

ANNUAL REPORT

2006 - 2007

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 OVERVIEW

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SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

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Cover photo by: Dick Knight

It's a pleasure to provide you with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group's Annual Report for 2006-2007. We hope you enjoy reviewing our accomplishments in the following pages. These activities would not be possible without hundreds of community volunteers and members donating thousands of hours to ensure there are healthy watersheds for wild salmon. As a nonprofit organization we are dependent on the generosity of our members and are privileged to live in a community that is willing to work hard to restore our local waterways and keep them healthy for all living things.

The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is dedicated to involving our community in restoring wild salmon populations for future generations. Our region is very large including the Skagit and Samish River watersheds as well as the watersheds of the San Juan Islands and Northern Whidbey Island. The Skagit River is the largest river in Puget Sound and has the largest populations of Chinook salmon, pink salmon and bull trout. Therefore the task we have in front of us is beyond the scope of most salmon recovery efforts. However, preserving the rural character of the Skagit Valley is something most residents feel very strongly about, and is an enormous help when trying to protect and restore salmon for our children and grandchildren.

Our Annual Report is organized by Focal Area. Focal Areas are places where we feel we can have the greatest benefit to salmon with our limited financial resources. Utilizing Focal Areas we have been better able to integrate our education and restoration projects and make both programs more effective. This report covers the accomplishments in these Focal Areas over the 18 month period from July 2006 to December 2007 as we move towards future Annual Reports which will match the calendar year.

Focal Areas where we concentrated work in the last 18 months include the Upper Skagit Floodplain, Middle Skagit Floodplain, Nookachamps Creek, Day Creek and Finney Creek watersheds. Projects ranged from large scale riparian restoration projects, building fences, installing large woody debris and community planting parties. Outreach and education programs were launched that target the communities living in each of these Focal Areas. By specifically tailoring our education programs to these communities we intend to increase engagement and action with local landowners and volunteers. In addition to significant work in these Focal Areas, SFEG was thrilled to finally implement the McElroy Slough Estuary Restoration project in partnership with Skagit County in 2006! Replacing these traditional tide gates with "fish friendly" ones under Blanchard Road was a very expensive project. For the first year ever, SFEG's budget soared to over \$1 million, and over \$2 million including the in-kind contributions. SFEG also launched a new middle school education program called Junior Stream Stewards in 2006. This new program was a great success and has doubled in size for 2007.

In all SFEG had a fantastic 18 months for community restoration thanks to our great staff, effective partnerships, willing landowners, hard working board members, dedicated volunteers and generous donors. We look forward to continuing our work with you all in the coming year.

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 AND NEARSHORE:

McElroy Slough: In October 2006, saltwater was reintroduced to McElroy Slough after many years of perseverance by project partners and community members to restore tidal function to this small Puget Sound estuary. The project uses an innovative approach for restoring tidal action to the slough, through the installation of a self regulating tide gate. The self regulating tide gate allows saltwater to enter the slough, but only to a predetermined height which will not flood the surrounding landscape at high tide. McElroy Slough flows through the lowland areas surrounding the Blanchard community and drains into Samish Bay. Three salmon bearing creeks drain into McElroy Slough: Whitehall, Colony and Harrison Creeks. SFEG has worked with landowners on both Colony and Harrison Creeks to do salmon enhancement work in the 1990's. The self regulating tide gate restores tidal flushing, fish passage and estuary rearing area for chinook, coho, chum and cutthroat within the McElroy Slough watershed. Restoring the estuary functions to McElroy Slough will greatly enhance the fish and wildlife use of this watershed as well as reduce flood hazards to the Blanchard Community. The project opens 1 mile in length or approximately 9 acres of estuary area for anadromous fish use within the slough. It also improves access to 5 miles of Colony Creek used by anadromous fish, a half mile of Whitehall Creek and 3 miles of Harrison Creek. The implementation of this project is very exciting, as it has taken 10 years of hard work by many individuals. After a decade of struggle, it is very rewarding to reach agreement with the diverse parties involved and see this unique and important project take place. The community and project partners were very excited to document juvenile salmonid use, especially chinook, in the newly restored estuarine environment of McElroy Slough in 2007.



