



# NISQUALLY LAND TRUST

Winter Newsletter 2021-22



Great Blue Heron at the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge  
Photo by Victoria Austin





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 conserva-  
tion organizations that meet national standards  
for excellence, uphold the public trust, and ensure  
that conservation efforts are permanent.

## THE CLEARWATER AWARD

This fall the Waterfront Center, as part of their international awards program, awarded the Nisqually Land Trust the Clearwater Award. Each year, they select one grassroots organization to recognize that has worked together collaboratively with a diverse group of people to make measureable progress in caring for their watershed. The Waterfront Center is a nonprofit educational group that celebrates the connections of communities with their waterfront.

Our Executive Director Jeanette Dorner was invited to participate in their online awards ceremony which also featured waterfront design awardees from China, England, India, Canada, and the United States. We are grateful to the Waterfront Center for this recognition and to long time friends of the Nisqually, Steve Durrant and Chris Carlson for nominating us for this award.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

It's a blustery autumn day, and every one of us is happy for new snow on The Mountain. And I want to again say thanks for your commitment to save the special places that sustain us all.

In the Nisqually Watershed, you have made a difference by protecting land, habitat, species, people. The numbers are compelling – protection of 8,751 acres of watershed habitat, 14.33 river miles, 1.45 miles of marine shoreline, expansion of the community forest, a river with some 78% of the shoreline protected, hundreds of thousands of trees and shrubs planted. A river salmon can return to.

And with that track record, what's ahead, you might ask?

We have been working hard on a plan for the next five years. Here's a few highlights:

- Development of a comprehensive climate-informed strategic conservation plan
- Benchmarks for increased land protection, especially in the Marine Conservation area, Mashel River, and Nisqually River tributaries
- Development of public access opportunities – defining how people can view, experience, and recreate in the Watershed, consistent with habitat restoration and protection goals
- Support for landscape-scale acquisitions in the Nisqually Community Forest
- Development of a long-term plan to fund the costs of stewardship of our properties
- Increased community engagement that is more inclusive
- SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES! Continuing our entrepreneurial, cutting-edge spirit.

Whether you support these efforts with money, time planting and weed pulling, coming to events, or simply through conversation with your friends and family—know that you make a difference and we are grateful.

We hope to see you on the River. 🌿



*Kathleen D. Mix*

Kathy Mix  
Board President



## Purchases Protect Spawning Beds and Set Stage for Restoration



*The Land Trust purchased the properties from two families with long ties to the Valley. Marcia Berger pictured here with her dog Selene on the newly conserved property.*

The Land Trust has permanently protected two more properties central to the restoration of Ohop Creek, one of the two main tributaries to the Nisqually River.

They include 45 acres of floodplain and over one-half mile of Ohop Creek shoreline used by all four species of Pacific salmonids native to the Nisqually Watershed, including threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. Both species hover dangerously close to extinction.

The Land Trust purchased the properties from two families with long ties to the Valley.

The Land Trust purchased ten acres in the lower Ohop from Marcia Berger, who has owned the property since 1983. The Land Trust worked with Marcia and her daughter, Cindy, to allow Cindy and her family to retain a residence on high ground while the Land Trust acquired the land along the valley floor.

The Berger property adjoins 90 acres the Land Trust purchased from the Pruitt family in 2019 and helps set the stage for the next phase of Ohop Creek restoration. Ohop Creek was ditched over a century ago to drain the valley for dairy farming. This had devastating impacts for fish, reducing the creek’s capacity for Chinook salmon, for one, by some 80 percent.

In 2015, the Land Trust, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and a team of local, state, and federal partners completed the first phase of restoration, re-converting 1.6 miles of ditch back to 2.4 miles of meandering, salmon-friendly stream and planting 186,000 native trees and shrubs in the floodplain.


“We’re grateful to Marcia and her family for helping us to secure one more piece of the puzzle for the next phase of the Ohop Creek restoration,” said Land Trust Executive Director Jeanette Dorner. “It’s been a high priority in the Nisqually salmon recovery strategy for the last two decades, and this

