

# THE MILLER BAY GUARDIAN

Volume 10, Issue 1

November 2010



Photo by Paul Dorn

FOMB President, Paul Dorn

## Greetings from the Friends of Miller Bay

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. It's put together by and for people who care about the beauty and

biodiversity of Miller Bay. If you would like to participate on a project, contribute financially, or just learn more about Miller Bay watersheds and the estuary please contact us, the Friends can use your help and are happy to share what we are learning about the Bay with you! All ages are welcome. The Suquamish Tribe provides office and meeting space for us in the Cowling Creek Center at 20325 Miller Bay Road NE.

Miller Bay is a blink in geological time. It's been here since the continental ice sheet receded north some 14,000 years ago. Between the glaciers departure and the arrival of European settlers, the landscape surrounding the Bay was one of dense conifer forests, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife, and native people who lived in a world very different from what we see around us today. FOMB is working with neighbors, the Tribe, the County, and the State to better understand these changes and bring back some of the things once taken for granted - like digging clams that were safe to eat and walking in the shadows of old growth hemlock, fir, spruce, and cedar.

For many years now the Tribe has passed adult coho

While videotaping the sculpins and cutthroat in Cowling Creek, we found month old coho fry.



salmon upstream of the hatchery to spawn naturally. Usually the fry grow to fingerlings and then smolt, heading downstream to the Bay at about a year and a half old. But not all coho behave that way, and this year we learned that was the case in Miller Bay. While videotaping the sculpins and cutthroat in Cowling Creek, we found month old coho fry. This was a surprise because no adult coho had spawned in Cowling Creek last fall. Turns out these fry had left Grovers Creek very early, well before they had smolted, and successfully found a home in Cowling Creek. The moral of this story is that our local streams can be re-colonized by juvenile salmon leaving other nearby streams early and are not dependent upon adult salmon to return and lay eggs in the gravel.

We are very fortunate to have Jamie Glasco



Brent Trim and Frank Staller of the Wild Fish Conservancy and Suquamish Fisheries intern, Molly Jackson, make plans for mapping Miller Bay streams.

*(Continued on page 3)*

*Feature presentation at the 2010 Friends of Miller Bay Annual Meeting*

## NEW MAPS OF MILLER

## BAY STREAMS

by Jamie Glasgow of the Wild Fish Conservancy

*Jamie will present the results of field work done this year to locate and type streams flowing into Miller Bay.*

November 17th, 7 - 9 pm

**Suquamish Community House**

Everyone is welcome.

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## Salmon Kayak Tours

# Welcome Chum Salmon Back to Local Streams

By Spring Courtright, Olympic Outdoor Center

As Chum salmon begin their annual return to local streams, Salmon Kayak Tour participants welcome them home from kayaks. From now until mid-late November the Chum will be at the height of their runs, so expect to see kayakers cheering them on.

Salmon Kayak Tours run through November 27, or as long as the salmon are running. Public tours are on Saturdays from 10-1:00 on Miller Bay. Private and group tours are available any day on Miller Bay. All ages are welcome, no experience is necessary and groups of up to 45 people can be accommodated.

Miller Bay tours start at Grovers Creek Salmon Hatchery. Participants are often joined by fisheries biologist Paul Dorn, who teaches about hatchery efforts to restore salmon populations. Dorn has 35 years of experience and has been instrumental in restoring salmon populations throughout Western Washington.

Once everyone is outfitted and has received a short kayak lesson (or refresher), the group heads onto Miller Bay to paddle up Grovers Creek with jumping Chum, King or Coho salmon, depending on the time of year.

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Cowling Creek Children's Forest

By Niki Quester

If you have looked at a trail map of the Cowling Creek Forest Preserve you may have noticed an area labeled "Children's Forest" and wondered how this appellation originated. I won't hold you in suspense any longer; here is the story.