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Thatcher Bay: Thatcher Bay is located on the southwest side of Blakely Island in the San Juan Islands. Grant funds are being used to assess the potential for removing wood waste deposited by an old saw mill and the restoration possibilities that may exist. Wood waste deposition creates an inhospitable environment for most nearshore life. Graduate students at the University of Washington are studying the impact of the wood waste on the nearshore environment, the costs and impacts associated with its removal and the potential for eelgrass (valuable rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids) to reestablish itself if the wood waste were removed.



Deepwater Slough: SFEG is using new grant money from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to install additional native plants and continue invasive species control at this WDFW owned restoration site. SFEG is partnering with the WDFW and the Skagit River System Cooperative to continue this native vegetation restoration project at Deepwater Slough along Skagit Bay where dikes were removed in 2000 to reestablish valuable estuary habitat.

River Awareness Month: Funding from Skagit County's Clean Water Program allowed SFEG to sponsor River Awareness Month at the Children's Museum of Skagit County in December 2006 and October 2007. Over 4,500 children visited the museum during these months learning about the Skagit River, its salmon and water quality through exhibits and activities.

NOOKACHAMPS WATERSHED

Riparian Restoration: SFEG is using a Centennial Clean Water Fund Grant from the Department of Ecology to implement restoration projects to improve water quality in the Nookachamps watershed. SFEG used these funds to leverage additional grant funds from the Pioneers in Conservation to work with local farmers to protect water quality. Riparian restoration projects were focused on four sites (Murray, DeVries, Tewalt and Verdoes). An inventory of lands in private ownership conducted by the Skagit Land Trust helped to prioritize where future restoration and/or protection actions are



needed to occur in order to help improve water quality. This prioritized list of properties will aid in the development of future projects and is being used to initiate contact with new landowners for protection and restoration projects by SFEG, the Skagit Land Trust and other partners.

Summary of Accomplishments 2006-2007:

Habitat Enhancement:

Riparian plantings	20,300 feet
Riparian maintenance	100 acres
Riparian fencing installed	2,850 feet
Instream habitat improved	1.75 miles
Isolated habitat reconnected	13 miles
Nutrient enhancement	12,164 carcasses

Community Outreach:

Community education	13,990 people
Volunteer involvement	10,875 hours

RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Nookachamps Outreach: SFEG hosted a series of workshops and tours in 2007 to engage Nookachamps residents in learning more about their watershed, the salmon that live there and what they can do to help protect and improve habitat and water quality. One workshop combined natural and cultural history along with sites visits, a Septics 101 class was offered in partnership with Skagit County and a watershed tour was given for area residents. Volunteers and school groups all contributed to revegetation efforts along local streams in order to reduce water temperature for salmonids.

DAY CREEK COMMUNITY WATERSHED

Morgan Creek: Several fish passage issues were identified through assessment work in the Morgan Creek area in recent years.



Before

Funds were secured this year to fix the fish passage problem nearest the outlet to Ross Island Slough. This culvert is located on Draper Valley property and was replaced with a bridge in the summer of 2007 with funding from the FishAmerica Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This project improves fish passage to 3 miles of habitat. A second fish passage problem was identified on a tributary to Morgan Creek which has been funded for replacement by state grant funds in 2008.



After

Native Plants: Riparian restoration work was implemented by volunteers with new property owners along Stevens Creek. Several plantings along Day Creek were maintained by staff and volunteers.

Outreach and Education: Funding from the National Fish and Wildlife's Community Salmon Fund continued to fund outreach to local landowners to learn more about the creeks in the Day Creek Community Watershed. Workshops and field trips were held in 2006 to share information and help the community learn more about the valuable resources within their watershed. Signs for stream crossings were created by the community and installed in 2007, as well as a booklet which summarizes the highlights of the Day Creek Community Watershed for local residents.

Anderson Creek Habitat Enhancement: A partnership with Seattle City Light is restoring 125 acres of land protected around Anderson Creek and Ross Island Slough. Grant funds are being used to develop a restoration plan for Anderson Creek in partnership with City Light. In 2007 an unused farm crossing was removed to reconnect isolated habitat associated with important slough habitat.



