

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Striving to recover salmon by engaging our community
in restoration, education and stewardship.



BRETT BAUNTON

NOOKSACK SALMON ENHANCEMENT ASSOCIATION



DEAR FRIENDS

Here in the Pacific Northwest, wild salmon are a representation of our way of life. These iconic fish are both symbolic of what we love, and a barometer of the health of Whatcom County. NSEA strives to recover salmon by engaging our community in restoration, education, and stewardship.

This year, thanks to your support, we celebrated a number of exciting accomplishments. We cheered as salmon came back to a section of Goodwin Creek that had been blocked for more than 30 years. We applauded more teachers and students than ever who participated in our Students for Salmon education program. And we high-fived the community members who volunteered their time to plant trees along the banks of salmon bearing streams.

We celebrated when we successfully completed our capital campaign in July. And now, as I type, we are working on finishing the final building project on the land that has become NSEA's permanent base of operations. This community building will include a class / meeting room, a library / resource space, a laundry room to wash all of the gloves that volunteers use at work parties, a sink to calibrate water quality monitoring equipment and a storage area for all of our program supplies. This facility

is an incredible tool that will help us accomplish more for salmon recovery, healthy streams and our community. If you haven't seen our new facility yet, please come for a visit!

As we move into 2017, the goals for NSEA are clearly defined thanks to a comprehensive strategic planning process that our board of directors led in 2016. Under this new plan, goals are set to grow restoration projects, develop a pre and post monitoring program to determine the effectiveness of our restoration efforts, increase our Students for Salmon Program, and cultivate community engagement through work parties.

We invite you to join us in our mission! Become a member, support NSEA's work with a donation,

volunteer your time, complete a restoration project at your home, plant a tree at a community work party, or simply tell us what you think. It is important that your voice be heard. We look forward to learning what matters to you and how we can work together to ensure the success of salmon recovery.

With tremendous gratitude,



Rachel Vasak
Executive Director



NOOKSACK SALMON ENHANCEMENT ASSOCIATION

3057 E. Bakerview Road
Bellingham, WA 98226

Phone: (360) 715-0283
www.n-sea.org

PHOTO CREDITS:

BRETT BAUNTON
DANIEL BROKER-BULLING
JESSICA NEWLEY
LAURA GOING
NSEA STAFF AND FRIENDS

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

RESTORATION PROJECTS

- 10** new restoration projects
- 5,200** feet of streambank planted with **3,974** native trees and shrubs
- 14** large wood structures installed
- 3** fish passage barriers removed
- 1.6** miles of habitat opened
- 21,000** feet of riparian restoration projects maintained
- 28** previous restoration projects maintained

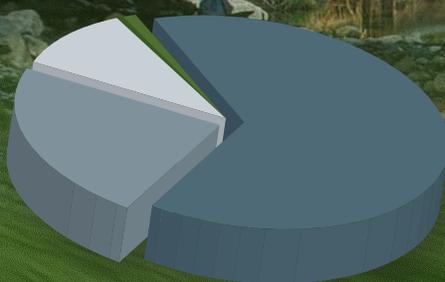
EDUCATION

- 47** interns donated **4,783** hours
- STUDENTS FOR SALMON PROGRAM:**
- 1,619** students educated
- 97** field trips led
- 29** schools participated
- 73** classes participated
- 280** trees planted by students
- 731** parent chaperone hours donated by **249** chaperones
- 83%** of students increased knowledge about salmon, salmon habitat and stewardship

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

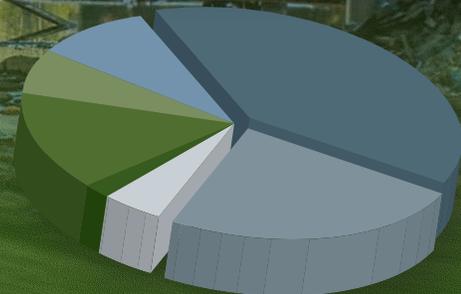
- 10** new landowners
- RIVER STEWARDS PROGRAM:**
- 2,445** people participated
- 6** community presentations
- 16** stream walks led
- 8** community events
- COMMUNITY WORK PARTIES:**
- 1,730** volunteers
- 6,787** volunteer hours
- 47** work parties
- 288** bagels, **1,440** cups of coffee
- 1,941** trees planted

