

the REEDD



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Dedicated to Restoring Salmon for Future Generations

Improving Habitat for Chinook at Presentin Park

By ERIN MATTHEWS - SFEG Habitat Restoration Coordinator

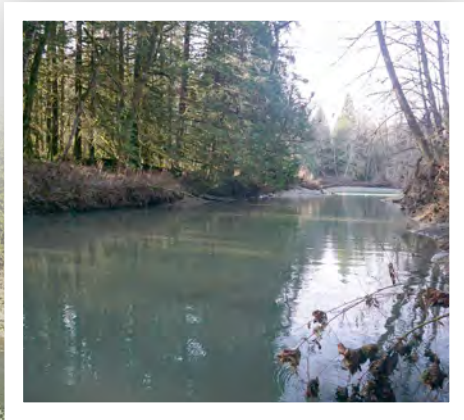
With the help of over a dozen partners and funding organizations, SFEG staff are pleased to report that the construction phase of the habitat restoration project at Presentin Park in Marblemount Washington is finally wrapping up this month, August 2021. It has been a long road bringing this ambitious project to fruition. SFEG became involved with project planning

nearly a decade ago. Skagit Chinook stocks have been declining since at least 1935. In 1999, Puget Sound Chinook were listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. In 2005 the Skagit Chinook recovery plan took the best research available and outlined a plan for addressing this alarming decline of the Chinook salmon: a commercially, recreationally, and culturally valuable species. One of the most critical needs for Skagit Chinook was (and still is) a lack of rearing habitat

in both freshwater and estuaries.

Some stocks of Chinook overwinter in the freshwater Skagit system during their first year, especially those fish that are born in the upper Skagit region. During this time, juvenile fish often enter off-channel habitats to find food, escape high flow velocities in the mainstem river, and avoid turbid flood waters. Recent research in the Skagit basin suggests that juvenile Chinook prefer large side channels with relatively small substrate in the winter. Off channel

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Existing Marblemount Slough channel



Excavator finalizing the new channel

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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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A Statewide

This year the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been celebrating 30 years of successful collaboration with our community to restore habitat for salmon. However, Skagit Fisheries is not alone in celebrating this milestone. As one of 14 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups across Washington State, we are part of a statewide celebration of important salmon work occurring at the community level over the past 30 years. The Washington State Legislature created the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) program in 1990 to involve local communities, citizen volunteers, and landowners in the state's salmon recovery efforts. Like Skagit Fisheries, each of the state's 14 RFEGs is an independent, local, nonprofit organization with its own board of directors and is supported by its members. Each RFEG creates local partnerships with landowners, tribes, businesses, volunteers, agencies, and other non-governmental organizations to lead their communities in successful restoration, education, and monitoring projects. Each RFEG serves different watersheds in diverse communities across the state so that anywhere there are salmon in Washington, there is an RFEG working with their community to steward salmon resources. This year the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Program is celebrating 30 years of working for salmon at the community level. The Skagit Fisheries

Enhancement Group is a proud part of this statewide program celebrating 30 years of accomplishments.

The 14 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups share the common goal of restoring salmon populations and habitat in their regions, relying on support in their local communities. However, the geographic areas and therefore the groups vary widely. Skagit Fisheries, along with its RFEG counterparts, perform a unique role in the statewide salmon recovery effort. Each RFEG creates dynamic partnerships with state and federal agencies, Native American tribes, and local business and landowners. Through these collaborations, the RFEG program has helped lead local communities in successful restoration projects over the last 30 years.

In the early 1990's, RFEGs worked with their communities with limited funding resources to enhance salmon populations through small scale habitat restoration and production projects (such as Remote Site Incubators or "egg boxes"). Since then, the RFEG program has grown to be an essential component of Washington State's salmon and steelhead recovery by also focusing on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed salmonids and providing education and outreach programs to promote good stewardship practices of salmon habitat.

After many years of salmon recovery work, the easiest projects have been completed. Remaining priority projects



Celebration

By ALISON STUDLEY - Executive Director

to improve habitat, ensure fish passage, and make progress on state recovery goals are very complex. However, over the last 30 years the RFEGs have developed the experience and collaborative relationships necessary to efficiently implement projects and leverage additional support from communities across Washington State. Today, the RFEGs are one of the largest project sponsors of Salmon Recovery Funding Board grants in the state.

