



Camas flowers blooming near Muck Creek

Nisqually Land Trust

Spring - Summer 2022
Newsletter

Training a New Generation of Wildlife Watchers

New Program Helps Get Kids Out In Nature

Ten First Creek Middle School students from the eastside of Tacoma got the chance to get outside and connect with wildlife as part of the new Wildlife Watchers Program the Nisqually Land Trust launched this spring.

A primary purpose of the new program is to give youth from underserved communities the opportunity to get out in nature and experience viewing wildlife.

The Land Trust teamed up with the Greentrike and Tacoma Schools' "Club Beyond" afterschool program to help kids learn about wildlife and nature through hands-on activities and field trips to the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and our newly acquired property on the Nisqually floodplain in our Brighton Creek Protected Area.

In addition to Land Trust staff, partners from the Nisqually River Education Project, the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Wolf Camp, and the Nisqually Tribe all took turns leading activities including nature hikes, wildlife tracking, bird identification and calls, salmon life cycle, salmon dissection, native plants identification, and

traditional tribal uses, and the ten essentials for outdoor exploration.

"It's been fun to see the kids who at first were apprehensive and quiet enjoy themselves and see the enthusiastic students from the start get into observing wildlife," said Maya Nabipoor, Nisqually Land Trust Americorps Service Member, who

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*Pictured below:
Students from First
Creek Middle School
in Tacoma visited the
Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually
National Wildlife Refuge
for their first Wildlife
Watchers Program field
trip.*





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

OFFICE

Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife
Refuge, Old Education Center
100 Brown Farm Road NE
Olympia, WA 98516

MAILING ADDRESS

1420 Marvin Road NE
Suite C PMB 243
Lacey, WA 98516-3878

Telephone: 360.489.3400
staff@nisquallylandtrust.org
Website: www.nisquallylandtrust.org

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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.*

*Photo by Charly Kearns: Nisqually Land
Trust Mashel River Protected Area*

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Caring for Nature

The poet, environmental activist, and novelist Wendell Berry said: “The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy and after all our most pleasing responsibility.”

As the Nisqually Land Trust celebrates thirty-three years of conservation efforts, let’s take a minute to reflect on how our community has taken on the responsibility to care for our corner of the Earth this last year.

- 277 volunteers who planted, pulled, staked, & cleaned up
- 1,496 dedicated volunteer hours
- 494 donors, large, small, and in kind
- 9 exceptional NLT staff
- 15 dedicated Board members, offering time, talent, and treasure

One day at a time, the contribution of every person has added up to protect an enormous amount of the Nisqually watershed for future generations—over 10,000 acres of land, 78% of the Nisqually River’s salmon-producing shoreline, a growing community forest to protect the headwaters.

Thank you so much as we join in this incredible effort to cherish the Earth and foster its renewal.



With Gratitude,

Kathleen D. Mix

Kathleen Mix
President, Board of Directors



Wildlife Watchers | Continued from page 1

organized the new outreach program. “We hope that they will carry this experience with them and continue to find opportunities to get out in nature and connect with wildlife.”

The participating kids also received a package of outdoor gear that they can use after the program ends. Generous donations included backpacks and coats from Patagonia and water bottles from MiiR, and grant funds from the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife supported the purchase of hiking boots and other outdoor essentials from our local REI. 🌿

“Seeing kids that don’t normally have the opportunity or easiest access to get outside come out and experience nature while learning was joyful to watch!”

Thank you to our Project Funders
& Donors!

WA Department of Fish & Wildlife, Patagonia, & MiiR

Outdoor gear donations from our partners not only served the kids during program field trips, but will allow them to continue to explore natural areas in the future!



Top Left Picture: Hanford McCloud, a member of the Nisqually Tribe and the Land Trust Board, demonstrated to the youth on their field trip to the Land Trust property the traditional way to pull cedar bark. Cedar bark is used by tribal members to weave into baskets and hats.

Top Right Picture: On the first Wildlife Watchers field trip to the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge the kids learned how to use binoculars and then practiced using them on their trail walk to spot birds and other wildlife.

