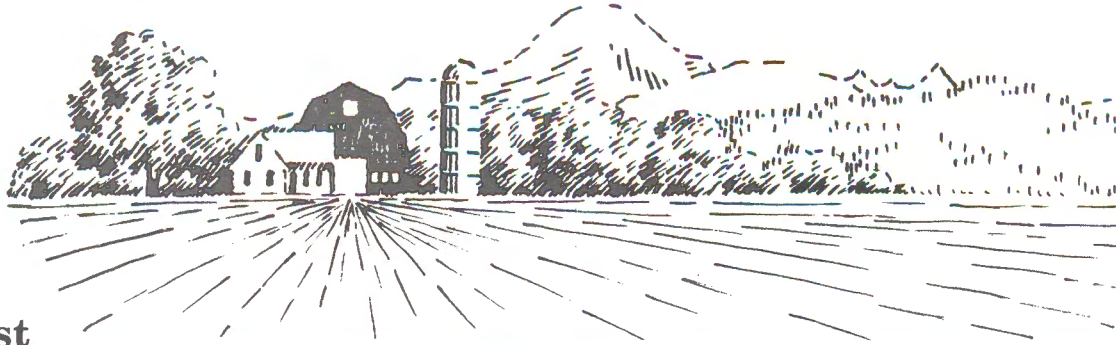


Whatcom County Land Trust



Volume 3, Number 2.

Newsletter

Fall 1993

A UNIQUE APPROACH TO LAND CONSERVATION

By Mike Finger

In the coming years the climate for land protection in our county will likely grow more urgent and more complex. Urbanization and industrialization are changing the face of Whatcom

County from historical green pastures, forested hillsides and free flowing salmon streams. The *Whatcom County Land Trust* promotes cooperative and voluntary approaches to land conservation. It is uniquely suited to preserve our natural heritage, even as the pressures to develop mount. The impetus for the Land Trust's work is most clearly reflected in its mission statement:

... to preserve and protect unique natural, scenic, agricultural and open space land in Whatcom County through acquisition of perpetual conservation easements or other land interests that insure the protection of the resource value.

Achievement of our mission is made possible by our ability to work objectively and privately with land owners and utilize tools unique to the Land Trust. Our philosophy and approach to land conservation is based on four primary strengths.

- First, the Land Trust preserves land without coercion, condemnation or political maneuvering. Our primary tool, the conservation easement, is an entirely voluntary agreement between land owner(s)

and the Trust. The easement is formulated through meetings with the land owner and those holding interest in the property. The desires of the land owner are discussed and a conservation easement

drafted to reflect the desired donation of specific rights held on the property. Most easements involve the donation of development rights, while other rights may be identified as well. A land owner might, for example, chose to restrict logging on the property while also allowing for a limited number of building sites for future homes. Another land owner might chose not to permit any alteration of the land. In both cas-

es, the land owner decides and does so without being compelled by an outside agency.

- Second, the Land Trust enables land owners to practice responsible land stewardship. By emphasizing the owner's property *obligations* and not merely property *rights*, the Land Trust creates a vehicle by which the private land owner can act out of respect for the land. The benefit of this kind of action to the community as a whole is significant. Many of us know a special place in our neighborhood — a pasture, a stream, or perhaps a stand of forest — that we do not own, yet we value. The conservation easement is a simple and enduring way for owners of special lands to protect them thereby enriching our collective quality of life.



Photograph by David Scherrer

President's Message

By Michael Durbin
Interim President

Has Whatcom County ever seen a time of greater conflict and debate regarding land use issues? Public debate swings between the poles of private property rights and environmental land stewardship until one must wonder if balance between the seemingly polar ideals of property right and environmental responsibility is possible. The *Whatcom County Land Trust* provides an effective forum in which to explore the balance between the rights of land ownership and the responsibilities of land stewardship. The Land Trust can provide unparalleled flexibility for landowners who wish to preserve forever some precious aspect of their land holdings while reserving uses and rights that they may require. The Land Trust is an independent organization dedicated to creating cooperative land conservation opportunities that reap benefit for all parties concerned: the private property owners, the denizens of the forests and wetlands, and the citizens of Whatcom County.

