



Saving Farmland for the Soul



Long-time Ebey's Prairie residents, Dave and Dolores Engle, give future generations a chance to enjoy the prairie as they have by working with the Land Trust to preserve their historic 32-acre farmland. Photo: Cac Kamak

Dave Engle grew up on Ebey's Prairie. He was raised there as were generations of Engles dating back to 1852. That's when his great-great grandparents, Daniel and Susan Pearson, arrived on Whidbey Island and moved into the historic Harmon House near Coupeville. Now Dave and his wife Dolores have helped to preserve the scenic setting on Ebey's Prairie by working with the Land Trust to permanently protect their 32 acres of farmland forever. The Engle's property is located near Prairie Center and the Coupeville High School gym in Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve.

Expressing a deep-seated environmental ethic in his decision to permanently protect his farmland, Dave Engle points out, "We need to feed the soul, too. If you look over the Prairie from the Sunnyside cemetery, what a place! We are blessed. Saving it is for the community—it's really a unique and special place."

While not farmers, Dave and Dolores eagerly agreed to work with the Land

Trust. They want their four daughters and nine grandchildren to enjoy the Prairie as they have. "We love knowing the beauty of the Prairie will go on forever—these 32 acres are part of the Prairie," Dave said. "We feel like stewards of the land. It's a gift to leave it for future generations. If you carve up open spaces, you cannot bring them back again."

Like much of the surrounding lands, the Engle's acreage is now protected by a conservation easement that removed all development rights. It will never be subdivided or developed for residential, retail, or industrial uses. The fertile soil will always be available for food production. The Engles will continue to lease the land to farmers for agricultural crops and retained the right to build agricultural structures in the future, if needed.

"This prime farmland is an essential part of maintaining viable agriculture in Ebey's Reserve. Dave Engle's property connects with adjacent protected farmland, helping to maintain a strong fabric

of farm operations in Ebey's Prairie," said Mark Preiss, manager of the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve.

Safeguarding the Engle's historic farmland from future development is part of a larger effort by the Land Trust to protect productive agricultural lands in Island County. In fact, the Engle's acreage is one of nine farmland properties the Land Trust is currently working to protect. Like the Engle property, all of these lands have productive soils of statewide significance. In addition, the conservation easements connect already protected farmland, contributing to the beautiful agricultural setting on the Prairie. Protecting the land from subdivision is also beneficial for wildlife, particularly raptors that hunt the open fields.

The Engle conservation easement was underwritten by three competitive grants the Land Trust secured from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Farmland Preservation fund, Natural Resources Conservation Service's Farm and Ranchland Protection program, and Island County's Conservation Futures Fund.



The soils on the Engle property support a wide variety of crops, including corn, shown here. Photo: Mark Sheehan



**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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Three-Way Win: Protecting Smith Prairie

Seeds, soil, and safety are the themes for the Land Trust's acquisition of a conservation easement on a 66-acre conifer seed orchard on the Smith Prairie south of Coupeville, owned and managed by Sierra Pacific Industries. The U.S. Navy and a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Farmland Preservation grant funded the permanent easement that keeps the land in productive agriculture and provides a safety buffer for the Navy's Outlying Field.

The seed orchard lies along State Highway 20 on Smith Prairie at the gateway to Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve. The conservation easement removes all future development from the property, so it will remain open space forever. This acquisition protects scenic views at the Reserve's south entrance and habitat for small mammals and birds, particularly raptors. Keeping the property undeveloped also protects the aquifer below Smith Prairie, helping maintain an adequate and healthy water supply for Whidbey Island.

The conservation easement is a good thing all around. Mike Brady, Director of Real Estate Services for the Navy, says, "It's a three-way win. Sierra Pacific can plan for their long-term use of the property, the Land Trust follows its mission of protecting productive agricultural lands, and the Navy enhances the safety of areas near the

Outlying Field (OLF) used for touch and go landings by carrier-based jets."

Tom Nelson, Sierra Pacific's land manager, agrees. "Our objectives are completely compatible. We're looking for long-term, sustainable yield management. We have a big investment here and are certainly not interested in having the land change to residential development."

Seed orchards, like the one located on this property, produce a unique agricultural product—conifer seed; a type of seed you don't find in popular seed catalogs. Young trees are planted on the property and put under stress, encouraging them to produce high quality seeds. Contrary to some beliefs, the seeds are not genetically modified; the stress of the surrounding environment along with the natural reproductive process of the trees, combine for production of hardy seeds. The seeds produced on the Sierra Pacific property—principally Western hemlock and Douglas fir—are then grown into trees that will reforest lands primarily in Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom counties.

The soil and climatic conditions of Smith Prairie are ideal for this type of seed production. Long-time Ebey's Prairie farmer Al Sherman said the seed orchard is "an ideal use for Smith Prairie. The soil

see "THREE-WAY WIN" on page 2 >



Conifer seeds harvested at the Sierra Pacific seed orchard are used to reforest northwest lands. Shown above are seeds being collected from the trees. Photo provided by Sierra Pacific

Fabulous Four: Our New Board Members



New Board members (left to right) John Boone, Phyllis Kind, Christopher Mathews, and Ken Cohen.

