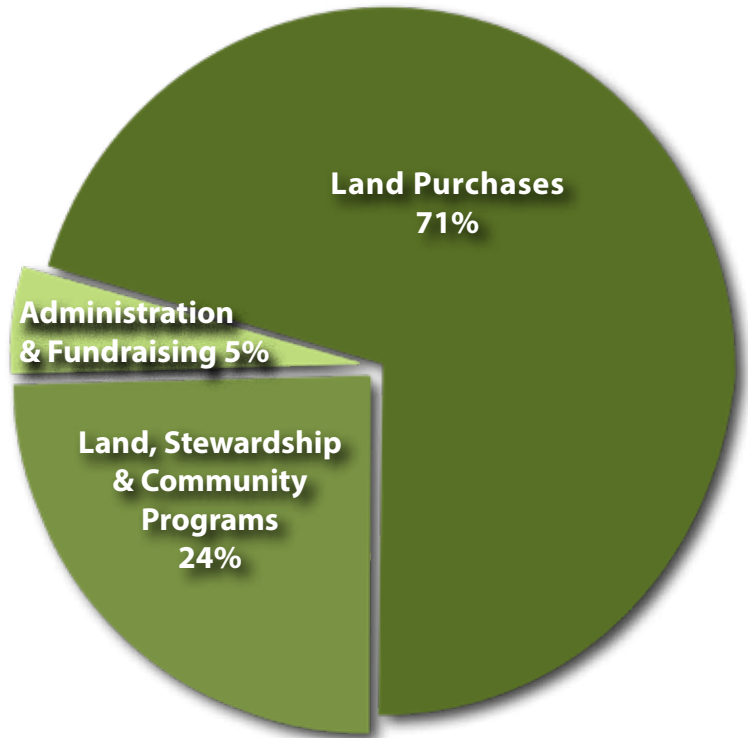


Immeasurable cool creatures found on Trust lands

REVENUE \$4,493,268



EXPENSES \$3,134,689



Taking Action – Here are a few examples of what the Trust is doing to help mitigate and prepare for the impacts of a changing climate.



- The Trust has protected 1,855 acres along the Skagit River with support from landowners, members, the Skagit Watershed Council, and partners. Undeveloped land in the floodplain acts as a sponge and reduces effects of local flooding on our communities. Protecting critical river and shoreline habitat ensures that salmon and other species have the best chance of survival as climate change accelerates.



- The Trust holds permanent conservation easements on 1,680 acres of the Anacortes Community Forestlands. Protecting forests and wetlands from development captures carbon and other greenhouse gases. Local trails and conservation areas decrease the amount of energy we use to travel to experience nature, lessening our carbon footprint.



- The recently acquired Kelly's Point property protects more than 3,000' of marine shoreline and a regionally important feeder bluff. Unarmored marine bluffs provide a natural sediment source that replenishes nearby beaches and coastal wetlands, which in turn helps protect people and infrastructure from sea level rise and storm surges.



- Big Lake Wetlands and Barney Lake, two large wetland properties in the Nookachamps watershed, are climate change workhorses! They store carbon and act as sponges to decrease flooding in the wet season. In dry summers, they provide water and food sources and a steady water source to rivers, helping maintain summer river flows and fish habitat.

Our conservation work is more important than ever. By supporting the Trust through donations, volunteer time, and citizen science work, you are strengthening our ability to protect local lands, store carbon and prepare for our changing climate. Together we are creating a future that reduces risk to people, property, and nature, and holds the promise of thriving communities within a vibrant, healthy ecosystem.

Orca Recovery Work

"How does planting a tree at Barney Lake help the whales?"

A fair question recently asked by a volunteer during a Skagit Land Trust stewardship event. The status of our local whales – the Southern Resident Killer Whales (SKRW) – has been on the minds of many these past months, as declining numbers and tragic whale deaths have captured international attention and become a focus of policy makers at the highest levels.

While emergency measures are being contemplated to save our resident whales, the conservation community knows that the only lasting solution is to play the long game: to continue the multi-generational effort to restore the ecology of the Skagit. There is no Orca recovery without the Skagit; the resident Orcas eat Chinook salmon almost exclusively, and half of the wild Chinook in Puget Sound are in the Skagit watershed.



