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The Planet, the environmental publication of Western Washington University, focuses on the myriad of ecological problems this region faces.

Some air and water pollutants are decreasing. This is because federal, state and municipal governments are beginning to comply with laws enacted 20 to 30 years ago, such as the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. This is good news for the human environment.

Despite this progress, nature is still under attack. Over 900 plants and animals are listed by the federal government as endangered, and nearly 3,000 await similar recognition. Political pressures, especially from western legislators, have blocked their listing.

Not only is the natural environment in its worst state in recorded history, but now many in Congress want to weaken pollution control laws.

We feel that the destruction of nature is one of the premier problems the world faces today, so we dedicate this magazine entirely to issues of land health.

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I fill the remainder of my backpack with water, a peanut butter sandwich and a power bar. A thought keeps reoccurring in my mind: What can everyday people do about the environment?

Placing my backpack in my Ford truck, I head for the hills. I park my truck and walk up the logging road. I could drive up the Forest Service road, but I get more out of walking. I wonder how much this road costs the public. Few taxpayers know that they subsidize forest destruction by paying for logging roads on National Forests.

My hike leads me past several small and large landslides, which poorly designed roads on hillsides have created. I have seen several hundred of them, and the more I see the angrier I get. A ten-foot deep crevice, created by the combination of rain and poor road construction, will allow little growth for many years. I wish more of the public could see this.

My hike leads past stands of trees that suggest tree plantations. They look like forests and smell like forests. I even spot a deer far up the road. Deer are among the few animals I'll find on this bright sunny day. Deer, coyotes and cockroaches - I expect these adaptable animals to survive the onslaught on the forests. What are missing from these structurally simple forests are two species of woodpeckers, three kinds of owls, and seven kinds of ducks. The most valuable trees in a forest for wildlife are often the standing and downed dead trees, which provide food and protection for dozens species of animals. Clear-cut logging removes these.

I once met an 80-year-old logger, Merv Wilkinson, who told me, “There is a better way.” Merv Wilkinson has selectively logged his property for 55 years. He earns a good income and still leaves plenty of room for animals.

Along the trail, I don’t see bears, elk or moose, but that is no surprise. Scientific studies have shown that these animals avoid roads whenever they can. My hike brings me further up the road. The air is fresh, and the river below is clear. Further up the road clear-cuts on hill sides come within twenty feet of the river.

I can see how rain has washed clay, sand and silt into the river. Though this sediment is non-toxic, it is the salmon’s number one enemy. After a salmon lays its eggs in a “redd” (nest), it covers the eggs with gravel. The river will bring clean oxygenated water, but silt from logging suffocate the eggs. Our rivers become sterile and lifeless.

I come to a place that provides a good view of the river valley, so I sit down and eat my lunch. What can people do? Hiking and reading has taught me to recognize what healthy rivers and healthy forests look like.

From my vantage point, I watch the stream meander through the valley. Eight large clear-cuts cover about 30 percent of the valley slopes, a testament to the over-cutting of the 1980s. Two of the clear-cuts have been replanted with seedlings. Ten small trees might be planted to replace an 800-year-old Douglas fir. This is what the timber industry means when it...
says there are more trees now than ever before.

My travels lead farther into the mountains. I reach subalpine fir, where a 10-foot-tall tree might be 300 years old.

Once logged, this area is likely to remain a virtual desert for several lifetimes. Most of the gnarled and twisted trees are useless to the timber industry anyway. When the timber industry says plenty of old growth forests remain, these “forests” are what they are talking about.

I won’t hike any farther today to the regions of rock and ice. Another day, I’ll return. Desolate and beautiful as it is, for lack of a better land designation, the government calls this region national forest, though another title might be more appropriate.

What can people do? Learn more about the environment. A few years ago, I was a business major and a big critic of the environmental movement. The more I investigated, the more I changed my mind.

Though I still read the Wall Street Journal, for information about endangered plants and animals, I read Sierra, Audubon or National Geographic. For better but more technical information I recommend Wild Earth. For information about the forests of Northwest Washington, Northwest Conservation is available from Greater Ecosystem Alliance in Bellingham. The best thing students or everyday citizens can do is learn more about issues, so they will know when the industries are lying. Well-paid small-time Limbaughs are everywhere.

We can build strong industries, respect each other and have a healthy natural world all at the same time. “There is a better way.”

The end of my hike brings me back to my truck. Every time I hike into the woods I learn something new. A thought occurs to me as I start my Ford.

There is something else you can do. Vote with an awareness of how the candidate stands ecologically. Furthermore, few people write to their legislators, so one letter has a real impact.
“These last 10 years have been an incredible ride,” Terry Galvin said as he reflected on his experience with the Whatcom County Planning Department (WCPD).

This was the second time I sat across from Terry in his tiny office at the WCPD. The first time I had asked for information on the controversial Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), a group of environmental regulations, which he wrote. I returned to learn more about Terry as a person and as an important environmental figure in the area.

Terry Galvin is not Howard Stern or Madonna. His blue eyes, moppish graying hair and casual sweaters do not demand attention. Even his deep voice is laid back. I couldn’t find a crazy decoration in his book-crammed office to give away who he is. But Terry’s words do define who he is: a Henry Thoreau with an office job.

“I am a strong proponent of the management of growth and I think there is an intrinsic quality in the environment that we as communities need to survive and live healthy, productive lives,” Terry said.

Terry has one of the toughest jobs in the county. During the CAO uproar, he received threatening phone calls and people on both ends of the political spectrum accuse the Planning Department of being biased.

“I’ve been perceived to be on one side of center or the other by a number of people,” he said.

And now the County Council majority views the Planning Department with suspicion and is unresponsive to the input of planners like Terry.

But Terry still believes in the community of Whatcom County. Terry and his wife selected Whatcom County to settle and raise their children eleven years ago.

“We consciously picked Bellingham to become our home after looking at a number of communities,” he said.

Terry was born and raised in Spokane Valley on the Idaho side of the border. He has a degree in political science and has studied community planning. He spent seven years working odd jobs and traveling around the world with his wife and then worked as an independent building contractor before opting for a change of scenery.

“I was very conscious I wanted to make a career change and play this role here (at the Planning Department) in Whatcom County,” he said.

In 1986 Terry received a planning degree from Western Washington University the same day he landed his job with the Planning Department.

“I interned at the Planning Department beforehand and knew I wanted the job,” he said.

Terry has been an advocate for environmental protection for many years. When I asked him what sparked his interest in environmental protection, his answer surprised me.

Terry said that when he was younger, he and his wife elected to move to a rural area of Eugene, Oregon, and live a life of simplicity. They grew everything they ate (animal and vegetable), lived without...
electricity and pumped water from a shallow well they dug themselves.

"This experience allowed us to fundamentally get a grip on the most basic level of what constitutes reality," Terry said. "My wife and I were given a good, solid understanding of the relationship between ourselves and the environment that we live in."

Ten years later the Galvins decided to give up this simple way of life.

"We had two children and wanted to move into a more substantial community and play a more effective role in preserving a simple lifestyle," he said. "Since we have been in Whatcom County we have increasingly become strong believers in the sense of community as well as advocates for protecting the environment."

Today, Terry’s life revolves around his two daughters and his work. "While I spend a huge amount of time on environmental issues here in Whatcom County with my job, when I leave work I spend my remaining time with the children and the community," he said.

On weekends Terry coaches his 12-year-old’s soccer team or attends his 14-year-old’s volleyball tournaments. And of course there are cello and violin lessons to take the girls to. Like their father, his two children care about the environment.

"It’s kind of fun. I see them advocating environmental issues and community issues in their papers at school," Terry said.

Terry spends time with his family and friends out on the rivers of Whatcom County as well.

"One of my personal favorite recreational activities is river canoeing," he said. "I go into the upper highwater of various Pacific Northwest rivers with my friends. We get crazy and pretend that we are 20 years old again."

When I asked if he plans on staying with the Planning Department, Terry surprised me again by answering, "No."

With the wave of conservatism in the County Council, Terry feels his effectiveness as Senior Planner for the Planning Department has diminished. The County Council has cut the Planning Department’s budget and has indicated they intend to cut it further. Terry said the legislative leaders of the county are less receptive to the legislative solutions the Planning Department proposes.

"I am not willing to just sit back and occupy space," he said. "If I am not going to be effective here then I need to move on to some other role."

