



# THE REDD

The Newsletter of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group  
*Dedicated to Restoring Wild Salmon for Future Generations*

Volume 16, Issue 2 • Summer 2010

## Skagit Valley Food Co-op's 4% Friday Raises Money for Junior Stream Stewards



JSS students take it all in at North Cascades National Park

We'd like to offer a big THANK YOU to Skagit Valley Food Co-op and to all who shopped there on Friday, June 25. SFEG received 4% of the days' sales, which amounted to a generous contribution toward our Junior Stream Stewards program. Thank you Co-op and community!

Junior Stream Stewards, a service-learning program for middle school students, is gearing up for the 2010-11 school year, once again engaging local 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in exploring and improving their neighborhood watersheds. Students will embark on watershed tours and implement projects to help raise awareness and improve salmon habitat in tributaries of the Skagit and Samish Rivers. The contribution from the Co-op will help pay for things like trees to be planted along stream banks and the cost of busses for student field trips. In addition to financial assistance, we also seek volunteers who would like to help with program instruction. Contact the SFEG office if you would like to assist or donate to this program.



Above - Conway students plant a cedar tree at Little Fisher Creek.  
Left - Concrete students transplanting young cedar trees grown from seeds collected near their school.



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From The President ~ Bruce Freet.....	page 2
Thanks and Good Luck to our Interns and Volunteers.....	page 3
What's Happening in the Samish River.....	page 4
What's That Oily Sheen on the Water .....	page 6

Volunteer Spotlight .....	page 6
Become a Member .....	page 7
Whale Watch Companies Donate Earth Day Proceeds .....	page 7
Calendar of Events .....	page 8

## From the PRESIDENT

### What is a Redd?

A female salmon uses her tail to dig a nest in the gravel. After she deposits her eggs the male fertilizes them. The female then covers the fertilized eggs with gravel from upstream and the resulting nest is called redd.

**Our mission** is to build partnerships that educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship in order to enhance salmonid populations.

### Board of Directors:

**Bruce Freet**, President  
**Jeanne Glick**, Vice President  
**Deene Almvig**, Treasurer  
**Ned Currence**, Secretary  
**Kurt Buchanan**  
**Oscar Graham**  
**Jim Johnson**  
**Chris Kowitz**  
**Robin LaRue**  
**Boshie Morris**  
**Patrick O'Hearn**  
**Mike Olis**

### BOARD MEETINGS

The SFEG Board meets the 4th Tuesday of each month. The public is welcome to attend.

### Staff:

**Alison Studley**, Executive Director  
**Sue Madsen**, Restoration Ecologist  
**Lucy DeGrace**, Outreach Coordinator  
**MaryMae Hardt**, Finance Manager  
**Michelle Murphy**, Stewardship Manager  
**Joe George**, Restoration Technician  
**Kyle Koch**, Restoration Technician  
**Andy Beckman**, Restoration Technician  
**Bengt Miller**, Restoration Technician  
**Neil Vargas**, Restoration Technician  
**Sarah Davis**, WA Conservation Corps  
 Restoration Assistant  
**Katie Moyer**, WA Service Corps  
 Outreach Assistant

### Contact us:

360-336-0172  
 sfeg@skagitfisheries.org  
 PO Box 2497  
 Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Some esteemed members of the staff and Board of Directors have kidded me about not getting “Off the Hook” again from writing an article for our newsletter, so here it is from a fly fishing guy who uses “barbless” hooks, and releases fish ... well, the vast majority of them.

