



SKAGIT UPDATE

WINTER 2016

## Forever an Island of Green

*By Lynne Jordan, Development & Communications Director*

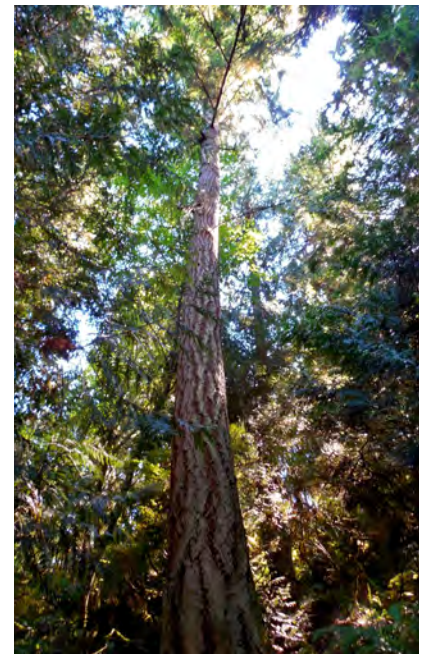
“This is where we last saw our Executive Director” I joked as we bushwhacked our way through a dense forest of large cedars, firs and ferns on a steep hillside bordering the Guemes Mountain Conservation Area. This past summer, a small group of us visited the 9.5 acre parcel to get a sense of how adding this land would enhance conservation on beloved Guemes Mountain.

As we found our way, it became clear that this was a truly special place. A place of towering trees and sheltered wildlife habitat, a place with a cacophony of bird song and dancing dragonflies, and a place where people can immerse themselves deep in nature on this island of green.

The whole of Guemes Island in itself is a special place and a big part of what makes it so are the people who care for it. The Guemes Island community extends far beyond those that live there, it is loved by many near and far. With just a few short months to acquire the resources needed to purchase this property, **over 100 community donors helped us raise the funds to bring this dream to reality!**

The Trust is now incorporating this land into the Conservation Area’s management plan. In addition, a new

*continued on page 3...*



The newest property preserves a large stand of trees and a sheltered wildlife habitat corridor helping to connect shoreline to mountaintop.

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

2015 marks 23 years of land conservation for our organization. Our dedicated staff and board have done an incredible job at expanding outreach, increasing habitat restoration of our protected lands, and ramping up our involvement in collaborative planning processes locally. They do this while always maintaining our core focus on permanent land conservation and stewardship. As you will note in this newsletter, our team has shifted. We dearly miss those who have retired and thank them for helping us realize many dreams. We are enthused to introduce our new team members to you.

Our board and staff recently met at an all-day “retreat”. In Skagit Land Trust parlance this does not mean a beautiful garden affording peace and quiet, but rather an all-day meeting. We had a wonderful day in a lovely location, hosted by Warren Walz at the Anacortes Yacht Club. We explored the factors, trends and pieces of information that will lead to making sure our work is sustainable. We are doing more land conservation projects than ever before. It is essential that we find ways to keep up the strongest pace possible. **The time is now to save land.** They won’t be making more of it. What really struck us is that our fast growing stewardship work is not only here to stay but inevitably will become a bigger part of our pie. Unfortunately it is a harder piece of the pie to fund continuously so we must get creative. Our work with youth programs is also here to stay. Today’s youth are the future leaders and stewards of our natural heritage. We leave them aside at our own peril...we love working with their refreshing joy and energy for nature.

We also gratefully acknowledged that Skagit Land Trust is stronger than ever due to our continually expanding community who comes together to donate time, resources, and talent in support of our mission. In fact, **we would not have gotten much accomplished without you.** So, although you didn’t attend our retreat, you were there in the room with us.

Thank you so much and Happiest Holidays to all.

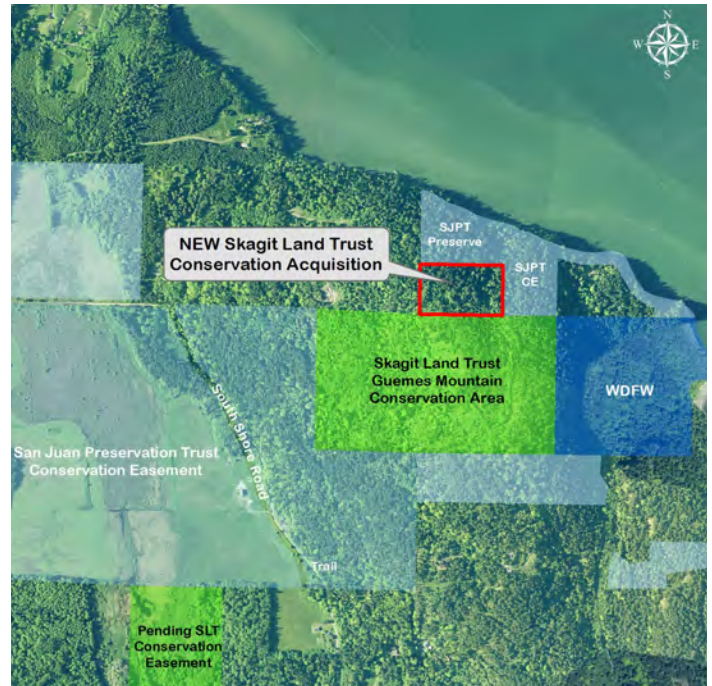
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly D". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Molly Doran, Executive Director