The *Whatcom County Land Trust* is seeking new opportunities to help land owners become aware of the potential benefits the Land Trust can bring to their land stewardship programs. As described in another article, the Land Trust is embarking on a new project in cooperation with Whatcom County to implement the land conservation goals established in the **Natural Heritage Plan**. We also are making efforts to become active in facilitating creative and effective approaches to wetlands management. Your support and understanding of the Trust are critical to the success and quality of our projects. During the land swap facilitated by the Land Trust, the voices of concerned citizens created significant impacts upon the course of our negotiations. The Land Trust will inevitably continue to become involved in controversial and difficult projects. We hope to continue to hear both your concerns and your hopes as we navigate the political minefields of land use and conservation. We hope our efforts will be worthy to receive your support.

Your financial contribution to the *Whatcom County Land Trust* is a commitment to the future of our forests and farmlands: it is a commitment to assure that the Whatcom County received by distant generations remains green, alive and beautiful.

A Unique Approach . . . (Continued from Page 1)

- Third, through the application of the conservation easement, the Land Trust achieves significant land preservation at little cost to the community at large. Other means by which land can be protected — condemnation, outright purchase, or litigation — cost the public substantial sums of money. Conversely, the conservation easement, because it is a voluntary agreement and does not require the land to change ownership, is an inexpensive way to protect land from conversion. As government budgets continue to contract, the conservation easement will become increasingly attractive as a cost effective and positive means to protect our farms, lakes, forests and scenic lands.
- The fourth strength of the Trust is our ability to promote conservation projects outside the scope of other organizations. As a non-political organization that creates voluntary agreements to protect land, the Trust has earned the respect of government agencies, environmentalists, developers and private land owners. The recently completed land exchange involving the Trillium Corporation, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham, was facilitated by the Whatcom County Land Trust and The Trust for Public Lands. This resulted in the transfer of approximately 20,000 acres of forest land out of which 7,000 were transferred to public ownership in the Lake Whatcom watershed. This is an example of conservation through negotiation and facilitation that the Trust is able to pursue and accomplish successfully.

For the land owner, the Trust provides a simple and enduring means to protect the land he or she knows intimately and uniquely. For the community, the Trust provides an effective, cooperative and inexpensive means to protect the natural heritage of Whatcom County, for us and for our children.

We invite you to become a member of the *Whatcom County Land Trust* and join us in this important work, a lasting legacy.

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR NEWSLETTER SPONSORS:

The Trust's Stewards, Our Feet On The Land

By Chris Moench

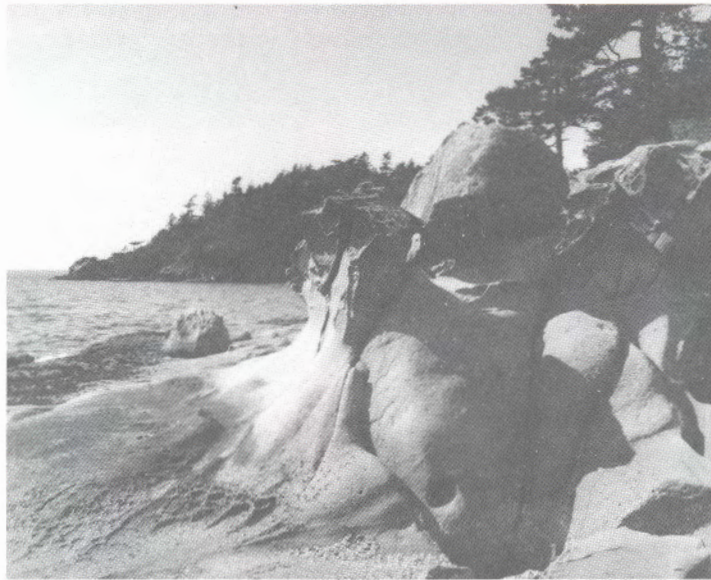
One year ago we made a plea for volunteers to become *Stewards* of individual properties under the protection of the Land Trust. We are pleased to report that several responses resulted from the newsletter request and that the Trust's stewardship program is well on its way to becoming the keystone in our efforts to fulfill the monitoring obligations assumed with each property we take under our wing.