While Terry may quit working for the Planning Department, he still wants to play a role in the management of growth and the effort of maintaining the high quality of life we have here in Whatcom County.

"We have lost the sense of neighborhood," he said. "I want to be involved in trying to find physical configurations of houses which lend themselves more to community. There is a concept called ‘cohousing’ that creates a configuration of houses around a central area that is a community area. I would like to be doing that sort of work independently."

Terry also looks forward to the opportunity to speak out for the environment.

"I relish the opportunity of playing the role of the activist," he said. "For years I have had to try to maintain some neutrality and find the middle ground. It will be gratifying to be able to get out and support a political position in the community."

Overall, he feels he has been a positive influence on ensuring a bright future for Whatcom County. By drafting the Critical Areas Ordinance and the Environmental Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, Terry has helped protect the local environment with legislation. With his concern for the community, Terry will no doubt continue to support the welfare of the county.

"If there is one contribution that I want to leave to this community, after my 10 years at the Planning Department," Terry said, "it is the understanding on the part of the decision makers that we need to look at things from an ecosystem perspective. We need to see the environment as an organic, living thing, and if you harm one part of it you affect the entire system."
Imagine an expanse of wilderness that begins in the Arctic, continues through Canada and the U.S. and extends down into Mexico and Central America. This contiguous tract of wild lands consists of numerous core wilderness reserves connected to each other by a system of corridors, enabling plants and animals to naturally disperse over their historic ranges. Grizzly bears roam across their entire continental territory and Gray wolf populations in Greenland have an unbroken connection to wolves in New Mexico. All wildlife moves freely across borders, from state to state and country to country.

This is the ultimate goal of the Wildlands Project, a nonprofit publicly supported organization based in Tucson, Arizona. The project is a long-term strategy for creating interconnected wilderness reserves that will span the continent, and is built on the philosophy that a healthy planet means recognizing the needs of all life and not just human life. The reserves will consist of a core that will be strictly protected, surrounded by inner and outer buffer zones that will be managed for recreation and limited resource development. The connecting corridors will also be protected by buffer zones.

Jim Strittholt, an ecologist and geographic information specialist with the Wildlands Project, told me the centerpiece of the linked reserve design is its connecting corridors. Whether or not wildlife would actually use the corridors is a subject of debate in the scientific community, but Strittholt said it makes intuitive sense. “If you’re a cougar and you want to get from here to there, you take the path of least resistance. You’re not going to walk through a shopping mall.”

Using corridors to link wilderness reserves may be the only way to ensure that wide-ranging animals, such as Grizzly bears, escape extinction. David Johns, executive director of the Wildlands Project, said ideally a reserve large enough to support wide-ranging wildlife would be created, but that is not something that can be done in the near future.

“Because it is so difficult to protect large areas,” Johns said, “corridors become extraordinarily important. It’s a way that wide-ranging animals can move between areas.”

“For example, in the Northern Rockies we have seen populations of Grizzlies become smaller and smaller, and become isolated in Yellowstone and other areas. By linking those areas up, we think it will make a great deal of genetic difference by allowing the different bear populations to connect.”

Johns said the Wildlands Project isn’t directly involved in designing the reserves, but provides financial and technical assistance to grass-roots organizations across North America to help them develop wilderness reserve proposals for their regions. In designing these projects, participants try to achieve four conservation goals: (1) protection and recovery of all native species; (2) protecting all ecosystem types; (3) maintaining the integrity of ecological and evolutionary processes; and (4) ensuring that ecosystems are resilient enough to recover from disturbances.

I talked to Johns about the origins of the project, and he told me much of the motivation for designing linked wilderness reserves came out of studies of islands in the
1970s and 1980s. Island biogeography theory showed that smaller islands tended to have fewer species of plants and animals than larger islands, and were also more susceptible to degradation resulting from such phenomena as inbreeding, natural disturbances and human-caused disturbances. The studies also showed islands close to mainlands, or ones that had only recently been separated from mainlands, tended to have a greater variety of plants and animals than islands that were more isolated.

"What scientists began to see on the continents of the world," Johns said, "was that wild areas were increasingly resembling islands in that they were becoming isolated. If you look at a map of the United States, for example, and you look at designated parks and wildernesses, you will see that they are indeed isolated islands cut off from each other, very much like oceanic islands."

Scientists were seeing that species and entire ecosystems in these isolated wilderness regions were in serious trouble, as evidenced by dwindling wildlife habitat and the rapidly growing number of animals either on or waiting to get on the endangered species list. Even protected areas — let alone areas that were being destroyed through conversion to agriculture, mining or suburbs — were experiencing fragmentation that was causing the accelerated loss of species and the unraveling of ecological processes. Scientists and conservation activists, alarmed by these developments, started looking for new wilderness designs that would function on an ecosystem level.

One strategy called for introducing buffers around existing core wilderness areas. Strittholt said the core-buffer concept has actually been around for over 20 years, and the United Nations "Man in the Biosphere" program was an attempt at putting that concept into practice. This program sought to create a global network of protected areas for scientific research and for protecting genetic diversity.

"The United Nations came up with the idea of having protected core areas surrounded by zones of increasingly intensive use by humans as you move away from the core, and they were trying to apply this model worldwide," Strittholt said.

However, the U.S. application of this model never really materialized. Strittholt said, "If you look at all the national parks that are part of this program, there is pretty severe disturbance right up to the borderline." In many cases, such as Yellowstone and Washington's Olympic National Park, the bound-
aries of the parks are strikingly obvious because of the wasteland of clearcuts that lead up to the parks’ borders.

In addition to looking seriously once again at core-buffer designs, scientists in the 1980s started exploring the idea of using corridors to link existing wilderness areas. These corridors were thought to allow wide-ranging animals to naturally disperse between protected reserves. That made more sense than having a number of scattered but unconnected wilderness areas.

Johns said some wildlife already make use of naturally existing corridors, which is good evidence that linking corridors will work.

“Wolves, even though they are being reintroduced in Yellowstone and Idaho, are finding their own way down from Canada. They are using long, historic corridors, ones that have not been developed or logged,” he said.

Linked wilderness reserves are still years away, but regional groups all over the continent are slowly making progress. For example, plans for a regional system of core-buffer-corridor reserves in the state of Florida are moving forward, and sometime around the year 2000 a functioning model may be in place. Strittholt said a number of state and federal agencies are involved in gathering information, studying it and even developing land acquisition plans. A program called Preservation 2000 is actively buying land for Florida to implement the reserve system.

Another linked wilderness proposal, the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA), would connect five major ecosystems that cover parts of five states—Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon and Washington. There is still enough wild land in the Northern Rockies to make NREPA a reality, although it exists in isolated blocks that would require a complex system of corridors. NREPA is introduced as a bill every year and up until the last Congress had collected a respectable number of congressional sponsors. With the current environmentally unfriendly Congress, there is little chance NREPA will get very far, but that just means the scientists and conservation activists fighting for it will have to set their sights a little further down the road. As Johns said, “NREPA is not going away.”

Such patience is a virtue when attempting to build a future that is radically different than the one that awaits us in our current path. David Johns recognizes that getting the citizens of North America to commit themselves to the creation of a large scale system of linked wilderness reserves is a long term effort—certainly beyond our lifetime.

“I think we realize that the implementation of such a vision would take decades,” Johns said, “if not a century or two. It’s a very long term process, but knowing where we need to go helps us to find priorities.”

“People ask, ‘are you radical?’,” Strittholt said. “Well, yeah, because we’re saying we have to look at things very differently than we’ve ever done before, and that’s hard for people to do. Are we being unreasonable? I don’t think so, because we’re interested in all varieties of life, including humans and our quality of life.”

“We have a choice,” Johns declared, “between embracing the earth as our home, or continuing on this path of conquest and control, which is going to lead to a devastated earth.”
Walking along the dry river bed of the Red River, I thought about what Nelda Sigurdson told me. The river used to flow beneath beautiful trees, and salmon berries and dogtooth violets used to bloom here. Now only the trees remain, growing along the banks of a dead stream.

The Nooksack River used to flow into Lummi Bay. A log jam diverted the main flow in the late 1800s, but it still used the Red River channel for much of the discharge. The problem now, Nelda says, is that the bridge spanning the Red River was replaced with a culvert. Because of sedimentation and blockage from debris, water can no longer flow through the old channel.