conservation easement agreement with a nearby private landowner will be adding more protection in this corner of the island. As the Trust expands conservation on the island, we expand our stewardship obligations. The final goal of our *Guemes Forever* campaign is to raise funds for stewardship and trail work for protected lands on Guemes Island.

The Trust is fortunate to have a dedicated cadre of stewardship volunteers on Guemes Island - people such as Kit Harma, Ian Woofenden, Ed and Carolyn Gastellum, Joost Businger and Marianne Kooiman, and other trail volunteers and stewards. Stewardship funds address issues ranging from small tasks such as fixing a gate or dealing with a downed tree on a trail; to larger projects such as removing invasive plant species, or building and caring for trails; to major events such as damage to the land itself. Good stewardship of conserved lands is one of the greatest gifts we can give current and future generations of people and wildlife.



**With the recent addition of the new mountain property and a pending nearby conservation easement, over 600 acres of land on the SE corner of Guemes Island is forever preserved thanks to many conservation partners, landowners, community donors and volunteers.**

## Guemes Forever 2015 Donors

- |                                   |                                    |                                  |                                |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Anonymous (6)                     | James Eberhardt                    | The Linnemann Family             | Rod and Barbara Brown          |
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| Deb Bear                          | Carolyn and Ed Gastellum           | James and Marjorie McCormack     | Luther and Maryam Schutz       |
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| Bobbi and Thomas Deutsch          | Joan Knowles and Howard Dawson     | Julia Pingree                    | Ron Winter                     |
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| Molly Doran and Andrew Cline      | Trevor Kyle                        | Lynn and Norman Prewitt          | Yadira Young                   |
| Ann Dursch                        | Nancy and Les Larsen               | Bob and Judith Rainwater         | Stan Zyskowski                 |
| William Easton and Tomasa Ramirez | Matt Lerner and Jo Saltmarsh       | Roger Ridgway and Mary Jon Vance |                                |

*Our apologies if your name is missing. Please contact us if there is a discrepancy.*

## Cascade River Conservation Expands



Conservation of Cascade River fish and wildlife habitat has been a priority for many. Today, Skagit Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy protect over 1 mile of the river's vital shoreline.

The Cascade River enters the Skagit River in Marblemount, and much like the Skagit, it is rich with salmon and steelhead. The Cascade provides critical habitat for Spring and Summer Chinook, Bull Trout and Steelhead, as well as Coho, Sockeye and Pinks. This is the reason Skagit Land Trust works to conserve the shoreline here when opportunities arise.

Such an occasion came up recently when the Trust bought the 4.5 acre Parsons property. Located almost entirely in the floodway, this property has over 800 feet of shoreline along the Cascade River and ranks highly in the County's Shoreline Master Program Study.

This land was owned by Addie Parsons, who passed away in 2005 at the age of 104. She moved to Marblemount in 1930, and in true upper Skagit spirit, competed in the buck saw and power saw competition in Loggerrodeo until she was in her 80s.

As we incorporate this land into our conservation portfolio, we will clean up the property to help return it to its natural state. The acquisition, demolition and clean-up are funded by the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board with match provided by Seattle City Light and support from the Skagit Watershed Council. With this acquisition, the Trust now protects over 47 acres and 2,500 feet of shoreline along the Cascade River. The Trust also manages an additional 100 acres for The Nature Conservancy with 3,200 feet of Cascade River shoreline upstream from the Parsons property.

We think that Addie would have been happy to know that her property has been preserved forever for future generations to visit and appreciate the rich environment of the Cascade River.

## More March Point Heron Habitat Protected

**Great Blue Herons** foraging in the seemingly endless tidal mudflats of Padilla Bay cover a great distance each day in search of food. When the earliest hint of spring is in the air, however, many herons set their sights on a much, much smaller area: a tiny patch of coastal forest strategically positioned at March Point.

