

# Community Land Trust of Waldron Island



## ***Winter Greetings from Waldron Island!***

We have started 2024 with a roller coaster of weather events: After a mild New Year's Eve, temperatures plummeted into the single digits followed by over six inches of snow. As usual, the snow didn't last long, and by the end of the month we had record high temperatures of over 60 degrees, making January the warmest January on record. By February the mountain snow pack was the lowest since 2015. Then March hit with the coldest first 3 days ever recorded! Looking ahead, 2024 is bound to be an interesting year across the nation and, we hope, for our CLT as well. But first, let's take a look back at 2023:

## **Annual Report 2023**

### **Governance:**

**Started the year with Board Members:** Rebecca Moore-Chair, Jeana Bird-Treasurer, Chris Rogers-Secretary, Litia Perta, & Tony Scruton

**New Board after August Annual Meeting:** Rebecca Moore- Chair, Jeana Bird-Treasurer, Joanne Colman Wester-Secretary, Linnea Magraw Bensel, Litia Perta, Chris Rogers, & Siri Thorson

**Membership:** 88 current members (31 more than 2022!)

Annual membership and fundraising drive in January 2023 raised just under \$6000 for operations and to implement forest stewardship at the Commons. Kris Wernstedt and Sarah Lynch did an analysis of our membership history, noting that only an average of 15% of the Waldron community has joined the CLT in any one year, and that membership is widely inconsistent from year to year. The current board hopes to increase membership by changing our membership fees and implementing automatic renewals. Memberships keep our organization afloat!

**Annual Member Meeting:** The 2023 Annual membership meeting was held on October 7th after being postponed several times due to Covid-19 surges on Waldron. 37 community members attended the thoughtful and tasty gathering. (see article on page 4)



**Outreach/Newsletter:** In an effort to keep in touch with members and share updates and information, the CLTWI sent out a winter newsletter in January of 2023 with content for the newsletter coming from community members and Board members alike. Many thanks to Nancy Moore who volunteered time and expertise in editing and design. We received lots of positive feedback from members and plan to send out two newsletters annually. Other member outreach is happening through monthly emails with board

meeting agendas and minutes, and periodic announcements, updates, photos, or invitations.

### **Leasehold:**

**Mail Bay Leasehold Transfer :** At the request of the current leaseholders, the CLTWI successfully transferred ownership of the property leasehold interest from Richard Van Fossan to Nina T Hutcheson, who together with Zane Hutcheson are the current leaseholders of the CLTWI property on Mail Bay. The transfer enabled the CLTWI to review its current leaseholder documents and develop a potential template for standardizing its agreements on current and future CLTWI-owned property. The CLTWI is pleased to welcome Nina as the newest leaseholder on CLTWI-held land. The CLTWI is indebted to William Appel, a longtime former resident of Waldron Island and friend to many community efforts, who provided legal guidance, prepared and reviewed legal documents, and facilitated the closing on the Land Trust's behalf.

## **Stewardship of Commons:**

- **Forest Management** : The annual membership drive in 2023 included a special appeal to raise funds for a Commons Land Steward. However, an opportunity to leverage grant funding from the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to continue forest thinning and firebreak implementation along roadways and gathering spaces within the Waldron Commons allowed us to hire two temporary foresters. The grant specifically enabled Waldron residents, Ebony Pickard and Joe Hatten, to focus on an area equivalent to 2.8 acres. Their work was well-supported by a community workbee on May 13th that drew 15 volunteers. Together, the contributed volunteer labor and funds raised allowed us to provide on-island employment and leveraged \$5411.25 in grant funding. We are continuing work at the Commons this winter/spring and have received a second phase grant from the DNR to support this work.