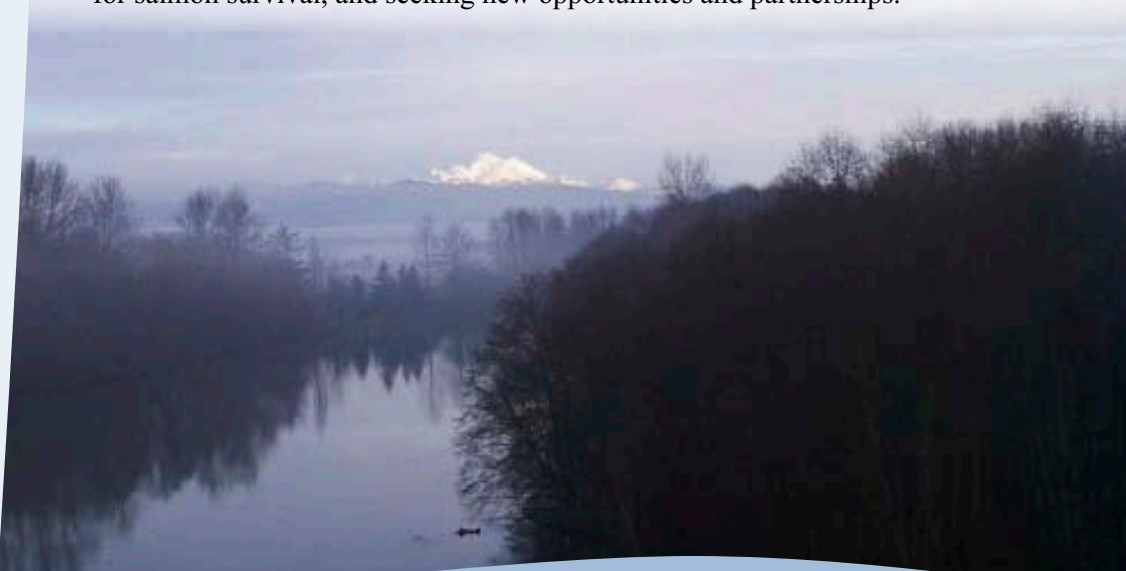
First, here are some observations about Skagit River Watershed stewardship. Starting at the upper watershed, the Skagit River in Skagit Valley Provincial Park, British Columbia is a beautiful, gin-clear stream with bull trout and rainbow trout. It is designated as a ‘blue ribbon trout stream’, catch with single barbless hook, and release all fish. Moving downstream, we have the National Park Service managing Ross Lake National Recreational Area primarily as wilderness, except for the Seattle City Light hydroelectric reservoirs (Ross, Diablo, and Gorge Dams). Below the dams, the river from the mouth of Bacon Creek to Sedro-Woolley flows as a Wild and Scenic River. While afforded the least protection under the ‘recreational’ category, it nonetheless was one of the first rivers in the nation to gain protection with the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. The Skagit River Wild and Scenic River corridor was expanded in 1978 to include most of the Cascade, Sauk, and Suiattle Rivers (tributaries), and is managed by the Forest Service. Today, this forms 100 miles of scenic and 58.5 miles of recreational Wild and Scenic river corridor. It also establishes an important stewardship precedent and makes a valuable natural resource conservation statement by protecting critical salmon and steelhead habitat.

The Nature Conservancy has led the effort to have over 14 miles of Illabot Creek designated as Wild and Scenic with the greatest protection of ‘wild’. Illabot Creek is important habitat for Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout (all threatened species), plus other salmonid species. The Illabot Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill passed the House of Representative in October 2009, and is awaiting a Senate vote. Now, the National Park Service is recommending Wild and Scenic designation for nearly 33 more miles in the Skagit Watershed including: 11 miles of Skagit River from Bacon Creek to the Gorge Dam Powerhouse, 12.7 miles of Goodell Creek, and 9 miles of Newhalem Creek as part of its Ross Lake National Recreation Area General Management Plan. Your comments regarding this recommendation and the Management Plan can be made at [www.nps.gov/noca](http://www.nps.gov/noca).

This creates the foundation for our salmon habitat restoration efforts. While we have certainly made improvements and continue to do so, I am proud to say that we are maintaining past work sites, monitoring our projects to assure better conditions for salmon survival, and seeking new opportunities and partnerships.