The two properties that have required the most active stewarding are Clark's Point on Chuckanut Bay, to which the Trust was granted a conservation easement in 1990, and the Ruth Kelsey property, 20 acres near Lake Terrell gifted to the Trust by Ms. Kelsey in 1992.

Clark's Point has three voluntary stewards, in addition to the members of the Clark family who live on the Point. George and Lois Garlick have undertaken the task of periodically patrolling the shoreline of the Point. As stewards of the Nature Conservancy's Dot Island located just south of Clark Point, George and Lois tour the shoreline by boat at least once a week. Their intent is to keep a watchful eye on the sensitive vegetation and wildlife associated with the shoreline, they also watch for fires, collect trash and report more serious damage resulting from negligent human use.

Janet Taylor is the primary steward for Clark's Point. Since beginning in March, Janet acts as a Land Trust representative as well as steward for the Clark property. As steward she visits the Point several times a month, concentrating on the northern end of property where public access is allowed through an agreement between the Clark family and the City of Bellingham. Her main stewardship tasks involve picking up trash, removing fire rings and maintaining barriers across the many illegal trails extending south on the point. Acting as a representative of the Trust, Janet has met with

neighbors and city police in an effort to find solutions to ongoing problems associated with public access to the Point. In April the Clark's Point Stewards, members of the Clark Family, Binda Colebrook, consulting botanist and the Land Trust worked together to obliterate illegal trails and to revegetate bald areas created by foot traffic in locations outside the designated public access. We expect that this work will require ongoing attention in order to succeed. The Clark's Point Stewards will be there to see it is done.



Photograph by David Scherrer

Steve Irving is our steward for the Ruth Kelsey property. Living nearby, Steve keeps watch over the land which involves periodic visits, fence mending and maintaining contact with Tom Reed of the Washington Department of Wildlife with whom the Trust has a joint management agreement. The land is protected as wildlife habitat and although access is restricted Steve has been kept busy controlling access, particularly tracking down and talking to a man who used the twenty acres of forest and wetlands as a private ORV track. Steve has also spent many hours working with the Land Trust and adjacent landowners in an effort to bring additional properties under the protection of the Trust and creating an even greater upland wildlife preserve surrounding Lake Terrell.

The Land Trust Board and supporters of the Trust are grateful for the extended voluntary time and efforts our stewards put into their work. They form the backbone of our presence on the land and to each of our stewards we say **THANK YOU!**

As the number of properties under the Trust's protection grows we will need additional Stewards. We encourage anyone interested to contact the *Whatcom County Land Trust* at 647-5484 or 734-9472.

Leave A Lasting Legacy

By Bruce Smith

The *Whatcom County Land Trust* and the property owners who contribute conservation easements on their property are building a valuable heritage of protected natural lands for future generations. Approximately 450 acres of our area's most beautiful and productive natural, agricultural and wild lands are currently under protection. We are working with property owners to add other special lands to our trust.

You can make a valuable contribution to this important work, even if you don't own important conservation property, by making a bequest to the Land Trust on your death, through your will or revocable trust.

Currently, contributions to the Land Trust support our part-time coordinator and general operations. Most of our work is performed by committed volunteers, in particular the members of our board. Gradually, the cumulative responsibility for monitoring our easements and pursuing our mission will exceed our volunteer resources. A gift to our general fund will help us meet the needs of our day to day operations and services to the community at large.

In addition, there are limits to what we can accomplish with donations of conservation easements and in some cases a fee title acquisition is necessary. Much of the most important property is not there for the asking, but it may be purchased. Our Capital Fund is used for this purpose. A gift to the Capital Fund will be used to actually buy land, or conservation easements on these lands.

A bequest is accomplished with the inclusion of simple wording in your will, for example:

I give ten percent of my estate to the Whatcom County Land Trust, a Washington non-profit corporation located in Whatcom County, Washington.

or

I give the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to the Whatcom County Land Trust, a Washington non-profit corporation located in Whatcom County, Washington.

If you need particular assistance in drafting your bequest, one of our volunteer attorneys can answer your questions, or work with you and your attorney or other advisors.

