

# the REED



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

*Dedicated to Restoring Salmon for Future Generations*

## A Collaborative Effort to Restore Fish Passage in Carpenter Creek

By SUE MADSEN - SFEG Restoration Ecologist

Culverts that block fish passage have been a hot topic lately. In June 2018 The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a decision made by the District Court in 2013 that ordered the State of Washington to replace culverts with the worst impacts on fish habitat by 2030. SFEG has long worked with partners ranging from private landowners to County governments to replace culverts. The recent court decisions and the plight of the Southern Resident Killer Whales are leading us to redouble our efforts in this arena.

Replacement of man-made barriers that prevent fish from accessing upstream habitats is one of the fastest, most cost effective ways of increasing habitat for salmon. Removal of a single barrier may open up miles of habitat that was formerly inaccessible to fish. The effects are immediate: SFEG's spawner survey program often documents use of newly accessible habitat within weeks of completing work.

These projects also provide work for local contractors, and improve infrastructure condition and safety. Truly a win-win situation.

SFEG has been working with partners from the Skagit River System Cooperative, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, and Skagit County Public Works for the past 3 years to update a local culvert inventory, identify potential

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ABOVE: One of the cutthroat moved during the project



Installation of a new bridge on Carpenter Creek removes a fish passage barrier

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# the REDD

**REDD:** A female salmon uses her tail to dig a nest in the gravel. After she deposits her eggs the male fertilizes them. The female then covers the fertilized eggs and the resulting nest is called a redd.

## MISSION

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## BOARD MEETINGS

The SFEG Board meets the 4th Tuesday of each month. The public is welcome.

## STAFF

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## SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP PRESENTS

# SYRCL's WILD & SCENIC® FILM FESTIVAL

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Artwork by Lawrence Lander

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A BENEFIT FOR:





# Restoring Fish Passage in Carpenter Creek

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projects, and ramp up the rate at which barrier culverts are repaired. Those efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

Carpenter Creek, located just south of Mount Vernon, drains 4.2 square miles of land from the headwaters just west of Big Lake downstream to Skagit Bay via Hill Ditch. The creek travels through the south side of Little Mountain Park, a popular hiking area. Streams in the upper watershed support populations of ESA-listed Steelhead trout and coho salmon, as well as resident and sea-run cutthroat trout. Our inventory identified 8 undersized fish passage structures, starting with the county-owned crossing on Cascade Ridge Road, and including a crossing at East Hickox Road owned by the City of Mount Vernon, and five privately

owned driveways or logging access roads. Collectively, these structures impair more than 4.2 miles of fish habitat on Carpenter Creek, and its tributary English Creek.

In 2017, SFEG began working with private landowners to secure funds to begin fixing these fish passage barriers. These projects build on two projects upstream of our sites recently completed by Grandy Lakes Forest Associates Inc. and a group of private landowners. This summer, work is being completed on a project that is funded by Washington State's Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFPP); that program has also allocated funding to a second culvert just downstream that is slated for repair in 2020. Owners of three of the four remaining privately owned culverts have

expressed interest in working with SFEG to undertake fish passage improvement projects. We will also be working with Skagit County and other partners to secure funds that will help develop designs for replacing the larger structures on public roads. Ultimately, when this collaborative project is completed fish will be able to access the entire length of Carpenter and English Creeks.

SFEG is excited about this effort to restore access to virtually all of a small watershed. We hope it provides a model for future cooperative projects targeting other high priority sites identified by our project team. Stay tuned for more information as our work goes forward, and check our website for photos and video of our 2019 project.

BELOW: Carpenter Creek barriers map



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**

- Not a barrier
- ▲ Partial Fish Passage Blockage
- ▲ Total Fish Passage Blockage
- ▲ Barrier, Unknown Percent Passable

- Diversion
- ▲ Natural Barrier - Verified
- Unknown
- Corrected Barriers



# Restorin

By ALISON STUDLEY - SFEG Executive Director

The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is closely watching the population of our iconic orca whales and is continuing to do what we can to help recover these amazing creatures. The Southern Resident Killer Whales (also known as orcas) that inhabit the waters in and around the San Juan Islands during the summer months lost three more individuals recently, bringing their population to a dramatically low level with only 73 whales remaining. As orcas continue to be lost in our local waters, we continue to strive to provide our community with ways that they can help save these magnificent mammals.