**Bruce Freet**  
*President*





# Thanks and Good Luck to SFEG Summer Interns and Volunteers!

SFEG Projects have greatly benefited this year from the efforts of a number of interns and dedicated volunteers. **Matt Kurle** of Mount Vernon has assisted us since the end of March by helping to lead the volunteer instream monitoring program, and by cheerfully pitching in with other work as needed. Matt is currently enrolled in the Environmental Science Program at Western Washington University, and expects to graduate this fall. **Stacey Benson** also helped with the instream monitoring program this summer as part of the Learning Into Action program through Skagit Valley College. **Allen Weese** of Mount Vernon took on a leadership role in our vegetation monitoring program, and in addition to helping gather data on past project sites he constructed a plant press that will be a wonderful tool for training future interns and volunteers on native plant identification. Allen is enrolled in Skagit Valley College's Environmental Conservation Program. Allen was ably assisted by dedicated volunteer **Sharon Demuth**. We'd also like to thank **John Rohde** for his dedication in helping maintain our nursery and assisting field staff 1-2 days each week with whatever they threw at him. John is currently enrolled at Bellingham Technical College and worked with us to fulfill his Service Quarter requirements. A fond farewell to **Gene DiPietro**, who has been an active volunteer since getting involved in our spawner survey program last year. Gene was recently hired by the Suquamish Tribe as a water resources technician; congratulations Gene, and best of luck!

Last but by no means least, we will all greatly miss **Sarah Davis**, a WCC Intern who has worked with SFEG's restoration program over the past year, and **Katie Moyer**, who worked as our Outreach Assistant through Washington Service Corps. Thanks to you all!



## Goodbye from Sarah

It is hard to believe that my second Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) term is coming to an end. These past two years have been an amazing and eye opening experience. When I first began working with the WCC, I was uncertain of which direction to take. But thanks to SFEG and WCC, I have found my passion in life. I have fallen in love with Washington State, as well as Skagit County. I am hoping to pursue a career in environmental resource management. I have had an amazing year working with the SFEG staff and volunteers. Their enthusiasm and passion for salmon enhancement, as well as the environment, has been truly inspiring!



Above - Allen Weese & John Rohde conducting vegetation monitoring



Left - Matt Kurle instructs volunteers in determining bankfull width



## Goodbye from Katie

Thank you to everyone for a great year and a great experience! I completed my ten and a half month AmeriCorps term with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group in mid-July. In that time I helped to teach 350 middle school students in our Junior Stream Stewards Program, as well as an additional 240 students of all ages through classroom presentations and service projects. Getting kids outside was so much fun - one of my favorite times teaching was collecting macroinvertebrates with a group of high school girls who totally got into it (not to mention the looks they gave me when I told them to tuck their jeans into their socks so they would fit into boots better). I also helped facilitate the spring and fall volunteer planting events, coordinated hatchery tours, conducted spawner surveys and in-stream monitoring (I only kind of fell in once...), and a whole host of other interesting tasks. I am so lucky to have worked with the many talented and friendly Skagit Fisheries volunteers and staff. Working in streams was a kick, and I am now considering going back to school to study some sort of aquatic science.

Thank you again for all of your guidance and support. I look forward to seeing you all around our beautiful valley!

# What's Happening in the Samish River – Part 2

*By Kurt Buchanan – SFEG Board member, retired fish biologist*

*A year ago in the fall 2009 newsletter, I told you about the on-going fecal bacteria pollution issues in the Samish River. This is the update. A lot has happened; a lot remains to be done.*

