

SKAGIT WILD AND SCENIC RIVER
RESOURCE EDUCATION PROGRAM
ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT
1993 - 2005



KEVIN MORRIS - courtesy of CASCADIAN FARM

USDA FOREST SERVICE
MT BAKER-SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST



INTRODUCTION

In This Report

This report provides an overview of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program and its chief accomplishments during its first 12 years.

“Watersheds are complicated biological systems. This fact, coupled with the diversity of ownerships, jurisdictions, social interactions and regulations, makes for highly complex problem solving. Success can be achieved only with collaboration and good communication at all levels of government and with key interests engaged and working together.”

– John Phipps, former Forest Supervisor, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

Did you know...?

- Washington State’s Skagit River is the largest river in the Puget Sound Basin.
- Three unique bird species visit the river system each year: the trumpeter and tundra swan and the majestic bald eagle.
- Five salmon species are found along the Skagit River: chinook, coho, pink, chum, and sockeye.
- The river system is home to four Native American tribes: the Upper Skagit, Sauk-Suiattle, Samish, and the Swinomish.
- The Forest Service manages 44 percent of acreage within the Skagit Wild and Scenic River System; 50 percent is owned by private individuals; and another 6 percent is owned by state, county and other federal agencies.
- The 58.5 miles of the Skagit are classified as “recreation;” 100 miles of the Sauk, Suiattle, and Cascade rivers are designated as “scenic.”

In response to the myriad and complex challenges of managing the Skagit Wild and Scenic River System, the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest uses education and outreach as a way to reach both the citizens who make their homes in the Skagit Valley and those who visit this unique place. The Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program started in 1993, when the North Cascades Institute approached the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the North Cascades National Park with a proposal for watershed education. The Forest Service had a need to develop links with the public, a broad vision of collaboration outlined in the Skagit River Management Plan, and limited resources—a recipe for working in partnership with others who share similar goals and needs. Building on initial success, the program has expanded over time to meet resource management challenges and in response to shared interest and opportunity. This report outlines the accomplishments of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program over 12 years and looks to the challenges facing the program in the future.

Background

Located in the North Cascade Mountains of northwestern Washington State, the Skagit Watershed is a unique and inspiring place, largely wild yet within a stone’s throw of major metropolitan areas. Development in western Washington has increased rapidly in the past 50 years. The convergence of abundant natural resources and increasing demands on those resources creates an environment that is on the one hand passionately prized, and on the other hand threatened.

Portions of the Skagit River and three of its largest tributaries—the Sauk, Suiattle and Cascade rivers—are part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, designated by Congress to safeguard fisheries, wildlife, and scenic qualities for generations to come. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation is intended to balance demands among uses and protect some of our most outstanding rivers in a natural and free-flowing state.



BENJAMIN DRUMMOND



NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE

The Forest Service has faced challenges as well as opportunities, in developing river management strategies that push beyond geographic, administrative, political, and personal boundaries to find effective solutions to the wide-ranging resource issues in the Skagit System. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides no management authority or enforcement capability on non-federal lands, which comprise over 50 percent of the Skagit System. The Forest Service has chosen to work in partnership with the multitude of agencies and organizations concerned with issues that affect the river. In this way stewardship of the river system is a shared responsibility. Education and outreach programs, conducted with a network of partners, are a cornerstone of Skagit Wild and Scenic River management.

Effective conservation education helps people understand their environment and how it relates to their daily lives. Such education instills awareness and concern, especially among younger members of society, and provides people of all ages the tools they need to participate effectively in stewardship of natural and cultural resources. The Forest Service embraces education both as an effective tool to achieve stewardship goals and as a way to learn from the unique knowledge, advice, and values of local people.



DICK KNIGHT

Education and Outreach

The USDA Forest Service developed the national Vision to Action Strategy to promote conservation education as an effective, dynamic way to connect the American people with their environment.

