

## *From the President*

*By Bruce Freet*



First of all, the “bottom line” is that the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is making a difference by restoring salmon habitat! A sample of several possible measures for success reveals:

- In our strategic focal area of Finney Creek, water temperature and sediment loads have declined as our efforts have moved the stream flows back into a channel with pools, runs, and riffles. What a pleasure it was to see several salmon species spawning there this fall.
- Our spawning surveys are finding higher numbers of returning salmon than usual in most of the Skagit and Samish River tributaries.
- While we could certainly use more funding, our Junior Streams Stewards educational program is reaching more public schools and children every year.
- While we need your membership and donations, ninety percent of our funding goes directly into salmon restoration projects and seventy-five percent of our funding comes from grant requests our staff has written.
- And consider our enthusiastic volunteers, who on Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, planted over 1,000 native trees for riparian shade and bank stabilization at Howard Miller Steelhead Park.

Looking within SFEG, our Relocation Committee has looked at several properties, but is still seeking a new office, shop, and nursery facility and hopefully we can find it in 2010. Again, if you are aware of any rental properties that would enable us to combine our operations, please contact us. Staff-wise, I am excited to inform you that we did hire a Restoration Ecologist, Sue Madsen. As a fluvial geo-morphologist with 15 years of experience, she brings a unique set of salmon habitat restoration skills to serve us and contribute to our collaboration with partner organizations.

Looking beyond SFEG to give you an update on the Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act (Senate Bill, S. 817, and House Bill, H.R. 2055), both Bills have been ‘Referred to Committee’. As I discussed in the last Newsletter, this Act will create a proactive U.S. policy to focus federal support for public and private incentive-based efforts to protect the healthiest remaining salmon ecosystems ... a network of our most abundant, productive, and diverse salmon river ecosystems or ‘strongholds’. Earlier this year, it was endorsed by the entire West Coast Senate delegation (AK, WA, OR, and CA). In a Congressional Hearing, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supported this effort. The Wild Salmon Center organized a scientific Steering Committee, who gave the Skagit River watershed the highest rating as a potential ‘stronghold’ in the Pacific Northwest Region. While these Bills may or may not become federal law, we can use the ‘stronghold’ rationale to strengthen our collaborative efforts and related grant proposals now.