In 2004, children from a nearby church and several local schools came together to create the Children's Forest at the CCFP. The United Church of Christ Youth Group tackled the Himalayan Blackberries, students from Kingston Jr. High, Harvest Day School, North Kitsap Options Program, Suquamish Elementary, and Sunrise School cleared the area of invasive ivy and holly. Then they planted the cleared area with Douglas fir and hemlock seedlings.

Over the years, volunteers have continued to clear the brush around the young trees and, six years later, the trees are coming into their own—a legacy that these children can be proud of.

*"To conserve and preserve the waters, wetlands, wildlife habitat, timberlands, undeveloped land, and scenic space in the areas around or near Miller Bay, Washington." - Friends of Miller Bay Mission Statement*

(Greetings continued from page 1)

from the Wild Fish Conservancy as our annual meeting featured speaker this year. Jamie's crew, funded by a Kitsap County salmon grant and with help from the Tribe's salmon recovery program, has mapped and typed all the streams flowing into Miller Bay this year. He will present the study's preliminary results at the Suquamish Tribe's Community House November 17<sup>th</sup>. These small streams are very important not just to coho salmon, but to sea run cutthroat and steelhead. Many of the streams were incorrectly mapped or not mapped at all prior to WFC's work. He'll be able to answer your questions and explain how you can help possibly get salmon back into your stream. The Friends are also looking for ways to help find project funding for interested landowners.

Based on the importance of what we learned working with the Wild Fish Conservancy, and with the help of the Suquamish Tribe, we have removed two blocking culverts on Cowling Creek.

The Friends are a strong supporter of the Great Peninsula Conservancy (GPC) and have followed the Indianola example to protect land and create educational trails by establishing the Cowling Creek Forest Preserve. Based on the importance of what we learned working with the Wild Fish Conservancy, and with the help of the Suquamish Tribe, we have removed two blocking culverts on Cowling Creek. The most recent culvert removal was on the tributary from the Suquamish Elders Housing and has been replaced by a 21' bridge. This is one example of the type of projects that the Friends gets involved with and why we can use your help.

2011 will be a special year for FOMB. Virginia Cowling's bequest to GPC's Cowling Creek Forest Preserve will be around \$300,000. We hope to grow the size of the Preserve with this gift and protect an ecosystem that Virginia loved deeply and wanted everyone to experience. We extend our welcome to everyone that lives in the Miller Bay watersheds and along the shores of the estuary to get involved in 2011 in some way that you haven't tried yet. Go on a salmon kayak tour, come beach seining, walk to the 400 year old cedar, check out the tiny coho leaving Grovers Creek, watch the eagles raise their young at the mouth of Cowling Creek, or just sit back and let rain drops splash on your cheeks. It's a beautiful world!

- Paul Dorn, FOMB President



Photos by Paul Dorn

Culvert removal and bridge construction on Elders Tributary of Cowling Creek.

## SHB decision on the way

# MB Dock Appeal

By Stafford Smith, FOMB Board Member

For nearly two years FOMB has been engaged with other Miller Bay residents in working with Kitsap County to limit docks in the shallow, narrow upper part of the bay to a reasonable size. This has occurred in the context of a couple of county permit proceedings, most notably the White/Conrad dock application that just went to hearing before the state Shorelines Hearings Board and is now awaiting a decision.

Miller Bay empties completely on lower tides, so extended pier-ramp-float facilities with boat lifts are now being proposed in an attempt to maximize the time of deep water exposure and keep boats off the bottom when the tide is out. Until recently, upper bay residents have been content to harmonize their boating activity with the tide cycle, and existing docks and floats are very modest structures.

The White/Conrad application was originally for a dock complex that would extend out 150 feet from shore in a section of the bay where the width is about 750 feet; it was revised to 125 feet when opposition was encountered. In early 2009 the county's environmental review process (SEPA) placed a 50 foot length limitation on the White/Conrad proposal, a restriction that was upheld in spring 2009 by the county's hearing examiner and later affirmed by the board of county commissioners. The applicant, Rick White, then appealed the county's 50-foot limitation to the Shorelines Hearings Board. Friends of Miller Bay has been actively engaged in the process since the beginning and was admitted as an intervenor in the SHB appeal.

