



NISQUALLY LAND TRUST

Winter 2016
Newsletter

Land Trust Acquires Rare Nisqually River Salmon Property

Has Potential for Extending Yelm-Tenino Trail to River

The Land Trust continued its renewed push to protect high-priority salmon habitat on the main stem of the Nisqually River by acquiring a prized shoreline property in the river's Whitewater Reach, just below Yelm.

The ten-acre property includes over 2,000 feet of salmon-producing shoreline, an exceptional run of habitat to find in a single property. The Whitewater Reach is rated highest priority for protection in both the Nisqually Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan and the Nisqually Steelhead Recovery Plan.

"It was well over ten years ago that we first identified this valuable shoreline property as important for protection," said Lands Committee Chair George Walter. "Over the years we have kept in contact with the owner, and we're very happy to announce that we have now acquired the property for permanent protection. Securing this much high-quality habitat in such a relatively developed area is a rare opportunity."

(continued on page 7)

The Land Trust has acquired a key property with 2,000 feet of Nisqually River salmon shoreline (right bank, above) and potential for extending the Yelm-Tenino Trail.



OUR MISSION

The Nisqually Land Trust acquires and manages critical lands to permanently benefit the water, wildlife, and people of the Nisqually River Watershed.

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The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

The photographs in this publication are courtesy of Land Trust staff and volunteers



President's Letter

Summertime, and the livin' is...wait, it's autumn already! How'd that happen?

We had another great summer here in the Northwest. Maybe just a little too warm for a couple of days there, but not so warm that the fish minded, as they hunkered down in the cool waters of the Nisqually River.



And even though our short summers mean we have to play hard while we can, our volunteers heeded the call, changing their shorts and flip-flops to overalls and boots and joining work parties to save the baby trees we planted last winter from being strangled by ivy and overrun by Herb Robert.

The Borg-like advance of Scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry was fended off with loppers, shovels, and well-gloved hands. Fueled by fig bars and devotion, our volunteers made a difference.

As the days slipped by and, hopefully, we all enjoyed the beauty and recreation of the natural world we live in, those trees and shrubs we planted and nurtured grew a little more, and the spawning grounds they sheltered beckoned steelhead home – and for the past two years, they've come in unexpectedly large numbers!

Did we do that? I think we helped.

Good change from good work.

And as the leaves change and the rains return, our work continues. We'll have plenty of opportunities for you to join us in our restoration efforts and plantings this winter, so watch our website and your e-mail for notices of upcoming events. It's the best way to get to know our properties and the other volunteers who love them as you do.

See you on the river.

JW Foster, Board President



Too many e-mails? Want to switch from paper to electronic communications?



Easily update your communications preferences: Take our brief online communications survey on our website (Visit www.nisquallylandtrust.org and click "Contact Us" in the menu) or call the office at 360-489-3400.

“1% for the Land”: Help Make Our Work Permanent

What if every Land Trust donor and volunteer left just 1 percent of their estate to the Land Trust in their will?

“It might seem like a small thing, but the impact would be massive,” said Executive Director Joe Kane. “No other single action would do more to assure that all the time, effort and energy the Land Trust family has put into our work together is sustained over the long term.”

As an example of the impact bequests can have, he points to the precedent-setting success of the Land Trust’s recent completion, with Microsoft, of the first carbon-credit transaction in the Pacific Northwest.

“That was a high-risk venture,” he said. “But it was a bequest [from the Jane Willits Trust] that gave us the security we needed to take that risk. And it paid off hugely, not only by tripling our investment, but also for the land, for wildlife, for clean air and water, and for conservation throughout the Pacific Northwest – it created a new tool for making land trusts sustainable.

“Without that bequest, we could not have pursued the project.”

A bequest is the gift of an asset made through a will or trust. It is the simplest type of planned gift a supporter can make, and one of the easiest to implement. The Land Trust even has suggested language for listing it as a beneficiary in a will.