The Land Trust is fortunate to welcome four new members to its board of directors.

Prospective board members begin as Land Trust donors, become volunteers, and then decide to interview for a place on the board. Our four newest board members bring a powerhouse of talent with expertise in medical, accounting, legal, business, and scientific fields. To a person, they love the land and care deeply about its protection and stewardship. Join us in welcoming these fabulous four to their new leadership role!

John Boone (Greenbank): Site steward at the Hammons Preserve, dedicated habitat restoration volunteer, active community member, retired U.S. Navy Surgeon, father of Jake and Ellie, and companion to Ginger, the Corgi.

Ken Cohen (Langley): Passionate about the islands' natural beauty, treasurer of the Whidbey Island Center for the Arts, retired vice-president of a multinational NYSE-listed company, husband of Susan, and guardian of dogs Gita and Blue.

Phyllis Kind (Greenbank): Busy bird-observer and Pigeon Guillemot researcher, active Beach Watcher, retired professor of microbiology, immunology and genetics, and shares a home with canine pals, Whidbey and Duncan.

Christopher Mathews (Seattle and Greenbank): Avid perennial gardener, passionate about the health benefits of the outdoors, physician and health administrator, partner to Rob, and play-mate of "Velcro" dog Lucas, the Vizsla.

For additional background, see www.wclt.org/about-us/board-and-staff.

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS

The Land Trust has been accepted as an applicant for national land trust accreditation. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awards the accreditation seal of excellence to land trusts that meet high, national standards for protecting important lands forever.

The Commission is governed by a board of experts in nonprofit management and land conservation. To-date, just 130 of the 1,600 land trusts across the country have been awarded accreditation.

Accreditation involves an extensive, detailed assessment of the Land Trust's policies and procedures. As part of the review, the Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications.

We invite you to comment. For instructions, information and links to the Commission's website, go to www.wclt.org/aboutus/standards. Thank you.

"THREE-WAY WIN" continued from page 2

is marginal for most other crops. It's easy to work. Irrigation is available. And it's in a noise zone. I appreciate the Land Trust's work on this. It's a good project."

Nelson from Sierra Pacific agrees with Sherman. "In terms of soil and climate, this is one of the best areas for growing conifer seed." Nelson adds that Smith Prairie soil is deep and well drained, plus the vigorous winds off the Strait of Juan de Fuca keep the trees selected for seed production from cross pollinating with the 'wrong' trees.

The Sierra Pacific conservation easement is the second time the Navy has partnered with the Land Trust to protect a property; the first was another conifer seed orchard near the OLF – the Longview Seed Orchard (formerly Plum Creek). Following the success of that partnership, the Land Trust and Navy entered a multi-year agreement that provides funding to protect other properties around the OLF. The agreement, Brady said, provides the flexibility to work with the Land Trust and willing sellers when the opportunity for land acquisition arises. Stay tuned for future Navy/Land Trust land protection successes!

STEWARDSHIP TOOLS NEEDED!!

Thank you for supporting the Land Trust through your monetary donations, stock transfers, multi-year pledges, legacy giving, and in-kind donations. Please consider helping us with our on-the-ground restoration work by donating the following tools in good condition:

6 or 7-foot freestanding ladder, gas-powered chainsaw, and small truck

Thanks to You

We're grateful to the following individuals and businesses who contributed to our Operating Fund and to projects between October 16, 2010, and April 15, 2011.

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The Whidbey Camano Land Trust does not share our mailing list.

Tom Haensly: Contributing Legal Expertise

by Scott Price, Member

The work of the Land Trust is designed to last forever. It's a difficult and complicated task to ensure that the legal documents, developed to permanently protect lands, can stand the test of time amid shifting politics, growth, zoning, and public opinion. To ensure this continuity, the Land Trust is fortunate to have nationally-renowned attorney Tom Haensly on its team. Tom's skill is critical in determining the best approach for each situation and ensuring that all legal documents are done right.

"We are fortunate to have such a knowledgeable, recognized expert. He applies the law in a practical manner, and his strategic and tactical abilities are outstanding," says Tom Cahill, board president.

For years, Tom has provided his services at a significantly reduced rate. Tom recommends that people support the Land Trust in two ways: "First, offer to use your talent, skill or business assets and, second, find what makes you passionate and match



Tom Haensly's legal work was invaluable in the Land Trust's acquisition of the Trillium Community Forest. Tom, pictured above, is an avid flyfisher.

that with the good work the Land Trust does." This type of professional, in-kind service is not tax-deductible but instead provides a meaningful way for people to help beyond direct cash contributions.

"The Whidbey Camano Land Trust is one of the most effective land trusts around and has really superb people. It's a pleasure working with a fun, active team, and there are lots of opportunities for interesting work with a good purpose," says Tom.

