



SPRING 2011

SKAGIT UPDATE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT LAND TRUST

OF SAMISH ISLAND OAKS AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

by Martha Bray, Conservation Director

Last year on a brisk day in October, a small but notable group came together to walk a parcel of land on Samish Island. The common thread for everyone was an interest in Garry oak habitat. At the Land Trust's request, scientists kindly came from as far away as Olympia and the San Juan Islands. They came to observe a population of Garry oaks on Landry and Susan Corkery's property, and to make recommendations for land management techniques that could help sustain this rare habitat.

This tiny remnant of native oak habitat on the southwest side of Samish island is the only known occurrence of its kind in Skagit County; as such, it adds significantly to the biological diversity in the area. Over the years, many plant enthusiasts and scientists have walked this property; and yet, on that October day, new clues to the land's ecological history were uncovered, and a species of fern was observed that was both unusual for the site and never before noted.

In many ways what transpired during this site visit was a continuation of a conversation that the Land Trust and the Corkerys have been having for years. The Corkerys love their oaks and the pristine saltwater shoreline on their property. They have a strong conservation

ethic, and have been working with Skagit Land Trust since 1994 to ensure that the most important conservation features on their land will be protected through donated conservation easements.

The October site visit helped define the next steps, and in December 2010 the Corkerys donated a third easement that protects an



Pristine shoreline and a rare stand of Garry Oak plus 26 acres of land are now protected by a conservation easement on the Corkery property. Five other land owners on Samish Island have also protected their land with conservation easements donated to Skagit Land Trust.

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Illustrations by
Brenda Cunningham

Skagit Land Trust
PO Box 1017, 325 Pine Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
voice: 360•428•7878
fax: 360•336•1079

email: dianebednarz@skagitlandtrust.org
website: www.skagitlandtrust.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have enjoyed being a member of Skagit Land Trust's Board of Directors for the past six years and I am honored to be the Board president this year. I recently retired and closed the civil engineering and land surveying business where I worked for 37 years. I confess that during these years my primary concern was the human environment.

My interest in the land trust began with engineering work that I was doing on the Skagit River. I was fortunate in the last 15 years of my career to work on a number of wildlife habitat projects and levee improvements, getting to know the many conservation groups, agencies and citizens who are working on solutions that help to alleviate flood risk while restoring natural processes that heal our damaged river ecosystem.



The Trust's goal in wildlife habitat protection is to protect the best quality, most at-risk and inter-connected habitat first. We work all around the County but in the past decade our most extensive acquisitions have been lands east of Sedro-Woolley in the Middle and Upper Skagit. Here we focus on protecting functioning floodplain habitat and restoring the natural condition of the river shoreline.

The Board and staff are currently working on an update of our 10 year old conservation strategy. We welcome your comments and want to know the conservation interests of our members and supporters. Our role and partnerships have evolved over the past decade and many different groups are working on various aspects of land conservation in the County. What should our role be in protecting lands that are cherished for open space values, forest lands, farmlands or wildlife habitat? What should our role be in restoring habitat and encouraging natural processes to return to the land?

On a cold and snowy night in February we held our annual auction and dinner at the St. Josephs Center in Mount Vernon. We had over 210 people attend and netted more than \$50,000 for land conservation. In these difficult economic times during a snowstorm, we were surprised and gratified by the tremendous support of our members and friends. Thank you!

Bob Boudinot, Board of Directors, President

Continued from page one

additional eighteen acres. All told, twenty-six acres and 1,000 feet of saltwater shoreline are now protected in perpetuity. This includes all of the oak habitat and shoreline on the property, as well as a large contiguous block of upland conifer forest. The Corkerys retained the right to build just two single-family homes on their entire property; the conservation easement extinguishes the rest of the development rights, which reduces the potential residential density by about 80%.

Also known as Oregon white oak, Garry oak is close to the northeastern edge of its range in Skagit County. Most other occurrences in this area are in the San Juan and Gulf Islands, with a few in the Chuckanut area in Whatcom County. Many native species of herbaceous plants are associated with oak including camas, paintbrush, red fescue and wild rye. In our area, without periodic fire to maintain a more open landscape, oaks and their associated plant species tend to be out-competed by conifers.

