

# the REEDD



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

*Dedicated to Restoring Wild Salmon for Future Generations*

## Migration Restoration

By **CORY FAKKEMA**, SFEG Restoration Technician

In the fast-paced, high-tech, ever-expanding world we live in, the most important action people can take to help salmonid populations is simple: protect what is left. We must inflict no harm and refuse to give up any wild and natural habitat that remains. Human influence on the environment has significantly contributed to the decline in salmon populations, but there are plenty of actions we can take to repair damages.

One of the most effective ways of protecting and improving salmon habitat is to make sure that fish can freely migrate up and downstream. Anthropogenic structures have interrupted the natural hydrology of creeks and rivers for centuries. Thousands of roads (dirt, gravel, and paved) used for all sorts of purposes (travel, recreation, logging, shipping, driveways, and easements) cross waterways with nothing left but a small pipe for water and aquatic organisms to pass through. Thankfully, there are a

number of entities and organizations that work hard to fix fish passage problems.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) helps small forest landowners remove undersized culverts thereby improving the ability for spawning salmon to migrate farther upstream and immediately increasing the amount of fish habitat. Other programs by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board tend to focus on fixing higher priority barriers that have the highest benefit to fish. Some say that fixing one barrier at a time is merely putting a band aid on a cut when the system as a whole is dying by a thousand cuts, but I argue that every little bit in the right direction counts; no detail is too small.

SFEG has been helping landowners to improve fish passage for 20 years. Sites like Silver Creek, where SFEG worked with the neighborhood road association and individual landowners to upgrade 3 culverts, and Colony Creek in partnership with Goodyear Nelson Hardwood Lumber, are examples of how SFEG has partnered with local organizations and communities to implement win-win projects helping fish move upstream and landowners access their property in safer and more sustainable ways. This year, SFEG has helped with 4 fish passage projects: Starbird Creek, Skrinde Creek, Lower Day Creek Slough, and Davis Slough. We are always looking for new sites and partners to team with on these types of projects. If you know of a fish passage barrier or have one on your property, please contact us: smadsen@skagitfisheries.org or 360-336-0172 ext 302.

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ABOVE: Parsons Creek coho photographed by volunteer Chris Brown

# 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 build partnerships that educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship in order to enhance salmonid populations.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## BOARD MEETINGS

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

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## From the Director

By **ALISON STUDLEY**

There are always a multitude of exciting things going on in the world of salmon, conservation and watershed stewardship in the Skagit, and this fall is no different. SFEG has six large in-stream restoration projects with local landowners that have been occurring during the low flow of late summer that are all wrapping up, while our school programs are just ramping up as students return to their classrooms refreshed and ready to learn. We have just hired two new AmeriCorps interns who are anxious to get their feet wet and start working with our volunteers. And our annual spawner survey workshop is just around the corner...which means the salmon are about to return to our local streams. Looking ahead, SFEG has some kind of volunteer opportunity or event going on just about every weekend now through Earth Day next year, so there is no shortage of ways to get involved or learn more about the Skagit watershed. It is an exciting time and it's no wonder there is a need for us to take a step back and do some prioritizing for the work we do in order to ensure we continue to do the best possible job we can with our limited funds.

This fall our board and staff will be working on updating our Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan will attempt to prioritize the many goals we have here in the Skagit to ensure we are focusing our efforts in way that has the most impact. To update this Plan we will not only be

looking inward, we will also be seeking input from some of our local stakeholders in order to ensure that we continue to be a successful, sustainable organization making a significant impact on recovering salmon and encouraging watershed stewardship for future generations. Many things have changed since 1990 when we were formed, and every few years we need to look ahead and ensure we are readjusting our course as needed. The restoration projects that used to be implemented by volunteer excavator operators using a sketch drawn on a napkin by landowners and fish biologists now require a great deal more complexity. Restoration projects often take years to go from conceptual idea to reality on the ground, testing the patience of many landowners. Project designs must be prepared by licensed engineers and receive permits from local, state and federal agencies in order to minimize impacts to all natural and cultural resources. Greater funds are needed to implement these projects with increasing complexity and there is much greater review at the local, regional and state levels to ensure limited funds are spent on the most important projects. As we proceed with our Strategic Planning process we will be addressing all these changes and also looking ahead to how we can make the greatest difference for salmon and our community in the years to come.