The newly created Southern Resident Orca Task Force identified three major factors that must be addressed in order for orcas to continue to survive these include: increasing food availability, decreasing toxic contaminants, and decreasing disturbance from vessel traffic noise. One factor that we at SFEG are actively working on is increasing the primary food source for our orca whales, Chinook salmon.

Southern Resident Killer Whales rely on a healthy supply of Chinook salmon which makes up 80% of their diet while they inhabit the waters of the Salish Sea. The Skagit River is home to over one-half of the remaining wild Chinook salmon in Puget Sound. Therefore ensuring there are healthy populations of Chinook salmon in the Skagit River is directly related to ensuring there is enough food to keep orca whales healthy.

SFEG is working with habitat restoration partners in the Skagit watershed to restore habitat that will increase the number of Chinook salmon available as food for orcas struggling to survive in the Salish Sea. Recently, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation awarded several grants from its Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program to organizations that are implementing habitat restoration projects to increase Chinook salmon numbers in the Skagit River. This new grant source brings together diverse partners from Shell Oil, SeaWorld, NOAA and the US

Fish and Wildlife Service to create a larger sum of funding available for these important habitat restoration projects. Grants awarded to Restore America's Estuaries, Skagit County Parks, and the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, are all restoring valuable side channel habitat along the Skagit River.

Recreating and restoring side channels is a high priority for recovering Skagit River Chinook salmon runs. Off channel slough habitat provides valuable resting and feeding areas for young salmon as they begin their incredible migratory journey from the headwaters of the Skagit River to Puget Sound. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants are funding important projects to restore side channel habitat for Chinook salmon at three critical locations along the Skagit River: Pressentin Park in Marblemount, Britt Slough south of Mount Vernon, and Ovenell Slough along the Skagit River in order to increase the number of Chinook salmon available to orca whales.

## ORCA RECOVERY DAY

PHOTO: NOAA FISHERIES WEST COAST



# g Orcas

At Pressentin Park, Restore America's Estuaries is working with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Skagit County Parks to restore and enhance a historic side channel habitat in Pressentin Park. This restoration project will both increase available habitat for Chinook salmon as well as enhance park and recreational amenities in the Upper Skagit community.

At Britt Slough, the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is working with the Skagit Conservation District to restore a river connection to valuable off channel habitat near the Skagit River estuary on property owned by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. This project will restore the outlet of Britt Slough to its historic path through an off channel wetland area in order to increase critical habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon as they migrate downstream from spawning areas to the estuary.

At Ovenell Slough, Skagit County is working with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to remove a barrier to fish passage across a Skagit River side channel in order to reconnect this valuable off channel habitat for Chinook salmon rearing at Cedar Grove. Additionally, the public will gain access to reach a beautiful recreational site owned by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife along the Skagit River as part of this habitat restoration project.

These are just three examples of habitat restoration projects dedicated to helping the plight of our orca whales. Restoring habitat for Chinook salmon in the Skagit River helps to ensure there is enough food for our endangered orcas and that healthy habitat exists for many other fish and wildlife species that we love in the Pacific Northwest.

## YOU can help our endangered orca whales!

- **VOLUNTEER** at Orca Recovery Day on October 19: SFEG will cohost volunteer work parties with Skagit Conservation District at March Point and with Northwest Straits Foundation and Whidbey Conservation District at Cornet Bay. Register at [www.BetterGround.org/ord](http://www.BetterGround.org/ord)

- **VOLUNTEER** with SFEG at one of our many restoration events this fall More information at: [www.SkagitFisheries.org](http://www.SkagitFisheries.org)

- **LEARN** how to decrease your use of toxic chemicals, here is one site.... <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-involved/What-you-can-do/Washington-Waters-ours-to-protect>

- **FOLLOW** boating rules in Puget Sound, which reinforce the need to keep a distance from orca feeding grounds

- **MAKE** a donation to SFEG's "Feed the Orcas" Fund and support Chinook salmon habitat restoration projects in the Skagit watershed. By restoring salmon populations, you are helping to feed our orcas and ensure a future for our endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale population.