The Land Trust can also provide advice on a full suite of planned gifts, including charitable gift annuities (you make a gift of cash or property to the Land Trust, and we agree to make fixed payments to you for the rest of your life) and charitable remainder trusts (you transfer your cash or property to fund a charitable trust, which makes payments to you for your lifetime or a number of years and then passes the remainder to the Land Trust).

For those who would prefer that their estate gifts be overseen by a third party, the Land Trust has also set up endowments with community foundations in Olympia

and Tacoma.

We invite you to become one of our Natural Legacy Partners, the circle of supporters who have included the Land Trust as a beneficiary in their estate plans.

If you’ve already included the Land Trust in your estate plan, please let us know so that we can acknowledge your generosity, and also so we can discuss your intentions with you to be sure they’re met.

With your help, we can secure a bright future for the water, wildlife, and friends of the Nisqually River Watershed. Please contact our office for more information. ☞

“ This is an organization with a solid plan for preservation of our region. To help sustain it, I’m contributing through my estate. ”

Become a Nisqually Natural Legacy Partner



Above: All-star volunteer Marti Anderson has helped assure that her hard work will be carried on by providing for the Land Trust in her will.

Changing Seasons, Changing Faces

In September, **William Kogut** retired from our board of directors after twenty years of service, including as vice-president from 2004 to 2010.

William's tenure, one of the longest in our history, saw the Land Trust grow exponentially, increasing our land holdings from just under 200 acres to over 5,000 and evolving from an all-volunteer land trust to one with national accreditation and a full-time professional staff.

Throughout, William provided the board with a steady voice, deep perspective, and a comprehensive grasp of the organization's history and mission – valuable contributions that he will continue to make as an ongoing member of the Land Trust's Finance Committee. Thank you, William!

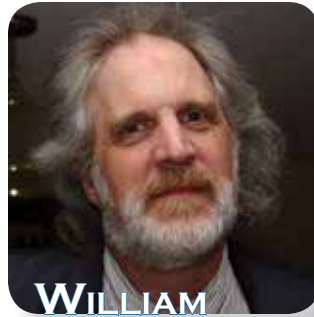
The Land Trust welcomes **Sunny Thompson** to our board of directors. Sunny is the longtime proprietor of Wellspring Spa in Ashford, near Mount Rainier, where she has made her home for over forty years.

Renowned throughout the Nisqually Watershed for her bright spirit, warm heart and welcoming soul, Sunny says she “loves to hike in summer, ski in winter, and, in all seasons, love, honor, and care for our beautiful and precious planet.”

Sunny believes “wholeheartedly in the power of collaboration” and has a passion to bring awareness of climate change, protect the watershed's intact forests, and help restore fragmented commercial timberlands.

Many of her favorite experiences have been with kids, helping them explore the watershed through Nature Mapping or toss frozen salmon carcasses into the river to restore vital nutrients to the ecosystem.

It was with heavy hearts but great memories and enduring friendship that we



bid farewell to Philanthropy Coordinator **Candi Tobin** in September.

Hired out of college nearly eight years ago, Candi rose from administrative assistant through almost the full gamut of Land Trust positions – including a stint as Queen of Demolition, when she donned a hard hat and oversaw removal of derelict buildings from Land Trust properties.

Candi succeeded at every new assignment and handled all of it with skill and grace. Now a wife and a mother, she's taken a job near her home in Chehalis, which will give her more time with husband Tim and two-year-old daughter Penny.

We'll miss Candi's sly wit, her kindness and generosity, and her dedication. The Land Trust grew as Candi grew – she was the second-longest-serving member of the staff – and she leaves behind a Nisqually Watershed that is much the better for her having been a part of it. Thanks, Candi!

Claire Cook completed her Americorps service as our Volunteer Coordinator in June. Claire's thoughtfulness, optimism and superb work ethic were great assets for us and will be again in her new position, as a Research Technician at Padilla Bay Estuarine Research Reserve near Anacortes. Congratulations, Claire – and thanks!

