

ANNUAL REPORT

2008

Dedicated to involving
our community in
restoring wild
salmon populations
for future generations



RESTORE

EDUCATE

MONITOR

VOLUNTEER

PROTECT



SKAGIT FISHERIES
ENHANCEMENT GROUP

SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP 2008 SUMMARY

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AmeriCorps Interns:

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Washington Conservation Corps
Ona Strikas, Education Assistant,
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SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

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The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) is proud to present its accomplishments from another impressive year of salmon habitat restoration and stewardship projects in the Skagit Watershed. These accomplishments would not be possible without our remarkable volunteers, members, private landowners, and incredible partnerships that exist in the Skagit Valley.

We are extremely fortunate to work in a watershed where so many individuals and organizations are dedicated to protecting and preserving this exceptionally special landscape we all call home. It takes all of us working tirelessly together to engage our community in restoring wild salmon populations for future generations. This passion found throughout our community is what helps us come closer each year to achieving our mission of restoring wild salmonid populations.

Upon reviewing the results of our 2005-08 Strategic Plan, we are proud to report the complete integration of the Focal Area concept into all that we do and the many great successes in these geographic areas. We are especially proud of the fact that we met and exceeded the habitat restoration goals included in this plan by improving over 27 miles of salmon habitat and implementing more projects specifically targeting the recovery of threatened salmon species such as Chinook. Community members donated over 26,000 hours to restoration, education and stewardship projects during this same 3-year period. Our Junior Stream Stewards middle school program, which began as a pilot program for one school in 2006, is now engaging over 350 students in four school districts covering all of our Focal Areas. Targeting outreach programs to communities in Focal Areas has resulted in greater volunteer involvement and participation from those residing in the areas. Community members who live in Focal Areas are volunteering more and more for restoration and stewardship projects.

We are thrilled to have exceeded our own expectations over the last three years and look forward to the upcoming challenges that face us to achieve the new goals we have set for the next three years. If you are reading this Annual Report, you are most likely one of the many people that helped make the accomplishments of 2005-2008 possible. We thank you for your generous contribution towards making the Skagit Watershed a healthy and beautiful place for all humans and critters to live. We hope you will continue to be involved in and support stewardship actions that leave a lasting legacy for future generations.



Mission Statement:

The mission of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is to build partnerships that educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship in order to enhance salmonid populations.

RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

ESTUARY & NEARSHORE

Thatcher Bay:

Thatcher Bay is located on the southwest side of Blakely Island in the San Juan Islands. A Feasibility Report was completed for assessing the impact of wood waste deposited by an old saw mill in the nearshore environment. New grant funds were received to prepare final designs and permits for removing the wood waste to improve habitat for forage fish important to salmonids.



Deepwater Slough:

A partnership with the WDFW and the Skagit River System Cooperative continued to restore native vegetation to the estuary restoration project at Deepwater Slough along Skagit Bay, where dikes were removed in 2000 to reestablish valuable estuary habitat.

Junior Stream Stewards:

Seventh graders from Conway School were some of the 350 students participating this year in SFEG's unique watershed education program designed to teach kids about the salmon habitat near their schools and homes. Conway students are learning and exploring the Bulson Creek, Fisher Slough and Skagit Estuary habitats through



classroom activities, field tours and water quality studies. Their learning will culminate in designing a service learning project that benefits salmon in these watersheds.

Dry Slough Monitoring:

The Skagit Conservation District contracted SFEG to monitor the presence of juvenile salmonid species in Dry Slough along Skagit Bay as part of baseline monitoring for future restoration work of this important estuary habitat.



NOOKACHAMPS WATERSHED

Restoration:

A 3 year Centennial Clean Water Fund Grant from the Department of Ecology was completed to improve water quality in the Nookachamps watershed. Riparian restoration, fencing and large woody debris projects were implemented to have an impact on reducing temperature in this important lower Skagit tributary stream.



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Outreach:

Educational outreach continued in the Nookachamps Watershed with DOE grant funds. A watershed tour was held to familiarize residents with the watershed and a Salmon Friendly Gardener brochure was created and distributed to households in this urbanizing watershed. Multiple classroom presentations and service learning projects were offered to local students to get them out of their classroom doing hands-on learning.

DAY CREEK COMMUNITY WATERSHED

Day Creek Restoration:

New grants from the Department of Ecology and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board are being used to plan large woody debris and riparian enhancement projects with local landowners for Lower Day Creek. Approximately one mile of stream and 10 acres of riparian area will benefit.



