2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Engaging our Community in Restoring Salmon
Our Skagit Valley and the surrounding Island communities are amazingly beautiful places. We at the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group are lucky enough to have the opportunity to work with hundreds of you each year to ensure that the Skagit remains a healthy and beautiful place for all of us to live, work, and play. We believe having healthy habitats which support plentiful salmon in our rivers, creeks and shorelines is part of what makes our corner of the world so unique and special. And we believe that our work to improve salmon habitat not only benefits salmon but also our entire community that values the birds, animals and the unspoiled beauty of the Skagit Valley. We greatly appreciate the contributions that each one of you makes to improve the health of the Skagit for salmon, as your work is also helping to ensure clean water, abundant wildlife, enjoyable recreation opportunities and a beautiful Valley for everyone.

As you read this Annual Report I hope you find great value in the work being done by our community. The accomplishments represent the collective efforts of many hard working volunteers, dedicated staff, supportive landowners, cooperative partners, and generous donors. To achieve these accomplishments our community is planting trees, restoring habitat, reconnecting waterways, counting salmon, sharing knowledge and teaching our youngsters. There is also significant work being done that isn’t well represented in these numeric accomplishments. We spend a substantial amount of effort laying the groundwork for large scale projects that will have big impacts in the future. And it is impossible to quantify the lasting impact of education programs in our schools. These programs are engaging kids outside of their classroom with hands-on learning experiences that ultimately fosters the next generation of engaged community members with a strong commitment to stewardship.

We thank you for your commitment to keeping the Skagit a healthy, beautiful place for all of us and we look forward to what we accomplish together over the coming year.

ALISON STUDLEY
Executive Director
SUMMARY OF 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RIPARIAN PLANTINGS
18,731 NATIVE PLANTS
Covering 21 acres along 1.6 miles

RIPARIAN MAINTENANCE
220 ACRES
of native plant care and invasive plant removal

HABITAT OPENED
1,954 FEET
of stream opened by removing fish passage barriers

COMMUNITY OUTREACH
1,942 INDIVIDUALS
Community members reached through outreach programs

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT
11,358 HOURS
Hours donated by community volunteers

KIDS EDUCATED
1,156 STUDENTS
Students engaged in environmental education programs

2016 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

INCOME
PUBLIC FUNDS: $1,000,304
PRIVATE FUNDS: $192,112
IN-KIND DONATIONS: $398,075
$1,590,491

EXPENSES
PROJECTS & PROGRAMS: $1,007,430
ADMINISTRATION (13%): $154,781
$1,162,211
Upper Day Slough fish passage improvement project, before (top) and after (bottom).

UPPER DAY SLOUGH FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT

Upper Day Slough provides important floodplain habitat for salmon along the middle Skagit River. However, three failing culverts blocked fish passage within this slough to 2,000 feet of high quality habitat. This summer the old culverts were replaced with a new bridge structure with grant funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Puget Sound Energy. Water flow has been greatly improved and salmon are readily using the new migration corridor to access excellent juvenile habitat.

R E S T O R I N G H A B I T A T

FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION

Reconnecting floodplain habitat is a high priority goal of the Skagit Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan. SFEG is currently working with three communities to assess existing habitat conditions and develop strategies for restoring salmon habitat and make other community improvements. In Marblemount, we are working with Skagit County Parks to restore and enhance historic side channel habitat in Pressentin Park. This project will both improve salmon habitat as well as enhance recreational amenities. In Hamilton, we are working with partners to develop a conceptual plan for restoring salmon habitat for Carey’s Slough. This restoration plan is intended to provide a community roadmap for implementing restoration actions over the next decade. And in Cedar Grove along the south side of the river at Ovenell Slough, we are working with landowners to develop designs for restoring fish passage and an undersized culvert crossing. Replacing this culvert with a footbridge will restore fish passage to valuable floodplain habitat while also improving recreational access. We look forward to sharing results from all of these communities in future reports.

STEWARDING OUR LANDS

Controlling the spread of invasive plants such as knotweed is incredibly important for healthy aquatic ecosystems. Invasive plants can out-compete native vegetation and are detrimental to salmon as well as many other wildlife species. The Upper Skagit Knotweed Program has been working since 2001 to control the spread of knotweed in the Skagit and Sauk watersheds. Last year SFEG continued its work with many partners including the Washington Conservation Corps and Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe to survey for knotweed along 55 miles of rivers and tributaries to protect and steward 18 square miles of important floodplain habitat.

Student interns assess habitat conditions in Carey’s Slough.

Partners map out a plan to survey for knotweed along the Sauk River.
NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

SFEG works with numerous landowners, volunteers and partners to plant thousands of native trees and shrubs along waterways each year. This critical work improves salmon habitat by shading streams which keeps water temperature cool; limiting erosional forces which keeps the water clear; and providing habitat for insects which salmon eat. Planting native plants along rivers, streams, and shorelines also provides habitat for many other species from herring and orcas to song birds, eagles, amphibians and much more. Last year volunteers, students and staff planted 18,731 native plants to restore 1.6 miles of habitat adjacent to waterways. Volunteers and interns also grow many of these native plants in our own native plant nursery on Samish Tribal land. Volunteers care for 10,000 native plants as they grow to a larger healthy size in pots before being planted at restoration sites.

MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

Volunteers become citizen scientists through training workshops that teach community members how to gather data that is used to track success at habitat restoration sites. Citizen scientists collect valuable data related to vegetation survival and growth, as well as document juvenile and adult salmon use at project sites. This year, volunteers and student interns donated over 2,200 hours collecting essential data to share with funders, researchers and public agencies. Adult salmon returns were up this year, making it an exciting year to be a citizen scientist.