# Migration Restoration

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## A quick glimpse of how the projects work:

Parsons Creek is a tributary to the Samish River and had an undersized and failing culvert deemed 100% impassable by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Once permits were obtained and contractors were chosen, the culvert was removed during low fish passage flow, spawning gravel was imported and set in place, and a bottomless culvert was installed. The temporary construction disturbance led to sustainable fish passage and has allowed spawning salmonids into 3,500 feet of excellent habitat upstream. Since installing the bottomless culvert in 2006, SFEG volunteers have counted over 2,300 salmon in Parsons Creek, including Chinook, Coho, and Chum salmon.



**ABOVE:** Impassable culvert and new culvert allowing unobstructed fish passage in Parsons Creek

# Volunteer Spotlight

**JACK MIDDLETON**

## How did you get started volunteering with SFEG, and what volunteer projects are you involved in?

**JACK:** Starting back in 2008, Kurt Buchanan and Jim Johnson told stories about all the wonderful projects the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group was doing: removing fish barriers, designing and constructing in-stream woody debris, planting riparian buffers, potting nursery stock, and doing salmon spawner surveys. So, I began volunteering at planting parties and nursery potting. Great fun and camaraderie!

Later, fall spawner surveys at Mud Creek and Finnegan Creek (tributaries to Lake Samish) with Pete Haase and Dennis Parent were added. One year, my grandson, Colin, participated!

Another important activity was the Junior Stream Stewards program which Lucy DeGrace organized for seventh and eighth graders. She was visiting 20 local classrooms monthly with educational programs on watersheds, water quality, native plants, salmon life cycle and habitat, and restoration activities. I began participating in the fall salmon return and water quality field trips, and the spring planting service projects. It's great to get the kids outside! Kurt and Jim were right: SFEG gets an amazing amount accomplished for salmon restoration.

## Do you volunteer with any other organizations?

**JACK:** My other volunteering has included: Skagit County Composting and Recycling, Skagit Conservation Education Alliance, Skagit Conservation District, The Skagit Land Trust, Skagit Audubon Society, WSU Skagit Beach Watchers, The Swinomish and Samish Tribes, The Nature Conservancy, ReSources, and the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.



**ABOVE:** Jack Middleton plants with an Edison 8th grader at Mud Creek

## What inspires you to keep donating your time to salmon habitat restoration?

**JACK:** What I find the most rewarding and inspiring is to plant a tree with a kid. Some kids have never had the opportunity to even work a shovel or dig a hole. It's not only the mechanics of the thing - digging a hole, carefully removing the tree from pot, placing it just so in the hole, tamping the soil back around its roots - but then to stand back, admire our work, and to see that we are part of a larger team, and that together we are turning this field edge into a streamside forest buffer.

So, the tree gets liberated from its nursery pot, the salmon will get clean water and shade, the students realize that their trees will grow way bigger than they are, and they feel they are part of their own future now.



# 5,280

By MELANIE ANDERSON

When I received word that I had gotten the coveted job with Skagit Fisheries last September, I had no idea what I was in for. I was doe-eyed, enthusiastic, and green as summer. With so much opportunity and little time to waste, I packed my belongings and hit the road on the 1,200-mile journey that traversed smoky deserts, double rainbows, and rivers wider than a Southern Californian's wildest dream. The Emerald City found me nervous but eager, as I began my wildest chapter yet...