Summary of Accomplishments 2008:

Habitat Enhancement:

Riparian plantings	3.5 miles
Riparian maintenance	160 acres
Riparian fencing installed	1,150 feet
Instream habitat improved	2 miles
Isolated habitat reconnected03 miles
Nutrient enhancement	2,500 carcasses

Community Outreach:

Community education6,820 people
Volunteer involvement	6,422 hours

RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Ross Island Slough Restoration:

A partnership with NRCS and Seattle City Light is restoring riparian areas on over 150 acres of land permanently protected around Anderson Creek, Gilligan Creek and Ross Island Slough.

Iron Mountain Ranch Habitat Enhancement:

A partnership with Seattle City Light is protecting and restoring 2 miles of riparian habitat along the Skagit River. This property is adjacent to prime Chinook and steelhead spawning habitat. The Skagit Land Trust holds the conservation easement for City Light and a local farmer continues to lease land that is currently not being restored. New fences have been built to exclude livestock from large riparian areas and at least 48 acres has been revegetated with native plants by volunteers and staff.

Outreach and Education:

New outreach efforts are being planned with new grant dollars from the Department of Ecology for the Day Creek Community Watershed for 2009 and beyond.

FINNEY CREEK WATERSHED

Habitat Restoration:

28 new log jams were installed over a 1.6 mile reach in Lower Finney Creek on Hampton Timber property. To date SFEG's partnership with the Forest Service, National Park Service and



private timber companies has enhanced over 7.6 miles of Upper and Lower Finney Creek through the addition of large woody debris since 1999.



Outreach and Education:

Community outreach was conducted through field tours, workshops, monitoring and the production of a new brochure that highlights the fish and restoration work occurring on Finney Creek through this unique partnership since 1999.



MIDDLE SKAGIT WATERSHED

Elysian Meadows Riparian Restoration:

Private property owners have protected 112 acres along the Skagit River through a perpetual conservation easement held by the Skagit



Land Trust. SFEG is working with the landowners to restore native vegetation on about 8 acres of floodplain property along the edge of the dedicated agricultural zone.

Junior Stream Stewards:

Seventh graders at Cascade Middle School in Sedro Woolley were some of the 350 students in four school districts participating this year in SFEG's unique watershed education program designed to teach kids about the salmon habitat near their schools and homes. Cascade students are learning about and exploring the Brickyard Creek and Middle Skagit River habitats through classroom activities, field tours and water quality studies. Their learning will culminate in designing a service learning project that benefits salmon in these watersheds.



RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Hansen Creek Riparian Restoration:

Skagit County Parks Department contracted SFEG to restore the riparian area of lower Hansen Creek as part of a CREP project adjacent to large woody debris restoration. Approximately 12 acres were prepared for plantings in 2009.

UPPER SKAGIT WATERSHED

Jackman Creek:

The Nature Conservancy partnered with SFEG to mobilize volunteers to restore riparian area on a property recently purchased for its salmon conservation values at the mouth of Jackman Creek. Approximately 5 acres of the 26 acre property are being treated for invasive species and planting of native species. An Earth Day work party completed half of the planned riparian restoration. Funds are provided through the NFWF's Community Salmon Fund.



Cascade River:

SFEG is working with land conservation partners to restore riparian areas along two protected sites on the Cascade River. The Nature Conservancy recently purchased 112 acres on the south bank of the



Cascade River where SFEG is removing invasive species and engaging volunteers in revegetating the areas with native species. The second site is owned by the Forest Service near the mouth of the Cascade River and includes the Marblemount Boat Launch along the Skagit River. Here SFEG is using a grant from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to continue riparian restoration efforts which were initiated by the Forest Service a number of years ago.

Sauk River:

A partnership with the Forest Service is working to restore the riparian area of a floodplain site purchased for conservation purposes along the west side of the Sauk River near its confluence with the Skagit River. Invasive plants were removed over several acres and hundreds of new native plants were installed. SFEG is using a grant from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to augment riparian restoration efforts initiated by the Forest Service some time ago.

Hobbit Creek:

Hobbit Creek flows through this floodplain site owned by The Nature Conservancy before entering the Sauk River. The Nature Conservancy contracted SFEG to completely remove 150 feet of road

and the perched culverts associated with this road to provide fish passage to Hobbit Creek upstream of this unused road. This project



opened 1/3 mile of habitat for steelhead, coho salmon, and cutthroat trout. SFEG is pursuing the correction of several other known fish passage barriers upstream of this one.

