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ANNUAL REPORT

*Engaging our Community
in Restoring Salmon*

PARTNERSHIPS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

As a nonprofit organization, the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) is highly dependent on a wealth of partnerships to accomplish our mission of keeping the Skagit watershed a salmon rich place for future generations. We are fortunate to work in a community that is rich in generosity and partners. From local clubs and community groups; to businesses and landowners; to schools, tribes, and our local governments we all work collaboratively on habitat restoration projects and education programs that are helping to make the Skagit Valley a more beautiful and healthy community for all of us.

In 2018 some partnerships of note include... SFEG being chosen by Puget Sound Energy (PSE) as one of two Powerful Partners in Skagit County. This Partnership enabled PSE to financially contribute to our Junior Stream Stewards education program, while SFEG provided opportunities at community events and in our publications for PSE to share messages about energy efficiency tips and green energy options.

Another partnership example includes, SFEG working with local businesses and service clubs to bring Salmon in the Classroom to all five elementary schools in the Burlington-Edison School District. Local businesses and Rotary Clubs helped fund the purchase of large fish tanks to enable students to raise salmon from egg to fry at local schools, while SFEG worked with educators to teach third grade students about life cycle concepts and keeping our waterways healthy for salmon.

A new funding partnership includes grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program to restore habitat specifically for Chinook salmon in order to increase the number of salmon available for our declining and beloved Killer Whale population. This grant source brings together diverse partners from Shell Oil and SeaWorld with NOAA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to create a larger sum of funding available for these important projects. Working with

Restore America's Estuaries, Skagit County Parks, and WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, SFEG has secured grants for three habitat restoration projects that target increasing prey for Orca whales along the Skagit River.

These are just several examples of how partnerships make our work go farther. Each one of our projects and programs utilizes a diversity of partners to make them happen from planting native trees, to eradicating invasive knotweed, to removing fish passage problems, and monitoring salmon use at restoration sites. Restoring salmon and ensuring we have healthy communities for our future, takes partnerships at all levels and we are incredibly grateful to each one of our partners for their contributions and support. We are proud to count you as one of our partners and hope you take pride in reading through what we accomplished this past year together.

Thank you for your generous partnership to keep the Skagit a healthy and beautiful place for all of us.




ALISON STUDLEY
Executive Director



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

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 nonprofit
501 c(3) organization. All donations are tax
deductible to the extent that the law allows.
Tax ID# 94-3165939



SUMMARY OF 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RIPARIAN PLANTINGS

17,081

NATIVE PLANTS

*Planted covering
20 acres along
1.8 miles of streams*

RIPARIAN MAINTENANCE

284

ACRES

*of native plant care
and invasive plant
removal*

KNOTWEED TREATMENT

4,716

ACRES

*of floodplain surveyed
along 52.3 miles
of river*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

5,335

INDIVIDUALS

*reached through
community engagement
programs*

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

9,950

HOURS

*donated by
community
volunteers*

KIDS EDUCATED

2,055

STUDENTS

*engaged in
environmental science
education programs*

2018 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

INCOME

PUBLIC FUNDS: \$872,488

PRIVATE FUNDS: \$208,109

IN-KIND DONATIONS: \$376,528

\$1,457,125

EXPENSES

PROJECTS & PROGRAMS: \$923,318

ADMINISTRATION (14%): \$149,501

\$1,080,597



RESTORING HABITAT

FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT

In the Samish River basin the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group worked with local landowners to improve fish passage on Homestead Creek. Grant funds from the Family Forest Fish Passage Program funded a project on Homestead Creek to replace a 30" concrete culvert with a 26-foot bridge. This new bridge structure allows for unimpeded access for both juvenile and adult coho in Homestead Creek. The project improves access to 0.40 miles of stream including a large wetland that juvenile salmon utilize for winter rearing.



Before, on Homestead Creek, a 2 1/2 foot culvert impeded fish passage for coho salmon



After, landowners stand on the new 26 foot bridge that allows for unimpeded fish access to high quality spawning and rearing habitat on Homestead Creek.



