



SKAGIT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

News



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SOIL • WATER • WOODLAND

Fall 2017

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Photo credit: Tara Ellis

<https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/tara-ellis.html>

Congratulations to our new Supervisors

Margery Hite was appointed to serve on the Board of Supervisors of the Skagit Conservation District in May, 2017. Margery lives on a historic small farm just south of Blanchard where she raises dairy sheep. Using sheep's milk, she makes cheese, yogurt and ice cream for her family.

Her interest in the SCD stems from classes she has taken (with Kristi Carpenter) and consultations on manure management (with John Schuh), as well as from the impressive conservation projects that SCD has sponsored.

Margery is a lawyer and spent 30 years on local government issues before retiring from public service. Margery began her career working for the Criminal and Fraud Divisions of the King County Prosecutor's Office. From criminal cases, she moved on to handling civil cases for Snohomish County government. After a number of years as a lawyer for the county, she was invited to serve as the executive director for law and justice agencies, and human services in the County Executive's Office. In 2001-02 she took a year off to volunteer in the former Yugoslavia as part of the American Bar Association's legal reform project there. When she returned, the governor appointed her to the Growth Management Hearings Board for Western Washington. From the growth management board, she returned to representing local government as City Attorney for the City of Oak Harbor. She finished her career in public service working on affordable housing legal issues for the Snohomish County Housing Authority. Since retirement, she volunteers with the Northwest Justice Project (NJP) and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP).

Margery moved to Skagit County in 1993 to be able to live in the country and so her daughter could have horses. At that time, her farm was home to many Pony Club lessons. After she returned to the U.S. from Eastern Europe, Margery began raising sheep. Her travels have taken her to Peru, Ecuador, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Hungary and Austria. "There are sheep everywhere," she reports.



Jed Holmes was elected to the Board in February of 2017. Jed grew up in the Skagit Valley and graduated from Mount Vernon High School. His first jobs were at local farms, picking berries, milking cows and bucking hay. He also worked for the Weed Science department at the WSU Research Station on Memorial Highway, helping run herbicide efficacy trials.

Jed studied at Evergreen State College, where he focused on Russian language and literature, and spent his summers working in Yellowstone National Park. His academic studies took him to Russia, where he spent nearly two decades, first as a student and then working in publishing and public relations in Moscow.

Since returning to the Pacific Northwest, Jed has been actively involved in community groups and local political advocacy. He currently works as a community outreach coordinator for the Pilchuck Audubon Society, promoting backyard environmental stewardship.

"I was encouraged to run for this position by friends and community members, who know me to be an enthusiastic conservationist. I hope that my professional background will be helpful in building the resource and volunteer base for the Skagit Conservation District," Jed said. "I appreciate the many years of service and leadership of Mr. Blau, and I know that his shoes will be hard ones to fill."

Jed lives on Thomas Creek outside Sedro-Woolley with his wife and 4-year-old daughter. He enjoys hiking, cooking, fishing and bird watching.



2017 Skagit Conservation Youth Tour

This year's annual Skagit Conservation Youth Tour welcomed sunny weather and 700 excited fifth and sixth grade students from 27 Skagit County classrooms to Pomona Grange Park this past May. Students participated in hands-on activities offered by local resource professionals at stations provided throughout the forested park along beautiful Friday Creek. Stations included: forest protection, the salmon life cycle, bivalves, soils, "Leave No Trace" camping practices, Macroinvertebrate identification, and forest regeneration. Classes that participated in the "Zero Waste" recycling lunch activity reduced landfill waste by 72%!

THANK YOU!!!

Sierra Pacific Foundation – bus transportation funding for students to attend the tour

NSC-Society of American Foresters – event sponsorship

Skagit County – continued program support

Department of Natural Resources, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Taylor Shellfish Farms, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Forest Service, Padilla Bay Reserve, Skagit Land Trust, Sierra Pacific Industries, and Skagit County Compost/Recycler Program volunteers – station hosts



Photo 1 – Students watch clams filter water at the Taylor Shellfish Farms bivalve station

Photo 2 – Students from Karen Kanske's Samish Elementary sixth grade class show their appreciation for tour sponsors and station leaders

Photo 3 – Department of Natural Resources station leaders demonstrate equipment used to combat wildfires

