



## Helicopter Delivery Protects Fragile Roadless Landscape

To protect a fragile landscape, we air-lifted 1,000 1-gallon plants to the Black River Conservation Easement and Preserve in Thurston County. The property is bordered by the Black River and Mima Creek; both are critical wildlife habitat that Capitol Land Trust has been working to protect along with our local partners.

In 2012 we worked with the owners of the Black River Farm and our local partners to protect the property which is one of the largest and strategically most important regional dairy farms.

We were able to conserve 721 acres in a way that allows the farm to continue operating while protecting critical wildlife habitat.

The property along the Black River features well established wildlife habitat, but the portion along Mima Creek is in need of restoration. Recent changes to the management of the dairy farm has resulted in several access roads being planted with crops. The use of a helicopter saves time, prevents damage to farm crops, and allows us to meet our restoration goals. The helicopter is just one part of our fall restoration work – which involves planting 3,200 native plants over 4.11 acres along Mima Creek shoreline.

A mix of stream and inland plants are being used—black cottonwood, Sitka willow, red osier dogwood, Douglas-fir, and other natives. Most of the plants are purchased from Sound Native Plants of Olympia.

This restoration will help salmon runs coming from the Pacific Ocean, up the Chehalis River, to the Black River and finally to Mima Creek.

Funds are from a Washington Department of Ecology Section 319 grant and Washington Recreation and Conservation Office through the Washington Coast Restoration Initiative.



Photos by Kathy Strauss







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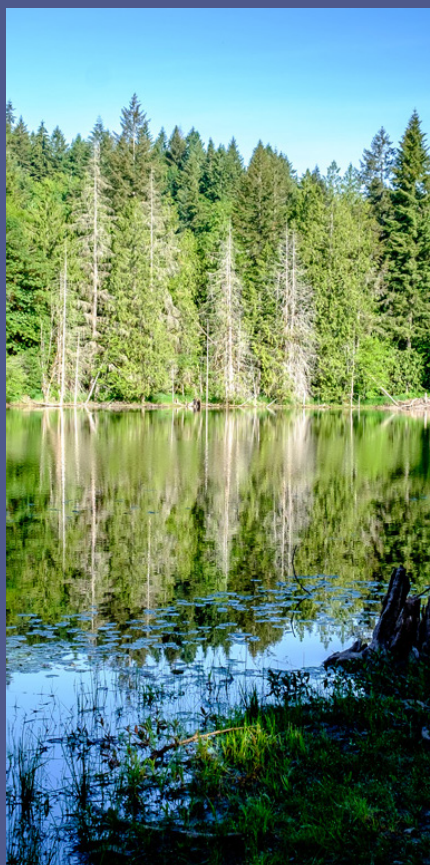
## SNAPSHOT: A FEW 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

As 2016 flows quickly past us like a river into the new year, it seems fitting to look back upstream at the wonderful successes Capitol Land Trust has enjoyed this year and marvel at the views.

Our new Strategic Plan challenged us to conserve shorelines, wetlands, riparian areas, and associated upland forests. We've added to each of these habitat types during the past year. Here's a quick review:

**Darlin Creek Preserve** is 312-acres of healthy forest, as well as wetlands and streams feeding into the Black River. It took nearly a decade to purchase this gem, saving it from residential development for future generations of people and wildlife.

**Shermer-Deschutes Preserve**, adjacent to the Chehalis Western Trail, conserves 22 acres along the Deschutes River as well as 1,900 feet of the river's shoreline. With our partners, we work to improve