(see article on page 6)

- **Land Bank Conservation Easement Annual monitoring visit:** On November 15th, Board members Joanne Colman Wester and Rebecca Moore joined Erin Halcomb of the SJC Land Bank to walk the Commons property while she conducted the annual monitoring of the conservation easement on the Commons. Erin applauded efforts to remove invasive weeds and improve forest health through the DNR supported forest work and gave approval for the proposed next stage of thinning and brush removal. She encouraged us to take precautions while thinning as some of the understory trees and shrubs within the Commons are uncommon within the archipelago in both species and structure. For example, on our monitoring walk we identified both Pacific Dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) and Canadian Buffalo-Berry (*Sherherdi canadensis*). This encouragement is consistent with the Land Bank's stated conservation value of protecting and promoting an ecologically diverse forest habitat. We also discussed the need to more clearly identify the location of several easement corners as well as a need to decide on the exact location of the half-acre building envelope allowable within the easement area.

Buffalo-Berry



Dogwood

- **Mapping and Land-Use Plan for the Commons** :

This winter the CLT board has been focusing on the creation of a master land-use plan for the Commons. James Robarts has offered to create layered maps of the property to help with the planning process (Thank you James!) and board members are researching and discussing options and prioritization of possible projects on the Commons, including affordable housing, improvements to the Commons gathering space, trail building, and forest management.

## **2023 Craft Faire:**



This year's summer Craft Faire was a very successful event for the Waldron community. Thirteen artisans and crafters sold their wares, and contributed 10% of their gross receipts for a total of \$524 to the CLTWI. The pizza-making crew was in full gear providing refreshment to a very large summer crowd.

The CLTWI appreciates the volunteers that made the food and beverage operations such a great success, and especially thanks the extraordinary efforts of Joanne, Cathy, and Barry. Another year of great music provided a wonderful backdrop to the gathering. Thanks to Michael Ludwig and all of the musicians for their contribution of musical talent. In total, the event raised \$1896 toward the operating fund.

## **CLTWI Logo Design and Hats:**

CLTWI decided we'd like to have hats for sale, and we solicited designs from members and readers of our newsletter as well as from students at the Waldron School. Nina Hutcheson submitted the design we thought best encapsulated all CLTWI hopes to be. We got in touch with a great family-run business in Anacortes, T-Shirts by Design, to make us 100 hats in three colors. 28 hats were sold for \$25 each at the Craft Faire in addition to a few more by request in the months that followed.



## Summary of Current Financial Position:

By Jeana Bird & Jill Ciolli

The CLT brought in \$24,573.29 last year, up nearly 150% from 2022. The change was largely due to a substantial increase in memberships and donations (thanks to all who contributed), as well as a DNR grant of \$5,411.25 for forestry work on the Commons property. Additional annual revenue from other sources including the Craft Faire, leasehold fees, and loan interest made up the rest. \$9,611.43 was spent on the forestry project (part raised by CLT and part matching funds from DNR), along with taxes, mortgage interest, and other operating expenditures adding up to total expenses of \$17,023.59. Net revenue for 2023 was \$7,571.97, an increase of 342% over 2022.

Currently, the CLT has bank accounts totaling \$27,872.44, up \$5,141.11 from the same time last year. Total equity amounts to \$335,573.51 and includes three properties plus the outstanding loan on one of them. Total liabilities amount to \$32,680.75 owed on the Mail Bay property

### CLTWI Statement of Activity 2023

Summary Income Statement	Jan - Dec 2023	Jan - Dec 2022
<b>Revenue</b>		
Contributed income	9,819.99	3,174.00
Government grants & contracts	5,411.25	
<b>Total Contributed income</b>	<b>\$ 15,231.24</b>	<b>\$ 3,174.00</b>
Craft Fair	1,843.00	1,893.50
Leasehold Fee - Mail Bay	300.00	300.00
Leasehold Fee + Donations - Scrutons	600.00	600.00
Mail Bay Loan Interest Earned	3,884.05	3,989.39
Membership Dues	1,740.00	920.00
Merch Income	975.00	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 24,573.29</b>	<b>\$ 10,876.89</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Advertising & marketing	1,793.02	175.95
Commons Forest Management	9,611.43	2,273.80
Craft Faire Expenses	418.00	81.00
Mortgage Interest - Mail Bay	2,089.11	2,316.31
Office expenses	0.00	70.00
Memberships & subscriptions	241.94	0.00
Printing & photocopying	101.36	0.00
Shipping & postage	97.75	27.00
<b>Total Office expenses</b>	<b>\$ 441.05</b>	<b>\$ 97.00</b>
Real Estate Taxes Paid	2,397.47	2,656.50
Services	0.00	590.00
Supplies	178.51	140.40
WA NonProfit Registration	95.00	0.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 17,023.59</b>	<b>\$ 8,330.96</b>
Other Revenue		
Interest Earned	22.27	9.43
<b>Total Other Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 22.27</b>	<b>\$ 9.43</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 7,571.97</b>	<b>\$ 2,555.36</b>

