

the REEDD

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP



Dedicated to Restoring Wild Salmon for Future Generations

New Faces, New Fun!

By KELLY SYKES

SFEG's education programs this year have been full of new lessons, new faces, and new fun. From brand new lessons to new interns and volunteers, this year may be one of the most unique years yet! We continue to offer the same programs including Jr. Stream Stewards, Kids in Creeks, and Salmon in the Classroom, but this year we've added more partners and schools.

This year Jr. Stream Stewards consisted of 21 classes in 5 schools serving 545 students. This program engages middle school students from the Salish Sea all the way to the Cascade foothills. This year the students have learned about their local watershed, anatomy and life cycle of the five species of Pacific salmon, water quality, riparian plants, benthic macroinvertebrates

and the concept of stewardship. The lessons have been extremely diverse from dissecting salmon to watershed tours and service-learning projects. Students planted hundreds of trees and shrubs and removed various invasive plants. The students made bracelets to resemble salmon lifecycles, and became "guinea pigs" in a brand new educational board game called *Spawn 'Till You Die*, which the majority of the students say they loved.

This year two classes from Lincoln Elementary School and two from Immaculate Conception Regional School (ICRS) raised coho salmon as part of the Salmon in the Classroom program. In this program each school gets a 55-gallon aquarium designed specifically for salmon. They receive eggs from a

nearby hatchery and raise them in their tank for about four months, then release them in a nearby stream. Through this program, students develop not only a relationship with the salmon they raise but also a sense of respect for the stream their salmon will inhabit. To start, all classes toured the Marblemount Hatchery to see where their salmon eggs would come from. They learned about the type of salmon they were going to raise and the lifecycle that their salmon were about to start. Usually the classes receive their eggs from the hatchery in January but this year was again, quite unique. Students named their salmon and bid them goodbye and good luck at Bakerview Park in April and May.

Last but not least, the Kids in Creeks program. This year this program had the most drastic change. Our usual Kids in Creeks program provides a single classroom visit in which the students learn about salmon and what

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"Life is hard for a salmon"

*Said by a 7th grade student from Cascade Middle School while playing *Spawn 'Till You Die*.*



ABOVE: Bay View 8th graders playing *Spawn Till You Die*

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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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Volunteer Spotlight

TIFFANY GRAVLEE

**How long have you been volunteering with SFEG?
How did you get started volunteering with SFEG,
and what volunteer projects are you involved in?**

TIFFANY: I got involved with SFEG (in March) after seeing a Facebook event for a beach restoration at Deception Pass Corbet Bay. I went and enjoyed myself and went back for another restoration on Earth Day. What better way to spend a few hours than spending time at the beach and helping the environment? I joined the Beach Naturalist program from Deception Pass State Park, earlier this year, where we volunteer and educate people on the importance of preservation of our tide pools at Rosario Bay. Through this program, someone was hosting a beach cleanup at Deception Pass Park. During this cleanup, there were only 3 of us total. I couldn't believe the lack of volunteers, so I decided to make a Facebook group called "Whidbey Island Beach Cleanup", in hopes of sharing and/or organizing cleanup events, beach restorations, and any other volunteer opportunities on Whidbey Island. The host from the cleanup sends me cleanup dates and I share them with the

members. We're adding members every couple of weeks or so and hope to have more join and in the future, hope to have more volunteers attend. The more people we have, the greater the impact.

What community do you live in?

TIFFANY: I live in Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island. My husband and I were stationed here from '04-'08 and just recently transferred back. We absolutely love it here and are so happy to be back.

Why do you volunteer?

TIFFANY: I started volunteering after I moved back up here. It all started with the Beach Naturalist Program, I joined to meet new people, put myself out in the community, and of course...LEARN. I've since met new people and have had the opportunity to learn so much about our fragile ecosystem and how to protect it. I feel volunteering allows you to connect to your community and make it a better place. Planting plant after plant, picking up bag after bag of litter from the beaches, and educating peers and today's youth, is quite the humbling experience & I'm extremely grateful to be able to give back to our planet that has given us so much.

