



Dunlins congregate at Crockett Lake on a quiet November day.

Photo: Craig Johnson

Generosity Fuels Conservation at Crockett Lake

This is a story of astonishing generosity and patience that will result in the Land Trust protecting—forever—an additional 151 acres in one of the Islands' most important natural areas.

Recently, three nature-loving people donated their properties to us on the east side of our Crockett Lake project area. Meanwhile, a husband and wife have been patiently waiting for the Land Trust to buy their 34 acres adjacent to the donated lands. The map on page 4 shows the lands that are already protected, the one pending, and additional lands we are keenly interested in protecting in the future.

Crockett Lake is an incredible refuge for wildlife, particularly for migratory birds, and is the largest wetland system on Whidbey Island. It is separated and protected from Admiralty Inlet and the Strait of Juan de Fuca by a narrow gravel spit that is part of Fort Casey State Park.

The Land Trust's long-term goal is to protect the Crockett Lake wetland system to safeguard the breeding, nesting, feeding, and resting areas that are critical to the survival of the diverse wildlife species that depend on it.

In March of this year, the Land Trust acquired 92 acres on the east side of its

Crockett Lake project. As a result, Mary Bicknell was inspired to donate her adjacent and beloved 17 acres of freshwater wetlands to us a few months later. Mary gave a simple, yet profound reason for loving Whidbey Island. She says, *"It's not Vashon. It's not Bainbridge. It's Whidbey."* Mary and her husband Jim bought their property in 2000. Mary explained their purchase saying, *"One day while visiting Whidbey, I saw a "For Sale" sign on a field across from Crockett Lake where I had seen my first Harrier hawk many years ago. I had just inherited some money and immediately bought the property. I decided*

Continued on page 4



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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From the Director

2012 has been a year of generosity fueling significant conservation successes by your Land Trust. These achievements are thanks to you and our many partners.

In this newsletter, you'll read about just a few of these successes, including meeting Mary Bicknell, a warm and caring person with a great love of Whidbey Island (front page story). Mary bought land at Crockett Lake to ensure a permanent place for native plants and animals to thrive – especially hawks. She donated this land to us knowing we will carry out her dream. Mary, thank you for your trust.

On Page 11, you'll find out how many partners worked together, against a seemingly impossible deadline, to permanently protect an important coastal natural area. It's a shining example of how we can work together—community donors, landowners, and local, state and federal agencies—to achieve meaningful results.

The land conservation work we're accomplishing this year is too extensive to include in this newsletter—we'd have to write a short book to contain it all! Here are a few highlights for 2012:

- Our state legislators, Senator Mary Margaret Haugen and Representative Norma Smith, helped secure a \$2 million appropriation for the Admiralty Inlet Preserve to match an existing \$2 million grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We can now proceed to work with the owner to protect this amazing old-growth forest and rare prairie remnant along ½ mile of Admiralty Inlet waterfront—a project that we'll complete in 2013.
- We continue efforts to restore high priority areas to provide critical habitat for juvenile salmonids at two of our Dugualla Bay Preserves. At one, our partner, the Whidbey Island Conservation District, is completing plans to reconnect tidal flow between the bay and a historic lagoon. At the other, we've partnered with the WA Department of Transportation to return a degraded landscape back to estuarine (salt and fresh water) conditions. Restoring salmon habitat is incredibly complicated and time-consuming, but the results are priceless.

- Near Camano Island State Park, a remarkable family is donating a conservation easement to protect the forested wetlands and open fields on their property.
- As always, we continue to submit grant applications for funding to purchase outstanding lands and waters on Whidbey and Camano Islands and restore the former vitality to degraded natural areas.



Danielle Rideout displays our Accreditation Certificate with Larry Kueter and Tammara Van Ryn from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

- We were presented with our Certificate and Seal of Accreditation in October at the national land trust rally—joining just 181 out of over 1,700 land trusts in the nation. Being accredited is a mark of distinction showing we meet national standards for excellence, upholding the public trust, and making sure our conservation efforts are permanent and sustaining.
- On the flipside of these positive experiences is that we said a sad goodbye to one of our valuable conservation team members, Chris Hilton, who was the key to many of our successful land acquisition projects over the past five years. Chris continues to work in the conservation field but is now closer to her home in Seattle.