### CLTWI State of Financial Position 2023

Summary Balance Sheet	As of Dec 31, 2023	As of Dec 31, 2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 27,872.44	\$ 22,731.33
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 276,639.16	\$ 276,305.16
Other Assets	\$ 63,742.66	\$ 65,556.69
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 368,254.26</b>	<b>\$ 364,593.18</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>		
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$ 32,680.75	\$ 36,591.64
Total Equity	\$ 335,573.51	\$ 328,001.54
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>\$ 368,254.26</b>	<b>\$ 364,593.18</b>

### Please Support Your Land Trust

Once a year the Land Trust asks for your generous support through its member appeal. New this year: your gift at any level and for any purpose makes you a valued member of the Community Land Trust of Waldron Island. Your donation will empower the CLTWI to build resilience, promote economic diversity, increase advocacy, and ensure the health of our island's human and natural environment today and for future generations. This year's donations will also augment the Commons forestry grant described on page 6.

Donate any amount, and you will become a voting member of the Land Trust. All donations are tax deductible and can be made through our website [waldronclt.org](http://waldronclt.org) or with a check mailed to POB 11, Waldron, WA 98297. Checks should be made out to CLTWI.

Thank you for your annual support!

**PROTECT WHAT YOU LOVE  
WITH A DONATION TODAY!**

## Annual Meeting

By Litia Perta

After some Covid related postponements, the Community Land Trust of Waldron Island was finally able to hold our annual meeting on a beautiful sunny day in October, 2023. It was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Land Trust and to celebrate the people who are right here on Waldron, the Board decided to source annual speakers from our community members as well as host a community share session. The baked goods table was out of this world, turnout was excellent, and the general feeling of the day was both pride in and excitement about all that the CLT has done and hopes to do in the future. Our speakers included Bill Corr, who wrote a beautiful piece about bringing his young children here in a small skiff he had built with his brother (read by James Robarts as Bill was in absentia). Vicki Heater shared a stirring set of questions about the future of the island and the intermingled vitalities of the Land Trust and the Waldron Island School. Steve Bensel offered a tender story about the people of Waldron Island coming through for his family in a time of need as a way of introducing an idea for an island-wide revolving loan program to help young families establish shelters here. Jess Arndt reminded us that “community” can be a verb: something we do together and engage in all the time; and then asked participants to share moments when they were “community-ing,” as Jess playfully put it. Jason Lerner completed our speaker program by giving us a brief history of alternative and electric vehicles to underscore how important it is for Waldron to move towards renewable energy vehicles—especially suggesting an electric boat to run the mail. CLT was so grateful for these robust and thoughtful contributions and provocations, and many participants of the meeting remarked on how profound it was to hear from Waldron’s own.

Daniel Rouse led a community share session borrowing from his Quaker tradition and invited anyone so moved to speak. The one constraint he offered was to allow silence after each person’s share so that we could all engage in a more active listening, allowing what was shared to land and be integrated in the circle. Shares ranged beautifully between stories of past times on island, gratitude for actions that helped people feel welcome here, and ideas and hopes for the times to come. A through-line of the shares was, as one member put it, deep consideration for the pressing question: What can we do now to help those that will follow us?