Bottom Right Picture: During the second field outing, kids explored the Land Trust’s Brighton Creek Protected Area while suited up with outdoor gear donated by Patagonia and MiiR. Land Trust Community Engagement AmeriCorps Member Maya Nabipoor (left) helped identify some local fungi.

“The Best Way to Love It Is to Let Go of It”

Buddhist Priory Transfers 270 Acres along Nisqually River to Land Trust

In February the Land Trust and North Cascades Buddhist Priory completed the fourth and final stage in the Priory's transfer to the Trust of 270 richly forested acres and more than a quarter mile of high-priority Nisqually River salmon shoreline.

The project is located in the river's McKenna Reach, about two miles upstream of the S.R. 507 bridge crossing, in Pierce County. The property also spans Harts Lake Road and Brighton Creek and is central to the county's plan to remove a salmon-blocking culvert under the road, which will open up miles of salmon habitat in the creek.

The terms of the transactions also include creation of the first pileated woodpecker preserve in the state.

“For the past thirty-six years the Priory has done an incredible job of restoring and stewarding this landscape,” said Land Trust Executive Director Jeanette Dorner. “We're deeply honored to become its next caretakers.”

The Priory donated over 70 percent of the property, which had a market value of at least \$2.3 million. The Priory will use proceeds from the portion that it sold to support its retreat center, located on five acres that it retained along Harts Lake Road, and to help fund residences for teaching monks in Olympia and Port Ludlow. Abbot Tim Schomberg founded the Priory in 1986 and

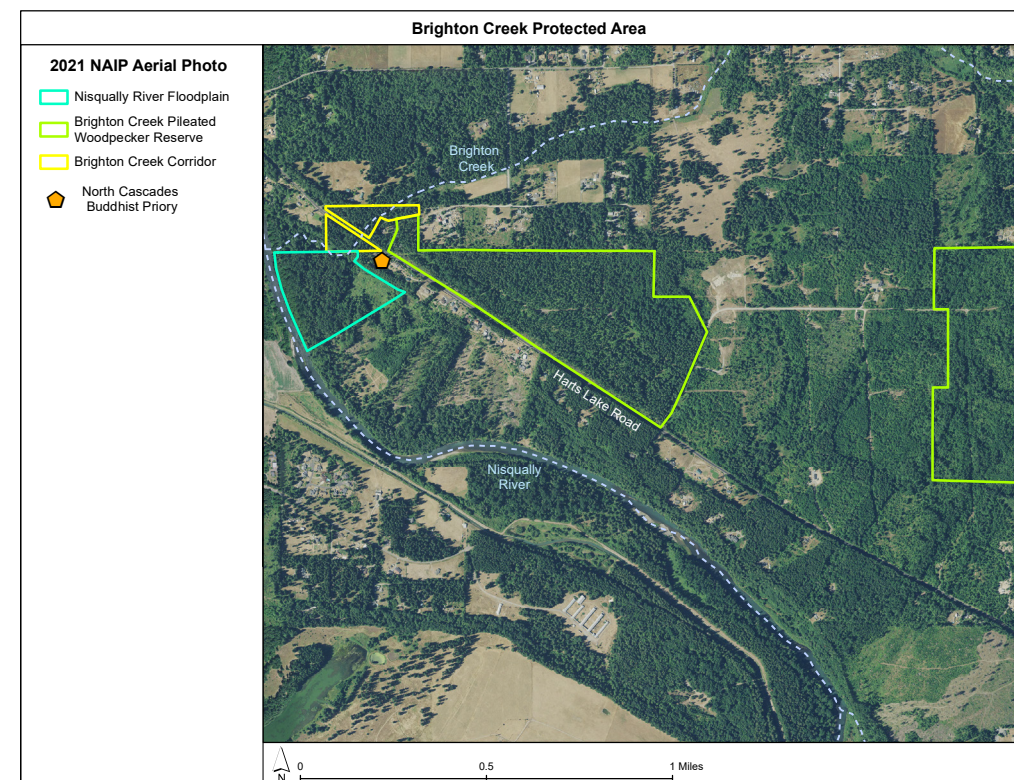
has led its program of acquiring and restoring the surrounding habitat. “We are very grateful to Nisqually Land Trust for its willingness to assume responsibility for stewardship of this beautiful and diverse property,” Rev. Schomberg said. “We dearly love this land and its wildlife, and it has been a joy to work on the property and see it develop over many years.

