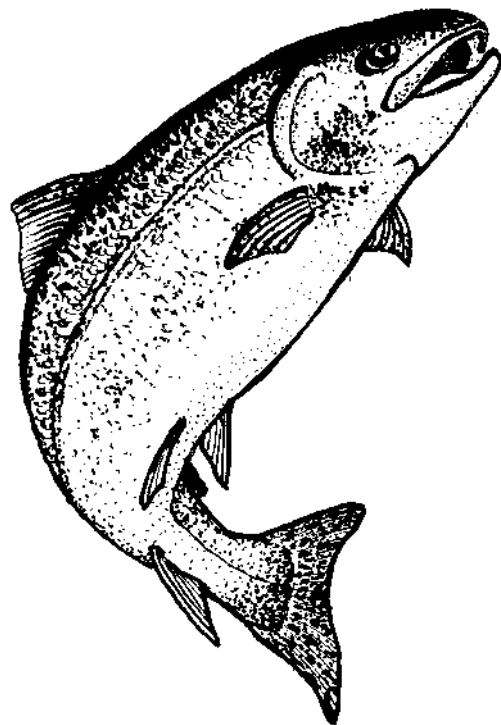
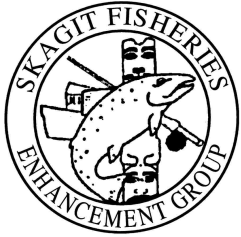


SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP



ANNUAL REPORT

July 2003 - June 2004



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.

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Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

Overview

The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the enhancement of salmon resources throughout the Skagit, Samish and Island Watersheds. Our mission is to build partnerships that educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship activities in order to increase salmonid populations. By educating community members and involving them in hands-on restoration and monitoring activities we intend to meet our goal of increasing local salmon populations through citizens taking actions. Established in 1990 as one of 14 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups in Washington State, SFEG is part of a coordinated effort to educate and involve the public in salmon enhancement activities across the state at the community level. SFEG works cooperatively with local landowners to identify restoration opportunities on their property and find the funding to implement them. SFEG's region is large including the Skagit River and Samish Bay watersheds as well as the watersheds of the San Juan Islands and northern Whidbey Island. The Skagit Watershed alone is the largest Puget Sound drainage; covering over 3,000 square miles and contributing roughly one-third of the freshwater to Puget Sound. While development and timber activities have impacted the health of the Skagit Watershed, its overall salmon habitat conditions are excellent relative to other more urbanized Puget Sound watersheds. The Skagit Watershed continues to provide significant spawning and rearing habitat for all five species of Pacific salmon as well as steelhead, cutthroat and bull trout. Currently, one-half of the remaining Puget Sound Chinook salmon (which are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act) return to the Skagit Watershed to spawn. This designation makes it all the more important for us to work collectively to keep the Skagit Watershed healthy.

Restoration continues to be a challenging process, even in this relatively un-urbanized area of Puget Sound. This past year was one of extremes. A very hot dry summer in 2003 stressed newly planted seedlings and impacted our ability to work on forestlands due to increased fire risks. Early heavy rain events followed the dry summer dumping record amounts of rainfall in the Upper Skagit watershed. Over 12 inches of rain fell during a 24-hour period in October 2003 causing many higher elevation streams to rise to record levels and flooding many communities throughout the Skagit Valley. Restoration sites were impacted by these large flood flows, but we were reminded that it takes this type of large scale water event to create new channels which form habitat for salmon in our rivers and streams.

SFEG continued its work to improve fish passage on three streams this year and also implemented a major large woody debris project with a prominent timber company and the US Forest Service. We continued to seek new ways to engage the community in all aspects of our projects. A grant from the Puget Sound Action Team enabled us to implement a new educational program called Stream Stewards in two local communities. In addition, educational presentations were delivered to nearly 1,300 kids and adults, and 235 volunteers contributed over 5,000 hours planting trees, monitoring habitat conditions, counting returning salmon, flinging dead fish, educating local students and much more.

