ANNUAL REPORT
2009

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 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is proud to present its Annual Report for 2009 which includes an increasing diversity of accomplishments related to salmon habitat restoration and stewardship projects in the Skagit, Samish and Island watersheds. It was an exciting year for volunteers to count returning salmon, with over 2 million humpies returning to the Skagit River and much larger coho runs than we have seen in recent years. Volunteers sent many pictures to us from the field of the fish they were counting to share their excitement. There was also the first sport Chinook fishery on the lower Skagit in 16 years for local fishers to enjoy! While we cannot take credit for these increased salmon returns, it is encouraging and satisfying to see so many community members, families and sportsmen enjoying their time on the river.

As we leave 2009 and enter into 2010, the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) celebrates 20 years of engaging our local community in salmon enhancement activities. We are fortunate to have many accomplishments to celebrate over this 20 year period, none of which would be possible without our volunteers, members, private landowners, and incredible partnerships that exist throughout our region. What started as a small group of passionate volunteers in the Skagit Basin has become a staff of 11 highly skilled and educated individuals working in three watersheds (Skagit, Whidbey and San Juan Islands) as well as hundreds of community members contributing thousands of hours annually to restore miles of habitat each year. While we reflect on all that we have done in the past two decades for salmon and healthy watersheds and how much the landscape of salmon restoration has changed, we must recognize that it is you who makes all of this success possible. Without your support, there would be no Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group.

SFEG’s habitat restoration program has grown by leaps and bounds since our beginning in 1990, planting nearly 40,000 native plants in riparian areas in 2009. We have developed educational programs that utilize local hatcheries as a learning opportunity to teach visitors and students about the salmon life cycle and wild salmon habitat needs. And we have re-distributed over 91,000 adult salmon carcasses returning to the Marblemount Hatchery to streams in the Upper Skagit Watershed to provide much needed nutrients to our aquatic ecosystem. We have a well established monitoring program that trains volunteers to collect data that is shared with state agencies to track the effectiveness of restoration projects and the number of salmon returning to our watersheds. We have developed a highly successful education program for local middle school students, Junior Stream Stewards, which engaged 350 students this year in learning about their watershed and implementing stewardship projects. And our outreach programs as a whole in 2009 reached over 11,425 individuals of all ages from throughout our region.

Looking ahead into 2010 we are embarking on a new era for the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. For the first time we have restoration projects funded in all three of the watersheds in which we work, we are once again increasing our outreach and stewardship efforts in the Samish watershed and we are taking on the leadership of an important upper Skagit knotweed control program with 15 other partners. We have created a new Restoration Ecologist position to lead our habitat restoration program. And while funding for education and outreach programs may remain difficult in the near term, we are very excited and optimistic about our future, in most part because of the support we receive from you our volunteers, members, landowners and project partners. Thank you!

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.
ESTUARY AND NEARSHORE

Thatcher Bay:

Thatcher Bay is located on the southwest side of Blakely Island in the San Juan Islands. A partnership with the University of Washington continued to sample and analyze sediment and wood waste to be removed from the nearshore environment. Approval for disposal of these materials was received, a design was created and permits were filed. Nearly $310,000 was secured for project implementation which will improve habitat for forage fish important to salmonids on these tidelands owned by the Blakely Island Trust.

Swan Lake Feasibility Study:

A new partnership was formed with the Swan Lake Watershed Preservation Group. This nonprofit organization is comprised of citizens living around Swan Lake, a 300 acre estuarine marsh located on the western side of Whidbey Island just south of the Navy base. The Group is working to restore fish and tidal access to this valuable habitat which was purchased for conservation values by Island County in 1999. A preliminary feasibility study was funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) in December 2009 to determine the likelihood of providing long-term sustained access into and out of Swan Lake for juvenile salmonids, marine fishes, and marine invertebrates.

South Fork Skagit River:

SFEG partnered with The Nature Conservancy to plant a conservation easement in their ownership. The site was prepped and a volunteer planting event was held, in which 19 volunteers installed 437 trees and shrubs. The project is along 2,000 feet of shoreline on the South Fork of the Skagit River which provides valuable habitat for all species of salmonids, including ESA listed Chinook.

Junior Stream Stewards:

Seventh graders from Conway and LaConner Schools are some of 350 students in 5 school districts involved in this unique watershed education program in 2009-10. This is the second year Conway students have participated in Junior Stream Stewards learning about Bulson Creek, Fisher Slough and Skagit Estuary habitats through classroom activities, field tours and water quality studies. Their learning in 2008-09 culminated in designing educational signs as a service learning project that were posted along salmon streams in their watersheds. This is the first year LaConner students have participated in Junior Stream Stewards. They will be doing their service project in partnership with the Swinomish Tribe on a tributary to Forsby Slough, in the Swinomish Channel Watershed.

