

Partnership with State Succeeds in Preserving South Fidalgo Bay



Photo by Ric Merry

Views of south Fidalgo Bay and Tommy Thompson Trail. Protection of tidal area is now 532 Acres.

A unique partnership between Skagit Land Trust, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Texaco Trustees Restoration Committee has succeeded in the purchase and preservation of another 82 acres of tidelands in Fidalgo Bay. This complex transaction was over two years in the making and used settlement funds from oil spills that occurred in Fidalgo Bay in the 1990's. The newly protected tidelands will be owned by the state and managed by DNR with a conservation easement, which is a permanent preservation

agreement, held by Skagit Land Trust.

Together with 450 acres that Skagit Land Trust facilitated DNR acquiring in 1999 through a similar transaction, the total protected area in the southern part of the bay is now 532 acres. The area is also proposed for natural habitat restoration and management as a state Aquatic Reserve.

More and more people are enjoying the scenic beauty of Fidalgo Bay as they discover and hike on Anacortes' Tommy Thompson Trail.

The trail connects the city with March's Point by traversing spectacularly across the bay on the old Burlington Northern railroad trestle. With the return of these irreplaceable tidelands to public ownership and with a conservation easement in place, the open space quality, marine views and native species will survive here for future generations.

The tidelands contain important eelgrass beds and intertidal habitats that support many species of marine organisms including forage fish,

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Drawings by Brenda Cunningham

From the Executive Director

Dear Members and Supporters of Skagit Land Trust,

Life at Skagit Land Trust keeps getting busier – and that is a good thing for land conservation. In the past few months we've completed five land conservation projects permanently protecting hundreds of acres and two miles of marine and freshwater shoreline. We have three projects encompassing two more miles of Skagit River shoreline in the final stages of protection. And we have started protection work on new projects throughout Skagit County. In fact, we are so busy that we've added a staff person Renata Hoyle Maybruck, to help with membership, funding and outreach. We know that time is of the essence and that we need to stretch to protect beloved local land now, before it is forever lost to unplanned development. This new position will help us engage the greater community to support the work needed to get threatened land protected.



At the same time we are losing our very capable Stewardship Director, Brenda Cunningham. Brenda and her husband Tim Manns, formerly the head naturalist at North Cascades National Park, plan to travel and enjoy the natural world they have worked so hard to protect and steward in their respective jobs. We will miss Brenda. Our stewardship volunteers love her. She makes everyone know they are part of the team. She is also an extremely engaging naturalist. She is our go-to person for all things related to land management, biology, maps and computers. She is a wonderful workmate and supporter of land conservation, and has gently encouraged the Trust to embrace land stewardship as a long-term process and a community endeavor. With thousands of acres of land to look after, we are refilling this position immediately.

I encourage you to attend Skagit Land Trust's Annual Meeting, March 23. This year we are very fortunate to be holding the event at The Museum of Northwest Art in LaConner. This is a bonus event – get updated on and celebrate land conservation successes you have helped to make happen, and tour a great show of Northwest art entitled "Range" depicting range animals of the American West by Deborah Butterfield, C. S. Price, Theodore Waddell.

Thank you for your help and support. We could not do this work without our members. Your support, volunteer efforts, notes, drop-ins, and financial gifts have made this stormy winter, a very successful and cheery one for the Trust. Thank you.

Molly Doran
Executive Director



South Fidalgo Bay Continued from page 1

juvenile salmon, Dungeness crab and shellfish. Bald eagles and great blue herons from the nearby March's heronry forage there, as well as over-wintering waterfowl such as Black Brant.

Skagit Land Trust originally approached the landowners, the Kay and Sayre families, about selling the property more than six years ago. The families re-contacted the Trust in 2005, and the Trust then presented a funding proposal to the Texaco Trustees Restoration Committee, which represents various public agencies and local tribes affected by the oil spills. The Committee approved the proposal and, working closely with DNR, Skagit Land Trust facilitated the purchase and protection of the property. At closing, the property was conveyed to DNR.

