

The  *Newsletter of Whatcom Land Trust*
Whatcom County, Washington

Steward

Whatcom Land Trust: Preserving the *Nature* of Whatcom County since 1984

Volume 19 Number 3

Fall 2010

Catalyst for Change

Rand Jack

On October 27, 2010 Whatcom Land Trust purchased a 130-acre former poplar plantation located south of Acme on the South Fork of the Nooksack River. When we signed the purchase and sale agreement with Pacific Poplar Inc. on Feb. 27, 2009, about 50,000 upright sixty-foot tall hybrid cottonwood poplar trees grew on the property. Under the agreement, the trees were to be removed, roots and all, and the transaction completed in the fall of 2009. When the fall closing date arrived, the 50,000 trees had been uprooted and stacked on the property in nine piles measuring over 20 feet high and 400 to 500 feet long. The contractor charged with removing the trees was nowhere to be found.

One thing the Land Trust wanted even less than the property with 50,000 growing poplar trees was the property with 50,000 poplar trees stacked on it, roots and all. We managed to negotiate an extension of the purchase contract providing safeguards to the Land Trust and giving us the right to buy the property if the trees were removed and the ...continued on page four



photo: Eric Carabba

Darrell Gray of Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association supervises restoration of Landingstrip Creek on the Catalyst Property.

Auction Purchase Expands Samish River Preserve

Whatcom Land Trust did something it had never done before in June. We purchased a property in a sealed bid public auction, and a substantial property at that. We acquired 453 acres of forestland east of Wickersham from Trillium Corporation for \$955,000. The acquisition protects significant spawning habitat in Ennis Creek, wetland and riparian habitat along the upper Samish River, and forestland habitat for elk, bear, and other wildlife. Money to buy the Wickersham block came from a settlement agreement with Shell Oil for the payment of fines levied by the Washington Department of

Ecology as a result of the 1999 Whatcom Creek gasoline explosion and fire.

Whatcom Land Trust has worked for the past six years to protect and enhance the headwaters of the Samish River, including its major tributary Ennis Creek. The Samish River Preserve project began with a partnership of the Land Trust, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, and Whatcom County Public Works to acquire 50 acres along Ennis Creek, to return the creek to its previous vigor as a meandering Coho salmon spawning ground, and to build a new bridge across Ennis Creek. Since then we have acquired five more

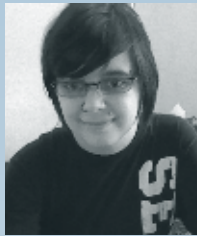
properties and with the addition of the Wickersham block, the Samish River Preserve totals 650 acres.

Because of the importance of a portion of the Wickersham block to the effectiveness of the Samish River Preserve, we had tried several times to acquire the most salmon-sensitive part of the Wickersham holding from Trillium. But the company had been unwilling to divide the property. When the auction opportunity arose, we knew this was our best chance, perhaps our only chance, to protect vital upper Samish/Ennis Creek salmon habitat. After careful ...continued on page five

WLT News

Andrea Norton

We're very happy to have Andrea Norton as this year's Whatcom Community College Work-Study Student. Andrea was born and raised in Lacey, Washington. She moved all around the country for about seven years. Arriving in Bellingham in fall 2010 opened new opportunities for school, work, and new acquaintances. She's pursuing a major in environmental science out of devotion to nature and determination to achieve something her parents could not. Andi sees herself helping preserve habitats in the future so no human construction can destroy it. She believes the earth should be shared between people, plants, and animals.



Karin Grimlund

Karin Grimlund, our new AmeriCorps volunteer, comes from Minneapolis, Minnesota. However, she feels at home in the Pacific Northwest since her father is a Bellingham native. Karin will serve as the Land Trust's Volunteer Coordinator during 2010-2011. She is responsible for coordinating restoration work parties, recruiting new groups of volunteers, and assisting with outreach events. Guiding volunteers in restoration work is particularly gratifying for her, as she routinely sees volunteers develop a hands-on, healing relationship with the natural world.



Karin comes with experience in conservation from work with the Minnesota Conservation Corps, and as an intern at a diversified livestock farm in Decorah, Iowa. She enjoys working at the intersection of conservation and sustainable agriculture, and hopes to develop a career in environmental education with a focus on reconnecting food systems with ecosystems.

While not at work, Karin can be found hunting for edible mushrooms, watching birds, investigating plants, and in general, exploring her natural surroundings.

