

SKAGIT CONSERVATION DISTRICT STORMWATER EDUCATION PROGRAM 2020 REPORT



Figure 1 The pet waste social marketing plan was initiated in 2020 with 290 signs posted in priority parks and neighborhoods as prompts to remind dog walkers to pick up and dispose of pet waste properly. Scoop it. Bag it. Trash it.

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for:

City of Anacortes

City of Burlington

City of Mount Vernon

City of Sedro-Woolley

Skagit County

Storm Water Education Program Summary

This progress report summarizes the storm water public education and outreach and the public involvement and participation activities that were conducted by the Skagit Conservation District (SCD) over the period January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The primary purpose of the Skagit Conservation District's Storm Water Education Program is to provide education and outreach programs in partnership with our local MS4 Permittees to educate the community about the impacts of stormwater discharges on water bodies and the steps that the community can take to reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff. The SCD's Stormwater Education partnership provides a multifaceted and site specific education plan designed to:

- Build general awareness about methods to address and reduce impacts from stormwater runoff;
- Effect behavior change to reduce or eliminate behaviors and practices that cause or contribute to adverse stormwater impacts; and to
- Create stewardship opportunities that encourages community engagement in addressing the impacts from stormwater runoff.

Skagit MS4 Partners: The SCD's Stormwater Education Program is a local partnership including the City of Mount Vernon, City of Burlington, City of Sedro-Woolley, City of Anacortes, and Skagit County. With the exception of the Skagit Conservation District, all partners are MS4 communities required to prepare Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) in accordance with Phase II of the Clean Water Act. The purpose of the partnership is to work together cooperatively, share a common message, avoid duplication of efforts (which in turn will save money and resources), utilize existing programs when possible and to share resources and expertise.

Program Overview: An informed, knowledgeable, and engaged community is crucial to the success of a stormwater management program. Between 2011-2020, the Skagit Conservation District, in partnership with the Cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley, and Skagit County, has provided a comprehensive and multifaceted series of programs and opportunities aimed at educating, engaging, and inspiring local stewardship so that the goal of reducing stormwater pollution impacts to our local waterways can be achieved.

2020 presented some unanticipated challenges due to the pandemic and social distancing requirements.

2020 Activities

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Task 1.1 Host Private Stormwater Facility Maintenance Workshop



A "Managing Stormwater Facilities Maintenance Workshop" was coordinated and held virtually on July 29th with **35 attendees**. The agenda included a municipal overview provided by Diane Hennebert, City of Anacortes; Detention Pond Maintenance: Nuts and Bolts provided by Reid Armstrong, Kulshan Services, LLC; and Involving your Neighborhood Community provided by Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District. Handbooks were compiled by SCD staff and mailed to all attendees. Promotion of the event was conducted via direct mailing to HOA contact lists in each jurisdiction, press releases provided to all local media, two promotional ads in the local newspapers, promotional fliers distributed throughout the community and posted on websites and other social media.

Task 1.2 Watershed Masters Volunteer Training Program



Figure 2 Maybe there really is a "Poop Fairy?" WSM volunteer, Charlie Wilson, cleaned up the trail while walking his dog at Sharpe Park (no, all those bags weren't from his own dog).

Due to covid restrictions we did not host a Watershed Masters training in 2020. However, staff maintained regular correspondence with our Watershed Master volunteers via email and phone correspondence, including providing educational resources, volunteer opportunities and responding to requests for technical assistance. It is anticipated that we will hold a virtual training in the Fall of 2021.

However, despite restrictions, our community volunteers were seeking "covid friendly" volunteer opportunities throughout the year, particularly outdoor activities, that would allow for social distancing. **Over 2,600 volunteer hours were reported in 2020.** Watershed Masters continue to play a key role in protecting water quality in our community and sharing what they have learned with friends, neighbors, and family. While some activities were limited this year, some examples of the activities conducted by Watershed Masters in 2020 include the following:

- Conducting "poop surveys" at priority parks and trails as part of the new "Poop Fairy" campaign;
- Posted "Poop Fairy" signs in HOA neighborhoods;
- Assisted with stream restoration projects;