“Public involvement and collaboration with partners are critical to the future of ecosystems, natural resources, and their management, and conservation education should be the cornerstone for each. The need to focus on communicating the sustainability of natural and cultural resources in forests, grasslands, and aquatic ecosystems and the interconnectedness of land and people requires a coordinated and effective Service-wide conservation education strategy. This strategy is designed to equip present and future resource users, decisionmakers, and partners with the tools they will need to make informed decisions regarding public and private lands, and to simply help them connect. This strategy is an investment in the future of natural resources on America’s public and private lands”. (1)

Related Skagit WSR Management Goals (2)

- Minimize conflicts between public use and private landowners within the WSR corridor.
- Provide for the conservation and continuation of patterns of land use.
- Protect and enhance the landscapes visible from the river and its banks.
- Protect and maintain wildlife habitat.
- Protect and maintain fish habitat.
- Provide public access.
- Provide coordination in management of the Skagit River Bald Eagle Natural Area.

SKAGIT WILD AND SCENIC RIVER SYSTEM

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

By the 1960's, there was sufficient concern over the seemingly inexorable loss of free-flowing rivers that Congress decided to intervene. The result was passage of legislation to preserve forever in a free-flowing condition some of the nation's most precious rivers. This legislation --the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Act) -- was signed into law as Public Law 90-542 on October 2 1968. (5)

To qualify, a river or river segment must be in a free-flowing condition and must be deemed to have one or more outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values.

Management Principles Derived from the WSRA

- Keep designated rivers free-flowing.
- Protect outstanding natural and cultural values.
- Allow existing uses of rivers to continue where they do not conflict with river protection.
- Build partnerships among landowners, river users, tribal nations, and all levels of government.
- Encourage basinwide management that crosses political boundaries.
- Promote public participation in developing goals for river protection.
- Improve understanding of river values and processes.
- Deepen the awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of river conservation.

River Classification: Refers to Levels of Development

Scenic—Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.

Recreational—Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

Wild—There are no Wild segments in the Skagit system.



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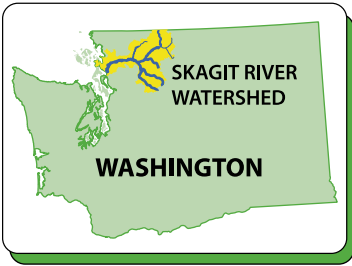
The Skagit Wild and Scenic River System, established by Congress in 1978, includes 158.5 miles of the Skagit and its tributaries—the Sauk, Suiattle, and Cascade Rivers. Management of the Skagit System is consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act direction to protect and enhance the values that caused the Skagit to be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System:

- Free-flowing characteristics and water quality of the four rivers;
- Outstandingly remarkable values: Wildlife, Fish, Scenic Qualities.

The Skagit appears largely natural and undeveloped in its sweep from the peaks of the North Cascades to the open waters of Puget Sound. The largest river in the region, the Skagit is one of the few rivers to support five types of salmon as well as seagoing trout. In winter, bald eagles migrate to the Upper Skagit to feed on spawning chum salmon. With its numerous tributary streams, high mountains, deep canyons, broad floodplains, estuaries, forests, fields, and farms, the Skagit retains a wealth of environments vital to fish, wildlife, and humans alike.

Over the past century, increasing human uses and competing demands on the Skagit's natural resources have presented a daunting challenge in the effort to maintain naturally functioning ecosystems. At stake are not only the survival of the region's salmon, forests, waters, wildlife, and wild places, but also the cultural identities, family heritages, lifestyles, and livelihoods of the people whose lives are so intimately linked with this landscape.

