

the REEDD



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Dedicated to Restoring Wild Salmon for Future Generations

An Exstreamly Rewarding Experience

By **MADDY LOY, LAUREN ODE,** and **ALEXIS VIRNIG**

As this summer's vegetation monitoring interns, we have had a memorable and exciting experience at SFEF. We fish our time was not coming to an end!

Our duties included going out to various restoration plantings and monitoring how well the plants within that area are doing. We traveled to some amazing places that otherwise we would have not gone to and got familiar with the native plants of the Pacific Northwest. While at the sites we used monitoring techniques to accurately depict the survival of the plants. Such techniques include using twine to measure plot area, a stadia rod to measure height in feet, and data sheets to record the

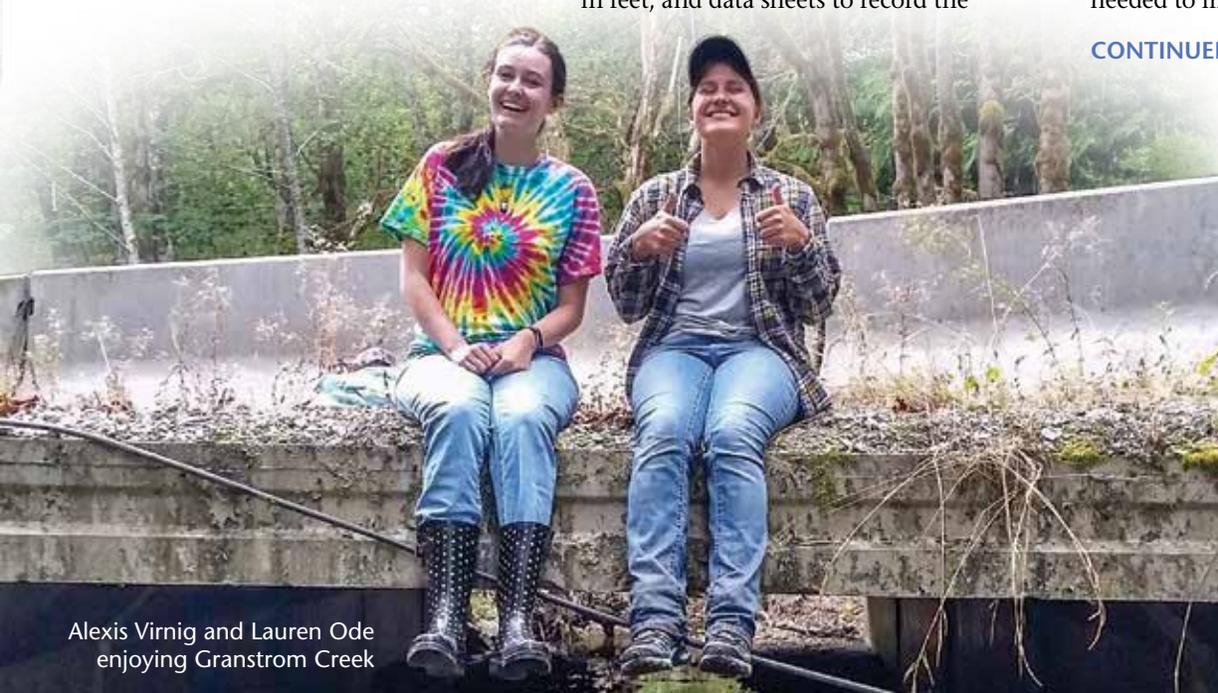
valuable information. While surveying the plots, we learned about native plants and how to identify them after they have become "grazed anatomy".

We are students going into our senior year at Western Washington University, just living the stream. We are all Environmental Science majors within Huxley College of the Environment. This internship at SFEF has been extremely beneficial to our education. Prior to this internship, we were not as knowledgeable about native plants and how to identify them. This has also given us a better understanding of how restoration projects work, the ecology within the systems, and the organization needed to implement restoration work.