Stormwater Classroom Presentations

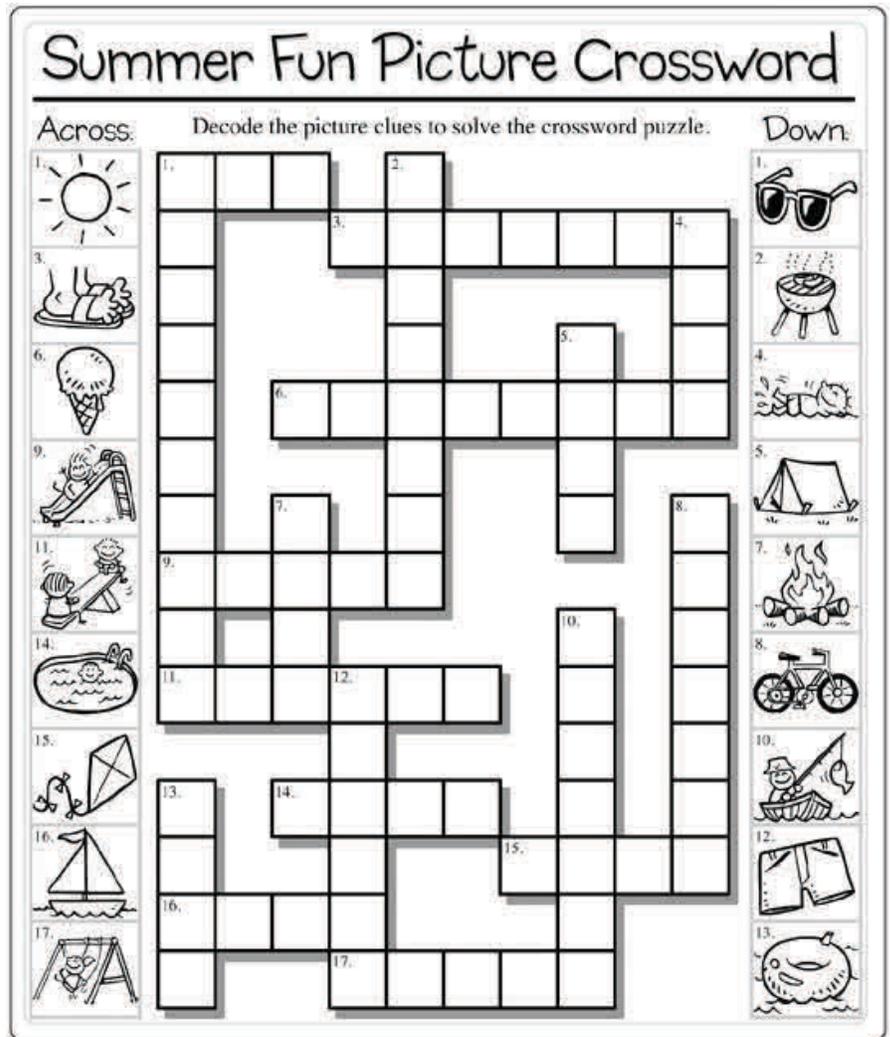
During the 2016-17 school year, the Skagit Conservation District visited 58 Skagit County classrooms educating over 1,350 students about stormwater pollution within their watersheds.

Using the EnviroScape® watershed model, a scaled-down, tabletop version of the “Skagit” watershed, students learn about the important relationship they share with their local water bodies and the impact that human actions have on them. The hands-on model gives a visual example of what a watershed may look like and the accompanying demonstration shows how various land uses and their associated non-point source pollution can affect water quality, especially after a rain storm.

These free presentations, which are offered to Skagit County schools and local organizations, provide a unique, interactive learning experience, enabling students to make the connection between the way we live and the health of our local waterways. They are able to see how the combined affects of non-point source pollution from many small sources can have a large impact on the quality of our shared water resources. Students discover how they can protect the environment by taking small, local actions and gain knowledge about stormwater runoff, water pollution, water quality, watersheds, and stewardship.



