



SKAGIT FISHERIES
**ENHANCEMENT
GROUP**

2 0 1 7

ANNUAL REPORT

*Engaging our Community
in Restoring Salmon*

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is a nonprofit working to keep the Wild and Scenic Skagit a salmon rich place for future generations. We do this work by assisting landowners with habitat restoration projects, engaging volunteers with monitoring the effectiveness of these projects, and providing free education programs to local students each year. We believe that all of these efforts are engaging our community to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of the Skagit Valley, our role in the sustainability of this beauty, and ensuring we have a healthy Skagit Valley for everyone. The work that is done by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and our volunteers and partners benefits not only salmon but also our entire community that values clean water, abundant fish and wildlife populations, enjoyable recreation opportunities, and a beautiful Skagit Valley.

As you read this 2017 Annual Report you should find great value in all the work being done by our community. The accomplishments presented in this report represent a small sample of the collective efforts of many hard working volunteers, dedicated staff, supportive landowners, cooperative partners, and generous donors.

To achieve these accomplishments it takes a community that is committed to a healthy future. We are fortunate that our community cares so deeply for the well-being of our community members and our fish and wildlife populations. Over and over throughout the year I am reminded of the generosity of our community as groups of volunteers show up to plant trees at planting parties, as individual volunteers dedicate day after day on cold rainy days to collect meaningful monitoring data alongside our staff, and as generous donors contribute to our education programs to ensure that our kids keep learning about science through hands-on stewardship activities that ultimately help to ensure all of us a healthy future.

Thank you for caring about the future of the Skagit Valley and for understanding and supporting the role the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group plays within our community to keep the Skagit a healthy place for all of us.

Thank you for caring about the Magic Skagit!


ALISON STUDLEY
Executive Director



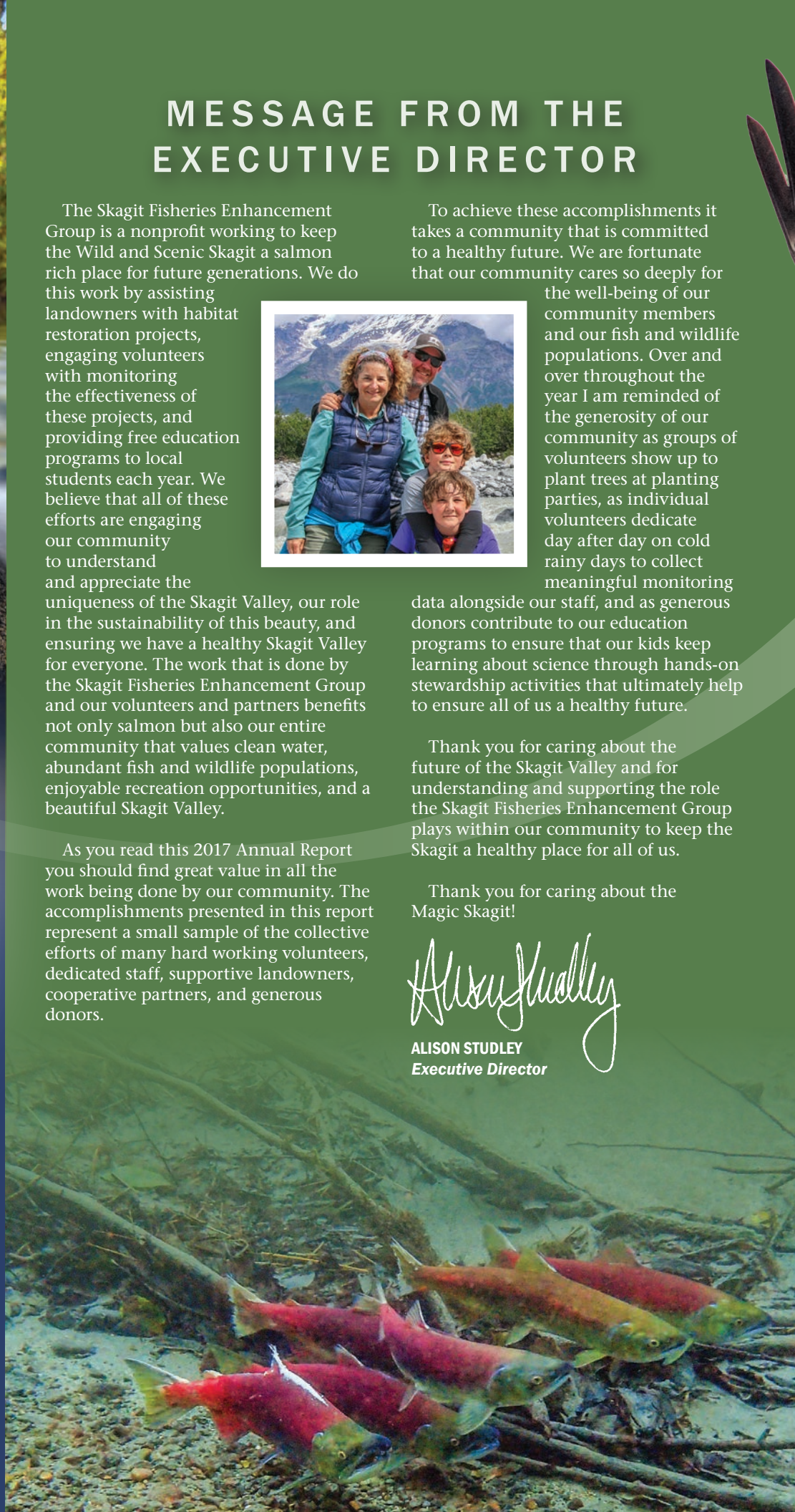
Our mission is to educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship to enhance salmonids.

