



SCD

SKAGIT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

News

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SOIL • WATER • WOODLAND

SUMMER 2014



Summer 2014



LOCAL POLLINATORS:

Affordable Labor with Six Legs

You often hear that it is hard to find good help these days, but the good news is that there's a group of workers out there who will gladly work daily as if their life depended on it. Who are these workers? They are our local pollinators; an important resource that can be of great benefit to anyone growing crops that need pollination, such as berries, cabbage seed, apples, and clover. There are many different pollinators but bees are the most prevalent. In the past few years you may have heard that honey bee colonies are struggling; our native pollinators have also been in decline. Habitat loss, alteration, and fragmentation; use of pesticides; and introduced diseases contribute to the decline of bees and other pollinators. While research is underway to help strengthen our understanding of what is happening to the honey bees and native bees, it is important to act now. According to the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, "... the fruits and seeds from insect pollinated plants account for over 30 percent of the foods and beverages that we consume." It is important to understand that there are many local varieties of bees and other pollinators that, while they may not provide honey, do a great job of pollinating our crops. As long as there's habitat near your crops, those pollinators will be working hard for your benefit and the benefit of our plant communities and wildlife.



A high country bumble bee sits on a thimbleberry leaf. (Photo courtesy of Bumblebeewatch.org)

improve field production more than just relying on honey bees alone. In a study in New Jersey of small fields from 10 to 20 acres that were surrounded by natural habitat the majority of the fields obtained all of their pollination needs from native species. So, take advantage of these hard working local pollinators to grow the foods we all enjoy and need. By providing them with a wide variety of pollen/ nectar sources and a place to build their homes they will have stronger populations that stick around to pollinate our crops year after year.

How can you build up your workforce of native pollinators?

Start by planting or maintaining a variety of plants that bloom throughout the growing season so that pollinators have food sources throughout the growing months. Pollinator habitat should include native wildflowers, shrubs & trees. For a full pollinator habitat guide for our area, visit <http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/MaritimeNorthwestPlantList.pdf>

Also, establish or protect areas where native bees nest, such as dead wood, bare dry ground, and brush piles to name a few. If you use insecticides, make sure you read and follow labels carefully and consider *when* you spray - spraying at times when the native pollinators are not active will reduce the harm from these sprays to the insects. Limiting or altogether eliminating the use of insecticides and herbicides, whether considered organic or conventional, will be of the greatest benefit to the native pollinators.

What are the benefits of attracting our local pollinators?

Native bees are well adapted to our climate and will operate in cooler and wetter weather than the European Honey bee. Not all bees pollinate in the same way. For example, several native bees and bumble bees will actually use their wings to shake the flower which can result in greater pollination on plants like blueberries, cranberries, and tomatoes. Several studies completed in California and Canada have shown that native pollinators can

More Information

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), part of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has programs available through the Farm Bill that may be able to provide assistance with the establishment of pollinator habitat. For more information on these programs in our area, please contact Jared Hamman, Soil Conservationist for the NRCS at jared.hamman@wa.usda.gov or call 360-428-7758 x 134.

For more information on NRCS programs online, please visit www.nrcs.usda.gov Information for this article was found through The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, www.xerces.org



DID YOU KNOW?

- The economic value of our native pollinators is estimated at \$3 billion/yr in the U.S.
- Native pollinators are necessary to the reproduction of more than 2/3 of the world's crop species.
- Without native pollinators, 85% of the crops & wildflowers would be unable to produce seeds or fruit.



The new Naturescape Demonstration Garden recently planted at the Alger Community Hall features a Pollinator Garden that provides examples of a variety of plants that will attract pollinators to your garden/farm.

The garden was established by the Skagit Conservation District, Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, Alger Improvement Club, and Alger neighbors and volunteers to provide valuable habitat to attract pollinators and as an educational resource for our community.



SKAGIT VALLEY

FESTIVAL of FAMILY FARMS

Saturday, October 4, 2014 – 10am to 4 pm
Sunday, October 5, 2014 – 10am to 4 pm
 Look for Skagit CD at Double-O Ranch (Ovenell Farms) in Concrete and Taylor Shellfish in Bow



Acres of Fun for Everyone

For more information: <http://www.festivaloffamilyfarms.com/>



Skagit Farmland Legacy Program

As we all know, the Skagit Valley is a unique place ...

A place that serves as the gateway for the North Cascades National Park to the east, the San Juan Islands to the West, and a functioning agricultural economy in the center. It is this agricultural core that contributes so much diversity to the landscape over so little distance. The Skagit Valley continues to maintain an agricultural economy despite a geographical position that may present some challenges. Located directly alongside Interstate-5, the Valley is easily accessible from the large metropolitan areas of Seattle to the south and Vancouver to the north. As these cities seem to expand ever outward they bring development pressures to our relatively undeveloped Valley. Despite a landowner's best intentions to maintain production on their farmland, financial situations may require some to seriously consider

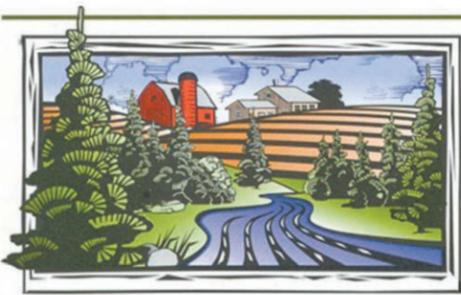


development on their property. This is where the Skagit County Farmland Legacy Program enters the picture. The Farmland Legacy Program exists to purchase agricultural easements on Skagit farmland. Through the purchase of development rights, the Farmland Legacy Program helps to prevent the fragmentation of productive agricultural land throughout the valley. Fragmentation of farmland is known to contribute to a decline in the proper functioning of local agricultural economies. Since 2009 the program has successfully protected over 9000

acres, and decreased the odds of fragmentation occurring. If you own farmland and would like to contribute to the continued existence of an agricultural landscape here in the Skagit Valley then consider participating in the Farmland Legacy Program. Even if you don't own land there are opportunities available for donations to the program. Contact Kara Symonds at the county, karas@co.skagit.wa.us to check on eligibility and application requirements. For further information you can also visit the website of Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland at www.skagitonians.org.



Stewardship Pays!



Receive Payments for Buffers on Agricultural & Rural Lands

CREP

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Financial Incentive

Land enrolled in CREP receives an annual rental payment of \$298 to \$904 per acre depending on soil type.



Good Stewardship Has Its Rewards

CREP is a voluntary program that pays landowners rent, a signing bonus and the costs for establishing buffers along creeks, ditches and wetlands. Participants will receive annual rental payments in return for land that is removed from production and grazing, under a 10 or 15 year agreement.

For more information please call:

Joe Holtcamp
360-428-4313
www.skagitcd.org



After The Storm ...



Making the Message Stick!

This past spring, members from the Mount Vernon American Heritage Girls participated in a volunteer activity by gluing down a dozen informational storm drain labels in the Skagit Highlands neighborhood. To prepare them for this project, Cindy Pierce, Youth Education Coordinator with the Skagit Conservation District, brought the EnviroScape® watershed model to the group's meeting and explained how pollutants such as animal waste, pesticides, fertilizers, oil, and/or waste from failing septic systems can be carried into our storm drains and waterways when it rains (see "It's Raining in the Classrooms"). The group experimented with the hands-on activity and was able to see the actual effects of the pollution being carried to the waterways, which helped them understand how important their volunteer project would be to their community. Good work, girls!



ABOVE: Members of the Mount Vernon American Heritage Girls prepare for their storm drain marking project.



LEFT: Claire See displays her newly affixed storm drain label.



It's Raining in the Classrooms!

The Skagit Conservation District offers stormwater presentations to Skagit County classrooms each year. During the 2013-2014 school year, the District visited 29 classes, educating 700 students about the attributes and functions of their Skagit Watershed and the effect stormwater runoff has on the land and waterways.

Using the EnviroScape® model, the students track pollution from different sources, including non-point sources (residential areas, stormwater, logged areas, transportation, recreation, agriculture and construction) as well as point sources (factory, sewage treatment plant, storm drains). Stormwater pollution and runoff are visually apparent when rain falling over the landscape carries soil (cocoa), chemicals (colored drink mixes) and oil (cocoa and water mixture) through a watershed to a body of water. Stormwater runoff and storm drain function are also addressed. Best management practices include felt buffer strips as vegetation, fencing livestock from streams, and other methods to show conservation and water pollution prevention measures at work. The model offers a hands-on, visual approach to learning and discussing water quality, land use, ecosystem and human health, and fish and wildlife habitat.



A student from a Skagit County classroom enthusiastically makes it "rain" on the watershed model. This is always the favorite activity of students during the presentation and allows them to witness on a kid-friendly scale how the "rain" washes the pollutants off the land and into the nearest waterways.

Storm Drain Labeling to Earn Scout Eagle Status



This past June, Josiah Norton, a senior at Burlington-Edison High School, installed 170 storm drain labels in the neighborhood of Skagit Valley Hospital in Mount Vernon. He coordinated the project by mapping it out, recruiting volunteers, and instructing them on how to mark the drains properly. Austin is a member of the Mount Baker Council, Troop 4100, and selected the storm drain labeling project to earn his Eagle Scout ranking.

