Protecting the Skagit Headwaters

An International Coalition of nearly 300 opposes mining

A Saison for the Skagit: Brewshed® Alliance Members Brew Up a Unique Collaboration

Wild Olympics Passes House of Representatives
I’m originally from the East Coast. My family chose to move to Washington nine years ago in part because of the amazing wilderness. What’s unique about living in Seattle is that there’s something for everyone when it comes to nature. Within an hour, you could be skiing, river rafting, hiking, or exploring tide pools.

My favorite thing to do is camping. We try to hit at least three campsites every summer and like to go with different families. I love to unplug, and I love even more that my children unplug and can happily spend a weekend playing hide and seek in the woods or whittling sticks.

I’ve worked at nonprofits throughout my career, including environmental organizations. I think many people don’t realize that the laws we have in place to protect our most treasured places are not impenetrable. There are constant attacks on public lands and waters and without the hard work of organizations, elected leaders, and concerned citizens actively defending against these threats they would have been sold off to the highest bidder long ago.

Maureen McGregor
Board Member and longtime Washington Wild supporter

Notes from the Board

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Special thank you to Joe Foy for the cover photo.

Graphic Design by Kristen Proctor.

PROTECTING THE SKAGIT HEADWATERS

Nestled between Skagit Valley Provincial Park and E.C. Manning Provincial Park in British Columbia lies the “donut hole,” an area of land containing lush forests and clean, clear water that serve as the headwaters of the Skagit River. The iconic Skagit River flows down from this starting place through the North Cascades and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, eventually ending in the Puget Sound, providing 30% of the Sound’s freshwater.

Protecting the Skagit Headwaters is a transboundary issue. In 1984 British Columbia and the City of Seattle signed the Ross Dam Treaty to resolve disputes over Ross Dam and to conserve, maintain, and enhance wilderness and recreation qualities of the Skagit Watershed going forward.

In 2018, the spirit and intent of this agreement was broken as clear-cut logging began in the Skagit Headwaters without warning. Road development and land clearing posed another serious threat; easier access to develop a proposed copper mine by Imperial Metals Corporation, the company responsible for the infamous Mount Polley mine disaster of 2014, which spilled more than 24 million cubic meters of wastewater laden with arsenic, lead, selenium and copper into the Fraser River watershed. This devastating event was one of the biggest environmental disasters in Canadian history.

With decades of winning coalition building experience, Washington Wild was called upon to lead a new international coalition to urge the British Columbia government to stop logging and mining in the Skagit Headwaters, respect Tribal communities, and protect conservation and recreation values for downstream communities within the Skagit Watershed.

MEDIA ATTENTION GROWS

With a little strategy and a lot of passion, a small movement can grow into something much bigger. What began as a coalition of 15 now totals nearly 300 entities working to protect the Skagit Headwaters. To gain supporters in the fight against logging and mining, the coalition knew it had to harness media attention and grassroots advocacy.

While media outlets in Skagit counties and Seattle brought attention to downstream threats, Washington Wild worked with Canadian coalition partners, including The Wilderness Committee and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-BC) to generate media attention on the mine issue on the Canadian side of the border.

“From long-term economic and environmental benefits to cultural and recreational value, the health of the rich and intact Skagit headwaters is imperative on both sides of the border.”

Jessie Corey, Terrestrial Conservation Manager at CPAWS-BC.
is imperative on both sides of the border," said Jessie Corey, Terrestrial Conservation Manager at CPAWS-BC. "Development in this ecosystem would harm the broader landscape—including the surrounding protected provincial parks, Skagit and Manning—and threaten the struggling species that live within them, like grizzly bears and Spotted Owls."

The coalition took out a paid ad in the Vancouver Sun in June 2019 with a direct ask to Canadian policy-makers. "Washington Wild's persistent and strategic advocacy effort leading our international coalition of stakeholders was critical in garnering significant attention from federal and state policy-makers; ultimately securing a ban on logging and a hold on an exploratory mining permit in the Upper Skagit Watershed in British Columbia," said Maura Brueger, Government and Legislative Affairs Director at Seattle City Light.

