

Family Land on the Upper Samish Donated to Skagit Land Trust

by Martha Bray, Conservation Director

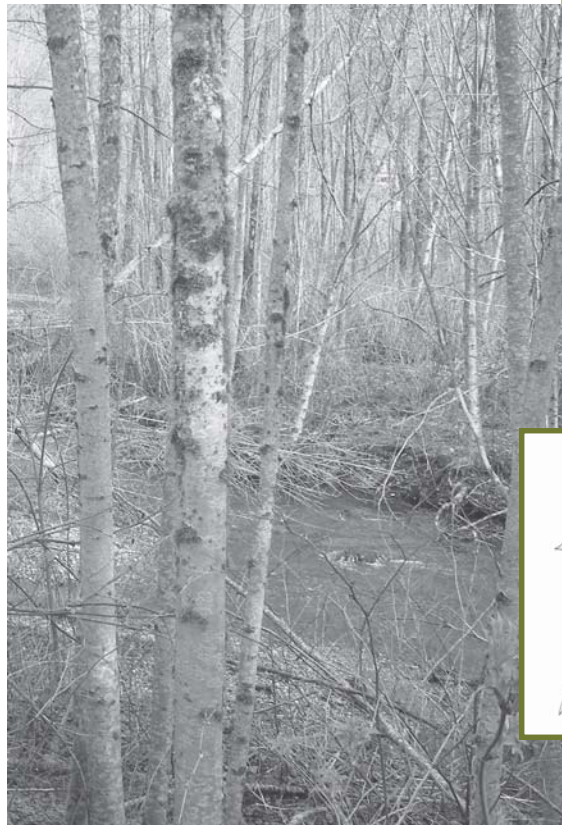
In December, Kristjan and Monica Ochs of Anacortes donated 28 acres on the upper Samish River to Skagit Land Trust. This land had been passed down through many generations of Kristjan's family before being gifted to the Trust. It includes both sides of the Samish River for more than 1,100 feet, and is important habitat for numerous native species that depend on undisturbed riparian habitat.

The Ochs say that it is Kristjan's grandmother Berniece Leaf of Camano Island, who should be honored for this gift. Berniece shared some family history including that her grandparents, Joe and Annie Hoyt acquired the property in the early 1900's, and they called it "the Forty." It was her family's "favorite place for adventure and fun." She said that her father would cut firewood on the property during "the great depression [when] men were desperate for work. Dad would hire them to cut and stack the firewood providing them the dignity of earning money [and] Mom would see that they had a home prepared meal before leaving." She remembers during World War II when "[s]ometimes young service men who had never seen trees in a forest nor a river to fish nor deer walking quietly through underbrush would share the Forty experience. They loved it!"

The wildlife that the generations of Hoyts and Ochs enjoyed is still abundant in the upper Samish River. Because of its richness, this area has long been a conservation priority for Skagit Land Trust and its partners. To the north, Whatcom Land Trust has protected some of the highest quality wetlands that make up the

headwaters of the Samish in Whatcom County. Protecting key parcels of undisturbed lands within a settled rural landscape creates safe havens for wildlife and builds more resilience into the ecosystem. The Ochs donation adds another natural area to a network of protected habitat that includes lands on both sides of the Whatcom/Skagit County border.

Not only is this a gift of land, but it is also a legacy of family history that is connected to the land. Berniece Leaf says that she is "pleased to know the Forty, which provided joy for six generations of our family, will be preserved from development. Other generations will make happy memories of their own."



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Message From the Executive Director

Happy 2010! I am pleased to send you the first Trust newsletter of the new decade. Ten years ago, in 2000, with the help of 400 dedicated members, Skagit Land Trust had protected 943 acres. We were just finishing a large conservation easement on South Fidalgo Bay. 75 acres of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands had been conserved. We had a 28K computer modem on our wish list. Now, in 2010 we have just passed 5600 acres protected. 1600 acres of the Anacortes Forest Lands have been permanently conserved— which more than meets the original project goal. We have sleek flat screened computer monitors, a DSL line that feeds us 1 megabit (1000 K's) a second and we have a Facebook page!