"It was disgraceful when we'd have all these awful floods and there wasn't anything running down that little creek," Nelda says. "It could have been really helpful."

Flooding along the Nooksack River has long been an issue for people living in the floodplain. For Nelda, living with the river is just a way of life.

Her grandfather, Frank Peterson, settled on the bank of the river in 1899, buying 80 acres of riverfront property from the Lummi Indians. Nelda grew up on the same land and lives there today in a house built in 1928, about a mile-and-a-half south of Ferndale.

"When we were kids, we always had to watch for mole holes in the dikes," she recalls.

The barn her grandfather built in 1908 is still used by the Sigurdson family and has been inundated by the river only once, in 1990.

Sandbags prevent further destruction along the Nooksack River during the 1990 flood.

"Humorous things always come out of (floods) and I like to pick up the positive things ... One of the funniest things I ever saw in all my life involved a bunch of cats living in the barn. Three feet of water came streaming through the barn. The cats didn't know what to do. They scrambled to the top of some hay bales and then just looked at this muddy river water."

This spunky 72-year-old woman enjoys the hard work that comes with the rise of the river. "It's an exciting time. You try to pit your knowledge against Nature's and see who's going to win," she says.

Most floods result from rain melting the snowpack. Floodwaters drain into the Nooksack River from about 826 square miles of mostly mountainous terrain. Trees slow the water and anchor the soil. Not only do clear-cuts substantially increase the speed of run-off, but silt deposits fill the river channel to amplify flooding.

Wetlands and side channels act as flood control features in a normal river system. "Every wetland is like a sponge and when the river floods, it flows into these big swampy areas that hold the water and release it slowly, reducing the damage that floods cause," says City Council member Larry Harris. Destruction of such areas adds to the possibility of major floods.

The 1990 Veterans Day flood was the most serious flood ever recorded on the lower Nooksack. The flood was estimated to have caused $21 million in damages. Flood damage from the Nooksack averages $2.5 million a year, according to the U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers. Public awareness of the threat of floods increased after the floods in 1989 and 1990.

In 1991, a Flood Control Zone District was set up by Whatcom County. A citizen's advisory board began working on the problem of how to lessen the danger of severe future floods and reduce the amount of damage that could be caused. The group is currently putting together a Flood Hazard Reduction Plan.

Nelda, like other farmers living in the floodplain, is upset and frustrated that more hasn't been done by the citizen's advisory board. She thinks some of the problems of flooding would be solved by dredging parts of the river.

"Dredging, I think, would help in the lower reaches of the Nooksack. I don't think there are many salmon that spawn in this area ... My brother and I feel that the bed of the river has raised about five feet in 60 years. If you dredged at least that deep or a little deeper, you'd have a tremendous amount of volume of water that would be able to go down there."

Dredging involves removing sediments from gravel bars, side channels and the bottom of the river. It is temporary and costly, and may have detrimental environmental effects.

"The bed load has increased," Larry says, "and (the river) has been squeezed into a relatively narrow channel and the bottom of the river has been raised so it doesn't take much water any longer to do a whole lot of damage."

Dredging isn't feasible, he says, because of the expense and the amount of time it would take. The process would have to be repeated every year or so to keep the channel clear. There are also potential impacts on the salmon that spawn in the Nooksack and its tributaries.

"If you dredge gravel out of the river, that gravel may be the fish spawning habitat that they need," says Larry, "and you may be setting up a dynamic that destroys a certain part of the river for fish spawning."

Peter Willing of Water Resources Consulting doesn't think dredging is a practical solution to damage control during flooding either.

"I have severe doubts that there would be substantial effects, though there might be localized effects in one or two places," he says. "At certain times of the year you're compromising biological resources by running up and down the river with a bunch of machinery. I don't think we should look to gravel mining as a panacea to flood damages in the whole Nooksack Basin."

According to Larry, many people are beginning to ask when the Flood Hazard Reduction Board will have a plan that can be put into effect.

"They say, we've been paying property taxes for this and we want to see some results. The advisory committee that has been working with the county engineers, when they started out three years ago, they thought the solutions were pretty simple: We build some dikes and we dredge the river. The more they became knowledgeable, the more complicated they realized it is," he explains.

"You'd be surprised how many people think it's a simple matter: Get the gravel out of the river so that the water levels drop, and you put the levies up so that the water doesn't overflow the top of the bank, and that's all you have to do. It's amazing the number of people that believe that's what the answer is. And it's frustrating because you just can't shake that idea..."
in some people’s heads,” he says.

Growth Management legislation enacted by the state legislature in 1991 caused counties all around the state to re-examine their land-use laws. As a result, Whatcom County began to restrict building in the floodplain.

Peter’s solution is more drastic and calls for keeping people out of the floodplain. “One of the really good ways is to stay out of the floodplain — keep people and structures that don’t need to be there out.”

Nelda is adamantly against the idea of the county buying out floodplain residents, but agrees people should not be allowed to build in the floodplain.

“I’m not anti-environmental, but I think you have to be sensible about what you’re trying to do and the results that you want. I don’t believe in condemning somebody’s property. I’ve been here since 1960 and I’ve tried to be a good steward of the land and I don’t want anybody to take it away.”

Larry doesn’t think the county will get to the point of telling people they have to leave their homes, but he believes building in the floodplain should be restricted.

“The county has been able to be a little tougher recently on people who want to do things in the floodplain and not grant permits for it ... But the county has not gotten to the point of saying you can’t build a house and, to go even further, you’ve got to abandon the property that you have now. That would be political suicide.

“The trouble is that agriculture is extremely important in this county and most of the agricultural land is in the floodplain.”

People can approach the problem of reducing flood damage structurally or environmentally.

Engineers generally approach the river from a structural point of view. They may broaden the span of bridges so debris does not block the river or raise houses above the flood stage. Reducing the height of levees so the river can overflow them prevents more damage downstream. Widening levees allows the river more room.

Environmentalists approach the river as a natural ecosystem. “There is no way to stop flooding,” Larry says. “The only reason you have flooding damage now is that people have encroached on the river so badly that the river has nowhere to go when it floods. When channeled too narrowly, it rips, tears, smashes and causes damage.”

Some environmentalists advocate letting the river flood naturally, and say people should accept the floods and get out of the way when they come.

“I don’t blame anybody if I have a flood. I want to live here, I’ve lived here all this time. My kids are the fourth generation on this farm and we love it here. I don’t carry flood insurance because if it happens it happens. I’m certainly going to try to keep the whole thing together and will fight the floodwaters as they come, but I think that people need to be aware of what they’re getting into if they want to be able to live in the floodplain. I assume that responsibility.”

The Army Corps of Engineers placed rip rap (boulders) along a section of the Nooksack River to protect the bridge from washing out during floods.
I stepped down the narrow ribbon of pavement into a treasure trove of natural wonders. Ferns grew from the side of ancient trees, seedlings sprouted from the backs of fallen giants and the glaring sun took on a softer, glowing tone. The jigsaw patchwork of industrial forestry spread behind me, but in front endured the legacy of Washington's true natural riches. The monstrous conifers that gave the Evergreen State its name are here in abundance. I found the real Washington.

Our state's most magnificent treasures lie in our national parks. Mount Rainier National Park's Carbon River holds the farthest inland temperate rainforest in the country. Along the northwestern corner of the park, the mountain's massive height creates the prodigious amount of rainfall needed to support the lush growth of ferns, mosses and 200-foot-tall Douglas firs.

There I first walked on the vibrant green mattress that is the rainforest floor and gazed at the towering giants that create the forest's cathedral walls.

Established in 1899, Mount Rainier became the northwest's first national park, and the fifth in the United States. Since then, park status has provided protection for the mountain's forests, wildlife and famed glaciers. The establishment of the park also gave millions of people the opportunity to experience the natural wonders of the region as eons had evolved them.

Bill Briggle, approaching his fiftieth year in the service of the national parks, also has a special connection to Mount Rainier. Briggle became superintendent at Mount Rainier in 1977. After seven years he moved onto other park assignments, but in 1991, when the superintendency of the park opened up, he took the opportunity to return. "Mount Rainier is one of the more spectacular pieces of the national park system. People that work in the park revere and respect the mountain just as those who visit," Briggle says. "Rainier is definitely one of the jewels of the park system," he continued, "not just the natural beauty but also the wealth of history it holds."

