



WHIDBEY CAMANO

LAND TRUST

Protecting our Islands' most important lands in partnership with landowners and the broader community

— FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER, ISSUE #3 —



Crockett Lake, see page 6 for more details. Photo: Mark Sheehan

Protecting the Nature of Whidbey and Camano Islands

Imagine! In the still of a summer morning, you hear a squawking call and look across an open field toward a forest. Four herons are descending into the treetops. Smiling, you know they're carrying breakfast into nests for their baby birds. The young ones will eat safely in protected nests until their parents teach them to fly. The next generation of herons has a chance. While they don't know whom they should thank, we know it's you.

Since 1984, the Whidbey Camano Land Trust has saved nearly 7,000

acres of prime farmland, lush forests, rare native prairie, and priceless wetlands and shorelines, providing wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, clean water and local food. Every donation to the operations of the Whidbey Camano Land Trust supports our work to protect – permanently – the unique nature of our islands.

Land conservation is a complicated business and it grows more complex each year. It demands expertise and excellence in

science, organizational management, fundraising, stewardship, tax and real estate law, and more. It takes creativity, perseverance, relationship skills, an abundance of passion, and lots of time. The Land Trust's professional staff and volunteer board of directors possess all these attributes.

Your donations to our Operations Fund pay for this excellence and translate into saving the places you love for all time. Thank you for your continued support.



**WHIDBEY
CAMANO**
LAND TRUST

Mission

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust protects the Islands' most important natural habitats, scenic vistas, and working farms and forests in partnership with landowners and our island communities.

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Jessica Larson *Stewardship Associate*
Cheryl Lowe *Land Steward*
Patricia Powell *Executive Director*
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Stewardship: What Protecting



Connecting You to the Land: Bringing people out to properties they've helped to protect is rewarding for us. Field trips have covered coastal geology, conifer seed orchards, wetlands, forest ecology, birding, ethnobotany, military history and farming. We've had over 20 work parties this year to remove invasive plants, plant native species, maintain trails, collect seeds, and much more. If you want to join a work party or field trip, check our website's events calendar under "News and Activities" for scheduled activities. *Photo: Dr. Lou LaBombard explains the rich Native American history and the archeological shell midden at the Mitchell Conservation Easement.*

Stewardship Activities



Monitoring Conservation Easements: The Land Trust holds 30 conservation easements protecting over 1,000 acres. Permanent protection requires that we annually visit each property to make sure the easement terms are being followed. If we find a violation (fortunately a rare occurrence), we have to be ready to enforce the terms if the property owner will not correct it. Funding our Stewardship and Legal Defense Fund ensures we can always protect these important conservation lands. *Photo: An annual monitoring visit by the Land Trust with Harry Case and Shawn Conner, owners of the Forest Forever property on south Whidbey.*



Restoring Natural Landscapes: Restoring and improving the health and functioning of our islands' native ecosystems, including wetlands, prairies, forests and shorelines, is a high priority for us. We work with advisory committees, scientists and neighbors to develop science-based plans that may call for collecting scientific data and modeling possible outcomes. We're doing this now at our Dugualla Bay Preserve (northeast of Oak Harbor) to decide the best way to restore salmon habitat. *Photo: At the Naas Preserve south of Coupeville, the Land Trust is restoring a native prairie, home to the rare golden paintbrush plant. Less than 1% (80 acres) of Whidbey's native prairies remain.*

Land “FOREVER” Means

At the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, land stewards Cheryl Lowe and Jessica Larson make sure that the lands we acquire are protected forever. The only way to do this is by caring for these lands—a big job with the newly-acquired 654-acre Trillium forest and 39 other properties. (See the accompanying photographs and captions for some of what Cheryl and Jessica have been up to this year.)

Our amazing stewardship staff is funded by your yearly membership donations to our Operating Fund. Cheryl and Jessica greatly leverage your donations by recruiting and training volunteers to help with the hands-on work, which includes restoring natural landscapes, monitoring properties, maintaining trails, removing invasive plants, and leading tours.

Once we purchase a property, like the Hammons Preserve on south Whidbey or the Fairfax Forest Preserve on north Whidbey, the stewardship staff starts their “forever” work. They immediately complete a field inventory and develop an

interim conservation and use plan. During the next 9-12 months, Cheryl and Jessica develop a detailed site management plan with input and review by our members, neighbors, and/or resource experts.

These plans define the conservation goals for the property and address public uses, safety, habitat restoration and enhancement, access, infrastructure (signs, fences, parking areas, etc.), monetary needs, priorities, and an activity timeline.