RFEGs have a 30-year track record implementing over 4,000 projects for salmon statewide. These projects address the most critical issues for recovering salmon including restoring high priority habitat, educating kids and communities, and training citizens to collect important assessment and monitoring data for projects. Each year the RFEGs collectively reach over 55,000 Washington citizens through education and outreach activities about the stewardship of our salmon resources. This outreach forms the base of successful statewide salmon recovery efforts. Over the last 30 years, the accomplishments of RFEG are impressive:

This work has not come easy. RFEGs are creative in how our work is funded: expertly knitting together funding from multiple grant sources to implement large projects and leveraging volunteer support and donations whenever possible. For every \$1 in state and federal base funding received, RFEGs secure an additional \$9 toward salmon recovery, greatly amplifying the initial investment. During the COVID-19 crisis, RFEGs learned to be even more nimble and to adapt, like salmon, to ever changing conditions. When schools and businesses closed, RFEGs were quick to react. Education staff continued supporting teachers to deliver exciting watershed curriculum remotely. Volunteers continued to conduct work and collect data outdoors, in a safe manner to ensure on the ground projects continued. RFEGs strengthened connections between our 14 groups across the state, and shared our lessons learned.

RFEGs are confident that our partnerships, connections, and resiliency will set us up for further success as we face emerging and future challenges such as climate change. RFEGs understand the need to incorporate climate resilience

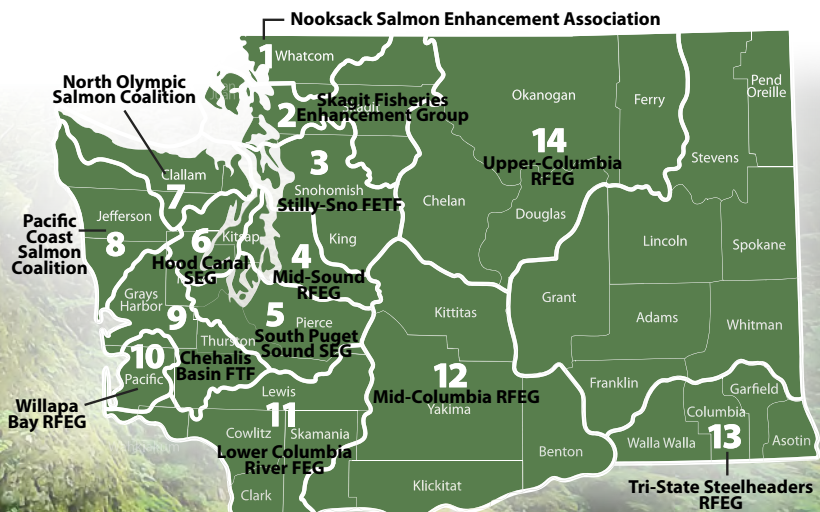
into habitat restoration projects. RFEGs are planting thousands of trees around Washington State each year which are cooling waterways for salmon and steelhead, while also absorbing carbon dioxide. As scientists predict that lessened snowpack will lead to more flooding, RFEGs work to connect floodplains around the state that will protect salmon redds and local communities alike.

The work of the RFEGs supports the sustainability of salmon resources but we do more than that: we build community, create jobs, encourage environmental stewardship, and activate a new generation of salmon advocates. Inspired by the return of salmon, despite the many obstacles they face, RFEGs continue to restore streams, rivers, shorelines, and floodplains; and to proactively engage local communities around the state in salmon recovery.

Please join Skagit Fisheries in celebrating the successes of the RFEG program, as we mark 30 years of accomplishments on behalf of salmon.

For more information on the work of the RFEGs, visit <http://2019-20.regionalfisheriescoalition.org>.

Salmon Projects Completed:	Fish Passage Projects Completed:
4,182	944
Miles of Stream Opened:	Volunteer Hours:
1,316	1,655,000
Miles of Restoration:	Fish Released:
1,125	86,000,000



Improving Habitat

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

habitats that provide refuge during flood flows and relatively stable spawning areas are currently a rare habitat type in the upper Skagit River. Salmon sampling efforts reveal that the freshwater rearing capacity for Chinook is limited due to historic and modern watershed modifications made by humans which eliminated off-channel habitats. In 2010, the Skagit Watershed Council designated the mainstem river, floodplain, and tributaries within the floodplains of the Skagit and Sauk Rivers from Sedro-Woolley upstream to Marblemount that provide rearing habitat for multiple Chinook populations as the highest priority for restoration. The Skagit River in the vicinity of Presentin Park supports upper Skagit summer Chinook and upper Cascade Spring Chinook as well as coho, chum, and pink salmon. The area also supports endangered steelhead and bull trout as well as sea-run cutthroat trout.