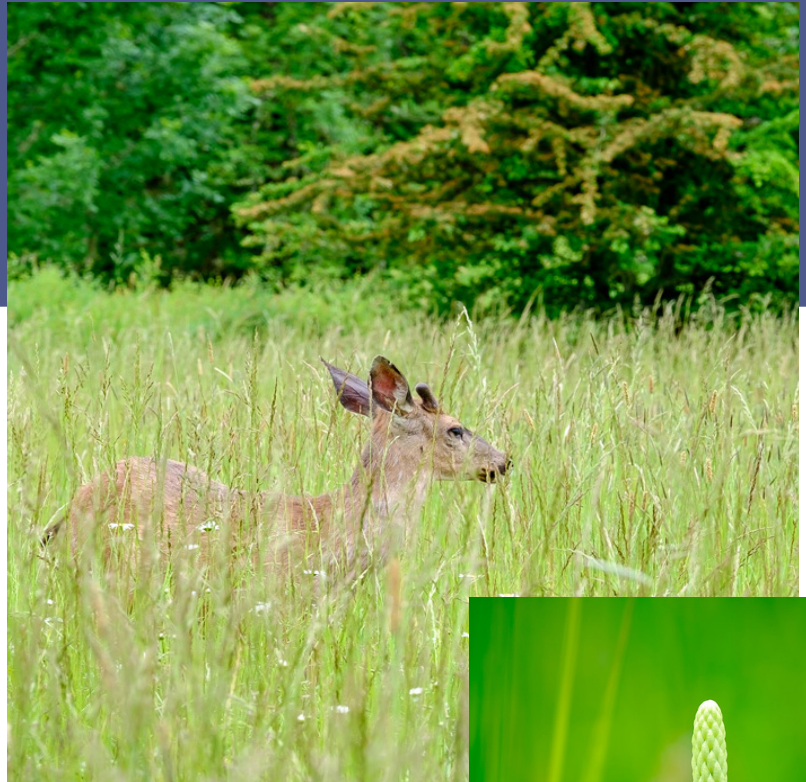


water quality for people and wildlife at the eight CLT-conserved sites now preserved along the Deschutes River.

**The Stillman Tree Farm** was purchased using a new tool, a bridge loan from The Conservation Fund, to secure the first of two adjacent parcels of marine shoreline in northeast Thurston County. These unique properties will be developed into the "Inspiring Kids Preserve" so that a new generation of conservationists will be able to learn and play on the site.

**Summer Gala & Auction** A grand evening was enjoyed by all who came to celebrate what conserving Forests, Farms and Fish does for our community, and what education and fun in nature can do for children and adults! We raised \$100,000 for conservation and outreach programs, with \$39,500 of that for this year's Fund-a-Need program: the Inspiring Kids Preserve, (shown in the photo below).

The river of time keeps flowing, and we have much more to accomplish in the coming years. We have set our sights high, so get your paddles ready, dip in to the rapids, and travel with us to new conservation adventures!



Photos, opposite page, upper: Darlin Creek Preserve with Lake Lucinda. Bottom photo: Darlin Creek trickles through the preserve. Bruce Livingston.

Photo above: Young buck wanders through Shermer-Deschutes Preserve. Right: Native Lupine at Shermer-Deschutes Preserve. Bruce Livingston.

Photo below: Estuary, emerging marsh and spit at the Stillman Tree Farm, being acquired as part of the Inspiring Kids Preserve. Jane Chavey.





# Protecting Puget Sound Prairies

## *Pene Speaks*

Protecting the grasslands and oak woodlands of the south Puget Sound is a high priority for Capitol Land Trust. Their ecological importance was identified when the Trust first established its strategic goals for land protection.

South sound prairies once created a vast blanket of lush grasslands that rolled for miles on end. Today only three percent of these native prairies remain.

Imagine, as one of the first Euro-Americans to survey what is now western Washington, riding your horse through an undulating grassland spreading for miles around you. Stands of oak trees dot the landscape, and rivers like the Nisqually, Deschutes and Chehalis carve their way through the gravelly soil. What a contrast to the towering dense forests that dominated the mountains, foothills and much of the landscape!

So, what created these lowland ecosystems that now only exist in small patches?

Like many of the natural features we see around us, the south sound prairies are the remaining evidence of the enormous sheets of ice that once covered the land. When the earth warmed and the ice began to melt, around 15,000 years ago, the water coming from the glaciers created a complex of rivers, lakes and, at times, wide sheets of

floodwaters that shaped the land. As the ice retreated, it left behind swaths of soils made up of gravel and sand and fields of cobbles washed and rounded by the action of the rushing waters. The plants that established themselves in the glacier's wake created a particular environment that gave rise to today's prairie ecosystems.

Our prairie soils are very permeable; the abundant rain that quickly drains through them creates a challenge for many plants to grow there. As a result, our prairies' vegetation communities can survive long periods of dry weather and have developed strategies to complete their life cycles before the summer droughts that are so characteristic of Pacific Northwest weather patterns.