Claire has passed the torch to **Katie Kirdahy**, our new Americorps Volunteer Coordinator. A Washington native, Katie received her BA in Environmental Studies and Political Science from Gonzaga University. She's worked in the Trails Program at Seattle Parks and Recreation; with the City of Spokane, collecting greenhouse-gas inventory; and most recently with the South Sound Reading Foundation. Katie will focus her passion for local environmental conservation on community engagement and connecting volunteers with the Land Trust mission. 🌿

Land Trust Launches Next Phase of Ohop Floodplain Restoration

New Acquisition Protects Heart of Spawning Beds



The newly acquired 32-acre property includes mature upland forest (left) and one thousand feet of Ohop Creek (right).

Moving quickly in the face of a competing offer, the Land Trust has succeeded in acquiring for permanent protection a 32-acre property in the middle Ohop Valley that contains Ohop Creek spawning beds used by all five species of Pacific salmon native to the Nisqually Watershed.

This site is upstream of the Lower Ohop Creek floodplain restoration. The completed phases rebuilt 2.4 miles of creekbed in the Lower Ohop valley and re-charged 414 acres of floodplain. The impetus for that restoration was to restore healthy passage for spawning salmon from the Nisqually River to the spawning beds in the middle Ohop.

The new acquisition is in the heart of those spawning beds and contains both banks and over one thousand feet of Ohop Creek. The instream habitat is in relatively good condition, but two-thirds of the property was once used for agriculture, and though long abandoned has mostly been cleared of its natural vegetation.

Twenty-six acres lie in the Ohop floodplain, and on its south side the property rises steeply through seven acres of timbered bluffs and uplands with trees over a hundred years old. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Priority Habitat and Species site identifies this area as a biodiversity corridor for terrestrial wildlife.

The Land Trust drew on its reserve funds to secure the property, which it has proposed for funding in the current round of the state's Salmon Recovery Funding program. The project ranks second among the proposals

coming from the Nisqually Watershed. The project has also been proposed for funding under the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

"We took a risk with this one by funding it out of our own pocket in advance of securing those grants," said Executive Director Joe Kane. "But all you have to do is walk across this property once to know that it's a risk you have to take."

If funding allows, the Land Trust will team with the Nisqually Indian Tribe's Native Plant Restoration Team to reforest approximately 20 acres of the floodplain with native plants and remove four derelict outbuildings.

The Land Trust will also explore development of public access for wildlife viewing with the Town of Eatonville. The site is located directly on the Ohop Valley Trail proposed in the Town's adopted trails plan and less than a mile from the Road to Rainier Scenic Byway being developed by the Land Trust and a consortium of partners in the Eatonville, Elbe, and Ashford areas.

Restoration of the Lower Ohop floodplain has led to an explosion in wildlife species using the valley.

"This project would further strengthen the rich partnership that has developed around the Ohop floodplain restoration," Eatonville Mayor Mike Schaub noted in a letter of support for the project, "uniting the Town, the Land Trust, Pierce County, and the Nisqually Indian Tribe and enhancing the economic, cultural, and physical health of Eatonville and east Pierce County." 🌿

Healthy Increase for Nisqually Steelhead

Spawning Numbers rose in 2015, 2016, but reasons uncertain

Data collected by the Nisqually Indian Tribe's Natural Resources Department and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife suggests a healthy increase for Nisqually steelhead trout, which just a few years ago were hovering so close to extinction that many feared they were as little as one more bad year short of it.

The new data documented an uptick in the wild spawning population from a low of 269 in the 2012 season to over 1,000 in 2015 and over 2,000 in 2016.

Though the precise reasons for the increase remain unclear, freshwater habitat protection and restoration of the Nisqually River and its major tributaries by the Tribe, the Land Trust, and a consortium of local, state, and federal partners have almost certainly played a critical role.


Tribal fisheries biologists caution that an increase is not a trend. Ocean conditions, mammal predation, Orcas, and fluctuating stocks of prey in Puget Sound can all have positive and negative impacts on the population.