These rich tidal lands will now be stewarded for the benefit of wildlife and be managed as a natural preserve. The conservation easement permits habitat restoration but does not allow any commercial development. ■

Mud Lake Conservation Area Grows

Skagit Land Trust purchased another 12 acres of wetlands to increase the Mud Lake Conservation Area in Clear Lake. This addition protects more acres of habitat for herons, ducks, innumerable species of songbirds, and frogs. The total area protected by Skagit Land Trust at this special wetland and lake is now 60 acres. The new addition is contiguous with a permanent easement held by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for wetland protection. Including the NRCS easement, the permanent protection around Mud Lake is over 82 acres.

Mud Lake is part of the Nookachamps watershed – renown for its beauty, farming, wildlife and for its flooding. This quote from the Skagit River Journal article about local pioneers paints a picture of this area well.

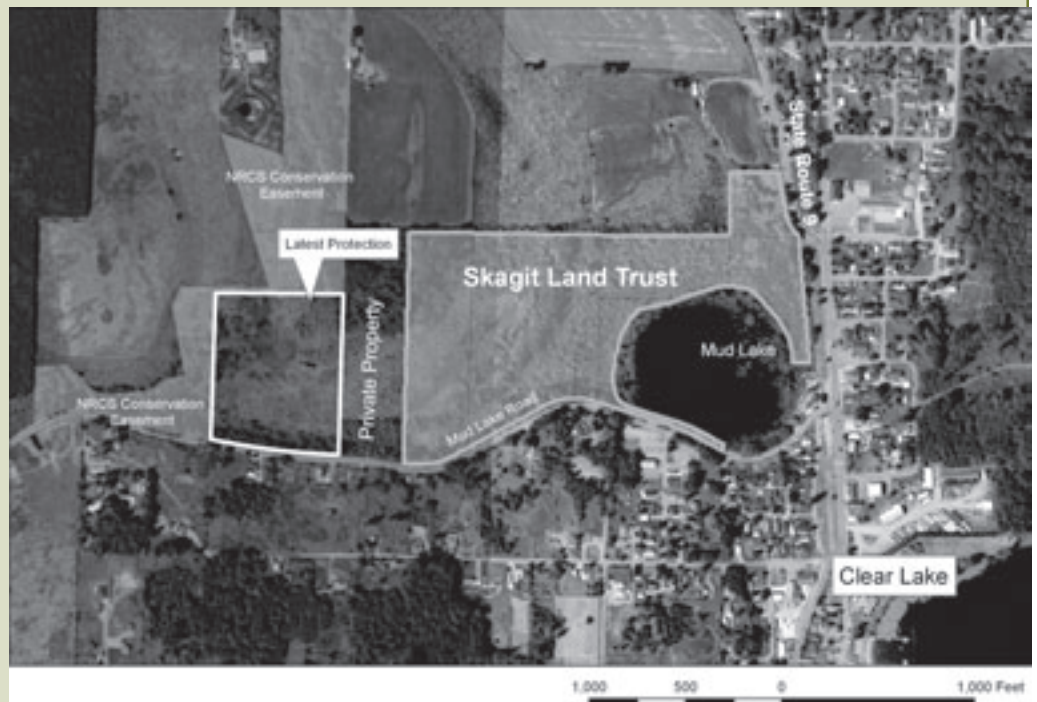
“If you drive or bicycle through the Nookachamps watershed today, you can see why settlers would love it there. Starting in the late 1870’s, it began filling up with homesteaders. The views of the hills to the east around Clear Lake and Day Creek are beautiful, dense forests awaited the axe and misery-whip saw, potable water was everywhere

around them, crops grew abundantly and the summers are heavenly. The valley there seems idyllic, until ole man river starts bucking and snorting, that is. When that occurs, the image resembles the biblical flood”.