We can't believe it was just two years ago that we completed acquisition of the Trillium Community Forest. That's because the team here at the Whidbey Camano Land Trust hasn't missed a beat. We remain inspired by the conservation opportunities around us and your generous support.

We are grateful for all that YOU do for local conservation!

Cheers!

Saving Local Family Farms in Ebey's Reserve

By year end, we will acquire conservation easements on five more farmland properties in Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve that will protect important soils to grow food and historic open space views. The five properties total 92 acres and the conservation easements are valued at nearly \$2 million. See the map below for more information.

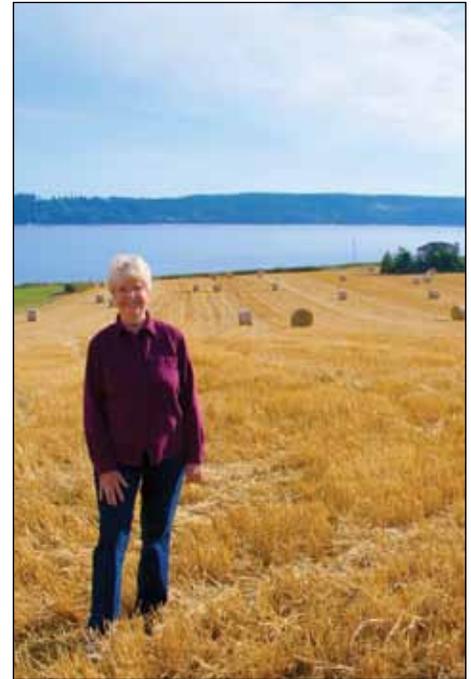
Four of the properties, owned by the Pickard and Engle families, are near each other in Ebey's Prairie and connect to hundreds of acres of already-protected farmland. You probably thought these lands were already protected—they will be soon!

In the words of Jan Pickard, one of the property owners, "We are long-time supporters of the Land Trust, and our family has lived in the Reserve since 1921. It has always been our desire to obtain conservation easements on our agricultural property and we are thrilled to be completing this process. We will celebrate closing, knowing we have forever protected our farmlands and helped ensure the vision of preservation within this unique, amazing national reserve."

The fifth property, owned by Judy Lynn, is located on north Penn Cove near San de Fuca, and will be the first farmland property protected on the north side of the Reserve. Judy's property is the view you see from the highway when entering Ebey's Reserve from the north. It's the fabulous scenic view of farmland, Penn Cove, and the Olympic and Cascade Mountains that has been disappearing as more and more homes are built in the area.

Funds to purchase the farmland conservation easements are from a combination of sources. Grant funding is from Island County's Conservation Futures Fund, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Farmland Preservation Fund, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Farm and Ranchland Program. Some of the landowners are helping stretch limited grant dollars and protect more farmland by selling the conservation easements to the Land Trust below appraised market value.

These exciting conservation projects will be completed in the next few months. Stay tuned for details!



You have supported us while we've been working to protect nearly 100 acres of farmland like Judy Lynn's. Ebey's farmers and future generations will thank you!
Photo: Cac Kamak



"My family has been farming this land since 1852 and we wanted to see this land preserved."

– Len Engle, landowner

Island Guardian Donations Doubled through End of the Year!

Your support of the Land Trust protects what you love about Whidbey and Camano Islands forever—wildlife habitat, working farms, beaches, open spaces, and forests. Together, we've protected more than 7,500 acres and we have dozens more projects underway.

Right now, through the end of the year, we have an exciting opportunity. By making a two-year pledge of at least \$1,000 per year, you will become part of a special circle of Land Trust supporters referred to as Island Guardians.

As we inaugurate the new Island Guardian program, a generous donor is matching **new** Island Guardian pledges that are received **by December 31, 2012—dollar for dollar—up to \$50,000**. That doubles your investment in preserving what we love most about our Islands. Will you help us meet this challenge? As a bonus, you'll be invited to fun events and tours, as well as receive special updates on the Land Trust's work-in-progress.

To learn more, please contact Elizabeth Guss at (360) 222-3310 or elizabeth@wclt.org. Also check our website at www.wclt.org.

Generosity Fuels Conservation... *continued from page 1*

that this field should always be for hawks." And now, thanks to Mary's foresight and generosity, it will.

In October, brothers Dixon and Kelle Burgess donated 5.1 acres adjacent to Mary's donated property. The Burgess family has owned the property since the 1950's. Dixon has fond memories of the property, having spent many childhood summers nearby at his grandparents' beach cabin.