Summary of Accomplishments, July 2003-June 2004

Outreach:	Community Education	1,277 individuals
	Volunteer Involvement	5,072 hours
Habitat Enhancement:	Riparian Revegetation	46 acres
	Riparian Maintenance	100 acres
	Instream Channel Improvement	1.3 miles

Estuary Restoration	5 acres
Nutrient Enhancement	4,973 carcasses
Fish Passage Improvement	Nearly 1 mile

Salmon Recovery Partners 2003-2004

- ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grants
- Danny Beatty
- Boy Scouts of America
- Blau Oysters
- Karen Burt, landowner
- Gabe Carson, landowner
- Cascade Job Corps
- Children's Museum of Skagit County
- City of Concrete
- City of Mount Vernon
- City of Sedro-Woolley
- Crown Pacific, Ltd.
- Diana Davis, landowner
- Dickerson Distributors
- Ducks Unlimited
- Earthwatch Institute
- Ferguson Foundation
- Fidalgo Fly Fishers
- Fidalgo Bay Roasting Company
- Polly Fischer
- FishAmerica
- Fourth Corner Fly Fishers
- Fred Meyer
- Leland Fox, landowner
- Gretchen's Kitchen Store
- Cynda Garver, landowner
- Holiday Sports Center
- Island Adventures
- Island Outfitters
- Island County
- Kapteins Ace Hardware
- Michael & Astrid King, landowner
- Krispy Kreme
- Landed Gentry Development, Inc
- The Lincoln Theater
- Don Lucinger, landowner
- Lee Mann, photographer
- Marblegate Community Association
- People for Puget Sound
- Porterhouse Restaurant
- Printwise, Inc.
- Puget Sound Action Team
- Puget Sound Anglers-Fidalgo Chapter
- Puget Sound Energy
- Skip Remlinger, landowner
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- Samish Indian Nation
- San Juan Conservation District
- Sauk Mountain View Golf Course
- SeaBear Smoked Fish
- SeaBolt's Smokehouse
- Seattle City Light
- Seattle IMAX
- Scott's Bookstore
- Skagit Land Trust
- Skagit Conservation District
- Skagit Conservation Education Alliance
- Skagit County
- Skagit River Brewing Company
- Skagit River Stewards
- Skagit Stream Team
- Skagit River System Cooperative
- Skagit Valley College
- Skagit Valley Food Co-op
- Skagit Watershed Council
- George & Joleen Sloniker, landowner
- Sports and More
- Stanwood Grill Restaurant
- Steel Perceptions
- Taylor Shellfish
- Fred Tewalt, landowner
- The Nature Conservancy
- Thrifty Food Pavillion

- Master Marine Services
- Max Dales Restaurant
- Merritt Apples
- Libby Mills, artist
- Dr. David Montgomery, author
- Mount Baker National Forest
- The Mountaineers Foundation
- William & Rebecca Murray, landowner
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- National Wildlife Federation
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- National Park Service
- Bill Neat, artist
- NOAA Restoration Center
- North Cascades Institute
- North Cascade Networks
- Northwest Women Fly Fishers
- Trillium Corporation
- Trout and Salmon Foundation
- Jana Turner
- Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Bank
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- Wal*Mart
- Washington Conservation Corps
- WA State Department of Ecology
- WA State Department of Fish & Wildlife
- WA State General Administrative Services
- Simon Wester, landowner
- Wetlands Reserve Program
- Whatcom Land Trust
- Wildcat Steelhead Club
- Charles Willoughby, landowner
- Woods Logging Supply
- Wizards of Ooze

Habitat Enhancement Projects

Finney Creek: This project involved installing 257 pieces of large woody debris to create 21 log jams in a 1.3 mile reach of Finney Creek owned by Crown Pacific Timber. Finney Creek has been plagued by increased sediment loads due to rapid logging of the hillsides during the 1970's and 1980's. Historically, Finney Creek provided important habitat for four salmon species (Chinook, coho, chum and pink) and steelhead and cutthroat trout runs. Strategic placement of woody debris has reinforced existing small log jams and created new log jams that help trap sediment, create pools, and decrease water temperatures to make a healthier environment for salmon and resident trout. Logs were supplied by US Forest Service and flown in by helicopter to Finney Creek. Crews from the Forest Service and SFEG spent several weeks cabling these logs together to create large log jams. Salmon habitat will be improved throughout the 1.3 mile project reach, the 9 miles of anadromous habitat downstream, as well as the lower Skagit River. Log jams were not anchored so they could be moved by the natural processes created by these flood flows. During the October 2003 flood events, many of the log jams moved downstream of their original locations. To date, our projects have placed over 1,000 logs into 103 log jams in two reaches of Finney Creek covering 3 miles of instream habitat. The project was funded by Salmon Recovery Funding Board with matching funds from US Forest Service.

