

Public Access to Skagit Land Trust Owned Properties

These are places to observe wildlife and appreciate nature

Skagit Land Trust now owns many acres of wildlife habitat, forest and farmland in 16 locations around Skagit County. We are

expenses, it is worth this cost to provide places for people to observe wildlife and appreciate nature. It also helps increase public awareness that conservation of wildlife habitat is important and worthy of support. As we develop management plans for each property we

overnight use of the property, the youth groups will help us maintain the hiking trails and enhance the wildlife habitat on the property.

Of course, some properties are just too sensitive to allow access. The March's Point Heronry is an example of one of the few Trust properties that is closed to public access. The nesting herons are sensitive to disturbances, yet people are very curious about them. So we have created two ways for people to see the



The Butlerer Flats Conservation Area offers bird and wildlife watching from Green Road outside of Burlington.

often asked about public access to these properties and what sorts of activities are allowed. This fall we are launching a program to provide information about what you can do on each of the Trust's owned properties. Soon you will find more information at each site, either in the form of a paper flier about the property and suggestions on how to enjoy it, or in the form of an exhibit panel with information about the importance of the property to people and animals.

Many people are surprised to learn that we try to keep the properties we own open if possible. While keeping a property open for public use costs the Trust more in terms of monitoring and maintenance

determine what level and kinds of uses the property can sustain without damaging the conservation values of the land. For instance, you can fish or go for a walk at Tope Ryan Natural Area or watch birds at the Butler Flats Conservation Area along Green Road. And in a first for the Trust we now allow overnight use for organized groups at one of the properties along the Skagit River. We decided that providing a location for children and other people to learn about the natural world, while building a community partnership, will help the Trust care for its properties and is a good thing. In return for the



nests and learn more about the birds. We offer a public tour every year during the winter when the birds have left the nesting area and we now have a camera attached to a tree in the heronry. Images from the camera can be viewed in the exhibit area at the Breazeale Interpretive Center.

Trails on Skagit Land Trust's Cumberland Creek property.

We also remind people that lands where we hold a conservation easement are often owned by private landowners. We ask that the public respect these landowner's private property.

Watch for more information about activities on Trust properties in the coming months, or better yet, join us on one of the volunteer events and get to know a property firsthand!

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Skagit Update

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Drawings by Brenda Cunningham

From the President

Dear Fellow Members:

At the Trust we pride ourselves on working within the private sector, quietly pursuing our mission of land protection in Skagit County. From its earliest days, Skagit Land Trust deliberately steered clear of involvement in political action and major public policy.

However when the land trust community came under fire by Congress and the IRS two years ago, our board realized that public policies and actions could seriously impact our mission. Thus we recently established a Public Policy Committee to address public policy matters, primarily at the state and local levels, where there is a substantial and direct impact on the Trust's ability to accomplish its mission. This committee alerts us to proposed regulations, land use changes and other public actions which might impact our work, and helps us to evaluate them.

The committee immediately faced the challenge of I-933.

Our decision to oppose Initiative I-933, the "Property Fairness Act", was not taken lightly.

I-933 would require state and local governments to either pay landowners for claims of diminished property value due to zoning and environmental rules or not enforce those rules at all ("pay or waive"). In Oregon, where a similar initiative passed, the majority of claims have been to subdivide and develop forests and farmlands and to build in critical areas that were previously protected by local or state regulations. Lack of funding to pay landowners has resulted in waivers of regulations in 90% of the subsequent claims.

At our July board meeting, the committee reported on the potential impact of I-933 here in the county, including loss of critical habitat and open space, working forests and farmland taken out of production for development, and adverse impacts on streams and shorelines. This is the very natural heritage we have committed to save. Protecting land and our natural heritage in this environment would become increasingly difficult.

Furthermore, as a property owner, we rely on zoning and environmental laws to protect us from unregulated land use on neighboring properties. Without this protection, stewardship costs could rise dramatically, and both our land and its natural values would decline.

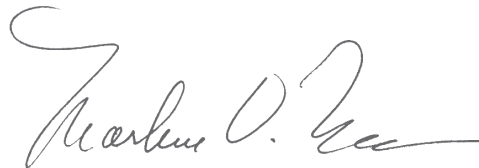
The board voted to oppose I-933.

I ask you to read the initiative carefully and understand its full impact before you vote — and to encourage your friends and neighbors to educate themselves on it as well. I am confident that, armed with the facts, voters will defeat I-933.

For more information please read the section in this newsletter on what you should know about Initiative I-933, on page 3.

Sincerely,

Marlene V. Moore
President



What You Should Know About Initiative I-933 The “Property Fairness” Act

If enacted, what would I-933 require?

It would require state and local governments to either pay landowners for claims of diminished property value due to environmental rules and zoning or exempt them from enforcement of those rules.

What are some of the laws and

regulations I-933 could impact? Legal experts say that the impact of the initiative would be to discourage enforcement of land use regulations adopted on or after 1996. This is because state and local governments do not have the funds to pay special interests what it costs to enforce environmental laws and zoning – and they would thus need to waive the law for these interests. The regulations that could be undone include the: Shoreline Protection Act; Clean Water Act; Growth Management Act including Critical Area Ordinances; Forest Practices Act; Fish and Forests Agreement; housing and development regulations; local wetlands ordinances; and local zoning regulations.

Who are some of the organizations

opposing I-933? To date, over 125 organizations, community groups and businesses have formally opposed I-933 including Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, The Nature Conservancy, Washington Association of Churches, Washington Conservation Voters, Association of Washington Cities, National Wildlife Federation, Washington Audubon, Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, etc..