Iron Mountain Ranch Habitat Enhancement: SFEG is working with Seattle City Light to protect and restore 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 35 acres has been revegetated with native plants by volunteers and staff.



FINNEY CREEK WATERSHED

Habitat Restoration: SFEG continued it's partnered with the US Forest Service and National Park Service to restore degraded habitat in Finney Creek. New partnerships were formed with Sierra Pacific Industries, Goodyear Nelson Timber and private landowners to install log jams in Lower Finney Creek in 2006. Funding from the Department of Ecology's Centennial Clean Water Fund was used to install 359 logs into 17 jams through a 1.5 mile reach of Finney Creek. As of 2007, our partnerships have restored 6 miles since 1999 for this incredibly valuable lower Skagit tributary. Additional restoration efforts are planned for the summer of 2008 with new timber partners, Hampton Affiliates.



Outreach and Education: An outreach and education program continued in the Finney Creek watershed utilizing funding from the Department of Ecology. A watershed tour and two fish viewing workshops were held for local residents. Volunteers were engaged in collecting macroinvertebrates to track stream health. And the first ever Finney Family Day was held in cooperation with a local farm in order to better engage local kids and their parents in the conservation of Finney Creek.



RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

MIDDLE SKAGIT WATERSHED

Wiseman Creek Feasibility Study: SFEG worked with a large group of partners including WDFW, Skagit County, NRCS and the Skagit River System Cooperative to develop restoration alternatives for Wiseman Creek. Six alternatives were developed and were taken to the community for input. Restoration actions are needed to improve habitat for coho and steelhead. SFEG is hopeful of future work in this important area.

Elysian Meadows Riparian Restoration: The Skagit Land Trust and SFEG have partnered to protect approximately 112 acres along the Skagit River through a perpetual conservation easement. This project presents a rare opportunity to protect a large area of Skagit River floodplain in a dynamic reach of the river. SFEG is working with the landowners restore native vegetation on about 8 acres of floodplain property along the edge of the dedicated agricultural zone. Volunteers and staff have started this restoration effort.



Junior Stream Stewards: A new and unique watershed education and stewardship program was launched in 2006 for 130 middle school students in Concrete. The Junior Stream Stewards is a 9 month program that challenges students to apply classroom lessons with a stream restoration project in their backyard. In a combination of classroom programs and field study trips, students learn all about salmon and the stream habitat that supports them by studying water quality, native plants, aquatic insects, the salmon life cycle and much more. The program culminates in a community service-learning project to protect and enhance their local stream, in partnership with local organizations, businesses and governments. Thanks to fundraising efforts by SFEG Board members and the generosity of many local businesses, this successful program doubled in size for 2007 and is now being offered at Cascade Middle School in Sedro Woolley in addition to Concrete Middle School.



UPPER SKAGIT WATERSHED

Nutrient Enhancement: Volunteers distributed 12,164 Chinook and coho carcasses from the Marblemount State Hatchery back to natural streams. Partners contributing to this nutrient enhancement effort include: the USFS, Fidalgo Fly Fishers and ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Funds.



Cascade River Tributaries: Landowners in the Cascade River Community Park partnered with SFEG to fix 4 fish passage barriers with funding from the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. Two culvert crossings were completely removed and two other culvert crossings were replaced with new culverts in order to provide better fish access to this Cascade River tributary.

Howard Miller Steelhead Park: Funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation were used to start revegetation efforts at Howard Miller Steelhead Park. This eastern Skagit County Park is a very popular spot for camping, boating and eagle viewing. Half the park is undeveloped for passive recreation use and in need of invasive removal and riparian enhancement. SFEG staff and volunteers have begun the battle with invasive species and have replanted the area with native plants. Three new interpretive signs were installed along a popular eagle viewing trail to educate thousands of visitors about salmon, eagles and trees.



Community Outreach: In 2005, SFEG began working with partners to train 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. Over 550 people attended the tours during the 2006-07 winter. Several workshops and tours were held in eastern Skagit County focused on educating local residents including a fish viewing tour, Skagit River Family Fest and a Septics 101 class.