Storm drain labeling supplies were purchased through funding received from the City of Mount Vernon as part of the effort to meet the city's Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements. Volunteers have been installing the labels in areas around the county. The labeled storm drains themselves become public education tools—reminding potential polluters, motorists, pedestrians, and area residents that storm water runoff flows to area water bodies. It is import to keep our storm drains free of oil, pesticides, fertilizers, and other contaminants that could ultimately pollute our rivers and streams, impairing human health and harming wildlife.

The Skagit Conservation District would like to thank Josiah for his hard work in completing this project. Josiah is the son of Edwin and Caryn Norton of Burlington.

For further information about installing labels in your neighborhood or if you are interested in a service or group project, please call Cindy Pierce at (360) 428-4313. Marking projects are available in the cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and rural Skagit County areas. All materials are available at no cost to individual volunteers or groups, and assistance is available.



Josiah applies a new storm drain label in a Mount Vernon neighborhood.



Josiah uses a map to direct the locations of the drains the scout groups will be labeling.

Kids for Conservation

2014 Envirothon Recap

NW Regional Competition

The Northwest Regional Envirothon was held May 1, at Warm Beach Camp and Conference Center in Stanwood. The all-day competition tests high school students on their knowledge of soils/land use, aquatic ecology, wildlife, forestry, and a current environmental issue. The 2014 current issue is "Sustainable Agriculture/Locally Grown." An oral presentation by each team was also given, using a scenario encompassing the current issue.

Mercer Slough's Environmental Education Center from Bellevue had the first place team and Stanwood High School had the second and third place teams. The top two teams, one from King County and one from Snohomish County, went on to compete May 21 and 22 at Camp Don Bosco in Carnation. Envirothon competitions are held all over the U.S. and Canada each year.

Washington State Competition

The King Conservation District hosted the 2014 Washington State Envirothon on May 21-22, at Camp Don Bosco in Carnation, with funding provided by the Washington State Conservation Commission and the Washington Conservation Society. The top 71 students from thirteen counties across the state competed in the Envirothon.

The Science and Math Institute (SAMI) from Tacoma won first place at this year's competition, followed by Garfield-Palouse High School placing second, and Stanwood High School earning third place. This is the third year in the row that SAMI has captured the title. The top three teams won individual medals and a team trophy. Each member of the first place team earned \$500 gift cards to Best Buy to purchase electronics for college, with funding provided by the Washington State Envirothon.



ABOVE: The Science and Math Institute in Tacoma won first place at the State Envirothon Competition. They proudly display their winning plaque and medals with the Envirothon sign, along with their matching tutus!



ABOVE: A participant closely studies the specimens at the aquatic station during the State Envirothon Competition.



LEFT: An Envirothon Team member carefully assesses the marked tree at the forestry station.

ENVIROTHON'S 2014
CURRENT ISSUE IS

**"Sustainable Agriculture
Locally Grown."**



2014 POSTER CONTEST

"Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil"

The Skagit Conservation District hosted its annual Natural Resources Conservation Poster Contest in honor of Soil and Water Stewardship Week, April 27 to May 4, 2014. The contest was open to Skagit County students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, and 87 poster entries were submitted.

Each year, the National Association of Conservation Districts creates a theme based on an annual rotation of five natural resource topics. The theme for 2014 is "Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil". A series of activity booklets, bookmarks and other educational resources have been developed with this year's theme.

The Overall Winner this year is **Lauren Medeiros**, a seventh grader from La Conner Middle School. As the Overall Winner, Lauren was awarded a \$50 Tri-Dee gift card, a plaque, and professional framing of her poster. Lauren was also the Category 7-9th Grade Winner.

The Runner-Up Winner is **Erin Hendry**, an eleventh grade student at Concrete High School. She was awarded a \$25 Tri-Dee gift card and a plaque. Erin was also the Category 10-12th grade winner.

Chloe Hart, a kindergartener who attends Island View Elementary, is the Category K-1st Grade Winner, **Karen Ayala-Gomez**, a Centennial Elementary third grader, is the Category 2-3rd Grade Winner and **Kendal Lawson**, a fourth grader at Foothills Christian School is the Category 4-6th Grade Winner.

As category winners, all of the above mentioned students received a vegetable root viewer, A "Dig Deeper" backpack, laminated bookmarks featuring their winning artwork, and a certificate of achievement. All poster entries received a participation certificate and "Dig Deeper" activity booklet and a bookmark.

A Soil and Water Stewardship Proclamation was held at the Skagit County Commissioners Hearing Room on April 29, 2014. The award winning students were recognized for their talents during a televised presentation with the Commissioners and Blossom the Treeture™.

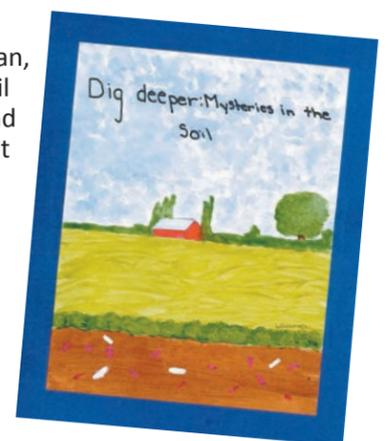
The poster judges this year were Don McMoran, Director for WSU Skagit County Extension, Phil Roberts, Soil Scientist with the USDA-NRCS and Sue Mitchell, Co-Chair for Friday Creek Habitat Stewards and Skagit Conservation District's 2013 Inspirational Award Winner.



Overall Winner Lauren Medeiros with her winning artwork accompanied by Blossom the Treeture™



Blossom the Treeture™ poses with this year's contest winners. From left to right: Karen Ayala-Gomez, Lauren Medeiros, (Blossom the Treeture™), and Chloe Hart.





Kids for Conservation

Sunshine and Sixth Graders



This year's annual 6th Grade Conservation tour welcomed approximately 750 students from 32 Skagit County classrooms to Pomona Grange Park May 13th and 14th. Sunny warm weather greeted the students as they participated in hands-on educational activities at a rotation of seven 15-minute stations: forest protection, the salmon life cycle, bivalves, soils, "Leave No Trace" camping practices, macroinvertebrates, and forest regeneration. New this year was the "Zero Waste Station" hosted by the Skagit County Composter/Recyclers Program. At this station, it was mandatory for all students who brought their lunch to the park to walk through the steps of recycling cans and plastic bottles, food waste, paper and cardboard and only necessary waste was put into the garbage container. **The students eliminated 78 percent of trash being brought to the landfill!**

We want to thank the **Sierra Pacific Foundation**, who donated bus transportation funding for classes to attend the tour. Without transportation scholarships, many schools wouldn't have been able to incur the expense. We also want to thank natural resource professionals from the Department of Natural Resources, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Taylor Shellfish Farms, Natural Resources Conservation Service, North Cascades National Park, US Forest Service, Sierra Pacific Industries, Inc., and Skagit County, who dedicated their time to host stations at this event. We also thank our faithful volunteers who worked so hard to make this a successful event once again.

Photos at Left – Top to Bottom:

Students sort recyclables, food waste and garbage at the new "Zero Waste" station hosted by Skagit County.

Phil Roberts, Soil Scientist with NRCS, instructs students as they observe the texture of different soil types.

Students pretend to be salmon as they swim past a fisherman at the "Salmon Lifecycle" station hosted by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group.



SIERRA PACIFIC FOUNDATION
Growing Healthy Communities...

Fire & Forestry

FOREST PRODUCTS *News Report:*

Producing maple syrup from bigleaf maple in the Pacific Northwest

Skagit CD Forester, Al Craney, WSU Extension Forestry Specialist, Kevin Zobrist, and a local land manager spent the last year studying, analyzing, experimenting, and producing maple syrup from bigleaf maples growing on Skagit County acreage. Their efforts resulted in a number of things including a how-to video, a research paper, and the beginnings of a new business. Below is the research paper that includes information on how to produce the syrup. The video can be seen at <http://youtu.be/z03vapfoiAA>

Bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) is Western Washington's largest native maple. It is found in abundance in lowland areas (below 1,500 feet) throughout the west side of the state. True to its name, its characteristic five-lobed leaves can be up to a foot across. It is a versatile tree with a unique combination of fast growth and shade tolerance. In forestry settings it is often treated as a weed because its vigorous growth and aggressive stump-sprouting competes with Douglas-fir. However, the Bigleaf Maple has many desirable qualities.

Bigleaf maple grows on a variety of different sites. It grows best on well-drained alluvial and colluvial soils, which are characterized by sediments that accumulate in river flood plains and at the bases of hillsides. It thrives in areas of abundant moisture, such as river terraces, flood plains, and seep areas, but it does not tolerate long-term flooding. It is also found on shallow, rocky soils, but growth is poorer and sap production is not optimum.

Sap comprises water, dissolved minerals, sugars, vitamins, and amino acids. Sap flows up the stem of the tree from the roots to provide water and nutrients to various parts of the tree. The sap flows through tiny pipelines that compose the sapwood of the tree, which is the lighter-colored wood in a tree stem. The sap flow quantity and quality varies on weather conditions and available moisture. It also depends on the soil type, as the concentration of potassium, calcium, phosphorus, iron, sodium, and other macro and micro nutrients in the soil will affect the color and taste of maple syrup.

