



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

*Restoring Salmon for Future Generations*



# CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS

It was another exciting year for watershed restoration and salmon recovery in the Skagit Valley thanks to our members, partners, and volunteers. Skagit Fisheries accomplished much due to the generosity and investment our community chooses to make in having healthy watersheds for salmon and people. This year working with private landowners, salmon and trout access was restored to over 12 miles of valuable habitat. By removing and replacing culverts that block salmon migration in streams, salmon now are able to utilize 12 miles of spawning and rearing habitat that was not accessible to them. Volunteers (and sometimes even the landowners as volunteers themselves) are documenting salmon use above these newly removed structures and ensuring the habitat is utilized. Skagit Fisheries was also very busy this year working with County and Tribal partners to identify, survey, and prioritize future fish passage correction projects throughout our watersheds.

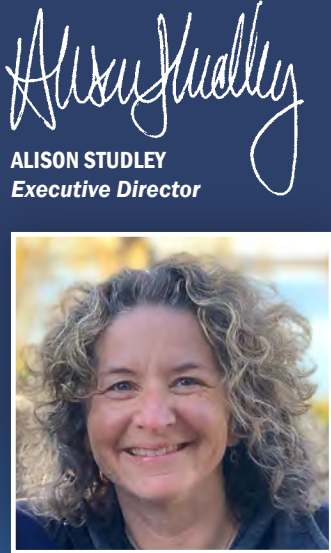
Planting native trees along rivers, streams, and wetlands remains a high priority for salmon recovery. This year Skagit Fisheries worked with many partners to plant over 21,500 native trees on 43 acres with willing landowners along waterways. To accomplish this restoration it takes the collective effort of volunteers, students, AmeriCorps, Washington Conservation Corps, public landowners, private landowners, and many partners. We are thrilled to have such a diverse group of stakeholders invested in helping to make the Skagit Valley a healthy place for all of us.

In addition to work led by Skagit Fisheries, we also assisted and supported a number of other amazing restoration projects being led by partners in our watershed. We were thrilled to be part of the significant Chinook restoration efforts taking place with Dike District 3 along the South Fork of the Skagit River. As well as assisting Skagit County to restore salmon access in Ovenell Slough at Cedar Grove.

All of us working collectively together and sharing expertise with one other is what makes doing habitat restoration in the Skagit Valley a success. This conservation work would not be possible without the tremendous partnerships on all levels from landowners, to funders, to agencies, tribes, volunteers, nonprofits and businesses. Partnerships are really what makes habitat restoration possible in the Skagit Valley.

Thank you each for being a partner in this work.

Gratefully,



ALISON STUDLEY  
Executive Director



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

Skagit Fisheries  
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Phone: 360-336-0172  
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Skagit Fisheries is an independent nonprofit 501 c(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible to the extent that the law allows.  
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# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RIPARIAN PLANTINGS | **21,587 NATIVE PLANTS**  
*Over 43 acres of streams and shorelines revegetated with native plants*

HABITAT OPENED | **12 MILES** of habitat reconnected  
*by removing fish passage barriers*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH | **1,167 INDIVIDUALS** reached through community engagement programs

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT | **9,052 HOURS** donated by community volunteers

KIDS EDUCATED | **818 STUDENTS** engaged in environmental science education programs

KNOTWEED SURVEYED | **19 MILES** of river surveyed for invasive knotweed

FISH PASSAGE | **26 CULVERTS** assessed to determine fish passability

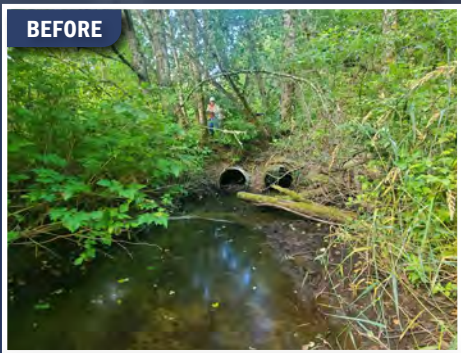
# 2022 FINANCIAL SUMMARY







# IMPROVING FISH PASSAGE

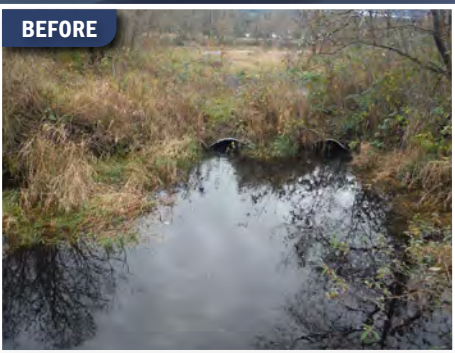
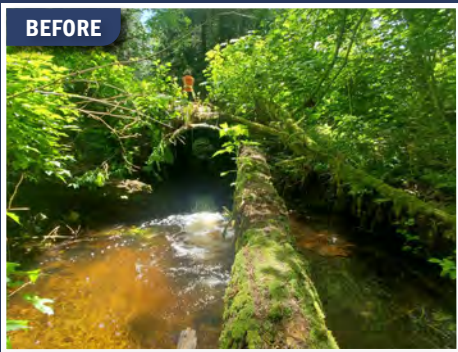