The Presentin Park area already contained one active side channel, where both WDFW and SFEG surveyors documented high salmon usage at multiple life stages. An additional historic side channel was identified at this site that had likely been high quality habitat for salmonids but became disconnected due to intentional filling at the inlet and outlet and by reduced winter high flows from Seattle City Light dams. It took years of feasibility studies and assessments to plan and design this large restoration project. SFEG and partners looked at historic land use,



■ *Habitat Restoration Coordinator Erin Matthews with some of the rescued salmonids*

hydrologic factors, likely future river conditions due to climate changes, and the Skagit County Parks Department's vision for the recreational use at this site. All these factors were considered carefully and led to the results we see today.

In summer 2021 Tiger Construction Ltd began work re-connecting the historic side channel. They created 1/2 mile of high-quality side channel habitat with an average area of over 2 acres. For future human users, the contractor installed 3 footbridges, over 2 miles of trails, and used the sediment removed from the new channel on site to prepare for recreational park developments which include campsites, a picnic shelter, toilet facilities, additional parking, and several interpretive signs. In preparation of this project SFEG led volunteers and EarthCorps in 2020 to build a salmon viewing station with benches and educational signs which will soon be

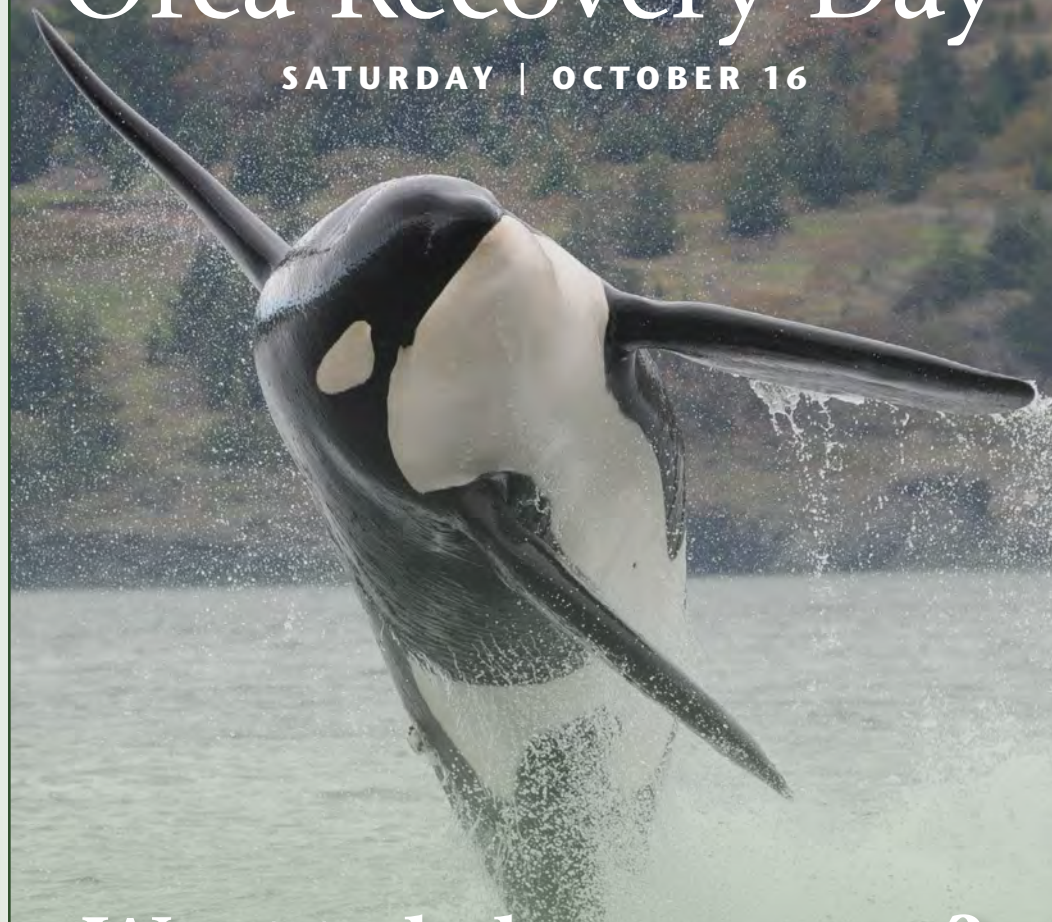


Recently Twin Sisters Brewing and the Conway Pub partnered to create JPod Hazy IPA, a yummy microbrew made with Chinook hops. With 10% of proceeds of draft and can sales going to SFEG, both businesses were able to make generous donations to our Chinook side channel projects. Thank you so much!



Orca Recovery Day

SATURDAY | OCTOBER 16



Want to help save orcas?

Want to help save orcas? Join in our Orca Recovery Day planting party at Presentin Park on Saturday, October 16. We'll restore native trees and shrubs to the new side channel that will provide a hospitable environment to generations of Chinook salmon...and food for orcas! Organized by Better Ground and the Washington Association of Conservation Districts, events are being organized all over Washington State to help raise awareness and improve conditions for our beloved orcas. Not in Skagit County? Visit BetterGround.org for events elsewhere in Washington State.

In addition to Orca Recovery Day, you'll have three additional opportunities this fall to help restore habitat at Presentin Park. See our event schedule on the back page of this newsletter for details.

To learn more about the orca-salmon connection check out the [orca page](#) on our website for links and more.