Olympic National Park is no exception to the treasure of natural, cultural and historical wealth of the Pacific Northwest. Encompassing rainforest, glacial peaks and snowfields and the longest stretch of wild undeveloped coastline in the lower 48 states, Olympic, to many people, is the hallmark of our native Northwest heritage. Established in 1938, the national park protects the richest temperate rainforest and some of the largest trees in the world from commercial logging. It wasn't until the mid-1970s when the wild coast was added to the park, however.

My first trip to Washington's coast included the fabulous three-mile hike from Lake Ozette to Cape Alava, a trip where you are just as likely to see deer or black bear as you are to find sun-bathing seals or centuries-old rock carvings. The outermost corner of the Olympic Peninsula is the traditional home of the Makah Indians. The Makah fished the prolific salmon runs and hunted great whales far out to sea from canoes of cedar.

The wild coast is ma-
A tree may hold more than one ton of moss in the Hoh Rainforest. To many visitors, flyfisher Terri Sue Pauly is drawn by the huge trout of Lake Chelan. "I'm glad the park exists for us. It is something that all people can enjoy," Pauly said. Her women's flyfishing group makes several trips to the park complex each summer. Washington has other segments of the national park system that may be a little less known but are important parts of understanding our historical and cultural heritage.

Among the favorite spots of many Northwesterners and foreign visitors alike are the peaks and glaciers of North Cascades National Park. High above the tree line of the North Cascades, mountaineers scale marvelous heights that are often compared to the Swiss Alps. North Cascades National Park was established in 1968 after a prolonged battle by conservationists and opposition by the U.S. Forest Service. The park complex includes the national park, divided into two sections by Highway 20, and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan National Recreation Areas, also administered by the Park Service. The park complex is bordered on the east by the Pasayten Wilderness, managed by the Forest Service.

Though the North Cascades peaks are the main attraction for many visitors, flyfisher Terri Sue Pauly is drawn by the huge trout of Lake Chelan. "I'm glad the park exists for us. It is something that all people can enjoy," Pauly said.

Her women's flyfishing group makes several trips to the park complex each summer.

Washington has other segments of the national park system that may be a little less known but are important parts of understanding our historical and cultural heritage.

San Juan Island National Historical Park is the site of early American and British encampments during the Oregon Territory boundary dispute of 1859. The last British flag in the territorial United States flew here. The historical park is located on San Juan Island.

In Seattle's Pioneer Square, the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park exhibits artifacts and information of the 1897 gold rush to Alaska. Included are mining tools, a photomural and visual programs.

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is the site of an 1829 Hudson's Bay Company trading post, with many of the buildings restored. Located in Vancouver, Washington, this site tells of the beginnings of American settlement into the Pacific Northwest.

Whitman Mission National Historic Site, near Walla Walla, is where the first family of white settlers to cross the Rocky Mountains started a mission. The Memorial Monument overlooks the scenic Walla Walla Valley and the beautiful Blue Mountains.

Washington's national parks are symbols of the values we hold as a society. Natural, historical, cultural and spiritual values are enjoyed by millions of Americans and foreign visitors each year. The common heritage we all share is embodied in our efforts to ensure the health and integrity of our parks for now and posterity.

Learn more on our national parks in the following books:
Olympic Battleground by Carsten Lien
National Park Guide 1995 by Michael Frome
National Parks: The American Experience by Alfred Runte
100 Hikes in the South Cascades and Olympics and 100 Hikes in the North Cascades by Ira Spring and Harvey Manning
Those Dammed Diversions

By Fred Breedlove

I walked on top of the 565-foot-long 10-foot-wide pipeline that leads from the Nooksack Falls diversion dam to an underground tunnel and eventually winds up at a powerhouse below the falls. I wondered what the area was like before men intruded upon it. It must have been a truly inspirational sight to see the unimpeded river pour over the 170-foot-high cliff to the rocks below. Today, thanks to a dam that diverts the water away from the river before it ever reaches the falls, and to the chain-link fences that all but eliminate any scenic viewpoints, the beauty of the falls certainly is not what it used to be. Few people know that the Nooksack, a relatively small river, already has five dams on its tributaries.

Thirteen similar projects have been proposed on the Nooksack watershed. These projects are on hold until permits and licenses are granted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

FERC prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), published in November of 1994. The EIS was prepared as an information resource in order to help decision makers and inform the public of a proposed action. FERC recommends granting permits for two of William Devine’s four sites.

“The demand for renewable energy on a national level is high. Our country gets only ten percent of its energy from renewable resources. The need for renewable resources is considerable,” Devine told me.

“On a local level, we import a tremendous amount of energy for the Intalco plant and the refineries. Historically, Whatcom County has gotten most of its energy from the Columbia River plants,” Devine said. He was also quick to correct me when I asked about the dams: “One thing I need to clarify is that they are not dams. They are just water diversions that do not even back up the water.”

Devine emphasized that he cares about the environment and Whatcom County. “I was born and raised in Whatcom County. In my experience, I have found that the type of power generation I am proposing in the Nooksack watershed can have very little impact (on the environment) if done in the right places.”

Mitch Friedman, Executive Director of the Greater Ecosystem Alliance, is concerned that the pipelines and roads required for the projects will cut through critical wildlife habitat areas. “We are talking about thousands and thousands of feet of roads and pipeline,” he says.

Many of the roads and pipelines will pass through critical habitat for cougars, black bear, the endangered grizzly bear and bald eagles, endangered gray wolves and northern spotted owls. Building roads and pipelines through these areas can scare away these animals because of the presence of people and noise. Roads also serve as transportation systems for exotic plants (plants not indigenous to the area). Exotic plants are carried by automobiles along roads. These plants can replace native vegetation and are often inedible, forcing animals dependent on the native vegetation to find somewhere else to live.

Two of Devine’s sites, Canyon Creek and Boul...
der Creek, would use existing roads and are in clear-cut areas. "It is a misnomer to say that all the proposed sites will damage critical wildlife areas," Devine says. He adds that his Deadhorse Creek project can be operated without building a new road system by instead using a cable system. "But the Forest Service wants to require me to build new roads. I am trying to keep from doing this."

Scott Brewer, an ecologist for American Rivers, an organization based in Seattle that works to protect river systems, is also concerned for the fish and wildlife along the Nooksack. "A dam is going to have an impact - period. With the abundance of clear-cut areas and the addition of dams, the Nooksack watershed is a basin being hit right and left by harmful environmental impacts," says Brewer.

Brewer is concerned that the proposed diversion dams would compromise river flow and consequently the fish habitat. The Nooksack Basin is currently home to four species of salmon, three species of trout and Dolly Varden. "Building the dams will have the usual effects," he says. "They will not allow fish access to habitat areas, which will also damage their reproductive capacity."

Brewer stresses the need for the dams in the Nooksack Basin has not been demonstrated. "What’s the need? The need for power has really not been shown. The economic analysis (in the EIS) in our opinion was poor."

In fact, less than two pages of the inch-thick EIS were devoted to the need for power.

Brewer also says that the EIS was "very poorly done, inadequate, and did not look at all of the alternatives."

The EIS devoted only a dozen pages to possible alternative energy sources. In an environmental assessment prepared by students at Huxley College in the spring of 1994, several alternative energy sources were explored. According to their assessment, the most likely alternatives would be increased conservation or energy efficiency and energy exchanges between Washington and California. The EIS compiled by FERC states that more than 4.1 GWh (giga-watts) can be conserved per year, which would significantly help to meet future energy needs.

In regard to inter-regional exchanges, the Huxley students' assessment states: "An ideal scenario would be an exchange of electricity between utilities in the Northwest and California, both of which have peak demands which correspond with the other's peak production." Energy exchanges would be both practical and cost-effective. Other less likely alternatives include natural gas, cogeneration, wind, solar and nuclear power.

Is the best alternative to building the dams not building them at all? It is up the community to choose what is most important: electric power we may not even need, or protecting a valuable river.

As I drive away from the Nooksack Falls dam, I can’t help but think of all the plants and animals that the new dam projects could harm. Not only would these projects disturb the ecological functions of the river, but they would scar the natural beauty of the area.