Yes, it's true. We brought in the new decade by joining Facebook as an organization. We recruited our youngest staff members to figure it out for us. And, we are in! If you are already a "Facebooker" (or have a keen desire to join), you can type in Skagit Land Trust in the search box and then click on "become a fan" which leads you to our organization's page. Our goal is to have 150 fans by March. On our Facebook page we have an events calendar (with an RSVP function), a photo album and a comment wall. You can tell us what birds you saw on a property, where your ride share will leave from, share a conservation thought, or post event and work party photos. So if the Facebook world calls to you, I invite you to become a fan of Skagit Land Trust and help us meet our goal. However, our website, email, the phone and walking in the office still

work as they always have. We all, board and staff, love hearing from you and staying connected with you and Facebook adds one more way to do that.

We have some great events on the horizon. I encourage you to attend our annual auction on February 27th at beautiful McIntyre Hall. It is such a fun way to celebrate and raise funds to protect beloved local lands. We have wonderful auction items this year (see article in this newsletter for more information). Our 2010 Annual Meeting is on March 19th at Hillcrest Park Lodge in Mount Vernon. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Bill

Dietrich will be our guest speaker. Bill combines a love and knowledge of the Skagit with an eloquence that makes us sit up and take notice. Bill was formerly a board member of the Trust (back in 2000) and has a very special place in our hearts. At the meeting we will honor retiring board members Andrea Xavier, Glenn Bordner and Bob Apter for their selfless work as board members. There is 21 years of Skagit Land Trust board experience amongst them and they will be missed. Please come and toast the accomplishments of these people and others and enjoy Bill's presentation.

We don't know exactly what twists and turns and opportunities this next decade will hold, but working together we will continue to protect this remarkable place we love. We are so fortunate to have people like you helping us to protect the natural Skagit. Thank you.

Molly Doran
Executive Director



A New Way of Thinking Coming to Your Town Soon: Ecosystem Services

by Ellie Rodgers Americorps, Volunteer Coordinator

A new year, a new decade, and with it will come new opportunities for Skagit Land Trust and its members to preserve open space here in Skagit County. In the last decade a catch phrase has buzzed about conservation biology circles; “Ecosystem services”.



***Pacific Northwest forests** have the most potential of any forests in North America to store large quantities of carbon, which removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – an important ‘ecosystem service’. As with farmland protection, we can purchase development rights from willing forest landowners to prevent irreversible development of key forestland. An additional option is to provide financial incentives to forest landowners to manage their lands in longer rotations (growing larger older trees); this greatly increases the forest carbon storage of the forest while still yielding high quality fiber and creating more diverse wildlife habitat.*

It is not a new idea, but the popularity of the term itself signals a growing understanding of all that our land has to give us, and the importance of valuing more than just the development potential of land.

As we stride into 2010, we’ll encounter the phrase not just as a philosophy but as a potential new conservation tool because funds will increasingly be available to provide, protect, and restore ecosystems services. The valuing of ecosystem services might well be a new source of revenue for conservation, but we need to approach it with our eyes open.

Ecosystem services are anything the natural world does that benefits humanity and sustains our lives.

As conservationists, we know that there is inherent worth in land, apart from humanity. But our appreciation of this land can intensify when we realize the extent to which we are dependent upon it. Wetlands and watersheds provide natural stormwater management and water filtering, our most efficient source of clean water, as well as critical habitat for salmon, and meditative places to walk and wonder. Trees can grant monetary profit as lumber, but we can also see them as the key to clean air—oxygen giving, carbon sequestering sentinels. Aren’t those properties of forests and wetlands worth something?