“Alone, we can do so little;  
together, we can do so much.”  
– Helen Keller



The impromptu piece that emerged in response to Jess Arndt’s prompt reads like this:

**I am on Waldron community-ing when I**  
**am \_\_\_\_\_**  
eating at Community Land Trust events  
meditating with friends  
harvesting honey  
waiting for the dock dinghy  
going to school for plays, Apple Day, random times  
thinking of ways for people to collaborate  
chatting  
listening  
helping to unload the Loon  
picking up something and carrying it and it’s not mine  
controlling my dust  
delivering  
listening to people  
going to community meeting  
going to the mail on a mail day  
reaching out to folks I know are struggling and offer  
help or lend an ear  
pausing to chat with people on the road and I don’t think  
I have time, but I do

Thank you to all who spoke and shared and contributed and listened!



## Meet the Trustees

By Joanne Colman Wester, Linnea Magraw Bensel,  
And Sire Thorson



In the 65 years **Linnea** has lived on Waldron, she has seen the island population ebb and flow. When she attended the Waldron School in the 1960's, the enrollment dropped to 4 students,

three of them being Magraw girls. In the early nineteen eighties, when she worked as a teacher's aide at the school the enrollment peaked at around 30.

Somehow the Waldron community and school has always managed to rebound from the periods of low population. Currently, real estate prices as well as economic and cultural forces continually threaten to make depopulation of the island a real concern.

Now, as Linnea looks toward retirement from growing and marketing at Nootka Rose Farm (established 45 years ago with Steve Bensel) she would like to help keep the Waldron community sustainable by making it possible for people of all ages and income levels to live on the island. Over the years, Waldron has had a good balance of year-round and part-time residents in the community, families with school-aged children and retirees, low impact development of homesteads, farms, and vacation homes and land with conservation easements. Linnea is hoping that by serving on the CLT board, she can help this community organization assist families put down roots on the island to maintain and strengthen this unique place. With the fourth generation of her family now living on the island, active involvement in building and growing a long-lasting community seems like a worthy goal.

School! **Joanne's** whole life has revolved around schools and schooling, Forty-two years ago, it was the teaching job that brought her here to Waldron. Thirty years ago, it was the declining school population that prompted her to serve on the CLT board the first time. After raising a child and teaching at the Waldron School twelve years along with another sixteen years at the other one and two-room schools on Stuart, Shaw, and Decatur Islands, she knows first-hand the value a school contributes to a community. She longs for her future grandchildren to experience the Waldron School. But once again, Waldron's little school house is in jeopardy. The aging population of the island residents coupled with increased land values and a lack of affordable housing have led to fewer young families moving to the island. A multi-age population with a thriving school will make a more dynamic community for us all. Joanne would like to help the Land Trust make this happen.



A third generation Waldroner, **Siri** grew up on the island and attended K-8th grade at the Waldron Island School. After a decade living in California and New York, Siri once again made Waldron her home base in 2014 and has been a full-time resident since 2020. Siri is a florist and grows cut

flowers on her family's property, as well as working part time at Nootka Rose Farm.

Siri has long been interested in local grassroots organizing, mutual aid, and social and ecological justice. She has served as Waldron's Precinct Committee Officer for the San Juan County Democratic Party since 2021, and is honored to be a new member of the Waldron CLT Board.

As a Millennial, Siri has witnessed and experienced the struggles that her generation has faced in securing stable and affordable housing, something that is felt acutely in our County and on our island. She hopes to be able to contribute to the creation of comfortable, sustainable, low-cost housing on Waldron, as well as the purchase of more land by the CLT. As pressure from business development and tourism squeeze San Juan County ever harder, she feels strongly that the continued flourishing of our unique Waldron community depends on collective stewardship of land and resources in accordance with our incredible Sub Area Plan. She is deeply grateful for the hard work towards these ends of all those that came before her, and hopes she can honor their legacy by standing up for this small but irreplaceable piece of our planet.