Two years ago, a long-time Whidbey Island couple took their property off the market after we approached them to buy it. Since that time, they have exhibited remarkable patience with unforeseen obstacles that have cropped up, including ones created by the inaction of Congress. This has meant a serious delay in pursuing their future plans. The good news is that we'll be acquiring their property soon, thereby filling the remaining "hole" in the east part of our Crockett Lake wetlands project (see "Protection Pending" on map below).

The Land Trust secured the money needed to buy the couple's 34 acres, and future land purchases inside the project area, from a variety of funding sources. Included are a \$960,000 National Coastal Wetland Conservation grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a \$270,000 grant from the Island County Conservation Futures Fund, U.S. Navy funding, as well as a generous donation from an anonymous donor. In addition, the value of the lands donated by the Burgess brothers and Mary Bicknell will further leverage these funds, allowing us to protect even more land for wildlife and future generations.

These land donations and acquisitions exemplify how placing property in the Land Trust's care not only ensures that it is forever protected, with its potential for restoration secured, but also how it allows the Land Trust to multiply the benefits of these gifts through even larger protection efforts. We will be working on additional Crockett Lake acquisitions in 2013, so stay tuned for more good news.

Why Crockett Lake is so Important



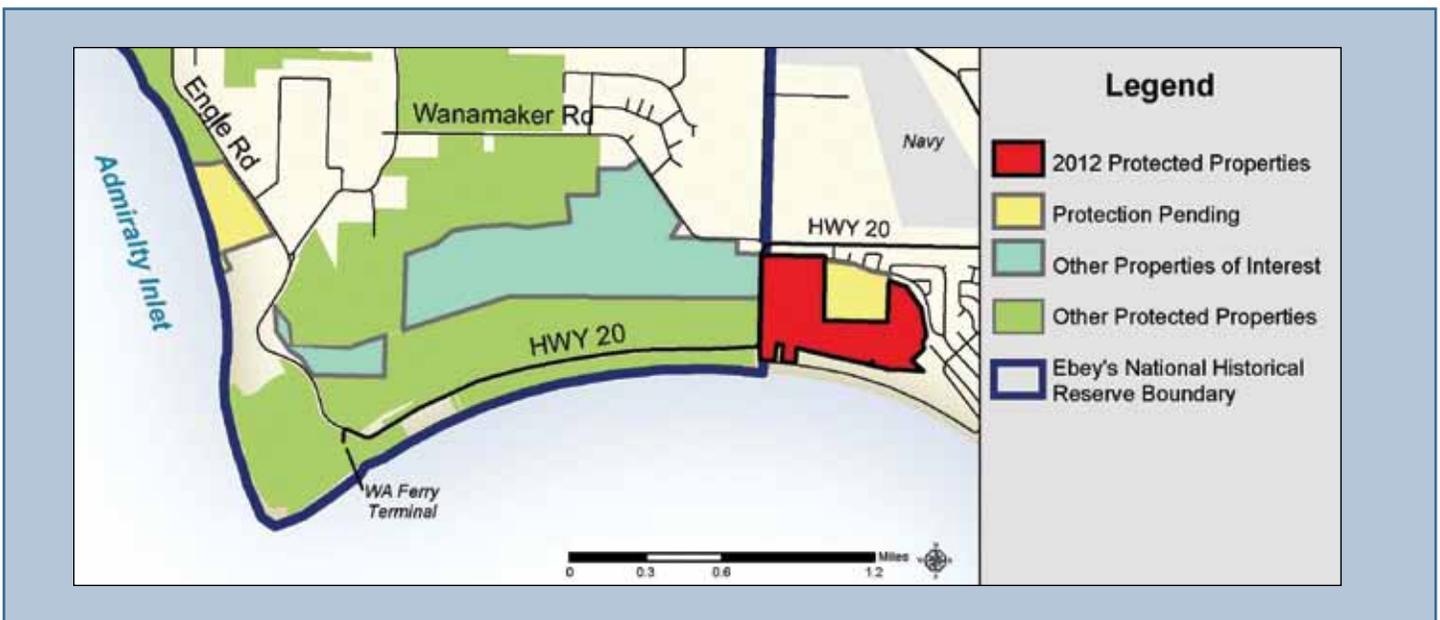
Situated in central Whidbey Island, the Land Trust's Crockett Lake project area is nationally recognized as an important coastal wetland system. It's also incredibly scenic with its backdrop of Admiralty Inlet and the Olympic Mountains.