Photo – Students become storm clouds as they rain on the watershed model during a presentation

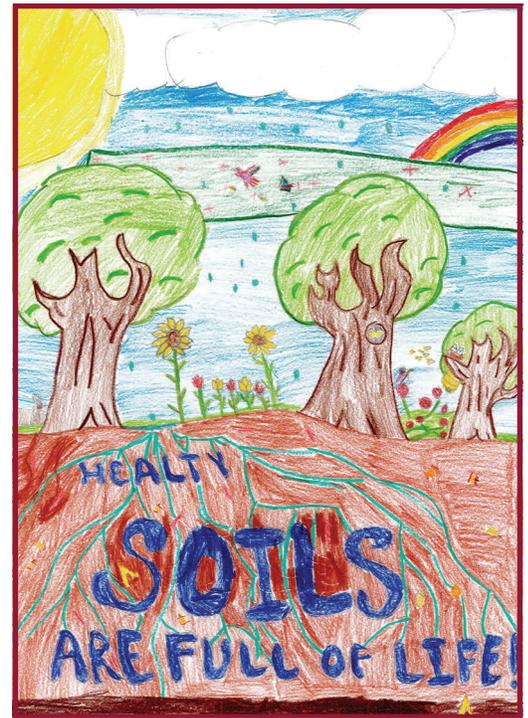


2017 Poster Contest Healthy Soils Are Full of Life!

The Skagit Conservation District hosted its annual Natural Resources Conservation Poster Contest in honor of Soil and Water Stewardship Week, April 30 to May 7, 2017.

Each year, the National Association of Conservation Districts creates a theme based on an annual rotation of five natural resource topics. The theme for 2017 is “Healthy Soils Are Full of Life”. The contest was open to Skagit County students, grades K-12.

This year’s overall winner was **Dalton Kurtz**, a fifth grader at Little Mountain Elementary. Dalton was also the Grade 5 Winner. He was awarded a \$50 Tri-Dee Arts gift card, a plaque, and professional framing of his winning poster. The Runner-up Winner was **Addison Felty**, a fourth grader at Big Lake Elementary. Addison was also the Grade 4 Winner and was awarded a plaque and a \$25 Tri-Dee gift card.



Dalton Kurtz winning poster

Allison Geibig, a third grader at Little Mountain Elementary, was the Grade 3 Winner, **Hannah Dutton**, a sixth grader at Foothills Christian, was the Grade 6 Winner, and **Ruth Coronel**, an Emerson High School tenth grader, was the Grade 10 Winner. Each Category winners received a root viewer science kit and an award certificate. Laminated bookmarks were created featuring their own artwork. All contest participants received participation certificates, as well as activity booklets and bookmarks featuring this year’s theme.

The award winning students and their families were recognized during a televised presentation with the Commissioners and Blossom the Treeture™ at the annual Soil and Water Stewardship Proclamation that was held at the Skagit County Commissioners Hearing Room.



We want to give a special thank you to our 2017 poster contest judges: **Crystal Briggs**, **Carl Fuller**, **Phil Roberts**, and **Max Ross**, all Soil Scientists with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Poster contest winners pose with Blossom the Treeture™. From Left to Right: Hannah Dutton, Addison Felty, Dalton Kurtz, Ruth Coronel

Diobsud Hazardous Fuels Reduction Pilot Project

Project Goals:

- ✦ Reduce High Fire Risk (High ignition potential, rapid spread rate, high intensity.)
- ✦ Reduce impact on adjacent forest lands. Non-native, invasive plants, out-compete native vegetation. Un-checked spread causes serious ecological and economic impacts.
- ✦ Reduce risk to inter-structure of Seattle City Light power distribution system.
- ✦ Experiment with control techniques of an invasive species not previously tried. Implement an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM).
- ✦ Provide long-term control techniques by managing vegetation with vegetation.
- ✦ Enhance habitat for wildlife forage, pollinators, and song birds.
- ✦ Reduce long-term maintenance of power line right-of-way.
- ✦ Long-term commitment/partnership to maintain a desirable ecological plant community.
- ✦ Meet forestland management goals of our partners in the Diobsud Firewise Community.



Before Treatment/Fuels Reduction



After Fuels Reduction/Mulch and Native Plants

FIREWISE



Communities enhance standing in Firewise Community/USA Program
www.firewise.org

Communities achieve renewal in 2017

Chuckanut Ridge, Shelter Bay, Butler Hill, Newhalem, Diablo, Diobsud, Cascade River, Jenkins Lane.



Forest Health Treatments



Home risk assessments



Colony Mountain Community works toward Firewise USA status



Support from local fire districts



Thank you 2017 Marine Biotoxin Volunteers!

