



2005 Targeted Watersheds Grants: Skagit River Washington

WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

The Skagit River watershed, located in northwestern Washington, drains over 3,000 square miles, and the river traverses 120 miles. It supplies about one-third of all the fresh water that flows into Puget Sound. In addition to being well known for its natural beauty, the watershed is extremely productive, providing the natal habitat for 50 percent of the endangered Puget Sound Chinook salmon, winter habitat for 80 percent of western Washington's waterfowl, and foraging and staging areas for 70 percent of Puget Sound's shorebird population. The Skagit River also plays host to all eight species of anadromous salmon and trout.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

In addition to its ecological importance, the Skagit River watershed is economically important. Commercial forestry, hydroelectric dams, agriculture and urban development are central to the watershed. The Targeted Watersheds Grant funds will address the impacts of these activities on the fish habitat and water quality.

- Seventy to ninety percent of historic wetlands have been lost to diking, draining and development.
- Salmon habitat has been destroyed by forestry, dams and agriculture.
- Salmon and shorebird populations are endangered or in decline.
- Shellfish area closures due to poor water quality are the result of failing septic systems and increased stormwater runoff.

RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

The Nature Conservancy aims to improve water quality, restore wetlands habitat and demonstrate that biodiversity is compatible with agriculture and forestry. The Targeted Watersheds Grant funds will enable The Nature Conservancy to:

- Restore 50 acres of tidal wetlands and acquire conservation easements to protect the surrounding farmland from development.
- Develop a habitat friendly farming program - *Farming for Wildlife* - where farmers are paid to grow wildlife-friendly crops, providing foraging habitat for shorebirds and reducing sediment and chemical runoff.
- Partially rehabilitate agricultural drainage systems into streams and institute Best Management Practices to protect and restore fish populations.
- Conduct water quality monitoring to evaluate the impacts of the restoration activities.



*Farmer Dave Hedlin preparing soil for habitat friendly farm experiment.
Credit: Kirsten Morse*



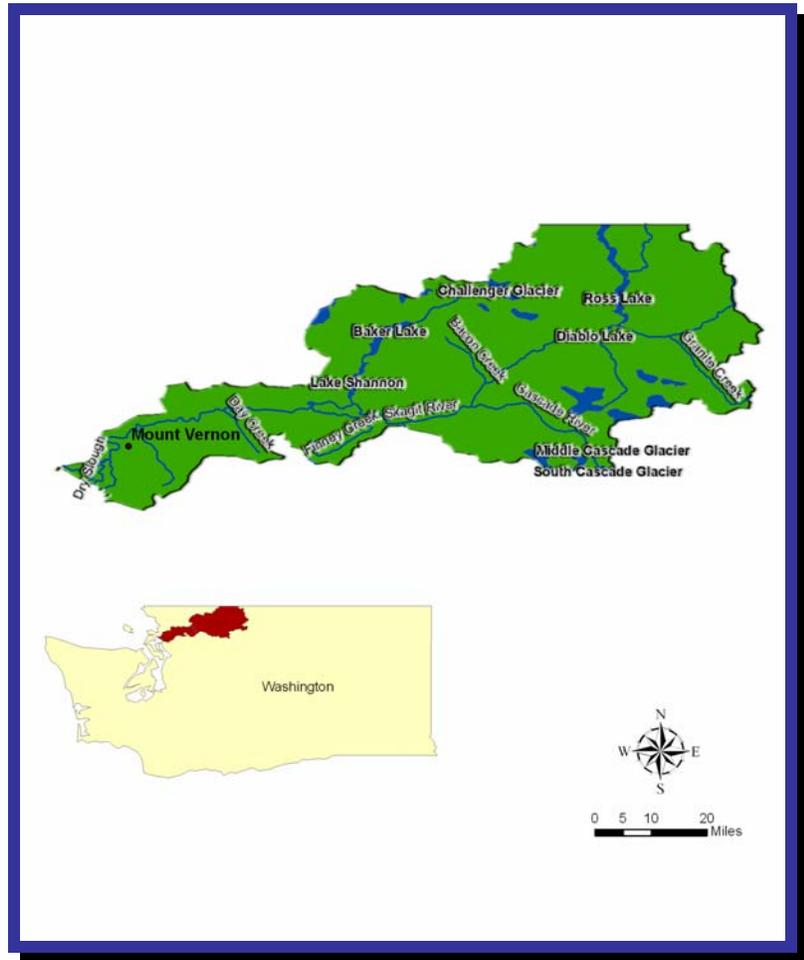
A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The Nature Conservancy has built a broad coalition of support, including key stakeholders:

- Western Washington Agricultural Association
- Skagit River System Cooperative
- Washington State University
- Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Skagit River System Coop salmon sampling crew.



EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grants

EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grants program is a competitive grant program designed to encourage collaborative, community-driven approaches to meet clean water goals.

For More Information Contact:

Kevin Morse
Skagit Delta Project
Manager
The Nature Conservancy of
Washington
kmorse@tnc.org
(360) 419-0131

www.tnc.org

Funding: \$774,000



Fisher Slough contains 50 acres of tidal wetlands that will be restored. Credit: Keith Lazelle.