LOGGING IS HALTED IN THE SKAGIT HEADWATERS

When we work together, we accomplish more. In December 2019, the growing coalition celebrated a major win from media and grassroots efforts: a ban on future logging in the Skagit Headwaters.

"We’ve heard loud and clear from individuals and groups on both sides of the border that logging should stop in the Silverdaisy," said Doug Donaldson, BC Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development, "We’re making sure that commercial timber harvesting in that area does not continue."

Washington Wild has brought together a diverse number of stakeholders in the continued fight to protect the Skagit Headwaters, including Seattle City Light, who depends on utility power as part of negotiations from the High Ross Treaty.

"Washington Wild’s persistent and strategic advocacy effort leading our international coalition of stakeholders was critical in garnering significant attention from federal and state policy-makers; ultimately securing a ban on logging and a hold on an exploratory mining permit in the Upper Skagit Watershed in British Columbia," said Maura Brueger, Government and Legislative Affairs Director at Seattle City Light.

TRIBES AND FIRST NATIONS VALUED LEADERS IN OPPOSITION TO MINING

While logging has been halted, the coalition continues to push back on the proposed mining permit.

"Due to the strong opposition, the mining permit is still pending after more than two years, a process that normally is approved in a matter of months. Currently, the BC Government is consulting with First Nations as they consider how to proceed."

The Skagit Headwaters are unceded Indigenous lands for First Nations. Upper Skagit, Stó:lō, Syilx and Nlaka’pamux people have been integral to Tribal treaty rights and rights of the fish, wildlife and natural and cultural resources on which our existence is based.

meadows, and streams since time immemorial for essentials such as clean water, wild foods, old-growth wood and other cultural materials needed for medicines and spirituality. Downstream in Washington, the Skagit River produces the most salmon, which are integral to Tribal treaty rights and lifeways for U.S. Tribes.

Tribes and First Nations have been valued leaders in the opposition to the mine by sending formal letters to Premier Horgan and publishing a joint op-ed in The Seattle Times.

"The proposed mining in the Skagit headwaters poses a significant and devastating threat to our inherent Indigenous Title and Rights and the fish, wildlife and natural and cultural resources on which our existence is based," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SPEAK UP

It’s a rare thing for governments of an entire region to agree on something. The last time every government of the Skagit region came together on land use was the era of the Magic Skagit – a united effort to oppose a nuclear power plant.

To date, 15 local Skagit County Government and Land Use Authorities have formally opposed Imperial Metals’ pending mining permit through resolutions and opposition letters expressing concerns for downstream public health, economy, agricultural irrigation, and clean drinking water for 140,000 Skagit Valley residents.

Local Skagit County government leaders understand that the Skagit River is our last, best hope to recover diminishing salmon populations, particularly chinook salmon which are crucial to Orca population recovery. They are united in not allowing one proposal to erase the millions of dollars of investment in salmon recovery over the past decades.

"This is an unacceptable risk to the lives and livelihoods of an entire region," said Laurie Gere, Mayor of Anacortes, which is situated near the mouth of the Skagit River.

"The residents of Anacortes are connected to the Skagit River and rely on it for clean water, economic benefits, recreation and for the quality of life that makes this such a special place to live."

Washington Wild will continue to lead the international coalition of First Nations, Tribes, elected officials, local businesses, and conservation and recreation organizations to oppose the mining permit and permanently protect the Skagit Headwaters for all of us. a
Washington Wild is leading an International Coalition of nearly 300 entities opposing a mining permit in the Canadian headwaters of the Skagit River. Mining would put hard-fought downstream values at risk including clean water, salmon habitat, tribal lifeways, local communities, and economies.

**TRIBES & FIRST NATIONS (10)**

**LOCAL BUSINESSES (61)**

**CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS (55)**

**RECREATION, HUNTING, & FISHING (29)**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (133)**

**NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PARKS**

**SKAGIT WATERSHED**

**SKAGIT WILD & SCENIC RIVER**

**DRINKING WATER**

Skagit Public Utilities Division (Skagit PUD) is the largest water purveyor in Skagit County, serving potable water to more than 80,000 people from mountain streams in the Skagit River Basin.