One theory for the increase is that steelhead from many different age classes returned all at once to spawn because they found it more favorable than remaining in the ocean, where food was scarce.

An opposing theory is that steelhead filled a niche in the ocean environment that Chinook and coho salmon could not fill because of their own extremely low numbers.

Thirty to forty years ago, steelhead spawning runs averaged in the range of 6,000 fish, but the population crashed by 90 percent in the 1990s and continued on a downward spiral through the first decade of this century.

Meanwhile, in August the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife designated the Nisqually River and the Elwa River as wild steelhead gene banks, the first two rivers in Puget Sound to be so recognized.

Under that designation, both rivers will be off-limits to releases of steelhead raised in state hatcheries, which can pose risks to native fish through interbreeding and competition for spawning areas. No hatchery steelhead have been released into the Nisqually since 1982. 

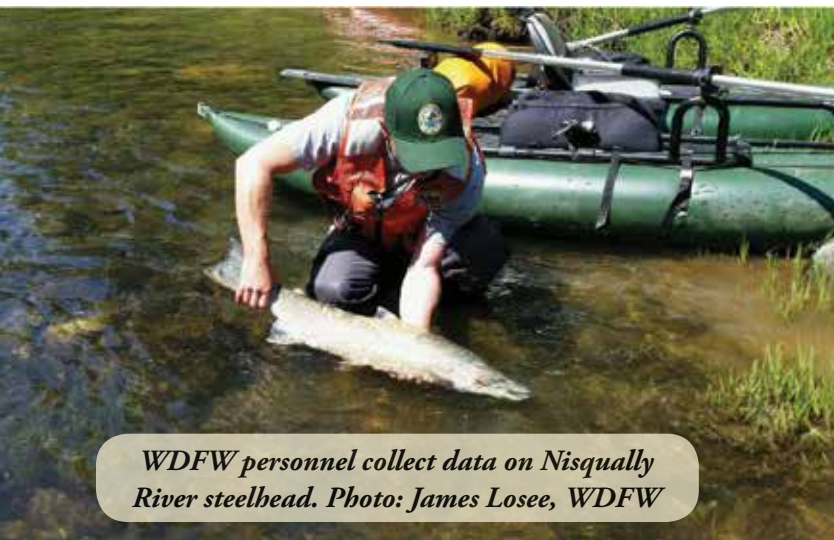
Streamside Landowners: Can We Count on You?

This fall two of the Land Trust's longtime partners, the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group (SPSSEG) and the Nisqually River Foundation, are collaborating with streamside landowners to help bring back the Nisqually Watershed's threatened steelhead trout population. If you are a landowner with property crossed by a creek or stream, SPSSEG is seeking your permission to access that waterway.

SPSSEG will be mapping stream habitat to collect information on steelhead and other salmonid habitat. A small field team will walk the streams to collect data that will be added to project maps. They will start on Brighton, Horn, Harts Lake, Muck and Murray creeks.

SPSSEG is a nonprofit conservation group; it is not a regulatory or governmental agency. It relies on voluntary cooperation from the community. Its field crew will not leave any physical impact on your property, and the survey will cover only the area within the stream channel and immediately adjacent banks. The Nisqually Watershed team truly appreciates your contribution to this important project.

For questions, please contact stream.survey@spsseg.org or call (360) 412-0808, ext. 104.



WDFW personnel collect data on Nisqually River steelhead. Photo: James Losee, WDFW

Salmon Property Protection

(continued from cover)

The Whitewater Reach contains spawning and rearing habitat for all five Pacific salmonid species native to the Nisqually Watershed, including Chinook, coho, chum, and pink salmon and steelhead trout. Both Chinook and steelhead are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The densely wooded property is the first of four in the Whitewater Reach that the Land Trust has won funds to acquire. It will be managed as part of the Trust's Yelm Shoreline Protected Area, expanding it to 207 acres and 2.45 shoreline miles.