The high fecal bacteria pollution levels, and where the bacteria is, and how it gets into the river are largely unchanged from one year ago. The place is still a mess. Volunteers have faithfully sampled 20 big rainstorm events throughout the watershed, and we have widely reported the results as a series of “poop maps”. The County, and other Stream Team volunteers have also faithfully sampled on a two-week schedule; this information has also been widely presented and distributed. The collective sampling efforts throughout the watershed have been intensive. We have found that if it hasn't been raining hard, the river is mostly within clean water standards for fecal bacteria. If it has rained hard and/or had a large snow melt, the river and most of its tributaries are badly polluted by fecal bacteria. These things we knew from our 2008 sampling. We have seen it again in our 2009/10 sampling. Sections of river where bacterial rise is the greatest, and the badly polluted tributaries are also as we knew before. We have, however, discovered something new. During the depth of the winter's really rainy season (most of November through the end of February), bacteria pollution levels are the lowest of the year. Then something bad happens, fast. Beginning in March, pollution rapidly rises throughout the basin, getting higher and higher through April, May, and June. Then summer gets here, it quits raining, and things look good again. But every time it does rain a lot through late summer and fall, the pollution levels rise again. So, we now have a much clearer idea how, and when, fecal pollution happens in the Samish River watershed. But is anyone doing anything to clean it up? The answer is mixed.

## Talking

In the last year, agencies like Ecology, Dept. of Ag., Skagit Conservation District, Skagit County, and quite a list of others have gotten together to talk about the problem, and devise a game plan on who is supposed to do what, and by when. Such a high-level work group has never happened in Skagit County before. This

mostly agency group continues to have meetings. Ecology Dept. has handed the program leadership over to Skagit County. There have been a number of public meetings in the county to bring information about the problem to local residents, and also some agriculture/manure “best management practices” -related workshops for area land owners and articles in the paper, and on websites, etc. At this point, you'd have to be living under a rock not to have heard some part of the Samish pollution story.

Throwing money at the problem – Skagit County has done that, in a big way. The County Commissioners decided to continue the Clean Water District program, and to increase the tax assessment that goes along with it. This program is to deal with pollution prevention in various targeted watersheds, including the Samish, and to expend its tax funds accordingly. SFEG receives some of this money specifically to do Samish watershed restoration/education/planting work. This spring the County has received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency for nearly one million dollars, to be spent on Samish pollution issues over a three-year period. This is particularly to help better identify properties where pollution is coming from, and to correct these problems. So, for the County, lack of funds and staff should no longer be an issue causing delay in Samish clean-up. Large dollar clean-up work in the Samish has not been seen since the mid 1990's when septic issues in the towns of Blanchard and Edison were fixed.



Pete Haase, Jack Middleton, Kurt Buchanan and Bill Bowen installed the new Friday Creek interpretive sign at Donovan Park.



## Staff Time

Both Dept. of Ecology, and Skagit County staff have been working together since fall 2009 to visit properties throughout the most badly polluted sections of the Samish. This level of staff commitment has never happened before. These inspections are looking at all sources of fecal pollution, including septic and animal. When a problem is found, the landowner has been directed to do some immediate clean-up work. Landowners on Parsons Creek (one of our SFEG salmon spawning survey creeks) fenced off livestock and provided off-channel watering areas and the fecal pollution has been greatly reduced as a result. Landowners with inspections resulting in animal manure issues are directed to the Skagit Conservation District. District staff then works with them to devise a Farm Plan and then obtain funding to do required repairs and improvements. This takes time; time to do the planning, time to get agreement from the landowner and agencies concerned with pollution, time to find funding to do the improvements, and then time to actually get the work done. And make sure it works, and keeps working. Those properties needing septic improvements are directed to the County Health Department. There are low cost loans available to assist on these improvements. Understanding the septic problems on a property, having an improvement plan done, agreed upon, funded, and actually built, also all takes time. And that's where we are right now, September 2010, in the place where time moves slowly. Too slowly for me, but ..... It takes time to fix this big a mess.

If we measure success in the Samish by greatly improved water quality, rain or shine, then so far we have failed, utterly. But, it seems to me that we are not yet at the time to take that final measurement. We are in a time of waiting, persevering, and making sure that things get done. Making sure that pollution sources are thoroughly and very specifically identified. The County and Ecology are not even close to having that all pinned down. Making sure that farm and septic improvement plans get done, funded, built, and monitored to see they actually work and keep working. This whole process is in the beginning stages even now. Making sure that the agency and political will that is so evident right now stays strong over the period of actually getting this fixed. We haven't fixed up much, yet. Cold feet can happen quickly. Making sure that all this mess finally gets fixed requires an engaged public, not just landowners in the watershed. Keeping the public's attention, focused, over the waiting time required may be the toughest part. It's tough to be patient as the pollution continues.