accessible via the new trails and foot bridges. After construction is complete SFEG staff, EarthCorps, Washington Conservation Corps, and SFEG volunteers will plant the disturbance area created by construction and areas along the new channel where SFEG removed patches of invasive species, a total of 11 acres of riparian habitat, which will require 11,000 native trees and shrubs.

We have many partners on the Presentin Park side channel project including: the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Restore America's Estuaries, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Skagit County Public Works, Skagit County Parks, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Herrera Environmental Consultants Inc., Sea World, Earth Corps, Cooke Aquaculture Supplemental Environmental Project, Washington Conservation Corps, the U.S. Forest Service, the local area tribes.



■ Spawning chum carcass found in existing side channel

■ Looking upstream under new footbridge

A promotional graphic for Orca Recovery Day 2021. It features a collage of images: an orca breaching, a group of people planting trees, and a person working in a field. The text includes "ORCA RECOVERY DAY 2021", "October 16", "WHAT IMPACTFUL PROJECT ARE YOU PLANNING?", and "SIGN UP NOW: BETTERGROUND.ORG/ORD". Logos for Puget Sound Partnership, becf watersheds program, The Nature Conservancy, Port of Seattle, ESA, and CASCADIA are also present.

ORCA RECOVERY DAY 2021

October 16

WHAT IMPACTFUL PROJECT ARE YOU PLANNING?

SIGN UP NOW: BETTERGROUND.ORG/ORD

PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP

bcf watersheds program

The Nature Conservancy

Port of Seattle

ESA

CASCADIA



■ Fish biologist Kurt Buchanan, pictured at the Maddox Creek restoration site, says he's a fish nerd, and thinks all fish are worthy of protection.

Interview Subjects Share Why They Love the Skagit and its Salmon

By OLIVIA HUBERT - Former WSC Education Associate

To celebrate our 30th anniversary this year, we have been interviewing community members from different sectors, to discuss why they support salmon recovery and how we can further our collaboration. We have had the pleasure meeting with various volunteers, a fisherman, a brewer, an artist, educators, and business owners to name a few. This project started out as a way for us to make connections to our community during a year of limited interaction and evolved into an outlet to expand our reach as an organization.

By interviewing groups from various sectors, we have been able to bridge some gaps where the connection to salmon is not immediately obvious. For example, Linda Sanford, who is known as the 'green realtor' in Anacortes, shared with us why exactly she focuses on sustainable housing and how the importance of salmon influenced that decision. Linda explained, "Salmon habitat is part of our natural resources, and everything is connected. How we live in our homes and how our homes perform. What type of stewardship we have to our Earth and our natural environment determines our health."