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ABOVE: Alexis Virnig, Lauren Ode, and Maddy Loy on a rainy day at Granstrom



Alexis Virnig and Lauren Ode enjoying Granstrom Creek

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the REDD

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 and the resulting nest is called a redd.

MISSION

Our mission is to educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship to enhance wild salmonids.

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BOARD MEETINGS

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

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Exstreamly Rewarding

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Working with the SFEG staff has been a pleasure. Everyone who works in the office and in the field are hard workers who are very determined to ensure the productivity of the Skagit Valley's rivers and streams. We are extremely thankful for this opportunity to help with the

projects and learn more about them, as well as being able to be a part of an organization that does outstanding work throughout the Skagit area. Willow ways remember this summer and the amazing people we worked with, and we will miss them all snowberry much.

We believe that this experience is enriching for everyone from staff to interns to community volunteers. We recommend volunteering with the vegetation monitoring interns for summer 2017. What are you wading for?

Sincerely,
Alexis, Maddy, and Lauren.

Help us Welcome the New AmeriCorps members!



My name is **KAYLANI SIPLIN** and I am the new Washington Service Corps Education Associate for this year. I was born and raised in Everett, but eventually made my way to Bellingham where I graduated from Huxley College at Western Washington University. Here I received both a B.A. in Environmental Education with an emphasis in outdoor education/interpretation and a B.S. in Environmental Science with an emphasis in marine ecology. During my time at WWU, I worked as an interpreter at the Seattle Aquarium and as an environmental educator with the Friends of Moran State Park on Orcas Island. Since college I have been working as an outdoor environmental educator at YMCA Camp Orkila on Orcas Island.

Being able to share information about the local environment and give kids (adults too!) of all ages experiences in nature has been more than rewarding. I am very excited to be working with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and have the opportunity to continue educating kids and help them to foster a connection with salmon and their local watersheds.



Greetings! My name is **LINDSAY WARNE** and I'm joining the SFEG team as the new Washington Service Corps Outreach Associate. I graduated Middlebury College in Vermont with a degree in Geography and Environmental Studies in 2015. Since graduation, I have worked in the solar industry in Vermont and on a fire ecology study in the North Cascades. In this new role, I look forward to working with the local community and supporting the region's rich tradition of salmon. When I'm not enhancing fisheries, I can be found skiing, climbing or lurking in a coffee shop.



Hi, I am **TAYLOR SCHMUKI** and I am excited to be this year's Washington Conservation Corps Restoration Technician. Born in Phoenix, my parents quickly learned I was a fish out of water. Spending the first years of my life swimming every day, I dreamt of the time when I would live among the sea creatures. After getting my Bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Wildlands Conservation from Brigham Young University, I convinced my husband to take a risk and move to Washington to follow my childhood dreams. Now I am receiving the opportunity to not only use my degree, but to pursue my passion of helping conserve our precious water systems and the species that depend on them.

Outside of work, I live by the motto "mountains and mermaids." Summiting peaks, kayaking down rivers, or running 2.5 miles to swim at a lake near my house are some of my favorite things. If adventure is out there, I hope to be a part of it!

It's About WAY More

By LUCY DEGRACE

Summer 2016 was busy and fun, with many events and partnerships new and old. Along the way SFEG staff and volunteers had opportunities to learn and teach about many creatures, in addition to salmon, that rely on healthy watersheds.

Our first-ever SFEG trivia night was held in June, in partnership with North Sound Brewery and with donated prizes from many local businesses (Thank you!!).

This fundraiser was the brainchild of AmeriCorps members Kelly Sykes, Hanna Jones, and intern Patrick Hutchins. We met new people, learned a lot, and had our brains challenged by some great trivia questions! For example: Q: What is the Washington State Insect? Q: This is one of the most poisonous amphibians in the Pacific Northwest and the most poisonous of its kind in Washington State. It lays one egg at a time and attaches it to underwater debris. This amphibian displays a bright colored underside when threatened. Do

you know the answers? Kelly, Hanna, and Patrick did a super job putting it all together, and we hope to make it an annual tradition.

