



**SKAGIT FISHERIES
ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

2 0 1 6 A N N U A L R E P O R T

*Engaging our Community
in Restoring Salmon*





MISSION

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



**SKAGIT FISHERIES
ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

PO Box 2497

**1202 South 2nd Street, Suite C
Mount Vernon, WA 98273**

Phone: 360-336-0172

www.skagitfisheries.org

SFEG is an independent 501 c(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax deductible.

Tax ID# 94-3165939

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SFEG STAFF, ELAINE LEASE
AND DREW FLESHMAN

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

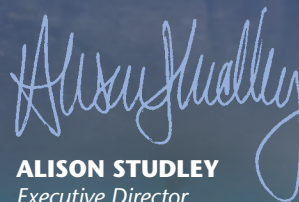
Our Skagit Valley and the surrounding Island communities are amazingly beautiful places. We at the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group are lucky enough to have the opportunity to work with hundreds of you each year to ensure that the Skagit remains a healthy and beautiful place for all of us to live, 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 ground

work 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



RESTORING HABITAT

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 at 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.



Upper Day Slough fish passage improvement project, before (top) and after (bottom).

UPPER DAY SLOUGH FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT

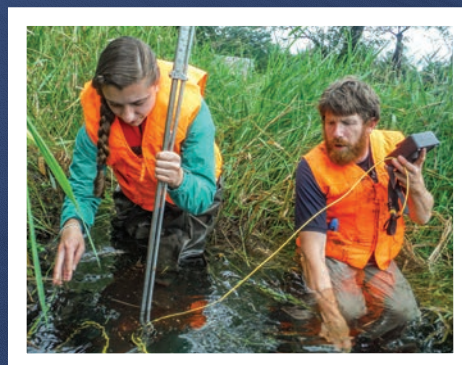
Upper Day Slough provides important floodplain habitat for salmon along the middle Skagit River. However, three failing culverts blocked fish passage within this slough to 2,000 feet of high quality habitat. This summer the old culverts were replaced with a new bridge structure with grant funding from 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.



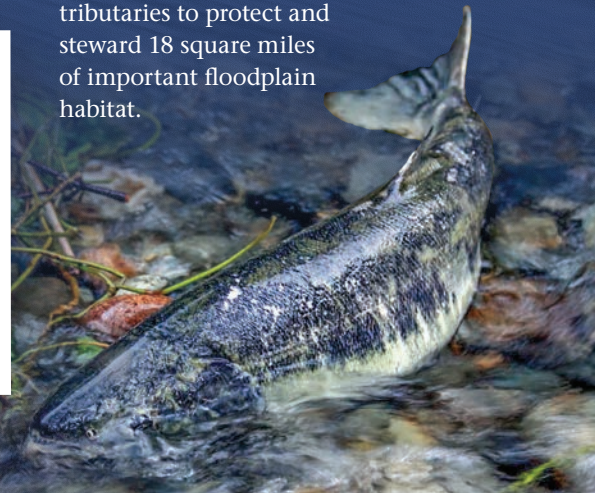
Partners map out a plan to survey for knotweed along the Sauk River.

STEWARDING OUR LANDS

Controlling the spread of invasive plants such as knotweed is incredibly important for healthy aquatic ecosystems. Invasive plants can out-complete 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.





ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY

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.



AmeriCorps volunteers planting for Earth Day at Deception Pass State Park



Citizen scientist, KayLani Siplin, documenting coho salmon use in NP creek.

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.



Sammy salmon demonstrates how culverts can block salmon migration to a young participant at the Skagit River Salmon Festival.





"This is one of the best field trips I've ever been on!"

4th grade student from Lincoln Elementary

EDUCATING OUR YOUTH



Edison students participating in Junior Stream Stewards assess the health of Ennis Creek along the Samish River.

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

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 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.

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