

# Newsletter

Spring 2010



A doe and her fawns on a Lake Sammamish resident's beach.

# Living with Wildlife on Lake Sammamish

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### About Save Lake Sammamish

**SLS** is a non-profit Washington corporation established to promote the water quality of Lake Sammamish and its watershed by:

- · Increasing community awareness of the lake and its watershed, and
- Fostering greater public awareness of the environmental and wildlife concerns relating to Lake Sammamish and its watershed, and impacts of any potential development thereon.

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Check out our web site at: <a href="www.savelakesamm.org">www.savelakesamm.org</a>

## Living with Wildlife on Lake Sammamish

All things share the same breath - the beast, the tree, the man - the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.
-- Chief Seattle



A Great Blue Heron looks for fish on a neighborhood dock.

ake Sammamish is blessed with abundant wildlife. What a joy it is to share the Lake with the marvelous mix of wildlife who live above, alongside, and below us-- eagles, osprey, owl, great blue herons, wood-peckers, deer, bats, otter, muskrats, beaver, turtles, bullfrogs, bass, and kokanee -- to name only a few!

Wildlife plays an important part in the lake's ecosystem. All are dependent on healthy habitats and the balancing forces that nature provides for their long term survival. While many of us may not realize it, a property owner is also a wildlife habitat manager. The things we do, or do not do, in the vicinity of our

home have an effect on the quality of habitat for dozens of wildlife species.

Though not intended, human intervention may upset the natural balance, endangering both the wildlife and its lake habitat. The nature we love can literally be "loved to death." By being aware of your environment and practicing good environmental stewardship habits, you'll avoid harming wildlife where you live.

Here are some simple things to remember:

1. Watch carefully for wildlife while driving to help you avoid hitting or running over animals. Wildlife often does not realize

the potential danger of an oncoming vehicle. Stop and help animals like turtles to the side of the road while maintaining both your safety and the animal's. Try not to spook animals and consider alerting other traffic about the animal's presence.

- 2. Pick up any litter you see along the road, lakeside, or other nearby areas. Litter such as watch batteries, six pack connectors, and other items are deadly to wildlife. Practice good conservation yourself in areas with wildlife, leaving nothing but footprints behind.
- 3. Leave baby wildlife alone unless you are positive they have been orphaned. In many cases, a parent may be near or returning soon. Orphaned wildlife should not be kept as pets. Instead, look for wildlife refuges or nature centers which can provide the care the young animals need.
- 4. Create a yard that will avoid harming wildlife. Consider using non-toxic products on your lawn and plants. Plant trees, shrubs, and flowers that provide food, habitat, and shelter for wildlife. Walk around your yard before mowing to make sure there are no nests or animals in it.
- 5. Prevent your pets from playing with or harming wildlife. Cats who are allowed to roam freely outside can be especially harmful to birds that feed or nest on the ground and other small animals. If you keep your pet in a pen, be sure it is kept well back from the waterside.



A beaver takes a break on the banks of Lake Sammamish



Photo by Ed Mills

Two river otters frolic on a Lake Sammamish dock.

- 6. NEVER feed human food to wildlife. Wild animals need to find nutrition in their natural environment. Wildlife that obtain human food become nuisance animals that are often killed by cars, dogs, or predators because they left the safety and cover of their normal habitat. Such animals often get into human trash, eating things such as plastic food wrappers, which can become trapped and clog their digestive systems.
- 7. Place streamers or other items in front of large windows to prevent birds from crashing into them. Put caps on chimneys and other areas where wildlife can get caught. Keep lids on trash cans to avoid making unintended feeding sites for wildlife.
- 8. Observe wildlife from a distance so they are not scared or forced to flee. Harassed animals waste energy that they need to survive. You are too close if your presence or actions cause wildlife to alter their normal habits.

If you have pictures of wildlife that you've encountered around Lake Sammamish and would like to share them with our readers, please e-mail them to our Newsletter editor at <a href="mailto:ridemarco@comcast.net">ridemarco@comcast.net</a> and we'll feature them in upcoming editions of the SLS Newsletter.

### Be Kind to Your Web-Footed Friends ...

For a duck may be somebody's Mother! She lives at the edge of the swamp Where it's always wet and damp.

**B**ird watching on Lake Sammamish is pleasurable and rewarding.

From bald eagles, osprey and great blue heron to tiny Anna's humming birds and dozens of other species in between: belted kingfisher, green heron, nuthatches, chickadees, Stellar's jay, northern flicker, downy and pileated woodpeckers, junco, redwing blackbird, sparrows, owls, hawks, waxwings, robin, rufous-sided towhee, varied thrush, purple- house and goldfinches, gadwall, mallard, American coot, cormorants, mergansers, wood duck, golden eye, bufflehead, Western grebe, gulls, Canadian geese, and many more, including a pair of pheasants that hung around for a week in the fall and a transient brown pelican - all live around or visit Lake Sammamish.

Many homeowners have backyard feeders and even "wildlife backyards" to encourage the native birds and help replace lost habitat. With the pleasure of birding comes responsibility: keep feeders clean and stocked, especially in winter's harsh weather and feed nutritional foods only! Don't feed birds into the winter because many should migrate.