Though the power companies stand to gain financially from these small dams, the regional need for electricity has not been adequately shown. I recently heard that the cost of power in Washington State is cheaper than anywhere else in the United States. Instead of building new dams to insure cheap power, it is time for the public to pinch a few pennies and commit themselves to ensuring a protected environment.
"THE CRITTERS DOWN UNDER"
Local Dive Shops Teach Sea Life Appreciation

By Daniel McLeod

Without hesitation, I lunge forward, but the overbearing weight forces me to plummet. A glimpse of sunlight is soon lost as a biting coldness is met with a shudder. I arrive, at last, into a world that unfolds with humbling beauty.

My vision is somewhat impaired due to the constraints of a mask. I must adapt. I quickly look for something reassuring to grab, but find nothing. This is not my element. Suddenly I feel small and alone. It feels as if there is not a soul for miles. Seemingly, everything closes in on me, as if I am appetizing to the creatures around me. I remain calm, realizing everything is probably as scared of me as I am of them.

Through the rising air bubbles, I see my dive buddy a couple of feet below. We signal to each other that we are O.K.; we will watch out for one another. Quickly, I re-check my pressure gauge, glance at my compass and test the air flow on my regulator. At this depth I may easily surface if I am not comfortable, but I am. With an outstretched hand I pull my BC's (buoyancy control device) exhaust valve, and air escapes, leaving me to my descent.

The feeling of weightlessness is overwhelming. Excitement and curiosity for the upcoming exploration take over. No longer do I feel the 40 degree water creeping into every little nook and cranny of my wetsuit. No longer do I see the ocean's surface backlit by the occasional sun. No longer do I feel terrestrial. I do remember, however, that I am a visitor.

On the way down, visibility becomes increasingly limited. I am occasionally startled when a creature or object magically appears that I didn't even see coming. I continue to descend in a spiral fashion so that I may be aware of my surroundings. Already at a 60 foot depth, I find the spot where my buddy and I agreed to meet. I think about those people on land overlooking the water, unaware of what is occurring below. They have no idea of the interactions presently taking place or that their own kind are within visibility. The vastness of this world is luring. What I will see is unsuspecting . . .

My experience will not compare to the experiences of others. Every dive is unique. For those who have not dove, recall those movies or TV shows where you have seen exotic locations with coral reefs, colorful fish and sunken wrecks; all this is for you to experience out your back door — in the Puget Sound. Some of the world's best diving, involving an abundance of life and color, can be found right here.

But regardless of what you have seen in photographs or movies, if you have never actually dived yourself, you are missing the feeling of being underwater. Weightlessness allows one to hover over
the edge of an 80 foot cliff, the freedom to move up or down the cliff walls at will and the interaction with a cast of characters: delicate orange Anemones and spiny Nudibranchs, skittish Sculpins and feisty Lingcod, and foreboding Moray eels and playful seals.

Scuba diving offers an excellent way to increase one's awareness of the fragility of the marine environment. The beauty and appreciation gained may be carried over and applied to one's surroundings on land as well. Three scuba shops exist in Bellingham which ensure access and promote marine education.

To determine what marine education these shops offer, I met with each owner. It comes as no surprise that all owners are very familiar with the marine environment considering the amount of logged dives they each have. Dennis Withner's said, "I stopped keeping track years back once I hit 600." Larry Elsevier's approximated he has made over 10,000 dives. Each shop gives presentations to both private and public audiences. All are stewards of Keystone State Park, meaning they help to keep it clean and offer suggestions on improvements. All participate in recycling programs. Adventures Down Under won the Waste Wise Business Award for recycled products in 1993.

Washington Divers, Inc.'s new Environmental Diver specialty course incorporates lectures, dives, beach walks and aquarium visits. The course is taught by employee and former Huxley student, Scott Dawson, and is aimed at a fundamental understanding of marine ecology, identification of flora and fauna, and buoyancy control.

Bellingham Dive-N-Travel and Washington Diver's, Inc. are also involved in a new program called the Diamond Reef. The Diamond Reef educates divers to preserve their surroundings (specifically coral reefs) through proper buoyancy control. The program involves swimming through a series of anchored diamonds of varying sizes without hitting them. If successful, the diver's certification card is stamped, allowing them to dive in sensitive areas without a Dive Master present to help protect the local marine life.

The third shop, Adventures Down Under, has become active in our community's education. Adventures Down Under organized and participated in a Rosario Beach clean-up, works with D.A.R.E. through a program to discover scuba (the $15 class charge is donated to D.A.R.E.), and employs a local artist (Bill Wylan) to create educational murals of local marine life. This shop also offers a dive program for the physically challenged. Wayne Gerner, a representative of Adventures Down Under, discussed this program at the "Adaptive Sports and Recreation Expo," put on by the Parks Department at Bloedel Park, May 13.

Adventures Down Under's biggest success comes from "Critters Down Under," a free educational program now in its fourth year. "Critters Down Under" consists of slide shows, videos, lectures, hand-outs and beach walks. This program is requested once or twice each month. Silver Beach Elementary has requested this program in April, Larrabee Elementary wants it in May and the Boy Scouts have reserved it in June. "Critters Down Under" has become so successful that a proposed Bellingham Aquarium of the Inland Sea (which is still in the planning stages) is interested in taking over the program.

If plans for an aquarium become a reality, it would be Bellingham's biggest marine educational facility. Future plans indicate that this regional aquarium will be approximately 70,000 square feet and located beside Bellingham Bay.

Planners for the aquarium hope the facility will become a financially self-supporting public institution. It will be a place where all can come to see the marine biology of Bellingham Bay, the San Juan Islands and the deep waters of the Passage to Alaska.

It is important to know as much about our environment as possible. I chose the marine environment to explore because it is new to me. Scuba diving gave me the perfect introduction to this marine world. Participation in the sea has made me look differently at the land environment as well. Both land and sea have treasures that need to be preserved. The sustainability of both these environments may improve if we stop viewing humans and our impacts as separate from the environment. Nearly every place on earth has been influenced by humans. Because of this, we try to assess our impact on the natural world.

Fortunately, we can readily see the destruction we are causing in our natural environment and therefore act with more immediacy. The marine environment is a bit trickier, because what is occurs is not as visible and therefore sometimes overlooked. Concerns arising from increased tourism are coming to the forefront. With more hotels, marine parks and boating the water quality, marine life and local community infrastructure is negatively impacted.
We all know that water is essential to life. We must keep it pure so all may survive. Water has also been labeled the universal solvent. We put it to use in an infinite amount of applications. It is hard to keep anything out of water’s reach. Gas leaked in the deserts, fertilizers on the farm, or poisons in the city all are picked up by water, no matter how minute the quantity. Since water is always going somewhere, so is pollution. Half the battle in stopping environmental degradation is knowing where and how to look for signs and then acting upon them.

Statistics are not needed to make one realize that conservation and preservation tactics need to be applied quickly to the marine environment. We all must encourage responsibility and education in order to maintain a healthy way of life for all creatures. After all, our environmental crisis is a crisis in education.

When I asked what conservation or preservation activities Larry Elsevier, of Bellingham Dive-N-Travel, participates in, he replied, “No special groups or activities... just the human race. We should all naturally be aware of the environment in our day-to-day lives.” Think about that — common sense.

For more information contact:
Adventures Down Under
701 E. Holly St., Bellingham
Ron and Barb Akeson, owner
Bellingham Dive-N-Travel
2720 W. Maplewood, Bellingham
Larry Elsevier, owner
Washington Divers, Inc.
903 N. State St., Bellingham
Capt. Dennis and Karen Withner, owners

Silver Beach Elementary along with French exchange students discover marine life during a “Critters Down Under Beach Walk” at Larrabee State Park.
Lacking the Initiative:

New bill will decrease our quality of life, but make some people some money.

By Heather Campbell

Initiative 164 may be a tax payer's worst nightmare. A chemical company could be compensated for denial of a permit to operate a hazardous waste facility. A porn shop owner could be compensated when he/she is denied the permit to relocate next to a school. McDonald's could sue the government for not being allowed to build a restaurant in your neighborhood.

Initiative 164 was recently passed in the State House and later the State Senate. Governor Lowry has no power to veto the law, so a new campaign is being created to obtain the 90,834 signatures required to put Initiative 164 to public vote in November. If the campaign is successful, the law would go to public vote. If past cases are an indication of the future, our community's safety, ecological health and economic stability will suffer.