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Mount Vernon, WA 98273**

**Phone: 360-336-0172
www.skagitfisheries.org**

**SFEG is an independent nonprofit
501 c(3) organization. All donations are
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Tax ID# 94-3165939**

PHOTO CREDITS: SFEG STAFF, DREW
FLESHMAN, AND AARON LOGUE





SUMMARY OF 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RIPARIAN PLANTINGS

23,900

NATIVE PLANTS

*Planted covering
43 acres along
3 miles of streams*

RIPARIAN MAINTENANCE

294

ACRES

*of native plant care
and invasive plant
removal*

KNOTWEED TREATMENT

3,269

ACRES

*of floodplain
surveyed along
34.5 miles of river*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

8,475

INDIVIDUALS

*reached through
community engagement
programs*

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

9,628

HOURS

*Hours donated
by community
volunteers*

KIDS EDUCATED

1,964

STUDENTS

*engaged in
environmental science
education programs*



2017 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

INCOME

PUBLIC FUNDS: \$995,886

PRIVATE FUNDS: \$137,360

IN-KIND DONATIONS: \$332,284

\$1,465,530

EXPENSES

PROJECTS & PROGRAMS: \$986,405

ADMINISTRATION (14%): \$159,887

\$1,146,292



RESTORING HABITAT



SFEG welcomed Kelsey Taylor, our new Riparian Restoration Coordinator, in 2017 to work with landowners, volunteers, and students to plant and care for thousands of native trees along waterways in our watersheds.

NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

Planting native trees along waterways is a key action to ensuring healthy habitat for salmon as well as many other wildlife species we know and love from salamanders and bees to hummingbirds, wood ducks, bears, and even orca whales. In 2017 SFEG worked with numerous landowners, volunteers, students, and partners to plant 23,900 native trees and shrubs along 3 miles of waterways. This important work improves salmon habitat and water quality by shading streams to keep water temperature cool; limiting bank erosion to keep water clear; and filtering out pollutants to ensure healthy habitat downstream for our vibrant shellfish industries. Volunteers and interns grew many of these native plants in our own native plant nursery through a partnership with the Samish Indian Nation. Led by our WCC AmeriCorps intern, volunteers cared for 10,000 native plants as they grew to a larger healthy size in pots before being planted at restoration sites.

FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION

SFEG works closely with its partners to focus effort on high priority projects identified in the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan. Reconnecting floodplain habitat along the rivers in the Skagit watershed is one of the highest priority goals for the recovery of Chinook salmon. SFEG has worked closely with communities along our rivers to assess existing habitat conditions and develop strategies for restoring salmon habitat while also making additional wildlife and human community improvements. In Marblemount, we have worked with Skagit County Parks to design a project to restore and enhance historic side channel habitat in Pressentin Park. This project will both improve habitat for salmon and other wildlife species as well as enhance recreational amenities in the Upper Skagit. In Hamilton, we worked with partners to develop a conceptual plan for restoring salmon habitat for Carey's Slough. This restoration plan provides a community roadmap for implementing restoration actions over the next decade. SFEG is also embarking on a floodplain restoration project in the Skagit River Delta to reconnect the lower part of Britt Slough on WDFW land.



Volunteers plant native trees to reforest Lower Day Creek Slough where public and private landowners are working cooperatively to restore floodplain habitat.



SFEG staff and WCC AmeriCorps crew work to help a private landowner steward their land by planting trees along Walker Creek a tributary to Nookachamps Creek as part of Skagit County's Natural Resource Stewardship Program.

STEWARDED OUR LANDS

For the last 9 years the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) has been partnering with Skagit County on their Natural Resources Stewardship Program. The Natural Resources Stewardship Program helps private landowners steward their lands by providing financial and technical assistance to conduct small restoration projects on their properties. These stewardship projects include planting native trees, building fences to exclude livestock from waterways, and stabilizing eroding streambanks. Over the last 9 years, SFEG and Skagit County have worked with 48 landowners in the Skagit and Samish watersheds to improve habitat on their properties. In 2017 that included planting 7,194 native plants on 12 acres of streamside land, and maintaining 47 acres of previous plantings. SFEG staff and volunteers have also assisted with the ongoing stewardship of these project sites by monitoring vegetation growth and success.

MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

SALMON SPAWNING SURVEYS

The opportunity to observe adult salmon spawning in their natural habitat makes the salmon spawning survey program one of our most exciting volunteer opportunities. It kicks off with a workshop each fall to train volunteers how to safely walk streams, identify different salmon species, and salmon redds (nests). In 2017, volunteers learned not only how to conduct spawner surveys for native salmonids, but how to identify escaped Atlantic salmon in the unlikely event such fish were observed on the spawning ground. While numbers of returning adult salmon were down in 2017, we are happy to report that no Atlantic salmon were documented at any of the 19 streams surveyed for the season.



Volunteers trained by SFEG staff conducted salmon spawning surveys along 19 creeks each week during the 2017 spawning season. Volunteers count returning salmon to track effectiveness of habitat restoration projects and to report results to fish management agencies.



SFEG staff lead volunteers in using a seine net in Carey's Slough in order to document juvenile salmon use.

JUVENILE SALMON SURVEYS

Restoring aquatic connections to floodplains is an important habitat restoration action for Skagit Chinook salmon. Specifically these restoration projects are designed to restore connections between the rivers and off channel habitat such as sloughs and side channels in order to provide young salmon with more rearing habitat. Off channel habitat is crucial to juvenile salmon as they make their long journey downstream to the salt water. During high river flows, small fish can rest in off channel habitat to get out of the fast flowing main river. During low river flows, young salmon can find refuge in cool, shaded off channel habitat when water levels drop in main river channels. Community volunteers and student interns are assisting SFEG staff in learning more about juvenile salmon use where floodplain restoration projects are occurring. Led by SFEG staff, seining nets are used to sample what fish are using off channel water bodies where floodplain restoration projects are planned or have already been implemented. In 2017, community volunteers assisted in collecting samples at 4 locations.

Juvenile Chinook fish were found using habitat where previous restoration efforts had occurred during each survey event at Howard Miller Steelhead Park documenting the success of this type of restoration effort. Surveys were also done at project locations where future restoration projects will occur in order to provide data for post project comparisons. Community members were often invited to observe these sampling efforts to better understand how many small salmon are using these valuable slow moving water bodies.