What we need are some more actual successes to show off. Bob Smith Creek, the site of SFEG's first restoration project in 1991, still has high levels of fecal bacteria. We ought to work with the property owners as we did so long ago, and help them make this a far cleaner and more productive creek. It's what we do; as we have always done for 20 years. What do you think?

For more on what's happening in the Samish, visit [www.skagitcounty.net/cleanwater](http://www.skagitcounty.net/cleanwater).



### Flows to Samish Bay: Samish Watershed Sporting New Signs

Next time you're traveling through the Samish Watershed, be sure to take note of the new stream crossing signs. Thanks to funding from the state's Puget Sound Partnership, Skagit Conservation Education Alliance (SCEA), Skagit Conservation District, and SFEG collaborated on the development and placement of the signs, with assistance from the Public Works departments of Skagit and Whatcom Counties for installation. At each major crossing you'll notice the message "Flows to Samish Bay." Also part of the project, a detailed interpretive sign was designed by SFEG Americorps intern Katie Moyer. Volunteers installed the sign at Donovan County Park on Friday Creek Road on August 5. Be sure to check it out when you're in the Alger area!



# What's that Oily Sheen on the Water?

*By Joe George*



As you walk through a wetland area you may come across what looks like an oily sheen on the water, from shades of gray to rainbow colors. As you continue your walk you also notice a fuzzy light brown to orange color coating on the substrate near the creek. Most people's first thought is pollution, but it is a natural occurring bacteria. These bacteria belong to a group called Chemolithotrophs (kē'mō-līth'ə-trōf'), which obtain their energy through the oxidation of inorganic compounds. How can you tell if the film is bacteria growth or oil? By poking at it. When you poke at the film and it breaks up and does not bind back together, then it is bacteria. If you poke at it and it immediately rejoins back together again, then it is oil. The color comes from the oxidation of manganese (black to gray) and iron (browns to orange). Chemolithotrophs are always present; only when the conditions are right do they multiply enough to be seen. This bacterium is not harmful, but is essential to many forms of life. If it was not for bacteria, there would not be enough dissolved iron or manganese needed by plants and animals as nutrients.

## Volunteer Spotlight - Gene DiPietro

I have been volunteering with SFEG since October 2009, after signing up for a workshop to learn how to perform salmon spawner surveys. I've found that the SFEG website advertises more challenging and interesting volunteering opportunities than other RFEGs in the Puget Sound area. Their website also offers a good level of transparency about the work that they do, and it is organized and up to date. Since becoming connected with the group I have performed instream monitoring, vegetation monitoring, riparian planting, office work, and participated in various other surveys and projects. I find it very stimulating to be involved with like-minded people who want to make a difference for the environment, and who are particularly passionate about aquatic ecosystems.



## Wish List

### **Board meeting space**

A meeting room is needed once per month for evening board meetings. We need space to accommodate up to 20 people.

### **Building**

We are still looking for a place to relocate! We need roughly 3000 to 3500 sq ft of office and shop/warehouse space and secure outdoor parking space for 3 vehicles and a trailer, preferably in the vicinity of Mt Vernon, Burlington or Sedro Woolley.

