

PROTECTING SPECIAL PLACES ON FIDALGO ISLAND

Land conservation has received a nice boost on Fidalgo Island. Longtime land trust members, Bill and Sally Turner, have donated a conservation easement on private land on the south side of Mount Erie, and another conservation easement has been completed on the public Anacortes Community Forest Lands. These projects demonstrate the depth of commitment to conservation on Fidalgo Island, and show what can be accomplished by a small community with perseverance and a vision of the future.

For years the Turner's planned to protect the most sensitive 12 acres on the land they owned on the south side of Mount Erie. They faced a number of challenges as they prepared to sell the property this year, but with the sale pending in April, they stayed true to their vision, and insisted on the conservation easement as a condition of the sale.

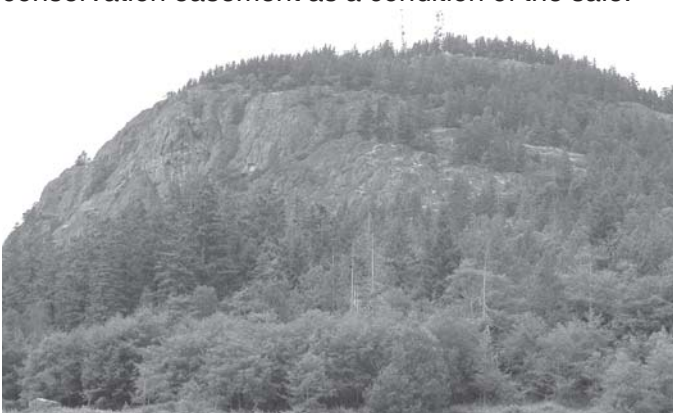


The newly protected land is contiguous with City of Anacortes Parks land, and includes beautiful undisturbed forest, rocky outcroppings and sensitive plant and wildlife habitats. The easement prohibits building of structures, livestock grazing, and clearing of native vegetation and allows quiet enjoyment of nature and other forms of passive recreation. The City hopes to

The Turner conservation easement is adjacent to Anacortes Community Forest Land on Mount Erie. It has long been a conservation priority to protect and this year saw that desire become a reality thanks to Bill & Sally Turner.

eventually connect an old trail that crosses the property, which offers beautiful views on its way to the summit of Mount Erie, via a trail easement. However at this point, the trail easement is incomplete and thus the property is not accessible to the public. The lower and less sensitive part of this property is not part of the conservation easement and can be used for rural residential development. The Turner's are added to a short list of visionary landowners on Fidalgo Island – John and Doris Tursi and George and Sue Mehler – who have permanently protected their land with conservation easements with Skagit Land Trust. Jonn Lunsford who oversees the forest land program for

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From the President

Dear Members,

It is with great pride and a little trepidation that I write my first column as President of Skagit Land Trust. It has been an honor to serve on the Board for 4 years with some of the most talented and dedicated people I have ever had the opportunity to work with. Consequently, I wish to thank both the Board, and you the membership for placing your confidence in me as I begin my term as President. And yes some trepidation too as a result of the very unusual economic times the Trust is facing.

It is ironic that this uncertain economy also provides the Trust with unique opportunities to purchase and protect additional lands and habitats, often at significantly reduced prices. It would be disheartening if limited or diminishing resources prevented the Trust from seizing these opportunities - opportunities that will not wait one or two years for the economy to fully recover. The sad reality is that once gone, these special places are likely gone forever. It is you, the members, who have always been there with your support; be it time, actions, money or land. The Trust needs that continuing support now more than ever.

The staff is doing its share of sacrificing in order to insure that this most vital conservation work continues. In order to ameliorate potential budget shortfalls staff has agreed to take additional vacation time without pay. The Board and Molly are regularly monitoring the Trust's budget to be sure that all expenses are justified and necessary to the health and longevity of the

organization. I am confident that the Trust will emerge from these challenging times stronger and more vital than ever.



The good news is that the Trust is continuing to do great work. I especially want to mention two projects worthy of recognition. The first endeavor began under the leadership of Marlene Moore, continued through the presidency of Patsy Martin and came to

fruition only last month. I am proud to announce that Skagit Land Trust has become the 2nd land trust in the state and only the 54th in the nation to receive full Land Trust Accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance in Washington, D.C. – something that required countless hours of dedicated work by both staff and board members. The other project is the Campaign to Save the Mountain on Guemes Island, which is progressing to what we all hope is the eventual purchase and protection of this island treasure. My wife Libby and I visited “the Mountain” in May and if you have not had the opportunity to stand atop it – “waste not a minute!”