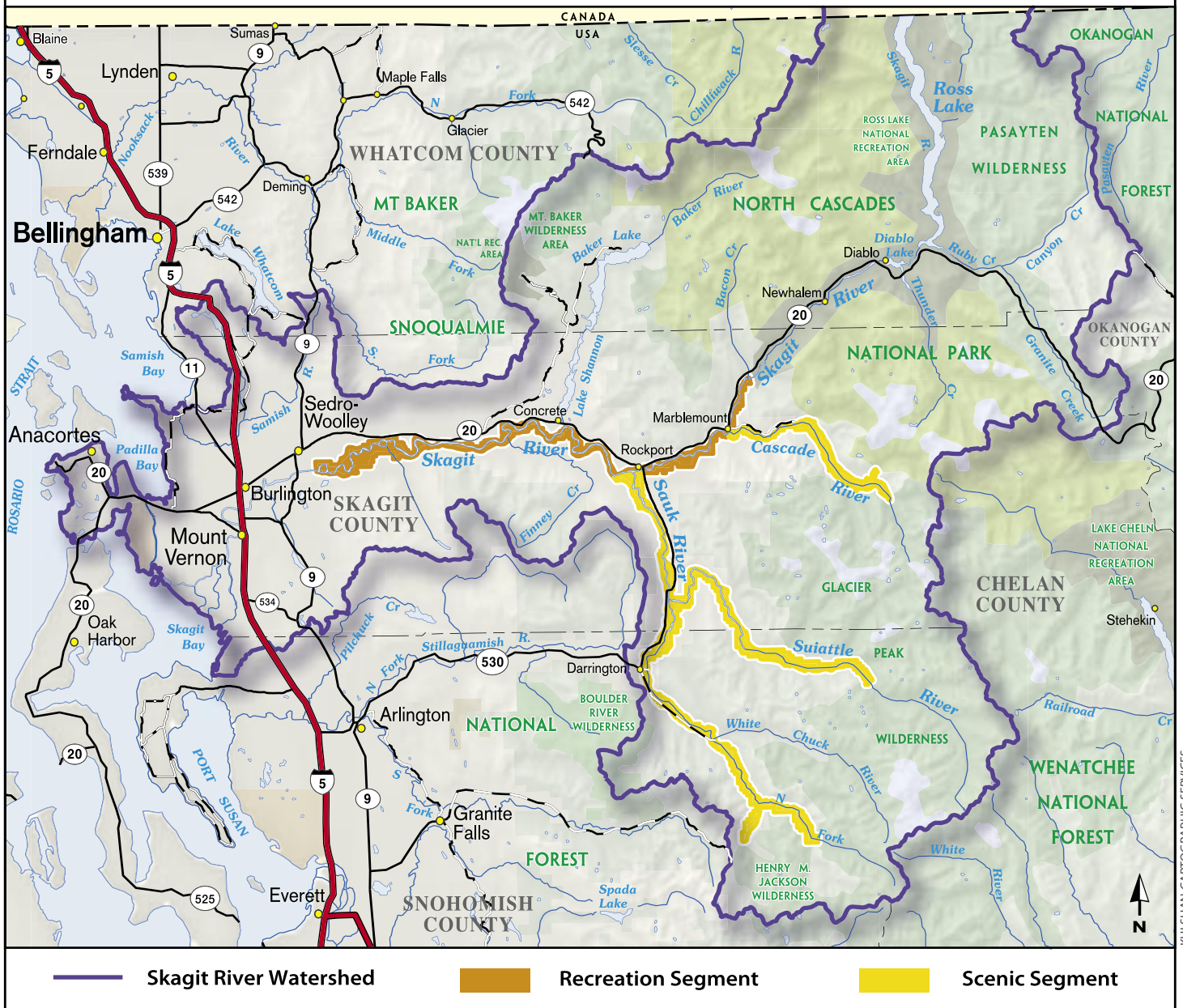
The Skagit Wild and Scenic River System is managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, in accordance with the Final River Management Analysis and Plan (2). In this complex and dynamic system, river management of necessity emphasizes collaboration with over 25 different agencies, landowners, tribes and other organizations who are concerned with various issues affecting river-related resources.



“The Skagit is one of the great rivers of North America. The river and its tributaries are the focus of life and energy for more than 1.7 million acres of the North Cascades - one of the most rugged mountain ranges in North America. Containing hundreds of glistening glaciers, tumbling waterfalls, rushing creeks, soaring eagles and spawning salmon, the Skagit is the largest watershed in the Puget Sound Basin”

– Weisberg and Riedel, From the Mountains to the Sea, 1991

SKAGIT WILD AND SCENIC RIVER SYSTEM



KULSHAN CARTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

RESOURCE EDUCATION PROGRAM: OVERVIEW

Mission

To promote interagency cooperation and community involvement to protect, maintain, and restore the values for which the Skagit River was designated a Wild and Scenic River: fisheries, wildlife, scenic quality and free-flowing character.