*Noel V. Bourasaw,
Skagit River Journal, 2004*

The latest addition at Mud Lake came to the Trust as a purchase from the Allen Family. Skagit Land Trust has been building the Mud Lake Conservation Area since the late

1990’s when 11 acres were donated to the Trust by supportive Land Trust members. Since then awareness of the lake and the habitat protected on it has grown to include members of a broader community, from residents of “downtown” Clear Lake, to students at Clear Lake Elementary School, to daily commuters on State Route 9. We are also very pleased that Leadership Skagit’s *History Team* has selected Mud Lake for their 2007 project. ■



Mud Lake Conservation Area in the Nookachamps.

Member Profile

John Tursi - Seventy Years of Conservation and Stewardship

By Molly Doran

“Doris and I had an ethic – as long as we didn’t need money, we should conserve the land”. *John Tursi*

John Tursi is a great friend of people, animals and the environment. Not only is John a significant supporter of Skagit Land Trust as well as several other local organizations, but he and his deceased wife Doris also donated a conservation easement on their property. John has protected 300 acres of Anacortes Community Forest Lands in Doris’s memory. John and I are friends and over time I have heard part of his remarkable story. It is a testament to how nature and service to something larger than oneself shapes a life that ends up benefiting a community.

John arrived in Skagit County in 1934 as part of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC, a Roosevelt initiative during the depression, was a work and relief program that sent young men to work on conservation projects in rural areas. The CCC operated numerous projects, including constructing many civil engineering works, buildings and trails in state and national parks. John left behind a pretty tough life in New York City so although only earning \$5 a month, John says “I had three meals a day, it was beautiful – I wasn’t going back.” He was assigned to work at Deception Pass when the bridge and parking area were being constructed.

It is truly a delight to visit this popular park now with John. Not only can he recount stories about the building of the bridge, but he has poignant stories about individual rocks and trees. Once John pointed out a grove of trees that he had planted in 1935 as punishment for missing a cigarette butt (that he thought was sputum) while on clean-up duty. These trees are now over 70 years old, passed by millions of people traveling along Hwy 20, and thriving. He also took us to a beautiful area of large conifers near the parking area south of the bridge. One tree had a peculiar, perfectly symmetrical burl on one side of it. John explained that 70 years ago he had placed a cable around the tree as a highline to get a rock in a truck while building the parking area at Deception Pass Bridge. He feels badly about hurting that tree – but I think if nature had any say about it,

she’d say that he has made it up to her over the years.

After the CCC John married Doris, worked at canneries, sawmills and eventually Shell Oil on March’s Point where he became a machinist, foreman and eventually a consultant and mechanical engineer specialist, advising on new plants built. Pretty impressive as John had to leave high school in grade 9 to work – but John had the right attitude. He and Doris traveled the world, always off the beaten track. They loved their property on Fidalgo Bay and it became a



John Tursi stands next to his tree burl.

sanctuary for wildlife. John says “Doris and I had an ethic – as long as we didn’t need money, we should conserve the land”. And they did. In 1997 John and Doris donated a conservation easement to Skagit Land Trust that extinguished all development rights except for the house they lived in and protected their forested land and Fidalgo Bay shoreline.

Being in touch with the land had a huge influence on John and the CCC nurtured a stewardship ethic in him that remains to this day. The CCC

taught him to leave no trace on the land well before this was a popular concept, well before the litterbug campaign, well before the term sustainability was coined. At almost 90 years old, John still picks up every piece of trash he sees on our walks – usually before I even see it. Of the 1000 CCC youth who came here in the 30’s, only seven stayed to live here. How fortunate we are that John was one of those. ■