For decades the courts have been hearing "regulatory takings" cases in which the government's regulations are considered by the owner to take away their property rights. Few plaintiffs ever won, because courts have supported the protection of public health and safety. However, with the passing of Initiative 164, cases which sound like irrational claims for compensation may have grounds to win.

Many supporters of Initiative 164 feel that it reinforces constitutional property rights under the Fifth Amendment. Environmentalists feel that if property is already protected in the Constitution, then there is no need for new regulation. Others feel Initiative 164 is a radical approach to regulatory reform problems that could be dealt with in more reasonable ways.

Problems arise, because Initiative 164 is written in vague language, "The state is responsible for the compensation liability of other governmental entities for any action which restricts the use of property when such action is mandated by state law or any state agency," Title 64 RCW Section 4 (7).

While some laws are text book length, Initiative fits on one page, which leads to a lot of confusion about the specifics. Does that mean that a gas station owner would be entitled to compensation if the Department of Ecology denies a permit to place underground gasoline tanks close to a stream? Do residential zoning regulations as restrict the use of property?

"Any action" could be manipulated to mean almost

The "Takings" Movement is part of a National Movement funded by Big Business, Mostly Building and Timber Industries.
A developer used the “takings” clause to challenge a city ordinance requiring developers to replace low-income housing destroyed by new, more expensive development or to make contributions toward a central housing fund. The ordinance was designed to address a crisis in the availability of low-income housing in the city. The court rejected the developer’s claim.

Sintra, Inc. v. City of Seattle, 829 P.2d 765 (Wash. 1992)

Initiative 164 is about “private property rights nobody could take from you, not even the government—Absolute ownership and responsibility,” says Ron Arnold, Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, which is a self-proclaimed “Think Tank” dedicated to public policy analysis and finding ways to deregulate industry.

While many elderly support Initiative 164, Gene Lux with the Senior Lobby is totally opposed to Initiative 164. “Initiative 164 exists primarily to benefit land speculators who invest in property, which is like the stock market, and they want it risk free.” Lux is concerned that people hoping to cash in on the “taking” of their wetland property will later pay elevated taxes from the costs of Initiative 164.

Business and real estate consultant Kathy Sutter endorses I-164. She feels large developers have no need to support I-164 because they currently have the financial resources to mediate and comply with regulations. However, she is concerned private property owners, without such financial resources, need the initiative to protect their rights and help distribute costs more evenly.

The “takings” movement is part of a national movement funded by big business, mostly building and timber industries. The top three financial supporters of Initiative 164 are Building Industry Association (BIAW), Olympia, $64,301.82; Issues PAC, Olympia, $32,122.35; and Washington Association of Realtors, Olympia, $25,000.00. A Property Rights Bill similar to I-164 is currently in front of the U.S. Congress.

Many citizens support the initiative hoping to protect their property rights and values, but I wonder if they are considering the legal battles the initiative will place on government agencies? Ultimately, because of the financial ramifications, government will be unable to protect property rights and values, which will lead to a decline in both areas. Estimates conclude that it could cost 1.5 billion dollars statewide just to make the economic impact studies the initiative requires.

Fish, wildlife, and water may suffer by forcing the government to compensate private property owners with such resources. This will force the government to choose between the well-being of the environment or incurring substantial costs.

Wetlands are a concern when talking about I-164. Wetlands aid in water purification and help alleviate...
flood damage. Under I-164, wetlands would have to be purchased or lost. Though reform may be needed, there are better ways to work with government than to take away its ability to plan for the future.

“Initiative 164 undermines the process itself. Government will be unable to provide protection because of outlandish compensation and litigation,” says Don Hopps, Director of Coalition for Livable Washington, an organization made up of church, labor and environmental groups working for practical and positive solutions.

Initiative 164 could easily be manipulated into a weapon against local and state governments. Zoning could become a thing of the past. Local control over the placement of porn shops, liquor stores, or even dumps and mines could no longer be enforced. Any private property owner who did not receive a permit to build could, with I-164, claim a “taking” and sue to pay for court fees, estimates, and compensation.

Various mainstream opponents express their concern for the lack of information the public is receiving about the issue. Lucy Steers, action chair on the board for the League of Women Voters said, “Initiative 164 causes local government to choose between protecting the environment and the community’s quality of life.”

Hopps, says “The issue needs to be put before the public. I believe the past several years have polarized in state politics. Initiative 164 continues this trend. It is necessary for the public to decide one way or another.”

Elliot Swaney, a spokesperson for the Building Industry Association told me, “Initiative 164 ensures fundamental property rights and protects private property used for individuals’ retirement. Too often, they come to find out they can’t do what they want with their property.”

Historically the U.S. has attempted to maintain a balance between public and individual rights. People are clamoring for reform, for solutions to problems. There isn’t enough money to support the endless court cases that would be brought against the government for simply doing its best to protect common resources necessary to healthy lives. Better solutions exist to the problems I-164 attempts to fix.

Education is an important tool in protecting our quality of life. Individuals and the public need to be better informed about Initiative 164 and be given the opportunity to make a decision at the voting booths.

Regardless of how much individualism we feel and how much freedom we express, we’re all on this planet together. We share its life-giving resources, and we share the responsibility of protecting the planet. This is one of the essential services governmental agencies perform. Without this ability, individual greed and power could go unchecked, destroying the quality of life we enjoy. Too often we do not realize the gifts we are given until after we have used them up.

With I-164, a landowner may sue the government for prohibiting the destruction of streams like this one.

A chemical company unsuccessfully claimed that a county’s denial of a permit to operate a hazardous waste facility was a “taking.” The company argued that due to extensive contamination in the area, developing a toxic waste dump was the only economically beneficial use of the property.

Guildford County Dept. of Emergency Services v. Seaboard Chemical Corporation, 441 S.E. 2d 177 (N.C. App. 1994)
I'll talk to anybody,” said Robyn DuPre, Conservation Coordinator for the Whatcom County Land Trust (WCLT). “Much of the land we want to preserve belongs to businesses and corporations, and they must be approached in non-confrontational terms.”

Since its founding in 1984, this non-profit, private trust has worked with land owners and public agencies to prevent unwanted development and destruction of habitat. It helps protect land with special cultural or educational value as well.

Robyn joined WCLT about a year and a half ago when the Trust obtained some funding for her position. “We have a very limited staff, and I work for the Land Trust only half-time out of my home,” she explained. She drafts conservation easements, makes weekly visits to people interested in conserving their land with the Trust and raises funds from individual donors.

Robyn graduated from Huxley College in 1983 with a degree in Social Assessment. She put her skills to work with the North Cascades Institute before joining WCLT. “It was a struggle to find work in conservation in Bellingham,” Robyn said. “I’d come to know this area, to have a sense of it. People should know what’s around them to work in conservation.”

A conservation or agricultural easement is the most flexible way for a private landowner to conserve a property’s integrity. WCLT works together with the land owner to design a legal agreement unique to the property and the owner’s interests, goals and concerns. Owners grant certain rights to the Trust, depending on what they want to give. For example, a family may define certain locations where their children may build homes. They can specify what actions may be taken on their land and how far any restrictions may extend.

“It’s a good compromise,” said Robyn. “That way, owners can still live on their land and make allowances for limited construction or use.” After a land owner grants an easement, WCLT accepts the responsibility of yearly monitoring of lands held in trust. Because WCLT is still young, few problems have arisen. “We found nothing that wasn’t easily remedied, or just a mistake,” assured Robyn.

Easement donors have more to gain than the conservation of their land. They can also receive income, property and estate tax reductions. An easement can either allow or restrict public access, or point out specific areas for each. “We won’t rush into any agreement,” Robyn said. “It’s all negotiated and defined. They have to know what they’re doing every step of the way.”

Designing such an agreement can take time, but Robyn understands the concerns land owners have about signing away rights to their property. “It’s a tricky time politically to ask people to give up their development rights. I have to use creative thinking to come up with solutions for every ‘what if’ an owner may have in mind,” she said. “It takes many cups of tea,” she continued with a smile. Robyn knows that the land is often a family’s most valuable asset. Some land owners leave an easement to the Trust in their wills.

Besides working with private land owners, WCLT can act as mediator between agencies in conservation
efforts. Robyn seized the opportunity to put the Natural Heritage Plan, which identifies important county areas to preserve, to work in a historic land trade involving many groups. Although she helped put the plan together, it spent time sitting on a shelf but could then be used as a guide of how to proceed. The Department of Natural Resources, the State Parks Department, Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham, the Trust for Public Lands and the Trillium Corporation made unlikely bedfellows at times during the lengthy negotiations to conserve thousands of Whatcom County acres.