As we proceed into a year of uncertainty and hope for the country, I am sure of one thing. You are providing for Skagit's treasured places to be protected for all its future generations. And for that I am exceedingly grateful.

Rusty Kuntze,

President of the Board

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the city says, "The south side of Mt. Erie is an unspoiled jewel in the middle of Fidalgo Island. We are very grateful to the Turners for helping us preserve a piece of the mountain in perpetuity."

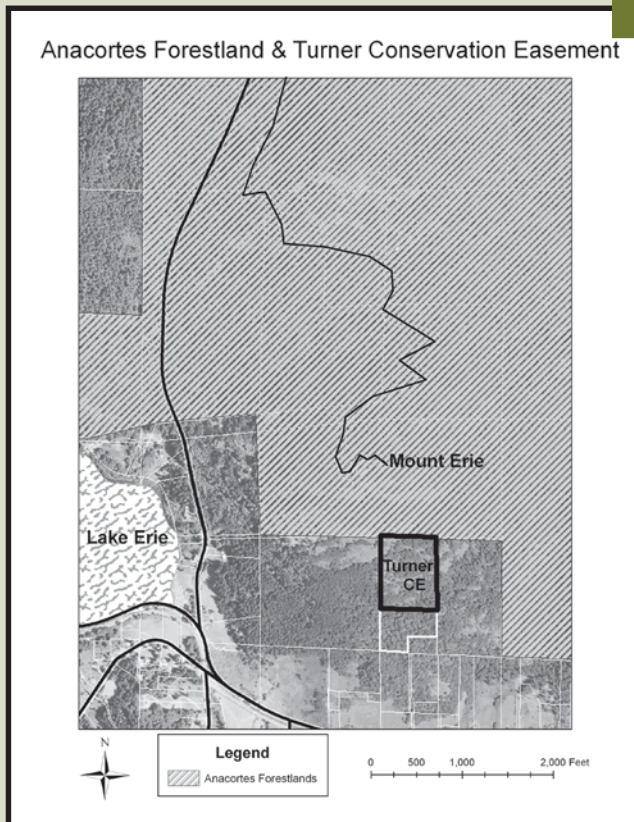
Meanwhile, the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Conservation Easement program still clips along. In May of this year the twenty-fourth easement was signed and recorded protecting another 60 acres. The first easement was recorded just over ten-years ago in March of 1999. In that span of a

decade 1,635 acres have been permanently protected – all accomplished with \$1.68 million dollars in private donations. Members of Friends of the Forest are key stewards and fundraisers

In the shadow of Mt Erie, the Turner easement preserves 12 additional acres of habitat adjacent to protected Anacortes Community Forest Lands.



behind this great partnership. For every \$1,000 donated to the Conservation Easement Program, the City places a Conservation Easement with Skagit Land Trust on one more acre – acre by acre it adds up. The City continues to own and manage the land, but it can never be logged, mined or used for any commercial purpose. Skagit Land Trust ensures it is protected forever in its natural condition.



Protection of Anacortes Community Forest Lands, plus Skagit Land Trust's partnership that protects South Fidalgo Bay, combined with donated conservation easements on private land, and the impressive work done by other conservation partners who work on Fidalgo Island, all add up to a remarkable natural legacy. Fidalgo Islander's vision of the future has room for open space and wildlife habitat!

***Thank You to the Following Volunteers
for Getting Their Hands Dirty & Helping Us at Events!***

Jim Asa	Carolyn & Ed Gastellum	Robyn Johnson	Jim Owens	Gale Sterrett
Feryll Blanc	Catherine Grenier	Shelley Johnson	Lynn Postler	Ona Strikas
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Skagit Land Trust Earns National Recognition