Sap collection for maple syrup production is done in the late fall and winter, after the leaves have come off the tree and before raceme (flower) formation prior to spring bud-break. The best sap flows occur during periods of nighttime freezing followed by daytime warming (to 45 degrees). The freezing temperatures desiccate the buds, and if it warms up enough the following day sap will flow up the tree to replenish moisture.

To harvest the sap, trees are tapped by drilling a 1.5 inch to 2 inch hole in the trunk of the tree with a 5/16" drill bit. A plastic spile called a spile is tapped firmly into the hole. A spile with a check valve is recommended, as it prevents bacteria from growing in the spile when the sap is not actively flowing. Flexible blue polyethylene tubing is run from the spile into a collection container. Spiles and tubing can be purchased from a maple syrup supply company (an internet search for "maple syrup supplies" will give you several companies to choose from). It will take 30 to 40 gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup, depending on the sugar content of the sap. In good conditions, sap flow can average one gallon per spile (tap) in 24 hours. Maple trees are not created equal, and sap production will vary between trees. Trees are tapped once per season. Spiles are removed in the early spring allowing the trees to heal-over during the growing season, and then they are re-tapped in the fall.

A healthy tree that is 10 inches diameter breast height (DBH) should have only one tap. An 18 to 24 inch DBH tree should have no more than 2 taps, and a tree larger than 24 inches DBH should have no more than

3 taps. Sap production and flavor will vary from year to year. Sap will stop flowing once temperatures no longer fluctuate between freezing at night and thawing during the day. Maple sap does not keep well, so it must be collected daily and processed.

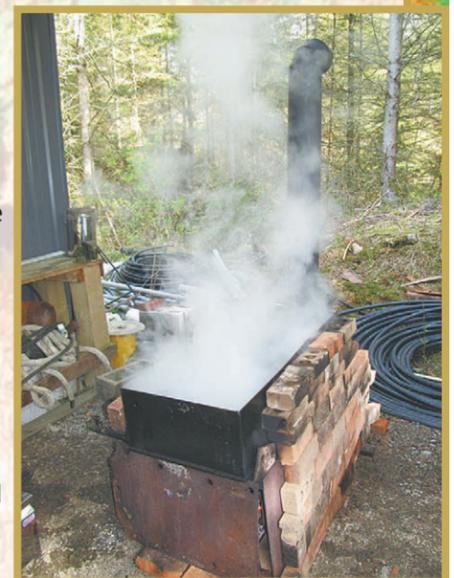
Bigleaf maple sap is about 2 to 2.5 percent sugar before processing. The goal is to boil the sap to evaporate the water and concentrate the sugar to 64.4 percent. Collected sap is cooked in three stages, all using stainless steel containers (evaporator pans). In stage one, sap is brought to a rolling boil (219 degrees F) to evaporate water and kill bacteria. Wood heat is normally used for stage one, because it is cost-effective. A small amount of vegetable oil is added to keep foam down. It is best to pre-heat additional sap in a side pot before adding it to the boiling sap in the evaporator pan. You can build your own fire box (called an arch) out of stainless steel (and/or cast iron) and fire bricks. You can also purchase commercially-built arches (as well as stainless steel evaporator pans) from a maple syrup supply company.

When boiling the sap, the sugar content should be checked regularly. A refractometer works best for this. A refractometer is a small device that analyzes the brix (sugar content) in a drop of liquid. Once the sugar content reaches about 30 percent, the thickening sap is transferred to propane heat for the second stage. It is easier to control the temperature with propane. Controlling the temperature is very important, because it is very easy to burn the syrup when the sugar content rises above 50 percent. This second stage is optional, as the cooking can be done entirely on wood, but it will be harder to control the heat. The first and second phase should be done outside. The cooking process produces a lot of steam, which can lead to black mold if done in the house.

Once the sugar content reaches 60 percent the syrup can then be finished on the stove in the house (stage three). During this finishing stage, monitor the sugar content with a refractometer to determine when it reaches the target of 64.4 percent. Remove the sap from the heat when it reaches about 63%, as there will be residual heat and evaporation that will bring the concentration to the target level.

The syrup must be filtered to remove natural mineral deposits. This can be done by running the syrup through an orlon acrylic sack. Because this is a time-consuming process, it is best to only use this filtering method for small amounts of syrup (i.e. a gallon or less). For larger producers, faster, commercial-grade filter systems are available.

Finished syrup should either be sealed in canning jars at 180 degrees or kept refrigerated as you would with any natural food. Maple syrup has a one year shelf life, but like any food should be refrigerated after opening. Pure maple syrup is a natural product with considerable variation in flavors. Syrup is graded based on color, from light amber, to medium amber, to dark amber. One gallon of pure bigleaf maple syrup can sell for up to \$300.00.



A stainless steel evaporator pan over a wood-fired arch.



Syrup is graded based on color, which can range from dark amber to light amber.



A refractometer measures the brix (sugar content) of a drop of liquid.



Trees are tapped with spiles, and blue tubing is run from each spile to a collection container.

For more information about non-timber forest products or this project, please contact Al Craney, Forester, Skagit Conservation District at 360-428-4313 or email al@skagitcd.org



Skagit & Whatcom Conservation Districts Team Up With Seattle City Light for the Newest Firewise Community

On June 3rd, Seattle City Light (SCL) and the town of Newhalem celebrated their national Firewise Community/USA[®] recognition. Staff from the Seattle office including CEO, Jorge Carasco, and the Director of Power Production, Mike Haynes, joined the Newhalem staff in the celebration as part of an historic building grand re-opening ceremony. SCL and Newhalem received Firewise Community signs to post at two entrances to the community and a plaque showing their official Firewise Community/USA[®] designation.



Partners in "Firewise", L to R: Jenny Hinderman, Firewise Program Coordinator for Skagit CD, Cody Watson, Seattle City Light Newhalem & Diablo Fire Chief, Al Craney, Forester for Skagit CD, & Wayne Chaudiere, of Whatcom CD.



Wayne Chaudiere of the Whatcom Conservation District displays the Firewise Communities plaque with Seattle City Light CEO, Jorge Crasaco, and Director of Power Production, Mike Haynes.

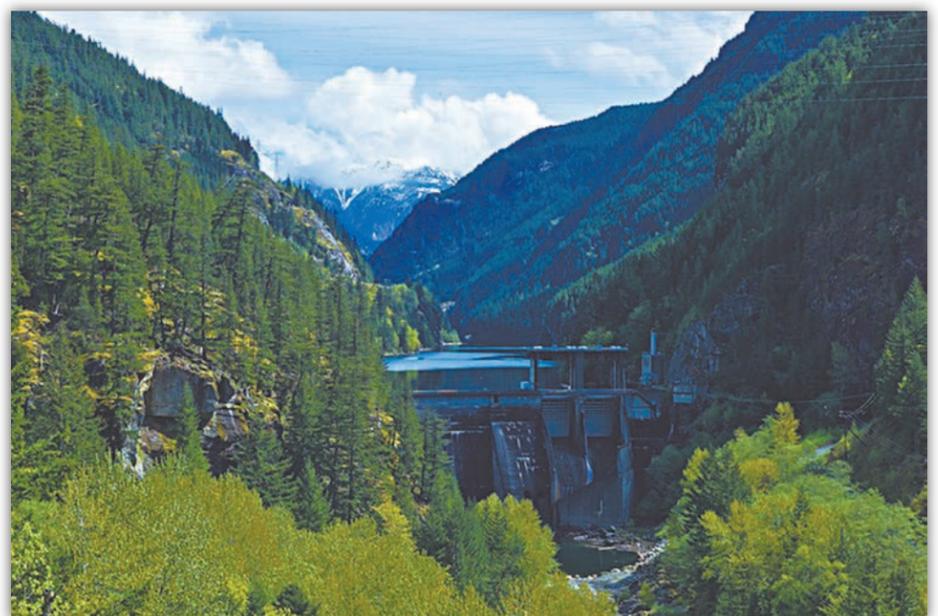


The town of Newhalem is unique in both its history and its geography. Newhalem is located in Whatcom County; however, it is only accessible through Skagit County by road. The town is owned by Seattle City Light and provides a living community for its employees that are part of the Skagit Hydroelectric Project. The Skagit Hydroelectric Project provides approximately 18% of Seattle's power and the transmission lines run from the town of Diablo (6 miles NE of Newhalem), to Bothell. There about 65 residents in Newhalem. The grounds are managed by SCL employees; however, the town is surrounded by National Park Service (NPS) lands – North Cascades National Park.

Utilities have a number of reasons to be concerned about wildfire. Transmission lines can be both the cause of wildfires and the casualty of a wildfire. An arcing transmission line can result in a fire that spreads, depending on the vegetation in and around the powerlines. In extreme heat, transmission lines can sag and come in contact with a tree. The electrical current can start a fire. Dense smoke from a nearby wildfire can trip a circuit causing the lines to go out of service, or result in an emergency de-energizing of the lines.

In order to properly address wildfire risk, a partnership was formed between Skagit & Whatcom CDs, SCL, & the NPS. This allowed all the entities to be on the same page and make decisions that would meet the goals of all involved. The common goal among the group was to identify and reduce the wildfire risk to residents and infrastructure, including both the utility infrastructure and the town infrastructure, while maintaining certain historical standards for the buildings and the landscaping. An important and ongoing part of this process is to evaluate the risk to, and potential effects on, power production and safety of residents/employees and neighboring landowners of the power lines.