**Contact Alison at [astudley@skagitfisheries.org](mailto:astudley@skagitfisheries.org)**

# Become a Member

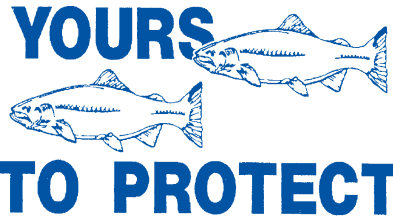
## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_



## MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

- Individual \$20
- Family/Household \$35
- Supporter \$100
- Benefactor \$500
- Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to S.F.E.G and send to P.O. Box 2497, Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
SFE~~G~~ is a non-profit 501 c(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

\* OR give online at [www.skagitfisheries.org](http://www.skagitfisheries.org) using a secure server \*

## There's still time to renew your 2010 membership!

This year we are **celebrating 20 years** of engaging our community in restoring wild salmon populations. Over the last two decades **community members like you have played a vital role** in ensuring the future of local salmon resources by providing volunteer effort and funding for the projects, programs and infrastructure that make this work possible.

**It's time now to update your membership** to ensure that valuable projects and programs continue to exist in our community to keep our watersheds healthy and clean for salmon and people.

Becoming a member of SFEG helps **support unique education programs** such as Junior Stream Stewards as well as **volunteer monitoring efforts** vital to understanding the impact of our restoration projects. Becoming a member supplies **critical funding to these important efforts** as well as links you with like minded individuals working to ensure the future of salmon and the health of our watersheds.

**We hope you will consider becoming or updating your membership now.**

## Whale Watch Companies Donate Earth Day Proceeds

SFEG's work to restore salmon populations is not just good for salmon. It's also good for the 137 other species of fish and wildlife that depend on them, such as orca whales. The Pacific Whale Watch Association consists of hard-working, dedicated whale watching companies committed to research, education, and responsible wildlife viewing. Member companies depart from 13 different ports in Washington State and British Columbia, Canada surrounding the San Juan Islands. SFEG would like to thank the Association for its support of our mission and specifically the members who contributed a portion of their profits from their Earth Day cruises in 2010: San Juan Excursions and Western Prince Whale & Wildlife Tours. If you are looking to take a whale watching cruise please consider giving your business to one of these supporting companies. More information about the companies and the Association is available at [www.pacificwhalewatch.org](http://www.pacificwhalewatch.org).



Killer Whales  
(Orcinus orca)  
Photo: NOAA



**SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP**  
P.O. Box 2497  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MT. VERNON, WA  
PERMIT #26

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*Dedicated to Restoring Wild Salmon for Future Generations*

## Calendar of Events & Volunteer Opportunities

**September 18: Fidalgo Bay Day**, Anacortes – A community celebration of Fidalgo Bay. Exciting activities for kids including fish prints, face painting, a touch tank, and much more! Meet sea creatures and marine scientists. Learn all about the wonders of the sea and keeping our waters clean. SFEG will host a display and activity booth, and we will need a few volunteers to run and take down the display in the afternoon.

**September 25: Family Day at the Creek, Donovan Park**, on Friday Creek Road south of Alger – join SFEG and friends noon-2pm for family-friendly games and activities to learn about Friday Creek and its critters. Volunteers needed to assist with info stations and activities.

**October 2: SFEG Spawner Survey Volunteer Training Workshop**, at Cascades Job Corps campus in Sedro Woolley – Learn to identify different species of salmon and their redds (nests), and document populations at stream restoration sites.

**October 16: Samish Watershed Tour** – Join us for a guided tour of the Samish River system. Learn about ongoing salmon habitat restoration projects and water quality issues, and what you can do to help. We'll rent a van, so please reserve your seat by Tuesday, October 12.

**October 30 - November 20: Fall Planting Parties**, various locations throughout Skagit County – Help restore salmon habitat- these plants will provide shade for salmon and woody habitat in the stream for aquatic insects, which in turn provide food for the salmon. Check our website or watch your mail/email for detailed announcement.

**December 4: Hatchery Tour Training** – As a Hatchery Tour Guide, you can teach the public fascinating facts of the Marblemount Hatchery and Skagit salmon during the 2010-11 season. Volunteers will lead tours each Saturday and Sunday from December 5 through January 30.

**Volunteer today! Call 360-336-0172**  
or visit [www.skagitfisheries.org/opportunities.html](http://www.skagitfisheries.org/opportunities.html)