Various issues have been raised in opposition to the proposed 125-foot facility: view impacts, interference with navigation and low intensity recreation, degradation of salmonid food resources and, especially, the cumulative impacts to the foregoing from multiple long docks constructed in this narrow and fragile part of the bay. It is assumed that the White/Conrad decision will set a standard that defines the allowable scope of future dock development in upper Miller Bay.

FOMB has weighed in on all the issues, but has been primarily focused on the impacts to salmon. The estuarine tidal flats of Miller Bay are a rich source of epibenthic fauna, which form the base of the food chain for juvenile salmon released from local hatcheries as well as for migrating juveniles from other parts of Puget Sound. Our main concern has been that increased boat propeller scour facilitated by longer dock development will impair the epibenthic resource.

Preparing for the two-day SHB hearing was an adventure in itself. Our entirely volunteer effort featured FOMB board president Paul Dorn testifying on the biological questions, board member Dick D'Archangel and bay resident Becky Hall talking about the navigational and recreational impacts and describing the existing dock environment, and board member Stafford Smith handling the legal chores. The SHB hearing got canceled and rescheduled twice, so we got to experience the emotional ups and downs of a couple of false starts. But

despite all the chaos we feel that our ultimate effort came together well.

This level of activism is, of course, a new development for Friends of Miller Bay. At some point we will need to stand back and assess what worked and what did not. And there needs to be a discussion among the FOMB membership as to whether, going forward, this type of involvement in public controversies makes sense for the organization. On the one hand, if you care about the future of Miller Bay you probably need to be willing to protect it; on the other, the level of effort required to be effective can place a strain on limited organizational resources. It's an important conversation for us to have.

## A great asset for Friends of Miller Bay

Stafford arrived on the scene just when we needed him. He is the mastermind of a complex legal effort to protect the historic character and critical marine environment of Miller Bay from the threat posed by long pier/ramp/float installations in the shallow, restricted, northern section of the bay. His article in this issue of the Miller Bay Guardian (left) explains how the applications, rulings and appeals proceeded. FOMB board members and other Miller Bay residents, especially Becky Hall assisted Stafford, but ninety percent of the work fell on his shoulders, and there is no way we could have effectively presented our case without his help.

Stafford was raised in California and came to Western Washington in 1970. Before moving to Miller Bay in 2007, he lived in Bellingham, LaConner and Seattle. Stafford has a law background and was the King County Hearing Examiner at the time of his retirement in 2006. He spent the first half of 2007 in Ukraine on a Fulbright fellowship teaching law at Ivan Franko National University in Lviv and traveling around Eastern Europe. Living in Bellingham in the 1970s and 80s, he at various times served as Whatcom County Hearing Examiner, worked for northwest Indian tribes, owned (with my wife Barbara) a bookstore and had his law practice.

Stafford's legal practice and hearing examiner work has been focused on land use and environmental issues. He also likes to travel, having lived in Mexico and visited India multiple times; and has a long and abiding interest in Eastern religions. He and his wife Barbara are presently building a house on Miller Bay on the property where she grew up. With five children and ten grandchildren and the desire to host occasional retreats, this new house is intended serve multiple purposes and has turned out to be a major project.

The FOMB board is very grateful for many hours of volunteer time that Stafford has given to FOMB and the community. -Eds.



**Join Friends of Miller Bay and make a donation to the Cowling Creek Forest Preserve.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

**FOMB Memberships (Make check to FOMB)**

- I include \$25 for a one-year membership.
- I include \$100 for a one year Conserving Membership
- I include a \$ \_\_\_\_\_ gift.

*Please mail this form and your check to Friends of Miller Bay, Box 37, Suquamish, WA 98392*

**Cowling Creek Forest Preserve Donations (Make check to GPC/CCFP )**

- I would like to donate \_\_\_\_\_ to the Cowling Creek Forest Preserve.
- Please contact me about a gift of securities.