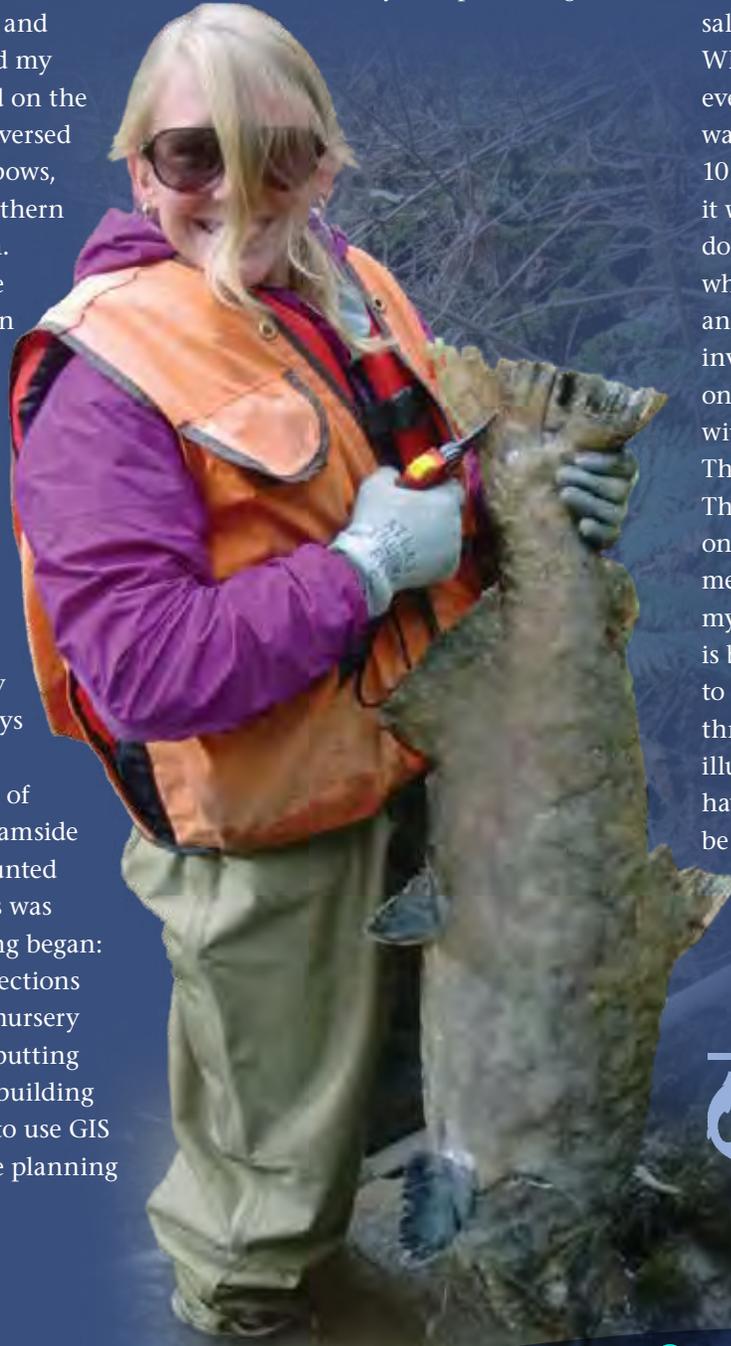
## 5,280

The first day was a whirlwind, my head spinning as I tried to count each individual salmon in Alder Creek (with Joe George quietly mocking my futile efforts). But the surveys became easier, and soon I found myself in the middle of February with hours of streamside walks and thousands of counted salmon under my belt. This was when the true shape-shifting began: I was pulled in multiple directions at once, having to prepare nursery plants for projects while inputting spawner survey data while building fences while learning how to use GIS while weed-whacking while planning

for Earth Day. My limits were pushed, my planner thickened with tasks, and my ability to prioritize was constantly questioned. The amount of hats I wore could easily fill up the Skagit

Fisheries office, and the existentiality of it all was hard to ignore. *Who am I? How did I find myself here, performing exhausting labor day-in and day-out?*

5,280. That was how many pink salmon I counted on my first day. Which was 5,280 more than I had ever seen before. Alder Creek's culvert was replaced 12 years ago and opened 10 miles of spawning habitat – and it worked! This is why I do what I do, why I nurtured 10,000 plants, why I individually weed-whacked and sprayed over 2-acres worth of invasive species, why I woke up at 5:30 on Saturday mornings to plant trees with volunteers in the pouring rain. Those 5,280 salmon changed my life. They gave me tangible perspective on what “salmon habitat restoration” means. They motivated me on even my toughest days. The Skagit Valley is brimming with people committed to changing the lives of thousands through their dedication to this illustrious animal. I am thankful to have been given the opportunity to be a part of their gallant efforts.



LEFT: Melanie Anderson and one big fish!

# 2014 Construction Update

By SUE MADSEN

Construction season is winding down and the SFEG restoration staff has been busy with projects throughout the Skagit and Samish Watersheds. We are actually involved in six separate construction projects this year. In May, Tiger Construction of Bellingham started work on a new 60-foot bridge on the South Skagit Highway where it crosses Davis Slough in the Day Creek area. SFEG and Skagit County have been working on conceptual plans and design for this Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)-funded project since 2010. In 2014 Skagit County received \$1.15 million in funding to complete construction. In August SFEG's restoration technicians, interns and volunteers from one of our Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews were on hand to help remove fish from the area prior to instream construction. The new stream channel was constructed in about 8 days, and flow was returned to the channel on August 20.

Project lead Cory Fakkema and Josh Boswell's WCC crew helped landowner Jim Kintzele and Nelson Construction Co. create off-channel refuge habitat along Thomas Creek in late August. Jim Kintzele and Kara Allen obtained

grant funding for this project under the Natural Resource Conservation Service's EQIP program. The project restores rearing and floodplain habitat on about 2 acres of the Kintzeles' small organic farm, and is a great example of how farming and fish can complement each other. You can help us plant native trees at this site later this fall.

In early September work started on three culvert replacement projects. Two of the sites, on Starbird and Skrinde Creek, are funded by the Washington Department of Natural Resources Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP). This program is a great opportunity for small forest landowners to obtain assistance with upgrading their roads. Together these projects will restore unrestricted access to more than 8 miles of habitat. The third barrier replacement site is on private property owned by Brian and Sandy Faber in the Day Creek area. That project is jointly funded by the SRFB, and by Puget Sound Energy (PSE). Work on the Faber's property site has included replacing three undersized farm-road culverts with a 60-foot bridge, and planting native trees and



ABOVE: The new bridge in place at Starbird Creek

shrubs on almost 20 acres of former farmland along the Skagit River and a side channel. This project represents one of the first on the ground efforts at restoring aquatic and riparian habitat for fish and wildlife funded as part of PSE's Baker River Project relicense. With PSE's support SFEG has also installed duck and bat boxes within the project area. In addition to creating habitat for Chinook, coho, and chum salmon we have been delighted to see majestic elk in the misty pasture some mornings, and to observe the antics of the resident otter family. The Skagit Valley is truly a special place.

None of these projects would happen without the enthusiastic participation of willing landowners, able assistance of design engineers, and hard work from local contractors and their crews. Please join us in thanking them all for their support of our work!



LEFT: Josh Boswell's WCC crew helping SFEG staff cable LWD in place at Jim Kintzele's restoration site.



# Summer Fun... *and Learning too!*

This summer SFEG staff, interns, and volunteers had lots of fun with youth in all sorts of educational pursuits.

On August 12 we spent the day with 10 teens in North Cascades Institute's Youth Leadership Adventures program. These 16-18 year olds from Washington and Oregon spent 14 days in the backcountry, living and learning together about science and sustainability in the North Cascades. They explored Ross and Baker lakes, developed outdoor skills, studied local impacts of climate change, and completed service projects on trails and campgrounds while practicing their leadership skills. SFEG staff engaged them learning about hatchery practices, removing invasive Scotch broom at a restoration site, and measuring biological and chemical water quality of local streams. It was an inspiration to spend the day with these bright, motivated young men and women! For more on this program visit <http://ncascades.org/signup/youth/YLA>

Another gorgeous August day was spent in Friday Creek, teaching families about the aquatic invertebrates of the Samish River Watershed. As part of the Clean Samish Initiative, the Skagit Conservation District offers Kids in Nature, an opportunity for families to learn about many aspects of streamside ecosystems. SFEG staff collected trays of aquatic insects and crayfish, showing visitors what lives in our freshwater systems and what they can tell us about water quality and salmon habitat. For more on the Clean Samish Initiative, visit <http://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PublicWorksCleanWater/cleansamish.htm>

In early September we partnered with many organizations to host the 3rd

Annual Skagit River Salmon Festival. This year's festival was held at a new location: The Waterfront Park at the Swinomish Casino and Lodge. By all accounts, the change was positive, and casino staff did a great job with the set-up and logistics of the event. A breezy warm day and beautiful view of the water and Mount Baker certainly enhanced everyone's enjoyment of the day! This year 6,000 people attended to learn about salmon, hear local music, enjoy local food, beer, and wine, and watch the acrobatics of Dock Dogs, a new addition this year. We're already planning for 2015, and hope you can join us next September!



**ABOVE:** FIN the giant salmon enjoyed the Salmon Festival. **RIGHT:** Youth Leadership Adventures group at Clark Creek in August

## My Day as a Hatchery Tour Guide By DAVID RADOSEVICH

Looking back at a fun and informative day as a guide at the Marblemount fish hatchery, I was impressed with the number of aware and informed people that came to visit.

There was a moment that I thought, "Oh boy, here comes trouble".... an awkward boy of about 10 years old with flaming red hair and a bad attitude. His kind and doting grandparents gave me a look of apology as they entered the waiting room.

As the tour of the hatchery progressed, he became more obnoxious and disruptive. I asked him to step up to observe the tray of fertilized eggs that had been given to us for show and tell. I told him to select an egg; he carefully studied the tray, chose an egg with a black eye dot, signifying that it has been fertilized. He seemed so excited... asking questions and radiating an innocent

thirst for knowledge. As the tour ended, I told him to drop the egg in the stream outside the visitor center, and that maybe it would return as a full grown salmon.

I will always remember the thankful smile from the grandma, as they walked out holding hands and chatting about their salmon.

# SFEG's New AmeriCorps Volunteers



Hi, my name is **KATIE BUNGE** and I'm the new Washington Service Corps IP. A native of Bellingham, I deepened my connection to what Robert Sund called the "Ish River Country" by attaining a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Education through Huxley College at WWU. During this time, I worked as an environmental educator at Tennant Lake Interpretive Center in Ferndale. At the end of summer, 2011, I left the United States in order to teach English abroad for three years in South Korea and Mongolia, but still deeply felt that Whatcom and Skagit counties were my home. Now, I'm excited to be working with Skagit Fisheries to support the health of the Ish River Country and share a deep love of this place with my community.

Hello, my name is **COLLIN MCAVINCHEY** and I'm excited about working with SFEG as the new Washington Conservation Corps IP. Since graduating with an interdisciplinary degree in Evolution & Human Ecology from Fairhaven College at WWU, I've spent time working in habitat restoration. I served as a stream restoration intern with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association in the spring of 2014 and recently completed a six month term with the Washington Conservation Corps as an assistant supervisor on a habitat restoration crew.

I was raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where nobody has ever seen a fish in the wild. I was drawn to the rainy Pacific Northwest to attend college and get away from the oppressive sunshine and heat of the Southwest. I have a fiery passion for great food, folk music, botany, and popular science, and I look forward to working with SFEG to help preserve the Northwest's salmon.



## HATCHERY TOUR GUIDES NEEDED

SFEG seeks volunteers to lead tours of the Marblemount Hatchery this winter (see insert). This is a great opportunity to learn more about how our local hatcheries work, and share your enthusiasm for salmon and their habitat.



## 2014 Membership



SKAGIT FISHERIES  
ENHANCEMENT GROUP

### 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.

#### { MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION }

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EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

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- \$20 - INDIVIDUAL
- \$35 - FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD
- \$100 - SUPPORTER
- \$500 - BENEFACTOR
- OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_



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## Events Calendar *AND* Volunteer Opportunities

### Fall Planting Parties

October 25, November 1, 8, 15,  
and 22 (Saturdays), 10am-1pm

Help restore native riparian plants in the Skagit and Samish watersheds! 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.

### Hatchery Tour Guides Workshop

December 6 (Saturday), 10am-3pm

Volunteers needed to lead hatchery tours at the WDFW Marblemount Hatchery this winter. Hatchery Tour Guides teach the public fascinating facts of the Marblemount Hatchery and Skagit salmon during the 2014-15 eagle watching season.

### SFEG Annual Meeting

February 12, 2015 (Thursday), 6-9pm

Watch your mail in January for your invitation!