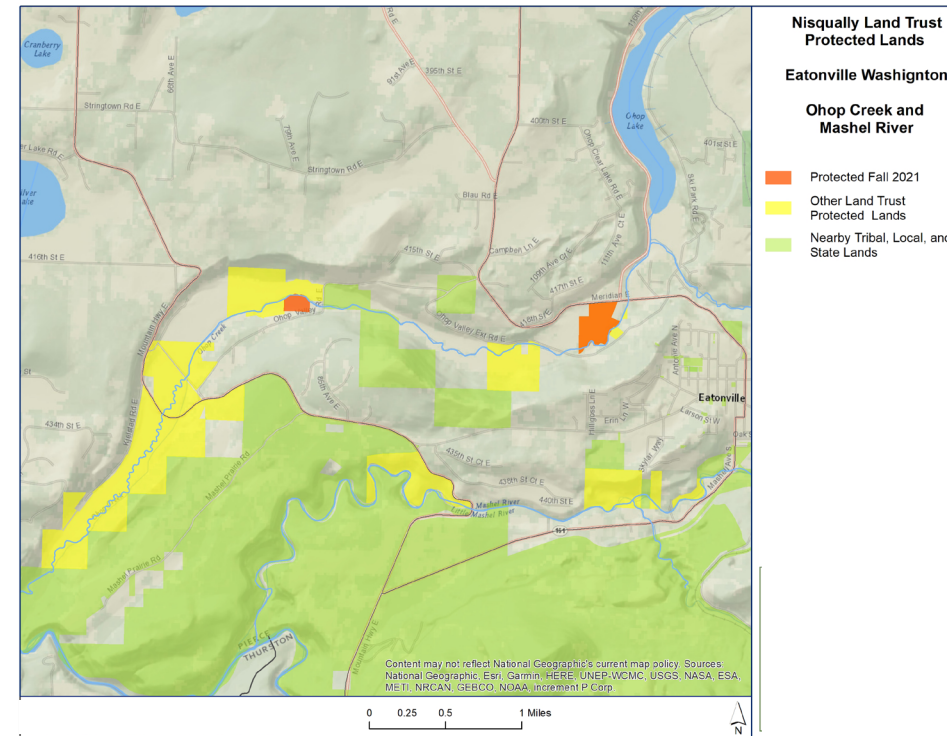
The restoration vision of the Ohop Valley continues because of the deep commitment of those who live there and want to protect the places they know and love so well.

brings us one step closer.”

Further up the Valley, the Land Trust purchased 35 acres from the Litzenberger family that include over 2,200 feet of Ohop Creek shoreline along the heart of the creek’s salmon-spawning beds.

The purchase secures the property for floodplain restoration and eliminates development of up to 37 residences, which would have severely impacted the spawning grounds. The Land Trust will continue to lease a home to a young family with a small livestock operation on a portion of the property outside the floodplain.

Funding partners for the two purchases include the state’s Streamflow Restoration and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration programs and the Nisqually Delta Environmental Mitigation Trust. 



*Above: Our two most recent acquisitions in the Ohop Creek Valley in orange add to the complex of protected lands already owned by the Land Trust and other partners.*

*Below: Newly protected Ohop Creek floodplain and Ohop Creek on property purchased from Marcia Berger.*

*Below: Newly protected Ohop Creek floodplain and Ohop Creek on property purchased from Marcia Berger.*



**Creating a conservation legacy**

By including the Land Trust in your estate plan, you will protect the health of our land and water for future generations. Talk with your family, talk with your advisor, then talk with us.

Call Executive Director Jeanette Dorner at 360.489.3400 ext. 103, or email [jeanette@nisquallylandtrust.org](mailto:jeanette@nisquallylandtrust.org) to learn more.



Volunteers plant cottonwood live-stakes to restore river-side habitat for Chinook salmon as part of Orca Recovery Day

Mount Rainier National Park



This October, volunteers joined us for a special Orca Recovery Day work party. Instead of planting trees or removing invasive weeds, we harvested cottonwoods from our Lackamas Flats Protected Area. Cottonwoods colonized this site which was formally a fallow field used for agriculture. Volunteers cut branches into over 1000 live cuttings.

After our planting bags were full of live stakes, we hiked back to the truck where soil and pots were waiting. We filled the pots and planted the cuttings in the soil. Over the next year, these cuttings will grow roots, and when the roots are strong enough we'll plant them along the river throughout the watershed where they will improve air and water quality, stabilize stream banks, and benefit fish and wildlife, including the Salish Sea's resident orca populations.

At the same time we were making cottonwood cuttings, volunteers in Olympia removed invasive English ivy at Watershed Park, and volunteers in Orting planted trees at South Prairie Creek Preserve. These events were held as part of Orca Recovery Day, an annual regional campaign facilitated by Better Ground, a partnership of Puget Sound conservation districts. Since 2019, conservation districts and partners such as land trusts, watershed councils, parks departments, and tribal groups have organized habitat res-