*Monthly board meetings are held on Sunday mornings, the third Sunday of the month, from 10:30 to noon, in the cottage. Everyone is welcome to attend. Each month's agenda is posted at the post office and is sent to members the week before the meeting.*

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."  
– **Margaret J. Wheatley**

## Caring for Commons

By Linnea Magraw Bensel

Caring for the Commons has continued this year with forestry grants, workbees, and other volunteer efforts. Projects on the CLT property have picked up since the last newsletter.

### DNR grants:

To maximize ecological and community benefits through good forest management practices, the CLT has received two financial assistance grants from the WA State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Phase I was completed in May 2023. The funding was to create a fire break along the driveway on the east boundary and the north side of the county road as well as in the area around the existing pizza oven clearing. Routes for potential trails were also flagged during this project. Phase II will begin in late winter 2024 and will go until May 2025 with a pause for bird nesting season in the spring and early summer. In this phase the funding is for forest thinning, slash abatement, and brush control on 14.9 acres. This will be a good opportunity to improve the health of the forest and reduce the amount of invasive species still choking areas that were logged in the 1990s. The DNR will give the CLT \$1,940 for each acre where thinning, slash treatment and brush control has been completed. Judging by the cost of the work done on the first phase, this is not enough to cover entire cost of labor and equipment needed to fulfill the requirements per acre. Therefore, the CLT will need to raise some funds to finish all 14.9 acres. Consider donating more for this project when you renew your membership or anytime that works for you.

(see page 8)

### Trails:

In January, the board decided to allocate \$5,000 to trail building, and work has begun on the trails flagged last year. This is an exciting project that will make the beauty of the Commons Forest more accessible to everyone. These trails will primarily be around the circumference of the Land Bank Easement land. The hope is that the community can enjoy and appreciate the diversity of native plant species and a beautiful second growth forest with salal undergrowth while walking on the trails.

### Re-establishing survey corners:

A small group gathered at the end of December to search for the elusive survey monuments, heavy rebar pins with an orange cap set by Iverson Surveying Co in 2005, marking the CLT property and the Land Bank easement line. With the original survey map and some good written descriptions by the late Ollie Wilgress, excellent progress was made. Seven out of the ten monuments have been positively identified. It will take a bit more time to find the last three markers but there is considerable confidence

that with some compass work, brush cutting and a metal detector to find the monuments covered in forest duff, this can be accomplished. Knowing where the property lines are will be necessary to move forward with any future plans the CLT has for this parcel.



### Workbees:

A successful workbee was held at the Commons in May 2023 after the fire break work was completed. Board and community members gathered to put in several hours of spreading chips and brush cutting in the pizza oven clearing. Firewood rounds were also split and moved to the oven shelter for future use. Delicious homemade pastries and a sense of accomplishment were enjoyed by all. There will be more workbees scheduled this year, so stay tuned. It's a great way to contribute to the CLT, connect with neighbors, and be productive.

## COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

### A New Face at the Post Office



In August Susan Bucknell became the 24<sup>th</sup> postmaster to serve the Waldron community, following in her father's footsteps who worked at the post office from 1974-75. Megan Orleman, our previous postmaster of 11 years, has moved to Orcas Island for her children to attend school, but you can still find her at the Orcas Landing Post Office.

The first regular mailboat delivery to Waldron began in 1878, with the first official post office established here in 1880. The current Waldron Post Office building was built in 1936, the same year Fran Chevalier was born. The building served as a store until 1942 during the war. By 1975 the Waldron post office was the only post office in the country without a phone and electricity.

Welcome Susan!



## A New Face at the Farmstand

Faye Lily Callaghan ~  
Born January 11, 2024,  
9:18am, 8lb3oz,  
in Portland Oregon.

Her parents Naomi Bensel and Neil Callaghan and brother Aidan are all doing well. Grandparents Steve and Linnea Bensel are all smiles!