When we hold a conservation easement – and we have 30 – Jessica and Cheryl first prepare a detailed and comprehensive baseline inventory to use as a reference point for future site visits. Using this baseline, staff monitors each property annually for compliance with the terms of the easement to ensure the conservation values of the property are being protected.

Jessica is also the Land Trust’s computer mapping specialist. She creates special maps for grant applications, baseline inventories, restoration and land pro-

tection plans, public information and outreach, and fundraising.

When you donate to the Land Trust’s Operating Fund you fund the majority of Cheryl and Jessica’s work. As Cheryl explains, “It’s the annual monitoring, management, volunteer coordination, and planning that truly protects each property forever.” If you are interested in volunteering with them, please call or email us or visit (www.wclt.org).



Photo: Volunteers planting native wetland species at our Hammons Preserve near Cultus Bay. Way to go team!

Together We Did It - the Trillium Forest is Saved!



WOW! THANK YOU to over 1,500 donors and scores of volunteers (see the insert for names) who raised over \$4 million to save the Trillium forest. This tremendous feat would not have happened without each and every one of you joining us in this seemingly impossible challenge. We all did it!

Now, after a brief respite for celebrating, we’re on to the next phase—the stewardship that requires a lasting commitment to care for the land. Our stewardship staff has been working to make the property safe for non-motorized users. We’ve already been installing gates and signs at

appropriate locations. One of our main tasks is to develop a solid corps of volunteers to help us care for this great forest of ours and make your visits to it more enjoyable.

In January, we’ll start to develop the site management plan for the forest property. An advisory committee will help oversee and guide this process. Along the way, we’ll be asking for input from individuals and groups and will hold public workshops for feedback. At the same time, we’ll begin writing the conservation easement, which the Land Trust will hold when the property is transferred to Island County.

We’ll also be working on ways to pay off the bridge loan generously extended to us by the Bullitt Foundation. This loan “closed the gap” between what we raised and the purchase price, allowing us to complete the Trillium purchase by the deadline. Learn more about the Bullitt Foundation, a fabulous nonprofit that helps to safeguard the natural environ-

ment in the Pacific Northwest, at www.bullitt.org.

The forest will “officially” open when we transfer the property to Island County sometime next fall. Don’t worry; the legally-binding conservation easement held by the Land Trust will permanently remove all development rights. The Land Trust’s job is to make sure the site is always protected for wildlife and appropriate recreational uses.

Right now, the forest is informally open for hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling. Please follow the signs and stay on trails that are open. Please don’t travel in areas marked for closure to protect wildlife habitat. Remember wildlife needs a home and refuge from us. Visit our website for more information (www.wclt.org/projects/Trillium). Learn where to access the forest, what uses are allowed, and how to volunteer. Stay informed about stewardship, site management and opportunities for your involvement.

Saving Trillium—Outreach, Development, and YOU!

Didn't saving the Trillium forest seem impossible in March? Raising over \$4 million in just a few months? And yet, by mid-September, that was exactly what happened. What you saw with the Trillium project was the outreach and development team at the top of their game. Outreach spreads the word. Development finds the private funds.

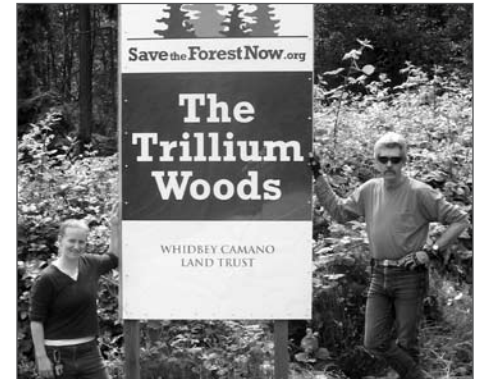
With energy, creativity, and enthusiasm, we described why this property mattered and asked you to help. You rallied—organizing fundraisers, contacting media, and asking your friends and colleagues to donate. The final tally was impressive—102 endorsers, 27 letters to the editor, 86 newspaper articles, three television stories, radio coverage, a gardening talk show, and over 625 Facebook fans. Together, we generated well over 1,500 donations from groups and individuals and built a broad and diverse community to save this forest for wildlife and the public.

Your Land Trust staff and board and a corps of volunteers was the rechargeable battery of this successful fundraising. But this battery can only be recharged with your membership donation. That's why we need your yearly, unrestricted donation to our Operating Fund.

Most people first give to support a project. Maybe your Trillium gift was the first time you've helped protect land. Will you continue your support with a gift to our Operating Fund? These funds enable the work of a talented staff who increase community awareness and raise significant private donations to protect and care for land.

The Trillium turning point was the August 3 front-page article in the Seattle Times (a "seed" planted by a staff member) that brought in scores of donations, including two major donors, that closed the gap on our ambitious, exciting goal.

