

CELEBRATING



25
YEARS

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

*A Quarter Century of Engaging our Community
in Restoring Wild Salmon*



The 25th Anniversary is known as the Silver Anniversary. SFEG is calling this our “Coho” Anniversary in honor of the coho salmon also known as “silver” salmon.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MISSION

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



**SKAGIT FISHERIES
ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

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

Tax ID# 94-3165939

PHOTO CREDITS:
SFEG, DREW FLESHMAN AND
AARON LOGUE

A quarter of a century is truly a milestone to celebrate! We want to thank you for your essential role in helping us reach this “Coho” Anniversary milestone together. For without you, an engaged body of community volunteers, members, landowners and partners the watershed restoration and education achievements that have been accomplished over the last 25 years would not be possible.


Looking back, in the early days the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) was an all-volunteer organization that implemented a few habitat restoration projects along with a few salmon supplementation projects where volunteers were raising hatchery eggs and young fish in volunteer run operations to supplement salmon stocks. However volunteers and members quickly learned that in order to make the biggest difference for salmon, there needed to be a coordinated effort to restore habitat in our watersheds. SFEG worked with key partners at the local, state, federal and tribal levels to establish the Skagit Watershed Council and create a Habitat Restoration Strategy to voluntarily follow. At the turn of the century, the first Endangered Species listing for salmon occurred and there became an even greater emphasis on strategic habitat restoration for salmon throughout Washington State.

SFEG was fortunate to grow its staff in both size and expertise during this time and now maintains a staff of 10

with multiple AmeriCorps members, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews, and student interns along with hundreds of volunteers assisting our staff each year. We purposely added new education staff and developed high quality education programs to offer students with the realization that educating our youth was the best investment we could make for the future stewardship of our watershed. Today, Junior Stream Stewards alone has engaged over 4,000 students in the last 10 years; teaching our youth about healthy watersheds and involving them in hands-on service-learning projects to keep our watersheds healthy.

We are confident that both our watershed restoration and education achievements are about way more than salmon and it's our priority to ensure the community recognizes this as well. The work we have done, the work we are doing and the work we will continue to do benefits way more than salmon and is something we believe makes our community a better, healthier, more beautiful place.

We are fortunate to receive your interest, energy and enthusiasm over the last 25 years and we hope to continue to count you among our supporters as we look ahead to the future.


ALISON STUDLEY
Executive Director



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 25 YEARS

11,000 STUDENTS engaged in environmental education programs

145,000

HOURS
DONATED
by community
volunteers

50

MILES OF
STREAMS
and shorelines
revegetated

10

MILES OF
FENCES
built to exclude
livestock and
protect sensitive
aquatic habitat

100,000

NATIVE PLANTS
grown for
restoration in
SFEG's nursery

60

BARRIERS
REMOVED
to restore fish
access to 75
miles of habitat

20

MILES OF
HABITAT
enhanced through
restoration
actions

100,000

COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
reached through
outreach
programs

SUMMARY OF 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RIPARIAN
PLANTINGS

29,520

NATIVE
PLANTS
covering 52 acres
along 3.5 miles

RIPARIAN
MAINTENANCE

394

ACRES
of native plant
care and invasive
plant removal

HABITAT
OPENED

2.12

MILES
of stream miles
opened by
removal of fish
passage barriers

HABITAT
RESTORED

800

FEET
of aquatic
habitat restored
with large
woody debris

COMMUNITY
EDUCATION

13,372

INDIVIDUALS

VOLUNTEER
INVOLVEMENT

8,474

HOURS

KIDS
EDUCATED

1,124

STUDENTS

2015 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

INCOME

PUBLIC FUNDS: \$1,871,584

PRIVATE FUNDS: \$91,004

IN-KIND DONATIONS: \$417,119

\$2,379,707

EXPENSES

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS: \$1,776,935

ADMINISTRATION (8%): \$161,620

\$1,938,555

RESTORING HABITAT



East Fork Walker Creek, before-culvert blocking fish access upstream and after-new bridge restores the natural stream channel for fish access upstream.

EAST FORK WALKER CREEK FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT

SFEG worked with a willing landowner and the Family Forest Fish Passage Program to improve access for coho, steelhead and potentially juvenile Chinook by replacing an undersized 4-foot diameter culvert with a 60-foot steel bridge. This project opened one mile of high quality habitat on the East Fork of Walker Creek in the Nookachamps watershed for salmon and steelhead migration. Volunteers and an EarthCorps crew revegetated 2.5 acres of habitat along the stream as well.