- Eradicating noxious weeds;
- Participating in the Stream Team program;
- Participating in the Storm Team program;
- Participating in the Marine Biotxin monitoring program;
- Conducting salmon surveys;
- Storm drain labeling;
- Conducting surf smelt surveys;
- Provided volunteer support to the Maddox Creek culvert replacement project;
- Implementing water conservation projects at the Montreaux HOA

Task 1.3 Skagit Stream Team

The 2019-2020 Stream Team program was cut short this year due to covid restrictions, thus, the 2019-2020 monitoring season was Oct. 2019 through March 15th, 2020 (monitoring year typically continues through June or July depending on stream flow in the summer). However, over the summer, new covid protocols were established and put into place with support from the Waste Water Treatment plants and the Padilla Bay Research Reserve, and we were able to resume the program in the Fall of 2020 for the 2020-21 monitoring season.

Priority streams currently being monitored by Stream Team volunteers include Trumpeter Basin, Kulshan Creek, Gages Slough, Ace of Hearts Creek, Nookachamps Creek, No Name Slough, Joe Leary Slough, Bay View drainage, and upper and lower Samish. All streams are monitored twice a month with the exception of Gages Slough, which is monitored monthly.

The goals of the Skagit Stream Team program are to: 1) *Inspire community stewardship of water resources by educating local citizens about land use and non-point sources of pollution and involving them in the process of water quality data gathering;* 2) *to develop and implement a routine sampling program that can be used to assess water quality trends, characterize the existing water quality of priority freshwater drainages, and determine how water quality conditions compare to State Standards;* 3) *to document improvements to water quality as a result of the implementation of Best Management Practices and storm water prevention measures;* and 4) *to teach community volunteers the sampling and analytical techniques used by environmental professionals, how to manage the data collected and create a database, and the importance of establishing a long-term water quality monitoring program.*

Parameters measured by Stream Team volunteers include fecal coliform (FC) bacteria, dissolved oxygen (DO), water temperature, turbidity and total depth.

2020 Stream Team accomplishments are highlighted below:



Figure 3 Skagit Stream Team was resumed in the Fall of 2020 with new safety protocols after breaking in early March 2020 due to covid restrictions.

- 7 Stream Team volunteers monitored the water quality of Ace of Hearts Creek in Anacortes over the 2019/20 monitoring season. The Anacortes Waste Water Treatment Plant conducts lab analysis for this program.
- 12 Stream Team volunteers monitored Kulshan Creek and Trumpeter Basin in Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon Waste Water Treatment Plant conducts lab analysis for Kulshan and Trumpeter.
- 2 Stream Team volunteers monitored Gages Slough through the 2019/20 sampling season. Burlington Waste Water Treatment Plant conducted lab analysis for the Gages Slough Stream Team.
- **64** Stream Team volunteers participated in the 2019/20 Stream Team program overall.
- 11 volunteers conducted storm event sampling in the Padilla Bay watershed during the 2019/20 season in support of the Padilla Bay TMDL and Skagit County PIC program (Storm Team).
- A Total of 50 monitoring stations were monitored twice a month by Stream Team volunteers, with the exception of Gages Slough which is monitored monthly Oct. 1st through early March when we had to pull them due to covid restrictions.
- The Annual Year-End Stream Team Celebration and Recognition event was coordinated and held virtually on Nov. 18th, 2020. **64 Stream Team/Storm Team volunteers were recognized.**
- **695 Stream Team volunteer hours** reported for the 2019/20 Stream Team program.
- The Stream Team program was resumed in the Fall of 2020 for the 2020-21 monitoring season with new covid protocols that were established.
- The Annual Stream Team training (for 2020-21 monitoring season) was coordinated and held Sept. 8th (virtual), 9th (in field), and 10th (virtual).
- Data was entered on excel spreadsheet.
- The 2018/19 Annual Stream Team Report was completed.
- The 2019-20 Annual Stream Team Report was initiated.

Task 1.4 Storm Drain Labeling Program

Storm drain marking kits are available at the Skagit Conservation District. Community groups and residents are encouraged to participate in the protection of water quality by marking storm drains in their neighborhoods and throughout the community. The Cities of Anacortes and Sedro-Woolley organize this program separately.

Due to covid restrictions this year, work completed on this task was limited this year. We will be able to resume in 2021 with covid protocols in place.