*“Oysters come and walk with us...
A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk along the briny beach...”*

- The Walrus and the Carpenter, Lewis Carroll

The Skagit Conservation District and the Washington State Dept. of Health would like to give special thanks to the participants of the 2017 Marine Biotoxin Volunteer program: **Glenda Alm, John Buchanan, Barb Cameron, Ann Childs, Chuck Davis, Andrea Doll, Jim Fukuyama, Lenora Hanson, Donna Helgeson, Dick Kent, Gil Ormbrek, Lindsey Parker, John Patton, Sally Peyou, Jon Stables, Marcus Stables, Vicky Stables, Steve Thornton, Barry Unema, Colene Unema, Pat Wedul, Strand Wedul, Dave Young and Pat Young.** It is through their active participation that we are able to protect the health of community residents and visitors. The goal of the Marine Biotoxin Volunteer Program is to provide an early public health warning of shellfish toxicity by routinely assessing our local recreational shellfish harvesting beaches for the presence of Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) and Diarrhetic Shellfish Poison (DSP).

Local shellfish are gathered at low tide every other week by our local Marine Biotoxin volunteers at 9 recreational shellfish areas and then taken to the County Health Department where they are shipped off to the State Department of Health’s lab in Seattle to be tested. The State Department of Health tests the shellfish then immediately gets any necessary warnings on the Marine Biotoxin Hotline to keep the public informed.

For information about the Marine Biotoxin Volunteer Monitoring program, contact Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District at (360) 428-4313 or email kristi@skagitcd.org.

Protecting our legacy of clean water... Welcome, Fall 2017 Watershed Masters - Class 25!

The Skagit Conservation District and partners, including the City of Mount Vernon, City of Burlington, City of Sedro-Woolley, City of Anacortes, and Skagit County, would like to send out a hearty welcome to the Fall 2017 Watershed Masters class! The 8-week program kicked off on the evening of September 27th and will continue through November 15th. Participants attend eight evening sessions and three Saturday field days. The sessions are taught by local experts and designed to demonstrate the inter-relationship of watershed health, beauty, recreation, economics and citizen behavior; and to provide residents with a vehicle to get involved individually and collectively to protect and improve the health of our local streams, rivers, lakes, and marine resources. In exchange for 40 hours of training, Watershed Masters pledge to complete 40 hours of volunteer service in our community over the next two years. Each individual volunteer decides how to spend these hours.

The Fall 2017 class is the 25th class to participate in this program! Over the years, Watershed Master graduates have played a key role in the protection of our local streams, rivers, and marine waters.

**Rachel Best Bruce Bucknam Randall Dills Kirk Hale Jonathan Hallenbeck Wim Houppermans
Yvonne Houppermans Michael Jackson Robert Jarvis Carole Kihano Barbara Kellner Kaitlyn Lammers
Virginia NaefJanet Nevitt Alison Percival Emily Rahlmann Doug Rollin Sara Seward Jean Stephens
Elizabeth StewartCandice Trusty Tim Verschuyt Anya Voloshin Antonia Weiss Jamie Weiss**

The Watershed Masters Volunteer Training course is offered each fall, with volunteer activities occurring year-round. For information about the program, please contact Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District, at (360) 428-4313 or email kristi@skagitcd.org.





**6th Annual Sustainable Samish Garden Tour
Where local economy and conservation meet**

The Skagit Conservation District, Chuckanut Transition, and the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards would like to give special thanks to the Samish watershed residents who opened their gardens for the 6th Annual Sustainable Samish Garden Tour, which was held on Sunday, July 16th! This year's event featured six garden vistas and farms that demonstrate features of sustainability, healthy living, and environmental and community responsibility - all brimming with inspiration! Thank you to everyone who attended (over 300 visitors this year!) and to this year's featured gardens pictured above - **Top Left to Right: Michelle Van Slyke (Mimi's Garden), Alger Community Hall Naturescape Demonstration Garden, Sarai and Mike Stevens Organic Garden & Solar Panels. Bottom Left to Right: Ranger Kidwell-Ross' Garden & "Gnome Sweet Home," The Rhody Café Farm to Table Garden (Lisa Cooney & Jim Kowalski), and Robert & Wendy Pare's Wildlife Habitat Garden.**

**Kids in Nature,
Burlington Harvest Festival, and
Festival of Family Farms**



Samish Bay Watershed Update



What an unusual year we've had so far! From near record-breaking streaks of daily rain all the way through February and March, to a remarkably dry late spring and summer, things have certainly been interesting around here. Though we did not qualify for an upgrade this year, there are definitely signs of progress! This was the first year we've ever been in position to achieve an upgrade (at least six river rises with only one closure) so far into the "critical period" of March through June; we made it all the way to mid-May. We are very pleased with the progress this year, and are grateful that the residents of the Samish Watershed are working hard to keep pollution out of the water.