SKAGIT RIVER SALMON FESTIVAL

Over 35 conservation organizations and agencies came together to celebrate and inspire greater community conservation for the remarkable natural and cultural resources of the Skagit River at the Skagit River Salmon Festival. SFEG continued to work with key partners to organize this 5th annual event held at the Swinomish Tribal Community’s Waterfront Park. Over 5,000 people attended the Festival to learn, engage and celebrate the amazing Skagit watershed and its vast resources.
JUNIOR STREAM STEWARDS

This school year long program engages middle school students in watershed and salmon-related studies, including a watershed exploration and a service-learning project within their school’s watershed. Last year, 530 students from five schools in Skagit County participated and completed this program. Students are engaged in learning about salmon and also their role in being stewards of habitat for the future.

“Science is so amazing!”
7th grade student from Cascade Middle School

“This is one of the best field trips I’ve ever been on!”
4th grade student from Lincoln Elementary

KIDS IN CREEKS

This K-12 school program includes both a classroom lesson and a hands-on service-learning project. Requests for this education program have increased as teachers have less time to devote to field trip experiences and still a strong desire to study watershed science and engage their students in learning more about salmon and being stewards in their own communities. In 2016, 531 students from 14 schools and youth groups completed community stewardship projects such as removing non-native invasive plants, planting native trees and shrubs, and removing old tree protectors.

Student discovers critters while planting trees at Pomona Grange Park as part of the Kids in Creeks program.

Students visit the Marblemount Hatchery as part of the Salmon in the Classroom program where they learn about the salmon life cycle and just how big an adult salmon can be.

SALMON IN THE CLASSROOM

This program engages elementary school students in learning the fascinating life cycle of salmon and their habitat needs through raising coho salmon in their schools. Coho salmon eggs are received from the Marblemount Hatchery and raised in large 55-gallon fish tanks in local classrooms. Students watch the eggs hatch, and feed their salmon until they grow large enough to be released in a local creek. This spring students from two Mount Vernon schools released about 400 young coho salmon into Trumpeter Creek with many hopes of seeing adult salmon return to spawn in a future fall.

“Nature is so beautiful.”
4th grade student from West View Elementary
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OUR STAFF

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Executive Director

LUCY DEGRACE
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STEPHANIE BLEVENS
(seasonal)

CATHERINE HARRIS
(seasonal)

AMERICORPS INTERNS 2016-17

TAYLOR SCHMUKI
Restoration Associate, Washington Conservation Corps

LINDSAY WARNE
Outreach Associate, Washington Service Corps

HANNA JONES
Outreach Associate, Washington Service Corps

OUR SUPPORTERS

We are very thankful to live, work and play in an area where our community cares so deeply for our natural environment. Our supporters understand the connection between having healthy salmon populations and the desire to have a healthy community for all of us. Your passion for watershed restoration means more salmon, more wildlife, more recreation opportunities, and greater enjoyment for all of us. We greatly appreciate your investment and the healthy communities you help to ensure for the future. A complete list of this year’s generous donors, businesses, schools, grantors, agencies, tribes and members is available in the online version of our 2016 Annual Report at SkagitFisheries.org.
### PARTNERS
- 501 Commons
- ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grants
- Anacortes Senior College
- Bay View Elementary School
- Beachwatchers of Island County
- Cascade Job Corps
- Cascade Middle School
- Centennial Elementary School
- Children of the Valley
- Chinook Species Foundation
- Coastal Volunteer Partnership
- Concrete Elementary School
- Conway Elementary School
- Earth Corps
- Edison Elementary School
- ESRI
- Family Forest Fish Passage Program
- Fidalgo Fly Fishers
- Immaculate Conception Regional School
- Island County Marine Resources Committee
- Kulshan Youth Program
- La Conner Elementary School
- La Conner Middle School
- Lincoln Elementary School
- Little Mountain Elementary School
- Lyman Elementary School
- Marblemount Hatchery
- Microsoft
- Mount Vernon High School
- Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- NOAA Restoration Center
- North Cascades Institute
- North Cascades National Park
- Northwest Straits Foundation
- Orcas Christian School
- Orcas Island Yacht Club
- Padilla Bay Foundation
- Patagonia Foundation
- Pioneer Center
- Puget Sound Energy
- Puget Sound Partnership
- Recreation and Conservation Office
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- Samish Hatchery
- Samish Indian Nation
- San Juan County
- San Juan Marine Resources Committee
- Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
- Seattle City Light
- Skagit Bald Eagle Awareness Team
- Skagit Conservation District
- Skagit Cooperative Weed Management Area
- Skagit County Parks and Recreation
- Skagit County Public Works
- Skagit Land Trust
- Skagit River Salmon Festival
- Skagit River System Cooperative
- Skagit Valley College
- Skagit Watershed Council
- Stewardship Partners
- Swinomish Tribal Community
- The Nature Conservancy
- Town of Concrete
- Town of Hamilton
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
- WA Department of Agriculture
- WA Department of Ecology
- WA Department of Fish & Wildlife
- WA Department of Natural Resources
- WA State Parks Department
- Washington Conservation Corps
- Washington Elementary School
- Washington Service Corps
- West View Elementary School
- Whatcom Community College
- Whatcom County Corrections
- Whatcom Land Trust
- Wild & Scenic Film Festival
- Wildcat Steelheaders

### PRIVATE LANDOWNERS
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- Larry and Samara Thomas
- Howard & Teri Tyra
- Roxanna Valdovinos
- Whatcom County Fire Station 16
Healthy Rivers, Healthy Salmon, Healthy Communities