Marblegate Slough: A gravel road crossing with failing culverts isolated the upper and lower segments of Marblegate Slough off the Skagit River near the town of Marblemount. SFEG replaced these undersized and failing culverts with a recycled flatcar bridge to re-establish the floodplain process and reconnect key isolated slough habitat for coho, chum and Chinook salmon. The crossing provides access to a common area and river trails for residents of the Marblegate Community Association. SFEG worked with the landowners of the

Association to develop this restoration project. Off-channel habitat provides over 1,800 linear feet of important refugia for juvenile salmon as well as spawning habitat for some salmon species. Much of the off-channel habitat in the Skagit River basin has been lost, thus the reconnection of this type of habitat is key to local salmon recovery efforts. This new bridge crossing was damaged during the October 2003 flood events, but passage for fish was not impeded. SFEG surveyed many fish during the 2003-04 spawning season including: 294 live chum, 127 coho, 10 pink and at least one steelhead. SFEG will repair the damage and allow pedestrian access during the summer of 2004. The project was funded by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

“The Marblegate Slough project is a classic example of a win-win project for nature and for man. Salmon get access to the slough and people get recreational access to the river. It goes a step further than preserving land for the sake of itself by providing a human connection.”

---Tom Harville, Marblegate Community

Association

Lake Creek Bridge: SFEG replaced a culvert barrier on a tributary to Lake Creek with a pedestrian bridge using Salmon Recovery Funding Board funds with in-kind contributions from the landowner. This project provides access to over 500 feet of prime spawning habitat. During the first spawning season (2003-04), volunteers inventoried 183 live coho, 17 carcasses, and 29 redds upstream of the former barrier. During a spring tour, it was noted that the stream was loaded with fry. This was a very cost effective project due to landowner donations and has provided access to important spawning habitat in the upper Nookachamps watershed.

Deepwater Slough: The Deepwater Slough Project is a 204 acre estuary restoration project implemented in 1999 located on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife land at the mouth of the South Fork of the Skagit River. The project removed dikes to restore river and tidal influence to the project area creating critical juvenile habitat for threatened Puget Sound Chinook salmon. The Skagit River System Cooperative is the lead on this project. SFEG's role in this project is to treat invasive vegetation species and while also planting native species. SFEG's restoration crew removed blackberries, scotch broom, Japanese knotweed from upland dike areas. Reed canary grass was removed from marsh areas and replanted with the native estuary shrub sweetgale. Total area treated was approximately 5 acres.

Shoeshel Creek: Landowners, George and Joleen Sloniker, had a perched, 30 inch-diameter concrete culvert creating a fish passage barrier under Shoeshel drive near Sedro Woolley. SFEG replaced this culvert with 12-foot diameter aluminum structural plate culvert to improve fish passage for coho salmon and cutthroat trout. This was the first time SFEG's crew had installed a plated culvert, but they rose to the challenge. The project opens access to a half mile of habitat leading to Bottomless Lake. Volunteers planted the site with native vegetation following the culvert replacement. Approximately 230 native trees and shrubs were installed. The landowners are very committed to the project and have been trained to conduct spawner surveys to count salmon returning to the stream during the winter. The project was funded by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

“The replaced pipe looks great. SFEG's volunteers and staff did a wonderful job with the plantings and fencing. They are a very professional organization. My father would have been very proud to see this project completed. I am ready to be a volunteer for life!”

--- Joleen Sloniker, landowner

Nutrient Enhancement: A new partnership was developed with the Fidalgo Fly Fishers and US Forest Service to help with nutrient enhancement this year. Fidalgo Fly Fisher volunteers distributed 4,973 carcasses from the Marblemount State Hatchery back to natural streams. This was primarily done as a weekly event loading totes from the hatchery filled with fish into a truck and flinging the fish back into the streams with pitchforks. But thanks to a new project with the US Forest Service, we were also able to redistribute carcasses above the Baker River Dams into the Upper Baker River via helicopter. Roughly 500 Chinook carcasses were dropped in the Upper Baker River.

Native Plant Nursery: Over 46 volunteers contributed 461 hours to water, weed, maintain, transplant and pot native plants at SFEG's nursery to produce a higher quality plant in greater quantities than what is available at local nurseries. The native plant growing operation enables SFEG to use plants at any time during the growing season rather than the limited time plants are available at nurseries. SFEG's nursery can hold roughly 4,500 plants in four raised beds. Approximately 2,000 plants were used at restoration sites this year and 2,000 replacement plants were added for next year.