You can learn more about Southern Resident Orca Recovery at [Orca.wa.gov](http://Orca.wa.gov)

# OCTOBER 19

## BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Visit [BETTERGROUND.ORG](http://BETTERGROUND.ORG) for more info

Our orcas are endangered but it's not too late! There is plenty we can do to save them.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

**PSOD**  
Puget Sound Conservation Districts



[www.skagitfisheries.org/donate/](http://www.skagitfisheries.org/donate/)



## FALL PLANTING PARTIES 2019

### Help Salmon and Orcas - Plant TREES!

#### OCTOBER 19: Orca Recovery Day

Restoration work parties with Skagit Conservation District at March Point (10am-1pm), and with Northwest Straits Foundation & Whidbey Conservation District at Cornet Bay (9am-noon). Pitch in to help salmon and help orcas! More info on these and other Orca Day events at [www.betterground.org/ord](http://www.betterground.org/ord)

#### OCTOBER 26: Make a Difference Day at Riverfront Park

Tree planting, trail building, and interpretive sign installation will #MakeADifference for wildlife and humans at this Sedro-Woolley city park. **Directions:** from Sedro-Woolley take Township Street to River Road and turn left into the park at 901 River Rd.

#### NOVEMBER 2: Planting at Riverfront Park

Wrapping up the trail building and tree planting with Sedro-Woolley Parks Department

#### NOVEMBER 16: Planting at Ann Wolford River Edge Park

In partnership with Skagit County, funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Help restore native vegetation at this county park.

**Directions:** Taking Hwy 20 Eastbound, turn right on Robinson Road (about 7 miles from Sedro-Woolley) and follow to the near end. Parking available on the right.

#### NOVEMBER 23: Planting at Hamilton

In partnership with the town of Hamilton, help restore native vegetation along the Skagit River.

**Directions:** From Sedro-Woolley head east on Hwy 20. At the sign for Hamilton, turn right on Petit St; go through the Town of Hamilton and turn right on Maple St; when it turns into First St look for signs for parking. Parking is limited so please carpool.

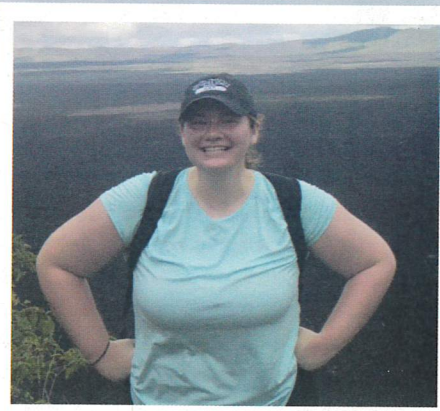
All events 10am-1pm, rain or shine. Bring your friends, we'll bring the tools and snacks! Please RSVP groups of 5 or more at 360-336-0172 or [outreach@skagitfisheries.org](mailto:outreach@skagitfisheries.org)

# New Faces at



CLAIRE HOWELL

I grew up in Bellingham, WA and have long been passionate about salmon conservation. I believe that salmon are an integral part of life in the Pacific Northwest, and that their protection strengthens the local communities and ecosystems that I love. After graduating with a BS in Biology and a minor in Scientific Diving from Humboldt State University, I have worked to develop a career in line with my interests. I collected fisheries management data on commercial fishing vessels in the Bering Sea, AK, and conducted research on parasite distribution and pre-spawn mortality of returning adult salmon in the Klamath River, CA. As the education associate at SFEG, I am excited to share my knowledge and enthusiasm, and to continue learning about conservation and restoration!