The area includes a mosaic of high quality, fresh, salt and brackish water wetlands, mudflats, and shallow open water, along with shrubby areas, wetland forest, and mature upland forest. This is complemented by hundreds of acres of adjacent protected properties—feeder bluffs, native prairies, farmlands, and an old-growth forest.

Crockett Lake is located along the Pacific Flyway and is designated as an Audubon Important Bird Area. Its diverse habitats and abundant food sources, found in the shallow lake and mudflats, attracts an amazing variety of birds.

More than 238 species of birds have been recorded here, including many rare birds. Thousands of shorebirds rely on Crockett Lake as an important fall and spring migration staging area. It also provides critical wintering and nesting habitat for more than 13 species of ducks.

We are proud to be partnering with you, the community, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Island County, and landowners to protect this fabulous place.



Planning for Public Use at the Trillium Community Forest

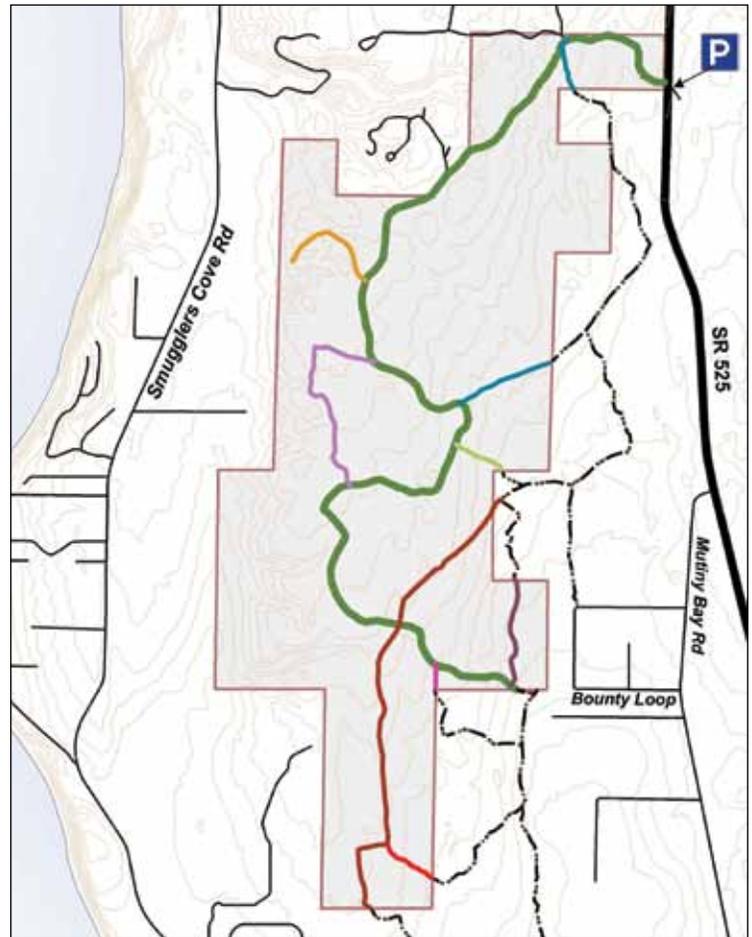
Over the last 18 months, a Steering Committee of dedicated volunteers has been working on drafting a plan to provide guidance for the use and management of the Trillium Community Forest. One of its main tasks was to balance public recreation with natural resource protection. The 654-acre forest near Freeland was saved two years ago by the Land Trust with generous community support, including donations from over 1,500 individuals.

As a result of the planning process, the Land Trust and Island County recently agreed on a revised ownership strategy for the Community Forest. The Land Trust will remain the owner and manager. The County will acquire a conservation easement on the property that includes non-motorized public trail access and the guarantee the Community Forest will never be developed.

The draft Public Use Management Plan was recently completed by the Committee. The overall vision for the Community Forest is “a healthy forest ecosystem that supports a vibrant native wildlife community where people experience the wonders of nature.”

Eight focus groups and two public workshops were sponsored by the Steering Committee. More than 50 people attended the final October 24th workshop and provided valuable input on the draft Management Plan. There were four different stations where the participants asked questions. Many of the participants provided written comment that is now being reviewed by the Steering Committee prior to the final Plan being completed.

