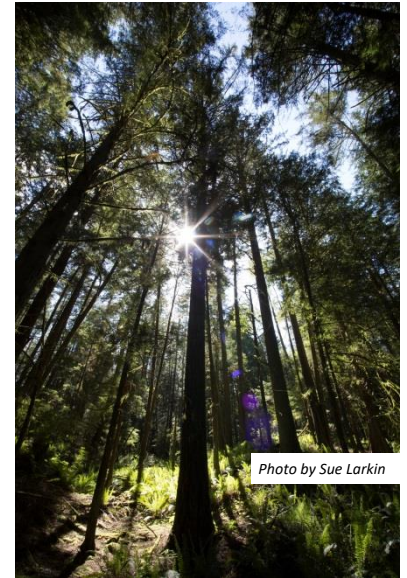


Bainbridge Island Land Trust

2018 Year in Review- Celebrating our History and Focusing on the Work Ahead

We are grateful that the people of Bainbridge Island embrace conservation and support preserving the island's natural character. 2018 was a record-breaking year for the Land Trust. We completed the largest number of land transactions in our history along with a multitude of important conservation accomplishments as we strive to "keep pace" with development pressures. Our significant body of work reminds us of how far we've come as a community, especially as we celebrate the Land Trust's 30th anniversary year with all of our members, partners and supporters.

The Bainbridge Island Land Trust was founded in 1989 by Jim Cutler, Paul Kuntz, Mike Ryherd, Nate Thomas and Maureen Buckley and governed by its first Board of Directors which included the founders as well as the following Islanders: Larry Luce, Erika Szgethy, and Dick Brown. Its mission: **to preserve and steward the diverse natural environment of Bainbridge Island for the benefit of all.** To achieve this goal, the Bainbridge Island Land Trust acquires interests in land having significant or potentially significant conservation values such as scenic vistas, wetlands, open spaces, tidelands, forest, unique plant and animal habitats and stream and wildlife corridors. We work with private landowners to protect their land using land protection agreements called conservation easements. We also work with a variety of partners to acquire land for parks, trails and public use.



The catalyst for formation of the Land Trust 30 years ago occurred when a proposed land use action – a permit for a golf driving range complete with high nets and glaring lights – was submitted for the pastoral meadow at the corner of 305 and Day Road. That proposed development caused several visionaries - our founders - to act, successfully preserving that property through a Land Trust conservation easement.

Fast forward to 2018, a dedicated group of Land Trust volunteers produced a [video](#) depicting the many facets of our conservation work – from stewardship work parties removing invasive weeds to planting native plants, providing educational walks of Land Trust preserves and other publicly accessible properties, to protecting habitat and water resources. We now have a total of 48 conservation easements– 42 with private property owners and six on public park properties with our friends at the Park District. These lands – private and public – are monitored annually by our professional staff to ensure that the conservation values are maintained. Staff serves as a resource for our landowners as do a diverse group of volunteers who have expertise in conservation matters.



Last year, the Land Trust provided the public with six Sundays of free invasive weed disposal at the Bainbridge Disposal transfer station. Dozens of Islanders participated in this effort and tons of invasive weeds were removed and properly disposed. This program has been well-received by the community, along with our Native Plant Sale which serves as a wonderful outreach and educational program. Members and the general public are invited to purchase nursery-

grade native plants each fall, with the proceeds benefitting the Land Trust. Native plant identification walks and planting expertise are provided, too.

More than six years ago, the Land Trust participated in hiring teens to be a part of a summer conservation crew. The program has grown and this year teens will spend six weeks removing invasive weeds from Land Trust conservation properties, while learning about conservation from various experts. The teens are paid as part of a cost-sharing program in which landowners contribute one-half of their wages and the Land Trust, via support from a community grant, contributes the other half. Our Stewardship Coordinator and Community Engagement Associate continue to head up this program.

In 2018, we completed the multi-year (2015-18) Springbrook Creek watershed assessment. In order to restore and protect our Island watersheds, the Land Trust worked with Wild Fish Conservancy and other partners to learn more about our valuable watersheds and water resources. We were also able to engage with the 54 property owners in the Springbrook Creek area who allowed our team to come onto their land and assess the stream's characteristics.

A forerunner to the Springbrook assessment was the Wild Fish Conservancy and Land Trust island-wide stream study conducted back in 2013-14. This was an incredibly important body of work which identified 25 additional miles of island streams– a 51% increase from what had previously been mapped. This work was shared with the City of Bainbridge Island – and was critical to providing land use protections for all previously unknown streams.

The environmental work the Land Trust performs is terrifically important, but we also maintain our high standards. Last year, the Land Trust submitted our application for reaccreditation with the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and we were officially reaccredited. This underscores the Land Trust's strong attention to detail and professional standards of practice.

Land preservation in the form of land acquisition remains a priority – for as long as the Land Trust is able to protect larger, ecologically significant parcels – it will. In late 2017, the Board of Directors voted in support of a campaign, *Stand for the Land*, to protect five to six large parcels and raise \$5-6 million for this ambitious project. As of late February 2019, the Land Trust has secured nearly \$3 million in funding and needs to raise another \$2 million by the end of the year to meet our goal. Thus far, three parcels have been protected via down payments and there will be at least two additional parcels added to the campaign in the next 3-9 months.

Many ask how the Land Trust decides which parcels to pursue – either for private conservation easements or land acquisition projects. Critical to these decisions in the Land Trust's Strategic Conservation Plan. In 2018, we updated that plan with help from experts and the public at large. We use what is called a conservation value index. Using sophisticated mapping of the island allows us to analyze various layers of information – wetlands, forest cover, streams, aquifer recharge areas, critical habitat, nesting sites, etc. and superimpose those layers – resulting in a map of the island's high conservation value areas. Potential properties are assessed according their conservation value index – and thus, a data-driven, scientific method is used as a tool to focus the Land Trust's work. The data tells us that the inventory of undeveloped lands using recent trends will be mostly gone in a little over 10 years. We must act quickly and wisely to focus our work for the greatest conservation gain.



Photo by Sue Larkin

Thank you for supporting our mission to preserve a natural Bainbridge. For everyone. Forever.