Some of the activities that will help the utility and community mitigate the risk include reducing the flammable fuels around structures, updating old



Gorge Dam with power lines stretching across (at the top of the photo) and steep hillsides bordering the river.

construction with new fire-resistant materials, and addressing invasive species issues under power lines; particularly highly flammable scotch broom. The town of Diablo, is also owned by SCL and is home to about 59 residents. Diablo is hot on the heels of its Newhalem neighbor to become a recognized Firewise Community/USA[®].

Bringing Seattle City Light on board with wildfire preparedness in Skagit County has already resulted in some positive developments, including opening up an avenue of communication with regional DNR staff regarding wildfire response and safety near powerlines; renewed support and partnership with the Park Service; research and regional discussion on climate change effects and how to prepare for them as utilities, communities, and forest land management agencies; and the development of future demonstration and research projects.

The town of Newhalem is the 9th nationally recognized Firewise Community/USA[®] in Skagit County.

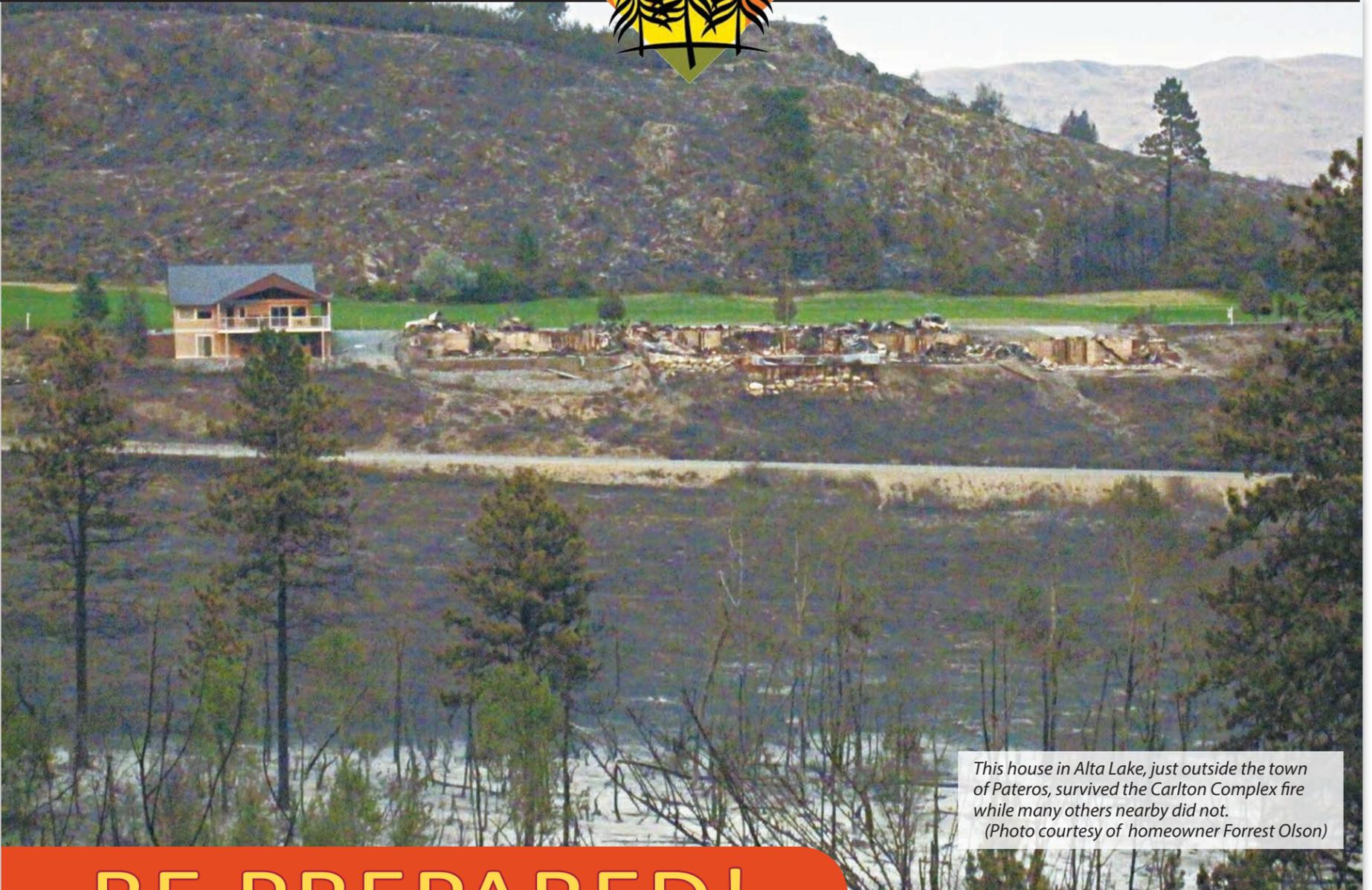


Note the steep, forested terrain in the background of this photo featuring Newhalem's power line sculpture in the town's park area.

For a map of communities currently participating in the Firewise Communities/USA[®] program visit www.skagitcd.org/wildfire_related_maps.



Forestry



*This house in Alta Lake, just outside the town of Pateros, survived the Carlton Complex fire while many others nearby did not.
(Photo courtesy of homeowner Forrest Olson)*

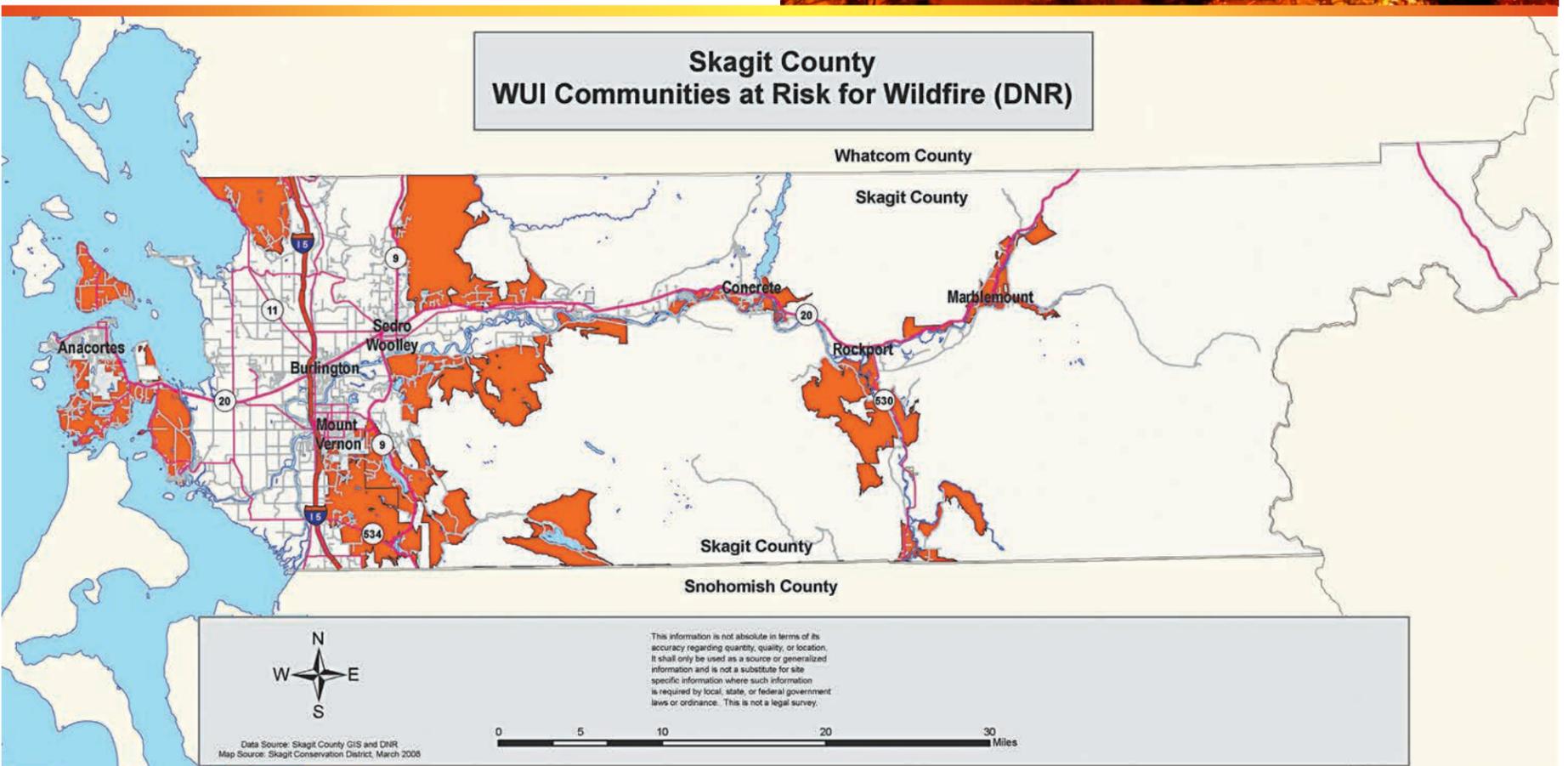
BE PREPARED!