Photograph courtesy of Phil Green



Skagit Valley College intern, Mayu Inagaki, assists with a tree planting along Trumpeter Creek at Barney Lake Conservation Area.

That tree the volunteer asked about at Barney Lake, and the thousands planted on Trust land each year, will hold the soil, remove toxins, and make the Salish Sea cleaner for the whales. Many miles from saltwater, the invasive Japanese Knotweed removed on a Trust conservation area near Hamilton, and the Douglas fir planted in its place, will provide shade, food and channel complexity that will help recover the Chinook.

With the help of landowners, our members, and partners, Skagit Land Trust has permanently protected more than 35 miles of salmon habitat on the Skagit River and its tributaries. We are also protecting marine locations where juvenile salmon find shelter. Protecting and restoring natural processes along our shorelines – at Kelly's Point on Guemes Island, at Samish Flower Farm on Samish Island -- will directly benefit the Orcas.

The future of the Orcas may be uncertain; but we know for a fact that our collective efforts are an essential part of the solution. Helping to save land that enables natural processes that stabilize and recover Chinook salmon is one of the best ways we can help the Orcas. Let's keep at it!



Skagit watershed Chinook distribution map created by Skagit River System Cooperative



Congresswoman Susan DelBene visits the Trust's Illabot Creek Conservation Area which holds vital Chinook salmon spawning and rearing habitat.

Welcome Stacy, Zena, and Meagan

Stacy Dahl is the newest member of our staff. She joined the Trust as our Volunteer & Education Programs Coordinator this August after serving as our 2017/2018 AmeriCorps Member focusing on Youth Engagement and Outreach. Stacy's work will focus on the care of Trust volunteers, coordination of our Citizen Science efforts, and overseeing our partnerships with local schools, youth clubs, and interns. 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.



Zena Gavin is a recent graduate from Western Kentucky University's Geography and Environmental Science program. Raised in Kentucky, this is Zena's first time to the West Coast. Zena is serving as our Education & Community Engagement AmeriCorps Member. She loves to travel, hike, and try out new projects. Some of her favorite things are pasta, musicals, her cats, and the outdoors. Keep your eye out for Zena hosting our booth around the community and please stop by to say hi!



Meagan Maillet graduated from Western Washington University in 2016 with a degree in Human Services. She is serving as the Trust's Stewardship AmeriCorps Member. A life-long Skagitonian, Meagan considers herself lucky to have grown up in an area full of natural beauty and recreational spaces. She has spent the majority of her life involved in agriculture, which taught her the respect needed for the lands that provide so much. Meagan loves learning about the many organizations, laws, and partnerships that make conservation successful. She is excited to connect with community members who help steward Skagit Land Trust properties.



New Board Members



Mark Hitchcock is a native Washingtonian who has resided in Skagit County for more than thirty years. He holds degrees in Forest Science from the University of Washington and Yale University. Mark has previously served on the boards of Skagit Land Trust and Skagit Conservation District. Now retired from a career as a forest management consultant, Mark regularly volunteers with the Samish Indian Nation and the Washington Department of Natural Resources on restoration and monitoring projects in and around the Salish Sea. Mark and his partner Alison enjoy living on Samish Island along the shore of Padilla Bay.



Kathy Thornburgh studied botany and plant ecology at the University of Tennessee and received a Master's degree in Marine Ecology and Fisheries from the University of Washington. She has worked as a preserve steward for The Nature Conservancy and a habitat biologist for Alaska Department of Fish and Game. She ran a water quality lab for the Tulalip Tribes, and retired after 20 years with Snohomish County working on water quality and environmental monitoring, public education, and habitat stewardship. Kathy is an avid bicyclist and volunteers as a bike safety instructor with the League of American Cyclists. She serves on the Skagit County Master Gardener Foundation Board and is involved in Master Gardener intern training, plant clinics, and rain garden education.