Knitting the Landscape Back Together

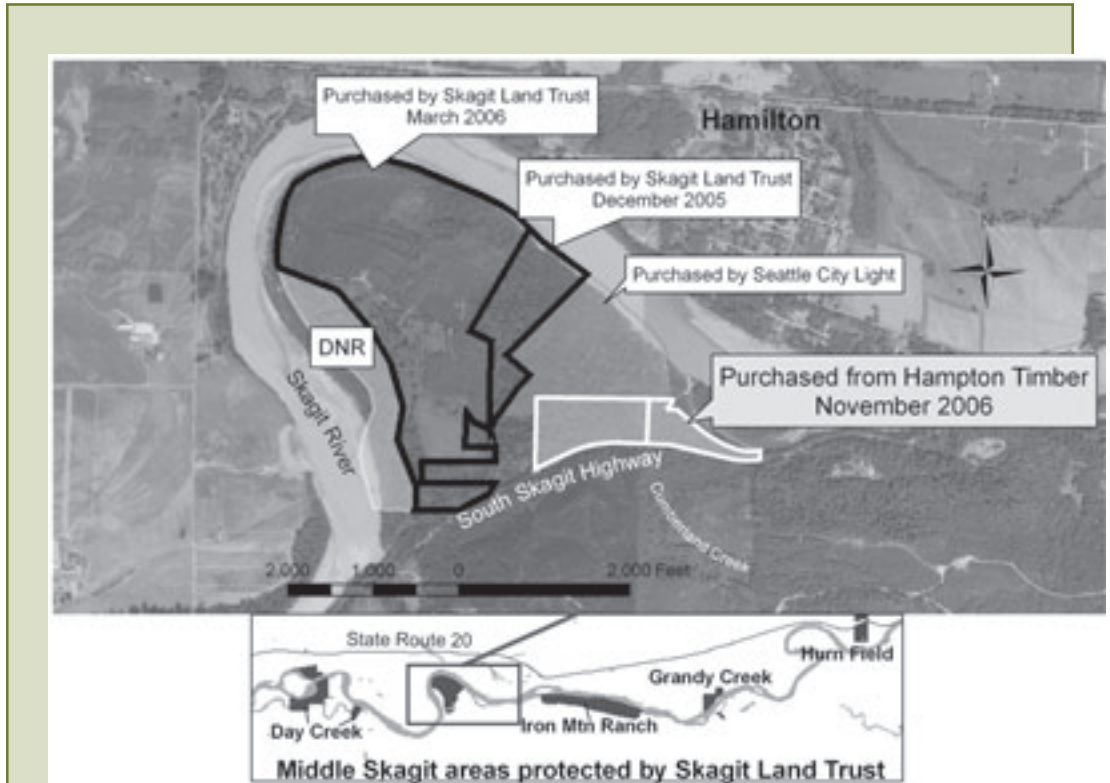


Middle Skagit River Grant Completed with the Purchase of 25 acres at the mouth of Cumberland Creek

For several years Skagit Land Trust has been purchasing the highest quality salmon habitat from willing landowners in the “Middle Skagit” area. With its gentle gradient, broad floodplain, meandering channels and oxbow wetlands, the Middle Skagit is a beloved Skagit County landscape. Unfortunately, this area is subject to considerable development pressure. Skagit Land Trust and our partners in the Skagit Watershed Council recognized the need to act quickly and efficiently to protect some of the best remaining habitat and the river’s natural ecosystem.

This project has succeeded beyond all expectations—the Trust has been directly involved in permanently protecting over 1,700 acres of floodplain lands and 15 miles of shoreline in the project area. You have seen the names of the protected properties float through our newsletters over the years – Young’s Slough, Lyman Slough, Grandy Creek, Day Creek Slough, Kosbab Slough, Iron Mountain, Cumberland Creek and more.

with funds raised from our members, from donations from the landowners, and from generous gifts from Trust major donors. Certain of our protection projects have been accomplished in collaboration with the Trust’s partners. Partner organizations have protected dozens more miles in the Middle Skagit River area



The greater Cumberland Creek Natural Area pieces together almost 290 contiguous acres, and includes four separate purchases for preservation – three by Skagit Land Trust, and one by the Trust’s conservation partner, Seattle City Light.