Will you help us continue this work? Your Operating Fund donation makes the magic happen.



Volunteer Jerry Lloyd and Land Steward Jessica Larson install a new sign in July at the highway entrance to the Trillium forest. For three months, the sign reminded thousands of people about the need to donate to the campaign. This is just one of dozens of ways the Land Trust spreads the word about its exciting conservation projects.

Accreditation: Path to a Stronger Land Trust

Continuing our commitment to excellence and to permanent land protection, the Land Trust has been working for more than two years to achieve accreditation from a rigorous, national program. Our goal is to gain a mark of distinction in land conservation. The accreditation seal demonstrates that we have met national standards for excellence in upholding the public trust and ensuring the land we conserve is protected permanently. Currently, only 105 of more than 1,600 land trusts across the country are accredited.

We will complete the final phase of accreditation in the first half of 2011. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent board, manages the program. They conduct an extensive review of a land trust's operations and make the final decision to accredit or not.

The accreditation process includes you, as well. Early next year, we will ask you to submit comments about how you think we meet national standards.

Until then, please read our adopted policies and procedures at: www.wclt.org/about/standards. Keep watching the website for updated information

and new policies. (Article adapted from "The Path to a Stronger Land Trust" by Rob Aldrich, Land Trust Alliance, Saving Land, Fall 2010).



The diagram above shows the rigor and involvement required for accreditation. The numbered steps and arrows surrounding the Land Trust Standards and Practices serve as sign posts and directional indicators for land trusts to follow on their path to excellence. The circular form highlights the reality that knowledge is ever expanding and land trusts must continually learn and grow. Diagram by Rob Aldrich, Land Trust Alliance. For more information, go to www.lta.org.

YOU DID IT!

We're grateful to the following individuals and businesses who contributed to help us acquire the Trillium property. These donations were received between March 1, 2010 and October 15, 2010.

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Photo: Petra Martin

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Photo: Cheryl Lowe

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Photo: Corrine Bayley

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Land Protection: Saving the Nature of Whidbey

YOU trust us to use your donations wisely. WE leverage your dollars into millions to protect and care for critical lands in Island County. In both 2008 and 2009, we protected \$24 worth of land for every dollar you donated.

How do we achieve this amazing leverage? We think strategically, using a science-based land protection plan. We evaluate potential projects carefully and choose those with high-quality habitat, important to the community, and with willing landowners. We also have a very skilled land protection staff, Pat Powell and Chris Hilton.

Pat and Chris work closely with landowners to meet the needs of both parties. They build and strengthen relationships that are crucial to conserving land. Many people who deeply love their land want to donate conservation easements or even the land itself to make sure it's permanently

protected. Landowner Harry Case had a lifetime dream that his treasured 174-acre forest on south Whidbey would never be subdivided or developed but would remain a forest forever. The Land Trust helped Harry's dream come true.

Pat and Chris research, write, and present applications to secure funds from competitive grants that allow the Land Trust to purchase conservation easements and land where a donation is not an option. In the last seven years, they've secured over \$20 million in grants to protect critical lands on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

These two staff put together the deals and legal agreements for each project and complete the required due diligence. It's a formidable task that includes appraisals, environmental reviews, land and baseline surveys, and title reviews. This due diligence is essential to ensure that land is protected FOREVER.

Each acquisition project costs the Land Trust anywhere from \$12,000 to \$30,000—sometimes more.

In addition, each acquisition requires depositing at least \$20,000 into our Stewardship and Legal Defense Funds because permanent protection requires that we care for and defend each property. This financial commitment can be much higher for a complicated easement or a large property with multiple uses, like the Trillium Forest. *See the Stewardship article for more on how we manage the land we've protected.*

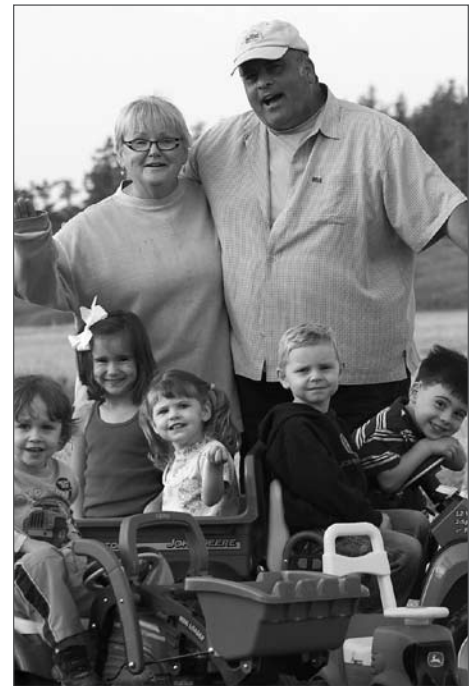
While much of Pat's time in 2010 was devoted to saving the Trillium property, Chris continued working on dozens of other land projects, two of which will be protected later this year. *The photographs and captions here tell more about our latest projects and grant successes.*