Tom's background and training provide a great match for the Land Trust. He received his law degree from Stanford and a Master's degree in wildlife ecology. Having once lived on Camano, Tom still visits the islands to fish, explore the parks and conduct business. For Tom Haensly, it's all about the islands: "Whidbey and Camano are very desirable places to live. We need to protect enough open space so that, in the future, the islands still look and feel as they do today, even as the population expands."

From his office in Edmonds, Tom advises clients on real estate and estate planning, including land conservation and charitable contributions. He is also a frequent speaker on land conservation topics.

Estate Planning – Do it Today.... ...for the Long-term care of the islands you cherish

Do you love Whidbey and Camano Islands and care about land protection and stewardship?

Then create a lasting legacy with a bequest to the Land Trust in your will or estate plan to continue our land protection and stewardship work. Think of the payoff – it's forever!

- Bequests give you the satisfaction of knowing your future gift will protect the landscapes you value.
- Bequests can be a specific amount, a percentage of your estate or the designation of the Land Trust as the beneficiary of an insurance plan or IRA.
- Bequests are simple and flexible. You can change your mind at any time.

Consider a gift to the Land Trust in your estate plans. We'll help. Come to our estate planning seminar September 7, 2011, in Freeland or contact Elizabeth Guss, director of outreach and development at elizabeth@wclt.org or 360-222-3310 for more information.

Nature Inspires Photographer

by Dan Pedersen, Member



Like many others who donate time, talents or financial gifts to the Land Trust, Craig and Joy Johnson cherish nature. "I just love birds," Craig says. "If my images inspire someone to do something good for the birds, then I've been successful." Photo by Dan Pedersen

"If you want to get within 10 feet of a bird, you need to be still," explains Craig Johnson, whose exquisitely sharp photograph of a young Chestnut-backed Chickadee graces the cover of our 2010 Annual Report (shown below).

"That fledgling was being fed so I kept my distance," he said. "The parent would call the young bird into the vegetation before feeding, and I had only a brief window to snap the photo before the bird went deeper."

Johnson photographed all of the birds showcased in the Annual Report and most of the bird photos the Land Trust uses in displays, publications, and grant presentations.

"Grant presentations are a critical step in securing funding to protect land," says Chris Hilton, land protection specialist. "When grant applications are reviewed, most of the reviewers have never seen the project. So, pictures that are accurate and beautiful are compelling and give us an advantage over the competition." And Craig's images reveal

intimately how wild birds use the farms, forests, shores, and wetlands we want to protect.

A debilitating neurological disease is robbing Craig of his ability to earn a living as a graphic designer, but he and Joy continue to generously donate their photography for Land Trust publications, presentations, newsletters, and grant applications. In fact, Craig recently donated a library of his photos for the Land Trust to use at any time.

Thank you, Craig and Joy, for your help in telling the Land Trust's story! For more information on the Johnsons, see their website at www.pugetsoundbackyardbirds.com/.



TRILLIUM FOREST UPDATE

Stewardship work continues in the Trillium Community Forest. Volunteers built and installed a kiosk at the entrance with a new trail map. With your help, we're battling blackberries and scotch broom and leading tours of the property. We'll have work parties and tours monthly. To develop a comprehensive management plan, the Land Trust conducted six focus groups with community members. We also convened a public meeting in May to gain community perspectives and insights about the desired future for the forest. We'll hold another public workshop when the draft plan is completed.



Steve Holmberg (shown on the right) designed and built a kiosk that was installed at the Trillium Forest with the help of other volunteers, including Mike Olney (on the left).

How to Get Involved

A second public workshop will be held once the draft management plan is complete; check the website for details. In the mean time you can provide comments online at the Trillium project page www.wclt.org/projects/trillium. We have monthly work parties at Trillium and will continue to have walking tours throughout the year. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Jessica at Jessica@wclt.org to sign-up on the volunteer list.

Save these dates!

Del Fairfax Tour
June 25: 10 am

Land Protection Plan Workshops:

- July 13: 5-7 pm
Coupeville Library, Coupeville
- July 27: 5-7 pm
Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland
- August 3: 5-7 pm
Skagit Valley College, Oak Harbor
- August 18: 5-7 pm
Camano Senior Center, Camano Island

Picnic and Community Celebration
August 24, Sunday: 12 - 2 pm
Coupeville Town Park

Estate Planning Seminar
September 7: 4-6 pm
Freeland

Holiday Open House
December 7: 5-7 pm
Land Trust Office, Greenbank

We invite you to reconnect with the spectacular landscapes and places on Whidbey and Camano.



Join us for one – or all – of our events this year. Check our online calendar for newly scheduled tours, work parties, and special events: www.wclt.org/news-activities/events-calendar.

♻️ 30% PC

765 Wonn Road
Barn C-201
Greenbank, WA 98253
www.wclt.org



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