*Call the GPC office (360 373-3500) for a credit card donation .*

- Put me on your email list (no membership required!).**

**Introducing Becky Hall**

**New FOMB Board Member**

We are proud to welcome Becky to the FOMB Board. As her bio shows, her appreciation and concern for the environment are qualities distilled from life experience.

Becky grew up in Puyallup, Washington attended the University of Washington, and earned a bachelors degree in accounting. Over the years, she worked for a public accounting firm, a public utility and was controller for a privately held retail chain. Before moving to Miller Bay in 1994 with her two children, she and her husband Mike lived in Boston and Seattle.

Becky loves living here and spends a lot of time boating, kayaking, biking, gardening and hiking. She was an active volunteer in the local schools while her children attended them. When they moved on to college, she joined the mentoring program at Suquamish Elementary and the Fishline Foodbank Board. Becky still works in the accounting field and currently has a few clients.

As a kid, Becky spent a lot of time in the great outdoors. Since her parents loved to fish and clam, all of their vacations were centered on that; along with camping and hiking. She also spent a lot of time with her grandparents near Anacortes. They owned 500 acres near Deception Pass and when the property taxes became too much, they

searched for a buyer. Being avid environmentalists, they rejected a lucrative offer from a developer and opted to sell the land to the State Parks at a lower price. Becky was very proud of them for doing that, and their example helped foster her enjoyment of and concern for the environment.

This year Becky worked with Dick D'Archangel, Paul Dorn, and Stafford Smith contesting the permitting of a very long dock in the shallow northern section of Miller Bay. FOMB looks forward to her participation in future activities. -Eds.

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*(Salmon Tours continued from page 2)*

The paddle is 60-90 minutes and is appropriate for all ages and experience levels. A snack of chocolate and smoked salmon at the head of the stream rejuvenates tired muscles and views of Eagles, Ospreys and bear tracks keep everyone alert.

"It sounds like we're at a fireworks show," says kayak guide Spring Courtright. "Every time a salmon jumps you hear 'ooh!' and 'ah!' To have a salmon jump right next to your kayak is more exciting than you can imagine, especially after Paul tells about their arduous trip home."

**For more information** about Salmon Kayak Tours, contact the Olympic Outdoor Center at (360) 297-4659, or e-mail [programs@kayakproshop](mailto:programs@kayakproshop).



Miller Bay Kayak Tours - Photo by Paul Dorn



Special presentation: ***MILLER BAY'S FISH BEARING STREAMS***

Jamie Glasgow, Wild Fish Conservancy Director of Science and Research

Do you live on one? - Details inside.

## Miller Bay Bird Survey

By Fay Linger

The much anticipated survey of the water birds of Miller Bay has gotten underway. This survey is a year-long project by the Friends of Miller Bay with the help of Fay Linger of the Kitsap Audubon Society. The intention of the survey is to give us all an idea of which species of birds utilize the bay and their approximate numbers throughout the seasons of the year.

FOMB members and friends have volunteered their time to help with this monthly survey. Others have generously offered their locations on the bay as viewing stations.

These locations have been chosen to give the best viewing coverage of different portions of the bay with as little overlap possible. Six locations on the bay have been identified and each location will be visited at least once a month.

We are feeling our way with this survey and the first day of observations was on Thursday the 7<sup>th</sup> of October. A second survey day may be added to each month. The surprise birds on the first day were twelve Common Merganser ducks and a small flock of California gulls on the Nooschkum sand spit near the boat launch.



Photo by Nancy D'Archangel

Fay Linger and Niki Quester spotting birds on Miller Bay.

If you wish to help out, you can write down your observations, date, time of day and location and email them to Fay Linger [ernieandfay@centurytel.net](mailto:ernieandfay@centurytel.net). It's alright just to say that you saw 200 "ducks" or 6 terns or 55 gulls. Identification is nice if you are confident of your observations.