The Trust has been directly involved in permanently protecting over 1,500 acres of floodplain lands and 15 miles of shoreline in the Middle Skagit.



photo by Ric Merry

Our protection work has used six grants from the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), which have been matched

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Thank You and Farewell to Skagit Land Trust's Stewardship Director, Brenda Cunningham

Brenda Cunningham will be leaving her position as Stewardship Director at the end of March. Brenda started her work with Skagit Land Trust as a volunteer at the Trust's Barney Lake property. She was so impressive and the timing was right, that the Trust asked her to become a "land specialist" in 2000. She later became the Trust's first stewardship director. Brenda and her team have orchestrated the growth of what is now a professional and first rate stewardship program. Because of Brenda's work, when people ask if we manage our land once it is protected, we can say YES! Brenda oversees the property management of 15 conservation areas, ensures numerous owners of 2800 acres held in conservation easements are fulfilling their obligations, and works with our many partners so that we collectively steward our natural lands for the betterment of the environment and the wildlife that depend on it. Brenda has also helped to design many conservation plans and assessments, done numerous environmental studies of lands we are interested in, ensured our conservation areas are appropriately accessible to the public, been instrumental in establishing a dedicated volunteer program and ended up as our "accidental techie," creating and sustaining our in-house technology system.

Please join us in thanking Brenda for her work at the Trust. She will be greatly missed but will remain connected with us through her volunteer work. Fittingly, it ends where it all began – Brenda and her husband Tim Manns will continue as our land stewards of Barney Lake. ■



Brenda and volunteer steward, Jim Johnson.



Brian Bluhm, Brenda Cunningham and Feryl Blanc after a wet and fun stewardship event.

Blanchard Mountain – Strategy Group Recommendation

The 4,800-acre Blanchard Forest state trust lands sit perched beside Samish Bay, acting as a green sentinel to the Cascades to Chuckanut Corridor. It is beloved for its year-round recreational access as well as its ecological benefits and serenity close to urban areas. It is also a productive place to grow trees for harvesting, which has been the historical path for Blanchard given its revenue-producing requirement as state trust land. After years of community debate about Blanchard, the DNR convened a nine-member Blanchard Forest Strategies Group representing diverse interests, asking them to craft a management recommendation. Molly Doran of Skagit Land Trust participated. The group recently finalized its plan. The recommendation includes preserving in perpetuity a 1600 acre forested "core" conservation area, while managing other areas as a working forest. Further key elements are financial compensation to the State Forest Trust for lands protected and mechanisms to help protect working forests surrounding Blanchard and in the region. Molly says, "It was a hard process as we represented such divergent ideas of what should happen. Our recommendation protects the forested heart of an important and treasured ecosystem and gets us one step closer to protecting both our natural and working forest lands from sprawl. We forged good relationships which will help as we steward Blanchard and work to protect more of the Cascade to Chuckanut Corridor." ■

We Thank the Following Foundations for Their Recent Grants in Support of Our Conservation Work

The **Linnemann Family Foundation** for a \$20,000 grant to help us protect more beloved local land. We hope to use part of these funds to help protect near-shore, island and marine areas.

PACCAR Inc and PACCAR Technology Center for a \$15,000 technology grant that will help Skagit Land Trust replace aging computers as well as update our digital imaging systems.

The Clarence Stewart Fund of the Skagit Community Foundation for their \$8,000 grant to our Hurn Field Stewardship and Wildlife Viewing Project. Skagit Land Trust will use this gift to help design and manufacture interpretive displays that tell the story of the elk and their habitat at the Hurn Field Pullout.

The **Norcross Wildlife Foundation** for a \$3,900 grant to help cover costs for field equipment to increase our youth-oriented stewardship participation.

The **Tulalip Tribes** for a \$10,000 gift to support our wildlife habitat conservation work, including threatened salmon habitat, in Skagit County.

The **Temcov Foundation** for a \$2,000 gift and continued long-term support of our private land conservation activities.

The Burning Foundation for a \$12,000 gift and continued partnership with the Trust, that is helping us to implement our Conservation Strategy at a rapid pace.