Thank you to everyone involved in the planning process—those attending the workshops and focus groups and those providing comments.



The colored trails on the above map show the current trail system at the Community Forest. You can download a copy of the map on our Home page at www.wclt.org under Trillium Community Forest Updates.



Website Update!

Take a Tour of our Projects by Priority Area

We recently updated and reorganized the Projects section on our website. All of the properties that we've protected, and many of those we are actively working to protect, are now geographically listed under our strategic Land Protection Priority Areas. The Land Trust has 28 "Priority Areas" located throughout Whidbey and Camano Islands to direct our land protection efforts. These Priority Areas were identified using scientific and natural resource data as well as input from natural resource experts and the public.

Our Priority Areas allow us to work proactively and effectively by focusing our work in the places that will make the most difference. The areas include high quality coastal shoreline and wetlands, freshwater wetlands and streams, working farms with prime growing soils, mature forests, significant natural areas, critical habitat for fish and wildlife, places for people to get out in nature, and scenic open space.

Now you can tour our project areas from the comfort of your home. Go to www.wclt.org. Click on the "Projects" link in the upper left corner of our home page. Let us know what you think!

Volunteers Shine for Conservation

We recently talked to three of the Land Trust's best volunteers to find out a little more about them and why they got involved with the Land Trust. Here's what they told us.

LEIGH SMITH

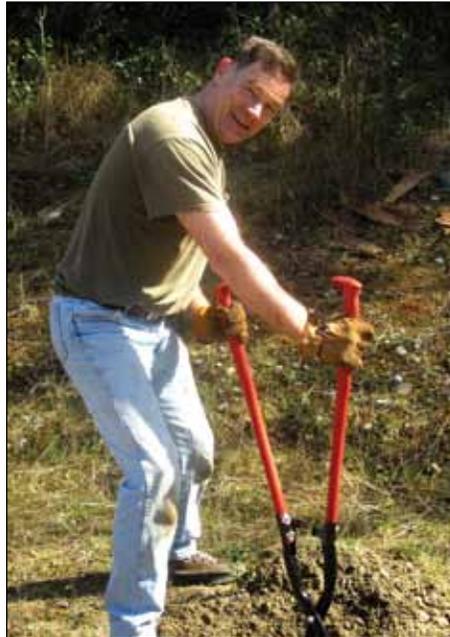
Leigh is a member of both the Land Trust board and stewardship committee and is steward for our three Dugualla Preserves. In 1971, after two years in the Army, Leigh headed west on a 650 Triumph motorcycle. He rode, hiked, canoed, and wandered in the U.S. and northern Canada for several years, ending up in Bellingham. He came to Whidbey in 1972 as a tourist.

Moving to Coupeville in 1992, he continued with his National Park Service career, retired a few years ago, and has been here ever since. He loves Whidbey. *"There is much to love about this place, with the dramatic landscapes and vistas which greet you with every turn, as well as the rural nature of the small communities."* He regards Pat Powell as a "force of nature."

Leigh's favorite project is the Naas Preserve. *"Preserving this fragile population of golden paintbrush and its prairie plant community is dear to my heart. There are only a handful of these plants left on the face of the earth, and we are working to change that in their favor. It is a big effort and a worthy effort, and I love it."*



A common theme for Leigh on Land Trust projects is the wildlife. *"I am often caused to pause by the antics of birds and mammals. It is deeply satisfying to me to share these places with such a wide variety of creatures and every time I see a heron in the field stalking voles, or eagles in aerial mock combat, or garter snakes hunting in the hedgerows, I am inspired to give more to this great Land Trust."*



JOHN BOONE

John is a Land Trust board member, an active volunteer on land projects, and is the site steward for the Hammon's Preserve. John served over thirty years in the Navy. During his tenure, he saw many places that lacked the foresight to save open spaces. This resulted in stressed communities that had lost their sense of identity. *"It's not too late for us to avoid a similar outcome here. Like so many of our volunteers, I prize the beauty of our Island. I volunteer at the Land Trust to do my part to ensure that future generations will have reason to love this Island as much as I do."*

John's favorite Land Trust site is the Hammons's Preserve, which overlooks Cultus Bay. *"It was here that my son earned his Eagle Scout for organizing the building of a footbridge and information kiosk."*

John is a dedicated and motivated volunteer ready to take on any project. He is always looking to find new ways to help and has passed his passion for land stewardship onto the next generation through his son.