*... the south sound prairies have an assemblage of plants found nowhere else in the world. Bunch grasses, sedges adapted for dry soils and flowering plants more typical of the drier east side of the state ...*





## Unique Plant Communities

The south sound prairies have an assemblage of plants found nowhere else in the world. Bunch grasses, sedges adapted for dry soils and flowering plants more typical of the drier east side of the state—like Puget balsamroot and prairie lupine—support a number of insects, birds and animals that have adapted to these conditions. Washington's only native oak tree, Garry oak, also calls it home.

Local Native American tribes actively interacted with the prairies. The wide open grassland was a good place to hunt deer and other game that are drawn to the rich forage. Several prairie plants, like the abundant blue camas, were important food sources. Tribal members often set the dry grasses

ablaze to help stimulate traditional food plant growth and keep the prairies open—free from conifers. European colonization of the area brought an end to this practice. The lack of fire has been a major cause of lost prairie habitat, and Douglas-fir stands now cover acres of what was once open grassland.

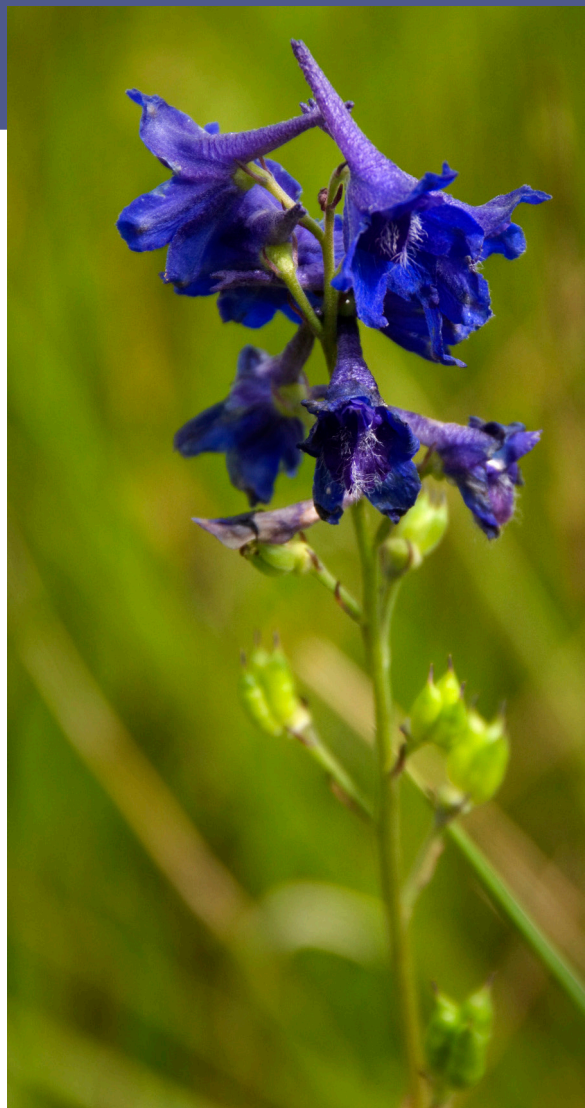
## Intriguing Question

A discussion of south sound prairies is not complete without at least a mention of the peculiar and endlessly fascinating Mima Mounds. Whether caused by giant gophers, multiple earthquakes, or intense flood action, the setting sun's slanting light shows the mounds as an intriguing and eerie landscape. Many scientists, researchers and casual observers have theories of how the mounds were created, but no definitive answer has been agreed upon.

Prairie habitat requires intensive management to keep it in good condition. Many species that rely on the prairie, like the Mazama pocket gopher, are struggling and under threat of disappearing. Stewardship is the key to maintaining healthy prairie ecosystems. That's why CLT works with our partners to identify ways to protect this amazing ecosystem.

Photos are of prairie vegetation at Leitner Prairie Conservation Easements. Upper right: Delphinium; far left, yellow Eriophyllum; left grasses in seed. Terry Liberty.

Right: heavy grass seed heads. Bonnie Liberty.