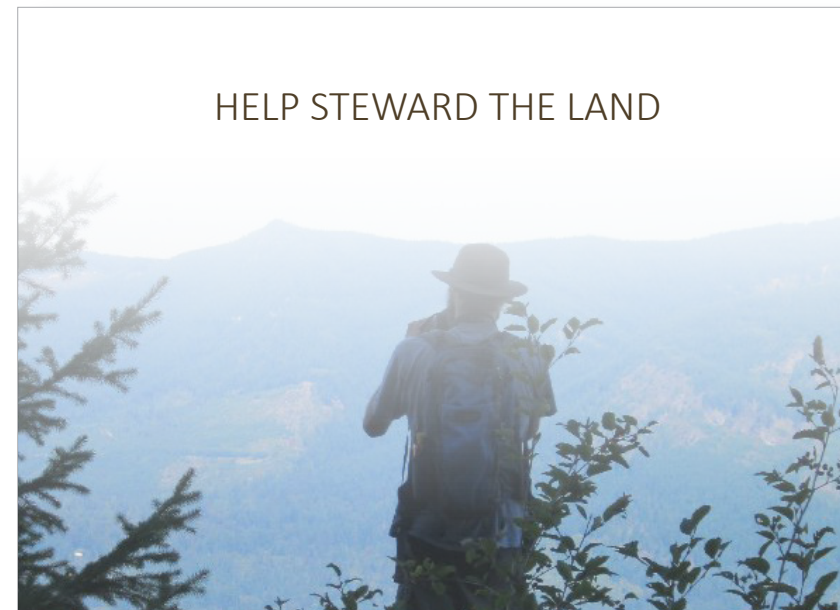
toration and educational events throughout the Northwest. In addition to volunteering, participants can pledge to take certain actions that help orcas, such as using only non-toxic cleaning projects or communicating with community leaders about salmon habitat initiatives.

Even though it feels like we're far from the ocean at Lackamas Flats, healthy riparian forests like those surrounding the Nisqually River mainstem are crucial for orcas because they rely on endangered Chinook salmon as their primary food source to survive.

Restoring riparian areas helps mitigate effects that habitat loss, climate change, and pollution have on Chinook salmon. With healthier riparian forests, the Nisqually Chinook salmon will have more success spawning, and will, in-turn, provide more food for resident orcas. By harvesting cottonwoods on Land Trust properties, we're preparing for future restoration projects in a sustainable way.

Though Orca Recovery Day is behind us, you can still be part of the effort to protect threatened orcas and other native species! Check out our events calendar at: [nisquallylandtrust.org/calendar](https://nisquallylandtrust.org/calendar) to sign up for a tree planting event this winter. 🌿

## HELP STEWARD THE LAND



The Nisqually Land Trust is looking for groups to help steward our properties! Church groups, scout troops, school groups, clubs, and any and all other groups are invited to work with us to create an event your friends and families can enjoy. Spending time outside together is a great way to bond and enjoy a change of scenery!

Contact [maya@nisquallylandtrust.org](mailto:maya@nisquallylandtrust.org) with any questions or to schedule an event.

## Native Species Highlight Black Capped Chickadee



### Black-capped Chickadee

Black-capped Chickadees may be one of the most widely known birds in our area. These often under-appreciated birds have a striking, distinct call and easy-to-spot markings. Thanks to its large head and round body it is the quintessential cute bird, and is quickly identified with its black cap and bib contrasted with white cheeks. It's shrill "chickadee-dee-dee" can be heard year-round in western Washington, and it is a frequent backyard visitor.





“WE KNEW THAT THE TREES WOULD KEEP GROWING AND REMOVING CARBON FROM THE AIR, BUT THE RE-VERIFICATION PROVED THAT THEY WERE DOING IT AT A RATE 40 PERCENT BEYOND WHAT WE’D EXPECTED. THAT BLEW US AWAY.”

- JOE KANE, SPECIAL PROJECTS CONSULTANT

*Pictured: Old Growth trees in the Land Trust’s Mount Rainier Gateway Reserve, near Ashford, site of the first carbon-credit project in the Pacific Northwest*

**Verification of Land Trust’s first carbon project beats projections**

Six years ago the Land Trust completed the first carbon-credit project in the Pacific Northwest. Our hopes were simple: Raise money to protect and steward 520 acres of old forest on the slopes of Mount Rainier that provides habitat for threatened northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets.

We entered the project in the California carbon market, a regulated market with the most rigorous standards in the U.S., and after a long, expensive, and grueling verification process – essentially, a hyper-detailed timber cruise – we were issued 38,000 credits. These represented the difference between the carbon that would have remained on the land if had been commercially harvested vs. the carbon that remained because we protected it.

We sold the credits to Microsoft. It was the corporation’s first conservation project in the continental U.S. But the sale came with a contractual obligation for us to re-verify for the state of California, every six years for a hundred years, that the trees are still standing and the carbon still stored.

We completed our first re-verification – again, long, rigorous, grueling, expensive – in November. And got a surprise.

“We knew that the trees would keep growing and removing carbon from the air,” said Joe Kane, the Land Trust’s special projects consultant. “But the re-verification proved that they were doing it at a rate 40 percent beyond what we’d expected. That blew us away.”