JEAN KNAPP

Jean, who helps with critical administrative tasks for the Land Trust, spent every moment she had available on Whidbey Island in the 1940's and 50's, including living on Whidbey from 1950 to 1958. She moved back full time in 1979.

When asked what she loves about living on Whidbey, she replied, *"What's not to love? Peace. It's my world. You have everything and want for nothing more. The land and wildlife—peace!"*

She got involved with the Land Trust because she was retired, widowed, starting a new life, and had the time. *"The Land Trust was my first choice and it all fell into place for both of us."* Land Trust staff refers to Jean as 'the queen of bulk mail.' No small task!



Jean particularly appreciates three things about the Land Trust, *"The people who make it all happen. Donors and volunteers but especially the staff—you are the heart of this most beautiful living dream. The opportunity to own a piece of growing history and the ability to leave a piece of ourselves behind for all time that can never be touched and will always be protected."*

Find out more about volunteering with the Land Trust. Visit our website (www.wclt.org/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities) or give us a call at 360-222-3310.

Indian Point Protected by Generosity and Partnerships

In late September, in a flurry of activity resulting from tight deadlines, the Land Trust acquired two waterfront properties totaling 64 acres at Indian Point on southwest Whidbey Island. This protected a wild and ecologically rich natural area that provides critical habitat for migrating salmon and native wildlife.

The new Indian Point Preserve includes 28 acres of upland with over 2,100 feet of steep, eroding feeder bluff waterfront along Admiralty Inlet. It includes 36 acres of pristine sandy beach and a flourishing marine intertidal area with eel grass and shellfish beds.

This spectacular waterfront property will remain wild for the benefit of fish, wildlife and people. It was protected thanks to our many partners, including a National Coastal grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Washington Department of Ecology, a Conservation Futures Fund grant from Island County, a 60% donation of land value from Greg and Ann Lyle, one of the two landowners, and cash donations from 70 generous indi-



Indian Point Preserve

Photo: Cac Kamak

viduals who wanted to keep Indian Point undeveloped and forever wild.

Greg and Ann Lyle voiced their gratitude saying, *"We are extremely pleased that federal, state and county agencies and private donors joined together to preserve the Indian Point property, an almost virgin parcel, in a forever-wild state. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust's efforts in raising funds and putting this purchase together were extraordinary."*

Spanning nearly half a mile along Puget Sound, the shoreline's steep, eroding 200-foot-high feeder bluffs deposit sediment and nutrients into the tidelands and eelgrass beds below. This sediment drives ecological processes for over five miles of shoreline and tidal flats on the western shore of Whidbey Island, including the Useless Bay shoreline. It also shapes landforms and builds the Island's beaches while maintaining the shallow water habitat required for eelgrass, forage fish beds, juvenile Chinook salmon and shellfish. Above the bluff, a rare maple forest, recognized as a protection priority

by the state's Natural Heritage Program, is punctuated by a scattering of old-growth Douglas fir and other native trees and a healthy understory of plants. All of this provides nesting and perching sites for a variety of birds, including migratory songbirds and raptors like Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcons.

"Indian Point presented a rare opportunity to preserve a fragile and beautiful forested shoreline and bluff. The allocation of Island County Conservation Futures Funds allowed the Land Trust to leverage these limited local dollars with significant national support and private donations to protect this precious watershed and habitat," said Helen Price Johnson, chair of the Board of Island County Commissioners.

The Land Trust will be offering a few guided tours of the Indian Point Preserve each year. Watch our website and our email announcements to be the first to know about these and other opportunities to visit the lands you helped to save by being a regular contributor to the Land Trust.



Conservation Partners Sustain the Land Trust

Beginning in January 2013, you'll see a new giving level defining the Conservation Partner program. We'll be asking you, our supporters, to sustain the Land Trust's work with gifts that are at least \$1 a day (\$365/year). Conservation Partners are thanked at a fun dinner with tours of our lands and special updates on our work.



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You're Invited!

Whidbey Camano Land Trust's

Annual Holiday Open House

Wednesday, December 5, 2012, 5 - 7 pm

765 Wonn Road, Barn C, Greenbank

Come celebrate with old and new friends as we toast the extraordinary accomplishments you have helped us achieve.

RSVP to info@wclt.org or 360-222-3310