Ecosystem services themselves are obviously crucial to our life on this planet, but are subject to the age old tragedy of the commons. Their benefits are shared by all of us, yet we have traditionally had no way to account for their value. With no price tag to these services, the understanding of their real value is downplayed or lost, allowing for their misuse by us all. Every landowner makes decisions that impact our collective watersheds, healthy soil, and breathable



air. Clearly humans have always understood at some level that they are dependent upon and interdependent with the ecosystems around them. The recent discussion and fervor over this formalized idea of ecosystem services is a push for financially paying for those services, so that landowners and institutions will no longer be faced with choices between what seems like profit and true preservation.

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Examples of paying for some level of ecosystem services abound. The pending federal cap and trade bill or a carbon tax will undoubtedly have some component dealing with carbon sequestration and forest management where businesses will pay to restore and protect natural systems to off-set their carbon footprint.



Developers have to restore their wetland destruction, either on-site or via a wetland mitigation bank. Oil spills are mitigated locally by paying for tideland protection. For example, Fidalgo Bay was protected with mitigation funds. Ecosystem service programs helped reduce smog and acid rain in the 1970s.

Ecosystem services are a way to frame, describe, and value the worth of our natural world. However, the linking of economics and biology is still a rapidly growing and complex field. Used well, it will be a new tool in conservation, the same way that conservation easements are tools. Of course there will be imperfections and challenges when their value is translated to the market. How do we accurately measure and quantify these services? How will we keep ecosystem service mitigation programs from allowing avoidable destruction? Is this really a solution or a shell game as the protection “purchased” would happen anyway? These are valid questions and responses, and show the necessity of all of our involvement with the issue as it gains steam. Uniquely, land trusts offer both the protection and the stewardship systems needed for real restoration and protection to be transparent and permanent.

Just as important as its possibilities for expanding our ability to save critical land is the way that understanding ecosystem services will help us to recognize our relationship with the land. It could help develop the language we use to talk about the importance of conservation and make clear even more reasons why it is necessary. It could help to strengthen conservation at the table as the hidden costs to development and how each one of us uses the land are finally fleshed out. Explicitly talking about our link to land will be educational for all.

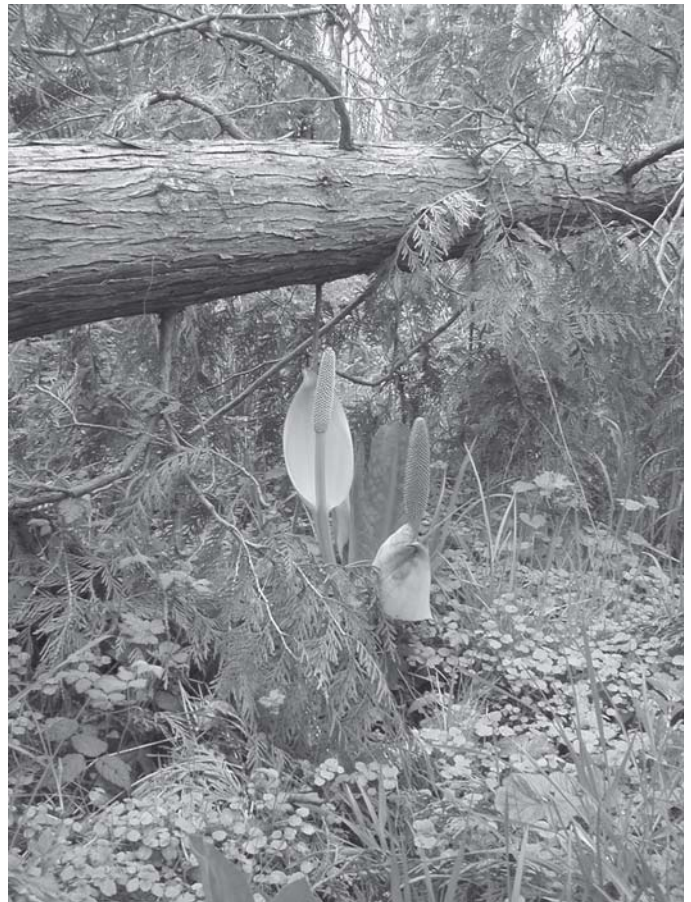
Open space is wonderful, and our expertise in conserving what we can and should is no small thing. The greatest conservation power lies in building and honoring connections and relationships in our world, which will in turn reinforce the land ethic of our entire society.