VEGETATION MONITORING

Volunteers and student interns are trained to collect valuable data related to vegetation survival and growth in order to track the success of habitat restoration sites. This data is shared with funders, researchers and public agencies to document effectiveness of revegetation efforts. Our goal is to have 80% survival of the trees and shrubs planted at each riparian restoration site. In 2017 trained volunteers and interns assisted riparian restoration staff with monitoring 30 planting sites to evaluate planting project success.



Volunteer interns collect data at riparian restoration sites to track success of native plant restoration efforts.

EDUCATING OUR YOUTH



Middle school students from Conway collect water quality samples and learn about how to keep our streams clean and healthy for salmon, wildlife, and our community.

JUNIOR STREAM STEWARDS

This science based education program engages middle school students in a school-year long study of local watersheds. Students are learning each month about salmon, how healthy watershed habitat is key to the health of many other wildlife species they know and love, and their own role in being stewards of healthy habitat for the future. Teachers can weave these monthly topics into their science units throughout the year for additional hands-on science learning opportunities. In 2017, 568 students from five school districts in Skagit County participated and completed this program.

KIDS IN CREEKS

This K-12 school program gets kids out of classroom applying science lessons while learning about water quality, habitat enhancement, and community stewardship. The program includes both a classroom lesson and a hands-on service-learning project at a habitat restoration site. Students have the opportunity to learn about how restoring habitat for salmon protects habitat for many other wildlife species as well as how to be stewards in their own communities. In 2017, 653 students from 14 schools and youth groups completed community stewardship projects at habitat restoration sites.



Kids in Creeks students from Immaculate Conception Regional School learn about a local creek and how they can be stewards of its health.



One of the most exciting field trips for students is releasing the young coho salmon they have raised in their schools into a local creek. Each student gets the opportunity to release fish from a cup into the stream with high hopes that one day they will see their salmon return to this creek as adults to spawn.

SALMON IN THE CLASSROOM

This program augments science curriculum at local schools by teaching students the fascinating life cycle of salmon and their habitat needs by raising coho salmon. Coho salmon eggs are received from WDFW's Marblemount Hatchery and raised in large fish tanks at local schools. Students observe the eggs hatch, feed their young fry, and care for salmon until they grow large enough to be released in a local creek. In 2017 students from two Mount Vernon schools released approximately 400 young coho salmon into Trumpeter Creek with high expectations of seeing adult salmon return to spawn in a future fall.



PEOPLE OF SFEG

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Anacortes*

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OUR STAFF

ALISON STUDLEY

Executive Director

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*Restoration Crew
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KELSEY TAYLOR

*Riparian Restoration
Coordinator*

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STEPHANIE BLEVENS

TYLER HERMAN

EMMETT LAWRENCE

AMERICORPS INTERNS 2017-18

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*Restoration Associate,
Washington Conservation
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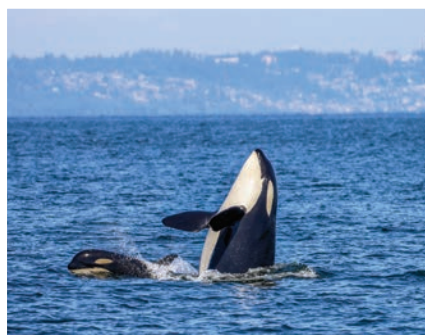
*Education Associate,
Washington Service Corps*

KEELIN MAURMANN

*Community Engagement
Associate, Washington
Service Corps*

OUR SUPPORTERS

We are very thankful to our community who cares so deeply for our natural environment. Our supporters understand that having healthy salmon habitat means having clean water and healthy communities for all of us. Our gratitude for your investment of time, energy and funding never goes unnoticed. We hope you will show your appreciation for those entities that support our work by supporting those that contribute to our success. A complete list of this year's generous donors, businesses, schools, grantors, partners, landowners, tribes, and members is available in the online version of our 2017 Annual Report at SkagitFisheries.org.



Local whale watching businesses are generous supporters of SFEG's work. These ecotourism based businesses recognize that our work to increase salmon populations directly benefits Orca whales who rely on Chinook salmon as their primary food source. Photo Credit: Island Adventures



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Town of Hamilton

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