Riparian Planting Projects: SFEG's restoration crew and volunteers continued efforts to revegetate riparian areas throughout our region this past year. Approximately 46 acres of riparian area was planted with native trees and shrubs in partnership with many landowners, businesses and agencies at roughly 15 different sites. SFEG's restoration crew performed riparian maintenance activities on about 100 acres. Maintenance is needed for plant survival at many sites during the first few years. Maintenance consists of mowing, weedwacking, spraying herbicide and protecting trees with tree wraps

Education and Outreach

Stormwater Education: SFEG's stormwater education program continued to build momentum this year. In an effort to raise awareness about stormwater pollution issues, this program teaches students about stormwater, its connection to salmon streams and why it is important to keep pollutants out of stormwater. Working with school and scout groups, SFEG staff and volunteers involved 158 kids in classroom presentations, and going out to school grounds and nearby neighborhoods stenciling 113 stormdrains with the message "Dump No Waste, Drains To Stream" on stormdrains in Mount Vernon, Sedro Woolley, Burlington, and Anacortes. This has become a very important message in our growing urban communities. Keeping pollutants out of stormwater is something that everyone has to be conscious of in order for the message to be effective.

Stream Stewards: A new program funded by Puget Sound Action Team's Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Fund, this is a 9-month workshop series geared to residents living within the Brickyard Creek/Hart Slough watershed in Sedro Woolley, and Mount Vernon's Trumpeter/Logan/Thunderbird Creek watershed. Through a series of workshops residents learn about their local stream, the wildlife connected to it, and ways they can get directly involved in keeping their stream healthy. Participants begin with a tour of their watershed, learning about the course of their stream and historical and current land-use practices along its path. Through the tour and subsequent presentations and field trips, participants explore the physical and biological components of their stream and learn how it compares with a healthy salmon stream. Stream Stewards "graduates" will complete the workshop series equipped with a greater understanding of and appreciation for their salmon stream. By contributing 40 hours of volunteer service in exchange for the training, participants become actively engaged in the conservation and restoration of their streams. In its first four months (by June 2004) the program has engaged 32 participants for a total of 143 volunteer hours contributed.

Wild Salmon Education Trunk: SFEG continued to use and loan out the resources included in the "Wild Salmon Education Trunk" created by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. SFEG partnered with People for Puget Sound on a presentation at the Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival to introduce local teachers to

the educational resources offered in the Salmon Trunk. We are developing new lessons for the trunk, including activities on stormwater pollution prevention and benthic macroinvertebrates.

Student Service-Learning: Throughout the year SFEG carried out service learning projects for student groups in Mount Vernon, Sedro Woolley, and Burlington. These projects get students out into the field doing hands-on projects to use their new knowledge of stream ecosystems and restoration. In addition to the stormwater programs, SFEG worked with scout groups and classes from La Conner High School and Immaculate Conception Christian School. These students learned about the salmon life cycle, riparian restoration and native plants versus non-native invasives, and ways to keep their local salmon streams healthy.

Community Education: Programs were delivered to 7 service clubs, fishing clubs, teachers' groups, and general public groups. Other education projects included working with the North Cascades Institute to implement the *Skagit Watershed Education Project*. This project educates local elementary school students about salmon ecology and restoration through hands-on activities. SFEG helped the Skagit Conservation District with their *Stream Team* and *Watershed Masters* to educate adult volunteers about salmon restoration and watersheds and with their *6th Grade Conservation Tour* with a station about the salmon life cycle. Volunteers in the Watershed Masters program each give 40 hours of volunteer service related to watersheds within a year following this training. By bringing presentations and activities directly to those who fish, teach, and actively support community programs SFEG has an opportunity not only to generate awareness and energize new volunteers, but it can also be helpful in finding new program funding sources.

Skagit Watershed Council: SFEG is an integral part of the Lead Entity for the Skagit and Samish Watersheds. SFEG is one of seven founding members of the Skagit Watershed Council which now consists of 40 organizations working together to restore and protect salmon resources in our watershed. SFEG's staff and board serve on key committees that review and prioritize projects as well as creating a monitoring plan for projects. This year, the Lead Entity and its committees reviewed projects and put forward a prioritized list of 14 projects to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board requesting \$3.5 million. Funding decisions will be made in December 2004. In addition, SFEG was active on the Monitoring Subcommittee as they created a plan for collecting data to track the effectiveness of restoration projects.