This 20 acre forest has been the location of **the largest heron rookery on the entire west coast for decades, with more than 400 nests** hosting thousands of birds over the breeding season. Skagit Land Trust has recently **more than doubled the protection for this critical forest** by agreeing to a conservation easement with T. Bailey, Inc., the neighbors to the north

of the heronry. More than five acres of forested land owned by T. Bailey will now be protected in perpetuity, providing a buffer between their industrial operations and the heronry. These new acres not only secure habitat for the herons, but also protect a long-standing Bald Eagle nest.

With this addition, the Trust now protects 8.5 acres of March Point forest and is working on additional heronry conservation with the support of The Norcliffe Foundation and Charlotte Martin Foundation. Although the property is not open to the public to protect the herons, during the spring you can **get live up close views via our "Heron Cam"** viewable at [skagitlandtrust.org](http://skagitlandtrust.org) and at Padilla Bay Reserve.

## Connecting Past to Future - The John Tursi Trail

In 1934, a skinny teenager from Brooklyn stepped down onto the platform at the Depot in Anacortes before boarding a truck to the island's south end shores of Deception Pass, where a new bridge was being built to cross a breathtaking expanse of churning water. Although he had never dreamed such a place existed, **John Tursi knew that he had found home.**

John came to Fidalgo Island under a depression-era program as a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). **Now 98 years old, John has ensured that the places he fell in love with will be here for future generations.** Not only did John help build the infrastructure at Deception Pass State Park with the CCC, but years later he and his wife Doris donated a conservation easement on Fidalgo Bay to Skagit Land Trust. In addition, John was the largest donor to the campaign that succeeded in forever protecting the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL).

In 2009, Brian Adams of Skagit County Parks and Recreation asked Deception Pass State Park and Skagit Land Trust to help create a connection between the two largest public lands on Fidalgo Island - The John Tursi Trail. This October a key milestone was reached when all county requirements were met and the team received the go-ahead to begin trail construction.

The critical link for this trail was provided through a generous trail easement donation by private landowners. **A public corridor will now link the ACFL and Deception Pass State Park.** Brian Adams shares that "the corridor passes through one of the most picturesque valleys on Fidalgo Island, traversing near the 'cathedral tree', the rock of Morris Graves lore, and the Ginnett Homestead. The trail will use an abandoned service road where possible, securing a low impact route across steep and otherwise difficult terrain." Trail construction is soon to begin.

Trust Land Specialist Jane Zillig, who has worked on this project since its inception, says:

*"This project exemplifies what I value in Skagit County – partnerships, connections to our beautiful landscape and community. Many people, including generous landowners and volunteers, worked several years to make this trail extension a reality."*

If you would like to work on the new trail, visit the Washington Trails Association website at [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org) for volunteer event details.



Left: Key partners from Washington State Parks, Skagit County Parks & Recreation and Skagit Land Trust visited the site with John in 2015.

Right: The trail will head north from the State Park to Donnell Road where hikers can continue on the road to the ACFL.



## Leaving a Legacy on Little Mountain

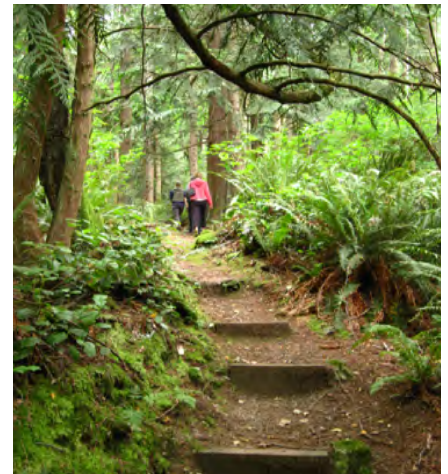
Approach Mount Vernon's Little Mountain Park from any angle and its true stature belies its name: the park may be a "little" mountain, but its impact is huge. When walking the park's trails, it is quite easy to feel like you are hiking in a much bigger place – the sounds of the town fall away, views of the Skagit Flats spread out to the horizon, and mature forest runs in every direction. Look closely at an area map, however, and it's clear that this beloved place is indeed bigger than it seems in part because of the generosity of the Darvill family. Fred Darvill bought a Little Mountain property in the 1960s and soon thereafter Ginny joined him and they raised a family among towering trees and tall ferns. In 1996, Fred and Ginny Darvill permanently protected 14 acres on the south side of Little Mountain by donating a conservation easement to Skagit Land Trust. Now Ginny is completing the protection by adding an additional 25 acres to the conservation easement. Instead of realizing significant income by developing the land up the flanks of this beloved park, Ginny has instead conserved forever a beautiful forested buffer to the park as a legacy for future generations.

