

Shelton-Mason County Journal

Belfair Herald

Serving the communities of Belfair, Allyn, Grapeview, Tahuya, Mason Lake, South Shore and Victor since 1969 • A section of the Shelton-Mason County Journal • Thursday, September 8, 2011

Land trust turns the tide on Klingel wetlands

By **ARLA SHEPHARD**

In little more than a month, construction workers completed a restoration project at the tip of Hood Canal that has been years in the making.

The Great Peninsula Conservancy, a non-profit land trust that works to restore habitat in Kitsap, Mason and Pierce counties, closed a chapter in

its Klingel Wetlands project in Belfair at the end of last month — crews from Zephyr's Inc. in Allyn removed the remnants of a 1,450-foot dike that severed tidal channels in the wetlands when it was built in the 1950s.

The dike removal opens up 13 acres on the 90-acre wetlands to

See Land trust on page BH-4



Herald photo by Arla Shephard

Sandra Staples-Bortner, executive director of the non-profit Great Peninsula Conservancy, explains the decades-long process it took the land trust to complete its restoration of the Klingel Wetlands.

Land trust

Continued from page BH-1

the tides of Hood Canal, which will slowly reclaim the land and revert the fresh water habitat to its former salt marsh and salt-tolerant environment.

"Now, we are waiting for Mother Nature," said Sandra Staples-Bortner, executive director of the Great Peninsula Conservancy, during a gathering at the site on Monday. "The goal is to get the young salmon, young steelhead, young crab to come back."

As part of the restoration process, a new dike was built closer to State Route 300 to protect the road and adjacent landowners, like

"Now we are waiting for Mother Nature."

Pat's Little Red Barn, from flooding.

Staples-Bortner thanked project partners like the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group, the Hood Canal Coordinating Council and others in helping design and fund the project.

"It's mind-boggling to look back at all the pieces that had to come together to make this work," said Dan Larsen of the NRCS. "I remember back in 2008, at one of these community meetings, someone asking why couldn't we get this started next fall."

Landowners Gary and Celia Parrott, who still own property next to the wetlands, founded the Hood Canal Land Trust, which became the Great Peninsula Conservancy, and in 1985, Elizabeth Klingel donated 66 acres to the conservancy. Judge Robert and Cathy Bryan and Oda Beard made subsequent donations that brought the total conserved acreage to 90.

"It's a small project in the scheme of things, but it's helping to restore Hood Canal and Puget Sound," Staples-Bortner said. "It's all part of that."