New Fun

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



ABOVE: Little Mountain 5th graders showing off all the English ivy they pulled from Hillcrest Park

makes up a healthy habitat, including human actions that can help (or hurt). The students then complete a service-learning project, such as streamside tree planting. In addition to the classes that participate in this program every year, this year we partnered with North Cascades Institute's Mountain School program. Now, after the participating fifth grade classes attend Mountain School they come back home and complete a service project in their home watershed, coordinated by SFEG. These service projects include planting native riparian trees and removing invasive species. So far we've worked with seven schools with up to 80 students per trip and a few more planned through the rest of the school year. It has been fun working with NCI staff and graduate students, as well as Skagit Land Trust, Washington State Parks, Mount Vernon Parks, and the Town of La Conner.

Because of the uniqueness of all the education programs this year, the year has been exciting, surprising, and amusing. The students have been great and full of enthusiasm for the programs and the volunteers have been amazing. A big thank you to all of the volunteers, partners, and funders that make these programs possible because this year wouldn't have been possible or nearly as exciting without everyone involved. Program funders include WDFW's Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Skagit Community Foundation, Tulalip Charitable Fund, and Skagit County, not to mention several project-specific grants. Thank you all, and cheers to the remainder of the 2015-16 school year!

Looking Back on 25 Years ClassyClassics

By **KURT BUCHANAN**

As we celebrate our "Coho" (silver) anniversary this year, it occurs to us that some of our SFEG members are becoming classics themselves (you know who you are...). Some founders have unfortunately become truly past tense. We feel the need to gather valuable information from members' minds, closets, desks, yes even computer files while we can, and then share the information with our members, young and not so young, highlighting classic projects from the formative years of SFEG. I imagine many of these earliest projects are unknown to our general membership, and are perhaps not as well documented in our SFEG files as they could be.

The early/mid 1990's were the formative years for SFEG. There was a volunteer Board of Directors as there is now, but there was no staff, no budget to speak of, and no systematic way to track information, much less a proper photo record of projects. These were the start-up days, when there would be, at most, one construction restoration project per year, sometimes none. With no budget, these projects were truly volunteer projects. Designs were made and projects built, almost never by engineers, but often by on-the-ground decisions with the contractor sitting in the excavator/dozer and then building the project. The contractors volunteered their own equipment, local refineries provided fuel for the equipment, and

rock, logs, and gravel were provided by private individuals, and sometimes by the County. Permitting was easier in those days. Not exactly the Wild West, but projects were of much smaller scale, and less tightly designed and permitted than today's work. Work was done only on small streams, often in the Samish River watershed, stream projects manageable to volunteers and contractors just learning their skills.

Projects include Bob Smith Creek, Friday Creek at Pomona Grange Park, Alger Brickyard/clay pit pond fishway, Kennedy Cr. fishway off F. Stevens Rd along WF Nookachamps Cr., Unnamed Right Bank trib to Cain Lk. weirs and plantings, Unnamed Left Bank trib to Cain Lk. plantings, off-channel pond, channel, fencing, and plantings along the Samish River near Prairie Ln., fishways along Cruse Rd. in the upper Samish, NP Creek fishway/rock weirs, and channel construction on Harrison, Colony Creeks., Bakerview Park, and small creeks near Darrington including Mouse, Gravel, and Powderhouse Creeks.

Some of you may have participated in these projects, either as school children, or as some of our earliest volunteers. Wouldn't you like to know how they turned out after all these years? If you have pictures, news articles, contacts, contracts, contractor contacts, memories, maps, we want them. For those of you trying to downsize, here is the perfect opportunity to divest your holdings of these artifacts. If you want to hold onto your artifacts, but would like to share them, arrangements can be made to make copies. We are primarily concentrating on projects prior to Jobs For the Environment (JFE) funded projects, (early to mid 90s) but all info will be gladly accepted. Contact Lucy DeGrace at ldegrace@skagitfisheries.org with anything you'd like to contribute.

This is going to be fun. A walk down a wet memory lane...and we need your help!



BELOW: Restoration project on Hansen Creek, late 1990s



Spring Planting Highlight: Beach Restoration

By **HANNA JONES**

SFEG's planting season came to an exceptional close with the Earth Day celebration at Bowman Bay and a record breaking number of volunteers. Over 200 people joined us to plant native shrubs and beach grasses along the shore as part of a larger restoration effort that has been underway for over 3 years. Partner organizations Skagit County Marine Resources Committee, Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, Skagit Conservation District, and Washington State Parks worked together to remove large rocks called rip rap, and added sand and gravel to regrade the beach to create a more natural habitat. Now, not only is it easier for people to access the beach, but the ecological functions of the beach will be restored as well. One essential function is that the beach can be used by forage fish that lay eggs in the gravel at high tide. Forage fish like surf smelt, Pacific sand lance, and Pacific herring are a vital food source for many species including salmon. SFEG's role in this project has been planning and implementing the riparian planting with many volunteers. This part of the project is particularly important



DREW FLESHMAN

to the surf smelt, whose eggs' survival depends on shade to keep them cool, as well as many species of marine birds that require this habitat to live.