Accreditation Awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

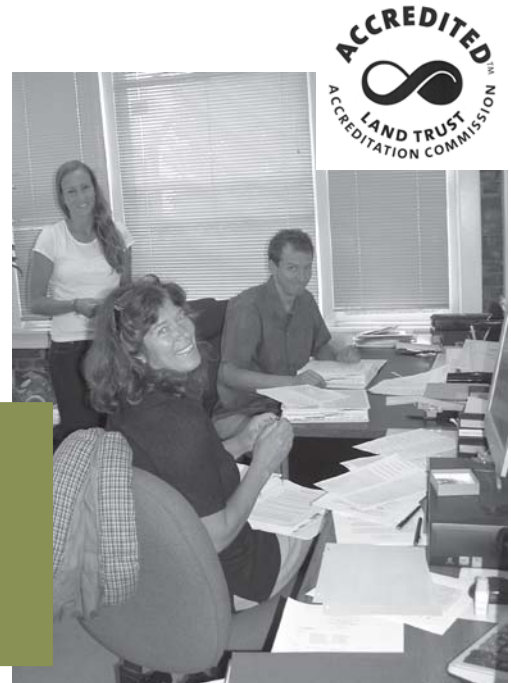
The Land Trust Accreditation Commission announced that Skagit Land Trust has been awarded accredited status. “Accredited land trusts meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever,” said Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn. “The accreditation seal lets the public know that the accredited land trust has undergone an extensive, external review of the governance and management of its organization and the systems and policies it uses to protect land.”

Skagit Land Trust was awarded accreditation this May along with five other land trusts from across the USA. These land trusts join 53 other land trusts from across the country that have been awarded accreditation since the fall of 2008. Accredited land trusts are able to display a seal indicating to the public that they meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, based in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. The Alliance, of which Skagit Land Trust is a member, is a national oversight group for the 1700 land trusts working in communities across the USA.

Staff are smiling because we are nearing the end of the process!

Special thanks to board member Ralph Heft for leading the accreditation team for Skagit Land Trust.



“It was a tremendous amount of work to undergo the process, but the founders, board, staff, volunteers, members and landowners who have worked with the Trust over the past 18 years laid a strong foundation. We have built on that foundation to become who we are – and are pleased to be recognized for our strength and quality programs. We will display the accreditation seal with honor” says Molly Doran, executive director of Skagit Land Trust.

A long Twitter from Guemes Island by Libby Mills from her iPod



Climbed the south face direct, (a climber's term) finding 29 species of birds as we walked. Some of the sweetest singers included warbling vireos, orange-crowned warblers, Wilson's warblers and olive-sided flycatchers just in from the tropics. Turkey vultures and bald eagles shared airspace with a fast “swoop” of two dozen newly arrived Vaux's swifts.

The insect world featured many Sara orange-tip butterflies as well as Spring Azures and a worn Painted Lady that appeared to have journeyed from a long distance or long winter. A paddle-tailed darter (dragonfly) hunted near the summit, hawking insects out of reach of the yellow-rumped warblers and pacific-slope flycatchers.



Photo by Ferdi Businger

Not to be outshined by animals the blooming flowers were colorful: paintbrush and salmonberry, red-flowering currant and vetch were reds and purples. Blue camas on the summit is surely the showiest, with tiny Blue-eyed Mary peeking out from the moss and lichens. Buttercups and Oregon grape in bright yellow, Checker lilies in their brown and yellow patterns were a nice surprise. Springbeauty, late Fawnlilies, showy Field Chickweed and delicate Heuchera saxifrage completed the palette in white. Let me not overlook the emerald green of the mountain forest understory, the contrasting conifers and blue blue seas, skies and retreating islands in view.

What a special place and spring day's walk. How lucky we are to have preservation of this mountaintop in our sights. Keep up your good work everyone.
Libby

Saving Guemes Mountain

Several years ago Guemes Mountain was identified by the Guemes community as their top priority for land conservation. Skagit Land Trust and the San Juan Preservation Trust joined together with concerned members of the community to protect the 75-acre top of the mountain when the property was on the market. Current zoning allows up to seven homes or the possibility of placing an estate at the summit. In either scenario, development would be highly visible from elsewhere on Guemes Island, from Anacortes,

“ In addition to protecting outstanding views, this project is an exceptional model of how private landowners, non-profits and the public can reverse wildlife habitat loss caused by land fragmentation” says Mark Hitchcock, a steering committee member for the Save the Mountain campaign.

As the market changed, the two land trusts recently negotiated a 23% price reduction of the property purchase price. The new campaign goal of \$2.2 million must be raised by October 1 2009. This includes a \$2 million purchase price, plus \$200,000 for transaction costs and stewardship funds for future property management and trails. To date, 70% of the funds needed for this campaign have already



Photo by Steven Businger

Samish Island and other areas. If privately owned, public access to this beautiful natural area, with its remarkable 360 degree views of Northern Puget Sound, would be prohibited.