## Passages

Garth Henry  
1953-2023

June Henry  
1925-2024

Denny Sevier  
1945-2024

## What Would the Waldron Community be Without the Waldron School?

By Rheanna Bensel

With school enrolment low and new teachers needed for next year, an active and concerted effort to recruit families and teachers is needed to ensure the Waldron School remains a vibrant and thriving component of the Waldron Community. The Waldron School Site Council and Community Land Trust of Waldron Island (CLT) are working together with the Orcas Island School District and the Waldron community on recruitment and to facilitate housing availability, but continued help and community support is needed. The CLT and its members have an important role to play in supporting the Waldron School.

In order to successfully recruit new teachers and more students for Waldron School, there needs to be affordable housing available for them and their families. This means identifying Waldron properties that are available for rent, lease, or sale to new families and teachers. In the fall, a letter was sent to CLT members and Waldron property owners asking them to think creatively about ways they could help provide housing for new members of the school community. Thanks to the responses received from the community, a brief list of possible rentals and properties for sale has been identified. However, the list compiled to-date is not sufficient to support the hoped-for new families and teachers, and the Site Council and CLT are continuing to work to identify ways further additional housing availability can be facilitated.

With two eighth graders graduating this Spring, the projected number of students for the school in the

coming years is quite low. In order to have a healthy and thriving school, and thus a healthy and thriving community, the school needs more students. The Waldron School Site Council and school community are approaching this from all angles -- from retention to recruitment. An effort is underway to update the school's website and community networks are being contacted. The Site Council is considering outreach to local media and brainstorming ways to get the word out about Waldron School and the opportunities it can provide for students and their families.

Before next school year (starting September 2024), the Waldron School will likely be hiring one or two teachers. The Site Council is reaching out to community networks, masters in teaching programs at Washington colleges, and other small schools across the nation, but the teacher recruitment effort is a work in progress, with more work to do. Teacher recruitment is critical so that interested prospective candidates have been identified when the official job posting is released by Orcas Island School District later in the year.

We need look no farther than Stuart Island for an example of the chilling effect closure of a school can have on a small island community. A once small, but vibrant year-round community on Stuart is all but gone, with only a handful of year-round residents remaining on the island. The Waldron School is critical to maintaining and enriching the entire Waldron Community. The Site Council and CLT are working together to identify ways we can facilitate housing availability and recruit teachers and students, but community support and assistance is critical.

Please think hard about contacts within your



networks who might be interested in a Waldron experience, even just a one-year Waldron adventure! We know moving to Waldron with a family is a big commitment, and we realize we're looking for a handful of needles in the haystack, which is why we need to make sure we actively spread the word as far and wide as we can-- hopefully the right people can hear about the

opportunities on Waldron and help enrich this community.

If you have suggestions, ideas, or time to dedicate to the Waldron School teacher and student recruitment and housing efforts, please contact Rheanna Bensel [rbensel@gmail.com](mailto:rbensel@gmail.com) (206) 819- 7962. Community support and involvement are critical.

Winter 2024

**Community Land Trust of Waldron Island**

**Please renew or join NOW!**

Memberships are per person and run January to January

Donation Amount:

\_\_\_ \$15.00.      \_\_\_ \$25.00      \_\_\_ \$35.00      \_\_\_ \$50.00  
\_\_\_ \$100.00      \_\_\_ \$250.00.      \_\_\_ \$500.00      Custom Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Earmark donations for \_\_\_ General Fund.      \_\_\_ Commons Forestry Project and Trails  
\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Let us know if you are interested in : \_\_\_ Automatic monthly donations.      \_\_\_ Estate Planning

Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please write checks to CLTWI or pay online at our website: [waldronclt.org](http://waldronclt.org)

*Thank you for your support!*

Community Land Trust of Waldron Island, PO Box 11, Waldron, WA 98297

Community Land Trust of Waldron Island

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**Our Mission:**

The mission of the Community Land Trust of Waldron Island is to be a resource for and provide access to affordable homes and land for Waldron residents while cultivating economic sustainability and nurturing land stewardship, thus enriching the entire community.

**Photo Contributors:**

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