AmeriCorps volunteer, Erin Matthews, plants native trees along the Skagit River to restore habitat for salmon and other wildlife.

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 2018 SFEG worked with numerous private landowners, public landowners, volunteers, students, and partners to plant 17,081 native trees and shrubs along 1.8 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 AmeriCorps interns, volunteers cared for 10,000 native plants as they grew to a larger healthy size in pots before being planted at restoration sites.

KNOTWEED CONTROL

SFEG is working with many partners to control the spread of the invasive knotweed plant along the Upper Skagit River and its major tributaries. In 2018, AmeriCorps volunteers from the Washington Conservation Corps assisted SFEG in surveying and treating knotweed along 52.3 miles of river shoreline along the Skagit and Sauk Rivers, and their major tributaries. This effort traversed approximately 4,716 acres (7.36 square miles) within the 100 year floodplain. Within this area we treated 136 patches of knotweed. If aggregated into one spot this conglomerate patch would cover approximately 0.21 acres, but spread out over the whole survey area it amounts to about one knotweed stem on every two acres. This ratio is almost unheard of along knotweed infested waterways. We also worked with partners from Skagit County, the Sauk Suiattle Indian Tribe, EarthCorps, and the Skagit Land Trust to complete reconnaissance surveys of 20 miles of river in an expanded treatment area. Knotweed is much more pervasive in these areas. We are working with these partners to develop a workplan that will extend treatment into this new area in 2019.



SFEG's WCC crew surveys thousands of acres looking for and eradicating the invasive plant knotweed.

MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

SALMON SPAWNING SURVEYS

For those who enjoy the thrill of seeing large salmon return home, there is nothing like the Spawner Survey Program. Each year SFEG trains volunteers to survey creeks where restoration projects have occurred to track the number and species of salmon returning to spawn. Volunteers are trained to identify salmon species and their redds (nests) and then walk their chosen creek each and every week throughout the fall and winter spawning season. Volunteers get a chance to know a stream intimately in all types of weather and are very excited to share news of salmon using their sites. Data collected is shared with fisheries co-managers at Washington State and local Tribes. In 2018, 30 volunteers surveyed 18 streams documenting salmon use at each site.



SFEG staff and interns use a seine net in the slough at Edgewater Park to document the large numbers of juvenile salmon using this off channel habitat that was reconnected to the Skagit River. Community members are invited to observe these sampling efforts to better understand how small salmon are using these valuable slow moving water bodies.



SFEG board member and fisheries ecologist Dave Pflug helps volunteers identify juvenile salmon species utilizing Ovenell Slough.

JUVENILE SALMON SURVEYS

A primary limiting factor for increasing Skagit Chinook salmon abundance is increasing the amount of habitat available for young juvenile salmon to rear prior to migrating out to the Salish Sea. 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. 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 assist 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 salmon are using off channel water bodies before and after floodplain restoration projects are implemented. In 2018, community volunteers assisted in collecting samples at 6 locations.

VEGETATION MONITORING

Volunteers and student interns become citizen scientists to collect valuable data related to vegetation survival and growth in order to track the success of habitat restoration sites. 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 2018 trained volunteers and interns assisted riparian restoration staff with monitoring 27 planting sites to evaluate revegetation success.



Student interns collect data to monitor the growth and health of native trees at restoration sites.





EDUCATING OUR COMMUNITY



Students from LaConner Middle School get their hands dirty while planting native trees along the Skagit River as part of completing the Junior Stream Stewards program.

JUNIOR STREAM STEWARDS

This STEM 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 then weave these monthly topics into their science units throughout the year for additional hands-on science learning opportunities. In 2018, 568 students from five schools in Skagit County completed this program.