It is generally accepted that the oak/grassland assemblages in the Pacific Northwest were historically maintained through deliberate burning by Native Americans, who relied on the camas bulb as an important food source. In modern times humans are still managing these landscapes to maintain oak stands, employing a variety of practices. The scientists who visited the Corkery's property in October are among those researching these different management techniques.

Indeed, the Corkery's oaks are quite crowded by Douglas fir, and they occur in just a narrow band near the shoreline. There are many questions still about these oaks, their historic extent on Samish Island, and what can and should be done to restore and/or manage what remains. Happily, the Corkerys have decided to have further assessment and management planning done by professionals with appropriate expertise; the results of this work will become an integral part of the conservation easement. This approach to conserving sensitive habitat on private land provides both a science-based framework for future land management

decisions, and a solid partnership between the landowners and the land trust. Most importantly, we hope that it will ensure that the Samish Island oaks will be around for many generations to come.

According to the landowners wishes, and consistent with many conservation easements on private land, access by the general public is not provided at this Samish Island site due to the sensitive nature of the habitat.



Discussing Garry oak management on the Corkery's property: from left to right, Susan Corkery; Connie Harrington, research scientist with the U.S. Forest Service; Peter Dunwiddie, ecological consultant, and Landry Corkery.



Garry oaks on the Corkery Property grow in a narrow band along the shoreline.

The Trust's members' picnic tour on August 13th will visit the Corkery conservation easement with the landowners and Trust staff.

5th Annual Auction and Dinner a Success!

We hosted our 5th Annual Auction and Dinner "Have Fun – Save Land" on February 26th at Saint Joseph Center in Mount Vernon. A record number of guests attended the auction despite the snowstorm and raised \$50,000 net to help conserve special land for current and future generations.

A huge thank you to our event sponsors: Foothills Toyota Scion, Puget Sound Energy, Premier Graphics, Balloon Splendor, Consumer Rentals, Hexcel Corporation, The Odom Corporation, Oliver-Hammer Clothes Shop, Dr. Daniel Rasmussen, Skagit Law Group, Skagit River Brewery, Sierra Pacific Foundation, Washington Bulb Company and Windermere Real Estate – Skagit Valley & Anacortes.



ABOVE: Board member Russ Weiser and his guest Clare Tatarsky enjoying the auction & dinner.

Be sure to save the date for **next year's auction, Saturday February 25th** at Saint Joseph Center and help us save more land!

The success of our auction was possible due to the generosity of guests who attended and bid, our dedicated board of directors who participated fully, over 250 businesses and individuals that donated auction items and our volunteers. Thank



ABOVE: Food provided by Gere-a-Deli and Max Dale's was superb!

you to our auction co-chairs, Fonda Downs and Marlene Moore, our auction committee and all the volunteers who worked at the event who helped make the auction a huge success.

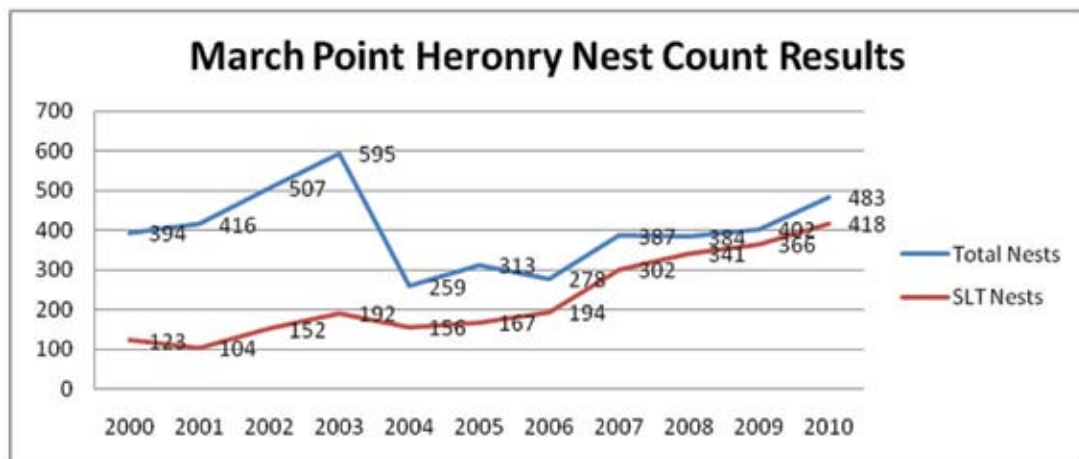
AUCTION COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We are forming our auction committee for next year's auction and would love to have additional committee members to help us plan, procure items and help make next year's auction a great success! Please call Renata @ (360) 428-7878 or email renatahm@skagitlandtrust.org if interested.