For further reading:

Costanza, Robert et al. The value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital. *Nature* 387, 253-260 (1997). <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/WR/hq/pdf/naturepaper.pdf>

Daily, Gretchen and Ellison, Katherine. The new economy of nature. *Orion* (2002). <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/110/>

Evergreen Funding Consultants. Washington Conservation Markets Study: Final Report. *Washington State Conservation Commission* (2009). <http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/>



The concept of ecosystem services helps us to understand the holistic value of our natural systems such as this wetland. Our land trust protects ecosystem services that are the most important and the most threatened. How will we use this concept when it is coupled with required mitigation? Are there ways our engagement could make sure any restoration is forever, natural, and truly beneficial?

Please Join Us for Skagit Land Trust's **19th Annual Meeting**
Friday March 19th 2010 from 6 - 9pm at **Hillcrest Park Lodge** in Mount Vernon

6 -7 pm - Social hour, appetizers and refreshments

7 - 8 pm - Business meeting, elections and awards

8 pm - Guest speaker Bill Dietrich. ***"Now More Than Ever"*** Bill will be speaking about the importance of land conservation in the face of climate change, population growth and economic & social stressors.

Bill Dietrich is a former Skagit Land Trust board member and Pulitzer Prize -winning journalist, university professor and author of twelve books.

Board Elections

The following individuals are up for election for 3-year terms. Each membership has one vote.

Curtis Miller (first elected 2001) Principal of Miller Consulting. Three decades of experience in land planning, natural resource management and design. Formerly of Jones & Jones, Architects and Landscape Architects in Seattle. Chair of Public Policy Committee.



Janice Martin (first elected 2007) Formerly a non-profit director of Youthnet. She has served on many Skagit committees, is active in the schools and elsewhere. Board Secretary and serving on the Development & Communications Committee.

John Hunt; Civil Engineer, retired in 2007 from an active career in construction and construction consulting. As Owner of ADR Services, Inc. he continues to work to resolve construction disputes, serving as a Disputes Resolution Board (DRB) member, project neutral, arbitrator and mediator. Member American Arbitration Association. Currently enjoying having more time for sailing, photography and fly fishing, as well as volunteering for the Trust. Serves on the Development & Communications Committee.



SKAGIT LAND TRUST AWARDED \$1.28 MILLION GRANT

Skagit Land Trust's successful efforts with salmon habitat protection will continue. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), a division of the State's Recreation and Conservation Office, has awarded Skagit Land Trust and its grant partner Seattle City Light \$1.28 million to be used over the next three years. Skagit Land Trust and its partners will provide an additional \$226,000 'local match' for this grant bringing the total dedicated to new habitat protection to more than \$1.5 million. The assistance of the local 'lead entity' for salmon recovery, Skagit Watershed Council, was crucial in securing this grant. The continued support of SRFB allows Skagit Land Trust and its partner to acquire high quality Chinook salmon habitat along the Skagit and Sauk Rivers and major tributaries.

Restoring and preserving fish and wildlife habitat is not the only benefit this grant and Skagit Land Trust's efforts provide. The natural environment itself provides economic benefits to Skagit County and important ecosystem services, as discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. Skagit County's renowned natural beauty contributes to our high quality of life and also to our recreation based industries and tourism, which includes fishing, hunting, hiking and camping. All these things rely on a healthy environment. In addition, the purchase and restoration of habitat provides work in many fields including those in engineering, surveying, appraisal and construction/demolition. Preserving important habitat and natural beauty while providing economic benefitnow that's making a difference!