On Earth Day our volunteers, in record time, planted 216 potted plants and 1,500 beach grasses, and also installed netting to protect the young plants from geese. When the work was done, volunteers joined beach walks led by Lisa Kaufman of Northwest Straits Foundation and Patrick Hutchins, SFEG Education

Intern. Pete Haase demonstrated how volunteers survey beaches for evidence of forage fish spawning. Finally, the delicious salmon burger barbeque and raffle drawing rewarded the hard work of all who attended.

Another highlight of our planting season was Cornet Bay, where 75 volunteers planted a combination of native trees, shrubs, and beach grasses. Cornet Bay is the site of a restoration project very similar to Bowman Bay. Although the beach grasses seem small and insignificant when they go into the ground, they will soon provide crucial stability to the beach sediment and food for birds.

The beach restoration projects at Bowman Bay and Cornet Bay are both examples of projects that enhance salmon rearing habitat. These projects are a little different than much of what SFEG has done in the past to improve salmon spawning habitat, but are equally important. As juvenile salmon leave the Samish and Skagit Rivers they must find refuge in estuaries and pocket bays so they can continue to grow stronger before facing the open ocean. Our focus

ABOVE: Volunteer Pete Haase shows Earth Day volunteers how scientists document forage fish eggs on local beaches.



ABOVE: Volunteers enjoyed salmon burgers donated by Trident Seafoods after the Earth Day planting event.

BeachWalking

By **PATRICK HUTCHINS**



ABOVE: 200 volunteers helped restore the beach at Bowman Bay for Earth Day.

on the Deception Pass area this planting season emphasizes the significance of healthy rearing habitat because almost all of the salmon that hatch in the Skagit River and its tributaries will have to swim through the pass.

In all, over 330 volunteers of all ages donated their time planting hundreds of trees, shrubs, and beach grasses at Iron Mountain Ranch, Cornet Bay, and Bowman Bay, and potting over 4,000 small trees at our native plant nursery in March and April.

For helping to make this planting season a success, we thank the donors: Starbucks Coffee, Woods Coffee, North Cove Coffee, Fred Meyer, Costco, Lafeen's Donuts, Breadfarm, Trident Seafoods, Padilla Bay Foundation, Anacortes Kayak Tours, River City Screen Printing, and Shell Puget Sound Refinery. Partners on these restoration efforts include Seattle City Light, Skagit Land Trust, Washington State Parks, Northwest Straits Foundation, Samish Tribe, and many others.

We'd also like to thank Dick and Elaine Lease for photographing the Earth Day event for us, and the Skagit Valley College Welding Department for crafting new tools for us to plant tree cuttings. We are grateful to instructor Michael Baker and his students for getting them done for the Earth Day planting!

We are grateful to all the community members who contributed to the restoration of salmon rearing and spawning habitat. In addition to habitat for salmon, they've helped countless species of birds, mammals, amphibians, invertebrates, and other fish. After all, it's about way more than just salmon!

This year's Earth Day planting was just one part of SFEG's expansion of our restoration program to include the nearshore marine environment. While nearshore restoration directly benefits the juvenile salmon that ply the Puget Sound it also reinvigorates the diversity and abundance of many ocean species.

Once the work part of the work party was done we wanted the volunteers to meet some of the animals that would thrive thanks to their efforts, so we offered an opportunity to stroll the shoreline with an experienced marine educator. Our hunt for intertidal animals did not disappoint. We found dozens of different types of organisms in the wealth of habitats along the edge of the bay.

By far one of the most noticeable groups of animals were the crabs. The five most easily found crabs along Puget Sound's beaches are: green shore, purple shore, red rock, Dungeness, and kelp crabs. Of those five species we found four on our casual jaunt. As volunteers lifted rocks to peer under them, both species of shore crabs scuttled in every direction to shelter under our feet. After inspecting the flatworms, limpets, whelks, mussels, and polychaete worms on the underside of the stones we gingerly returned the rocks to their original position and stepped carefully onward. While we walked many of the volunteers noticed seemingly

dead green shore and red rock crabs littering the beach. However, closer inspection revealed that these were not dead crabs, but the discarded exoskeletons of growing individuals.