TRUST PROTECTS IMPORTANT GREAT BLUE HERON NESTING SITE

Skagit Land Trust's March Point Conservation Area protects one of the largest Great Blue Heron nesting colonies on the West Coast. This chart shows the number of nests counted each winter and demonstrates the increasing popularity of this heronry.

(Note the decline between 2003 – 04 represents losing access to some neighboring property, not a decline in the number of nests). To see live images of the herons during nesting season (April – August), visit our home page at www.skagitlandtrust.org



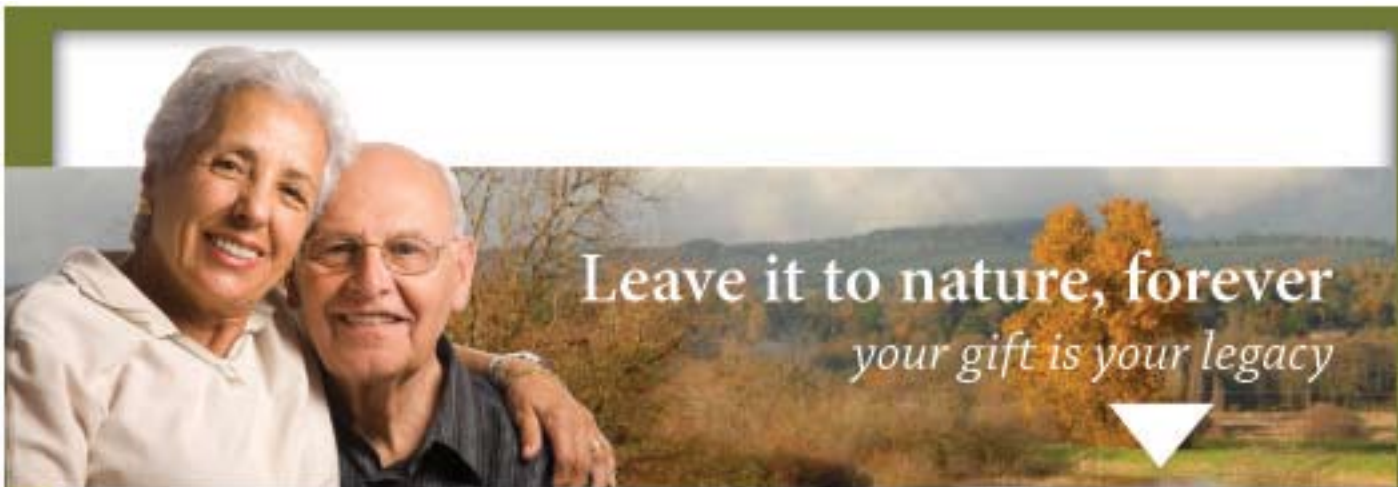
CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONATED IN THE WILL OF VICTORIA MICELI

Victoria Miceli grew up in the 1930's in the family home close to Bay View on Padilla Bay. The land and home had been in the family since the late 1800's, and Victoria and her husband Leonard returned there to retire in the 1970's. Victoria loved watching the bald eagles in the big fir trees at the water's edge, and even in her later years she enjoyed swimming in the bay. She knew this small vibrant place was special, and she made plans to preserve it in her will.

Victoria first contacted the Trust in 2002 to discuss protecting her property. When she passed in late 2009 the home and property were left to family members, but she also left

a conservation easement to Skagit Land Trust. The easement ensures that the shoreline and essential character of the land will stay natural and undeveloped in perpetuity. Victoria also had the forethought to set aside a small fund to help the land trust administer and monitor the easement over time.

Fortunately the heir to the family home, Jonathan Granger, shares the values of his "Aunt Vikki," and plans to carry on her stewardship tradition. He plans to raise his family there and is making plans to plant more native species in the shoreline buffer. Thanks to the foresight of Victoria Miceli and the ongoing cooperation of her family, two-hundred feet of shoreline along Padilla Bay will remain natural and undisturbed for wildlife and future generations.



