



— GARY SNYDER, AMERICAN POET



“Here in the islands, the mental and physical benefits of open space have become even more profound in the midst of a pandemic. The Land Bank’s efforts to conserve our natural and historic settings are evident; they are the comforting scenes that we have come to expect, and at times, even take for granted.”



From the Chair

An annual report is typically a reflection on the challenges and accomplishments of the past year. But this year’s global events have kept my mind firmly rooted in the ever-changing present and uncertain future.

For many of our mainland friends and family, the State’s order to *Stay Home – Stay Healthy* created a stark reality; whenever they left their apartments, houses or condos, they entered into city-scapes that were suspended of life. Periodic trips out to run an essential errand did little to bring them any sense of relief or respite. Instead, these outings served as glaring reminders of scarcity, of all the activities and occupations that had become temporarily unavailable.

Biologist E.O. Wilson coined the term “biophilia,” which means literally “to love of all living things.” Wilson stated, “We love nature because we learned to love the things that helped us survive. We are hard wired to affiliate with the natural world and just as our health improves when we are in it, so our health suffers when we are divorced from it.”

Here in the islands, the mental and physical benefits of open space have become even more profound in the midst of a

pandemic. The Land Bank’s efforts to conserve our natural and historic settings are evident; they are the comforting scenes that we have come to expect, and at times, even take for granted. In our island communities *Stay Home – Stay Healthy* hasn’t been without hardships and insecurity, but on our simple trips to town, we are still surrounded by working farmlands, simmering vistas and unobstructed scenic views. One of the benefits we reap from the Land Bank is what we all love about this area, its natural sense of abundance.

CHRISTA CAMPBELL, CHAIR
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2019 Acquisitions



There is a strong potential for this property to become one of the best loved spaces on San Juan Island."



TAYLOR PROPERTY, BEAVERTON MARSH SAN JUAN ISLAND

Once in a great while, opportunities emerge seemingly out of the blue. The 325-acre Taylor property, which includes much of Beaverton Marsh and the adjacent uplands, went on the market in 2018, but we didn't have the resources to pursue it. However, through the generosity of Geof and Anne Barker (and facilitated by their realtor Greg King), what was first "highly improbable" became "let's go for it!" The Barker's lead donation, followed by another partnership with the San Juan Preservation Trust, allowed the Land Bank to acquire this special place.

Together with the Land Bank's and Trust's existing preserves around the marsh, this acquisition creates a nearly 500-acre conservation area just outside the town limits of Friday Harbor. Its purchase will allow us to continue with efforts to restore the marsh and also give us the potential to create a trail connection from town. This will take time. Both projects involve much work on the ground (and a boardwalk will be needed to complete the trail!). But there is a strong potential for this property to become one of the best loved spaces on San Juan Island.

We are deeply grateful to the Barkers and the Trust for their partnership in this amazing project.



**WOODBIDGE PROPERTY,
CATTLE POINT ROAD,
SAN JUAN ISLAND**

This 35-acre parcel rests roughly at the midpoint of the trail from Friday Harbor to American Camp along Cattle Point Road. Its quiet forest and serene small pond make this location a natural respite for those hiking the trail. Jennifer Woodbridge, who was bequeathed the property by Ted Middleton, offered it to the Land Bank at a steep discount. The Preservation Trust holds a conservation easement which further ensures the land remains in its natural state.

We thank Jennifer for her generosity.



**STRACHAN PROPERTY,
(SPENCER SPIT
STATE PARK ADDITION),
LOPEZ ISLAND**

Another unforeseen chance took shape on Lopez Island where Rick Strachan set out to merge two of his interests—conservation and providing affordable housing. Rick offered to sell two 10-acre parcels at roughly 50 percent of their value. The Land Bank purchased one and State Parks committed to purchasing the other.

Our intention is to transfer the Land Bank parcel to State Parks in exchange for a conservation easement on both properties, therefore

limiting development on both sites. All money received by Rick will go to the Lopez Community Land Trust to help advance their much-appreciated efforts to provide islanders homes.

Many thanks to Rick for his big-heartedness and vision.





Farmland

In 2019, the Land Bank made concerted efforts to advance its agricultural program, beginning with the development of a new staff position, the Agricultural Program Coordinator.

This new, part-time position was established in order to improve agricultural resources on Land Bank farmland preserves and to support the implementation of conservation-based farming practices.