The Land Trust acquired the property with funding from the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding program. This acquisition brings the total of the salmon-producing portion of the Nisqually River – the 42 miles below Alder Dam – in permanent conservation status to some 76 percent, or about 64 of 84 shoreline miles.

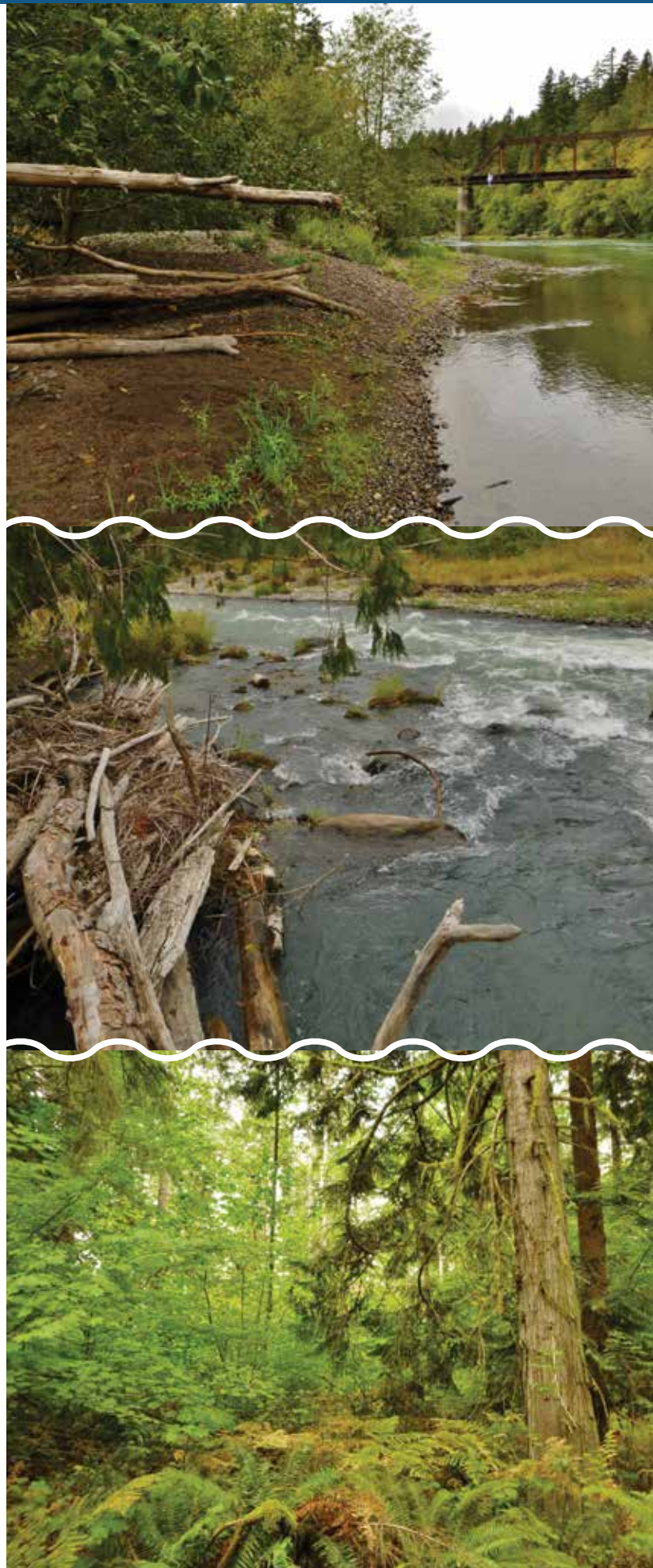
As well, the property is located adjacent to property owned by the city of Yelm that could be used to extend the popular Yelm-Tenino Trail all the way to the river. The new Land Trust property has the potential to complement and support such a trail extension.

In turn, the Yelm-Tenino Trail connects to the Chehalis Western Trail, thus holding the promise of a hike-and-bike trail all the way from Woodard Bay, on Puget Sound, to the heart of the main stem Nisqually River.