In light of the largest wildfire in WA state history currently burning on the other side of the mountains, it is a good reminder to plan ahead and be prepared. Having defensible space around your home and reducing the ignition potential of your structures does not guarantee that your home will survive a wildfire; however, it most certainly increases the chances of survival, especially knowing that there aren't nearly enough fire fighters to save every home. On the flip side of that, the safer you make your property, the safer it is for fire crews to be there defending your home and the more likely they will put themselves between the fire and your structure.

Wondering whether your property is well prepared to withstand wildfire? Skagit CD offers FREE wildfire risk assessments to homeowners in Skagit County. Simply email or call Jenny Hinderman, Firewise Program Coordinator to schedule a site visit. 360-428-4313 or jenny@skagitcd.org.

Do you live in an area at risk for wildfire?

CHECK OUT THE MAP BELOW! (This map is currently being updated and new data will be available on the Firewise Page of Skagit CD's website by the end of the year).





Community

Celebrating the

16TH SEASON

of Stream Team



On Saturday, June 14th, over 60 Skagit Stream Team volunteers gathered to celebrate the 16th season of volunteer water quality sampling in our Skagit County Watersheds. This potluck event was hosted by the Skagit Conservation District and Padilla Bay Research Reserve. Seventy-two volunteers were recognized for their participation in the 2013/14 Stream Team and Storm Team programs and for milestone years of dedication.

Special thanks to **Skagit County Commissioner Sharon Dillon** for her support and to **Paul Blau, Blau Oyster Company** and **Nicole Hopper, Taylor Shellfish Farms** for treating us all to tasty local oysters and clams and to **Glen "Alex" Alexander** of Padilla Bay Research Reserve for providing the musical entertainment!

All volunteers received certificates of appreciation. Some volunteers were given special recognition for their milestone achievements. Those included:

Long-time Volunteers (over 10 years):

- Alec McDougall (14 yrs)
- Tom Schmidt (11 yrs)
- George Viverette (13 years)

10 Years of Dedication:

Jeanette Redmond

Shining Stars (5 years of service):

- Robyn Blankinship
- Donald Brassington
- Erikka Olson
- Sally Saxton
- James Stavig

Other Special Recognitions:

- Steven Goodrich – for data entry
- Robert Pare – for exceptional service with Storm Team

The Skagit Stream Team is sponsored by the Skagit Conservation District in partnership with the Padilla Bay Research Reserve, Skagit County, and the Cities of Anacortes, Burlington, and Mount Vernon.



Jeanette Redmond pictured with her husband Dick (also a Stream Team volunteer), was recognized for her 10 years of dedication to the program!

The Storm Team volunteers model their new safety vests for fieldwork. Cars can't miss these stylish neon blue vests!

In the center Tom Schmidt sports a Storm Team hat as his work takes place in the lab analyzing the samples.



From L-R: Jim Fukuyama, Rich Brown, Alec McDougall, Tom Schmidt, George Viverette, Stephen Farmer and Robert Pare. Missing from photo: Lin Folsom.



Alec McDougall is our longest-standing volunteer with the Stream Team Program. Here he shows his certificate for committing 14 years to the program!

Thanks again to our 2013/14 Skagit Stream and Storm Team Volunteers!

Bay View Drainage

Jim Kunzmann
Lisa Temcov
Cedar Wyatt

Nookachamps

Mike Watne
China Moss
Holli Watne

Trumpeter

Dan McCroskey
Frank Repplier
Jack Sekora

Clyde Creek

Bertis Rasco
George Viverette

James Fukuyama
John Patton

Reid Bridgeman
Rhonda Jennings
Terry Williams
Seth Young

Jon Stables
Vicky Stables

Emilia Blake
Hal Lee
Hella Lee
Sally Saxton

Lab Support

Erikka Olson

Fisher Creek

Shirley Doman
Scott Doman
Carol Schwartz
Dean Schwartz
Jim Roberts

Heidi Nichols
Sheri Croll
Sandra Place

Data Entry Volunteers

Steven Goodrich

Luanne Goodrich
Robert Pare
Seth Young

No Name Slough

Ann Childs
Andrea Doll
Lisa Temcov
Steve Thornton

2013/14 Storm Team

Richard Brown
Stephen Farmer
Lin Folsom
James Fukuyama
Alec McDougall
Robert Pare
Tom Schmidt
George Viverette

Gages Slough
Robyn Blankinship
Donna Helgeson

Cadence Luchsinger
Patrick McDaniel
James Stavig

Joe Leary Slough

Scott Adams
John Schuh
Seth Schuh
Steven Schuh

Samish

Richard Brown
Stephen Farmer
Nicole Fisher
Steven Goodrich

Americorps Interns

Brooke Bannerman
Patrick Barnes
Anna-Mai Christmas

Russ Barger
Donald Brassington
Luanne Goodrich

Sarah Huntington
Sue Mitchell
Jeanette Redmond
Becky Rosencrans

Kulshan Creek

Gena Dilabio
Terri Dix
Maria Magaña

Andy Friedlander
Melissa Henderson
Ian Horton
Tom Schmidt

Alec McDougall
Sandy McDougall

Dawn Harju
Richard Lorentzen
Graham Read
Jack Uren



Shining Star, Donald Brassington



Erikka Olson and Robyn Blankinship receive their 5-year "Shining Star" awards.

SHINING STARS



Sally Saxton, Shining Star recipient.



James Stavig, Shining Star recipient.

Stewardship



Now Taking Registrations ... Fall 2014

Watershed Masters Program

Explore the Wonders of our Local Watersheds!

Are you interested in meeting new friends, learning from local experts about the wonders of our local watersheds and participating in meaningful community projects? The Skagit Conservation District is now taking applications for the **Fall 2014 Watershed Masters Volunteer Training Program**. The program is intended for community residents (age 17 and up) who are aspiring to increase their knowledge about their watershed, water quality and stream ecology.

Participants attend 8 FUN and INFORMATIVE EVENING sessions, which will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on WEDNESDAY evenings beginning September 24th and continuing through November 12th, and participate in three Saturday watershed field adventures, scheduled for Sept. 27th, Oct. 11th and Oct. 18th. The Wednesday evening trainings will be held at the Padilla Bay Research Reserve, located at 10441 Bay View Edison Road.

Watershed Masters receive a comprehensive reference notebook and 40 hours of FREE training, which covers an introduction to local geology, stream ecology, salmon, soils and wetlands, forest practices, water quality, backyard conservation, and much, much more! Each session is taught by local experts. After completing the training, volunteers return 40 hours participating in meaningful community projects of their choice. The program is being sponsored by the Skagit Conservation District in partnership with the City of Mount Vernon, City of Anacortes, City of Sedro-Woolley, City of Burlington, and Skagit County.

Pre-register by **SEPTEMBER 19th** by contacting Kristi Carpenter @ (360) 428-4313 or email: kristi@skagitcd.org



Join the Skagit Stream Team

Are you intrigued by the wonders of streams and interested in finding out more about how they function? The Skagit Stream Team program provides an opportunity for local residents, age 18 and up, to participate in "hands on" water quality monitoring and to gain an understanding of the relationship between natural factors, land use impacts, and a stream's health. Participants collect water quality data approximately once a month in the Samish Bay, Padilla Bay, Fisher Creek, Kulshan Creek, Trumpeter basin, Gages Slough, Clyde Creek, and Nookachamps watersheds (time commitment is approximately 2 - 4 hours a month Oct. 2014 through June of 2015).

2014 Skagit Stream Team Training Dates:

Wednesday, Sept. 3rd, 6 pm to 8:30 pm

Thursday, Sept. 4th, 6 pm to 8:30 pm

Saturday, Sept. 6th, 9 am to 2:30 pm

(New volunteers must attend all three training sessions)

PRE-REGISTER by Aug. 29th



Contact: Kristi Carpenter
Skagit Conservation District
(360) 428-4313 or email: kristi@skagitcd.org

Training will be held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center,
10441 Bay View Edison Road, Mount Vernon

Sponsored by:

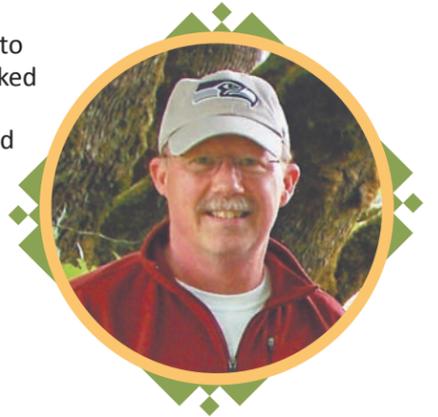
Skagit Conservation District, Padilla Bay Research Reserve,
City of Anacortes, City of Burlington,
City of Mount Vernon, and Skagit County



Thank You Plant Sale Volunteers!

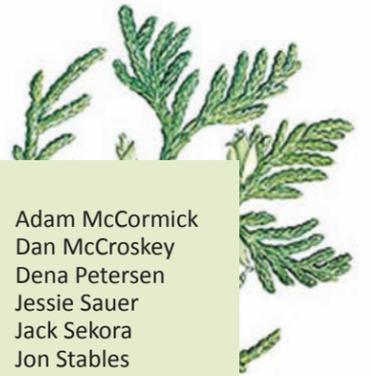
The Skagit Conservation District staff offers a big **Thank You** to the volunteers who helped at our plant sale this year!