Students from Children of the Valley and Kulshan Youth Program learned about water chemistry, aquatic macroinvertebrates, native plants, and salmon life cycle during a stream study at Friday Creek and the Skagit River. After learning what lives in the riparian zone, Orlando Garcia's Kulshan Youth students helped remove three large contractor bags full of invasive morning glory from the riverbanks. Children of the Valley students will return for a service-learning project at Pomona Grange in October to improve the habitat they've learned about.



Testing pH of the Skagit River

Ruby and Rainah Douglas helped keep the Salmon Fest a Zero Waste event

Ready to teach a

than Just Salmon!



July continued with eelgrass activities at the Mount Vernon Children's Art Festival, in partnership with Skagit Watershed Council, Illuminated Wildlife, and the Museum of Northwest Art. Families learned about the many creatures that rely on healthy eelgrass beds in the nearshore environment.

As August rolled around, we once again joined Skagit Conservation District for their Kids in Nature at Pomona Grange County Park, to host a macroinvertebrate station at Friday Creek. We had both the smallest and largest crayfish we'd ever seen, and visitors of all ages delighted in learning about the life cycles of many common invertebrates and what they can tell us about the health of our streams. Fidalgo Bay Day brought the usual excitement for learning about creatures in the nearshore habitat. The afternoon

beach seine demonstration was, as usual, the highlight of the day. Eager visitors got to see surf smelt (aka salmon food) and shiner perch, among other marine species.

Our wild summer season of festival and fairs went out with a bang at the 5th Annual Skagit River Salmon Festival in September. Many people worked hard over the summer to make this event happen, including the many people who volunteered their time on the day of the event. About 5,000 visitors enjoyed this beautiful day of educational activities, great music, yummy food, and a little bit of silliness. Thank you to all the sponsors, vendors, performers, and conservation groups that contributed to this impressive event that gets better each year.



ABOVE: Intern Patrick Hutchins teaching students how to measure temperature of Friday Creek

BELOW: During the Fidalgo Bay Day beach seine visitors learned that surf smelt need beaches to spawn, and that shiner perch bear live young



about fish passage!

Kulshan Youth program participants removed bags of invasive morning glory from the banks of the Skagit River



SFEG volunteer Jim Johnson taught visitors about fish passage at Fidalgo Bay Day



Not so Friendly Fire

While wildfire in eastern Washington grabs more of the spotlight, fires are a natural form of disturbance in forests throughout the West—including Skagit County. Skagit County weaves town and county together in the “urban wildland interface” leading to conflict between the ambitions of humanity and the forces of nature. In addition to impacting human communities, fire has consequences for river habitat and its fish.

In the short term, direct exposure to fire can cause increased surface temperatures as well as cause longer-term cascading effects throughout the water system. For example, the removal of vegetation leads to reduced leaf litter that decreases the water infiltration that then leads to erosion. Finally, increased

erosion alters the physical characteristics of a stream channel, which causes habitat disruption and in extreme cases, fish kills. Further, this high sediment load could increase the need for processing in downstream water treatment plants.

However, forest health experts do not recommend fire suppression as fire is a necessary component in some ecosystems. While high intensity fires may increase habitat degradation, research supports that low to medium intensity fires maintain healthy ecosystems while reducing negative impacts such as erosion and debris. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group works to improve habitat by restoring vegetation and improving fish passageways. These efforts are the most effective when

paired with an overarching strategy that addresses the causes of habitat degradation such as wildfires. Prescribed burns have been recommended as a potential strategy to reduce fire intensity and minimize negative impact on both human and fish habitat. As climate change increases the intensity and frequency of wildfires, these strategies will only grow in importance.