Why is SLC taking a position on I-933?

We think this initiative would undermine our mission of land protection and severely damage the health of our natural communities. The Trust is also concerned about the initiative’s potential impact on our conservation lands. These could be adversely affected by incompatible land uses on neighboring properties.

What about the issue of landowner’s

rights? The issue of private property is one we always take into consideration. However the scope of Initiative 933 is remarkably broad. Our zoning and environmental laws are the result of decades of community planning that benefits this and future generations while

Cooperative Effort with The Nature Conservancy to Protect More Skagit River Lands

Skagit Land Trust has teamed up with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to reach out to landowners with important salmon habitat in the upper Skagit River area. TNC has a grant from the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board to identify and purchase high priority salmon habitat from willing sellers. As part of this project, they completed a land inventory and assessment to identify the most important habitat areas, and they have been in contact with many landowners. However, without a local staff person available for the project, they have been unable to make the desired progress. So, this spring, TNC approached us requesting assistance.

Skagit Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy have developed a very effective partnership over the years, and the two organizations have assisted each other on numerous successful projects. This combined with the opportunity to protect more floodplain habitat along the river fits well with the Trust’s conservation priorities. Because the funding will only be available for a short time, the Trust has agreed to “co-sponsor” the grant, and to dedicate a part-time position to the project for eight to nine months.

We are pleased to welcome Jane Zillig to the Trust. The project is now in her competent hands. Jane will be working part-time as the Skagit River Project Coordinator until the project is completed in early 2007. Jane and her husband Paul live in Sedro-Woolley and have been long-time members and volunteers for Skagit Land Trust.

Jane has lived in eastern Skagit County for 25 years, and cares deeply about the community and its natural resources. She brings to the Trust’s office a rich professional experience which extends from the creation of the Upper Skagit Community Service Center in the 1980’s, to most recently working as a senior paralegal for Brett and Daugert in Bellingham. Jane is a great addition to the Trust’s staff.



*Jane Zillig - Upper Skagit River
Project Coordinator*

balancing private property interests. This initiative is not about landowners’ “rights”, as its proponents would have you believe. In fact, it could hurt many landowners individually and collectively—by devaluing adjacent properties, accelerating pollution of our waters, putting pressure on our county to convert farm and forest lands to development, and allowing development in places that are not good for our community or the environment.

What is one thing that you can do to help?

Educate yourselves, your neighbors and your co-workers. Current polling for this

initiative shows that when people hear just the title, “Property Fairness Act,” it passes. When one line of information about the initiative is provided, it ties. But when more detailed information about what it means and how it would impact communities and the environment is provided, it fails overwhelmingly. Thus, education on a broad scale is an important component of ensuring people understand the sweeping consequences of this initiative.



Heron Camera Update



Hopefully, many of you took the opportunity this spring to see the heron nest exhibit at the Breazeale Interpretive Center at Padilla Bay. A Leadership Skagit team planned and fundraised for the installation of a camera in the March's Point heronry. This camera sends a signal across the bay to the Interpretive Center, where the "streaming video" image of the heron nests is displayed in the exhibit area. In June Brenda Cunningham from Skagit Land Trust and Andrew Rice from Academic Adventures and Leadership Skagit, gave a presentation to a standing room only crowd at the Interpretive Center. The herons put on quite a show, with three young herons crowding the nest, while adults flew in and out of sight. Andrew and Brenda related the story of how the camera project came to be, followed by a lengthy question and answer period. We are still working toward getting the camera hosted on a website so it can be viewed over the internet. In the meantime, stop by the Interpretive Center Wednesday through Sundays to see the young herons as they fledge or you can see still images posted on the Trust's website at www.skagitlandtrust.org.

Skagit Land Trust Granted an AmeriCorps Position

This fall Skagit Land Trust will be receiving a 10-month volunteer position through AmeriCorps. This person will help the Trust improve its volunteer land steward program and recruit more stewards, develop educational materials about Trust properties and build new relationships between the Trust and community groups. The position will run from early September through mid-July 2007. This is a full-time position. The Trust will provide a stipend and reimburse travel expenses and AmeriCorps will provide an award for future educational expenses. **If you know of a person between the ages of 18 and 25 who may be interested in this, please have them call Brenda Cunningham at (360) 428-7878 or see the announcement on our website at www.skagitlandtrust.org.**

Thank You

Lee Mann - For his donation of an original poster "Cloud Forest" created for Skagit Land Trust (see back cover).

Dederick Ward & Susan Parke - For their donation of an original oil painting by Dederick Ward. The painting, "October in Turquoise" is a 34" h x 46" w oil and can be viewed at the Trust office. This painting will be auctioned.

Skagit River Systems Cooperative - For the donation of trees & labor at the Kosbab Slough.



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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

September 9th

Hurn Field – come help move the field fencing at Hurn Field to make room for an interpretive pullout.

SAVE THE DATE!

September 16th - 11:30AM - 3PM
Skagit Land Trust Annual Picnic –
Howard Miller Steelhead Park.
Watch for announcement in the mail.

Acres Protected

Conservation Easements	2,454
Trust-Owned Lands	809
Trust-Assisted Projects	1,014
Total Acres Protected	4,277



Lee Mann signing an exclusive poster he created for Skagit Land Trust at the poster unveiling at Althea's. Posters still available. The image can be viewed on our website: www.skagitlandtrust.org.