The Land Trust has committed to working with the city of Yelm to explore development of a trails plan that would include the Yelm-Tenino Trail extension.

Meanwhile, restoration of the newly acquired property will include demolition or relocation of a small residence and several outbuildings, which the Land Trust hopes to complete within the next year. 🌿

Right: A peek into the heart of the new acquisition: The property features shoreline with woody debris and a robust riparian forest, important features of good salmon habitat.



This Land Trust Spells “Summer” F-U-N!

Thanks to all participants in our summer event series

Ten Nature Walks



We appreciate everyone who was able to participate in our various summer activities. Between the nature walks, river float trips, and volunteer work parties, you sure kept us busy! Your enthusiasm for the Nisqually River Watershed and for the Land Trust was awe-inspiring— thanks! Here are some fun figures from our summer events:

- We hosted ten **Nature Walks** with 141 happy hikers and two terrific guest birding guides from our friends at the Tahoma Audubon Society.
- A total of 120 new friends and old pals joined us for two **Upper Nisqually River Float Trips**

Two River Float Trips



- For the first time in our history, we had so many friends sign up to attend our **Annual Meeting & Salmon Bake** that we had to close registration!

We hope you had as much fun as we did! Visit our website event calendar in the spring for a list of 2017 activities. We look forward to seeing even more of our friends at next summer's events! ~

Annual Meeting & Salmon Bake



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Above, photo credit: www.forwardphoto.com

George Walter Receives First Land Trust “George Walter Lifetime Achievement Award”

At our annual meeting in September the Land Trust named George Walter the first recipient of the George Walter Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognized George for his “leadership, inspiration, and friendship, and for his passionate commitment to permanent conservation of the Nisqually River Watershed.”

Grinning widely, George acknowledged that he was “deeply honored” by the award. But gesturing to the crowd of 150-plus Land Trust board, staff, and supporters assembled to honor him, he emphasized that “this is about all of us. This is *our* land trust.”

George founded the Land Trust in 1989 and served as its president for the next 23 years, stepping down in 2012 and retiring from the board itself this past April. In September, the board elected him its first Member Emeritus, and he continues to serve as chair of the Lands Committee.

The centerpiece of the award was an elegant “five pencil” portrait of George created by local master graphic artist Carl Williams.

A plaque with an engraved copy of the portrait will hang in the Land Trust office, with a place for the

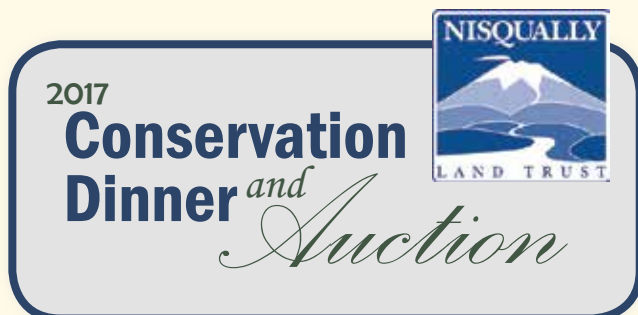
names of future winners – those, according to Land Trust Executive Director Joe Kane, “who measure up to the standards of wisdom, intelligence, integrity, and good intent that George has set for conservation of the Nisqually Watershed – and that’s a mighty high bar.”



Above: Board President JW Foster, right, presenting George Walter with the Land Trust’s first lifetime achievement award. And in recognition of his retirement from the board last April, we wrapped George in a Pendleton “Raven and the Box of Knowledge” blanket. In September, George was elected the board’s first Member Emeritus.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



The Nisqually Land Trust’s 25th Annual Conservation Dinner and Fundraising Auction will be held on
SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 2017.

Same great event at a **NEW LOCATION:**
SOUTH PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
(LACEY CAMPUS) IN LACEY, WA

We are now accepting item donations and sponsorships for our 2017 event! Please visit our website, call the office or e-mail staff@nisquallylandtrust.org for more information.