*Northern Harrier
photo by Phil Green*



Working Together We Can Protect More Land, Faster

Upper Skagit River Protection Project with The Nature Conservancy Clipping Right Along

Last summer Skagit Land Trust was honored to be asked by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to partner with them to assist with landowner outreach and with the purchase of high priority salmon habitat in the upper Skagit River area. This is the Skagit River and its tributary areas extending from Concrete east to the National Park. The stunningly beautiful Upper Skagit River holds a wealth of wildlife habitat, much of it in good condition. It is the most important spawning area for the endangered Chinook salmon in the Skagit River system. The project was funded by a grant from the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Due to grant funding timing, the project is on an extraordinarily tight time frame. The suitable properties had to be selected, outreach had to be done to find willing landowners and the properties purchased, all within seven months. That is fast! Nonetheless, we are happy to report that we together are succeeding in securing some of the best habitat lands remaining in the upper Skagit River area. Jane Zillig, the Trust's part-time coordinator for the project, has worked closely with The Nature Conservancy, and the properties should be purchased within the next month. Look for a full report on this in our spring newsletter.

Knitting the Landscape Back Together *Continued from page 5*

and are helping to restore and steward the land. As gaps in the map are filled in, fragmented pieces of the floodplain ecosystem are slowly knitted back together.

Six properties were protected via one significant grant received in 2002, called the Middle Skagit Habitat Protection Grant. Our latest land purchase adds 25 key acres to the Cumberland Creek Natural Area, and completes this grant from SRFB. The new property was purchased from Oregon based Mid-Valley Resources Inc (Hampton Tree Farm), and includes both sides of lower Cumberland Creek. The land has not been logged since the early 1900's and includes beautiful floodplain forest, which is now connected to a much larger protected land area as shown on the map accompanying this article. It is a fitting property to bring to a close this important grant. ■

Note From Brian Bluhm, Volunteer Coordinator

Hello Everyone!

I'm Brian Bluhm, the new Volunteer Coordinator for Skagit Land Trust. Many of you have been getting my e-mails over the past couple of months - I hope you have enjoyed them. I am an intern at Skagit Land Trust through the AmeriCorps program. I will be working with the Trust until mid-August. I graduated from the University of Minnesota-Duluth last spring with a BA in Anthropology. I am interested in the relationship between people and the environment. I have learned quite a bit in the past three months I have been with the Trust. Thanks to everyone for making me feel so welcome here in Skagit County.

We have had several successful events in the past few months, including maintenance at the Minkler Lake and Mud Lake properties, a joint tree planting with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group at Iron Mountain, as well as some events on conservation easement properties. This year's March Point Heronry Tour was a huge success with close to 40 participants. Check out our website for a listing of upcoming events. I would also like your help with designing the Volunteer Program at Skagit Land Trust. If you have any ideas of how to improve the Volunteer Program, or thoughts on how the program could better serve our community, please call or e-mail me at trustbb@fidalgo.net. I would like to hear them!

I'd like to thank Pete Haase who has been taking pictures and has set up a great website where people can go and see photos of the volunteer events. To see these photos go to <http://www.landtrust.homestead.com/> There are also links to this site from the Land Trust website. Enjoy the pictures and thanks again to all the volunteers!

Skagit Land Trust is Seeking a Stewardship Director

The primary responsibility of the Stewardship Director is managing the Land and Easement Stewardship Program at Skagit Land Trust. This position requires an individual capable of extensive outdoor fieldwork with an educational background in natural resources. Applicants must be proficient in the use of computers and general-use software programs. It is recommended that individuals are competent in Geographic Information System software (GIS), Geographic Positioning Systems (GPS), and other programs used in natural resource and land management. This is a 3/4 time position. Applications will be received until February 19, 2007. Please contact Molly Doran at trustmd@fidalgo.net for a complete job description.



Jim Sheltens, Kay Glade and Levy Sheltens help count nests at the March's Point Heronry.



Volunteers getting ready for planting trees at Minkler Lake



Rick Machin & Cindy McGuiness build a beaver fence.

**Mark Your Calendar Now to Attend
Skagit Land Trust's 15th Annual Meeting - March 23 2007, 6-9pm
at The Museum of Northwest Art (MONA)**

Skagit Land Trust will hold our 15th Annual Meeting on Friday March 23, 6-9 PM. The social hour will include refreshments and wine along with the opportunity to tour the current exhibit at MONA entitled Range with art by Deborah Butterfield, C. S. Price, Theodore Waddell. Following the social hour, there will be elections, awards, a presentation on the year in review, a slideshow on protecting beloved lands program and a guest speaker.