If successfully protected, Skagit land Trust (SLT) will own this property with a conservation easement held by San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT). The property will be available for low impact recreation while protecting sensitive wildlife habitat.

The campaign to save the top of Guemes Mountain is only part of the story of the mountain's conservation. In the past, eight landowners adjacent to Guemes Mountain have either placed their properties in conservation easements or have donated land for conservation to SJPT. Several more landowners have pledged to place conservation easements with SLT or SJPT. Thus, saving this 75-acre property will link over 600 acres of private and public protected land, stretching from pristine marine shoreline to the mountain's grassland/prairie bald summit and down forested slopes to an inland valley of wetlands and farmland. Additionally because Guemes Mountain is contiguous with WA Fish and Wildlife's Square Harbor property, its protection will add a significant buffer to this sensitive wildlife preserve protected for Peregrine Falcon, three species of cormorant and many other birds.



been raised, entirely through private gifts. **We have \$570,000 left to go as of June 1, 2009**

We are excited that we have come this far and are cautiously optimistic that, with the help of our community, we will achieve our goal on time. However, particularly in this economy, we need all the help we can get to finish this campaign. Persons interested in helping to save Guemes Mountain can write a check to Skagit Land Trust and note “Guemes Mountain” in the memo line. To make a gift by credit card or a securities donation please call 360-428-7878.

PLEASE COME! PICNIC – on August 15th, we will be holding a **Save the Mountain picnic** on Guemes Island at Schoolhouse Park. Yummy local food, a beer and wine garden, live music, hikes to the mountain and events for kids and adults are all part of the fun. For more information visit our website www.skagitlandtrust.org.

New Interpretive sign is installed at Green Road Marsh Conservation Area

Skagit Land Trust is pleased to announce the installation of a new interpretive sign at our Green Road Marsh Conservation Area (formerly known as Butler Flats). Two other signs — one along the Tommy Thompson trail above Fidalgo Bay and another at a conservation easement near Cascadian Farm in Rockport - will go in later this summer.

Funding for the sign was provided by the Lucky Seven Foundation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“As a Land Steward, I get the opportunity to look at this beautiful property and the birds here regularly. I hope this sign encourages other people to come out and do the same,” Volunteer Land Steward Scott Andrews said.

At Green Road Marsh, the interpretive sign explains to visitors the natural history of the site, as well as highlighting commonly visible species such as the Northern Harrier, Ring-Necked Ducks, Common Yellowthroat, beavers, and frogs. It also explains how the marsh fits into the larger historical and biological picture of the region. In addition to being protected as a land trust property, these wetlands were restored under the Wetland Reserve Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. “Wetlands are among the most important ecosystems on

earth,” said land trust Executive Director Molly Doran. “They help clean our water, provide vital wildlife habitat, control erosion, catch silt, store water and are places of inspiration. Thus we are so pleased to share this wonderful place with our community in an educational manner. People are more likely to protect what they understand.”

Photo by Phil Green



At Green Road a crew including Fred Hodge, Ralph Heft, Scott Andrews, Michael Kirshenbaum, and Sue Edelberg installed the new interpretive sign with the help of an '81 Ford dump truck.



Thank You Leadership, Sustaining & Business Members

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Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Gr.
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Grants & Foundations

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will be listed in
The Annual Report***

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***All members will be
listed in the
Annual Report***

Guemes Mountain Campaign:

*Thank you to the many
supporters who have
contributed to date to
the Guemes Mountain
Project on Guemes
Island. We will list all
contributions in our
summer publication.
We greatly appreciate
your support.*





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Mission Statement

*Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat,
wetlands, agriculture 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

July 17th - Work Party at Lyman Slough

Blackberry removal, 10am - 1pm
RSVP to Sue at trustad@fidalgo.net

August 15th - Annual Picnic/Save Guemes Mountain

at Schoolhouse Park, Guemes Island. 10:30am
& 1:30pm hikes of Guemes Mountain. Lunch
served at noon. Shuttle transportation from
ferry will be available.

August 22nd - Bike Tour

Skagit Land Trust & Skagit Bicycle Club will
tour Fidalgo & Guemes Island - 10am - 4pm.
Meet at the Park & Ride on March's Point Road
at 10am. RSVP to Sue at trustad@fidalgo.net

September 17th - Conservation Breakfast

at CottonTree Inn, Mount Vernon –
7:00 - 8:30am



*A sunny day brought out an
exceptional group of volunteers
to plant coniferous and
deciduous trees at the Tope Ryan
Conservation Area.*