DAY CREEK COMMUNITY WATERSHED

Morgan Creek Fish Passage:

Culverts were removed which blocked fish passage due to high velocity on a private driveway crossing off the South Skagit Highway near Day Creek. The crossing was replaced with a 40 foot recycled railroad flatcar bridge. This work opens 2.08 miles of habitat. The project was completed through cooperation with a private landowner and grants from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and WDFW’s ALEA program. This work builds upon previous work completed downstream near the mouth of the creek to make 4.3 miles of valuable tributary habitat available to coho, cutthroat, and Chinook.

Day Creek Restoration:

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. Log donations were secured through a Forest Service partnership and site preparation was performed for 2,500 plants to be installed in early 2010. Approximately one mile of stream and 10 acres of riparian area will benefit through these grants.

Ross Island Slough Restoration:

Over 19,000 native plants were installed on this floodplain habitat through a partnership with NRCS and Seattle City Light. Additional work removed culverts on an overflow channel which provides fish habitat during high water. Much more work is planned for 2010 continuing the restoration of riparian areas on over 150 acres of land permanently protected around Anderson Creek, Gilligan Creek and Ross Island Slough.
Iron Mountain Ranch Habitat Enhancement:
Work continued on this vast property owned by Seattle City Light which protects and allows for 2 miles of riparian habitat restoration along the Skagit River where key Chinook and steelhead spawning habitat exists. This year work was focused along the eastern end of the property and restoring riparian habitat along O’Toole Creek and the Skagit River. An old fence was removed to allow a new fence to be built to continue cattle grazing on the property but with a larger riparian area. New native plants will be installed once this fence is built.

Outreach and Monitoring:
Outreach and monitoring efforts were undertaken with new grant dollars from the Department of Ecology for the Day Creek Community Watershed. Volunteers were involved in collecting macroinvertebrates to help gauge stream health prior to restoration actions taking place. National Park Service staff wrote a temperature monitoring plan and installed monitoring devices to track water and air temperatures during the summer months. This information will be used as pre-project data for riparian and log jams projects planned for 2010 and beyond.

FINNEY CREEK WATERSHED
Habitat Restoration:
SFEG has been working with the Forest Service, Park Service and local timber landowners for the past 10 years to restore valuable salmon habitat through the installation of log jams in Finney Creek. To date over 170 log jams have been installed and additional grant dollars from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board were secured in December 2009 to continue this productive partnership. Logs are necessary as a near term restoration solution due to the lack of large diameter trees to add structure and complexity to this major tributary of the Skagit River. 30 more log jams are planned for 2010.

Outreach and Monitoring:
Outreach and monitoring continued in the Finney Creek basin as a way to inform users how to protect valuable salmon habitat. Outreach was conducted through field tours, workshops, and monitoring. More rigorous monitoring of cross sections and temperature conducted by staff and partners indicates that small successes are being made. Cross sections indicate that the log jams are helping to narrow and deepen the stream channel and allow for new riparian growth to establish on gravel bars. There are also early indications that summer high temperatures are being moderated or decreased after the installation of log jams. Continued monitoring is planned through volunteers and partners.

MIDDLE SKAGIT WATERSHED
Elysian Meadows Riparian Restoration:
SFEG is continuing this work with dedicated private property owners who have ensured the permanent protection of 112 acres of Skagit River floodplain through a conservation easement held by the Skagit Land Trust. Volunteers planted 4.5 acres with native plants and shrubs and SFEG staff removed 2 acres blackberries and treated other invasive species on 5.5 additional acres.

Junior Stream Stewards:
Seventh graders at Cascade Middle School in Sedro-Woolley were some of the 350 students in five school districts participating to complete SFEG’s unique watershed education program in 2009. This program is designed to teach kids about the salmon habitat near their schools and homes. Cascade students learned about and explored the Brickyard Creek and Middle Skagit River habitats through classroom activities, field tours and water quality studies. Their learning culminated in riparian restoration efforts that benefit salmon in these watersheds.

Hansen Creek Riparian Restoration:
A partnership with Skagit County Parks Department restored 12 acres of riparian habitat along over 1700 feet on lower Hansen Creek as part of a CREP project adjacent to large woody debris restoration. Nearly 6000 plants were installed by staff and volunteers. A fantastic Earth Day work party was held in cooperation with many partners including the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Skagit County Parks Foundation, Healthy Communities Project, and Starbucks.

Larsen Memorial Floodplain Restoration:
The Larsen Memorial site is owned by the Forest Service along the south side of the Skagit River floodplain. This past year, SFEG staff worked in cooperation with the Forest Service to rid the site of invasive species such as blackberries and knotweed. Over 900 conifers were planted at the site and three culverts were removed with associated road fill from three locations in order to better facilitate natural floodplain processes.
UPPER SKAGIT WATERSHED

Floodplain Restoration:
SFEG is working with the Forest Service to restore floodplain habitat at 5 sites located throughout the Upper Skagit. Sites are located along the east side of Skagit River upstream of Marblemount, at the confluence of the Cascade and Skagit Rivers at the Marblemount Boat Launch, a small site at the confluence of Diobsud Creek and the Skagit, along the Sauk River near its confluence with the Skagit, and at Ovenell Slough on the south side of the Skagit River across from Jackman Creek. Over 2100 native trees and shrubs were planted by volunteers and staff at these sites in 2009. Work is funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and supported through the Forest Service partnership.

Nutrient Enhancement:
Volunteers distributed 5,536 salmon carcasses from the Marblemount State Hatchery back to natural streams in the Upper Skagit watershed. Research demonstrates that over 83 wildlife species are known to depend on nutrients from salmon carcasses, including salmon fry.

Pressentin Park:
SFEG partnered with Skagit County Parks Department to restore new floodplain property added to Pressentin Park. Invasive species including blackberry, reed canary grass, clematis and tansy were treated at the park along 1100 feet of a side channel to the Skagit River utilized by chum salmon. Over 800 plants were installed on the site on approximately 2 acres with assistance from volunteers.

Community Outreach:
SFEG’s outreach efforts are now well established in the upper river communities. We continued to assist with increasing outreach capacity at the Marblemount Hatchery by training volunteers to lead hatchery tours during the busy bald eagle 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.

SAMISH WATERSHED

Outreach:
In 2009 there was a renewed interest in performing outreach in the Samish watershed due to the increased awareness for the water quality problems that exist throughout the watershed including Samish Bay. These water quality problems have received much attention at the state and county level and are impacting local oyster growers. SFEG partnered with the Skagit Conservation Education Alliance to organize watershed tours and assist with community members going on aerial tours of the watershed via small plane.

Junior Stream Stewards:
Concrete Middle School students learned about and explored 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 students to visit North Cascades National Park and learn about the pristine habitat being protected there. Their learning culminated in designing a service learning project to restore riparian area along Lorenzan Creek.

Junior Stream Stewards:
Eighth graders from Allen School were some of the 350 students in five school districts who participated in this year’s Junior Stream Stewards program. Allen students learned and explored the Samish River, its tributaries and estuary habitats through classroom activities, field tours and water quality studies. Their learning culminated in designing educational signs which were posted near salmon streams in the Samish Watershed.
EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING

Stream Monitoring:
Two workshops were held to train 33 volunteers to monitor the effectiveness of restoration projects. Once trained, volunteers collected physical data for 13 streams including parameters such as gradient, width, substrate, vegetation, pools, and riffles. 28 streams covering over 17.35 miles were walked each and every week by volunteers and staff to count returning adult salmon and their redds for spawner surveys during the fall and winter. 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. Nearly 900 volunteer hours were contributed this year.

Bird Monitoring:
Restoring riparian habitat recovers more than just salmon populations, it also supports other wildlife such as birds. This year for the first time, SFEG partnered with volunteers from the Skagit Audubon Society to attempt to document what species of birds utilize SFEG’s restoration and in what numbers. Six sites are currently being monitored and 56 bird species have been documented by volunteers. Ultimately, we hope to learn if the number and diversity of birds change as the riparian area becomes established. Many thanks to the Audubon volunteers for making this new program a success.

Juvenile Fish Monitoring:
SFEG staff and volunteers conducted seining efforts at several locations in 2009 to track juvenile fish use at restoration sites such as McElroy Slough. Data was also collected to document fish use for local sloughs such as Kayton Slough near Conway. Over 13,000 fish were identified through these efforts which consisted of salmonids, marine fish and freshwater species.