In 2017 so far, hundreds of Samish Watershed homeowners have gotten their septic systems inspected. Twenty failures where sewage was surfacing and five other serious deficiencies were found scattered all over the watershed. Many of those failures and deficiencies are now corrected.

The Skagit Conservation District has been working closely with the Clean Samish Initiative team on problems that have been found that involve livestock and manure. Most problems found involve grazing of livestock on wet or muddy pastures where manure easily washes off in a storm. Eleven problems have been solved since January 1, 2017, and the District is working on many more referrals.

♦ **What You Can Do**

Every resident can do their part to improve water quality. Below are some great tips!

- ♦ Get your septic system inspected regularly to check for problems
- ♦ Keep livestock and pet waste away from streams and drainage ditches
- ♦ Implement good pasture and manure management practices
- ♦ Consider a rain garden to capture rainwater runoff
- ♦ Take advantage of opportunities to educate yourself and your family about your local stream and watershed.

Padilla Bay Watershed Update

We are fully into our second year of working in the Padilla Bay Watershed, and are already making good progress. Four septic system failures where sewage was surfacing, and five other serious deficiencies were found. Five problems involving livestock have already been solved, and a large project by Skagit County's Drainage Utility is expected to improve drainage and water quality in the Marihugh Rd area of No Name Creek. The project is scheduled to be completed next summer. In addition, We are working with the Bay View Methodist Church to install a demonstration rain garden.

During the upcoming rainy season, we plan to focus our work on the Joe Leary Slough area, where the volunteer Storm Team has identified several areas with very poor water quality.



Kristi Carpenter, the District Public Information and Education Coordinator, has led the *Stream Team* of appropriately sixty eight volunteers since 1998, with support from numerous partners including the Padilla Bay Research Reserve, Skagit County, and cities of Anacortes, Burlington and Mount Vernon. The mission is to educate and involve local citizens in the stewardship of local streams. The 1,236 hours of their volunteer time in 2016 – 2017 was critical in monitoring stream health to better understand what actions can be taken to help reduce pollutants.

Kristi works closely with volunteers to accommodate their schedules. A basic premise of the volunteer program is to keep it simple by sampling one time per month. Kristi reinforces the importance of the three person teams, taking time to follow the detailed step by step sampling procedures to assure results are accurate. The teams efforts helped document fecal coliform contamination that lead to the Clean Samish Initiative (CSI). The CSI is a partnership of local, state, federal agencies and organizations launched in 2010 by Skagit County with funding from EPA. A new eight member *Storm Team* was born and in coordination with the WA State Department of Health sampling changed the classification of most of the Samish Bay in 2011 from “Approved” to “Conditionally Approved”.

What may have seemed at first an inconvenience resulted in a very successful effort to protect the priceless shellfish habitats of Samish Bay. The commercial shellfish growing areas are now closed when the river reaches 4.7 trillion fecal coliform colonies per day – a level determined to pose a risk for shellfish consumption. When Storm Team sampling indicates coliform levels are low there is a sense of celebration amongst the CSI team. The work of the team is a huge public service reducing the risk of people eating contaminated shellfish.

The Skagit Conservation District would like to say a big “**Thank You**” to two long-term Board members. **Paul Blau** and **Wendy Pare** were active Board members that took their position seriously and worked hard to make sure the District was providing quality services.



Paul was Chair of the Board at the end of his 21-year term holding a tight rudder to make sure the District stayed on course with the needs of the District. Paul was an instrumental figure in establishing and fostering the Clean Samish Initiative that was so important to the protection of the shellfish beds in Samish Bay. The Clean Samish Initiative brought together multiple partners, including Results Washington, where teams of staff and volunteers work together to make sure the resource will be healthy

for the next generation.

Wendy was a very active member of the Board that spent a lot of her own time in the office working with staff to get the job done right. Wendy brought her professional expertise with her and was always willing to share her ideas with staff. Wendy has a beautiful sustainable garden and is willing to share it with others during the Sustainable Samish Garden Tour put on by the District and community partners.

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month at 7:00 a.m. and are
open to the public.
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