South Fork Bicycle Tour

On September 25, 2010, a dozen folks joined Whatcom Land Trust staff members as we bicycled our way through conservation properties at the south end of Lake Whatcom and along the South Fork/Saxon area. The group enjoyed a beautiful fall day as we meandered beside a dozen WLT-protected sites along the 20-mile route. Ken Carrasco welcomed the group to his property and entertained us with his interesting stories before we continued on our way. The tour ended with a lunch stop at the Blue



Mountain Grill, which provided a pleasant lunch despite their power being out. The tour was a great way to see many of the South Fork properties WLT has been working to protect.

Thank You, BrewHaHa Supporters

We owe a great deal of thanks to a number of people that made the BrewHaHa such a fun event. First, we should acknowledge the generosity of Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro. Boundary Bay supports the entire non-profit community by providing their beer garden venue free of charge to groups in the community. Secondly, we are fortunate to receive the support of Grow Northwest, Whats Up!, Cascadia Weekly, WECU, ConocoPhillips, Glacier Lily Design, REI and the Foothills Gazette in promoting the event. Thirdly, the event wouldn't be near as much fun if

it wasn't for the entertainment provided by the Bellingham Storytellers Guild, Michael Watters and the Second Story Players, Bentgrass, and the fine sound of the End of the Road String Band. Lastly, we owe a huge thanks to the great folks at Pacific Survey & Engineering who manned the barbecues and produced the perfect bratwurst to complement Boundary Bay's Stewardship Brew. Thanks to all of our volunteers and if you get a moment, thank those businesses and groups named above who made it all possible!

Conservation Partners Breakfast

Our annual Business Conservation Partners breakfast will be hosted by Cascade Joinery on January 20th, 2011. Look for your invitation in the mail soon. Interested in learning more about how your

business can support the work of land conservation and Whatcom Land Trust? Contact Jerry DeBacker at 650-9470 or jerry@whatcomlandtrust.org.

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President's Message

Dear Friends of Whatcom Land Trust,

We are closing in on the end of a really phenomenal year for the Trust! The past twelve months have been successful both in new land protected (just over 1,000 acres by my unofficial count) as well as internal improvements with how we work together and manage our land and our organization. Neither land nor organizational changes would have been possible without our staff and board members.

Most importantly, these additional lands and internal changes would not be possible without the interest, support, and participation of the Whatcom community – you! This support is not limited to Whatcom Land Trust, but bestowed on all of our local nonprofits—whether environmental, social, youth, health, literacy, music, education, or other. It is truly wonderful to live in a community that understands the importance of place, and that recognizes, supports, and champions the value of place each day.

The fullness of local community support here at home is something I have appreciated, and greatly marveled at, since my family moved here nearly ten years ago. Larger cities may have more resources, but few demonstrate a stronger level of commitment than does Whatcom County. This commitment shows in the strength of our nonprofits and in our daily standard of living, and was brought home recently when Mauri Ingram and staff at the Whatcom Community Foundation hosted a seminar on nonprofit board development at the American Museum of Radio and Electricity.

Attending for the Land Trust, I was able to sit with members of the Whatcom Humane Society, ReSources, NSEA, Western, and other organizations that affect each of us as individuals and collectively as community. While the seminar was

on building nonprofit boards, the recurring theme was on the duty of nonprofits to continually link back with those we serve. Local values are the compass for any nonprofit organization, and our plans and actions become the roadmap for fulfilling community needs. Local values define our reputation and mission, establish our priorities (those issues critical to neighbors, businesses, and partners), and provide access to resources including funding and local talent for committee, board, and staff expertise. In return, it is our responsibility to maintain our ethics and assure delivery of our mission, to share good news, and to turn dreams into reality.

So, as we near the end of the year I am happy to share with you the continued good news of Whatcom Land Trust and the reality of more than 10,000 permanently protected acres of special land -- our grand total after 26 years of work. As I wrap up my two-year stint as your president, I want to thank each of you for your role in this good news, and express my gratitude for the opportunity to represent a great organization and to work with an even greater community.

Each day, my family wakes to the simple mantra of “we live here.” This is both an affirmation and a commitment, and after seven years on the Board of Directors, I continue to believe that the best way to protect and grow what makes Whatcom County special is through permanent land protection and the mission of Whatcom Land Trust. I hope you will continue to join me as I support the efforts of the Trust, as well as all of those important nonprofits and values that make this such a special place.

On behalf of Whatcom Land Trust, I wish you a great holiday season and best wishes for 2011.

Sincerely,



Great Outdoors Auction is Coming

Are you in need of little something to look forward to? Pull out the big marker and circle Saturday May 7, 2011 on your calendar. Join your friends at the 11th annual Great Outdoors Auction, enjoy local food and refreshments, and support the best little local land trust in the Puget Sound!

