

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Restoring Salmon for Future Generations

A Stunning Year

From the aurora borealis making repeat appearances in the Skagit Valley to a large number of restoration projects on our horizon, it's been a tremendous year.

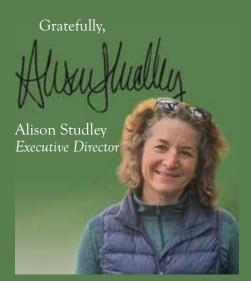
New staff has brought new ideas, new partnerships, and new enthusiasm, and we have an abundance of new projects funded and ready to be implemented in the coming year. We are also looking forward to developing a new River Journey education program, specifically geared towards our Spanish speaking students in the coming school year.

Before we look too far ahead to the coming year, we are excited

to share our Annual Report for 2024 with you. In it, you will find it filled with many accomplishments thanks to the hard work of our staff, interns, volunteers, project partners, landowners, donors, and each of you. Together we made a lasting impact in Skagit Valley by restoring habitat and educating the next generation of stewards. One specific achievement of note is that together we planted over 40,000 native plants along Skagit waterways-what a difference that makes!

A sincere thank you to all of you who helped make this tremendous work possible. We look forward to

another incredible year, thanks to all of you.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS



FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT

Lower Day Slough

Lower Day Slough is within the Ross Island reach of the Middle Skagit River. This slough provides critical habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon rearing that is limited in other areas of the Skagit River. There is documented spawning of federally threatened winter steelhead, as well as modeled use by federally threatened Chinook and chum, coho and pink salmon. The slough is spring fed, has cold water input and maintains sufficient water levels for salmonid rearing yearround. Habitat restoration on Lower Day Slough has been the focus of Skagit Fisheries for the last decade, with multilateral efforts to improve habitat for salmon, including riparian planting and culvert replacement at three downstream sites. This year Skagit

Fisheries completed the fourth fish passage project on this important slough. Together the 4 fish passage projects have opened over 0.63 miles of slough habitat and over 20,000 square meters of juvenile rearing habitat. The Lower Day Slough is a unique project site in that we have multiple adjacent landowners all supporting habitat restoration on their properties, and this greatly amplifies restoration outcomes.

Another exciting facet of this project is that we were able to work with Skagit Valley College to develop a video about our work on this slough, as well as the general importance of side channel habitat. The video can be found on the front page of our website at SkagitFisheries.org.



Looking downstream at Lower Day Slough from the culvert that was replaced with a bridge in July of 2024.



A bird's-eye view of the new 2024 bridge on Lower Day Slough.

Carpenter Creek Restoration Begins

This project will improve fish passage at six culvert crossings associated with Carpenter Creek and reopen nearly 9 miles of habitat to migrating salmon. These culverts are the last remaining fish barriers in the Carpenter Creek watershed. Carpenter Creek supports populations of summer and winter steelhead, coho salmon, and resident cutthroat trout, and is gradient accessible by Chinook, chum and pink salmon (according to Washington's Fish Distribution database). In 2024 significant grant funding was awarded to Skagit Fisheries from state and federal agencies enabling design work

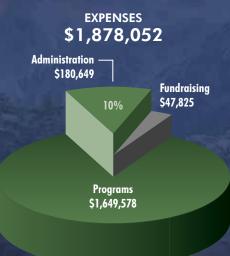
to begin at each location, with construction funding secured or anticipated for 4 of the sites. The culvert crossings are on a mix of private, County and City roads, and this full restoration project is a result of Skagit Fisheries' successful partnerships with each of these landowners. Fish passage removal projects at a watershed scale, such as this effort in the Carpenter Creek system, have been identified as part of a 10-year collaborative effort between Skagit Fisheries, county governments, and tribal entities (Skagit Watershed Culvert Group).



This impassable culvert under Hickox Road on Carpenter Creek will be removed and replaced with a bridge thanks to new grants.

2024 FINANCIAL SUMMARY





POCKET ESTUARY RESTORATION

Pocket estuaries provide important habitat for juvenile salmon as they migrate along the shoreline from the Skagit River delta to Puget Sound. Pocket estuaries exist where small streams join the salt water along the shoreline. Many of these pocket estuaries have been disconnected from the saltwater by human-made structures. Skagit Fisheries is working with several entities to restore access to these pocket estuaries. In Deception Pass State Park, Skagit Fisheries is working

with Washington State Parks, the Skagit Marine Resources Committee, and the Northwest Straits Foundation to complete a feasibility study for reconnecting tidal activity to the freshwater wetland at Bowman Bay. The wetland is currently disconnected from coastal influence due to a large berm and walking path accessing the trails to the south. During storms in January of 2024 the trail was damaged, leading Washington State Parks to decide to abandon the trail in its current location.

This decision opens the door for potential reconnection of the wetland if the feasibility study results indicate this would be desirable at this location. Juvenile salmon use monitoring was conducted in cooperation with Northwest Straits Foundation to provide data for the feasibility study. In 2025 Skagit Fisheries aims to hire an environmental consultant to collect additional data and assess the feasibility of wetland restoration.



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 2024 Annual Report at SkagitFisheries.org.