Board Members Up For Election at the Annual Meeting. All are standing for 3-year terms

Bob Aptor: *Bob is an emergency physician and Medical Director of the Emergency Department at Island Hospital in Anacortes. Immediate past president of Anacortes Rotary Club; Avid outdoorsman. Joined board in 2006.*

Janice Martin: *Janice, formerly a non-profit director of Youthnet, retired to raise her children. She has served on many Skagit committees, is active in the schools and elsewhere, and is a strong conservationist. Janice is interested in filling our board secretary position.*

Glenn Bordner: *Glenn is a retired electrician and past president and founding member of the Museum of Northwest Art. He served on the Lincoln Theatre board and was on the Mt Vernon City Council for 5 years and remains active in citizen politics. Joined board in 2003.*

Curt Miller: *Curt is the principle of Miller Consulting. He has three decades of experience in land planning and natural resource management. Formerly of Jones & Jones Architects and Landscape Architects in Seattle. Board member since 2001.*

Proposed Amendments to Skagit Land Trust By-Laws

These proposed changes/additions to the by-laws are presented to the membership and will be voted on during the business segment of the Annual Meeting, March 23, 2007 at the Museum of Northwest Art, LaConner. Each membership has one vote.

Article III, Annual Meeting:

The Annual Meeting of the corporation for the purpose of electing members of the Board of Directors and conducting other business which may properly come before the meeting shall be held during the month of March at a time and place to be determined by the Board of Directors. Notice of the date, time and place of the Annual Meeting shall be provided to all members of the corporation at least thirty (30) days in advance by mail, email or fax as directed by the Secretary. A quorum shall consist of those members present at the meeting.

Special meetings of the corporation may be called by the Board of Directors at its discretion upon 10 days notice to the membership.

Article VI, Executive Committee:

Section 2. The Executive Committee shall meet monthly and act for the Board of Directors between meetings and shall exercise all powers of the Board except those which have been expressly reserved by resolution of the Board or these By-Laws, and the acceptance, purchase or disposition of land and the acceptance or purchase of conservation easements. Notice of the date, time, place and agenda of the meeting shall be provided by mail, email or fax to all board members at least five (5) days in advance as directed by the Secretary. A quorum shall consist of three (3) members. Action approval would require a minimum of three (3) affirmative votes.

Section 3. The Executive Committee shall act as the Finance Committee of the corporation and the Conflict of Interest Review Committee.

Article IX, Financial Affairs:

b. Executive Director's Account. A separate checking account (Executive Director Account) shall be established for which the single signature of the Executive Director is authorized to sign checks of an amount recommended by the Executive Committee acting as the Finance Committee and approved by the board.

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Skagit Community Foundation
Clarence Stewart Fund
Temcov Foundation
Tulalip Tribes
WA Dept Fish & Wildlife - ALEA

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Mission Statement

Skagit Land Trust protects wildlife habitat, wetlands, agriculture and forest lands, scenic open space and shorelines throughout the mainland and islands of Skagit County for the benefit of our community and as a legacy for future generations.

Saving Land for Tomorrow

Upcoming Events

February 17 • Lyman Slough Tree Planting. See first hand how the river shifts, creating islands and gravel bars along its banks, while planting native trees.

February 24 • Barney Lake Tree Planting. Plant trees, improve wildlife habitat and learn about this large wetland just outside of Mount Vernon.

Mid-March • Plant trees at the **Kosbab Slough** and **Cumberland Creek** properties.

March 23 • Skagit Land Trust, 15th Annual Meeting (see details inside).

March 31 • Hurn Field Tree Planting. Help plant trees at this site near Concrete known for its elk visitors. New trees will help promote diversity of plant life, as well as protect water quality and provide wildlife habitat.

Visit Skagit Land Trust's website for more information on volunteer opportunities coming up this spring or call 428-7878 to sign up.