A crab's outer shell is like a suit of armor several sizes too large. There's a gap between the crab's skin and the carapace that the animal gradually grows into. When the body gets too large the shell splits open along a seam in the back and the squishy crab crawls out in a process called molting. The crab then hides somewhere in the rocks, sand, or vegetation sucking in water to push out the new shell as it slowly hardens. Spending upwards of several days without armor may sound like a distinct disadvantage for an invertebrate, but it provides them with a rare opportunity, the chance to mate. Many crabs fertilize internally, and that's not easy to do while wearing a suit of plate mail. So many species time their molts so that every individual in a certain area climbs out of their shells at once. The confetti of molts we found at Bowman Bay was probably the result of just such an event several days before.

The great number and diversity of animals we found during our Earth Day celebration shows the impact the restoration effort is having on the ecosystems along the shore. Each of the crab species utilizes slightly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



BELOW: Intern Patrick Hutchins teaching volunteers about beach critters.



Beach Walking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

different small habitats that are scoured away by tide and current when beaches are armored with rocks and lack vegetation. The large molt and likely mating event we observed will produce tens of thousands of baby crabs free-floating in the waters of Bowman Bay and throughout the Whidbey/Fidalgo nearshore. These planktonic larvae will become food for migrating salmon, especially because ALL salmon that migrate out of the Skagit River must pass through Deception Pass in order to reach the wide ocean. The larvae's nutrients might someday nourish trees in Marblemount as the salmon carry them back upriver several years from now.

In case you missed the Bowman Bay beach walk and really want to see some sea creatures, don't fret. Summer is the best season for low tides in Puget Sound. A full seven days of low very low tides begins June 3rd. Pick up a tide chart at your local marine supply store, or check out tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov for detailed times and heights.

Meet our Riparian Restoration Coordinator



RACHAEL WEST here, I am the new Riparian Restoration Coordinator for SFEI. I was born and raised in the south side of Chicago and went to college at the University of Dubuque in Iowa. There I received my B.S. in Environmental Science and began my career in restoration. Immediately after college I was offered a position on a private prairie restoration crew in the Driftless area of Wisconsin

(called the Driftless area because it is a very small portion of the Midwest that was not bulldozed by glaciers). In this position I worked on the limestone bluffs of the Mississippi River controlling weeds, chopping down incredibly invasive trees and working on a prescribed fire crew.

After a while I decided it was time to leave the Midwest and I found a position with the Washington Conservation Corps in the Seattle area. I worked as an AmeriCorps member for two years and then supervised several AmeriCorps crews for four years. I worked mainly in riparian areas planting buffers, controlling weeds, building beaver and elk exclusion fencing, etc... all to improve salmon habitat and water quality. In this position, I was able to get familiar with the Green, Snoqualmie, Cedar, and Nisqually watersheds. I am so excited to learn more about the beautiful Skagit River Valley and its surrounding community!

SKAGIT RIVER SALMON FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 10 • 10AM~6PM

WATERFRONT PARK
SWINOMISH CASINO
& LODGE

FREE ADMISSION • LIVE MUSIC
RAPTOR SHOWS • CONSERVATION ALLEY
SALMON BBQ • CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES
BEER & WINE GARDEN



Shannon's Farewell

*All for the salmon
Moving cedars to and fro
Contemplative works*

*Kind folks young and old
Community of helpers
Armed with hand pruners*

*While being lovely
Still less special than the stream
Tulip festival*

These are just a few of the many haikus I pondered while basking in the solitude and serenity of the Skagit Fisheries nursery on long and lonely potting days. When the nursery came into my hands, I was overwhelmed with the scope of the work to be done. The plants mostly appeared like uninteresting sticks to me, because I had missed their flowering season. However, after many days handling the twigs that I would come to know intimately as plants, I gained so much more from them. One of my favorite conservationists, Aldo Leopold, once



wrote, "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language." I didn't relate this to my time in the nursery on the first day I spent potting and moving plants in the pouring rain, nor the second. Over time I came to appreciate something much deeper and more beautiful in these moments than even the brightly colored

pollination stations these trees and shrubs would later produce. I grew to love the feeling of dirt under my fingernails, rain on my face, and the uniqueness of each and every plant I handled. No, not every time for sure, but more and more I became connected to the world of living things in a way that I previously hadn't, even in past conservation work. These tasks helped me to see great value in seeming drudgery and to take time to touch plants and earth, absorb discomfort, and practice mindfulness in a very real and productive way.