Goals

- Promote watershed stewardship to protect outstandingly remarkable values.
- Provide opportunities for community education.
- Facilitate communication regarding land management practices.
- Promote understanding and awareness of ecosystem processes.

Components

- The Skagit Watershed Education Program
- Eagle Watchers
- Skagit River Stewards
- Community Education
- Visitor Services and Facilities

Accomplishments

Each year the Resource Education Program reaches more than 20,000 people through educational programs, displays, publications, presentations, walks and other contacts. Staff and volunteers give more than 150 formal and informal presentations and more than 100 volunteers contribute thousands of hours.

“What’s noteworthy here is the way we’re all building on each other’s work. In an area where there are so many different landowners, it’s essential that we work together and that we focus on what’s most ecologically significant.”

—Bob Carey, The Nature Conservancy



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The Mt. Baker Ranger District of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest developed the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program with its many partners, to provide conservation education consistent with the outstandingly remarkable values for which the Skagit was designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The program represents an evolution and integration of several river-related education programs whose origins date back to 1993.

The program includes conservation education components for children and adults, volunteer monitoring, education for river visitors, fair and festival participation, and development of visitor services and facilities. Each program component offers unique opportunities to rural and urban youth, visitors, volunteers, and community members of all ages.

The program is part of an extensive partnership network that is essential for funding, coalition building, information exchange, technical accuracy and program validity. Partners contribute over 50 percent of the program budget each year, and they also provide substantial indirect contributions such as in-kind donations of staff time and materials, volunteerism, and general community support.



BENJAMIN DRUMMOND



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The Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program has received widespread local recognition as well as several regional and national awards. Principal funding for the Forest Service share of this program has been through the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region Aquatics Challenge-Cost-Share Program and the Seattle City Light Settlement Agreement for Recreation and Aesthetics (3).



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Partners

- **Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Mt. Baker Ranger District**

The Skagit River System is managed to protect and enhance the free-flowing condition, water quality and outstanding values for which the river was designated, while providing for public recreation and resource uses that do not adversely impact or degrade those values.

- **North Cascades Institute (NCI)**

North Cascades Institute, a non-profit, educational organization, promotes community education, involvement, and stewardship with an emphasis on biological diversity, wildlife and their habitats, mountain ecosystems, and watersheds.

The mission of the Institute is to provide and promote field-based environmental education about the natural history and culture of the Pacific Northwest in order to create an ecologically literate and engaged public.

- **Other Partners**

The Forest Service and the Institute have developed numerous other partnerships with agencies, councils, and organizations that help achieve Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program goals. Specific other partners are listed under the individual program components that follow.

Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program provides year-round education and outreach.

Program Component	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Skagit Watershed Education			■					■				
Eagle Watchers	■											■
Skagit River Stewards								■				
Community Education		■			■	■	■					
Visitor Facilities and Services	■											

SKAGIT WATERSHED EDUCATION PROJECT

The Skagit River is a vital entity to the inhabitants of its valley. Education about the complexities of river dynamics and physical and biological resources, improves public understanding of the challenges faced by Skagit River managers. A school-based program educates not only students, but their teachers and parents. An educated citizenry is the foundation of any effort to protect and enhance river values.

Goals

Create a sense of stewardship for the river system among its younger inhabitants. Students and their teachers learn about the issues that affect water quality and quantity within the basin and recognize their vital role in its future.

Accomplishments

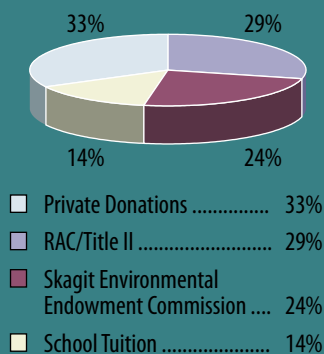
More than 14,000 students in seven Skagit County school districts have participated since the program's inception, and Skagit Watershed Education has been formally incorporated into the classroom curriculum.