It was exciting to hear our community members share about the importance



■ Island Adventures marine naturalist Samantha Murphy thrives on seeing wildlife during beach and forest hikes.

of salmon for their work as well as their personal connection to salmon. Retired fish biologist Kurt Buchanan said, "I'm a fish nerd, and think all fish are worthy of protection. Salmon are a product of ancient evolution and have been here before the last ice age and recolonized after. They are part of our local economy, ecology, and the mindset of people. They're just cool and I've been fascinated with them ever since I've been here." We came into this project expecting certain responses and were pleased to hear about connections that we never knew existed.

In addition to making connections and providing a platform for reflection, our interviews have inspired us to think about new ideas that will engage a larger audience and bring to light the idea that salmon appreciation and habitat stewardship can be accessible to all in various ways. We interviewed Nancy Quivey, a landowner on whose property we worked to improve fish passage. She says, "After [the fish passage project] ... we are seeing more salmon than we ever have before. I really enjoy when they come back every year. It's very hopeful. If you have a stream that looks like its bearing fish, and you have structures that look like they are small or limited I would absolutely recommend getting in touch with Skagit Fisheries."

We are grateful for the community members who took the time to speak with us and share their insights and reflections. It has been gratifying to hear about the impact our work has had on individuals from various backgrounds living in the Skagit Valley and surrounding areas.

We hope that those we interviewed and the people who get the chance to watch them will be encouraged to think about the ways in which healthy salmon and a healthy watershed truly does impact our lives.

2022 Membership



SFEG IS A MEMBERSHIP BASED ORGANIZATION

If you are enjoying reading this newsletter, perhaps it's time that you became a member! Your membership dollars are critical to support the operation of SFEG (including producing this newsletter), allowing us to develop new projects with landowners, providing education programs to kids throughout our watersheds, and collecting monitoring data regarding restoration project sites to document successes.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

NAME _____

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CITY / STATE / ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

PHONE _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

- \$20 - INDIVIDUAL
- \$35 - FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD
- \$100 - SUPPORTER
- \$250 - SUSTAINER
- \$500 - BENEFACTOR
- OTHER \$ _____

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**GIVE ONLINE AT:
www.SkagitFisheries.org**

Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent that the law allows. Tax ID#: 94-3165939



■ Landowner Nancy Quivey, pictured at her Silver Creek property, loves her new bridge, and feels hopeful seeing the fish come back year after year to her stream.

The places it took us

- Taylor Shellfish Farm
- Chuckanut Brewery
- Anacortes
- Floating art studio
- Twin Sisters Brewery
- Planting sites
- SFEG Nursery
- Popular birding sites
- Salmon spawning streams

The things we heard

- Salmon are of great economic importance
- Salmon are culturally valuable
- Salmon are a keystone species
- Salmon are cool!
- Habitat restoration benefits more than just salmon
- We are connected to the salmon
- Salmon have inspired generations of artists
- Salmon are delicious!

View our growing body of interview videos on the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group YouTube Channel



■ Educator KayLani Siplin says seeing salmon for the first time changed her life, and she loves them because they are the primary food source for her favorite animal, the killer whale.



SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

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Events and Volunteer Opportunities

Spawner Survey Workshop

October 2 (Saturday) 9am-3pm

Join us for training on documenting salmon use at restoration sites throughout the Skagit and Samish watersheds.

Volunteers will be assigned a stream at the workshop, and weekly surveying is done late October through early January. Registration is required and Covid-19 safety precautions are in place. More info and sign up at www.skagitfisheries.org.

Salmon Sightings

October 9 Hansen Creek at Northern State Recreation Area

November 2 at Oyster Creek in partnership with NSEA and Taylor Shellfish

**November 20 Presentin Park;
All events 10am-2pm**

Join us at various locations around the Skagit and Samish Watersheds in hopes of seeing spawning salmon! Experts will be on hand to talk about salmon habitat and local restoration efforts. More info at www.skagitfisheries.org. Parking at some of these sites is ex-stream-ly limited, so please carpool!

Fall Planting Parties

October 16 (Orca Recovery Day), October 23 (Make a Difference Day), November 20, December 4 (Saturdays) All events 10am-1pm; Help restore native riparian plants in the Skagit Watershed! All plantings this fall restore juvenile Chinook habitat, making more food for Southern Resident Killer Whales. Help orcas by helping salmon! Registration is required and Covid-19 safety precautions are in place. More info and sign up at www.skagitfisheries.org. Limited parking will be available, so please carpool!