GIFTS OF LAND

Making a bequest of land can have a lasting impact on the beauty and character of Skagit County while protecting its natural lands, farms, forests and wildlife habitat.

Although many charities hesitate to accept donated real estate, Skagit Land Trust invites you to consider gifting us land (with or without structures). Real estate and land management are what we do.

Whether your gifted land is held and managed as one of our conservation areas, or is better suited as land that we sell after placing a conservation easement on it, or is non-conservation land whose proceeds once sold can be used for more land protection - it all helps save land for tomorrow.

WWW.SKAGITLANDTRUST.ORG/ESTATEPLANNING • (360) 428-7878

WAYS OF GIVING

For more information, view our webpage on estate planning and bequests.

For gifts of land we encourage you to talk with us about your potential gift as this increases the probability that the Trust can meet your wishes in the future.



Guemes Mountain Trail - Almost Complete!

by Regina Wandler, Volunteer Coordinator



It's hard to believe that it is almost summer – and that the trail up Guemes Mountain is almost complete! Dedicated volunteers have come from all over Skagit, Seattle, and as far away as Pullman to donate almost 2000 hours to building this trail since the first workparties last September. In fact, I spoke with a girl who decided to volunteer one of the 10 days she was visiting home before heading back to her job on the east coast. When you walk up the trail this summer, look carefully at the ground you walk on – try to imagine the hours of labor that have gone into each flat, pleasant stretch between hundreds of trees, each stone lined drainage basin, and each rock wall.

Everyone who came up to build trail, involving hard physical labor digging stumps, carrying rocks, and grubbing soil for hours, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. A major reason for this was the superb leadership provided by the Washington Trails Association (WTA) – volunteers Pete Dewell and Arlen Bogaards. Marty Barney, of Anacortes, was a dedicated assistant crew leader who made it out to every single event, providing excellent guidance for newer volunteers. Without these and other dedicated volunteers this trail could not have been built.

Thank you volunteers!

Another reason so many volunteers were so happy to come out was the warm welcome from Guemes Islanders. For the first few reasonably warm weekends, there was camping. After it got cold and wet in October, Mark Linnemann, a Trust board member, was happy to help out by offering discounted rooms for trail builders at Guemes Island Resort. And from February on, other islanders have stepped up and offered meals, beds and warm sheds for the weary full-weekend trailbuilders to rest their heads.

We were very happy to present our Stewardship Award to WTA at our annual meeting in March. Not only have they helped us to build a fantastic trail that will help the public enjoy Guemes Mountain for years to come, they have shared with us yet another group of talented, caring and energetic people who care about conserving ecologically valuable places in the Skagit.



Just another day's work for our trail building volunteers.

Guemes Mountain Bicycle Project



Well here is a novel solution to tight parking at a trail head! Skagit Land Trust was interested in minimizing both parking congestion at the Guemes Mountain trailhead and our carbon foot print on the island. So we teamed up with Anderson's General Store on Guemes Island and the Bikespot in Anacortes to create the Guemes Mountain Bike Project. Skagit Land Trust is donating two bicycles and gear to Anderson's to be used by individuals interested in accessing the Guemes Mountain Trail via ferry and bicycle, rather than driving their cars. Anderson's will run the

program and bike sign-out. The Bikespot provided the bikes at cost plus will assist with repairs. It's a super cyclical partnership all around. The program will be up and running soon. For details check out our website www.skagitlandtrust.org or Anderson's www.guemesislandstore.com.

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wetlands, 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

June 12th – 12:30pm *Minkler Lake blackberry pull*

June 18th - 10:30 -4:00pm *Guemes Mountain
Trail Celebration*

June 24th – 12:30pm *Lyman Slough invasive
plant removal*

June 25th – 10:30 -1:00pm *Barr Creek nature
walk with Botanist Marlee Mountain*

August 13th - 10:30am *Tour Corkery
Conservation Easement*
noon *Annual picnic @ Samish
Island Community Center*

September 22nd – 7:00am *Conservation
Breakfast - Cotton Tree Inn*

December 1st - 4:30pm *Holiday Open House
- Skagit Transit Station*