OPERATIONAL INCOME



Grants	\$ 695,117	65%
Donations Temp Rest	\$ 250,427	23%
Donations Operational	\$ 111,829	10%
Fundraising	\$ 4,704	0.4%
Equip/Nursery/Office	\$ 11,863	1%
TOTAL	\$ 1,073,940	

OPERATIONAL EXPENSE



Habitat Restoration	\$ 420,460	39%
Education & Stewardship	\$ 260,159	24%
Monitoring & Assessment	\$ 49,900	5%
Volunteer & Membership	\$ 19,141	2%
Capital Expenditures	\$ 148,590	14%
Fundraising	\$ 76,953	7%
Management	\$ 102,692	9%
TOTAL	\$ 1,077,895	

RESTORATION

GOODWIN CREEK TRIBUTARY FISH PASSAGE PROJECT AND A TALE OF THREE LANDOWNERS

In 2016, NSEA completed a summer fish passage project on a tributary of Goodwin Creek in the Sumas River Watershed. This involved the removal of three fish passage barriers allowing salmon access to over a mile of upstream habitat for the first time in over 30 years.

Over the years we have had the great pleasure of getting to know some amazing landowners. For this project NSEA worked with three who own land in the Sumas River Watershed. Grant and Shelly Beld own a 30 acre farm where they operate a small business and raise horses and

cows; Rose Anne Featherston has a five acre farm with a horse, goat and chickens; and Satnam Parmar owns an 80 acre farm where he raises blueberries. An unnamed tributary of Goodwin Creek runs through their contiguous properties roughly south to north. After surveying the stream to develop project designs, it became apparent that all of the barriers should be removed at the same time. This would allow stored sediments behind each culvert to move downstream, establishing a new stream gradient. Appropriate crossing structures were selected for each site and NSEA was able to secure funding from the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Natural Resource Conservation Service for 2016 summer construction. NSEA was able to move equipment from one site to the next with the removal of a few fences. This also allowed us to regrade the channel between sites to the anticipated new stream gradient.

The construction caused quite a disruption to daily farm activities, not to mention the mess large equipment can make in a short period of time. However, throughout the entire project, none of the landowners complained and they always showed a keen interest in the activities. NSEA is required by permit to revegetate disturbed areas during an instream project, and all three landowners allowed additional planting to buffer the creek from adjacent agricultural activities. The landowners have also agreed to allow NSEA to conduct spawner and vegetation surveys over the next few years to assure the project's success. NSEA has already documented over 100 adult salmon migrating upstream, many of which spawned in the project reach. We have great appreciation for landowners like Grant and Shelly, Rose Anne, and Satnam that are curious, patient, and accommodating participants and we hope they enjoy the returning salmon for years to come.



Goodwin Creek Tributary Fish Passage Project-Beld Farm fish passage barrier removal before (top) and after (bottom).

EDUCATION

COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

Each year NSEA offers internships in stream restoration, scientific monitoring, environmental education, and community outreach. The reciprocal nature of the Environmental Conservation Internship Program allows college students and recent graduates to gain valuable real world experience and build professional skills; allowing NSEA to increase our capacity to improve and grow programs and resources, and accomplish more on the ground work. In 2016, 47 interns volunteered over 4,700 hours. By these

numbers alone, it is clear that NSEA interns are up to something good.