Skagit CD gives special acknowledgement to dedicated volunteer **Rich Brown** who worked ALL of the plant sale pre-packing and sale days AND stayed late to help inventory and clean up! SCD is ever appreciative of his commitment!



Rebecca helps a customer load up on compost and free willow cuttings from her yard.

We would also like to recognize volunteer **Rebecca Bernard** for organizing the pick-up, delivery and distribution of free compost from the La Conner Wastewater Treatment Plant for our plant sale customers. This is the second year Rebecca provided this service. Thanks, Rebecca!



Thank you to the following:

Rebecca Bernard	Beverly Dresen	Adam McCormick
Barbara Bond Howard	Jim Fukuyama	Dan McCroskey
Reid Bridgeman	Dennis Hall	Dena Petersen
Rich Brown	Ruth Heft	Jessie Sauer
John Buchanan	Linda Herring	Jack Sekora
Lenore Bussing	Ian Horton	Jon Stables
Ann Buzaitis	Bruce Howard	Vicky Stables
Ann Childs	Bob Lewis	Diana Wisen



Volunteer Ian Horton, landscape architect by day, helped out at the front answering customers' questions about native plants and planting requirements for different species.

Volunteer Ann Buzaitis, at left, shows a customer a bundle of Western red cedar trees.



Many thanks to Dena Petersen of Seattle who volunteered her photography skills to take pictures at the plant sale this year. Dena and her partner Ann are long-time, dedicated volunteers to our plant sale.

Community Stewardship

Thank You 2014 Marine Biotoxin Volunteers!

The Skagit Conservation District, Skagit County Public Health, and the Washington State Dept. of Health would like to express sincere appreciation to our 2014 Marine Biotoxin Volunteers. 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 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.

2014 Marine Biotoxin Volunteers:

Glenda Alm, Mount Vernon
Reid Bridgeman, Mount Vernon
John Buchanan, Anacortes
Barb Cameron, Guemes
Ann Childs, Mount Vernon
Jim Crone, Anacortes
Kathy Crone, Anacortes
Chuck Davis, Bow
Bev Dresen, Anacortes
Jim Fukuyama, Mount Vernon
Donna Helgeson, Sedro-Woolley
Katy Janicki, Mount Vernon
Dick Kent, Mount Vernon

Henry Nyland, Mount Vernon
Shirley Nyland, Mount Vernon
John Patton, Mount Vernon
Jeanette, Redmond, Anacortes
Jessie Sauer, Sedro-Woolley
Sharon Riggs, Bow
Jon Stables, Anacortes
Marcus Stables, Anacortes
Vicky Stables, Anacortes
Steve Thornton, Mount Vernon
Dave Young, Mount Vernon
Pat Young, Mount Vernon

For Your Health & Safety

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP)

PSP poisoning can be life threatening and is caused by eating shellfish containing a potent toxin. The toxin is produced by a naturally occurring organism. Cooking or freezing does NOT destroy the toxin. Common symptoms of PSP poisoning include tingling lips and tongue moving to the hands and feet, which may begin within minutes of eating the shellfish. In high doses it can cause difficulty breathing, which can cause death without emergency life support. A person who suspects they have eaten contaminated shellfish should seek medical help immediately.

Diarrhetic Shellfish Poison (DSP)

DSP produces gastrointestinal symptoms, usually beginning within 30 minutes to a few hours after consumption of toxic shellfish. The illness, which is not fatal, is characterized by incapacitating diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and chills. Recovery occurs within three days, with or without medical treatment.

How do shellfish become contaminated with PSP or DSP?

Shellfish are filter feeders. They pump water through their systems, filtering out and eating algae and other food particles. When they eat biotoxin-producing algae, the toxin can accumulate in their tissue.

What types of shellfish can transmit PSP or DSP to humans?

All molluscan shellfish (those having a hinged shell) including clams, mussels, oysters, geoduck, and scallops are capable of accumulating toxins. So can moon snails and other gastropods. Other marine species, such as sea cucumbers, might also be affected. Crab feed on other shellfish, so crab gut can contain unsafe levels of PSP, although the toxin is not known to accumulate in crab meat. To be safe, clean crab thoroughly, removing all butter (the white-yellow fat inside the back of the shell), and discard the gut.

If the water looks dirty or red, does that mean that shellfish are contaminated?

Not necessarily. Paralytic shellfish poison is rarely associated with a red tinge to the water. Reddish coloration of the water is more commonly associated with other, non-toxic organisms.

If the water is not red, does that mean that shellfish are not contaminated?

Not necessarily. PSP can be present in large amounts even if the water looks clear. Also, the toxin can remain in shellfish long after the algae bloom is over.

Can I tell if it's safe to gather shellfish by how they look?

No, shellfish containing toxic levels of PSP don't look or taste any different from non-toxic shellfish.

Does cooking the shellfish make it safe to eat?

No. The poison is not destroyed by cooking or freezing.

How can I protect my family from paralytic shellfish poisoning?

DOH regularly checks shellfish for PSP and DSP toxin and closes areas that have unsafe levels. Before harvesting any kind of shellfish, call the *Marine Biotoxin Hotline* at 1-800-562-5632 or visit the web page at: www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm to find out what recreational areas are closed due to PSP or DSP. Do not expect beaches to be marked with a sign.



Marine Biotoxin volunteers learn shellfish identification on the beach at March Point as part of the annual 2 day training event hosted by SCD and Skagit County Public Health in April.

Jeanne King, Skagit County Public Health Department (pictured at left), compares the shells of butter clams and manilas with new Marine Biotoxin volunteers Reid Bridgeman and Sharon Riggs.



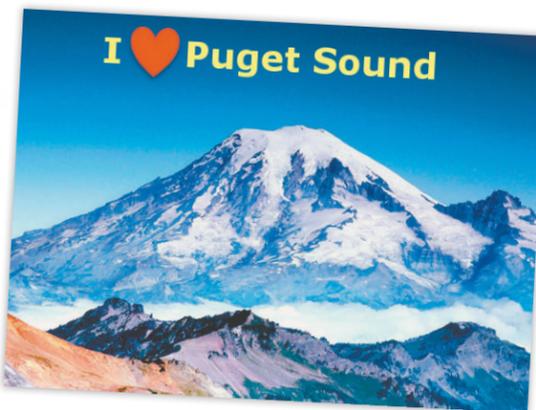
For information about the Marine Biotoxin Volunteer Monitoring program, contact Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District @ 428-4313 or email Kristi@skagitcd.org.



Are you concerned about the future of the Puget Sound and our local watersheds?

Sound Salmon Solutions is now accepting applications for the Everett Citizen Action Training School (CATS) Session. CATS is a FREE 12 week, college-level training program in watershed and Puget Sound ecology, with an added focus on civic engagement in the legal and regulatory processes that affect resource management. The Everett Session begins October 2, 2014 (applications due by Sept. 5, 2014), space is limited so get yours in soon!

For more information or to apply see www.pugetsoundsolutions.org, or contact kelly@soundsalmonsolutions.org or 425-252-6686.



Volunteers ...

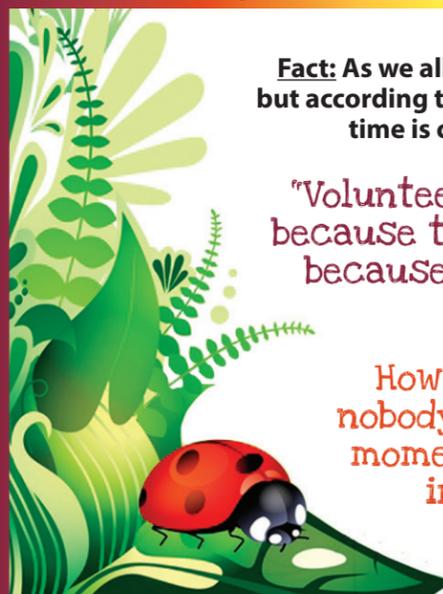
Fact: As we all know, volunteers are priceless, but according to Washington State, a volunteer's time is currently worth \$26.72/hr!

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

~ Sherry Anderson

How wonderful is it that nobody need to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

~ Ann Frank





In Your Backyard



Thank you!

2014 BACKYARD CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP SHORT COURSE PARTICIPANTS



2014 Backyard Conservation Stewardship class participants toured the Dave Brookings Rain Garden at the Skagit County Administration building during an evening session focusing on Stormwater and Low Impact Development.



These signs are springing up throughout our community as more and more Skagit County residents create gardens that provide for wildlife, reduce need for garden chemicals, and protect the health of our streams and rivers (and people too).

The Skagit Conservation District, Skagit County, and the Cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley, would like to extend special thanks to the participants of the 2014 Backyard Conservation Stewardship Short Course!

We commend this enthusiastic class of 50 community residents for completing the program and for their personal commitments to make changes in their own backyards that will benefit the environment now and in the future by providing habitat for wildlife and improving air, water, and soil quality. Thank you for your stewardship and involvement in making our world a better place to live...one backyard at a time!