Welcome New Americorp Volunteer

Hi! I'm Ellie Rogers, this year's Americorps Volunteer Coordinator. I packed my car in late September, 2009, and drove from my hometown of Saint Paul, Minnesota over plains and through mountains so I could work with you all here in the Skagit Valley. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to put my ecology degree from Macalester College to good use, get to know such charismatic folks, and experience a little topography. Okay, a *lot* of topography. While the jagged horizon here is certainly impressive, so are the people. You all are a dedicated

lot, and I have much to learn. Thanks for all the plant ID tricks and natural history lessons so far. I will welcome more! I'd also love to hear any ideas you have for amping up the volunteer program here at Skagit Land Trust and including more of the community in our work. Call, email, or stop by the office! Thanks so much for all you do.



"Thanks to all the volunteers who have already been out in the field with me since my arrival in October: Stacey Benson, Lester Bradford, Martha Bray, Paul Brown, Brenda Cunningham, Russ

Dalton, John Day, Kay Glade, Ralph Heft, Mark Hitchcock, Paul Ingalls, Ryan Jepperson (and Samantha and Jacob!), Hal and Hella Lee, Tim Manns, Jim Owens, Colleen Powell, Jim and LaVerne Scheltens, John Seehorn, Lin Skavdahl, Amelia Tomayko, Max Tomayko, Jeremy Westra, Jane Zillig."



Ellie Rogers

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Thank You!

Skagit Land Trust would like to thank Robin LaRue as he retires from his post as the Land Steward at the Minkler Lake Conservation Area!

Robin has been the land steward at Minkler since SLT acquired it in 2004, where he has helped with various tree plantings, blackberry removals, and general upkeep. Robin still plans to be active in the Skagit Land Trust volunteer community, and we are grateful to have had him in the ranks of the land stewards for so long!

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The Annual Report



Photo: Bertha Bridge



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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

- **February 27th - Annual Auction & Dinner**
Saturday - 5:30 - 9pm at McIntyre Hall
- **March 19th - Annual Meeting**
Friday - 6 - 9pm at Hillcrest Lodge, Mount Vernon
- **August 21st - Annual Picnic** at Lyman Park

- **Stay tuned for 2010 volunteer event dates!**

This spring and summer, we invite all of you to join us in two big trail-building projects. We'll be forging new walking trails on our Guemes Mountain and Barr Creek properties. Check our website for further event details: www.skagitlandtrust.org.

- **What's new with Guemes Island?**

In 2010, we'll develop a management plan to ensure ecological integrity and public enjoyment of Guemes Mountain. Skagit Land Trust will hold an informational meeting and conversation with Guemes Islanders in early February, and soon thereafter we hope to begin building an accessible trail to the top. The trail-building process will begin this spring, and will be guided by the expertise of the Washington Trails Association. If you have questions about the stewardship of Guemes Mountain, email Michael Kirshenbaum at MichaelK@skagitlandtrust.org.

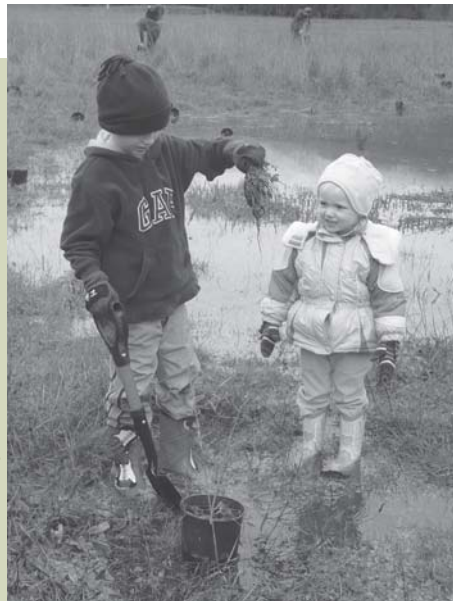


Photo: Katie Moyer

Young Trust members, Jacob and Samantha Jepperson, help with a restoration project at Elysium Meadows.