Volunteer Spotlight: Jim Terry

When it comes to salmon conservation, retiree puts his muscle where his heart is

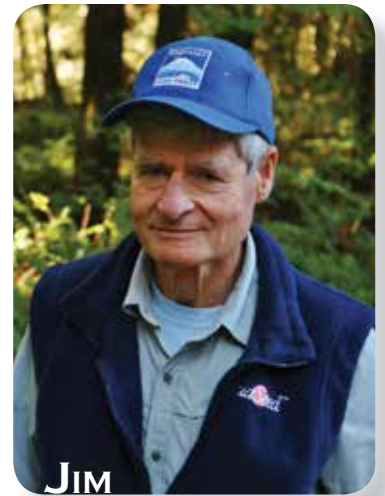
I've been regularly volunteering for work parties with Nisqually Land Trust for about a year and have been a Site Steward for around six months. My interest first began with a nature walk in Ohop Valley. I was very impressed with the restoration work that had been done.

I had retired a couple of years earlier and, like many older people who suddenly have time on their hands, was looking for some way to still contribute to society. Since I had been interested in the environment my whole life and had a background in salmon biology, I felt that my time and talents could be best used by Nisqually Land Trust and similar organizations.

I spent three years studying fisheries and wildlife management before joining the Air Force and retiring after thirty-three years of service. I then went back to school for two years, graduating with an AAS degree in

Fisheries Technology. After graduation, I worked sixteen years for a private salmon company.

In addition to my work with Nisqually Land Trust, I am a salmon docent with Thurston County Stream Team and South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group. I particularly enjoy passing on my knowledge and love of salmon to young children. 🌿



A labor of love: Physical property maintenance is not required of our Site Stewards, but many volunteers like Jim Terry (above and below) enjoy participating in regular work parties to control invasive plants, plant native vegetation, and perform miscellaneous activities to maintain protected Land Trust lands.

WINTER SITE STEWARDS WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 11, 2017 | LOCATION TBD

Join Land Trust staff and fellow volunteers for an informational session on the Site Stewards program.

Learn what it means to be a Site Steward. At the end of the program you will have an opportunity to select a property to steward if you are interested.

Contact Katie at volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org for more information and to sign up.





The Journey to a Quarter Million

If you've been following the work of the Nisqually Land Trust over the past decade, you've likely heard about the importance of restoring healthy forests along our rivers and creeks. Many of you have attended our volunteer native-vegetation planting events, or your children have helped plant trees with the Nisqually River Education Project.

This coming planting season, we will reach a milestone on the path toward restoring our watershed: Our staff, volunteers, partners and contract crews will have planted over a quarter-million trees and shrubs on Land Trust property!

It's hard to determine the precise environmental benefits of so many trees, but you just need to swing

through the Ohop Valley to get a feel for what they mean. About half of the quarter-million trees and shrubs have been planted in the Lower Ohop Valley. Many of the cottonwoods planted in 2009 and 2010 are now more than thirty feet tall! The Ohop floodplain, which was cow pasture in the recent past, has now been restored to a shrubby thicket teeming with birds and animal life.

The last few acres will be planted by the end of this winter, thanks to our amazing partners and volunteers. If you'd like to be part of this landmark event, please visit our website calendar for upcoming volunteer opportunities, or contact volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org. 

What does 250,000 trees look like? Above: Volunteers plant native trees and shrubs at Red Salmon Creek, near DuPont. Below: An aerial view of the Ohop Valley Restoration Project shows progress in the revegetation of the floodplain between 2009 (below, left) and in 2015 (below, right).





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What would the Nisqually River Watershed be without

Health **Y** forests.

Pr **O** tected wildlife habitat.

Vibrant comm **U** nities.



Your support connects land, water, wildlife— and people! Please contribute to our **2016 Conservation Appeal**. Donate electronically at www.nisquallylandtrust.org. Thanks!

2016
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