Monitoring, Studies and Design

Monitoring: Volunteers assisted SFEG's Monitoring Coordinator at 44 project sites to perform spawner surveys, monitor vegetation, conduct instream habitat monitoring, collect macroinvertebrates and take photos at reference points. About 60 volunteers were trained at workshops to utilize protocols for the five different monitoring programs. Dedicated volunteers walked 16.5 miles of creeks each week to count returning salmon this winter. Monitoring has become an essential component of all restoration projects. Documenting results from projects provides much needed data to funders and partner organizations. We also formed an exciting new partnership with the Earthwatch Institute to train their volunteers to assist with collecting data. SFEG has been participating on the Monitoring Committee for the Skagit Watershed Council as they develop a Monitoring Plan for our watershed.

Skagit River Stewards: During the seventh year of the Skagit River Stewards program, 19 volunteers contributed 157 hours for training and collecting biological samples at 8 restoration sites. This program is a successful partnership with the Forest Service and North Cascades Institute to conduct monitoring to track the health of tributaries to the Wild and Scenic Corridor of the Skagit River. Volunteers are primarily collecting aquatic macroinvertebrates to track stream health, but must also be trained to collect a variety of other physical parameters in order to make the biological data useful.

Feasibility Studies: This year SFEG began two feasibility studies both funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. The Lower Day Creek Feasibility Study is looking at the historical habitat conditions of Lower Day Creek and Day Creek Slough and comparing this to existing habitat conditions. A GIS consultant was hired to put together a series of historical surveys and photographs from 1860 to present. SFEG will take this product and work with the Forest Service to develop restoration and protection actions. The Wiseman Creek Feasibility Study is looking at restoration alternatives that will restore more natural sediment delivery and deposition patterns as well as reestablish improved salmon passage and habitat. A technical advisory team has been put together and tasks are being undertaken to conduct this study.

Project Development: SFEG's Project Committee engaged in a planning effort that identified Focal Areas for future restoration efforts. There are two principal goals to the establishment of Focal Areas: 1) to focus SFEG's efforts on those areas where SFEG can have the greatest contribution to the health of native fish populations, and 2) to integrate SFEG's outreach and education programs with its restoration projects in a way that makes both more effective. The Focal Area Planning document is meant to provide a guide for project development over the next five years.

Budget Summary, July 2003 - June 2004

INCOME	EXPENSES
Public Funds \$ 454,888	Projects & Programs \$ 477,495
Private Funds \$ 64,338	Administration (12%) \$ 66,571
Total Cash Income \$ 519,226	Total \$ 544,066
In-Kind Donations \$ 129,596	
Total \$ 648,822	

Board and Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Dick Knight, *President*, Retired Environmental Engineer
 Dan Ballard, *Vice President*, Ret Insurance Agency Owner
 Bruce Freet, *Secretary*, Environmental Mediator
 Deene Almvig, *Treasurer*, Retired Educator

Ken Urstad, Retired Forester

Arn Thoreen, Retired Commercial Fisher

Stephen Hopley, Retired Commercial Fisher
 Bob Carey, Program Manager-The Nature Conservancy
 Jeanne Glick, Printwise, Inc.- co-owner
 Tim Hyatt, Fisheries Biologist-Nooksack Tribe
 Jim Johnson, Retired High School Teacher
 Kay Howe, Educator

STAFF:

Alison Studley, *Executive Director*
 Lucy Applegate, *Outreach Coordinator*
 Perry Welch, *Project Manager*

RESTORATION CREW:

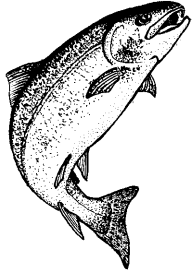
Dan Jacobson, *Supervisor*
 Kevik Rensink, *Monitoring Coordinator*
 Bob Keller
 Dwayne Massey
 Anna Casey, *Washington Conservation Corps*



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INSIDE...

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Annual Report 2003-2004



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Involving Communities in Restoring Watersheds of
Skagit County, the San Juan Islands and Northern Whidbey
Island

SFEG is a non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. Tax ID#94-3165939