- 126 storm drains were installed by 3 volunteers in several Mount Vernon, Burlington and Skagit County neighborhoods..
- Inventory for Mount Vernon and Burlington markers were replenished

- 50+ promotional fliers were distributed and included in the Detention Pond Maintenance and Skagit Stream Team handbooks that were mailed to attendees of those programs.

Task 1.5 Social Marketing Strategy

The Pet Waste Management Social Marketing Action Plan ("Poop Fairy" campaign) was drafted this year based on the recommendation from s5.c.2.a.ii (b) of the recently revised Western Washington Phase II Stormwater Permit, which was effective August 1, 2019. With consensus from the Skagit partners, option **S5.C.2.a.ii(c) 3 Public Education and Outreach** was selected with the goal of reducing fecal coliform bacteria levels in priority urban waterways by initiating a more focused pet waste management campaign. While our team has incorporated pet waste management education and strategies previously as a component of our Natural Yard Care and other stormwater education programs, we are expanding our efforts to develop an education and outreach campaign focused on fecal coliform reduction in urban and rural waterways by encouraging dog walkers to pick up after their pets when they are in public places, such as parks, walking trails, apartment complexes, or neighborhoods.

Staff time also included the following:

- Staff conducted research of successful pet waste campaigns conducted in other communities;
- Reviewed results of Skagit County's 2019 Poop Smart program survey;
- Coordinated with Skagit County, Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley Parks & Recreation Departments and the Port of Skagit County to identify priority parks/trails (significant number of dog walkers) to initiate priority areas to kick off the pet waste campaign (and to determine number of signs for initial printing);
- Recruited 14 volunteers to survey priority parks to determine amount of dog poo left behind;
- Conducted a review of our local municipalities Pet Waste codes.

Task 1.6 Rain Garden Program (City of Mount Vernon)

SCD Staff partnered with Snohomish Conservation District, Skagit Watershed Council and Jefferson Elementary School to install a pilot school raingarden project at Jefferson Elementary School in Mount Vernon. Funding for this pilot project was provided through a different funding source this year, however, we will continue to pursue raingarden partnerships with other local schools and neighborhoods and to seek additional funding in support of this program.

2. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Task 2.1 Backyard Conservation Stewardship Program

One of the priority behaviors targeted through the Skagit partnership outreach efforts has focused on yard care techniques protective of water quality. The Backyard Conservation Stewardship Short Course targets local homeowners and provides

education on sustainable landscape practices as promoted by the Sustainable Sites Initiative. Program objectives:

- *Participants will learn practices that can be applied in their own backyards to help reduce storm water pollution and create a healthy and more sustainable environment.*
- *Participants will be provided with the tools and resources to design sustainable, natural, backyard landscapes.*
- *To encourage community participation in the Backyard Wildlife Habitat and/or Backyard Sanctuary Certification programs.*
- *To create a network of community residents willing to share their love of gardening and the outdoors to inspire others to create environmentally friendly gardening practices that will benefit our community.*

Topics included in the 6-week short course include proper use and disposal of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers (and use of non-toxic alternatives), use of native plants in landscaping, reducing size of lawn, gardening for wildlife, using bees as pollinators, applying low impact development/rain gardens, use of permeable pavement for driveways and patios, composting, managing non-native invasive plants, how to build healthy soils, proper disposal of pet waste, preventive car maintenance, and more. Sessions are taught by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic slate of local and state experts.

- The 2020 Backyard Conservation Stewardship Short Course was organized and scheduled to begin March 18th and running through April 22nd. However, due to the covid restrictions that were initiated in early March, the program had to be cancelled this year. **43 participants had registered for the program.**
- In lieu of hosting the class this year, staff maintained ongoing correspondence with individuals registered for this year's class (as well as past participants), including providing links to a variety of web resources, webinars, and other sustainable gardening related educational materials and also provided one-on-one assistance when requested.