California will now issue the Land Trust credits for the newly stored carbon. These will be “removal” credits – as opposed to “avoidance” credits, for avoiding carbon release through timber harvest – and are particularly prized in the market.

“We’ll be able to cover our verification costs,” said Kane. “But more importantly, we should be able to generate funds for ongoing land stewardship. For any land trust, that’s the hardest money to raise. And those trees will keep growing.”





SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

## Volunteers wear many hats too

Longtime Pacific Northwest residents Dwight and Sharon Bergquist-Moody have been supporting the Land Trust for almost 15 years. Shortly after moving to Olympia from Portland, they heard Land Trust Associate Director Kim Bredensteiner speak at a Native Plant Society meeting about the Ohop Creek restoration project and signed up to be volunteer site stewards right away.

They quickly became dedicated volunteers and stewarded the Mount Rainier Gateway Protected Area for many years. In that time, they carried out “all manner of junk, furniture, car parts...you name it,” from the property. After a few years, they migrated downriver, caring for sites along the Mashel River and at Lackamas Flats. They’ve also put in their time at work parties, removing invasive plants and planting native ones.

Dwight and Sharon enjoy the peace that comes with being on protected landscapes, seeing wildlife like elk and bobcat tracks, and the view of Rainier from elevation at Mount Rainier Gateway.

While they’ve had to step back from stewarding, Dwight and Sharon are still active with the Land Trust and have shifted their support to assisting with events like the annual auction. They also support other nature organizations in the South Sound, such as Washington Trails Association, Capitol Land Trust, and others. We appreciate Dwight and Sharon’s support over the years and love having them as part of our supporter community. 🌿



South Sound residents and civic-minded community members Dwight and Sharon Bergquist-Moody planting trees in the Ohop Valley floodplain. Over the years these two have supported the Land Trust in the field, at our events, and with their generosity.

## Story of Service

By Susannah Prenevou

Preparing to exit my term of service with the Nisqually Land Trust brought mixed feelings. It had been a tremendous year of growth for me, as I’m sure these years are for all AmeriCorps members. I can’t thank the staff and volunteers enough for welcoming me in and treating me as if I’d been with them all along.

Being on the land and learning what it takes to restore habitat in the Nisqually River Watershed has opened up a new world to me, which includes lots of fieldwork, detailed planning, and dedicated, long-term support from volunteers, partners, and the communities of the watershed. Over the last 10 months, this new world had become a place where I was not simply a consumer of the outside world, but a participant in its ongoing growth and development. I have discovered how I am one part of a larger team that works in connection with the environment around me, giving back as nature freely gives to all of us.

This experience will forever be a part of my life from here on out, along with this watershed and its amazing beauty and resilience. It’s an experience that will not only be a sweet memory of a time in service to the land but also a steppingstone toward the greater responsibility laid upon my heart to do whatever I can to protect and conserve this lovely earth, finding ways to continue to grow and work with nature for the sake of my family’s future and the future of all the generations to come after me. 🌿

### SITE STEWARD TRAINING

February 5, 2022

9 am until Noon

Location TBA

To register contact Lotte Offe at [volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org](mailto:volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org) or call 360.489.3400, ext. 106.



### CONSIDER BECOMING A MONTHLY DONOR

Making a monthly contribution is an impactful way to support the Land Trust all year long. Join a core group of supporters who pledge their commitment to conservation in the Nisqually Watershed through monthly gifts. Donating throughout the year provides steady and reliable support that helps the Land Trust continue vital protection work.

You can become one of our Watershed Stewards by donating \$83.33 a month! Every gift, at every level, is appreciated and goes far to help achieve our vision of a healthy environment!



If you want to become a monthly donor please visit our website at [nisquallylandtrust.org](http://nisquallylandtrust.org) and find the monthly giving option on our Donation page. You can call us too at 360.489.3400, or email [staff@nisquallylandtrust.org](mailto:staff@nisquallylandtrust.org)

### TO OUR BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Thank you for the long hours, inspiring dedication, expertise, and commitment to the Nisqually!*



*Susannah Prenevou served as the Land Trust’s Volunteer Coordinator and AmeriCorps Member in 2020 and 2021. She brought genuine enthusiasm to everything she worked on while at the Nisqually. We truly appreciate all of her contributions and will miss working alongside her. You can still catch Susannah out planting in the field as a volunteer!*





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*Connecting Water, Wildlife, Land, and People since 1989*



## *2021 Year-End* Conservation Campaign

Our protection work is forever. The support we receive from our community, from people like you who have a generous spirit and commitment to nature, is central to our work.

We hope you'll consider a year-end gift to help us continue to build an environmental legacy that is healthy and vibrant.

You can easily make a donation online at [nisquallylandtrust.org](https://nisquallylandtrust.org). Call us at 360.489.3400 for more information. Thanks!