“But now, the best way for us to love it is to let go of it,” he said. “And allow the Land Trust and its partners to take its stewardship to a new level.”

The property supports shoreline spawning habitat for all five salmonid species native to the Nisqually Watershed, including threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. The Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board provided \$600,000 in grant funding toward purchase of the shoreline portions of the property, through its Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration program.

The Land Trust, through its Nisqually Delta Environmental Mitigation Trust, contributed a further \$28,000.

And the pileated woodpecker now reigns as the largest woodpecker in North America, following the U.S.



Brighton Creek Protected Area map: The project protected both vital Nisqually River floodplain and forest corridor along Brighton Creek.

Conservation funding for the floodplain portion was awarded by the State's Salmon Recovery Funding Board Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Program. And the 224-acre Pileated Woodpecker Preserve lands were donated by North Cascades Buddhist Priory.

Fish and Wildlife Service's declaration, last October, that the ivory-billed woodpecker is extinct. (Although – good news! – recent news reports suggest this might not be the case.) Rev. Schomberg said that the distinctive call of the spectacular, crimson-crowned pileated woodpecker is frequently heard near the Priory buildings, and sightings are not uncommon.

In almost all sightings, he said, a male and female are seen,

indicating that at least one nesting pair is living somewhere in the neighborhood.

“What magnificent birds they are,” said Land Trust Special Projects Manager Joe Kane, who coordinated the project. “To be able to take even this small step toward assuring they'll always be with us – that's our great good fortune, and a real thrill.”



Thank you to our
funding partners!

•Puget Sound Partnership
•WA State Recreation & Conservation
Office Salmon Recovery Funding Board's
Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration
Program; •North Cascades Buddhist
Priory • Nisqually Delta Environmental
Mitigation Trust.

Board President Kathy Mix cuts the ribbon at Brighton Creek with (left to right) Buddhist Priory monks Rev. Clement Siddoway, Rev. Olaf Miller, and Rev. Tim Schomberg, Puget Sound Partnership Deputy Director Larry Epstein, and Salmon Recovery Funding Board Citizen Member Kaleen Cottingham.

TWO MORE LAND TRUST ACQUISITIONS SET STAGE FOR NEXT OHOP CREEK RESTORATION



Pictured: Our newest acquisition along the middle reach of Ohop Creek, a major tributary to the Nisqually River and an important salmon-bearing stream.

In January the Land Trust added another critical pair of salmon-shoreline properties to its mid-Ohop Creek portfolio, setting some of the final pieces in place for restoration of the heart of the creek's spawning beds.

The newest acquisitions occurred almost immediately after the creek, swollen from heavy winter rains and massive flooding, triggered a landslide along Ohop Valley Extension Road, shutting down the Pierce County road and sending debris cascading along the shoreline and into the creek.

The Land Trust purchased the landslide property and another one just downstream after they were listed for sale as home-development sites. The Land Trust will now coordinate with the county and other partners to support incorporation of salmon protections into the rebuilding of the road, which remains closed.

The road repair project is in the middle of a larger planned restoration led by the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group (SPSSEG) in partnership with the Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Land Trust.

The project intends to protect and improve habitat in much of the nearly four miles of Ohop Creek spawning beds, which are used by four of the five salmonid species native to the Nisqually Watershed, including threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

The Land Trust now owns some 1.25 miles of that spawning reach shoreline and is in negotiations for a further .75 miles.

"Every foot counts," said Land Trust Land Steward Ian Stoner. "What that landslide illustrated, dramatically, is how fundamentally incompatible development along the creek's floodplain is with salmon recovery."