Many schools count on this project as part of their curriculum and enjoy participating year after year. Many teachers and parents report that this is the highest quality field trip that they take all year.

Partners

- Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission
- Islands Fund
- Russell Family Foundation
- Discuren Foundation
- North Cascades National Park
- and more than 30 other partners

2004 Watershed Education Funding



BENJAMIN DRUMMOND

With Forest Service technical support, North Cascades Institute developed the Skagit Watershed Education Project in 1992 as a community-based environmental education program involving elementary classes in school districts within the Skagit basin.

This field- and classroom- based program provides teachers and students skills, training, and experience in examining watershed issues. Each year some 1,200 students in grades 3 through 7 take an active role in learning about the Skagit watershed and exercising leadership in their communities. Elements of the program include yearly professional development workshops, a local watershed field trip, classroom presentations, curriculum materials, and pre- and post-field-trip activities.

The Watershed Education Project is designed to meet education standards and is continually being revised and improved based on evaluation and feedback from all those who have participated in the program. Students, teachers, and parent chaperones provide critiques after field trips, and teachers also evaluate the teacher handbook and other program features. At the end of year, the Institute compiles a final report for program partners and funders on accomplishments for the funding cycle.

"I learned that a watershed isn't just water, it's the mountains and the things that are surrounding the water. We have to take care of the land and the water together." — student

"I think learning outside is cooler than inside because you can see, feel, and smell the things we are studying." — student

"The students seem more excited each year—they learn a tremendous amount of valuable information that I feel they'll always remember." — teacher



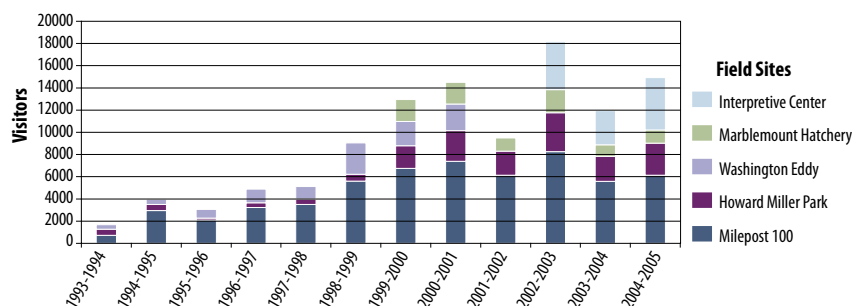
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Eagle Watchers is a joint training program for volunteers who provide the public with information about bald eagles during the winter “eagle-watching” season on the upper Skagit River. Run by the Forest Service and North Cascades Institute, the Eagle Watchers program is unique in its use of volunteers to help address management challenges during a critical lifestage for wildlife. Volunteers receive training in eagle ecology, identification, and management issues related to the wintering bald eagle population. Each year, 60 to 80 volunteers from the general public attend 12 hours of training and sign up to staff three sites along the Skagit River on weekends from December through February.

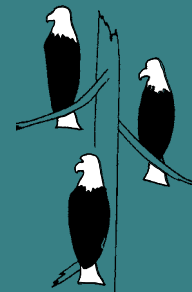
Eagle Watchers was the first program in Washington State to use education and interpretation to mitigate the resource concerns that resulted from the conflict between Endangered Species Act requirements to protect bald eagles on the one hand and the access needs of a recreating public on the other. The Eagle Watchers program also educates the public about respectful wildlife watching and provides access to viewing locations that are on public land, have safe parking, and create only minimal disturbance to feeding eagles.

At the end of each eagle-watching season, volunteers evaluate their experience and are invited to a potluck celebration where they receive recognition and share stories, suggestions and ideas. An annual accomplishment report summarizes the program’s achievements.