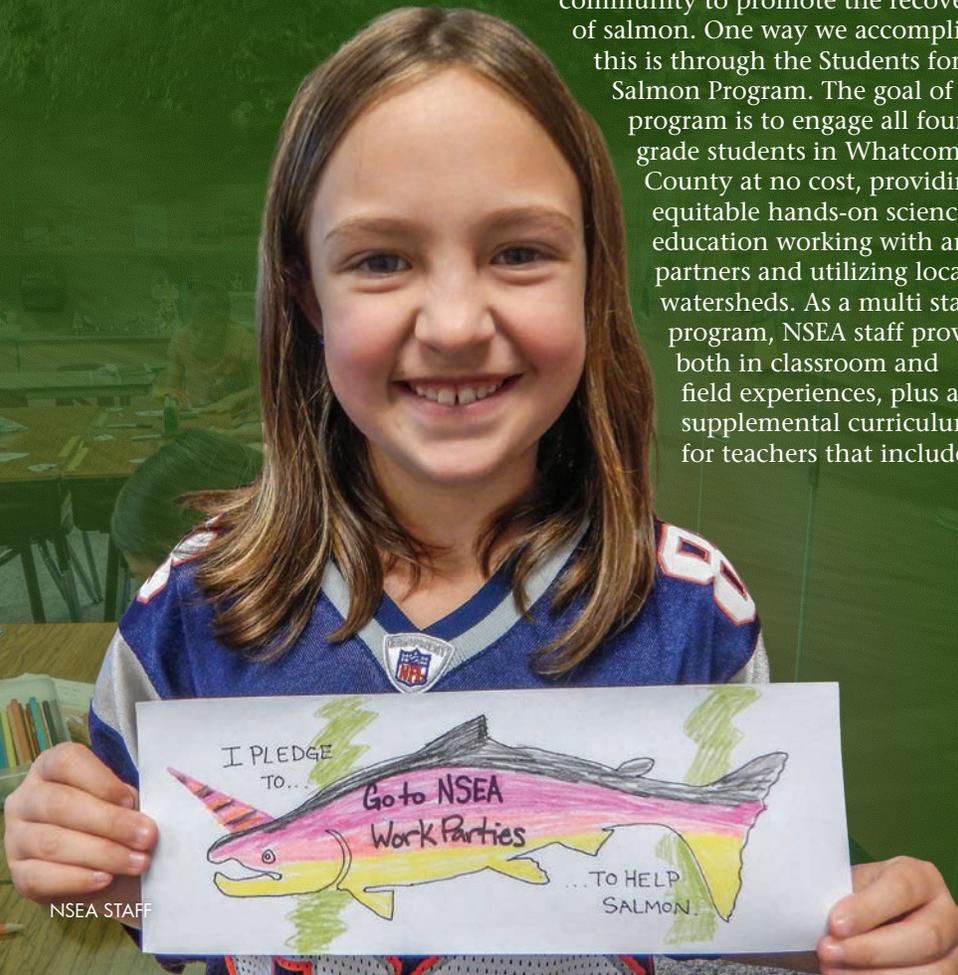
The benefits of interning with NSEA can be best explained by Restoration Intern, Alexa Jones, *"Strengthening my leadership skills has been a major component of this experience, and I feel much more confident. I am now comfortable initiating suggestions in professional groups and feel comfortable speaking knowledgably with the public about restoration, local watershed issues and salmon recovery goals."*



STUDENTS FOR SALMON PROGRAM

NSEA is dedicated to educating our community to promote the recovery of salmon. One way we accomplish this is through the Students for Salmon Program. The goal of this program is to engage all fourth grade students in Whatcom County at no cost, providing equitable hands-on science education working with area partners and utilizing local watersheds. As a multi stage program, NSEA staff provide both in classroom and field experiences, plus a supplemental curriculum for teachers that includes

five units, all supporting the newly adopted Next Generation Science Standards. NSEA's experiential program creates "stream scientists" by having them test water quality, assess the aquatic invertebrate population, and take an in-depth look at native plant communities, all to determine if the creek is healthy enough for salmon. Students follow their research by actively restoring the study site, empowering each student to take ownership of these creeks and make a difference. In the words of Madeline, a student at Assumption Catholic School, *"I am inspired to go out and help the salmon because of the NSEA."*