**ORCAS**

The Skagit River provides 30% of the Puget Sound’s freshwater. Maintaining a healthy Skagit watershed is critical to supporting Chinook Salmon and Orca Recovery.

**TRIBAL LIFEWAYS**

The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs has consistently opposed mining in the Skagit Headwaters, citing threats to their Tribal Lifeways.

**BIRDS**

The Skagit River provides 30% of the Puget Sound’s freshwater. Maintaining a healthy Skagit watershed is critical to supporting Chinook Salmon and Orca Recovery.

**PROTECTING THE SKAGIT HEADWATERS FOR DOWNSTREAM COMMUNITIES**

Washington Wild is leading an International Coalition of nearly 300 entities opposing a mining permit in the Canadian headwaters of the Skagit River. Mining would put hard-fought downstream values at risk including clean water, salmon habitat, tribal lifeways, local communities, and economies.

**NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PARKS**

THE DONUT HOLE

E.C. MANNING PROVINCIAL PARK

SKAGIT VALLEY PROVINCIAL PARK

ROSS LAKE

GORGE LAKE

LAC SHANNON

NEWHALEM

SKAGIT HEADWATERS

SKAGIT BAY

SALISH SEA

Enjoy the beauty of Skagit County with its stunning landscapes, wildlife, and outdoor activities. Explore the Skagit River, which is home to one of the largest Chinook salmon populations in the Puget Sound region. Protecting the Skagit Headwaters is crucial for sustaining these precious resources and ensuring a healthy ecosystem for generations to come.
The Skagit: A River that Connects Us All

By Tom Wooten

The Skagit River of Northwest Washington State has always been about connections. The river connects the mountains of the North Cascades to the Salish Sea. Since time immemorial it has connected Indigenous Peoples to trade routes and carried salmon to both the saltwater and freshwater environments in the largest upstream migration of nutrients in the natural world.

Salmon are a cultural keystone species for Coast Salish People like the Samish Indian Nation. Salmon connect us to our cultural identity and link us to our relatives in the Southern Resident Killer Whale populations of the San Juan Archipelago. Without salmon, you will not have the Southern Resident Killer Whales. As my mentor Ken Hansen once said, “As the whales go! So do we as native peoples.”

Climate Change, pollution, development have all played a role in creating the plight that salmon, orca, and native communities now face. The prospect of an industrial-scale open pit mining operation proposed by Imperial Metals Corporation in the very headwaters of the Skagit River poses an existential threat to one of the region’s largest remaining salmon runs. Salmon recovery does not happen in Washington unless the stocks of the Skagit River can recover and grow. An industrial-scale open pit mining operation presents a long-term, unmitigable risk to onsite and downstream cultural, environmental, and economic resources to the entire region.

The Samish Indian Nation stands in opposition of any mining operation in the headwaters of the Skagit River and has passed a resolution through Tribal Council stating this, which has been shared with legislators on both sides of the border. As Samish, it goes back to our mission to create a lasting sustainable future for the next seven generations to come. We support Washington Wild’s leadership in coordinating a growing international coalition of more than 280 tribes, first nations, elected officials, local businesses and other stakeholders from both British Columbia and Washington State to prevent this mine from happening.

Salmon are the heart of the food source for both native peoples that came before us and our brothers and sisters, the orcas. We live in a world where everything is connected, and water is at this center. If this circle is broken on the Skagit River, there will be nothing but memories.

Tom Wooten is Chairman of the Samish Indian Nation, a local tribe whose culture closely aligns with the Salish Sea headquartered on Fidalgo Island, near Anacortes. We support Washington Wild’s leadership in coordinating a growing international coalition of more than 280 tribes, first nations, elected officials, local businesses and other stakeholders from both British Columbia and Washington State to prevent this mine from happening.

We are proud members of the Washington Wild Brewshed® Alliance. Collaborations like this help elevate conservation issues as we work together in our shared interest of protecting our wildlands and waterways. The Skagit River is an invaluable wildland and waterway. We are proud to work with Fair Isle Brewing to bring you a unique collaboration.