Are you thinking this is the year

you need to get more involved in local land conservation? Consider serving on the Auction committee. Sure, you don't have the glamorous sweat of the outdoor work parties, but you do get to conclude your work with a darn fine party- the Great Outdoors Auction! Committee work will begin mid-January and continues for 5 months in an effort to plan and create

the auction. Members of the committee need not be present at every meeting to be effective as there are a variety of tasks that can be completed as needed. If you are interested in helping on this year's auction, please call the office 650-9470 or email to AmeriCorps@whatcomlandtrust.org.



ground restored before the end of 2010. When the Land Trust finally purchased the property this October, a year and 8 months after the initial agreement, the trees were gone and the property was bare, raked clear of sticks over 2 inches in diameter.

Why would Whatcom Land Trust want to purchase a bare-ground former poplar plantation? With an \$825,000 grant from the State Salmon Recovery Funding Board for the acquisition, the reason has to be salmon habitat, in this case salmon habitat and partnerships. Located adjacent to or nearby several Whatcom Land Trust protected sites, this acquisition is a high priority for salmon recovery on the South Fork. In addition to protecting nearly 2 miles of salmon rearing habitat, the

New board members respond to the Pacific Poplar acquisition:

Taking on projects like this heavily disturbed piece of land and restoring it to provide, in this case, enhanced salmon habitat in the long run will be just as important as purchasing areas of pristine forest or farm land. I think it is wise that the Land Trust is making decisions now that look not just at protecting undisturbed land but having the foresight to help restore some lands that will be healthy and beautiful in the future. Conservation is about the future and the Pacific Poplar Property is a great example of Whatcom Land Trust having a vision that looks beyond today.

Carl Prince

I love sharing the exhilaration within the board when a complex, long-range vision for securing land like the Pacific Poplar property is accomplished. Vision, patience, persistence, partnering (NSEA), and timing of decisive action all play a part in this land dance.

The Pacific Poplar project is different from the beautiful wild places the WLT has saved. How exciting to look ahead decades to its restoration as salmon habitat by NSEA.

Jayne Curley

photo: Eric Carabba

Once diverted into a culvert, this restored stream has already become a spawning site for Salmon.

property performs a significant water storage function that helps maintain stream flow in the South Fork during dry summer months when low water and high temperatures are harmful to salmon. Most importantly, the acquisition will facilitate work by our partners, the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) and the Nooksack Tribe, in implementing critical salmon habitat restoration

for the recovery of endangered South Fork Chinook Salmon.

Back in 2007, NSEA began accumulating grants to acquire and restore this property, but was unable to come to terms with the owner. When Whatcom Land Trust secured the right to buy the property, NSEA was ready to begin work even before the poplar piles were gone. Already, NSEA has removed a manure lagoon and rehabilitated several thousand feet of Landingstrip Creek and its tributaries. They liberated one of the tributaries from a thousand feet of buried culvert and transformed it into a spawning-friendly, meandering stream supplemented with large woody debris and streamside plantings. In the next two years NSEA will plant and restore 90 acres of forested wetlands and riparian forest. We hope to return the driest 40 acres to agricultural use.

Darrell Gray, NSEA Project Manager commented: "Ownership of the property by Whatcom Land Trust for conservation purposes will allow the property to be restored over time to its historical condition benefiting multiple native aquatic and terrestrial species, some presently listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association is excited to partner with WLT over the next several years to restore habitat critical to Salmon Recovery."

At a NSEA work-party on November 13, cosponsored by REI, 78 volunteers planted 400 native plants on the reclaimed property and a pair of Coho salmon appeared in the resurrected stream.

The Nooksack Tribe is our other valued salmon recovery partner in this venture. A 2006 study by the Tribe identified this site, in conjunction with adjacent Land Trust property as having high wetland potential to benefit Chinook salmon. Acquisition of the property will facilitate implementation of plans by the Nooksack Tribe for major in-stream habitat enhancement in this stretch of the South Fork.

Acquisition of this former poplar plantation highlights the dual role Whatcom Land Trust plays in effective utilization of State Salmon Recovery Funding Board funds – protecting habitat and facilitating restoration work by our partners in this long-term effort to recover salmon populations in the Nooksack River and Puget Sound. The project also illustrates the importance of patience and persistence, two traits that are well practiced by the Land Trust.





photo: Eric Carabba

Ennis Creek flows noisily along its way to the Samish River.