Outcomes: The Backyard Conservation Stewardship Short Course has played a key role in our efforts to increase levels of voluntary implementation of conservation practices on private lands in both urban and rural areas of our community and to promote natural yard care principles. In addition to making sustainable changes in their own backyards, four grassroots community volunteer groups have now convened from this program, including the Fidalgo Backyard Wildlife Habitat Group in Anacortes, Skagit Valley Backyard Wildlife Habitat Team (Mount Vernon, Conway, LaConner, & Bow), the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, which includes Burlington and Sedro-Woolley, and the "Backyard Eco Garden Club" emerged from the 2016 class. The Fidalgo, Skagit, and Friday Creek habitat teams have registered our communities with the National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat Program (Fidalgo and Skagit have already received national recognition as a "Community Wildlife Habitat," and Friday Creek is in progress). Over 1,000 Skagit County residents, and including schools, parks, farms, & businesses, have certified their yards through this program.

Task 2.2 Resource Materials/Education for Local Schools

Skagit Conservation District

provides support to local schools by providing educational resources and presentations throughout the year. Due to covid restrictions this year, opportunities for classroom presentations were limited, although staff did provide some "outdoor" presentations with the watershed model and also in partnership with local Girls and Boys Clubs and summer camps.

- Educational packets were prepared and distributed to 510 local teachers. The packets include information on stormwater, watersheds, and other resources and educational programs available for teachers and classrooms through the Skagit Conservation District.
- Promotion of the EnviroScope Model classroom presentations (stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution) was conducted.
- 24 storm water education presentations, using the EnviroScope watershed model, were conducted in 2020 at local elementary schools and summer camps reaching over 447 Skagit County students in the following jurisdictions:
 - Mount Vernon: 5 presentations to 120 students
 - Sedro-Woolley: 16 presentations to 367 students
 - Anacortes: 3 presentations to 40 students
- Virtual presentation planning with local teachers was conducted.
- Staff attended zoom trainings for educating virtually.
- In response to covid restrictions, staff participated in the Skagit Watershed Council's Citizen Engagement Committee (CEC) and worked with CEC partners to compile virtual and outdoor STEAM programs for local teachers and parents: www.skagitcd.org and www.skagitwatershed.org



Figure 4 The Watershed EnviroScope model is an excellent hands on tool to teach our local youth about watersheds, stormwater pollution, and pollution prevention.

Task 2.3 Miscellaneous

Work conducted under this task included project administration and tracking, preparation of the annual report, and meetings and project/contract planning with partners. Other activities conducted under this task in 2020 included:

- Participated in a virtual "social marketing during covid" webinar hosted by Nancy Lee on April 15th
- Correspondence and coordination with Parks and Recreation Departments regarding "Poop Fairy" campaign and signage installation

- Correspondence with volunteers and HOA's regarding Poop Fairy campaign - drop off signage to interested HOA's for installation.
- Provided "Poop Fairy" graphics and information to partners
- Participated in virtual Canva program training on Aug 25th

Task 2.4 Storm Water Educational Brochures and Fact Sheets.

To assist in kicking off the "Poop Fairy" campaign, educational signage was designed locally and printed on 12" x 18" 3mm aluminum composite to hold up in the great outdoors and to be used as prompts at priority parks, trails, and neighborhoods to remind dog walkers of the importance of picking up pet waste and disposing of it properly. Staff worked with all our local Parks and Recreation Departments to determine priority dog walking areas and to determine the number of signs needed to get us started. HOA's who had attended our Detention Pond Workshops were also contacted. The Port of Skagit County, City of Oak Harbor and Skagit Valley College also joined in the "Poop Fairy" partnership.

In 2020, 290 "Poop Fairy" signs were installed in our community with support from all Parks Departments, the Port, SV College, and 14 HOA neighborhoods.