A Saison for the Skagit

Brewshed® Alliance Members Brew Up a Unique Collaboration

When thinking about the iconic Skagit River, one might imagine bald eagles, thick forests, majestic peaks, tulips, and salmon. All these and more depend on the health of the Skagit watershed in order to thrive. What might not come to mind immediately is the craft brewing industry. But Brewers, malsters, and the farmers that grow barley, one of beer’s core ingredients, rely on the river. Imperial Metals Corporation—the company responsible for the infamous Mount Polley disaster—has a pending permit to begin mining in the Skagit Headwaters in British Columbia. This puts us all at risk downstream.

So, when Fair Isle Brewing joined the Washington Wild Brewshed® Alliance earlier this year we asked ourselves, how can we raise awareness and make some noise to stop Imperial Metals? By brewing up an Imperial Saison called Diane. Fair Isle is a farmhouse style brewery renowned for creating saisons that reflect the bounty of Washington state. This beer showcases some of the best of what the Skagit Valley region has to offer through thoughtfully selected ingredients, all of which rely on the Skagit River’s clean water.

Skagit Valley Malting donated barley representative of the terroir of two important geographic locations: 50% of the malt was grown in the Skagit Valley near their malthouse, and 50% was grown in the Fraser Valley in BC near the Skagit headwaters. Locally sourced blueberries from Bow Hill Farm add a fruity character and distinctive pink hue. As the brewing process continued, we added conifer tips foraged from a farm in Mount Vernon overlooking the Skagit River. The forage day was hosted by Diane and Mark Studley and brought together team members from Washington Wild, Fair Isle, Skagit Valley Malting, and Yakima Chief Hops.

Yakima Chief Hops—who was recently honored at our Wild Night Out event with the 2021 Brewshed® Award—contributed select Salmon Safe® hops to complement the dynamic flavor profile of this one-of-a-kind beer. Fair Isle, Skagit Valley Malting, and Yakima Chief Hops are all proud members of the Washington Wild Brewshed® Alliance. Collaborations like this help elevate conservation issues as we work together in our shared interest of protecting our wildlands and waterways.

The Skagit River is an invaluable and beloved resource that nourishes wildlife, ecosystems, agriculture, and communities. We are proud to work with Fair Isle Brewing to bring you a unique taste of all this region has to offer—and all that’s at stake.

Christopher Michel/Courtesy of Tom Wooten

Tom Wooten is Chairman of the Samish Indian Nation, a local tribe whose culture closely aligns with the Salish Sea headquartered on Fidalgo Island, near Anacortes.
**WILD PROFILES**

**Caramia and Kevin Murry**  
*Owners of Hot Cakes Molten Chocolate Cakery*

While both Caramia and Kevin Murry of Hot Cakes Molten Chocolate Cakery were not born here, they consider themselves Washingtonians. At one year old, Kevin arrived in Washington from Massachusetts and grew up on the coast. Caramia moved here with her parents at the age of 5 from California, noting that her stepfather grew up in Seattle.

“One of my favorite activities growing up was summer camp as I loved to explore and hike to learn about our local wildlife and environment,” said Caramia, “I especially loved Camp Waskowitz that my school participated in every year.”

Kevin and Caramia’s favorite outdoor activities are hiking with their lab, Reggie, exploring everything the amazing PNW has to offer, and anything that has to do with water. Golden Gardens is a particularly fond spot of her PNW reigns supreme, her parents were sailors, skiers, and hikers. They spent most of their spare time outdoors as well as traveling all throughout the west after they immigrated to the US.

“I fell in love with Washington after high school and spent the next 35 years climbing mountains, hiking, skiing, kayaking, and backpacking when we weren’t working,” said Gro. “We now live in Leavenworth where we are closer to all the places we love as well as enjoy protecting and advocating for.”

Between the two of them, they are on three boards that protect the environment and promote interactive conservation education: The Wenatchee River Institute, The Chelan Douglas Land Trust, and a newer organization, The Friends of Leavenworth.

“We believe that being involved with our community and advocating for conservation and preservation of lands is a fundamental citizen responsibility, which is why we support organizations such as Washington Wild.”