ABOVE: Panorama below Gorge Dam, near Newhalem, after Upper Skagit Complex Wildfires of August 2015

BELOW: Record setting 2014 Carlton Complex fire set the stage for massive erosion on SR-20 near Loup Loup Pass.



SFEG IS A MEMBERSHIP BASED ORGANIZATION

If you are enjoying reading this newsletter, perhaps it's time that you became a member! Your membership dollars are critical to support the operation of SFEG (including producing this newsletter), allowing us to develop new projects with landowners, providing education programs to kids throughout our watersheds, and collecting monitoring data regarding restoration project sites to document successes.

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There's a Fungus Among Us

By **JOE GEORGE**

As we begin our yearly spawner surveys, brightly colored spawning salmonids are darting about, fighting for dominance and making redds. As the weeks pass by older salmonids start showing the wear and tear of spawning. Their bodies show gouges, bites, gashes and then there are those white spots of various sizes that start showing up on their bodies. The carcasses of spawned out salmon become covered with a brown fuzzy fungus.

This fungus is called Saprolegnia (sap-ro-leg-ni-ah). It is ubiquitous in the fresh water ecosystem.

It is a filamentous mycelium, white to gray in color, turning brown because of dirt. Spawning salmon are highly susceptible, with wounds resulting

from fighting, losing scales and a weakened immune system. This allows Saprolegnia to take hold and invade the epidermal tissue; mostly starting around the head or tail it continues to spread until the entire body is covered.

Saprolegnia can infect other teleost (ray-finned fish) besides salmonids such as suckers, bass, lamprey, and sturgeon. It is also associated with tropical fish as with guppies, kissing gourami and platy fish. Not only does Saprolegnia infect fish but also eggs. An opportunistic facultative parasite which is saprotropic (an organism that lives or feeds

on dead organic matter) and necrotropic (parasite that kills its host, then feeds of the dead matter). There are several different species of Saprolegnia and can germinate under different environmental conditions and nutrient levels.



RIGHT: Saprolegnia on a salmonid carcass





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Events Calendar *AND* Volunteer Opportunities

Salmon Sightings

October 15 (Saturday) Noon-3pm at Clark Creek, Marblemount

Join us for an opportunity to view and learn about salmon of the Skagit and Cascade rivers. Experts will be on hand to talk about salmon habitat and local restoration efforts. Directions: Take Highway 20 east to Marblemount. At the sharp curve in the road, continue straight and cross the Skagit River Bridge. Turn right onto Rockport-Cascade Road, then right onto Fish Hatchery Road. Park at the far end of the gravel lot (look for the blue tent) and follow the Clark Creek trail for salmon viewing.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

October 22 (Saturday) 6:30pm at the Lincoln Theatre, Mount Vernon

The Wild and Scenic Film Festival will show at the Lincoln Theatre for one night only on Saturday October 22. This unique Film Festival event will begin with a 6:30 pm reception, with films beginning at 7:30 pm. This event uses film to inspire conservation within our community. The Festival will feature two hours of environmentally themed short films that together represent the work of over 100 artists and directors. More info at www.skagitfisheries.org/wild-scenic-film-festival-2016

Fall Planting Parties

October 29, November 12, and 19, (Saturdays) 10am-1pm at various locations

Help restore native riparian plants in the Skagit Watershed! These plants will help restore salmon homes by providing shade and cover for salmon and leaf litter for aquatic insects, which in turn provide food for salmon. These riparian zones also improve water quality by controlling erosion and filtering pollutants. See our website (www.skagitfisheries.org) for directions and details.

Salmon Sightings

November 5 (Saturday) Noon-3pm at Oyster Creek, Blanchard;

Join SFEG and NSEA at Oyster Creek to view and learn about chum salmon. Experts will be on hand to talk about salmon habitat and local restoration efforts. Directions: From Chuckanut Drive, follow the road to Taylor Shellfish Farms. Limited parking will be available along the railroad on the approach to the shellfish farm. Please carpool!