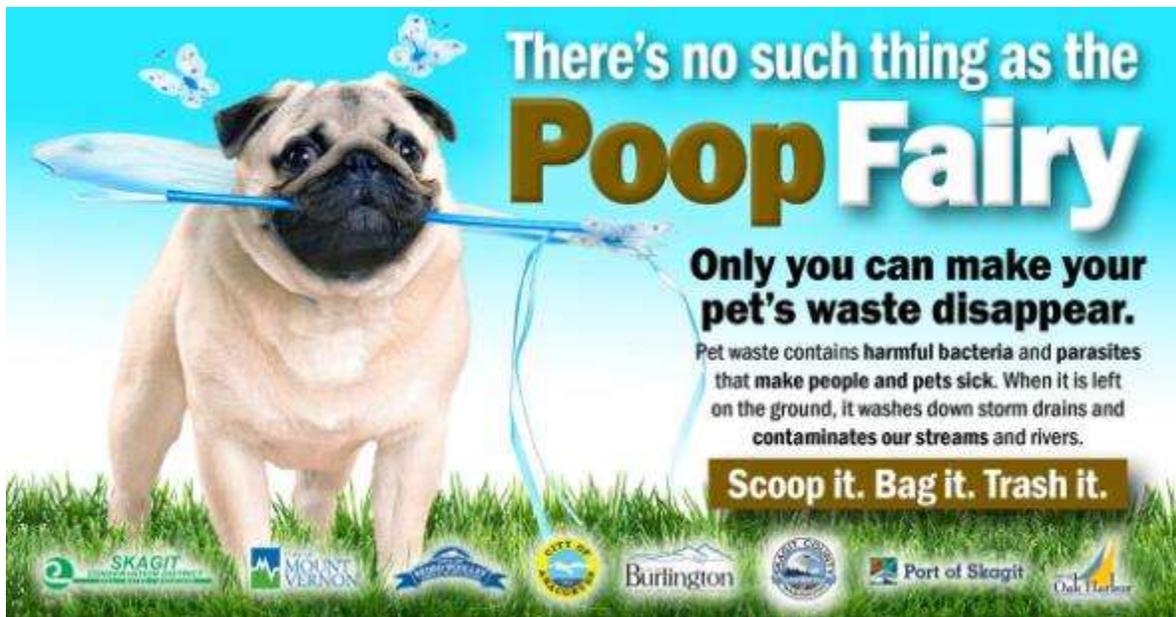


Figure 5 "Poop Fairy" signs were designed and 290 outdoor signs were installed at priority local parks, trails, and HOA neighborhoods.

Task 2.5 Workshops for Local Contractors and Businesses

A "Water Smart Gardening" webinar was coordinated and hosted on June 17th, 2020 with **99 participants.**

The workshop featured information on dealing with water related challenges in our region, from too much stormwater and drainage problems to several months of drought. The basics of rain gardens, rain collection, drainage solutions and great plants were covered. Bestselling author and award winning ecological designer, Jessi Bloom, was key note speaker.

We also partnered with Stewardship Partners as co-sponsors for the Annual Green Infrastructure Summit, which is scheduled for March 25th and 26th, 2021. SCD staff is participating on the "Host" subcommittee to assist with agenda planning, in gathering speaker proposals and recruiting presenters and will be facilitating the "Watershed Wide" break out session during the summit.

Task 2.6 PSSH Community Event Display Board

Due to covid restrictions, all local events were either cancelled or held virtually throughout 2020. However, staff time included researching incentive ideas for the pet waste campaign and pricing for a "poop fairy" display that could be utilized once covid restrictions are lifted. "Only Rain Down the Drain" magnets and "Spotlight on Stormwater" booklets were purchased as educational tools.

Task 2.7 Produce Media Advertisements



- The "Poop Fairy" ad was featured 4 x in the SV Herald (distribution 21,000 each)
- The "Poop Fairy" ad was featured in the Concrete Herald 2 x (distribution 5,000 each)
- The "Poop Fairy" ad was featured in the LaConner Weekly 2 x (1,200 each)
- A press release was sent to all local media; information about the Poop Fairy campaign was included in an article published by the SV Herald on July 31, 2020
- "Poop Fairy" tips for dog walkers were posted on social media July 20th, Oct. 15th, and Jan. 12th