Seeing wildlife is something most all of us cherish. Habitat protection is indeed the key to wildlife survival—refuges where they can mate, nest, raise young, eat and rest. "It's essential that we recognize that what's common today could easily become rare in the future," says Ruth Milner, state wildlife biologist. A very high priority for the Land Trust is to protect island wildlife habitat from being fragmented and converted to other uses. The Land Trust has protected nearly 7,000 acres of forests, agricultural lands, shorelines, prairies, streams and wetlands so that our native wildlife can not only survive but thrive. *Photo by Craig Johnson: A Red-tail Hawk.*

"I donate because I love Whidbey Island, appreciate the importance of preserving open space and forests, and am so impressed with how WCLT is managed," says member Susie Bavo.

CROCKETT LAKE provides crucial habitat for more than 238 species of birds, including thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl that rest and feed there during spring and fall migrations. This rich ecosystem in central Whidbey includes mudflats, salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, shrubs and forest. Designated as an Audubon Important Bird Area, Crockett Lake is one of the Land Trust's highest protection priorities. We've already protected 60 acres and we're actively seeking grant funds to protect another 416 acres of this critical wildlife habitat area. *Cover photo: Notice the habitat diversity and beauty of Crockett Lake.*



Conserving fertile farmland in Island County is a high priority for the Land Trust. We've partnered with many families, some going back six generations, to protect historic farmland from being converted into housing developments. *Photo by Cac Kamak: In 2009, we secured a conservation easement on farmland owned by Claude and Judy Harvey, pictured with their grandchildren.*

and Camano Islands

In Ebey's National Reserve we now hold eight conservation easements on 313 acres protecting rich, productive soils, local food production, clean water, wildlife habitat and the scenic beauty of this historic area. We're working right now to protect another 517 acres of this priceless, fertile treasure. *Photo by Mark Sheehan: Working farmland in Ebey's Reserve with Admiralty Inlet in background.*



An extraordinary Land Trust project in the works is 60 acres that contains a magical old-growth forest, endangered prairie, 2,300 feet of marine feeder bluff above Admiralty Inlet, and an exciting array of wildlife species, particularly nesting birds. The site has a wonderful loop trail that, when saved by the Land Trust, will be open for public walking. Offering views to the Olympics and the Strait of Juan de Fuca and ancient, wind-sculpted trees and serenity, places like this are rare and simply will not be available in the future. We've raised nearly half of the funds needed to preserve this property and hope to secure the remaining monies from a state wildlife grant. *Photo by Mark Sheehan: Gnarly, old-growth tree in Admiralty Inlet Forest.*



A unique partnership is underway between the Land Trust, U.S. Navy, Island County, Au Sable Institute and Pacific Rim Institute (PRI) to protect Au Sable's 170 acres on Smith Prairie in central Whidbey. When successful, the Navy and Land Trust will hold conservation easements and PRI will own and manage the property for environmental education and restoration, as well as plant and animal habitat, open space and trails. *Photo courtesy of PRI: The Au Sable property with Saratoga Passage and Mount Baker in the background.*

Protecting our islands' forests now is essential to ensure our native species have safe homes. As our lowland forests are cut down to make way for residential and commercial development, many common bird species are rapidly declining in numbers, including the Rufous Hummingbird and Winter Wren. These birds aren't on the endangered species list; they aren't specialists confined to a narrow habitat niche. They are common species who still do well where we allow their habitats to flourish. That is why saving the 654-acre Trillium forest was so important. *Photo by Cheryl Lowe: A magical forest on the Land Trust's Strawberry Point property.*





You're Invited!

WHIDBEY CAMANO LAND TRUST'S
Annual Holiday Open House

Join us to celebrate an amazing year for land conservation in Island County. Visit with old friends and make new friends while you enjoy festive holiday treats and tasty beverages. Relive the excitement of the Trillium campaign as you view the nine-panel display. Toast the extraordinary accomplishments of our local Land Trust community.

WHEN: Wednesday, December 8, 2010
5:00 – 7:00 PM

WHERE: 765 Wonn Road, Barn C-201 Greenbank

RSVP: Email info@wclt.org

♻️ 30% PC

Holiday Open House
December 8, 2010
5:00 - 7:00 pm
RSVP today! See opposite panel for more details



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www.wclt.org



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