## STARBIRD CREEK

This project worked with a private forest landowner to improve access to over 6.2 miles of habitat for coho, steelhead, and sea run cutthroat. The Family Forest Fish Passage Program funded the project to remove and replace two side by side barrier culverts with a bridge on Starbird Creek, a tributary to Fisher Creek in the Skagit River watershed. This project builds on past fish passage improvement projects completed downstream. The landowner is super excited about their new bridge which now allows unimpeded access for salmon, steelhead, and trout to high quality spawning and rearing habitat.

## COLD SPRINGS TRIBUTARY

On a tributary to Cold Springs Creek, Skagit Fisheries worked with a private forest landowner to remove culverts which were completely blocking adult fish migration for coho salmon, rainbow trout, and sea run cutthroat trout. The Family Forest Fish Passage Program funded this project to remove the blocking culverts and replace them with a much larger diameter culvert to allow fish passage on an unnamed tributary to Cold Springs Creek in the Nookachamps Creek watershed. Due to the slope of the old culverts, adult salmon were blocked from migrating 100% of the time. The new larger culvert enables fish to access 2 miles of quality spawning and rearing habitat on several small tributaries located above this project site.



## CAREY'S CREEK

On Carey's Creek near where it joins Carey's Slough in the Town of Hamilton, Skagit Fisheries worked with a private landowner to completely remove a culvert which was creating a fish passage barrier. Since the landowner (Janicki Logging) no longer needed access on this private road crossing, no structure was needed to replace the removed culvert allowing the complete restoration of the natural stream channel shape and flow. These are the best kind of fish passage projects to complete, when complete removal of a fish passage barrier is possible and agreeable with the landowner. Removing this culvert and restoring natural stream flows provides salmon access to 3.8 miles of salmon habitat including 4.5 acres freshwater emergent wetland, 27 acres freshwater forest/shrub wetland, and 7 acres of pond habitat. This project builds upon several past and current salmon restoration projects occurring upstream, including a fish passage project on Carey's Creek in 2020, riparian restoration along Carey's Slough, and an ongoing project to design and restore Little Carey's Creek and wetland upstream. This project was funded with grant funds from Puget Sound Energy.

## NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

Restoring riparian habitat means that we are planting native trees and shrubs adjacent to a river, stream, or other body of water. At Skagit Fisheries, we work with many partners throughout the year to plant thousands of trees to restore riparian areas. Revegetating these waterways with native plants, not only helps to restore habitat for salmon, it also helps to filter pollutants and keep our waterways clean and healthy for shellfish, wildlife, and our community. This past year, Skagit Fisheries worked with Skagit County, Dike District 3, City of Mount Vernon, WDFW, and many private landowners to plant over 21,500 native plants. Community members, students, staff, AmeriCorps and WCC members took part in making this restoration a reality. This year, many riparian restoration projects were located directly adjacent to the Skagit River providing important habitat for Chinook salmon. Some of these major projects took place along the South Fork of the Skagit River, the mainstem Skagit River in South Mount Vernon, DeBays Slough, Foxglove Slough, and Ovenell Slough. Skagit Fisheries is proud to provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be a part of tree planting events. In addition to planting trees at restoration sites throughout the Skagit Valley, volunteers also help grow trees for future restoration projects at our native plant nursery. We are excited many new projects begin in 2023. We hope to see you at an upcoming community planting party.



Students from Conway planting trees along the Skagit River.

# PARTNERSHIPS FOR SALMON



Father-daughter team of volunteers walk the East Fork of Walker Creek documenting salmon spawning upstream of a previous fish passage improvement project.

## SPAWNER SURVEYS

One of the highlights for many volunteers is getting to participate in Skagit Fisheries' Spawner Survey Program. In this program, volunteers are trained to identify salmon and the redds (nests) they make when spawning in order to document fish use at restoration sites. We are especially interested in documenting salmon use upstream of where fish passage improvement projects have occurred. Of course it is exciting to see live salmon spawning anywhere, but it is even more exciting to see salmon spawning in habitat that wasn't accessible until a barrier such as a culvert was removed. This year we had teams of volunteers surveying 21 streams weekly from October to January. Salmon were late to arrive due to the dry fall, so surveys went later than a typical year. However these hearty volunteers were more than willing to continue their surveys late into the winter to ensure all fish were counted. Skagit Fisheries has been training volunteers to count returning salmon for more than 20 years and providing this data to the fisheries co-managers at Washington State and the Tribes.