Important partnership support for Skagit Fisheries comes from





Washington Conservation Corps crew with raft guides that aid them in finding patches of knotweed along the Sauk River that are inaccessible by foot.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SALMON

Knotweed

The Upper Skagit Knotweed Control Program aims to control invasive knotweeds in the Skagit watershed upstream from the Baker River confluence. Skagit Fisheries partners with many organizations throughout the watershed to ensure any knotweed that Skagit Fisheries can access is treated. In 2024, Skagit Fisheries treated 265

Spawner Surveys

The spawner survey program is a volunteer program coordinated by the Washington Service Corps (WSC) AmeriCorps Restoration Associate serving at Skagit Fisheries, with help from other staff, interns, and Washington Conservation Corps AmeriCorps members. During the 2024-2025 season, 50 volunteers have gone out weekly to survey 23 streams in both the Samish

Native Plant Restoration

Through the Natural Resource Stewardship Program (NRSP), Skagit Fisheries partners with Skagit County to plant trees along local waterways to restore riparian habitat with interested private landowners. Using NRSP funding, Skagit Fisheries is currently working on projects with 11 landowners across the Skagit watershed. Along with habitat restoration, each project offers an opportunity to build working relationships with landowners and the community. In 2024, this program en-

Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps members Devon and Kelly at a spawner survey on Ennis Creek in the Samish Watershed. knotweed patches throughout the Upper Skagit Watershed. These patches were encountered while Washington Conservation Corps members, led by Skagit Fisheries staff, traversed over 6,074 acres of floodplain habitat along over 30 miles of the Skagit River and its tributaries from the top of the Skagit watershed down to Concrete. Skagit Fisheries was able to expand the

and Skagit watersheds. A spawner survey workshop is held each year to teach volunteers how to identify Pacific salmon species, salmon redds, and collect accurate data. This year we had a record number of volunteers, with 50+ people attending the workshop and committing to participate. During the spawner surveys from October to January, data is collected on live salmon, salmon carcasses, and redds. Coho are the predom-

abled Skagit Fisheries to plant 6,257 trees and shrubs over nearly 14 acres with these landowners. The types of restoration include planting of native plants in riparian areas lacking trees and shrubs, understory plantings to enhance the existing riparian vegetation community, and replanting as a supplement to the initial planting. Invasive plant species (such as Himalayan blackberry and reed canary grass) were controlled over a total of 34.5 acres. These actions enhance riparian habitat along 1.4 miles of local streams.



Four members of Skagit Fisheries' 2024-2025 Washington Conservation Corps Crew pose bundled up and ready to plant at an NRSP site. area where knotweed was treated thanks to funding from an America the Beautiful grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Future funding secured in 2024 from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's Riparian Grant Program will ensure this expanded work can continue for at least 4 additional years.

inant species that are seen on our surveys, though some streams also are home to spawning chum, kokanee, and even a small number of Chinook salmon. This year we had an incredible increase in young and excited new volunteers from Bellingham Technical College's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences program, and we are looking forward to welcoming these volunteers back as veterans next year!



Spawner Survey volunteer Victor Garcia and a coho found on a survey of Swede Creek.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Salmon Sightings

Through 'Salmon Sightings' events, Skagit Fisheries is able to bring the public face-to-face with the inspiring spectacle of salmon spawning within the Skagit and Samish watersheds. These events provide a safe and educational environment for folks of all ages and abilities. In 2024, events were held at Clark Creek near Marblemount, Mud Creek which flows into Lake Samish, and Oyster Creek along the Samish Bay. These events give community members an up close experience with salmon deepening their understanding of the importance of our restoration efforts.



Visitors pose in front of Oyster Creek sporting their stylish "salmon viewing" glasses.



Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps Education Associate Kelly Williams makes a salmon craft with a future fish biologist at Mud Creek.

Salmon in Schools

Salmon in Schools is a hands-on program that teaches students about salmon and their local watershed, both inside the classroom and out in nature. In 2024, Skagit Fisheries worked with over 700 students from 15 area elementary schools, including a new partnership with the Salish Sea Deaf School. Through this unique program, students receive 200 coho eggs from a state hatchery in January. Over the course of three months, students are able to watch the exciting transformation salmon go through during their first three life stages. After feeding their salmon and watching them grow, the students have the opportunity to release the fish back into a local stream. Through the attachments the students make raising the salmon in their schools and the thrilling experience of seeing the salmon swim in a stream for the first time, they are able to make a personal connection between the importance of healthy riparian habitat, restoration, and Pacific salmon.

Internships for Students

Skagit Fisheries is dedicated to engaging the community in every facet of salmon restoration. We offer internships to local college students, providing them with hands-on experience and careerbuilding skills while they work towards their degrees. In 2024, thanks to our generous donors, we continued to make these opportunities paid, which ensured that all students, regardless of financial situation, can gain valuable real world experience in their fields. Our interns have played a vital role in our education and monitoring programs, helping to further enhance our restoration efforts and community outreach. As we move forward, we are excited to continue to grow this program and broaden its reach, providing more students of all backgroundsthe opportunity to gain skills and contribute to our salmon restoration efforts.



A student from Harriet Rowley Elementary School is ready to release a salmon fry!



Spawner Survey Intern PJ Heusted records stream condition data on a survey of Ennis Creek.

Education Intern Kaia Olson makes a salmon ornament at the Children's Museum of Skagit Valley.



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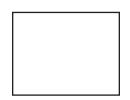
Our mission is to educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship to enhance salmon. Skagit Fisheries PO Box 2497 1202 S. 2nd St., Suite C Mount Vernon, WA 98273 Phone: 360-336-0172 www.SkagitFisheries.org Skagit Fisheries is an independent nonprofit 501 c(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible to the extent that the law allows.

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