San Juan Island field assistant, Charlie Behnke was chosen for this innovative role. He now coordinates programs on the Land Bank's 600 acres of agricultural preserves and monitors conservation easements that cover over 1,000 acres of private farmlands. Throughout the year, he has also been working to administer leases on farmed areas and develop stronger relationships with key partners and stakeholders, including the Ag Resource Committee, WSU Extension, San Juan Island Conservation District, and the Ag Guild.

In addition to developing the Agricultural Program Coordinator position, the Land Bank also initiated the formation of a Conservation Ag Resource Team (CART). This collaborative group consists of agricultural agency personnel, local farmers and conservationists. They are tasked with developing recommendations for the future management of the Coffelt Farm Preserve farm on Orcas Island, and will also be convened to provide input on future agricultural operations at Zylstra Lake Preserve on San Juan Island.

(photo, right)
Scottish heritage cattle at
King Sisters Preserve,
San Juan Island



“The Land Bank’s 600 acres of agricultural preserves and conservation easements cover over 1,000 acres of private farmlands.”

WHO IS FARMING ON LAND BANK FARMLAND?

FRAZER HOMESTEAD PRESERVE, SAN JUAN ISLAND

Thor Black (Lease to 2027)
Grain and seasonal cattle grazing

FALSE BAY CREEK PRESERVE, SAN JUAN ISLAND

John Wilson (Lease to 2021)
Seasonal cattle grazing

KING SISTERS PRESERVE, SAN JUAN ISLAND

Rob Waldron (Lease to 2029)
Sheep, cattle and market garden

BEAVERTON MARSH PRESERVE, SAN JUAN ISLAND

Mike Sundstrom (Annual agreement)
Hay, WSU Extension and SJICD no-till and forage trials

COFFELT FARM PRESERVE, ORCAS ISLAND

Lum Farm (Lease to 2021)
Diverse livestock, goat dairy, market garden

FOWLERS POND PRESERVE, ORCAS ISLAND

Lum Farm (Annual Agreement)
Seasonal grazing





BY THE NUMBERS

OUR LEGACY OF CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

4%

PUBLIC LAND HELD
IN LAND BANK PROPERTIES

7,700

TOTAL ACRES
PROTECTED SINCE 1990
INCLUDING:

2,500

ACRES IN CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

26

PUBLIC PRESERVES

12

BEACHES

50

MILES OF TRAILS

OUR MANDATE



“To preserve in perpetuity areas in the county that have environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic or low-intensity recreational value and to protect existing and future sources of potable water.”

- Land Bank Preserves
- Conservation / Historic Preservation Easements

Labeled preserves provide public access.

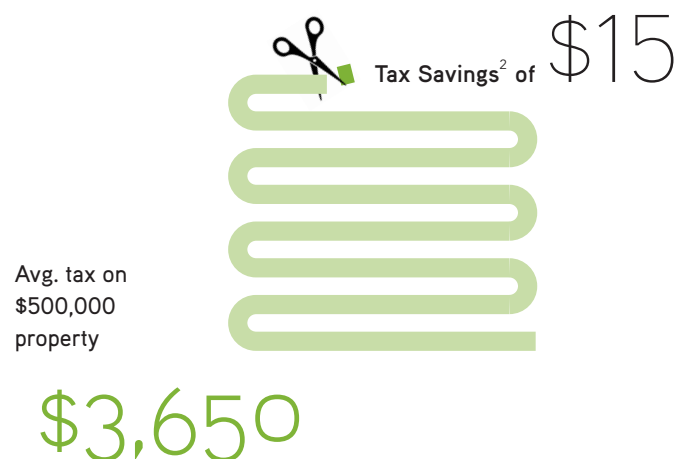
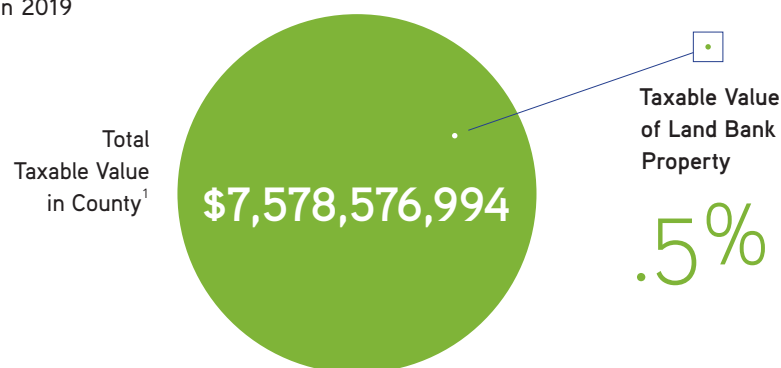