Number of Visitor Contacts: 1993 - 2005



The Skagit River system has one of the largest wintering populations of bald eagles in the lower 48 states, one of the “outstandingly remarkable” values for which the river was designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Bald eagle viewing along the upper Skagit River has increased dramatically in the past 5 years. In a typical winter season, 3,500 rafters, 1,000 anglers, and more than 10,000 people visit to view eagles. With the bald eagle’s threatened species status, protection of these birds is crucial. The Eagle Watchers program plays a vital role in this effort.



Goals

- Provide education about bald eagles, salmon and river ecology to volunteers.
- Enable volunteers to assist the public to watch eagles in a safe and appropriate manner.
- Compile visitation numbers for local land managers.

Accomplishments

- Since 1994, Eagle Watchers have made more than 100,000 visitor contacts and contributed nearly 7,000 volunteer hours.
- Local communities benefit economically from increased visitation during winter months.
- Eagle Watcher volunteers have participated in community education programs throughout the Skagit valley.
- An average of 74 volunteers per year have been trained since 1994.

Partners

- Puget Sound Eyes on Wildlife
- Seattle City Light
- The Nature Conservancy
- Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

SKAGIT RIVER STEWARDS

The Skagit Wild and Scenic River Water Resource Monitoring Plan (4) was developed to assess how timber harvest, flooding, and population growth are affecting fisheries and water quality, which are among the outstandingly remarkable values for which the river was designated. The plan calls for monitoring Skagit River tributaries, which should reflect the condition in the mainstem rivers. Citizen monitoring promotes a sense of stewardship by providing an opportunity for volunteers to see the connections between the natural world and the human community.



NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE

Goals

- Educate adults about aquatic resources.
- Initiate biological monitoring in the Skagit Basin.

Accomplishments

- Since the program began in 1997, an average of 15 tributaries to the Skagit have been sampled by volunteers each season.
- Since 1997, 200 volunteers have spent almost 5,000 volunteer hours in the field.
- The program has a returning cadre of enthusiastic volunteers who have built a sense of stewardship. Many new recruits come through word of mouth. Beneficial spin-off occurs as volunteers take what they've learned to other places and volunteers come through other programs.

Partners

- Environmental Protection Agency
- North Cascades National Park
- Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

Skagit River Stewards began in 1997 as a pilot project that involves citizen volunteers in the biological and physical monitoring of Skagit River tributaries. Volunteers receive 15 hours of training in watershed dynamics, aquatic macroinvertebrate ecology, salmonid lifecycles, and sampling techniques, and in turn, provide 16 or more hours of service. They visit several sites per day to sample Skagit River tributaries, helping Forest Service and National Park Service biologists to collect macroinvertebrate samples and physical stream data.

In the Skagit basin the concern over declining fish populations due to the combined impacts of timber harvest, flooding and population growth led to development of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Water Resource Monitoring Plan (4). The plan provides methods to assess how these impacts affect the values for which the Skagit River System was designated, specifically fisheries and water quality. One element of the plan institutes monitoring in tributaries to the Skagit River to determine their condition and contribution to the overall river system and to track trends in recovery as a result of watershed restoration treatments.

The data collected by this program are incorporated into a larger study conducted by North Cascades National Park. Volunteer-collected data combined with professional expertise from the National Park Service will result in a standardized biomonitoring framework for the North Cascades.

Skagit River Stewards Program - Volunteer Statistics

Year	Number of Volunteers	Field Hours	Tributaries Sampled
1997	16	392*	7
1998	20*	490*	37
1999	24	812	6
2000	23	639	13
2001	29	673	14
2002	26	420	15
2003	30	650	16
2004	33	808*	19
Totals	201	4884	

* - Estimated



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Community Education is a general outreach component of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program. The focus of this program is to:

- ♦ improve public awareness the need to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values of the Skagit WSR, and
- ♦ inform the public of the role of the Forest Service as a resource manager.

Community Education is composed of a diverse set of programs and activities that have been developed over time. A cornerstone of this program element is a focus on the river's aquatic resources, primarily salmon and their habitat.

In 1998 the Forest Service and the Skagit Chinook Work Group developed an education and outreach strategy, the Salmon Disturbance Project, to educate the public about the needs of salmon and the importance of protecting riverine habitat. River rangers conduct programs on salmon and river ecology at county, state, and federal campgrounds and other venues throughout the river corridor. River rangers also monitor recreational boating and permittees and provide them with guidance on resource protection and outdoor ethics.

