

# FRIENDS of the San Juans

## 2009... A Year in Review

by Stephanie Buffum Field, Executive Director

With your help, FRIENDS continued to protect farmland, water and wildlife; and restored critical shoreline habitats in 2009. With the help of property owners committed to restoring salmon and their prey “forage fish” (sand lance, surf smelt, and herring), FRIENDS removed multiple unnecessary shoreline structures from priority habitats. With the help of trained volunteers, FRIENDS completed an inventory of all shoreline modifications (docks, bulkheads, buoys, pilings, etc.) in San Juan County. Results show that 40% of county shoreline parcels have been altered. In 2009, FRIENDS held the line on protecting marine habitats, challenging loopholes in our woefully outdated Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) and Unified Development Code. When local and state agencies failed to protect documented forage fish spawning beaches and eelgrass, FRIENDS defended these species in the courtroom.

Your support also made it possible for FRIENDS to answer numerous calls for help...some asking for technical assistance, some worried about the filling of wetlands or clearing of shorelines and some just asking for answers about how the CAO will impact them.

In response to weakening land use laws meant to protect water quality, fish, wildlife and scenic views, FRIENDS worked on legislation to update the CAO, the Water Element of the Comprehensive Plan, the Essential Public Facilities Ordinance, and the Code Enforcement Ordinance. We also helped achieve a county-wide ban on polystyrene take-out food containers.

In 2009, we updated our website, [www.sanjuans.org](http://www.sanjuans.org), expanded our e-Action Alerts and created a Facebook page to better inform our community about local issues.

As a member of FRIENDS, you are essential to our success. I want to thank you for your financial support and your activism. Please tell us how we can better serve you and the environment of the San Juan Archipelago.

## What we can't see

by Mike Kaill, FRIENDS Board President

Horizons – lines separating one major thing from another – are interesting and instructive. A line that has been driving me nuts for a while is the line that separates the ocean from the air.

We worry about soft things with big brown eyes like horses, deer, and rabbits. But the world below the ocean's horizon swims with valuable, beautiful, fascinating creatures is unseen by most of us. So we tend to overlook and undervalue them. FRIENDS “Toxins in our Waters” lectures, articles and water-quality sampling program have highlighted the intersection between our lives and the lives of those below the horizon.

In particular, the stuff that ends up in the stormwater flowing over or through the ground, is of concern. For all our efforts, the creatures in the Spring Street Aquarium, those little canaries, are still paying the ultimate price. We have done a lot, but I ask you to keep in mind the health of those creatures below the sea horizon. They are one of the reasons we are here.

One way you can help reduce stormwater contamination from Spring Street is to support local efforts to promote rain gardens in Friday Harbor and other County urban areas.

### FRIENDS of the San Juans

**MISSION:** To protect the land, water, sea, and livability of the San Juan Islands through science, education and advocacy.

P.O. Box 1344, Friday Harbor, WA 98250  
360-378-2319 [www.sanjuans.org](http://www.sanjuans.org)

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Orcas - Janet Alderton & Farouk Scif  
San Juan - Mike Kaill, Bill Watson, Larry Marx, & Vivien Burnett  
Lopez - San Olson & George Lawson

**STAFF:** *Executive Director* - Stephanie Buffum Field ([stephanie@sanjuans.org](mailto:stephanie@sanjuans.org)), *Science Director* - Tina Whitman ([tina@sanjuans.org](mailto:tina@sanjuans.org)), *Staff Attorney* - Kyle Loring ([kyle@sanjuans.org](mailto:kyle@sanjuans.org)), *Office Manager* - Jana Marks ([jana@sanjuans.org](mailto:jana@sanjuans.org)), *Grants Manager* - Shannon Davis ([shannon@sanjuans.org](mailto:shannon@sanjuans.org)).

Newsletter design by Tif & Gif Creative.



# Restoring Shorelines for Fish and People...



before



after

## Forage Fish Beach Restoration

To improve beach habitat at a known surf smelt spawning site at Shoal Bay on Lopez Island, FRIENDS removed an old concrete and creosote wood "shuffleboard court" structure and replenished the upper beach with appropriately sized sand and gravels.

*"As we were walking along our beach on July 31 at 9:30 PM, to our surprise, excitement, and amazement, all of the effort involved with this project came to fruition as the surf smelt returned to spawn and now had use of the additional beach. As the surf smelt were spawning, two salmon were also observed foraging on the surf smelt which is all part of this marine environment life cycle! We have such a feeling of fulfillment and gratification. Thank you to the FRIENDS of the San Juans and all involved."*

Gary and Patty Bergren

## Tide Gate Removal and Lagoon Restoration

FRIENDS removed a tide gate and nearly 20 truckloads of fill from the entrance to the Shoal Bay Lagoon, improving water quality, fish passage and beach conditions for forage fish, out-migrating juvenile salmon and shellfish.

*"We wish to thank everyone involved for the highly successful restoration project on our Shoal Bay shellfish farm. FRIENDS of the San Juans has been cooperative, respectful and extremely inclusive through the entire process. The actual removal was carefully timed and staged to minimize impact both to the marine life and our ongoing shellfish farming activities. We are delighted with the result aesthetically, and can already discern significant, positive changes to the function of the lagoon."*

Nick and Sara Jones



before



after



before



after

## Turn Point Salt Marsh Restoration

Just south of Turn Point, on San Juan Island, FRIENDS removed an unnecessary rock wall, restoring a potential forage fish spawning beach and reconnecting a critical wetland to the marine environment.

*"The important role coastal wetlands play in providing prey items for out-migrating juvenile salmon in marine waters of San Juan County has been documented by local researchers. We were fortunate to work with the Ruckelshaus Family to restore a rare and significant salt marsh in our county."*

Tina Whitman, FRIENDS Science Director

# And the Flip Side – Habitat Loss



In the first decision, the San Juan County Superior Court reversed a Shorelines Hearings Board (SHB) denial of a single-user dock over eelgrass. In reaching that position, the court failed to grant proper deference to the SHB, which had spent two days examining the credibility of the witnesses and applying its Shoreline Management Act expertise to the dock application. The SHB's thorough review resulted in a thoughtful, 30-page decision. FRIENDS has appealed the Superior Court decision with a request to reinstate the SHB's order.

The second decision raises greater concern. On May 13, 2009, the SHB reversed the County's denial of a permit for a bulkhead along a documented forage fish spawning beach for the purpose of trying to protect lawn, landscaping, and trees. The San Juan County Hearing Examiner had concluded that landscaping is not the sort of use that justifies a request for a bulkhead and that the applicants had not shown that their need for the bulkhead outweighed the actual and potential environmental damage anticipated from the bulkhead. In reversing that decision, the SHB made the startling determination that County ordinances allow the construction of a bulkhead where shoreline erosion at a rate of less than 1 inch/year may impact a lawn, landscaping, and trees, even in the absence of any threat to a home or other structure. This decision was even more surprising given that the bulkhead would be placed in a biologically rich environment on a surf smelt spawning beach and adjacent to eelgrass prairies and Pacific herring spawning grounds. In a separate process, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) also approved the bulkhead, without either identifying the surf smelt spawning beach or contacting the Department of Ecology's coastal geologist who testified against the bulkhead in front of the SHB.

*They say that an ounce of protection is worth a pound of restoration. And although 2009 saw FRIENDS participating in several permit decisions that protect environmental resources in San Juan County, two decisions indicate a continued trend against shoreline protection, and establish dangerous precedents for our most critical marine ecosystems.*



WDFW's approval of a bulkhead on a known surf smelt spawning beach ignited concerns that FRIENDS needed to play a more active role in the WDFW permit process. Consequently, during the summer of 2009, FRIENDS appealed a WDFW permit for a dock in eelgrass and won a requirement that the applicants mitigate for and monitor their impacts to the eelgrass. That appeal proved invaluable as an information gathering tool, as well. FRIENDS learned that in over sixty years of its permitting program, WDFW has never denied a permit in San Juan County. FRIENDS also learned through WDFW testimony that the agency considers the state's no-net-loss requirements to be merely aspirational goals, rather than a mandated standard. The natural outcome, then, of WDFW's shoreline permitting program would be the substantial cumulative loss of shoreline habitats and species. However, FRIENDS is taking a stand against the loss of our resources with outreach efforts to citizens and marine managers region-wide for marine ecosystem protection.

# Shoreline Modification Inventory Completed



With over 400 miles of marine shoreline nestled within the confluence of Puget Sound, Georgia Strait and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the nearshore habitats of San Juan County play an essential role in salmon and orca recovery efforts. Shoreline modifications like armoring and docks threaten the habitat and habitat-forming processes that support our marine food web. Damage from shoreline modifications has been identified as one of the top three threats to the San Juan County marine environment by the Marine Resources Committee.

Until FRIENDS completed a county-wide survey of shoreline modifications in 2009, information on the number, type and location of modifications did not exist for San Juan County, limiting the effectiveness of shoreline protection and restoration efforts.

In the Spring and Summer of 2009, FRIENDS conducted a boat-based inventory and mapping project of shoreline modifications for all 400+ miles of shoreline within San Juan County. In cooperation with citizen volunteers, FRIENDS mapped and described over 3,900 individual modifications, including:

- 710 armored beaches**
- 472 docks**
- 32 groins**
- 55 marine railways**
- 70 improved boat ramps**
- 1,914 mooring buoys and floats**
- 50 marina/jetty/breakwater**
- 425 creosote pilings (not associated with dock or marina)**
- 191 "other" (boathouses, stormwater outflow pipes, patios etc.).**

Results indicate that the current level of impact to San Juan County shorelines is much higher than previously believed and that the vast majority of impacts are associated with residential shoreline development.

A few key conclusions can be drawn from the results of the inventory of shoreline modifications including:

1. San Juan County is not as undeveloped as we think. In fact, the amount of development on our shorelines approximates that in Hood Canal, East Jefferson County and rural portions of Whatcom County.
2. 40% of all shoreline parcels already have an associated shoreline modification.
3. Sand/gravel beaches (non rocky shorelines) are where the majority of impacts are concentrated even though they only make up 20% of our total shorelines.
4. Significant restoration opportunities exist for the removal of degraded, outdated or unnecessary modifications located in priority habitat areas.

FRIENDS will now distribute the shoreline modification inventory database, maps and report to coastal researchers, planners and land managers. This information will also assist FRIENDS in identifying and prioritizing habitat restoration projects, and can inform shoreline protection updates including the San Juan County Shoreline Master Program Update.

*Thank you volunteers: Chuck Rust, Craig Green, Rick Exstrom, John Ashoff, Mary Masters and Jim Sulak. You were critical to the success of this extensive field effort. Also thanks to Project Manager, Jim Slocomb and Interns, Tiffany Stephens and Samantha Palace.*

# Toxic Creosote Removed from Barlow Bay

With documented surf smelt and pacific sand lance spawning beaches, eelgrass, and outmigrating juvenile salmon usage, Barlow Bay on Lopez Island is one of San Juan County's priority nearshore habitat areas. To improve the overall health of the ecosystem within Barlow Bay, FRIENDS is working with the surrounding community, landowners, San Juan County Public Works, Tulalip Tribes and Coastal Geologic Services to identify and implement restoration actions.

In September 2009, FRIENDS removed multiple derelict creosote pilings in Barlow Bay. Removal of these pilings was the first on-the-ground action in our multi-year community water quality and habitat enhancement project for the bay. Next steps include removal of failing, unnecessary armoring at multiple sites, beach nourishment to restore forage fish spawning substrate; and, the further removal of toxic creosote pilings throughout the bay.

*"Historically, Barlow Bay has been many things to many people and cultures. In the century just passed, it has changed from industrial development related to the salmon fishing industry to rural residences and private docks. The bay is currently recovering some of its past ecological glory and the restoration work of the FRIENDS makes me more optimistic about the future health of the bay."* San Olson, Board Member and South Lopez Property Owner.



## Critical Areas Ordinance Update

San Juan County's Critical Areas Ordinance Update (CAO) is still struggling along. In 2008 and 2009, FRIENDS Executive Director, Stephanie Buffum was a member of the Citizen's Advisory Committee that worked on the CAO update. Last June, county staff competed and presented a draft CAO ordinance to the community for review. This draft ordinance was aggressively attacked by groups, who deny there is any need for protections, derailing the CAO update process.

This winter the County Council began taking steps to complete the CAO update again. The Prosecuting Attorney's office was directed to draft a resolution for Best Available Science (BAS) and to complete a series of papers on "hot button issues" including Reasonable Use, Non-Conforming Use, and Buffers in Urban Growth Areas. The council's current goal is to have a draft CAO to the Planning Commission and the public next winter.

Since 2006, FRIENDS has participated in the CAO process to ensure the best available science, document and policy review, and information is fair and balanced for residents. FRIENDS will continue to advocate for the passage of a strong CAO based on science, not rhetoric. We need your help. Completion of the Uplands Critical Areas Ordinance will provide greater protections for Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas, Wetlands, Fish and Wildlife and protection of property. It will also bring some certainty to property owners and allow the county to qualify for state funding. Please tell the Council to complete the CAO update this year!

Preserving  
Wetlands,  
Fish,  
Wildlife  
and  
Property

# 2009 Financial Highlights

FRIENDS of the San Juans is a 501(C)(3) non profit organization. FRIENDS receives its income primarily from membership contributions and grants. Expenditures pay for science, education and advocacy programs, publications, and administrative support. This is a summary of our 2009 Fiscal Year (October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009).

## Summary of Financial Position

### *Current and Fixed Assets*

Cash and Other Unrestricted	\$250,921
Marilyn Ellis Endowment	\$70,232
Other Assets	\$5,247
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$326,400</b>

### *Liabilities and Accumulated Surplus*

Current Liabilities	\$2,455
Accumulated Surplus	\$323,945
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Accumulated Surplus</b>	<b>\$326,400</b>

## Statement of Activities

### *Income*

Membership Contributions (39.9%)	\$159,909
Grants (59.1%)	\$237,061
Investments, Events and Other Income (1%)	\$4,154
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$401,124</b>

### *Expenses*

Programs (87.73%)	\$368,373
Fundraising (4.74%)	\$19,895
Administration (7.53%)	\$31,612
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$419,880</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>&lt;\$18,756&gt;</b>

We would like to thank the generous foundations and in-kind supporters that make our work possible, including: The Bullitt Foundation, ESRI, Horizons Foundation, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Northwest Fund for the Environment, The Russell Family Foundation, San Juan Island Community Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife ALEA, WA Dept. of Ecology Coastal Protection Fund, and WA State Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Project Partners: Barlow Bay Community, Gary Bergren, Coastal Geologic Services, Nick and Sara Jones, Lummi Nation, The Ruckelshaus Family, San Juan Initiative, San Juan County Marine Resources Committee, Public Works Dept. and Beachwatchers, San Juan Island Anti-Litter Coalition, Scenic Byways Committee, The Tulalip Tribe and Tina & Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria.

**And most of all, thank you Members!**

## *Leave a Legacy...*

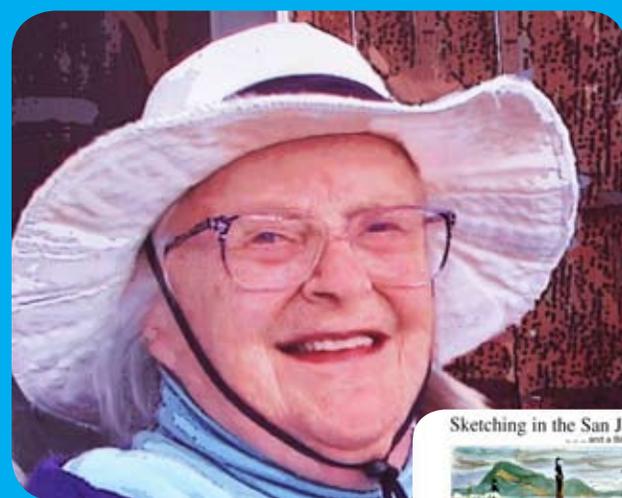
Everywhere Barbara Meyer looked she saw beauty. A tiny wildflower growing in a rock pile, a bird nestled on a branch (she knew all the birds), the geese flying and honking overhead. Barbara was born in 1918 and grew up in a family of artists in Carmel, California. In 1964, she fulfilled her desire to move to Orcas Island and chose Olga for her home.

Barbara always carried a sketch book at her side, and would "catch the moment" with a sketch. Her talent came naturally to her, and the beauty of the islands captured her. "What a joy it was to be with Barbara!!! She was so optimistic, and just loved life and our beautiful surroundings," said dear friend Mary Schoen. Barbara published two books: "Sketching in the San Juans and a Bit Beyond" and "More Sketches...Carmel to Orcas Island." Barbara Meyer passed away on January 6, 2009.

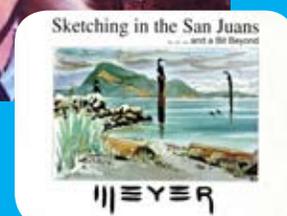
Barbara was an annual "Living Lightly" supporter of FRIENDS. This March FRIENDS learned that Barbara had named FRIENDS as a beneficiary in her IRA. Her generous legacy gift will help FRIENDS preserve the beauty of the islands for artists everywhere. Thank you Barbara.

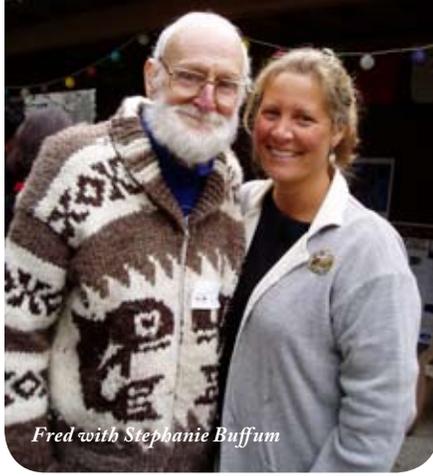
*To include FRIENDS as a beneficiary of your IRA or insurance plan, please use the following information: FRIENDS of the San Juans, mailing address is PO Box 1344, Friday Harbor, WA 98250. Our Tax Identification Number is 91-1087153.*

*For more information please contact Stephanie Buffum (360) 378-2319.*

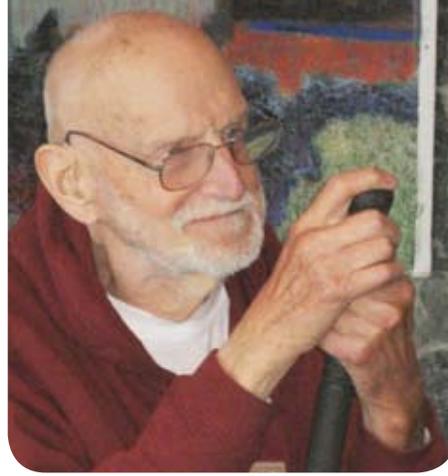


*Photo of Barbara Meyer provided by Mary Schoen*





*Fred with Stephanie Buffum*



*Fred with Robert Trimble*

## In Memoriam: Fred Ellis, Sr.

Fred Ellis' love of the Earth and passion for the environment was undiminished by age and remains an inspiration to many. He even inspired 5 year old Max Field to rename the FRIENDS of the San Juans to "Fred of the San Juans."

Fred Ellis first came to the San Juan Islands on a boat with his father in 1936. As they anchored in Shaw Island's Parks Bay, they agreed that its beauty should never be spoiled. His parents soon purchased the Thorald home on Shaw Island (now on the National Historic Register).

Fred graduated from Reed College in Oregon and then served as a medic in World War II. After the war, Fred received a PhD in History and Philosophy from Harvard University. He taught at the University of Illinois, University of Minnesota, Western Washington University and the University of British Columbia. Later in life, he taught mathematics in Anacortes and was a guest environmental lecturer in the San Juans.

Fred led a diverse and accomplished life, enthusiastically pursuing his interests in education, astronomy, Pacific Northwest history, philosophy, cattle ranching, music, environmental activism and land conservation. His favorite quote by

E.O. Wilson, a Harvard biologist, was "Man will be defined not by what he has created, but rather by what he has chosen not to destroy."

On Feb. 5, Fred Ellis passed away in the comfort of his home at age 93.

To Fred, protecting the islands' beauty and the diversity of marine, bird, and animal life for future generations was paramount. He was a relentless activist, writing letters, providing public testimony, and participating on boards. He knew he could not do this work alone.

Fred and Marilyn Ellis were founding members of FRIENDS of the San Juans. After Marilyn passed away, Fred created the Marilyn Ellis Endowment to honor her. Fred also served for countless years on the Boards of both the FRIENDS of the San Juans and the San Juan Preservation Trust. In addition to devoting much time and energy, the Ellis family donated more than 1,400 acres of land and conservation easements on Shaw and Lopez Islands.

Fred Ellis Sr. held the line for 93 years. Now it's our turn. We can all honor Fred by observing the natural world and speaking out more often. To continue the work that Fred was passionate about,

FRIENDS has created the Fred Ellis Action Fund to support the ongoing legal defense of protecting the land, water, sea and livability of the San Juans.

Some of Fred's earthly wisdom:

1. Read and inform yourself. (Fred read the NY Times and non-fiction daily. Fred recommended: Collapse by Jarred Diamond, and Plan B 4.0 by Lester Brown).
2. Get politically active. As Fred would say, "Politics is not a spectator sport; you have to remain active all the time;" write letters and emails, and make calls to your political leaders.
3. Join an organization working on an issue you care about and donate your time and your money to support this cause.
4. Eat fresh food. He swore that blueberries were a key ingredient to his longevity.
5. Exercise. He routinely walked 3 miles a day on his treadmill.
6. Laugh often...Maintain relationships with family and friends. Fred knew that together we can create a better future.

The Staff and Board of FRIENDS wish to thank Fred for all he did for the islands, our organization and for the inspiration he gave us all.

# 2009 Annual Report



P.O. Box 1344, Friday Harbor, WA 98250  
360.378.2319 • [www.sanjuans.org](http://www.sanjuans.org)

NON PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE PAID  
FRIDAY HARBOR  
WA 98250  
PERMIT NO. 38

## Calendar of Events – Save the Date

- May 1 - Stewardship Fair, Orcas Village Green, 10 am
- May 5 - Green Boating Workshop, SJI, Mullis Center, 7 pm
- May 6 - Green Boating Workshop, Lopez Library, 12:30 pm
- May 6 - Green Boating Workshop, Orcas Senior Center, 7 pm
- June 19 - Orca Sing, Lime Kiln Park, San Juan Island, 7 pm
- June 22 - Wills Workshop, SJI, Mullis Center, 10:30-11:30am
- June 26 - Low Tide Beach Walk at Garrison Bay 10-1 pm
- Aug 14 - Orcas Library Fair, Stop by our booth
- Aug 18-21 - County Fair, Visit us in the Green Tent
- Aug 28 - Annual Member Meeting, Lopez, Odlin Park

Events are **FREE** and open to the public

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Green Boating Workshops

Learn more about how you can reduce your environmental impact and protect water quality, marine mammals and eelgrass. Free and open to the public.

**Wed. May 5 7:00 - 9:00 pm San Juan Island Mullis Center**

**Thurs. May 6 12:30 - 2:30 pm Lopez Library**

**Thurs. May 6 7:00 - 9:00 pm Orcas Senior Center**

*Hosted by FRIENDS of the San Juans, in partnership with The Whale Museum, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance and the Stewardship Network of the San Juans.*

photo: Mark Gardner