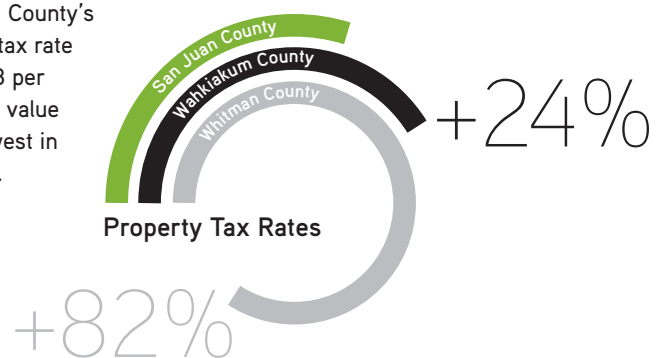
BY THE NUMBERS

\$3.8M

Real Estate
Excise Tax (REET)
in 2019



San Juan County's property tax rate of 0.0073 per \$1,000 in value is the lowest in the State.



¹ SJC Assessor / 2019 Tax Year Statement of Assessments

² \$3.00 per \$100,000 in value, adjusting the tax rate to yield the same total tax figure.



Impact on Your Taxes

Do Land Bank Preserves take land off the tax rolls, resulting in higher property taxes? How would adding their value back into the total taxable value of real estate in the County change tax rates?

The taxable value of Land Bank Preserves is roughly \$35 million—about one half of one percent of the total taxable property in the County (over \$7.5 billion).

If this amount were added back to the total, and the tax rate adjusted¹ to yield the same total tax figure the result could be just a \$15.00 annual tax reduction on a property valued at \$500,000 (approximately \$3.00 per \$100,00 value).

¹ Estimated based on assessed values, adjusted to current market. Does not include former DNR properties already in public ownership.

Further, privatizing Land Bank Preserves would have a direct impact on the valuation of neighboring properties. Multiple studies document that being near parks or preserves results in increased property values of up to 20%. The Land Bank has 300 immediately adjacent parcels and roughly 700 nearby parcels (1,000 total). Assuming just a conservative 5% increased value for those properties and an average \$500,000 value, this means the Preserves are currently yielding \$25 million in additional taxable value.

*Turtleback Mountain Preserve,
Orcas Island*





BY THE NUMBERS

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW IN THE FIELD

66

VOLUNTEERS IN 2019

2,117

VOLUNTEER HOURS
in 2019

30

PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENTS
(GUIDED WALKS, PLANT SALES,
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS)

4

MILES OF TRAILS BUILT

7,600

HERBACEOUS SEEDLINGS
PLANTED AND

12

POUNDS OF NATIVE SEED PRODUCED
AT SALISH SEED PROJECT

107

BIRD SPECIES DOCUMENTED
AT ZYLSTRA LAKE PRESERVE

1

ISLAND MARBLE BUTTERFLY SIGHTED
AT FRAZER HOMESTEAD PRESERVE



MOMENTS OF AWE



“Anytime I hear kids laughing as they run across the open grassland. Their laughter echoes across the water. It is such uninhibited joy. It makes my day.”

JIM FALCONER, VOLUNTEER, LOPEZ ISLAND

“The day I saw spawning Coho salmon at Coho Preserve. My knees got weak. And to see it in my own backyard! It was just so vital in fundamental ways.”

JERRY WEATHERMAN, VOLUNTEER, ORCAS ISLAND





SAN JUAN COUNTY

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Commissioners 2019

- Miles Becker, District 3, position 3
Christa Campbell, at large, position 7, Chair
Sandi Friel, District 2, position 2
David Meiland, at large, position 6
Jim Skoog, District 1, position 1, Vice-Chair
Douglas Strandberg, at large, position 5, Finance Officer
Brian Wiese, at large, position 4

Staff

- Lincoln Bormann, Director
Charlie Behnke, Agricultural Program Coordinator & Field Steward
Sarah Benson, San Juan Island Seasonal Nursery Assistant
Carlton Burns, Field Steward, San Juan Island
Judy Cumming, Office Manager/Fiscal Clerk
Peter Guillozet, Orcas Island Preserve Steward
Eliza Habegger, Land Steward
Erin Halcomb, Stewardship Coordinator
Eric Nelson, Orcas Field Steward
Doug McCutchen, San Juan Island Preserve Steward
Kayla Seaforth, Field Steward
Amanda Wedow, Lopez Island Preserve Steward
Tania Williamson, Outreach/Volunteer Coordinator

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