## CHANNEL RESTORATION

In addition to being the lead on many salmon habitat restoration projects, Skagit Fisheries often partners with other entities and takes on support roles as well. This past year, Skagit Fisheries assisted Partners with multiple high priority Chinook Recovery projects. Along the South Fork of the Skagit River, Dike District 3 and Skagit County worked to reconnect over 1,600 feet of backwater channel and 5.3 acres of wetland habitat to restore important habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon. Skagit Fisheries's role was leading the fish rescue effort prior to construction and to ensure that over 5,000 fish were unharmed during the construction project. Post construction, Skagit Fisheries is planting thousands of native trees along 24 acres of riparian area at the site. At Cedar Grove, Skagit County lead a massive fish passage improvement project removing culverts and fill from Ovenell Slough and replacing the crossing with a pedestrian bridge. This new bridge allows recreationalists of all abilities to access the publicly owned property to hike and fish. Again, Skagit Fisheries lead the fish rescue effort prior to construction to ensure young salmon were not harmed. And post construction, Skagit Fisheries worked with volunteers from Fourth Corner Fly Fishers to build a trail, install benches, and restore the riparian area associated with this beautiful spot to recreate.





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### SALMON IN SCHOOLS

With generous support from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Skagit Fisheries was again able to expand our Salmon in the Classroom program last year and for the coming year. Specifically we are expanding to reach more students attending underserved schools. Skagit Fisheries is one of 12 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups offering this unique education program to underserved schools across the state in a coordinated way. In the Skagit watershed, students at 11 elementary schools students receive 200 coho eggs from a state hatchery in January, and watch them transition through 3 life stages over the course of 3-5 months. Upon release into local creeks, students connect the concept of healthy habitat to the salmon they have raised for several months. The Children's Museum of Skagit County continues to host a Salmon in the Classroom tank as well, providing community members and younger children the opportunity to watch salmon grow and learn about habitat needs regardless of where they are enrolled in school. Anyone can come see the salmon at the Museum and even participate in the exciting salmon release days. Be sure to look for these opportunities in the spring.



One of many local students releasing salmon fry into Hansen Creek as part of the Salmon in Schools program.



Families at the Oyster Creek Salmon Sighting see live spawning salmon and learn about how to keep habitat clean and healthy.

### SALMON SIGHTINGS

Salmon Sighting events enable community members to have a front row experience for observing wild salmon spawning in local creeks. While the Skagit and Samish watersheds are home to all 5 Pacific salmon species, it is difficult to find accessible locations to view these amazing creatures. Salmon Sightings brings the public up close to salmon, finding locations and times when people can safely view spawning salmon while also learning about salmon species and how to keep their habitat clean and healthy from docents. This year we were excited to host several Salmon Sighting events throughout our watersheds, however the highlight was definitely the chum Salmon Sighting at Oyster Creek along Samish Bay. We hope you can join us next fall at a Salmon Sighting event.



Washington Conservation Corps members surveying the river for the invasive plant knotweed as part of the Upper Skagit Knotweed Removal Program.

### INTERNSHIPS

Skagit Fisheries strives to involve the community in all aspects of salmon habitat restoration. One way we do this is by providing internships to local college students offering them an opportunity to learn career building skills while earning their college degrees. In the past, these internships were unpaid thus limiting the pool of applicants to those individuals who can afford to work for free. In an effort to be more inclusive, Skagit Fisheries introduced paid internships to qualifying students this past year. This is an exciting new endeavor that we kicked off in 2022 and we hope to grow in the future as we expand our ability to provide learning opportunities for students, of any background to participate in career building internships. We look forward to this initiative expanding the number of internships we can offer to local students and expanding the diversity of young people who can apply.



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### OUR SUPPORTERS

We are very grateful to our community who continues to care so deeply for our natural environment. Our donors, supporters, and restoration partners understand that having healthy waterways for salmon also means having clean water and healthy communities for all of us. We are thankful for your investment of time, energy, and funding to support our work. Please show your appreciation for those entities that support our work by patronizing those businesses that contribute to our healthy watershed. 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 **2022 Annual Report** at [SkagitFisheries.org](https://SkagitFisheries.org).

### IMPORTANT PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT FOR SKAGIT FISHERIES COMES FROM



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Skagit County Marine Resources Committee  
Skagit County Parks and Recreation  
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