# LAND STEWARDSHIP, The Second Phase of Conservation

Nothing is quite as sweet in the conservation world as completing that land deal to protect a special habitat for generations to come. Whether it's finalizing a conservation easement or the outright purchase of a piece of critical shoreline, wetland or intact forest, the news is met with much celebration and sense of satisfaction—that more land is protected into the future.

But acquiring the land is just the first step in conservation. The next step is making good on the commitment to keep the land in as good condition—or better—than it was when protected.

Good habitat stewardship is key so the plants and animals that depend on that piece of natural world will continue to thrive. Good stewardship may include restoration, such as removing shoreline armoring and non-native invasive plants, or replanting an

*Buying land to preserve it is only the first step in long-term protection.*

old field with native trees and shrubs to recreate a once-existing forest or wet meadow. Often, good stewardship includes visiting a site to ensure that agreed-upon easement conditions are being adhered to, checking for encroachments, or picking up trash.

## Dedicated Volunteers Make it All Happen

Capitol Land Trust relies on dedicated members to ensure that our protected lands remain in good condition. As more of the protected sites we manage become open with trails and facilities for the public, it will take more work to ensure that

sensitive habitats are maintained and the “human footprint” isn't having a negative effect on them.

That is why we are always looking for volunteers willing to spend some time and energy to visit and monitor our sites as stewards or occasional workers; to ensure that we are keeping our commitment to landowners and our community to be good stewards of the lands we manage.





## Can I become a Volunteer Land Steward?

**Yes! We'd love your help.**

At the center of Capitol Land Trust's mission is the perpetual stewardship of the properties we have conserved—into the future. We visit even our more remote properties at least once a year to document their condition, check for dumping and trespassing, and visit with neighbors. For private properties on which CLT holds a conservation easement, we also meet with the landowner to be sure they are fulfilling the terms of the conservation easement.

Volunteer Land Stewards are key to our long-term success. They monitor sites, usually with a CLT staff member. During annual monitoring visits, Land Stewards observe, take notes and photographs, and may act as guides. After visits, they fill out monitoring report forms that help us create final monitoring reports.

Land Stewards who live near or travel to a CLT-conserved property provide a critical service throughout the year by alerting CLT to any problems. Depending on the needs of the property and the volunteer, a Land Steward also may add visits and do other activities (such as removing invasive plants or organizing a volunteer work party). We match volunteer



stewards with a property that fits their interests and physical abilities and (if possible) is near where they live or travel.

A Land Steward's time commitment depends on the CLT property and the volunteer. An hour is needed prior to the monitoring visit to review the previous year's report; part of a day is needed for the visit and an hour or so after to fill out the monitoring report form. Typically, new Land Stewards are trained during their first visit to their assigned property—or they may join a monitoring visit to another Land Steward's property to observe the protocol.

**The reward for being a Land Steward** is that you get to visit unique and beautiful natural areas, farms, ranches, and timberlands—most not open to the public. You also know you are giving back to your community.

**Call our office** if you are interested in being a Land Steward and we will match you with a suitable property. Thank you to all of our current, and past, volunteer Land Stewards for your ongoing support towards our efforts to preserve natural and working lands in southwest Washington!



Photo opposite page, upper: Land Stewards Mark Hendricks, Deanna Frost and Jack Sisco at Oakland Bay County Park.

Opposite page, left: Land Steward Jacqueline Winter monitors North Fork Goldsborough Creek Preserve.

Left: Planting live stake cuttings at Bayshore Preserve. Bruce Livingston.

Above: Michael Silverstein, guest, with Land Stewards Kathy Fox and Mark Hendricks at Bayshore Preserve.



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# SAVE THE DATE!

## Capitol Land Trust's 13th Annual CONSERVATION BREAKFAST

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

7:00 - 8:30 AM

Marcus Pavilion at  
Saint Martin's University

Join Capitol Land Trust for a complimentary breakfast and fabulous program featuring the recognition of conservation leaders, landowners, and supporters—who have made saving the special places in your community a high priority.

A donation will be requested during the program—donations support Capitol Land Trust's mission to further collaborative and strategic conservation of southwest Washington's essential natural areas and working lands.

**Would you like to be a Table Captain and help bring 7 friends to the event?  
Please contact Alison Beglin, Events Coordinator:**

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