The Darvill's generosity did not stop with just protecting the land however – they have also made a part of it accessible to the public by adding a trail through the eastern portion and connecting it to the park. Thank you to Ginny and the Darvill family for making the protection of our beloved Little Mountain even bigger!



**Top: Ginny Darvill hugs a tree on Little Mountain.**

**Bottom: The Darvill trail provides southern access to Little Mountain Park.**



### Welcome Martha Frankel



**Martha Frankel** joined the Trust in September 2015 as our new Administrative Assistant. Martha worked 20 years in

curatorial/administrative roles for cultural resource organizations in the Northwest and Mid-West.

Most recently she assisted with development and membership for Yellowstone Public Radio and Montana Conservation Voters. Welcome Martha!

### Welcome Jim Glackin and Kit Rawson to the Board of Directors



**Jim Glackin** lives in west Mount Vernon with his wife Paula and is a real estate broker with Windermere Real Estate. Born in Pennsylvania and a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Jim enjoys hiking & backpacking. Jim and Paula have two college aged daughters, Clare & Caroline.



**Kit Rawson** is a fisheries and conservation biologist who retired from full time work in 2013 after 26 years with the Tulalip Tribes following work in Alaska. Kit lives in Mount Vernon with his wife Kathy and consults part-time in addition to spending time on bicycling, photography, travel, and volunteer conservation work.

## PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR 24TH ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

**Thursday, January 21st, 2016, 6:00 - 8:30pm**

**Padilla Bay Reserve, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd, Mount Vernon**

**6:00 - 7:00 pm:** Social hour, appetizers and refreshments

**7:00 - 7:30 pm:** Awards, Board elections, and membership updates

**7:30 - 8:30 pm:** *Citizen scientists uncover the mysteries of Skagit's Great Blue Herons*

Visit our website at [skagitlandtrust.org](http://skagitlandtrust.org) for more information.

### **Citizen scientists uncover the mysteries of Skagit's Great Blue Herons**

Several active citizen science programs in Skagit County monitor the health of our region's herons. With support from biologist Ann Eissing, for many years Skagit Land Trust volunteers have been conducting annual nest counts at two large protected heronries and more recently volunteers began to monitor heron foraging and nesting behavior. This information provides vital data for research on Western Great Blue Heron colonies.

During this presentation, citizen science volunteers and Trust staff will share their heron observations over the years. Photographer Lance Ekhart will also share some fabulous Skagit heron images he has captured. Thank you to all of our volunteers who help care for Skagit County's natural areas today and into the future. If you would like to learn about various volunteer opportunities with the Trust, visit our website at [skagitlandtrust.org](http://skagitlandtrust.org).



Skagit Land Trust conserves two of the largest heron rookeries in the Western U.S. The Samish Squires Heronry (featured in Lance Ekhart's image above) hosts over 350 nests and the March Point Heronry is home to over 450 nests. A wildlife camera at March Point beams images from the heronry during the nesting season from March - August. Check it out at [skagitlandtrust.org](http://skagitlandtrust.org).

**SAVE THE DATE**

## **10th Annual Have Fun, Save Land Auction & Dinner**

**Saturday, March 5, 2016 5 - 9pm**

**St. Joseph Center, Mount Vernon**

Join us for our largest - and most fun - fundraiser of the year! All proceeds help conserve Skagit's natural lands today and for the future. Can you help make this a successful evening? Contact [auction@skagitlandtrust.org](mailto:auction@skagitlandtrust.org) or call 360-428-7878.

**WATCH FOR YOUR INVITATION IN THE MAIL OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE**



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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*

#### **Annual Members Meeting Thursday, January 21st, 2016**

6:00 - 8:30pm, Padilla Bay Reserve  
10441 Bayview-Edison Rd, Mount Vernon

#### **Upcoming Volunteer Events**

February TBD - Cascade River Parsons Work Party  
March 8 - Grandy Creek Work Party  
April 22 - Earth Day! Location TBD

#### **10th Annual Auction & Dinner Saturday, March 5, 2016**

5:00 - 9:00pm, St. Joseph Center, Mount Vernon  
*Reservations open in January*

Visit our website at [skagitlandtrust.org](http://skagitlandtrust.org) for details and other upcoming events.



**Our 2015 Annual Picnic was held at a Trust conservation easement property on the Skagit River near Concrete. 80 members joined us for a day of fun and food at this property's 120 acres of forest, shoreline and farmland.**