Leaving a Legacy

Leaving a Legacy through a Life Estate

Bob Keller liked to plan for the future. When he entered his late sixties, he and his wife, Pat Karlberg, knew it was time to make plans for what would happen to their estate after they passed away. With five children between the two of them, questions about who would inherit things like their 31-acre Cascade River property became complicated. The couple had placed a conservation easement on the property in 1998, restricting development of the site to one cabin, and protecting the mature forest, 3,500 feet of river shoreline, salmon spawning streams, and the wild character of the area.

Bob's two daughters had deep roots in the property, visiting the small cabin and woods since the mid-seventies.

Long-time friends of Bob and Pat's also had a deep connection to the site, visiting the cabin seasonally over the past twenty years and helping with annual chores on the property .

Rather than trying to figure out how to divide the property, Bob and Pat decided to gift their land at their passing to Skagit Land Trust, with a reserved "life estate". The donation of land with a reserved life estate can be given so that the donor continues to use the land, or it can go into effect at the landowner's passing, giving others use of the land for a specified timeframe. Since the land eventually comes to Skagit Land Trust, donors are eligible to receive a charitable gift tax deduction at the time they make the life estate gift.

In the case of Bob and Pat, they decided to include Bob's two daughters and the couple's long-time friends in the reserved life estate for their Cascade River property. Those included in the life estate will manage the land and have access to it for their entire lifetime. When they pass away, Skagit Land Trust will own the property in its entirety.

The Trust works with each donor to determine if their property would be best kept as a conservation area, or if the property could be sold after the donor's death to support conservation of other natural areas in the Skagit. Bob's thoughtful planning, years before he passed in 2017, left his family, friends, and the Trust a clear path to carry on the care and conservation of the land he loved. If you are interested in learning more about gifting land with a reserved life estate, please contact Molly Doran or Laura Hartner at info@skagitlandtrust.org or 360-428-7878.



2004 photograph of then Stewardship Director, Brenda Cunningham, with Bob and Pat at their Cascade River property.

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD's) Can Reduce Taxable Income

If you are 70 ½ or older, you know you must take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA. But did you know that a **qualified charitable distribution (QCD) made to Skagit Land Trust directly from your IRA can help reduce your taxes**, depending on your circumstances? QCD's are not counted as taxable income, but they are counted towards your Required Minimum Distribution. **Studies show that gifting directly from your IRA is one of the most tax beneficial ways of giving to a charity.** While this donation cannot be claimed as a charitable deduction, donors can realize other substantial benefits by reducing their taxable income in this way. Recently we have had members take advantage of this little known option to support our work and they are thrilled it exists. Talk with your accountant or financial advisor to see if this option fits for you. Please let us know if you are giving via a QCD so we can send you the appropriate paperwork for your files and thank you. For a fact sheet on this option and other *Ways to Give To Skagit Land Trust*, please contact Molly Doran at mollyd@skagitlandtrust.org or Laura Hartner at laurah@skagitlandtrust.org or call us at 360.428.7878.



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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.

Join us for an upcoming stewardship event! RSVP online, or call 360-428-7878.

11/23/18 - Opt Outside Day - 10am-1pm

Follow up the Thanksgiving holiday with a special boat-in work party at Big Lake Wetlands.

12/1/18 - Samish Island Ivy Pull and Wreath Making Party

Help us pull holly and ivy at the Samish Island Heronry, then join us in making festive holiday wreaths.

12/8/18 - Anacortes Ivy Pull and Wreath Making Party

Pull holly and ivy at one of our Anacortes Conservation Easements, then join us in making festive holiday wreaths.

**Annual Membership
Meeting - 1/17/19 at
the Lincoln Theatre**

Please join us at the Lincoln Theatre on January 17, 2019 from 5-8pm. The Trust will present annual awards and update members on current and future projects.

Bring a friend who wants to learn about the Trust. Visit our website for information and to RSVP.

**Save the Date!
“Lands We Love”
Auction & Dinner
March 16th, 2019
5pm-9:30pm**

Join us for our largest fundraising event of the year! Celebrate and support the work of the Trust across the Skagit. Tickets go on sale in January. Watch for your invitation in the mail.

Interested in donating or being a sponsor? Contact debbiee@skagitlandtrust.org or call 360-428-7878.