It’s now been over 20 years of support from these two incredible people, which began with an interesting introduction to our work. “We originally heard about Washington Wild on a Sierra Club trip to Cuba, where a Washington Wild board member was part of the group and filled us in on your organization. Ever since that trip we have added Washington Wild to our quarterly donation list.”

Thank you, Gro and Bruce for your ongoing support! ▲

**Gro Buer and Bruce Williams**  
*20-year supporters of Washington Wild*

Bruce Williams was born in Seattle and has checked pretty much every adventure box you can think of. As a kid, his family, sailed, hiked, skied and backpacked all over the state. As their passion for the outdoors grew, so did their appetite for adventure, culminating with all four teenagers climbing Mt. Rainier with their dad, Walter Williams. Now in his 60s, the adventures continue, as well as the commitment to protecting Washington’s wild places.

Gro Buer took a different path to the great Pacific Northwest. Originally from Norway, where the outdoors reigns supreme, her parents were sailors, skiers, and hikers. It didn’t take much convincing to ask our community to grab one of these incredibly delicious treats. This was the 6th year that Hot Cakes has contributed to our organization’s work, and year after year we are amazed with the amount of support we receive.

“I have a profound love and respect for our wild lands and believe it is extremely important to conserve our natural areas for all of our future generations to explore and enjoy,” said Caramia.

Thank you Caramia and Kevin for your continued support of Washington Wild and the positive impact you are making on our community. ▲

Learn more about Washington Wild and our supporters at wawild.org

**Conservation Updates**

**WILD NIGHT OUT Raises $60,000!**

On Thursday, September 30th, many of you joined us for the 17th year of hosting Wild Night Out. Ran as a virtual event, our guests from all over the state and country, celebrated with us on our leadership and impact of the Skagit Headwaters Coalition. Our program featured three incredible award winners, a virtual paddle raise, and an online auction. With your support, we were able to hit our fundraising goal and keep the pressure on Imperial Metals and the mining threat in the Skagit Headwaters.

**WILD OLYMPICS PASSES THE HOUSE AS PART OF THE NDAA**

For the second time this year, the Wild Olympics and Scenic Rivers Act—sponsored by Senator Patty Murray and Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA-06)—has passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill passed early in the new congressional session in February, and again in September as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The NDAA offers another opportunity to advance the bill in both House and Congress. The Wild Olympics legislation would permanently protect more than 126,500 acres of Olympic National Forest as wilderness and 19 rivers and their major tributaries—a total of 464 river miles—as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

**WASHINGTON WILD TAKES ACTION TO PROTECT MOUNT RAINIER AND OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARKS FROM NOISE POLLUTION**

Washington Wild coordinated a letter undersigned by 28 conservation and recreation organizations urging the National Parks Service to conduct an environmental assessment before allowing low-flying commercial air tours over Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks. The National Park Service’s draft Air Tour Management Plans for these beloved parks—both of which feature over 90% of their area as federally designated Wilderness—do not currently assess environmental impacts on wildlife, park resources, or peace and quiet of visitor experiences. In addition to a comment letter, Washington Wild mobilized supporters to take action and contact the National Park Service, resulting in 770 messages sent in just five days!

**CONGRATS TO OUR 2021 AWARD WINNERS!**

- Conservation Voices Award: Scott Shawley
- Founder’s Award: Richard Bradsmith
- Browiesed! Alliance Award: Yakima Chief Hops
- Conservation Hero: Karen M. Fant
- Wild Olympics Action Award: Scott Shawley
- Conservation Voices Award: Scott Shawley
- Seyfarth 2021 Wild Olympics Action Award: Richard Bradsmith
- Conservation Voices Award: Scott Shawley
- Conservation Voices Award: Scott Shawley

**THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!**

-Grayl
- Seyfarth
- DLA Piper
- Recology
For over three years, we’ve led an international coalition to protect the Skagit Headwaters from a mining threat. We’re at nearly 300 community stakeholders strong. Will you join us?

Give now to sustain our work to save the skagit: wawild.org/donate

Photo courtesy of The Wilderness Committee