CASCADE CREEK FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT

SFEG worked with volunteers from the Skagit Land Trust and Wildcat Steelhead Club to remove a culvert and restore salmon migration to Cascade Creek. The 3-foot diameter steel culvert had deteriorated, and was no longer needed to provide access to the Land Trust owned property. Using donated engineering services, and funding provided by ALEA and the Skagit Watershed Council the culvert was removed by SFEG's volunteer team, re-establishing unimpeded access for salmon and trout. The channel upstream of the removed culvert provides over one mile of high quality spawning and rearing habitat to this Cascade River tributary.



Removing fish blocking culvert from Cascade Creek



Island View Elementary School student plants native vegetation to restore shoreline along Bowman Bay.

SHORELINE RESTORATION AT DECEPTION PASS STATE PARK

SFEG is working with the Northwest Straits Foundation and Washington State Parks to restore shoreline habitat associated with Cornet and Bowman Bays. In 2015, one-quarter mile of rip rap (large rock) along the Bowman Bay shoreline was removed to restore habitat for forage fish (such as herring, sand lance and smelt) which are food fish for many species of Puget Sound marine life including migrating salmon. SFEG engaged Anacortes students who had recently attended North Cascades Institute's Mountain School Program in a stewardship project planting the shoreline area with salt-spray tolerant shrubs. In 2016, SFEG will continue to enlist the help of students and volunteers to plant native beachgrasses along the restored beach, as well as monitor vegetation survival, and assist with weed control.

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY

NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

Planting native plants along rivers, streams, shorelines and wetlands restores habitat for way more than salmon. Over the last 25 years volunteers, students and staff have worked with hundreds of landowners to restore 50 miles of habitat adjacent to waterways. Once bare land is now growing young forests thanks to hundreds of volunteer work parties. These vegetated corridors along waterways ensure healthy habitat for all types for living things from shellfish and herring; to Orcas, eagles, song birds, frogs and much more. Our human communities benefit too from decreased erosion, clean water, and aesthetically pleasing forests teeming with wildlife.



Cascade Middle School students planting at Utopia restoration site



EarthCorps members volunteering for Earth Day work party alongside SFEG staff member, Bengt Miller.

EARTH DAY

At the Utopia restoration site, reforestation is being completed in partnership with the help of many community volunteers on Skagit Land Trust land, with funding from Puget Sound Energy (PSE). The site is located in the Skagit River floodplain and includes Black Slough and Wiseman Creek. In 2015 nearly 5,000 native plants were planted to replace invasive species. To assist with restoring more than salmon habitat, bat boxes and duck boxes were built by students and placed on site for wildlife enhancement. New grant funds will expand restoration efforts in 2016.

MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

Volunteers monitor way more than salmon to track our progress at habitat restoration sites. SFEG trains volunteer citizens to be scientists in our watersheds and collect valuable data related to vegetation survival and growth, forage fish spawning on our beaches, water quality in our streams, and of course adult and juvenile salmon use. This year, volunteers and student interns donated 1,800 hours collecting essential data to share with funders, researchers and public agencies. This data is incredibly important to developing future projects and understanding the science of watershed restoration.



SFEG intern, Christie Turner, surveying habitat conditions



EDUCATING OUR YOUTH

SKAGIT RIVER SALMON FESTIVAL

SFEG continued as a primary organizer of the 4th annual Skagit River Salmon Festival held at the Swinomish Tribal Community's Waterfront Park on a beautiful sunny Saturday in September. Over 6,000 people attended the Festival to learn, engage and celebrate the amazing Skagit watershed and its resources.



Lincoln Elementary School 4th grader getting ready to release young coho salmon that were raised through the Salmon in the Classroom program

SCIENCE-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

SFEG takes great pride in knowing that 11,000 students have been engaged in our science-based environmental education programs. Students are learning about way more than salmon in all three of our youth education programs (Salmon in the Classroom, Kids in Creeks and Junior Stream Stewards). Students are having outdoor experiences that are connecting them to the natural world and inspiring them to care for the earth. They are learning that healthy salmon habitat, means healthy rivers, which also means healthy communities for our future.



Skagit River Salmon Festival mascots having fun while educating visitors



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OUR SUPPORTERS

We have huge appreciation to all of you that have supported watershed restoration over the past 25 years. SFEG would not be here without you and your passion for ensuring a future with healthy rivers, healthy salmon and healthy communities. A complete list of this year's generous donors, businesses, schools, grantors, agencies, tribes and members is available in the online version of our 2015 Annual Report at SkagitFisheries.org.



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Skagit River System Cooperative
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Skagit Watershed Council
Stewardship Partners
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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
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25
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"Coho" Anniversary*