MADDIE REID

Hi everybody! My name is Maddie Reid and I'll be the new Community Engagement Associate this year. I'm a Virginia native, growing up next to the rivers and coasts along the Atlantic. I've spent my life next to the James River, surrounding myself with water and wildlife. Wildlife has always been a big passion for me, from Canada to the Galapagos, I've been travelling around seeing firsthand the immense impact that we have on the environment and the organisms that live there. That led to me joining the Sierra Club in Virginia, where we worked to combat habitat degradation in our local environment. During this time I was also attending the University of Mary Washington, where I graduated with my B.S. in Wildlife Conservation this past May. Before coming to Washington, I had never lived anywhere other than Virginia. I'm excited to be able to live so close to the salmon and evergreens! I can't wait to work with the community and learn more about the ecology in the Northwest.



# SFEG!

## MOLLY VAN DAM

I grew up on Whidbey Island surrounded by eagles, conifers, seals, and beaches. After a childhood spent collecting rocks and sea glass on coastlines carved by glaciers, I attended Western Washington University and received my BS in Geology with an Environmental/Engineering concentration. I spent the 2018-2019 service year on the City of Bellingham Washington Conservation Corps crew learning about urban riparian ecology and working to improve salmon habitat through planting native species, removing invasive species, water quality monitoring, and so much more! I'm so excited to learn more about the Skagit watershed and continue on the path of habitat restoration!



## SFEG IS A MEMBERSHIP BASED ORGANIZATION

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

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY / STATE / ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

- ☐ \$20 - INDIVIDUAL
- ☐ \$35 - FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD
- ☐ \$100 - SUPPORTER
- ☐ \$500 - BENEFACTOR
- ☐ OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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PAYABLE TO "SFEG" AND  
SEND TO:**

**P.O. Box 2497  
Mount Vernon, WA  
98273**

### GIVE ONLINE AT:

**[www.SkagitFisherles.org](http://www.SkagitFisherles.org)**

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

**Did you know  
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while you shop?**

**HERE ARE TWO WAYS:**

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When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. Using this link <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/94-3165939> will connect you right to SFEG as your preferred charity.

**Fred Meyer.**

You can help (SFEG) earn donations just by shopping with your Fred Meyer rewards card!

Fred Meyer is donating \$2.5 million per year to non-profits in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, based on where their customers tell them to give. Here's how the program works:

- Sign up for the Community Rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to SFEG at <https://www.fredmeyer.com/topic/community-rewards-4>. You can search for us by our name or by our non-profit number (KC290).
- Then, every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, you are helping SFEG earn a donation!
- You still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points, and Rebates, just as you do today.

If you do not have a Rewards Card, they are available at the Customer Service desk of any Fred Meyer store.





## SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

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# Events and Opportunities Calendar

## Skagit Wild & Scenic Film Festival

**October 11 (Friday)** 6:30pm; The Wild and Scenic Film Festival will show at the Lincoln Theatre for one night only on Friday October 11, beginning with a 6:30 reception, and films beginning at 7:30. This event uses film to inspire conservation within our community. The Festival will feature two hours of environmentally-themed short films that together represent the work of over 100 film artists and directors. More info at [www.skagitfisheries.org](http://www.skagitfisheries.org)

## Orca Recovery Day

**October 19 (Saturday)** SFEG is partnering with Skagit Conservation District at March Point (10am-1pm), and with Northwest Straits Foundation at Cornet Bay (9am-noon). Pitch in to help salmon and help orcas! More info on these and other Orca Day events at [www.betterground.org/ord](http://www.betterground.org/ord)

## Fall Planting Parties

**October 26 (Make a Difference Day), November 2, 16, and 23, (Saturdays)** 10am-1pm; Help restore native riparian plants in the Skagit Watershed! These plants will help restore salmon homes by providing shade and cover for salmon and leaf litter for aquatic insects, which in turn provide food for salmon. These riparian zones also improve water quality by controlling erosion and filtering pollutants. More info at [www.skagitfisheries.org](http://www.skagitfisheries.org). Limited parking will be available, so please carpool!

## Salmon Sightings

**November 9 (Saturday)** at Oyster Creek in partnership with NSEA and Taylor Shellfish. Noon-3pm. Join us to view and learn about spawning chum salmon. Experts will be on hand to talk about salmon habitat and local restoration efforts. More info at [www.skagitfisheries.org](http://www.skagitfisheries.org). Parking is ex-stream-ly limited, so please carpool!

Contact us to volunteer today!