I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with the communities in and around the Skagit and Island County. I am consistently inspired by the dedication and willingness that so many volunteers exhibit across the spectra of age, political leaning, and profession. I think it's quite possible these volunteers have an even better idea of what I found in my solo nursery time, and they make sure to continue to find time for it in their personal lives through volunteer work. The work we do as an RFEG is not easy or uncomplicated, nor should it be. It's very important to keep getting our hands dirty, keep reminding ourselves of the effect our efforts have on the lives of all our fellow creatures, and continue to remember our own small place and great responsibility in this giant ecosystem we get to inhabit.

If you've made it through my sentimental ode to nursery work here (I apologize, but I have kind of adopted the nursery in my mind as a child), I would like to extend a final and truly heartfelt thank you to the staff at SFEG and volunteers. You have inspired me to be better, to believe in the work we do, and to believe in myself. As an IP, I had many opportunities that people my age (or any age for that matter) never have the chance to experience. I have come to appreciate the secret gem that is the Skagit Valley and all the perfect natural vignettes contained within it, and as I begin my next adventure as a Park Ranger at Twin Harbors Beach State Park, I will often review my mental Polaroids of the pinks splashing all over Alder Creek in the fall, the bald eagles crossing overhead so often I sometimes forgot how spectacular they were, the mighty herds of elk driving Joe George to the brink of madness along Highway 20, and the trees and shrubs all bursting back into bloom right before my departure. Thank you all so much.



{ MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION }

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

PHONE _____

{ MEMBERSHIP LEVEL }

☐ \$20 - INDIVIDUAL

☐ \$35 - FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD

☐ \$100 - SUPPORTER

☐ \$500 - BENEFACTOR

☐ OTHER \$ _____



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SFEG is a non-profit 501 c(3)
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are tax deductible

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Trivia Night

With Skagit Fisheries
Enhancement Group

Trivia Categories Include:

Fish of Skagit River
Skagit History
Local Businesses
And much more...

Groups of 5,
PRIZES for
1st, 2nd, and
3rd place
teams

June 16, 2016
7pm-9pm

North Sound Brewery



*\$5 donation
per person to
participate*



For more information visit skagitfisheries.org



SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

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Events Calendar *AND* Volunteer Opportunities

SFEG Vegetation Monitoring Workshop

June 4, 10am-1pm at Cascades Job Corps

Help survey vegetation at restoration sites. Introduction to identifying native and invasive plants, assessing plant health, and estimating coverage in riparian planting projects.

Trivia Night

June 16, 7-9pm at North Sound Brewing Co., 17406 State Route 536, Mount Vernon

Join us for our first-ever SFEG Trivia Night to raise funds for habitat restoration and education programs of SFEG. 21 and over, teams of up to 5 people, \$5 donation per person to join. Food truck onsite. Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place!

Bay View Dine & Discover

June 17, 4-8pm at Bay View State Park

Have fun and free food while learning about water quality of Samish and Padilla Bays. Help with our educational display and a crafty, fishy project for all ages.

Kids R Best Fest

July 9, 11am-4pm at Storvik Park in Anacortes

Help with our educational display and a crafty, fishy project for kids.

Mount Vernon Children's Art Festival

July 16, 10am-4pm at Hillcrest Park

Help with a crafty, fishy project for kids.

Taylor Shellfishtival

July 20, 11am-3pm at Taylor Shellfish, Bow

Help with our educational display and a crafty, fishy project for kids.

Kids in Nature

August 20, 11am-2pm at Pomona Grange County Park

Help with SFEG's macroinvertebrates station at Friday Creek, or simply bring the kids for educational fun in the park!

Fidalgo Bay Day

August 27

Help staff the SFEG educational display and coordinate salmon-related kids' activities at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.

Skagit River Salmon Festival at Waterfront Park

September 10, 10am-6pm at Swinomish Casino and Lodge

Join us for a FREE fun-filled experience for families featuring: Youth Activities and Crafts, Educational Booths, Live Music and Cultural Opportunities, Great Food and Salmon BBQ, Beer & Wine Garden, Commercial Arts & Craft Vendors, And much, much more! More info at www.skagitriverfest.org

SFEG Spawner Survey Workshop

October 1

Check our website in September for details.