Other activities include the development of educational resource materials such as newsletters, videos, brochures, and a poster; and a portable display for fairs and festivals. Program accomplishments—including number of visitor contacts, presentations, and volunteer hours—are reported annually.

Salmon Disturbance Project Contacts

Year	Contacts		Programs	
	Land	River	Land	River
1998	750	14
1999	1600	73
2000	1500	1100	54	50
2001	1200	1550	64	94
2002	1450	1205	18
2003	1200	1578	20
2004	2492	952	40	8
Totals	10,192	6,385	283	152

Goals

- Reach a diverse segment of the community through a range of interpretive media. These include one-on-one contacts, formal programs, newsletters, and fair and festival attendance.

Accomplishments

- Since 1997, thousands of visitors have been reached through participation in presentations, community events, and the *River Currents* newsletter.
- Between 1998 and 2004, river rangers conducted more than 500 presentations at campgrounds and other sites, reaching approximately 15,100 visitors. Rangers also annually post 80 salmon-message signs at 40 sites.
- The national forest hosted the Salmon Tent and shared the *Skagit River* video at the Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival from 1998 through 2005, reaching some 5,000 festival attendees annually.
- The Forest Service has used whitewater boating river rangers for several summer seasons to educate rafters about salmon spawning habitat and to monitor the health of the river system.
- The original poster *The Wild and Scenic Skagit River* was produced for distribution to schools in northwest Washington. As part of the poster project, the salmon disturbance message was incorporated into North Cascades Institute curriculum in 2000.
- The Salmon of the Skagit River video was developed by a volunteer and distributed to members of the Skagit Watershed Council and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, as well as local schools.

Partners

- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Seattle City Light
- Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group
- North Cascades National Park
- Puget Sound Energy
- Washington State Parks
- Skagit County Parks

VISITOR FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Goals

Implement portions of the Skagit WSR River Management Plan (2) as identified in the Skagit Project Recreation Plan (3).

Interpretive Planning goals:

- Increase awareness that the river is designated a wild and scenic river and increase recognition of the river as a national treasure.
- Increase understanding and foster appreciation and respect for the Skagit River System.
- Educate visitors, the local public, and managers (a) to learn how to help protect and restore ecosystems and (b) to become advocates for it.

Accomplishments

Services: \$135,000

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1997 | Skagit WSR Portable Display for Fairs and Festivals |
| 1998 | Skagit WSR Interpretive Plan |
| 2001 | Phase I Feasibility Study: Skagit River Interpretive Center |
| 2001 | Skagit WSR Program Logo |
| 2002 | Skagit WSR Sign Plan |
| 2003 | Skagit Bicycle Use Master Plan |
| 2004 | Skagit WSR Boatlaunch Banner Signs |
| 2005 | Skagit WSR Brochure |
| 2005 | Sign Contract for Phase I Interpretive Signing |

Facilities: \$560,000

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 2001 | Marblemount Boatlaunch |
| 2003 | Mineral and Marble Creek Campgrounds Upgrade |
| 2004 | Lower Sauk Boatlaunch |
| 2004 | Sutter Creek Rest Area Upgrade |
| 2005-6 | Rockport State Park Accessible Interpretive Trail upgrade |

"...the time has come to identify and preserve free-flowing stretches of our great rivers before growth and development make the beauty of the unspoiled waterway a memory."

—President Lyndon Johnson



USFS

The Skagit River Management Plan (2) identified management goals for visitor services and facilities, some of which were incorporated into the Settlement Agreement on Recreation and Aesthetics for the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project No. 553 (3). The Skagit Project Recreation Plan (3) provides funding over the 30-year period of the license as mitigation or enhancement for the downstream effects of the Skagit Project on the Skagit River.