Wickersham continued from page one

thought, we decided to go for it. And now we are thinking about what to do with the upland portion of the Wickersham block that is not so essential to the health of the upper Samish. One option is a trade for other land with greater habitat value. For now, at least, we can rest assured that the Samish River Preserve, with the salmon and other creatures that depend on it, is bigger and better than ever.

Successful bidders in a sealed bid auction, especially novices like us, often have an uneasy feeling when it is all over. Were we the only bidders? Did we pay too much? In this case, we had the good fortune to learn that we were not the only bidders and that our bid was close to second highest bid. So, we can feel good not only that we have furthered our mission to protect special Whatcom places, but also that we have ventured into the strange world of sealed bid land auctions and didn't do too badly there.

Kids, Parents Appreciate Jr. Stewards Program

This year's Jr. Stewards program wrapped up in August, and the feedback we received was very positive. The program is a summer, environmental education program for kids and their families. At the beginning of the summer, kids receive a booklet (developed by Randy Leventhal) with activities to do at 3 specific, WLT properties and 1 site of their own choosing. For each site visited, they were entered into a drawing for prizes. We distributed over 200 booklets this year and had a 50% increase in participation in the drawing over last year! Here's what some of the parents had to say:

I just wanted you to know how much my boys and I have enjoyed exploring different parts of Whatcom County these last two years. If it wasn't for your Jr. Steward Program we would have never known about such wonderful hikes such as Squires Lake or been able to explore the shoreline of Teddy Bear cove.

We loved the information about woodpeckers at Stimpson Family Nature Reserve. My 6-year old was delighted to find many pecked trees. The call "That one is from a hairy woodpecker!" was heard often on the hike.

I went with 3 Jr. Stewards ages 6-8 to Stimpson yesterday. They loved all of the fungus we found but they were tired at the end. Great place. These are all kids who love the outdoors and to add a bit of "education" that's fun is great.





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Recent Enhancement and Restoration Projects Steve Walker

Explorers Build Nesting Boxes for WLT Preserves

On Make-a-Difference-Day in October, the Whatcom Land Trust office was converted into a workshop! Fifteen elementary-age girls from the Explorers' Club Program constructed wood duck nesting boxes for future installation on Land Trust properties. The Explorers' Clubs for boys and girls are sponsored by Whatcom Wild, a local non-profit with the mission to foster lifelong appreciation for the natural world, instilling a deep sense of connection and wonder through outdoor exploration, and a strong ethic of service through community stewardship. To learn more about the Explorers' Clubs and Whatcom Wild, visit <http://wildwhatcom.org/>. The Land Trust salutes all the girls for their hard work and attention to quality. WLT looks forward to the installation work party and the new homes for waterfowl on Land Trust preserves.



WLT & REI Co-sponsor Work Party at City Parkland

Nearly 50 people contributed to a work party on Make-a-Difference-Day at the City of Bellingham's Chuckanut Ridge Wetland. Whatcom Land Trust holds a conservation easement on the 17-acre property west of the Interurban Trail. Volunteers pulled invasive weeds and restored the landscape where unauthorized trails had been built through sensitive wetlands. The Bellingham REI store co-sponsored the event and provided T-shirts for all volunteers. Starbucks provided coffee and treats. Additional work parties this fall included restoration projects at WLT's Racehorse and Fenton Preserves. The Trust extends a heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers and our work party partners. To help out with upcoming work parties, contact WLT's Volunteer Coordinator, Karin Grimlund, at AmeriCorps@whatcomlandtrust.org or 650-9470.

Hay Harvest on WLT Land



Whatcom Land Trust is continuing historic agricultural use at several preserves with active leases for the harvest of hay. Working with local farmers to cut open fields is a mutually beneficial relationship. Farmers secure feed for livestock and the Trust receives assistance with management of properties that would otherwise be invaded by weeds and non-native species.

photos: Steve Walker

Your Support is Vital

Did you happen to notice the arrival of our annual appeal letter in your mailbox? Your support of our once-a-year appeal is the lifeblood of our organization. We depend upon your generosity. Visit our webpage for a secure and easy way to make a donation today. Or consider making a donation through your workplace giving program. Some of our supporters have

found the easiest way to help is to make an automatic donation on a monthly basis. It is fast, convenient, and your gift quickly adds up!

Use the envelope that came in the mail, go online, or give us a call at the office. Just don't forget to support the preservation of the best of Whatcom places!

E-News

If you haven't been getting our E-News, you're missing out on the latest events and announcements. To receive E-News, go to www.whatcomlandtrust.org. In the upper right-hand corner is a block that says, "Sign Up for Email Updates." Go there and input your email address. Twice a month you'll receive up-to-date information pertinent to our supporters. As always, Whatcom Land Trust does not share or sell its email or address list.