In 2015, the Land Trust, SPSSEG, the Nisqually Tribe, and a team of local, state, and federal partners completed the first phase of restoration, along the creek's lower reach, 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.

"The primary goal of that project was to help deliver salmon upstream, to these spawning grounds," said

Land Trust Executive Director Jeanette Dorner, who helped initiate the restoration partnership in the early 2000's, when she managed the Nisqually Tribe's Salmon Recovery program.

The Tribe's federally approved recovery plans for Chinook and steelhead identify restoration of Ohop Creek, one of the two major tributaries to the Nisqually River, as a high freshwater priority.

"Our partnership spent fifteen years and nearly \$10 million on that part of the project," she said. "We are not about to stop now." ✂

RESTORE IT AND THEY WILL COME

After 30 years, Winter Coho Return

Ed Kenney has lived along Powell Creek, the largest Thurston County tributary to the Nisqually River, since 1980. Almost every day, he walks along the creek or river, checking on the salmon and steelhead runs.

In January, he saw something he hasn't seen in over thirty years: A winter run of coho salmon returning to spawn in upper Powell Creek and its sub-tributary, Elbow Creek.

"Back, after thirty years!" he recently told the Nisqually River Council. "That's amazing! And what a story about partnership and restoration."



Ed was talking about the complex network of partner agencies and organizations that have slowly but steadily built the trail of protected and restored lands that these winter coho followed home after three decades.

Winter Coho spotted in Powell Creek. Ed Kenney, a charter member of the Land Trust and current Site Steward, was excited to share this success story with others.

From the WA Department of Natural Resources' Nisqually Aquatic Reserve, on Puget Sound, through the restored estuary at the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. Then upstream along 32 miles of the mainstem Nisqually River shoreline, more than half of it now permanently protected, to the mouth of Powell Creek.

"I have witnessed every step of the process to bring these coho salmon back," he said. "It's such an inspiring story of how the Land Trust's first property has eventually led to their return."

Then a right turn at one of the very first conservation properties the Land Trust acquired, in January 1991, and onward into what is now the Land Trust's 523-acre Powell Creek Protected Area. And then up Powell Creek, turning right again at an old logging road on Land Trust property that the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group decommissioned to open up habitat that had been blocked for decades.

And then up Powell Creek and into Elbow Creek, under a bridge over Peissner Road that Thurston County built last year to replace a culvert that stopped the fish. "And that's where they were spawning," said Ed. "All along the good gravel above the bridge."

Sayre Hodgson, research biologist for the Nisqually Tribe's Salmon Recovery Program, confirmed the coho run during a site visit in early January. "It was cool to see a bunch of coho up there in January!" she told the Land Trust. "I took the fish presence to be an indicator that the culvert replacement was a success – there was *lots* of spawning activity." ✂

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

Kelsey Hulse



New Board Member **Kelsey Hulse** has always felt connected to water and the Pacific Northwest. She has fond childhood memories of swimming in Puget Sound, digging for clams, hunting for shells and baby crabs, and getting into seaweed fights with her cousins. As an adult her outdoor adventures and awareness of the importance of conservation expanded while working in the outdoor recreation industry. In 2012 Kelsey moved to Olympia from Seattle in the hopes of finding a place she could plant a garden and see the stars at night. She now works for Puget Sound Energy as their Tribal Relations Manager. Kelsey has always been impressed with the Land Trust's ability to achieve lofty goals and by the commitment and enthusiasm of the Land Trust's many volunteers. She is excited to be a new board member and looks forward to contributing to the Land Trust's continued success.

Todd Lovshin



New Board Member **Todd Lovshin** and his wife, Libbi, moved to the Tacoma area in 2019 from Montana. They spend much of their free time enjoying the great outdoors and all the Pacific Northwest has to offer. Ensuring that future generations can enjoy the watershed is why Todd is involved and excited to have joined this organization as a board member. During the day, Todd works for PacificSource Health Plans as the Washington executive lead.

