

# ANNUAL REPORT 2010



The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is pleased to present you with its 2010 accomplishments of salmon habitat restoration and stewardship projects throughout our region. The accomplishments included in this report would not be possible without our volunteers, members, private landowners, funders and incredible partnerships that exist in our watersheds. We truly have each one of you to thank for our success and hope your support will continue to make a lasting impact on the future of wild salmon in our watersheds.

2010 marked a year of geographic growth for SFEG. For the first year ever, we had projects funded in all three of the watersheds in our region (Skagit River, Whidbey Island and San Juan Islands). Our new Restoration Ecologist worked with the Swan Lake Watershed Preservation Group to assess the feasibility of restoring a large salt marsh near Oak Harbor. In the San Juan Islands we continued to work towards removal of 12,000 cubic yards of wood waste contaminating the nearshore environment of Thatcher Bay. In the Skagit, we embarked on a major new project surveying 175 miles of the Skagit, Sauk, Suiattle and Cascade Rivers for knotweed infestations through the Upper Skagit Knotweed Control Project. Our spawner surveys expanded to include documenting sockeye salmon returning to Baker River tributaries. And we renewed our activities and enthusiasm for education and stewardship programs in the Samish Basin as part of Skagit County's Clean Samish Initiative. To accomplish some of these new endeavors we added a new Stewardship Manager position, as well as employed a Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew. This WCC crew consists of 5 young and enthusiastic

AmeriCorps members, led by their very capable crew supervisor Rob Crawford. We are fortunate to gain this cost effective labor crew eager to learn, work with our professional Restoration Technicians, and make a difference for the future of our salmon populations.

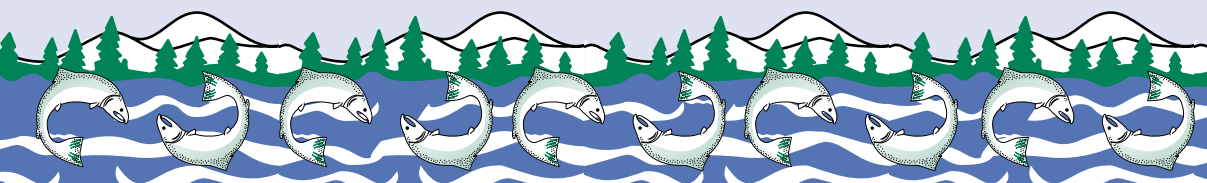
While funding remains a challenge for our education programs, our *Junior Stream Stewards* program continues to thrive. Over 400 middle school students at 5 schools are getting the opportunity to learn first hand about their watersheds, implement valuable stewardship projects and be inspired to make a difference for salmon. We also began offering elementary students the opportunity to participate in a new *Salmon in the Classroom* program thanks to generous grant funds from the Skagit Community Foundation. Although most of our funding goes towards on the ground salmon habitat restoration projects, the value of these and other educational programs is priceless to ensure that our next generation of stewards cares about the future health of our watersheds.

It's been an exciting year for all of us here at SFEG and we are very much looking forward to what 2011 will bring with new projects and partnerships we have been working on. We are fortunate to live and work in watersheds filled with such beauty and hope. The watersheds in our region are truly magical places that are teeming with all kinds of life. By working to protect and restore salmon populations, our goal is to have healthy watersheds for all life to thrive for future generations. We thank you for being a part of this effort. And greatly look forward to your ongoing support.

***Dedicated to involving our community in restoring wild salmon populations for future generations***



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### *Crew Members:*

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# HABITAT RESTORATION

## Finney Creek

In 2010 SFEG partnered with the Forest Service and local timber companies (Goodyear Nelson, Longview Timber and Sierra Pacific Industries) to install 30 log jams to improve water quality and stream conditions for 2 miles of habitat in Lower Finney Creek. Since 1999, seven in-stream have been completed directly enhancing 7.6 miles of Finney Creek. These projects have successfully installed 190 log jams putting more than 1,875 logs back into the stream. Historical salmonid use in Finney Creek was phenomenal. All 5 species of salmon used the creek in large numbers as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout. Temperature monitoring over the last decade indicates that slight reductions have been made and cross section and photo point monitoring indicate habitat improvements are taking place as well.



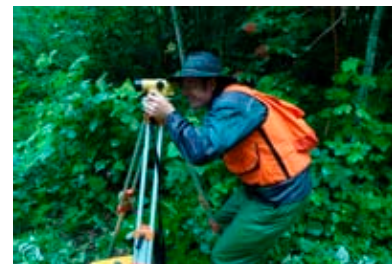
## Day Creek

SFEG has been working with private landowners in the Day Creek Community to identify and implement salmon restoration projects since 2005. Our current efforts focus on restoring riparian vegetation along Lower Day Creek, and placing large woody debris structures in the stream to reduce temperatures and im-

prove fish habitat. In 2010 we planted 3,600 plants along 0.6 miles of stream at four sites. R2 Resource Consultants were contracted to complete a hydraulic analysis and geomorphic risk assessment in support of the wood placement project planned for 2011.

## Iron Mountain Ranch

SFEG continues to perform restoration work at this large Seattle City Light property along the south side of the Skagit River. A fence was installed along O'Toole Creek to reduce stream impacts from livestock. Volunteers, staff, and WCC members planted 906 trees and shrubs within the new 4 acre area. SFEG also explored the feasibility of a river reconnection project with Davis



## Mission Statement:

*The mission of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is to build partnerships that educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship in order to enhance salmonid populations.*



# AND STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

Slough located on the other side of the South Skagit Highway. Survey data from this effort has led to grant funds to design an in-stream project for the site.

## Anderson Creek

Seattle City Light continued a partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to restore this property surrounding Anderson Creek formerly owned by the Vandersar Dairy. Over 17,340 plants were installed on 30 acres in 2010 bringing the total plants on this 150 acre site to 37,000 plants. WCC crews greatly assisted with this planting effort. Work restores habitat for Anderson Creek, Ross Island Slough and Skagit River floodplain.

## Upper Skagit Knotweed Program

In 2010, SFEG took on the leadership for the innovative and well respected Upper Skagit Knotweed Control Program. This program was developed by The Nature Conservancy in 2001 and is focused on a top-down strategic approach to controlling the invasive plant species knotweed in the Upper Skagit watershed. The project is part of a long-term, basin-wide approach to knotweed control that has been advanced by the Skagit Cooperative Weed Management Area. Knotweed is detrimental to freshwater ecosystems and natural riparian processes, which negatively impacts high priority salmon habitat. As of the 2010 season the effort has identified 1,812 patches of knotweed, achieved 58% control of knotweed in the Upper Skagit and is recognized as a model for invasive species work in Washington State. The project area starts at the confluence of the Skagit and Sauk Rivers, and includes the mainstem Skagit, Sauk, Suiattle and Cascade Rivers, their tributaries and surrounding landscapes. In the 2010 season, SFEG, TNC, WCC and other partners completed extensive surveys along 81 miles of river and streams, treated an estimated 3.5 solid acres of upland and riparian knotweed, as well as monitored a large percentage of previously recorded knotweed patches in the Upper Skagit watershed. SFEG and WCC also received on-the-ground assistance from U.S. Forest Service, Seattle City Light, North Cascades National Park, and the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe.



## Howard Miller Steelhead Park

This Skagit County Park is located in the town of Rockport along the upper Skagit River. Since 2006, SFEG has been working to restore the riparian area along the river with native plants and create educational signage for the trail along the river. This year the Whatcom County Corrections Crew maintained the previously planted areas by removing blackberries and reed canary grass. A new project was investigated to reconnect a backwater slough to the Skagit River and improve habitat on a small tributary creek. Volunteers helped survey the new creek channel. Survey data from this effort has led to a grant funds to implement this restoration project and work with Skagit County Parks to build a trail.

## Skagit Floodplain Riparian Project (SRFB-09 and 10)

The Skagit Floodplain Riparian Project represents a major effort to restore vegetation communities and floodplain function in the Skagit River floodplain. SFEG is working with 4 partner landowners who own conservation properties, including the US Forest Service, Seattle City Light, Skagit County and the Skagit Land Trust. The project has involved planting and maintaining riparian vegetation on 9 sites – Skiyou Slough, Ovenell Ranch, Marblemount Boat Launch, Diobsud Creek, the former Shaeffer property along the Sauk River, Ross Island Slough, Larsen property, Peterson property and Pressentin Park. 2010 work accomplishments include installation of 6,209 plants on 21.5 acres, and



maintenance of 78 acres along 4,209 feet of river bank. SFEG has been assisted in our restoration efforts by volunteer work parties, contract crews from Whatcom County Department of Corrections and WCC.

## SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

<b>Habitat Enhancement:</b>	Riparian plantings	29,397 plants
		74.5 acres
	Riparian maintenance	180 acres
	Riparian fencing installed	2,635 ft
	Instream habitat improved	2 miles
	Isolated habitat reconnected	0.67 miles
	Floodplain protected from knotweed infestation	19,282 acres
<b>Community Outreach:</b>	Community education	4,303 individuals
	Volunteer involvement	7,926 hours
	Kids educated	1,507 students





### Seattle City Light Stewardship Program

In 2010 SFEG began implementation of the Seattle City Light Stewardship Program. The purpose of this new program is to conduct quarterly visits to properties purchased through City Light's ESA and Wildlife Land funds and to effectively detect any stewardship issues. 15 properties underwent stewardship assessments each quarter. Baseline data was collected during first visits. During later visits stewardship activities were recommended for 2011. The most common issue noted at the properties was the presence of invasive plant species and dumping. Funding has been secured for identified stewardship actions at 4 properties.

### Skagit County Natural Resource Stewardship Program

SFEG has been assisting Skagit County with implementation of the Natural Resource Stewardship Program (NRSP). Work at 5 sites included fence construction to keep livestock out of streams, planting trees to restore riparian zones, site clean-up and control of invasive plant species. Actions have restored native vegetation on 2.7 acres of land along approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of Thunder, Carpenter and Bulson Creeks.



### West Fork Colony Creek Fish Passage Improvement

The West Fork Colony Creek fish passage improvement project was a collaborative effort between Goodyear Nelson Hardwood Lumber Co., the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), SFEG and the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. The project is located at a site where SFEG had installed a large, passable culvert in 2002. That same year a dam break flood originated from an upstream beaver dam destroying the culvert and rendered the site impassable for fish. Goodyear Nelson and Upper Skagit Indian Tribe worked together to collect background documentation for the project. SFEG removed the barrier culvert in summer 2010 using funding provided by the Family Forest Fish Passage Program. A bridge was then installed using designs and funding provided by the NRCS. The project re-opened 0.67 miles of stream for coho salmon and resident trout.

### Swan Lake Feasibility Study - Whidbey Island

In 2010 SFEG partnered with the Swan Lake Watershed Preservation Group (SWWPG) and Coastal Geologic Services to complete a preliminary feasibility assessment of the potential for restoring fish access to Swan Lake on the west side of Whidbey Island. This analysis concluded that the area was formerly a saltmarsh which was likely seasonally connected to the marine environment. Island County provided funds to collect additional data, and SFEG is applying for additional grant funds to complete an engineering analysis and design.

### Thatcher Bay Nearshore Restoration Project - Blakely Island

Since the 1940's wood chips from an old lumber mill have completely buried intertidal substrates suitable for forage fish spawning at Thatcher Bay on Blakely Island. This wood waste is releasing sulfide, a natural byproduct of wood decomposition, at levels that are toxic to benthic flora and fauna. The restoration of the area will include removing 12,000 cubic yards of wood waste and refilling the excavated area with sediments common to the surrounding areas. In 2010 permit applications were submitted and many of the approvals were granted. Funds were secured from DNR and SRFB for project implementation.

### Red Cabin Creek Fish Rescue

The WA State DOT contracted SFEG to watch the Highway 20 crossing of Red Cabin Creek for stranding of salmon during summer





low water and winter floods. Over 1,000 fish were rescued from Red Cabin Creek by staff and volunteers this year including 907 coho fry. Spawner surveys were also conducted this year where coho, chum and steelhead were observed. DOT plans to replace the stream crossing in 2011 to alleviate the salmon stranding and flooding issues.

### Native Plant Nursery

Volunteers led by Sarah Davis (WCC Intern) continued to operate a native plant nursery to grow plants to a larger size prior to installing them at restoration sites where competition with invasive species is very high. SFEG's nursery holds over 8,000 potted plants. Over 5,000 plants from the nursery were planted at project sites in 2010. Volunteers pot plants, perform summer watering and work with Cascades Job Corps to involve students in nursery maintenance via weekly work parties.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### Junior Stream Stewards

Junior Stream Stewards, a unique stewardship program for middle school students in the Skagit Watershed, continues to grow. In the 2009-10 school year, we engaged approximately 380 students in the Burlington-Edison, LaConner, Sedro-Woolley, Concrete, and Conway school districts. In the 2010-11 school year, Edison School replaced La Conner, bringing the number to 415 students involved in the program. Students learn from SFEG staff about watersheds and salmon through monthly classroom activities and several field trips. Classroom activities set the stage for a service-learning project, such as riparian planting, in the spring. Funds from Skagit County through an EPA grant have allowed added benefit to Samish schools such as being treated to a visit by Taylor Shellfish staff to dissect clams and oysters, and learn about the connection between land use and water quality.



### Salmon in the Classroom

SFEG coordinated the placement of two 55-gallon fish tanks with 200 salmon eggs for students at Madison Elementary and Lincoln Elementary schools in Mount Vernon. Students toured the Marblemount Hatchery and learned where their coho eggs originated. These students will raise the coho salmon for a few months and release them in area streams in spring 2011. Students throughout the schools receive the added benefit of watching these salmon grow in common areas of the schools.

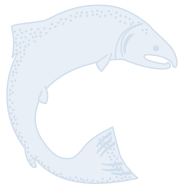


### Samish Watershed Outreach

SFEG is one of many partners participating in the Clean Samish Initiative, an effort to raise awareness for water quality issues in the Samish Watershed and offer assistance to landowners wanting to implement corrective measures on their property. Community members attended Family Day at Donovan Park to learn about the critters that call Friday Creek home, and how poor water quality impacts critters and humans. A Samish Watershed tour treated participants to excellent salmon viewing. Signs were installed at 50 stream crossings and volunteers developed and installed an interpretive sign for Donovan Park. In all, SFEG engaged 783 youth and over 1,300 general community members within the Samish watershed in 2010.







## Upper Skagit Outreach

Grant funds from ALEA this year provided for a Hatchery Outreach program, which entailed training volunteers to lead tours of the Marblemount Hatchery. This year twelve trained volunteers led tours for the public at the Marblemount Hatchery during eagle season, providing a learning opportunity for thousands of visitors from all over the world.

## MONITORING PROGRAMS

### Spawner Survey Monitoring

This year 34 volunteers assisted Technicians in walking 16.5 miles on 32 different creeks each and every week this fall and winter to count adult salmon returning to spawn at restoration sites. We have documented almost 7,000 coho salmon, 76 chinook salmon, and 49 chum salmon as well as over 1,000 kokanee in Lake Samish tributaries. Interns conducted sockeye spawner surveys for the first time on tributaries of Baker Lake through a PSE and Upper Skagit Tribe partnership. Data collected is shared with the co-managers, funders and project partners.



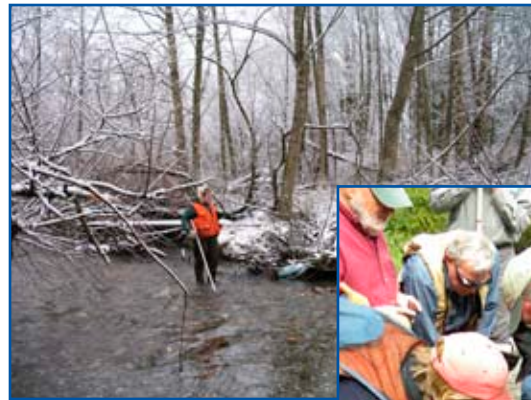
### Vegetation Monitoring

SFEG Technicians and volunteers conducted vegetation monitoring at 17 restoration sites, collecting data on plant health, weed infestation, and overall vegetation composition. This data is very helpful in determining future planting plans as well as documenting effectiveness to funders and project partners over time.

### In-Stream Monitoring

In-stream monitoring was conducted at 11 restoration sites this year to track the effectiveness of projects to improve physical habitat conditions. 19 volunteers were trained by SFEG Technicians and assisted staff in surveying channel cross sections, substrate, habitat type and in-stream structures. Data collected provides much needed information to funders and project partners.

In all, over 1,700 volunteer hours were documented assisting with monitoring programs in 2010.



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2010

Income		Expenses	
Public Funds	\$ 876,324	Project & Programs	\$ 827,356
Private Funds	\$ 60,888	Administration (11%)	\$ 97,814
Total Cash Income	\$ 937,212	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 925,170</b>
In-Kind Donations	\$ 231,182		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,168,394</b>		

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