Holiday Shopping?

Need to get holiday gifts for friends or family? Check out Whatcom Land Trust's gift items online or at the Allied Arts Holiday Market, located at 3548 Meridian St. The Festival is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesdays – Sundays until Dec. 24th.

Conservation Motivations

Mary Dumas

Whatcom Land Trust's work in the area of land acquisitions and conservation easements draws on the talent and insights of a wide-range of professionals skilled in the area of real estate transactions. We caught up with Realtors Rebecca Reich, Julie Carpenter, and Danne Neill, three long-time supporters, to learn more about the origins of their strong land preservation ethics and what motivates them to protect the special places and open spaces in our communities.

Julie, Rebecca, and Danne were each drawn to Whatcom County's unique brand of beauty and settled here over 25 years ago. While each had a unique journey to get here, they share a similar childhood story of time spent discovering nature's open pastures, forested lots, and beaches near their childhood homes and travels to national parks, new landscapes, and large open preserves. These experiences galvanized a deep appreciation for the natural world in each of these women.

Danne grew up in Seattle and was inspired by her mother's work to build a real estate practice at a time when women were not heavily represented in the industry. Danne, like her mother, raises questions regarding the treatment of land during development and works to increase awareness of the value of land preservation and the tools available to land owners to participate in that endeavor. Danne enjoys "talking with people about different land uses, why it is important that natural lands are maintained for our drinking water, air quality, and our children as well as educating people on methods of conservation and legal constructs to secure the long-term vision of open space and active farmlands."

All three women expressed a concern regarding the long term picture of lands in Whatcom County. Julie shares that it is important to consider "how we as humans can best help to reduce our negative physical impacts on the planet, such as reducing population growth and preservation of natural resources. Preservation of undeveloped land and the natural functions these lands play is a logical choice for investment locally, particularly in the types of properties WLT champions."

Julie, Rebecca, and Danne have each participated in WLT projects to secure lands for preservation. Julie shared thoughts regarding a recent WLT acquisition, "I was able to assist WLT with a recent acquisition of forested lands. It was very meaningful work for me to represent the Trust to help convert what the sellers considered to be developable residential property to a preserve that protects the surrounding watershed uplands and spawning habitat headwaters of a stretch of Dakota Creek."

Rebecca has woven the WLT's work into her real estate practice long before serving on the board of directors. For years,



photo: Eric Carabba

Rebecca Reich and Danne Neill at the Schornbush Forest.

Whatcom Places I and II have been her closing gifts to clients, who without exception cite the area's natural beauty as a primary draw to living here. Educating clients and colleagues about our special places and local preservation efforts underway is an integral part of Rebecca's work to support newcomers in their settling in process.

WLT's successes in land conservation have been accomplished through the good works of many, many fine individuals who recognize the immediacy of our efforts to preserve Whatcom County's special places. We are grateful for Julie, Danne, and Rebecca's active and sustained support of our work, as well as all the other real estate brokers we did not feature in this issue. Thank You!

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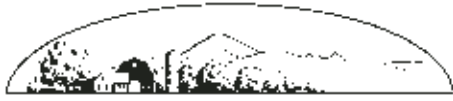
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Explore the Outdoors!

Bald Eagle Tour

Monday, December 18, 2010 10:00–12:30

Celebrate the New Year with magnificent Bald Eagles! This Eagle tour will visit a popular eagle fishing site protected by Whatcom Land Trust. Learn about the local recovery of this endangered species and of the current threats to its food source. See local places where eagles like to roost and watch the birds in action!

Call 650-9470 to register.

Tours are open to everyone. The tours are free to WLT supporters. Suggested donation of \$5 - \$10 donation for others. (You can become a WLT supporter for only \$35/family!)

We Want Your Opinion

We are assessing our communication and need to hear from you and the people you know. Please complete and share the short survey at: surveymonkey.com/s/HLB9DNC. Thanks

Stay tuned: Snow Goose Expert coming in February

Vasily Baranyuk, Senior Scientist of the Wrangel Island Nature Reserve of Moscow, Russia, will be in Bellingham in February. Whatcom Land Trust is hoping to co-host him with the North Cascades Audubon Society. For 20 years Baranyuk studied snow geese in the Wrangel Island ecosystem and Skagit-Fraser wintering areas. His presentations, designed to appeal to a wide variety of audiences, will be a mix of lecture, high quality photos, and digital video. Join our E-News or check our website for the specific date.