Rand Jack, a Fairhaven College professor as well as attorney with Brett & Daugert Law Firm and WCLT Managing Board member, spent two years working as a facilitator. The land trade was a success in 1993. Areas on Chuckanut Mountain, in the Lake Whatcom Watershed and along the Nooksack River moved into public preservation.

"The Natural Heritage Plan promotes voluntary, non-regulatory approaches to conservation, rather than government-forced sales," Robyn said. Land Trust President, Christopher Moench, concurs. He sees the Trust in an exceptional position to offer alternatives and keep open communications between conservationists and developers. Having just completed a weekend-long strategy planning workshop, Chris was enthusiastic about some new plans for the Trust.

"My time will be reoriented from daily operations to implementing policy, projects, and overseeing committee functions," he said, as we sat in Tony’s coffee shop in Fairhaven. "The Trust wants to counter the tendency to politicize and polarize land use issues." Chris believes that oversimplifying conservation issues negates the interdependency of life and the responsibility everyone shares in it. "Today’s political climate encourages cultivated ignorance," he said with a slight grimace.

He remains optimistic in the face of it, though. "With additional staff and board support, I’ll go out and do more projects and be able to support Robyn," said Chris. He has been president of the Trust for about three years. Rand Jack encouraged him to join WCLT after Chris graduated from Fairhaven College with a degree in conservation in society, ethics and law. Chris spent nine months as an intern with the Public Defenders Office, then joined WCLT board in 1988. He joked about being elected president: "Nobody else wanted it!"

Whatcom County Land Trust is heading into the future armed with some new goals and a bit of restructuring. Though reluctant to speak of impending easements, both Robyn and Chris are excited about them. Squire’s Lake may soon join the list of land held in trust with WCLT. “Half the funding is from a private donor, and the other half may come from the City Council,” Chris said. “They have yet to vote – it’s still a bit delicate.”

However, the largest blue heron rookery on the West Coast at Point Roberts is not so secure. “The 601 budget killed state help,” Robyn said. “The heronry won’t be funded by the state - none will. But there is a good side: it’s a catalyst for the Land Trust to buy it, to begin funding a campaign.”

It doesn’t always take a lot of money to conserve land. What it does take is a strong conservation ethic, and the willingness to speak with "anybody." Entrusting land ensures its preservation forever.
A smiling woman with sea green eyes and bare feet welcomed me with a warm handshake. Patrice Clark was happy to tell me the story of Clark's Point and her family's remarkable gift to Whatcom County Land Trust. The Point is 68 acres of private, protected nature jutting into Bellingham Bay, an emerald ring on the land's little finger.

My journey to the Point drew me through a tunnel in time, before mass development, to a place with enormous rocks and generously girthed trees.

"I was so pleased the day it happened, how it all came together," Patrice said as we sat at her table. The Clark family wanted to keep their land as undisturbed as possible, and considered the ways they might do that. "We had to all agree, my parents, my sister and brother and their spouses, as well as me and my husband."

Patrice's dog, Mia, slept contentedly near my feet as his owner's soft voice recounted how the Clarks came to know WCLT. "I credit Rand Jack with making it possible," Patrice asserted. "He sort of crashed a dinner meeting set up by Mayor Tim Douglas between us and a City Parks representative," she said, laughing at the memory.

The Clark family signed a conservation easement with WCLT on January 19, 1990. This agreement left the ownership with the Clarks, but gave most of the development rights to WCLT to hold in perpetuity.

"I was amazed at the response of other people - the phone calls, letters and newspaper articles," mused Patrice. "Even while they are so happy the Point will be preserved, they ask how we could give up the development rights. I don't think of just having some and needing more," she went on, and led me onto her back porch.

Mia sat squinting peacefully on the sun-warmed boards of the porch as more hummingbirds than I'd ever seen in one place whirred about our heads. Patrice stepped indoors to get her binoculars so we might identify the large group of birds floating out on the water.

"Those are grebes! Dad and I thought they'd all gone," she exclaimed, and handed me the binoculars. As I looked at their long necks with white throats and black tops, Patrice explained how the birds migrate to Eastern Washington for the summer.

"We have many types of birds living here. Soon after we signed the easement, a pair of bald eagles moved in; it's like they knew it would now be safe. And we have a family of geese living somewhere about. Do you hear them?" she asked me. We walked toward her garden as a pair of band-tailed pigeons settled on the nearby feeder.

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Patrice made a quick phone call to her father and we went to see the original house where he still lives, built in 1961. The tall and hardy 87-year-old stood to meet us and showed me pictures of the Point taken before the house was built, as well as a more recent one. Amazingly enough, the Point is actually greener now than in the past.

Outside, Patrice's green eyes took in the woods around her. "You have to look at the balance. I've always thought nature should win."

Driving away from Clark's Point early that afternoon, I came across a pair of yearling deer grazing by the narrow road. Their summer coats were just coming in. The gangly youngsters couldn't decide where to go, and I smiled as one misjudged his leap and hooked a leg through a little sapling. He corrected himself and we both went our separate ways. Though I removed nothing from Clark's Point, I left with much more than I had before.
Pepper, an aging black dog, met me in the driveway of Miller Farm and escorted me to her master, Herman Miller. I noticed the fresh grassy scent in the air, the absence of mud and signs of overgrazing. Gently rolling pastures held only a handful of animals each. The property is a 160 acre pocket of protected farmland. It has been Mr. Miller’s home for all of his 76 years. He gave me a country nod and smile as he worked with a rusted old garage door spring.

“I was cabin-born, in November of 1918, just across the road there,” Mr. Miller said, pointing to a field with a few fruit trees. As he began to recount the story of the adjacent land’s continual sales and partitioning, Pepper leaned against my legs with her head in my hand. Mr. Miller’s clear blue eyes saw more than the modern housing next door, and his skin and teeth gave testimony to a healthy lifestyle.

The Millers hoped their easement with Whatcom County Land Trust would encourage other farmers to preserve their lands. “I guess everyone is thinking of money. The land is getting chopped into pieces,” Mr. Miller said. “No other farmlands in the area have been preserved - some people are interested, but they’re not in it yet.”

We came to a low electric fence, and Mr. Miller held it down with a screwdriver for me to step over. “Watch where you walk,” he warned me with a smile. As we walked up a gentle grade, the grass brushed my shins and a few young cows paused in their grazing to regard our progress. The farm doesn’t suffer from overpowering herds of cattle; instead, Mr. Miller keeps the numbers low enough to keep the land healthy.

Pepper explored the pasture ahead of us as we topped a rise overlooking what was once Telegraph Road. “Our house used to be here, but we slid it closer to the road using horses back in 1925,” Mr. Miller said. “Though that house is gone, that’s the same maple tree I planted when I was thirteen or fourteen.” The tree towers over the present home of Herman Miller and his wife, Diane.

“We used to see meadowlarks and blue-birds, but they’re gone now,” said Mr. Miller. “We still have kill-deer. Their chicks look like balls of wool on stilts,” he went on, laughing. The Millers wanted to ensure their land would never be parcelled out and the remaining orchards and stands of firs lost to development. They began to look for ways to protect it and heard of a new organization called Whatcom County Land Trust at some county meetings.

“We learned how to do it together,” said Mr. Miller with a smile. “Ours was the first easement granted to the Trust. Rand Jack was very active in it and helped to set up the ground rules.” On February 11, 1986, Miller Farm was ensured its future as the Millers signed an agreement with WCLT. We came to a barn with a few young calves, including an orphan that Mr. Miller saved days earlier, and the family’s old riding horse named Diablo. Each animal greeted Mr. Miller with soft sounds and an extended nose.

As we ended our visit in the beef cattle pasture, Mr. Miller bent to pick up a stray baling string. “This will give the cows indigestion,” he explained. Both his love of Whatcom County and his farm were evident in Herman Miller’s manner; his generous grant will ensure an island of green amidst the tide of development.

Herman Miller with Pepper on their farm.
When The Rain
Hits The Drain

By Kevin Raudebaugh

I wore gloves when handling the star burners because the Mr. Muscle oven cleaner I had coated them with was so reactive it would have burned my skin. Carrying them at arm’s length, I managed to get the burners outside and propped up against a wall in the parking lot as I had been taught to do. As I hosed them off I watched the flow of Mr. Muscle foam. It was with no small sense of regret that I read the words encrypted on the drain: “Dump no pollutants, runoff to stream.”