Ovenell Slough:

The Ovenell Slough site is located on the south side of the Skagit River across from Jackman Creek. This large floodplain property was purchased by the Forest Service for conservation purposes. In 2001, the Forest Service began restoration of the site;



however funding shortfalls did not allow enhancement efforts to continue. SFEG received grant funds to remove invasive species, plant native species and install log jams on the floodplain in 2008. This year roughly 1,800 native plants were planted by volunteers and staff, 50 acres were treated for invasive species and 11 log jams

were installed in lowland areas to trap logs during flood events and enhance shoreline habitat when the river occupies these floodplain channels in the future.



RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Nutrient Enhancement:

Volunteers distributed more than 2,500 salmon carcasses from the Marblemount State Hatchery back to natural streams. Over 83 wildlife species are known to depend on nutrients from salmon carcasses, including salmon fry.



Howard Miller Steelhead Park:



Revegetation efforts continued at Howard Miller Steelhead Park in Rockport. This eastern Skagit County Park is a very popular spot for camping, boating and eagle viewing. SFEG staff and volunteers are manually removing invasive species and replanting the area with native plants, especially along the much used Skagit River trail.

Junior Stream Stewards:

Concrete Middle School students are learning and exploring the Lorenzan Creek and Upper Skagit River habitats through the Junior Stream Stewards Program. These students also had the special opportunity to visit the Marblemount Hatchery in their watershed and see coho spawners swimming in Clark Creek. A unique partnership with the National Park Service also enabled these students to visit North Cascades National Park and learn about the pristine habitat being protected there. Their learning will culminate in designing a service learning project that benefits salmon in the Upper Skagit.



Community Outreach:

SFEG's outreach efforts continued to grow in our up river communities. This year we attended two new festivals in Concrete and sponsored a new family day at Rassar State Park. The second annual Skagit River Family Fest in Rockport grew in popularity this year with music, food, activities, tours and learning opportunities. We continued to assist with increasing outreach capacity at the Marblemount Hatchery by creating a new self guided tour brochure, providing better signage, and training volunteers to give Hatchery Tours during the peak of eagle viewing season. These tours are meant to give visitors an opportunity to learn about salmon and how healthy salmon populations are vital to Skagit River eagle populations.



Forest and Salmon Stewards:

SFEG wrapped up educational work with Darrington Elementary students in partnership with the Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Task Force, WSU Extension and Snohomish County. Students learned both about the rural forested environment and the more urbanized environment of Arlington through classroom presentations, field trips, and hands on project work.

SAMISH WATERSHED

Ennis Creek:

Over 1,000 coho salmon were counted returning to this site restored on Whatcom Land Trust property through a partnership with Whatcom County Public Works in 2007. Additional revegetation efforts continued and monitoring shows the project objectives are being met.



Lower Samish River:

A partnership with WDFW and Dike District 25 repositioned fallen trees to form habitat enhancing features upstream of Chuckanut Drive.

Junior Stream Stewards:

Eighth graders from Allen School were some of the 350 students in four school districts participating this year in SFEG's unique watershed education program designed to teach kids about the salmon habitat near their schools and homes. Allen students are learning



and exploring the Samish River, its tributaries and estuary habitats through classroom activities, field tours and water quality studies. Their learning will culminate in designing a service learning project that benefits salmon in the Samish Watershed.

EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING

Volunteer Monitoring:

Two workshops were held to train volunteers to monitor the effectiveness of restoration projects. One teaches volunteers how to collect physical data on streams such as gradient, width, substrate, vegetation, pools, and riffles. The second trains volunteers to count returning adult salmon and their redds during spawner surveys. Volunteers also assist in a variety of project specific monitoring for revegetation, juvenile salmon and macroinvertebrates. The data collected provides much needed information to funders and project partners related to the effectiveness of enhancement projects. Over 800 volunteer hours were contributed this year.



CONTRIBUTORS

SALMON ENHANCEMENT PARTNERS:

ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grants
 Beachwatchers
 Concrete Middle School
 Cascade Middle School
 Darrington Elementary School
 Dike District #25
 Ecotrust
 Emerson High School
 Fidalgo Fly Fishers
 Landowner Incentive Program
 Marblemount Hatchery
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 Skagit River Bald Eagle Awareness Team
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 The Nature Conservancy
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 Gary and Rubye Vallat
 WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife
 WA Dept of Natural Resources
 Whatcom Land Trust
 Andrea Xaver



FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2008

Income		Expenses	
Public Funds	\$ 659,451	Project & Programs	\$ 624,260
Private Funds	\$ 33,259	Administration (8%)	\$ 90,800
Total Cash Income	\$ 692,710	Total	\$ 715,060
In-Kind Donations	\$ 152,580		
Total	\$ 855,290		



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