A gift in a will or trust to the Land Trust qualifies you for an estate tax charitable deduction. But more than that, you can be sure that your contribution will be carefully applied to the preservation of Whatcom County's beauty and heritage, forever.

JOIN US!

The Whatcom County Land Trust needs your membership support for operations. The Land Trust is a local non-profit, non-governmental land conservation organization. The Trust is directed by a volunteer board representing various professional backgrounds and conservation interests. We are dependent on membership contributions to fund our daily operations and part-time Coordinator. Currently we are supported by a small membership base which needs to grow with the increase in demand for our services.

We invite you as an individual or business to become a member of the Land Trust and join us in this important work for our community, our families and future generations. We have included a membership and contribution envelope for your use to join, renew your membership or make a donation.

Thank You

Historical Note

Helen Loggie, a Bellingham artist, died in 1976. Fortunately, many of her works were donated to the Western Gallery Archives at Western Washington University. Etchings and prints of Pacific Northwest trees are a large part of the collection. For a 1942 exhibit at Western she wrote: *If I could strike an answering spark, especially in the hearts of the young people, so that they would realize that natural beauty is the greatest heritage the West has to give her children, so that they would protect what remains of our Northwest, then, I would indeed feel that the years have been well spent.*

Conservation Coordinator Hired

By Rick Fackler

The *Whatcom County Land Trust* is pleased to introduce Robyn DuPré as our new Conservation Coordinator. The Conservation Coordinator position was created to fulfill the terms of a six month contract between the Land Trust and Whatcom County, in which the Land Trust has agreed to help implement the County's **Natural Heritage Plan**. The Conservation Coordinator will work with property owners who wish to voluntarily preserve their lands for the enjoyment and sustenance of future generations. Robyn's background in environmental education, her knowledge of and commitment to Whatcom County and its natural resources, coupled with her positive attitude and strong people skills make her well suited for the job ahead.

The **Natural Heritage Plan** was written in 1991 by the Natural Heritage Task Force, a group of citizens appointed by the County Executive and County Council to recommend a strategy for preserving

... those natural features in our landscape which are essential to the County's identity and a sense of well-being for the County's residents.

The Task Force's report recommends voluntary cooperative conservation efforts to preserve lands: significant shorelines, critical watersheds, open space, agriculture, forestry lands, trails, scenic areas and high priority wildlife habitats. Many specific areas are identified as deserving preservation, and other documents which more specifically identify key lands are referenced in the **Natural Heritage Plan**.

In order to focus her efforts Robyn will organize a workshop for members of the Natural Heritage Task Force, the Whatcom County Land Trust Board and other key individuals to identify specific high priority opportunities and strategies for proceeding. She will also be contacting people who have recently expressed an interest in preserving their lands through conservation easements with the Land Trust. Members of the Land Trust Board will continue to work with property owners on land preservation, but the addition of Robyn will significantly increase our ability to respond to inquiries. It will also enable us to become more proactive in identifying and contacting owners of significant lands throughout the County. This is an exciting expansion of the Land Trust's ability to help retain some of the essential character of Whatcom County in the face of regional growth pressures.



HELP PRESERVE OUR NATURAL HERITAGE BUY A MUG!

Whatcom County Land Trust mugs are now available. Beautifully designed by local graphic artist Mary Ann Warner the mugs are an elegant statement of support for the Trust's efforts to preserve our Northwestern way of life. If you love Whatcom County, you'll love our mugs!

To order your mug(s), send a check for \$12 per mug (cost includes shipping in the U.S. only) to:

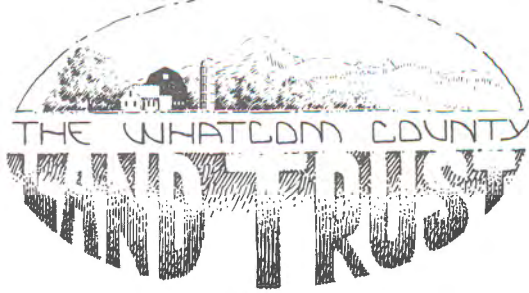
Whatcom County Land Trust

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or phone 206-647-5484 for more information

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WHATCOM COUNTY LAND TRUST

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