Summary of Accomplishments 2009:

Habitat Enhancement:
- Riparian plantings .................. 39,192 plants
- Riparian maintenance ................ 200 acres
- Isolated habitat reconnected ............. 2 miles
- Nutrient enhancement ................. 5,536 carcasses

Community Outreach:
- Community education ............... 11,425 people
- Volunteer involvement ............... 6,950 hours
**Contributors**

**Salmon Enhancement Partners:**
- ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grants
- Allen Middle School
- Beachwatchers
- Cascade Middle School
- Concrete Middle School
- Conway Middle School
- Dike District #25
- Emerson High School
- Fidalgo Fly Fishers
- Island County Public Works
- Komo Kulshan Outdoor School
- LaConner Middle School
- Landowner Incentive Program
- Marblemount Hatchery
- Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
- Mount Vernon Christian High School
- Mount Vernon High School
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- National Park Service
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- NOAA Restoration Center
- North Cascades Institute
- Padilla Bay NERR
- People for Puget Sound
- Puget Sound Anglers
- San Juan County Public Works
- Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
- Seattle City Light
- Skagit Audubon Society
- Skagit Conservation District
- Skagit Conservation Education Alliance
- Skagit County
- Skagit County Marine Resources Committee
- Skagit Land Trust
- Skagit Stream Team
- Skagit River Bald Eagle Awareness Team
- Skagit River System Cooperative
- Skagit Valley College
- Skagit Watershed Council
- Swan Lake Watershed Preservation Group
- The Nature Conservancy
- Town of Concrete
- University of Washington
- Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- Washington Conservation Corps
- Washington Service Corps
- WA Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- WA State Department of Ecology
- WA State Department of Fish & Wildlife
- WA State Department of Transportation
- WA State General Administrative Services
- Western Washington Agricultural Association
- Wetlands Reserve Program
- Whatcom Land Trust

**Major Donors:**
- Shane and Jennifer Aggergaard
- Worth Allen
- Nancy Applegate
- Dan & Linda Ballard
- Joel and Joanna Breems
- Hugh Campbell & Dianne Dalton
- Cascade River Community Club
- David Downey
- Jeanne Glick
- Steve and Gail Hopley
- Paul and Marie Hunter
- Daniad Jacobson
- Jim Johnson
- Boschie Morris
- Jim Palmer
- Douglas Risedorf
- San Juan City Public Works
- Mark & Diane Studley
- Matthew & Holly Studley
- Barb Trask & Ger Vanden Engh
- Duff and Pinky Walker
- Dennis and Trudy Wilson

**Business Donors:**
- Ace Hardware-Anacortes
- Anthony’s Homeport at Squalicum Harbor
- Blau Oyster Company
- Children’s Museum of Skagit County
- Christianson Nursery
- Concrete Nor’west
- Eagle Haven Winery
- Fidalgo Bay Roasting Company
- Food Pavilion
- H&H Anglers and Outfitters
- Haggen
- Holiday Sports
- Island Adventures
- Island Outfitters
- Ivar’s Restaurants
- Lincoln Theatre
- Lee Mann
- Master Marine Services
- Mount Vernon Red Apple
- North Cascade Networks
- Oliver-Hammer Clothes Shop
- Porterhouse Restaurant
- Puget-Hammer Clothes Shop
- Safeway
- Sakuma Brothers Farms
- Seabolts Smokehouse
- Skagit River Ranch
- Skagit River Brewing Company

**Junior Stream Steward Donors:**
- Fidalgo Fly Fishers
- Jeanne Glick
- Lakeside Industries
- Lucky Seven Foundation
- PACCAR
- Puget Sound Energy Foundation
- Stephen Reynolds
- Sierra Pacific Foundation
- Shell Oil–Puget Sound Refinery
- Skagit Community Foundation
- Tesoro
- Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund
- Westport Shipyards

**Landowners:**
- Gaylen and Bonnie Beirman
- Murray Benjamin
- Cascade River Park
- Cedar Springs Renewal Center
- Paul and Shannon Cooper
- Day Creek Corporation
- Tom Crowley, Blakely Island Trust
- Peter and Elizabeth Edelson
- Ken Evans
- Goodyear Nelson Timber
- Eric Knudsen-Creekside Farms
- Longview Timber
- Nan Monk and Michael Mahafey
- Jim Miller and Diana Davis
- Llane Rusnak and Daniel Burt
- Seattle City Light
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- Skagit County Parks Dept
- Skagit Land Trust
- The Nature Conservancy
- Barb Trask and Ger van den Engh
- US Forest Service
- WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife
- WA Dept of Natural Resources
- Whatcom Land Trust
- Patrick and Marie White
- Ben and Sloane Winkes

**Financial Summary 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Funds</td>
<td>$ 614,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Funds</td>
<td>$ 57,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cash Income</td>
<td>$ 671,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Kind Donations</td>
<td>$ 183,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$ 854,817</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INSIDE...

SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP
ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Dedicated to
Restoring
Wild Salmon for
Future Generations

Help enhance habitat for salmon.
RESTORE | ASSIST | MONITOR | EDUCATE | VOLUNTEER