Forest and Salmon Stewards: A modified version of the Junior Stream Stewards program was offered in 2006 and 2007 to Darrington classrooms. This modified program works with Snohomish County and includes a greater focus on forests as well as a "sister school" component. Darrington students get an opportunity to visit and assist students from a more urban setting with their restoration project and vice versa.

RESTORATION AND EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

SAMISH WATERSHED

Innis Creek Habitat Restoration: SFEG has been working for several years with the Whatcom Land Trust to restore Ennis Creek through its historic wetland path in the Upper Samish Watershed. During 2006, SFEG utilized National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funds in partnership with SRFB and Landowner Incentive Program funds to excavate a new channel in the location of a historic pathway below the Innis Creek Road crossing. Large woody debris was placed in the channel and was partially buried in the channel without the use of cable or anchors. In 2007 Whatcom County constructed a new Innis Creek Road crossing which rerouted Ennis Creek through its new path (instead of its old path in a roadside ditch). Volunteers counted hundreds of spawning adult coho salmon benefiting from this restoration project in 2007. Volunteers have also planted native vegetation throughout the protected land area.



Parson Creek Fish Passage Improvement: Grants from the Family Forests Fish Passage Program and American Rivers made



Before

fish passage possible again on Parson's Creek. The project removed a culvert perched 4 feet above Parson's Creek and replaced it with a fish passable culvert. This was an expensive project due to the large sized culvert needed and the large quantity of fill associated with the logging road crossing. An 18-foot wide pipe arch was needed to replace the existing 4 foot wide perched culvert. The new culvert is set on 22 concrete foundation blocks and backfilled with a roughened channel. The new pipe is 66 feet long and required excavation of a hole about 30 feet deep. The fixed crossing enables access to 0.5 miles high quality spawning habitat favorable to coho and steelhead trout with a well developed forest canopy.



After

EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING

Volunteer Monitoring: SFEG strives to involve community members in all our salmon enhancement projects. One excellent way to engage volunteers is through monitoring the effectiveness of projects. SFEG holds two workshops each year to train volunteers to conduct different kinds of monitoring. The first workshop teaches volunteers how to collect physical data on streams including gradient, width, substrate, vegetation, pools, riffles, and much more. The second workshop 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 and juvenile salmon. The data collected provides much needed information to funders and project partners related to the effectiveness of enhancement projects.



CONTRIBUTORS

Salmon Enhancement Partners:

ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grants
American Rivers
Earthwatch Institute
Concrete Middle School
Cascade Middle School
Darrington Elementary School
Family Forest Fish Passage Program
Fidalgo Fly Fishers
FishAmerica Foundation
Landowner Incentive Program
Marblemount Hatchery
Mount Baker-Snoqualmie
National Forest
Mount Vernon Red Apple
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
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Natural Resource Conservation Service
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Skagit Conservation District
Skagit Conservation Education Alliance
Skagit County
Skagit Land Trust
Skagit Stream Team
Skagit River System Cooperative
Skagit Valley College
Skagit Watershed Council
The Nature Conservancy

Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Forest Service
University of Washington
Washington Conservation Corps
Washington Service Corps
WA Salmon Recovery Funding Board
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WA State General Administrative
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Wetlands Reserve Program
Whatcom County Public Works
Whatcom Land Trust
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
WSU Extension/Snohomish County 4-H

CONTRIBUTORS

Major Donors:

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 Concrete Nor'west
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 David Downey
 Ken Evans
 The Ferguson Foundation
 Fidalgo Fly Fishers
 Brian Gentry, Landed Gentry
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 Puget Sound Energy Foundation
 Sierra Pacific Foundation
 Shell Oil- Puget Sound Refinery
 Skagit Community Foundation
 Skagit State Bank
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 Hampton Timber
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 Skagit County
 Skagit Land Trust
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 Gary and Rubye Vallat
 Carl Vandersaar
 WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife
 WA Dept of Natural Resources
 Whatcom County Parks
 Whatcom Land Trust

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2006-2007

Income		Expenses	
Public Funds	\$ 1,390,816	Project & Programs	\$ 1,295,099
Private Funds	\$ 88,832	Administration (8%)	\$ 111,146
Total Cash Income	\$ 1,479,648	Total	\$ 1,406,245
In-Kind Donations	\$ 1,206,184		
Total	\$ 2,685,832		



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