Barbara Samora



New Board Member **Barbara Samora** retired from the National Park Service after a 40-year career, the last 28 years as biologist in Mount Rainier National Park. She managed programs associated with research, inventory and monitoring of aquatic, Wilderness, atmospheric, soundscape, and geologic resources. She served as one of the park's first representatives on the Nisqually River Council in its early days. Barbara also served as a Planning Commissioner for the Town of Eatonville, representing the National Park Service and the Town during the development of the Nisqually Watershed Plan. She strongly supports protecting open spaces for ecological and public benefit and believes that land conservation is critical to addressing climate-change impacts. In her retirement Barbara spends her time volunteering with the Mountain Community Garden, Eatonville Family Agency, and Pierce County Master Gardeners and enjoys hiking, camping, gardening, and traveling.

Jeff Barrett



New Finance & Operations Manager **Jeff Barrett** has enjoyed the natural splendor of Washington since his childhood on Whidbey Island. He joined the Nisqually Land Trust in November 2021 after a career in engineering and computing management and owning a small business in Downtown Olympia. He's pleased to be able to put his experience to use in support of protecting, preserving, and fostering the flora and fauna in this region he loves.

Kayla Jenkins



Kayla Jenkins joined the Land Trust staff in November 2021 as our Office and Development Assistant. After earning her B.S. degree in Environmental Science from The Evergreen State College, she worked for a few years at the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. She later served a brief stint as staff for the Nisqually River Council, and after a few years home parenting, she worked as a budget analyst with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. While she was thrilled to be working in the Nisqually Watershed again, a place she has loved since childhood, she is off on a new adventure to Ecuador where she'll be working with the **Cofán** tribe to start a land conservation non-profit from the ground up!



82 Trees for 82 Years

Celebrating with a Birthday Tree Planting Party

Long-time Nisqually Land Trust supporter Barbara Cook celebrated her 82nd birthday this year by inviting her friends and family to help plant 82 trees on one of the Land Trust's Nisqually River Shoreline properties.

Volunteers planted close to 3,700 trees at the site over the last planting season. Barbara's actual birthday was in April, but since that was too late for tree planting season, her birthday tree planting was scheduled as the wrap-up volunteer event at the end of February.

Barbara was inspired to reach out to the Land Trust to request to celebrate her birthday in this way after reading the story of 7-year-old Annalina, who similarly celebrated her birthday with her friends on another Nisqually Shoreline property last fall.

After planting 82 native Garry oak trees on the site, Barbara's friends and family enjoyed some delicious birthday cupcakes, a step up from the usual fig bars at our regular volunteer events.

Pictured: Barbara Cook, her son Rob Cook, and friends Cleve and Marty Pinnix planted trees at the Land Trust's Nisqually River Shoreline Property to honor Barbara's birthday.



BECOME A SITE STEWARD

As the Land Trust acquires new lands, the need for volunteers to help keep an eye on the properties continues to increase. Site Stewards adopt Land Trust properties stretching from marine shorelines on South Puget Sound to forestlands in the shadow of Mount Rainier and many of our salmon shoreline properties in between.

Volunteers are inspired by:

- the opportunity to be out in nature,
- doing something good for the planet,
- homeschooling activity, and
- scout-troop programs

"We're grateful that the Land Trust's need for volunteer stewardship help is aligning with peoples' passion for being stewards of the land," said Americorps Service Member Lotte Off, who has been leading the Site Stewards orientations. "Together we are creating space for growth on our land and in our community."



The online Site Steward Workshop and training was recorded and is posted online on the Land Trust's YouTube channel. It is available for anyone interested in learning more about the program. Contact the Land Trust at volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org to sign up to be a Site Steward

Nisqually Land Trust

1420 Marvin RD NE

Suite C PMB 243

Lacey, WA 98516-3878

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Help us be responsible stewards
of the nature we work so hard to
protect. Please consider a dona-
tion directly towards restoring and
taking care of our protected lands
and wildlife habitats.

Photo: Native lupine at the the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge