



Land Trust Acquires Historic Eatonville Homestead

The Land Trust is pleased to announce the acquisition of the historic Van Eaton homestead in Eatonville – 68 acres of wetlands, floodplain, dense forest, and Mashel River shoreline that provides superior habitat for threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

The property is the crown jewel in the Mashel Shoreline Protection and Restoration Initiative, a multi-partner project to restore 2.2 miles of the Mashel River. In addition to protecting valuable salmon habitat, the property also affords the best access for future in-stream restoration of the confluence of the Mashel and Little Mashel rivers, a key site for salmon production.

The Mashel is the largest tributary to the Nisqually River. Forty years ago it was one of the richest steelhead rivers in the Pacific Northwest, with annual spawning runs in the thousands. Since then, the steelhead population has declined by some 80 percent. Restoring the Mashel is critical to recovery of this precious salmonid species.

Pierce County provided \$1.1 million toward the purchase, which was the highest-ranked project in the county’s Conservation Futures program. The Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board provided an additional \$200,000 to meet the purchase price of \$1.3 million.

The acquisition follows the Land Trust’s acquisition, in 2009, of an adjoining 25 acres of the Van Eaton homestead. That property was the first to be acquired under Pierce County’s transfer of development rights program, with additional funding from the Williams Pipeline Mitigation Fund.

“We could not be more pleased,” said Terry Van Eaton, who represented the Van Eaton family in negotiations with the Land Trust. “Our dream has always been to see this property permanently conserved. We are happy to know that it will remain a vital part of the community and that its protection will help bring back the Chinook and steelhead that once thrived in the Mashel.”

The two transactions mark the first time the properties have left family ownership since they were homesteaded.

In addition to the restoration project, the Land Trust anticipates working with the Town of Eatonville to incorporate portions of the property into the Town’s open-space plans.