The early afternoon sky had a yellowish cast as I sat in the office of Robin Matthews, Professor of Toxicology at Huxley College. “Non-point source runoff is a huge problem,” she told me. Non-point source pollution is defined by the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority as pollution which “originates from a number of dispersed activities and sources rather than a larger, more distinct source, such as an industry.” Matthews is definitely familiar with the issue, considering her extensive studies on the Lake Whatcom watershed.

A variety of problems are associated with non-point source runoff. The most obvious is chemical pollutants entering the storm drain, either directly or indirectly, carried along by storm water runoff. People dump pollutants such as old antifreeze and motor oil directly down storm drains. Chemical pesticides often linger where they are sprayed until it rains, and are then washed into storm drains. Pollutants tend to adhere to sediment particles, especially small ones, and are carried into streams through erosion.

The result of all this pollution is that fish are dying. Fish kills attributed to pollution, along with a decline in fish populations, have been documented in almost every major urban watershed in Whatcom County. I spoke to Brian Smart, Senior Service Water Technician for the City of Bellingham about this. He pointed out that there is particular concern for the fish in Whatcom Creek, home to two fish hatcheries.

“Streams are receiving the brunt of the impact from storm water,” he told me. “All streams in Bellingham receive storm water runoff.”

Despite all the problems with storm water, both Smart and Matthews remained positive throughout our talks, largely because of efforts being made to solve the problems. Smart informed me of the City of Bellingham Storm Water Management Ordinance, which is currently under review. The purpose of the ordinance is to reduce the amount of storm water pollution, in accordance with state minimum requirements.

Only the minimum requirements? I called up Chris Spens, Senior Envi-
Environmental Planner for Bellingham, and found out about a larger, more comprehensive 700 page document called the Watershed Master Plan. So what, I asked, is the difference between the Storm Water Management Ordinance and the Master Plan?

"The Master Plan is the best strategy," he said, "or kind of the watershed wish list. The ordinance is set up to fulfill the minimum requirements. Ideally, through grants or other laws, we will be able to fill in the gaps between the two."

The ordinance focuses on land development sites, a major cause of sedimentation in storm water. Areas affected by the ordinance are not limited to new developments, but extend to small redevelopment. The ordinance calls for control of runoff sediment from soils exposed by development, and the stabilization of all exposed soils within seven days in the dry season and two days in the rainy season. It goes on to require long term treatment of the site's storm runoff produced in accordance with the Department of Ecology's guidelines.

Examples of storm water management practices range from grassy swales, which are little more than ditches with plants, to wet detention ponds. Wet detention ponds are ponds set up near the destination of the drainage route and usually support plant life.

Wet detention ponds, according to most studies, have proved to be the most effective form of storm water pollution control. One pond studied in Madison, Wisconsin, showed decreases of 88 percent of sediments and 93 percent of total lead. There are 14 public and numerous private wet detention ponds in Bellingham, according to Brian Smart.

Matthews also talked to me about different solutions to the problem of non-point source pollution in storm water runoff. She is a member of Whatcom Watershed Information Network (WWIN), a grass roots organization devoted to maintaining the water quality of the Lake Whatcom watershed. This is definitely a worthy cause, considering most of Bellingham draws its drinking water from Lake Whatcom.

I also spoke with Joy Monjure, Education Coordinator for the Department of Public Works, as well as a member of WWIN. She explained to me that WWIN has set up a massive education network to curb the problems associated with storm water. "Storm water is our biggest concern in the watershed," Monjure said.

Monjure hosts a radio show on KGMI at 10:35 on Saturday mornings dealing with water quality problems. Other activities she and WWIN are involved in are: a bi-weekly column in the Bellingham Herald, a newsletter, a tour through a water treatment plant for fourth graders, a march in the Ski to Sea parade and a poster contest. The result of all this? "Bellingham has excellent drinking water," she said. "Our pre-treated drinking water is better than some tap water in the Seattle area."

WWIN’s efforts are an incredible asset to the community. But unfortunately, the focus of WWIN is the Lake Whatcom watershed and does not reach most of the city’s residents and streams. The

Fish kills attributed to pollution, along with a decline in fish populations, have been documented in almost every major urban watershed in Whatcom County.

When dumped down the drain pollutants don't just disappear.
Storm Water Management Ordinance is also limited, for it addresses only development sites, and not existing structures.

At about 6:00 a.m. twice a week at McDonald's, an employee walks outside to complete the cleaning duties. These duties include scrubbing the drive-thru, for which they use a chemical degreaser. After scrubbing the asphalt, the employee washes the degreaser down the storm drain, which washes directly into the salmon bearing Whatcom Creek.

I used to work at Sizzler in Meridian Plaza. We used all sorts of exciting chemicals to clean the floors, and kept chemical cleaning solutions such as the chlorine bleach in the mop bucket, which we dumped down the floor drains when they got too dirty. I assumed that this was all good and safe, but the floor drains at Sizzler are also connected directly to a city storm drain.

These two examples demonstrate the large and unwieldy problem of poorly designed existing structures, the full extent of which I can only guess at. It would be unreasonable to require Sizzler to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on replacing the drainage system. Solutions are certainly limited, but not impossible.

At the restaurant where I am currently employed, we recently switched from using a chemical degreaser to using an organic, biodegradable citrus based degreaser. There are, in fact, many biodegradable alternatives to chemicals such as cleaners and pesticides. Some even work better than their synthesized counterparts, and the cost is comparable.

When I was at the Department of Engineering in City Hall, I found a free pamphlet on common household chemicals, less harmful alternatives and proper disposal methods. Go down and pick one up; they are just outside the door on a shelf.

Fish are dying in our streams and rivers. Shellfish are sometimes too toxic to eat. Many bottom fish caught in Bellingham Bay are infested with tumors. By polluting storm water, we are not just hurting ourselves, but the animals that live in and feed off the water. All it takes to stop this is for people to pay attention to where they are dumping their waste. So do the planet a favor, and do what you can to keep our storm water clean.

Polluted tributaries have caused numerous fish kills in Whatcom Creek.
A Big Chapter in the Book of Huxley Ends

Difficult he was at times, but he still felt like a father. Huxley professor Michael Frome will leave Huxley College at the end of spring quarter. He was the advisor for The Planet, and his absence will be felt by us all.

No other professor I have known was willing to spend so much time with his students. After editing my articles a fifth time, he might say, “Aim high. Don’t sell yourself short.” It was this kind of excellence that he demanded, and he would not accept anything less. Having my article worked over five times was probably one of the most intellectually challenging experiences I have ever had. After many such experiences, though, he would invite me over for food, chips or beer.

Michael is short in stature, but big in heart. On Earth Day, he told the crowd, “I want you all to love everybody, including your adversaries.” This is exceptional coming from somebody with such a rocky career as Michael.

As Conservation Editor of Field and Stream, he criticized industries and federal agencies. They complained to the publisher and enlisted powerful politicians until ultimately, he was dismissed. Nevertheless he teaches his students, “Get your facts straight and don’t be afraid to come on strong for what you believe is right.”

One time I was going to quote an industry representative who had clearly manipulated the truth. I was going to follow the quote with the actual truth. “Now, that’s a low blow,” Michael told me, “Call him back and ask him again. Fight the good fight.” Michael taught his students to treat others with totally opposing viewpoints with respect, even if it is not reciprocated.

Another time he told me, “What these (loggers, miners, and ranchers) people have is a deep-rooted dislike for the government. And I don’t trust the government one bit either.”

He has written 13 books, and he plans to continue writing in the next phase of his career. The government is an enormous landowner - nearly one third of the country - and Michael is cited in my textbooks as an expert on this subject. He has led a full and active life. He traveled all over the world as a navigator in World War II, then returned to war-torn Europe to write front-page reports for the Washington Post.

Michael has brought a great deal of environmental knowledge to his students. He has been very involved with the environmental movement, and has hobnobbed with the likes of Rachel Carson, Ansel Adams, Dave Foreman, and even Lyndon Johnson.

Michael taught us to strive for excellence, and have fun while doing it. We have learned a great deal from his experiences. We’ll remember you, Michael.