In the Plan (3), recreation facilities such as boat launches, trails, and public access were identified as priorities for development. The need for planning for interpretation and additional visitor services was also recognized. Interpretive planning for the Skagit system has been implemented concurrently with ongoing interpretive and education projects. Interpretation has focused on the values for which the Skagit was designated a wild and scenic river: fisheries, wildlife, and scenic quality. In addition, several other resource management issues have received attention, including; endangered species, flooding, land use, forest practices, and watershed restoration and protection.

The Forest Service has taken a systematic approach to implementing the Skagit Project Recreation Plan. Several facilities have been constructed, others are still being evaluated, and new projects will be proposed. The national forest has completed some interpretive planning and has developed several products (see sidebar for projects completed to date). In 2006, an assessment of visitor services along the SR 20 corridor (Skagit segment) is expected to be completed, to inform the next phase of project development and implementation.

Partners

- Seattle City Light
- Western Washington University
- Skagit County Parks and Recreation
- Washington Department of Transportation
- North Cascades National Park
- Washington State Parks
- WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- The Nature Conservancy

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE



NATALIE FOBES courtesy of SKAGIT WATERSHED COUNCIL

It has been a challenge to fulfill the intent of the Wild and Scenic River Act to protect and enhance the free-flowing condition and outstanding values of the Skagit River System. The extent of private land ownership here is unique among designated wild and scenic rivers in the western United States, and pressures on the system have only increased over time. Demands on river resources are numerous and often conflicting: local riverside landowners are concerned with their right to full use of and flood protection for their property; some visitors view the Skagit as a natural haven that should be preserved from any future development, and nearby urban residents frequently look for solitude and a quality outdoor recreation experience.

The Wild and Scenic River designation has enabled the Forest Service to work in partnership at the watershed scale to fulfill our stewardship responsibilities. The Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program, as one element of the management strategy for the Skagit system, has been successful in building support for protecting the river's unique characteristics. To maintain its success, the program will need to be adaptable to changing public discourse among diverse rural and urban audiences, uncertain funding, and shifting resource management concerns that reflect changing but continued pressures.

River management will continue to emphasize the core values of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Resource Education Program. The need to establish and nurture relationships with stakeholders will only expand in the future as the stewardship challenges developing in local communities take on regional, national, and global proportions. Working beyond geographical and administrative boundaries—and monitoring progress both on the land and in our partnerships—will become critical to achieving resource goals at multiple scales and fulfilling the agency's mission over the long term.

References and Resources

- (1) U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], Forest Service. 1998. Conservation Education Task Force Report and Recommendations: Vision-to-Action Strategy. Cooperative Forestry FS-618. Washington D.C.
- (2) U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], Forest Service. 1983. River Management Plan (Final) Skagit River. Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.
- (3) Settlement Agreement on Recreation and Aesthetics: Skagit River Hydroelectric Project No. 553. April 1991. FERC.
- (4) U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], Forest Service. 1994. Skagit Wild and Scenic River Water Resource Monitoring Plan.
- (5) National Wild and Scenic Rivers website. <http://www.nps.gov/rivers/>

For more information

- USDA-Forest Service: Skagit Wild and Scenic River:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/skagit-wsr>
skagit-wsr@fs.fed.us
- The publication, *Beyond Boundaries: Resource Stewardship in the Skagit River Basin. Communities and National Forests in Partnership*, has a Partners and References section with hotlinks.
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/publications/>
- North Cascades Institute
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/nci@ncascades.org>
- North Cascades National Park
<http://www.nps.gov/noca/>
- Seattle City Light
<http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/light>

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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“The high level of skills of the coordinators of the program makes this an outstanding program. The education volunteers receive will be shared with friends, family and neighbors.” —volunteer

“I was amazed to see the number and variety of folks who were interested in seeing the bald eagles—no matter what the weather was like. It’s nice to know that wildlife still has that kind of hold on us.” —volunteer

“Our experience was that the public felt we were doing a very worthwhile task. Many people thanked us.” —volunteer

“Bugs are cool! I was fascinated to see how many different kinds of invertebrates there are and how many individuals. The benefit to the general public is tremendous—it made a huge impact on me to participate in hands-on monitoring.” —volunteer

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