STEWARDSHIP

NOOKSACK RIVER STEWARDS PROGRAM

For over 10 years NSEA has been collaborating with the United States Forest Service to bring the Nooksack River Stewards Program to the upper North Fork community of the Nooksack River. In 2016, NSEA trained six River Steward interns from Western Washington University to spend every weekend from June through September at the Glacier Public Service Center educating residents and visitors of all ages about the native fish of the Nooksack River. Throughout the summer, River Stewards hosted 30 presentations ranging from guided salmon viewing walks, to campfire stories, to recreational river etiquette talks, reaching nearly 2,500 residents and visitors of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. This collaborative program encourages citizen driven stewardship of the Nooksack River and presents guidelines for responsible recreation. This program also goes beyond outreach and education. In 2016, our team removed over 100 pounds of trash and cleared nearly 70 square feet of invasive vegetation from trails that surround the Nooksack River, thus setting positive examples of stewardship and respect for our river and surrounding forest.

SALMON VIEWING TOURS

NSEA's interpretive program, Salmon Viewing Tours, is put on by staff and volunteers that create a pathway to environmental stewardship by connecting people directly to salmon in our local creeks. This year, hundreds of people came to talk with NSEA naturalists and watch returning salmon spawn in Oyster Creek and Chuckanut Creek. Common sights on Salmon Tours are females digging redds, males sparring, salmon splashing as they make their way further upstream and even carcasses at various stages of decomposition on the stream banks (the nutrient gift that keeps on giving). Tours are a way for the community to see (and smell!) salmon up close, and for many it is their first face-to-fin interaction with salmon in this unique and important stage of their life cycle.

STREAM STEWARDS PROGRAM

Restoration work parties emphasize the core of NSEA's mission; integrating community restoration, education, and stewardship in a single event. In 2016, 47 work parties gathered community members from all over Whatcom County to restore degraded habitat on numerous salmon bearing streams. Over 1,700 volunteers of all ages, backgrounds and abilities worked together to plant native trees and shrubs, remove harmful invasive vegetation and conduct light maintenance. By bringing neighbors together with a common goal of improving watershed conditions, NSEA extends an avenue in which to discuss, act on, and ultimately work together to find solutions. The volunteers that participate in work parties clearly care for and want to improve the land we all value. Attend any one of the work parties and you will see that our success in 2016 was not solely work done by staff and board members, but from the hard working, passionate volunteers that care about Whatcom County, each other, and salmon.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

When we were faced with the daunting reality of losing our base of operations in 2013, the NSEA Board decided it was time to purchase a permanent home. We estimated the project cost at more than one million dollars. As Chairman of NSEA's first capital campaign, it was my job to assure the Board that our community would support us.

In 2016, the capital campaign surpassed its \$1,200,000 goal. Today, the property is paid for. Remodeling and new construction are virtually complete and the land is beautiful. Wendy Scherrer's native plant garden wraps around 'Commitment Creek', Elaine McRory's spectacular

front gate and Mike McRory's five salmon sculpture create an aesthetic impression of hospitality, substance and professionalism. The site is infused with the passion that is at the heart of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association.

NSEA's new home is one important step towards becoming an organization with greater capacity, productivity and endurance. More importantly, NSEA may now imagine a more self-defined future, with broader support and more refined mission priorities. NSEA's new home

is physical proof of this community's commitment to NSEA and our mission. Today, NSEA's future is brighter and more secure than ever before.

Looking ahead, I believe our success will convince others beyond Whatcom County and even Washington State to back our vision for abundant wild salmon runs. It is now time to tell our story of commitment and success to

a bigger audience

Phelps S. McIlvaine
2017 President, NSEA Board of Directors



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**NOOKSACK SALMON
ENHANCEMENT ASSOCIATION**

3057 E. Bakerview Road
Bellingham, WA 98226

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