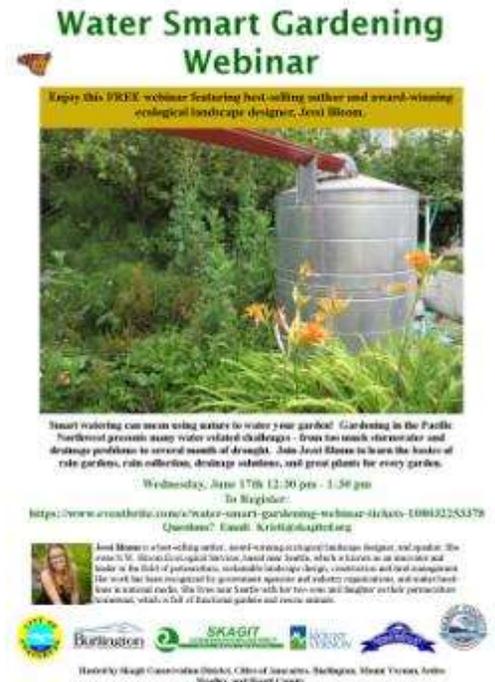


Figure 6 Water Smart Gardening Webinar Promotional Flier

- "Water Smart Tips" (Conserve Water Outdoors) tips was designed and posted on social media on Aug. 14th
- "Drainscaping" tips were published on social media on Oct. 5th
- A "Poop Fairy" article was published in the Skagit Conservation News - Summer/Fall 2020 edition
- The "Poop Fairy" ad was published in the Skagit Conservation News - Winter 2021 edition
- The "Poop Fairy," Drainscaping, and Smart Water Tips advertisements were also emailed to all SCD volunteers and partners



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED (Due to covid restrictions opportunities to distribute educational materials was very limited - however, we were able to email links to educational resources to our volunteers and others who expressed interest):

- 290 "Poop Fairy" Pet waste educational outdoor signs posted
- 45 Detention Pond Maintenance Handbooks distributed
- 50 Spotlight on Stormwater Booklets distributed.
- 100 Don't Just Landscape: Rainscape fliers distributed
- 250 Soil & Mulch: The Foundation of a Healthy Yard brochures distributed.
- 250 Planning & Planting a Sustainable Landscape brochures distributed.
- 250 Watering Wisely brochures distributed.
- 250 Think Twice Before Using Pesticides brochures distributed.
- 250 Natural Lawn Care brochures distributed.
- 10 Best Management Practices for Power Washing fact sheets distributed.
- 10 Best Management Practices for Mobile Carpet Cleaners distributed.
- 50 copies of the 2018/19 Skagit Stream Team Reports distributed (the report is also on the SCD and Padilla Bay Reserve websites).
- 45+ Storm Drain marking volunteer program promotional fliers distributed.
- 50 Native plants of the Pacific Northwest distributed.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR 2021

- Priority for 2021 will be coordinating and implementing a successful pet waste campaign ("Poop Fairy"), including a new pledge program and cute doggy photo contest. We will also be looking into initiating a Mutt Mitt program and providing incentives as well as tools to encourage behavior change.
- The Backyard Conservation Stewardship Short Course will be conducted virtually.
- The annual Stormwater Detention Pond Maintenance Workshop to be scheduled.(virtual).
- Co-sponsor the Annual Green Infrastructure Summit, scheduled for March 25th and 26th.

- Storm drain labeling will continue.
- Skagit Stream Team program will continue
- Work in kicking off a Rain Garden program will continue, including seeking funding to provide incentives for local homeowners and partnerships with local schools.
- The Annual Stream Team Water Quality Report will be published.
- Stormwater education media ads will be published in local media (and continue throughout the year).
- 2 new educational brochures/tip sheets and/or additional "Poop Fairy" signage will be published.
- Informational packets highlighting storm water and water quality education will once again be distributed to local schools **when back in session.**
- Staff will continue to provide presentations on storm water education with the watershed EnviroScape model to local school groups depending on covid status.
- An educational video of the stormwater EnviroScape model will be developed.
- Watershed Masters Volunteer training will be held virtually in the fall of 2021.
- The storm water education display will be updated and hands on activities designed to promote the "Poop Fairy" program.
- The SCD website will continue to be updated to include relevant storm water and LID information.
- News articles highlighting storm water education, LID practices, and volunteer opportunities will be included in each of the Skagit Conservation District's newsletters.
- Staff will continue to provide presentations to local groups on storm water and LID as requested.
- Stream Team data will be reviewed and will be used to target priority neighborhoods for follow-up education.
- Staff will continue to provide support to the Watershed Masters, backyard wildlife habitat volunteers, and Skagit Stream Team volunteers.
- All projects will be tracked, evaluation surveys conducted when appropriate, and reporting will continue.