SALMON SIGHTINGS

Salmon Sighting events are a way to enable our community to have the awe-inspiring experience of observing wild salmon spawning in local creeks. For years we have received inquiries from the community asking where they can go see live salmon. In the Skagit, it is difficult to identify reliable, safe locations where the public can view salmon. In response to this, we now hold "Salmon Sighting" events at a few locations each year where community members can come observe live salmon spawning in creeks led by docents who can ensure that salmon are not disturbed and can answer questions about salmon biology, life history, and habitat needs. This has become a wonderful hands on learning experience for community members.



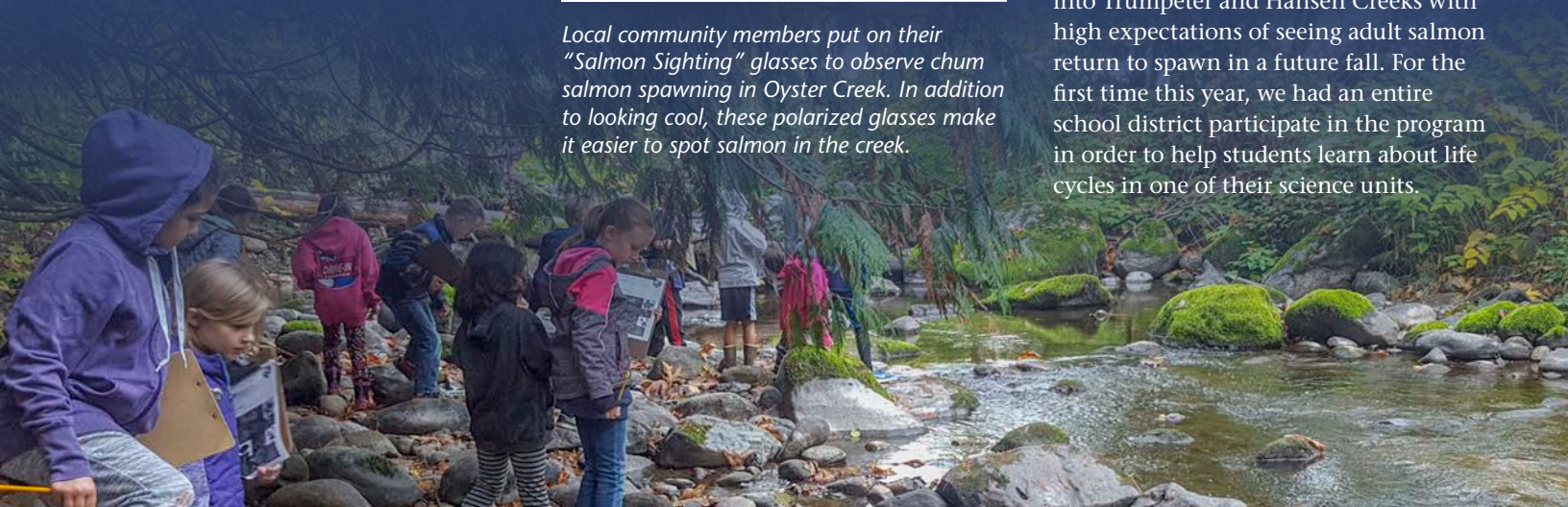
Local community members put on their "Salmon Sighting" glasses to observe chum salmon spawning in Oyster Creek. In addition to looking cool, these polarized glasses make it easier to spot salmon in the creek.



After caring for coho salmon from egg to fry in local schools, students visit a creek to release their young salmon into the wild.

SALMON IN THE CLASSROOM

This program uses STEM based curriculum to teach elementary school students the fascinating life cycle of salmon and their habitat needs by raising coho salmon in their school. Coho salmon eggs are received from Washington State'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 stream. In 2018 we expanded this program to include 464 students from eight schools that released approximately 1,300 young coho salmon into Trumpeter and Hansen Creeks with high expectations of seeing adult salmon return to spawn in a future fall. For the first time this year, we had an entire school district participate in the program in order to help students learn about life cycles in one of their science units.



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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 2018 Annual Report at SkagitFisheries.org.

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