- Russ Barger, Mount Vernon
- Larry Beto, Mount Vernon
- Rachel Beto, Mount Vernon
- Ronna Biggs, Bellingham
- Barbara Bond-Howard, Mount Vernon
- Elaine Bruns, LaConner
- John Buchanan, Anacortes
- Cheryl Buchanan, Anacortes
- Lenore Bussing, Anacortes
- Ann Childs, Bayview
- Evelyn DeVries, Anacortes
- Martha Doane, Anacortes
- James, Doane, Anacortes
- Suellen Eberhart, Sedro-Woolley
- Wendy Fleming, Burlington
- Andrea Gauthier, Anacortes
- Bob Gauthier, Anacortes
- Gary Gifford, Mount Vernon
- Gayle Gordon, Burlington
- Kathy Hagen, Bow
- Dawn Harju, Alger
- Donald Harper, Mount Vernon
- Gerty Hipp, Anacortes
- Lin Hoisington, LaConner
- Christine Holle, Anacortes

- Cindy Holmes, Anacortes
- Jeanette Johnston, Mount Vernon
- Ray Manzanares, Anacortes
- Claudia Manzanares, Anacortes
- Ann Mayer, Anacortes
- Lisa Mirante, Sedro-Woolley
- Jean Moore, LaConner
- Jim Moore, LaConner
- Jerry Nogle, Mount Vernon
- Harry Ota, Burlington
- Andrea Petersen, Sedro-Woolley
- Jim Powell, Anacortes
- Jennifer Prosser, Oak Harbor
- Karen Richman, Mount Vernon
- Susan Rigney, Anacortes
- Elizabeth Scholze, Anacortes
- Erin Shiflett, Anacortes
- Susan Smith, Sedro-Woolley
- Mary Stahl, Anacortes
- Mae Tabor, Burlington
- Steve Thornton, Bayview
- Claudia Trigve, Anacortes
- Shelly Vendiola, Anacortes
- DeeAnn Wolf, Mount Vernon
- Cedar Wyatt, Anacortes



"My garden, and those of every wildlife gardener I know, is about giving back. Giving back my tiny slice of the planet of which I am the steward. Giving back some native plants so that our bees don't continue to disappear, so that butterflies have someplace to lay their eggs, and so the birds have something to feed their young."

— Carole Sevilla Brown, Conservation Biologist



The overall goal of the program is to: "increase public awareness on a variety of backyard conservation practices and to promote community stewardship by exploring and investigating the fascinating natural world in our own backyards." Participants learn practices and are provided with the tools to help reduce stormwater pollution in their own backyards and to create a healthy and more sustainable environment for people and wildlife that will benefit our community now and in the future. For more information contact **Kristi Carpenter (360) 428-4313** or email: kristi@skagitcd.org



A group of class participants wave for the camera while touring the Naturescape Garden at the WSU Master Gardener's Discovery Garden on Memorial Highway. The class rotated through a series of stations and learned about native plants, sustainable vegetable gardening, and composting.



Alger Community Celebrates GRAND Opening of the New Naturescape Demonstration Garden!



Visitors to the garden grand opening enjoyed a relaxing afternoon strolling through the gardens, enjoying the beautiful blooms, listening to the birds, and visiting with friends.



The garden has been certified as a "Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary and Habitat" through the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and National Wildlife Federation because the garden provides the four basic habitat elements needed for wildlife to thrive: food, water, shelter, and places to raise young.

On Saturday, June 12th, over 40 community residents joined the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, Alger Community Hall, and Skagit Conservation District in celebrating the grand opening of the new Alger Community Naturescape Demonstration Garden. A special ceremony in recognition of the new garden and the many Alger community neighbors and volunteers who made it happen was lead by Sue Mitchell of Friday Creek Habitat Stewards with support from Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District, Donna Spencer, Alger Improvement Club, Sue Madsen, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, and Dan Berentson and Mattie Michalek, Skagit County Dept. of Public Works.

Visitors to the grand opening enjoyed an afternoon of sunshine, music provided by the Memory Tones, delicious baked goods from Alger Community Hall members, and a tour of the new specialty gardens. The garden was established at the Alger Community Hall by neighborhood volunteers to provide an outdoor learning experience for their community. In addition to

providing beauty and inspiration, the garden showcases the use of native and drought tolerant plants that provide a variety of community benefits, including water saving benefits, creating healthy soil conditions, reduced need for garden maintenance, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, attract birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects, and benefit the local stream. Interpretive signs were also established with support from the Skagit Conservation District and unveiled during the opening ceremony. The garden has been designated as a "Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary" by the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and the National Wildlife Federation.

The project was made possible by the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, a group of dedicated Friday Creek watershed neighbors and volunteers, who were awarded a \$7,500 grant from the Rose Foundation's Puget Sound Grassroots Stewardship Fund. The Friday Creek Habitat Stewards were established in 2011 and are working together with the Skagit Conservation District to earn national designation as a "Community Wildlife Habitat" through the National Wildlife Federation's "Community Wildlife Habitat" program. The basic idea of the program is that by becoming healthier for wildlife, communities become healthier for people. Residents benefit from landscapes designed to keep water and air resources clean, require little use of pesticides and fertilizers, and pack a powerful aesthetic punch.



Sue Mitchell, Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, welcomes visitors to the Alger Naturescape Garden Grand Opening, held on Saturday, July 12th.

How to support their efforts:

- 1) Join the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards project team! fridaycreekhabitatstewards.weebly.com.
- 2) Certify your yard as a backyard wildlife habitat –certifying your yard as a backyard wildlife habitat or sanctuary is easy and its fun! This program is an informal volunteer activity – no one comes to inspect your yard and it does not limit homeowner rights or your ability to develop your property. To learn how to make your home a certified backyard wildlife habitat or sanctuary, contact Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District at (360) 428-4313 or email: kristi@skagitcd.org.

2014 Skagit Watershed Letterbox Trail Underway!

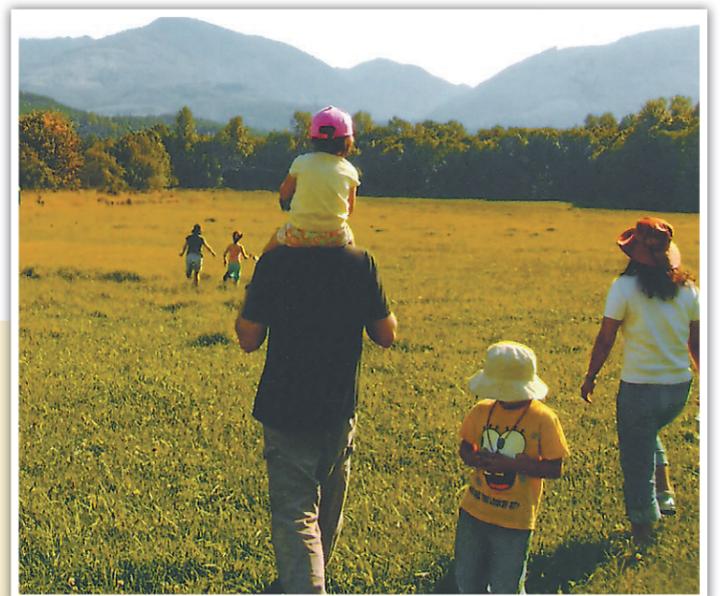
Discover and Explore the Wonders of the Skagit Watershed

Local conservation organizations have partnered to hide 18 letterboxes all along the Skagit River Watershed, from the North Cascades National Park in the east to Washington Park in the west! Each box contains fun educational materials about the watershed, along with a notebook and ink-stamp for trading stamps.

Letterboxing is a fun, exciting activity (much like a treasure hunt) that provides an opportunity for kids of all ages to explore the natural world and to learn about our beautiful community (great family activity). Participants follow clues at their leisure, to discover letterboxes hidden throughout the Skagit watersheds, each hosted by a participating organization. The 2014 Skagit Watershed Letterbox Trail will continue through October 5th.

New to letterboxing?

- 1) **Choose a trail name.** The name generally represents something about you, your likes, or your character.
- 2) **Bring the following items:**
 - **A rubber stamp.** The stamp that identifies you is called a "signature" stamp.
 - **Pen or pencil.** Some suggest using non-acid calligraphy markers, available in most craft or hobby shops. This will be used to record finds in logbooks and to let others know where you have been.
 - **Log book.** This is a personal book (small tablet or journal) that you carry from hunt to hunt and use it to stamp the rubber stamps you find in the hidden letterboxes.
 - **Ink pad.** As with all Letterboxing equipment the ink pad should be suitable for preserving paper – acid free ink pads work best. Colors and size are strictly up to the user. Some letterboxers also carry special ink markers to color stamps with multiple colors.
- 3) **Find the clues.** Pick up your trail clues at a local library, at the Skagit Conservation District office, the Skagit PUD office, or on line at www.skagitcleanwater.org, www.skagitcd.org, or at www.atlasquest.com.
- 4) When you find a letterbox, use your personal stamp to log in to the log book that you will find inside the letterbox. Sign your trail name and date you found the letterbox. Each letterbox will also contain its own hand-carved stamp that you will use to stamp in your **personal** log book. There will also be a "secret word" for you to record in your log book as well.
- 5) Remember to put everything back in the letterbox after you have stamped in and carefully re-hide where you found it.



The Skagit Watershed Letterbox Trail provides an opportunity for kids of all ages to explore the natural wonders of Skagit County while learning how to protect our watershed.

Letterboxers follow clues to discover hidden letterboxes throughout the Skagit Watershed. Each letterbox contains a hand-carved rubber stamp, for participants to showcase and collect in their personal log book.

Join us at the "End of the Trail" celebration scheduled for Monday, October 20th at the Padilla Bay Research Reserve– prizes for those completing the 2014 Trail! Bring your log book and share your memories! Check for time and event details at www.skagitcleanwater.org.

Backyard

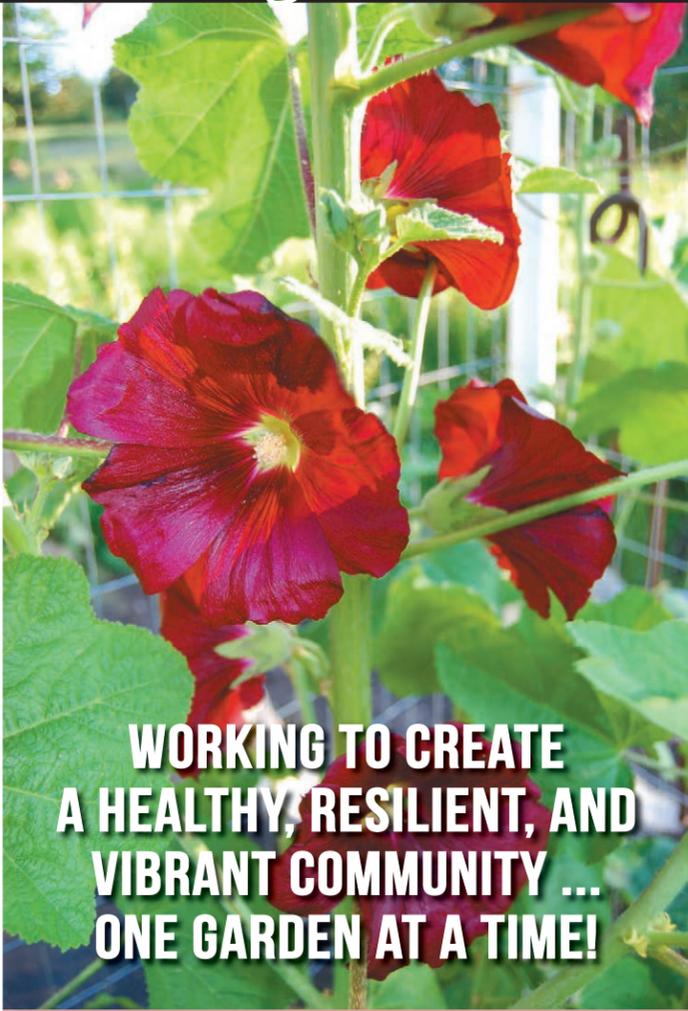


3rd Annual Sustainable Samish Watershed Garden Tour a Success ...

The Skagit Conservation District, Chuckanut Transition, and the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards would like to give special thanks to the Samish watershed families who opened their farms and gardens to welcome visitors for the 3rd Annual Sustainable Samish Garden Tour, which was held on Sunday, July 20th. The tour drew close to 80 visitors.

This year's tour featured the beautiful farms and gardens of Dennis and Maria Whitcomb (Prairie Road Farm), Joe and Nancy Paque (who featured their new solar panel system), Ted Rodriguez and Jill Weber (Rancho Mira Sol), Jeff and Marguerite Jacobs (Jacobs Bow Hill Bounty), Rachel Hodgson and Armondo Ruiz Garden, and Kate Bowers Garden in Bow. The new Alger Community Naturescape Demonstration Garden at the Alger Community Hall was also featured.

One of the draws to this annual tour is the variety in the gardens that participate and the opportunity to meet, network and gain tips from Samish watershed residents who are working to cultivate a healthy, resilient, and vibrant community...one garden at a time. This year's tour featured a mix of fresh organic food production, bountiful blooms, including flowers, orchards, fruits and herbs, an opportunity to learn tips on raising healthy livestock, including sheep, cows, horses, and poultry, and gardens that have received national designation as a "Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary or Habitat." Other projects featured during the tour included a solar power panel, a small farm that featured applied Best Management Practices and a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) project to promote healthier livestock and to protect the Samish River.



**WORKING TO CREATE
A HEALTHY, RESILIENT, AND
VIBRANT COMMUNITY ...
ONE GARDEN AT A TIME!**



Maria Whitcomb, pictured, and her husband Dennis of Prairie Road Farm, take pride in their farm and how they produce the old fashioned way – without synthetic chemicals or GMO feed or seeds, "We believe in keeping our farm small to serve our local community and ensure sustainability and environmental well-being. For example, 1/4 of our property is enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve the ecology of Friday Creek and provide habitat for fish and wildlife. We also use drip-tape irrigation in an effort to conserve water."



Joe and Nancy Paque featured their recently installed ground mount solar panel system. Since being installed in December 2013, the system has produced 3113 kW sending over 2000 kW back to the grid with an approximate savings of \$83.00 per month.



Jill Weber and Kate Bowers enjoyed a visit to Jeff and Marguerite Jacobs garden in Bow. The Jacobs 9 acre family farm and garden features a bountiful vegetable garden, an orchard, berries, and a mix of native plants and perennials that are in bloom all year to attract pollinators and birds. They also raise hens for eggs and cows, turkeys, meat chickens and a pig. "Our family is a constant project, but we are now more self-sufficient than we ever could have dreamed, and we marvel at how delicious life on a farm is!" – Marguerite Jacobs



"The garden is not the end, it is the beginning, the place where you preserve the wild spirit that will save the world."

– John Hanson Mitchell, from "The Wildest Place on Earth."



Rachel Hodgson and Armondo Ruiz have created a flourishing permaculture garden at their Bow residence featuring vegetables, fruit trees, berries, and blooms, and a variety of raised beds and trellises. Chickens, edibles and pollinators make a productive landscape for people, kids, and wildlife.



Jill Weber and Ted Rodriguez, showcased a variety of sustainable living elements they have applied to their beautiful small working farm, Rancho Mira Sol, where they raise Scottish Highland cattle and a variety of free range poultry breeds. Pictured, Jill shows visitors a new compost system and sacrifice area they have established with support from Skagit Conservation District to reduce mud and manure runoff. Garden elements include organic vegetables, herbs, berries, raised beds, a greenhouse, and an orchard. The farm has also been certified as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.



New to gardening, Kate Bowers of Bow, was delighted to share her trials and tribulations and her "first feckless attempts" at gardening which have blossomed into cherry trees, two baby paw paw trees, filberts, Italian and green gage plums, Spartan apples, and fruit trees of "unknown fruit" salvaged from a neighbor.



We wish to thank the businesses and individuals who help to sponsor this publication of the Skagit Conservation District News.

Skagit Conservation News sponsorships cost \$50 a year for business names or \$100 for business cards and are seen by over 4,000 readers twice a year.

To become a conservation newsletter sponsor, please contact Cora at **360-428-4313**.

The Skagit Conservation District salutes the following businesses as Skagit Conservation News sponsors:

- Puget Sound Energy
- Schuh Farms
- Skagit River Steel & Recycling

Small Works Roster and Contractors Lists

Licensed contractors who do conservation public works are invited to sign up for our small works roster. The list will be used to secure bid proposals for Skagit Conservation District public works projects estimated to cost less than \$100,000.

Restoration/reforestation contractors and contractors that do work such as concrete structures, ditching, drainage, fencing, pipeline, waste ponds, wildlife ponds, culverts, stream and wetland restoration, pipeline, soil testing, and pumping are invited to sign up for our contractors lists, which are given to the public upon request. The SCD provides the information as a public service. It does not endorse any of the contractors listed nor does it verify required licenses or registrations.

For a small works/contractors registration form, call **360-428-4313** or email skagitcd@skagitcd.org

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William Black Agronomist **360-757-6112** **Lynn Black** Lab Manager

503 North Gardner • P.O. Box 317 • Burlington, WA 98233

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SCD Board meetings are held at 2021 E. College Way on the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 a.m. and are open to the public. Please call (360) 428-4313 to verify meeting dates.

SCD Board of Supervisors

Paul Blau, Chair Wendy Pare, Auditor Janet McRae, Member
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2014 SCD Board of Supervisors Election and Appointment Results

Congratulations to Wendy Pare for being re-appointed in May by the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) Board of Commissioners to the Skagit Conservation District (SCD) Board of Supervisors (Board). Wendy, who is a retired Chief Financial Officer, the Treasurer of the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland Board of Directors, Treasurer for the Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) Board of Supervisors, and the current SCD Auditor, has served on the SCD Board since 2011.

Congratulations to Paul Blau for his automatic re-election in March to the SCD Board of Supervisors. WAC 135-110-370 allows for the cancellation of a conservation district (CD) election and the automatic re-election of a current supervisor if that supervisor is the only candidate and submits all of the required documentation, and the CD publishes all required public notices. These requirements were fulfilled. In May the WSCC Board of Commissioners certified Paul's automatic re-election. Paul is a local oyster grower, the owner of Blau's Oysters, and the current SCD Board Chair. Paul has served on the SCD Board since 1996.

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