Which brings us to the wild ducks. . .

When the ground is frozen and covered with snow (as in December 2008), feeding mixed grains and corn to the remaining resident ducks helps them make it through tough times. Dabbling and foraging for their "natural" foods is their job and will enable them to stay strong and healthy.

# Bread is bad for ducks! Bread is bad for the Lake!

People armed with bags of bread of various kinds and of dubious freshness mistakenly believe they are helping their feathered friends. Not so! Bread is junk food that damages the health of wild birds by causing their organs to become



Web-footed friends

engorged and fatty on the inside and they can die from malnutrition, heart disease, liver problems, and other health complications.

By the way, have you noticed what junk food is doing to people? Overweight birds can't fly – think domesticated turkeys, ducks, and chickens. They are raised and fed to be eaten by people, not to forage, fly, or migrate.

Often so many people are feeding the ducks that uneaten food is left to rot. Decaying food pollutes the water and attracts rats. Rotting food forms dangerous molds and spawns disease including Salmonella and Botulism, which can cause "limber neck" and loss of feathers, killing the ducks. These diseases can also be contracted by humans, especially children.

Next time you feel the urge to feed the ducks, please remember:

- 1. Feeding ducks attracts rats, pests and predators that kill ducks and endanger humans.
- 2. Rotting food pollutes the water and breeds deadly diseases and parasites...
  - A single outbreak of Duck Virus Enteritis (caused by artificial feeding) kills all of the ducks.
  - Uneaten food quickly forms a deadly mold called Aspergillus; fatal to ducks and communicable to humans



- Avian Botulism (caused by artificial feeding) kills entire waterfowl populations and hospitalizes people.
- Artificially fed ducks emit a parasite causing a condition in humans called Swimmer's Itch.

- 3. Ducks defecate at the site of scattered food or bread; bacteria in feces create much higher risks for illness or disease.
- 4. Ducks that are overfed create dangerous amounts of waste that harms fish and other animals
- 5. Some foods such as corn may be OK as a snack for ducks, but fish can't digest it and die. Seeds cause severe cramping pain in ducks.

### Please don't feed the ducks!

If you find waterfowl pesky and don't want them in your yard, the solution is simple and easy! Plant a buffer of shrubs between the water and your grass. Most of the time, if the geese, ducks, and coots cannot see grass, they won't be tempted to come into your yard. String or wire fences along the shoreline are not effective – birds can flutter over them – and they only serve to entangle and injure the waterfowl.

### Garbage in the Lake

ake shore residents find all kinds of nasty things on their beaches – beer cans and soda bottles, styrofoam cups and plastic plates, poptops, tangled fishing lines, fishing tackle and lead pellets, balloon rubber and streamers, firework wrappers, plastic bags of many varieties, broken glass, cigarette butts, oil, old rags and flip flops, you know . . . things that fall off docks and boats, that wash down storm drains.

SLS received reports last summer of large "mats" of garbage floating at the north end of the Lake by the Marymoor Park wetlands.

These finds are unpleasant for homeowners and swimmers but can be fatal to birds, fish, and animals that ingest them.

Just a teaspoon of oil can pollute gallons of water and kill off fish, particularly juveniles. Rain water running off a copper roof or downspout is highly toxic to fish. The amount of zinc in a single penny is enough to kill a duck. Foreign objects that can't be digested quickly lodge themselves in the gizzard of a bird.



As digestion begins, the metal breaks down and toxins enter the blood-stream, bones, and muscle tissue. Symptoms of poisoning include weakness, diarrhea, collapse, and death. Many creatures die horrible deaths caught in fishing line or trapped in plastic six-pack holders.

Please pick up garbage and remove it from the Lake and its watershed!

### SPECIAL FEATURE:

# Shoreline Master Program Updates

W ater and land meet on the shores of streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. Because these are transition zones, they support a rich diversity of life in many forms - fish, birds, plants, animals and insects. Estuaries and swamps along shorelines are

irreplaceable feeding, breeding and resting areas. Here are nurseries and hiding places for many babies – fish fry, insect and shellfish larvae, ducklings, even little Moses in his basket!

Shorelines are also valuable real estate.

Imagine what Lake Sammamish must have been a hundred and fifty years ago ...

Both the Lake and Sammamish River were about 15 feet

higher then than today, before construction of the Ballard Locks in 1911. Transition between water and land was in equilibrium, achieved by eons of interaction. Giant, ancient Western red cedars and Douglas firs blanketed the glacially created hillsides above the Lake. Numerous small streams flowed clear, clean, and cool from forested hillsides. Erosion occurred rarely. Half of rainfall was intercepted by the forest canopy; the balance filtered into forest duff soils. Shaded streams were rich with fresh water mussels and salmon, primarily the "red fish" - kokanee. Jumbles of fallen trees lay in and across the creeks creating pools for fish to hide or rest. The shoreline itself was almost invisible. In the company of great blue herons, belted kingfishers, bald eagles, and purple martens, black cottonwood trees grew at the water's edge. In fall, spawning kokanee dug redds and laid their eggs in clean gravels and fresh cold ground-water upwellings around lake shores and in streams. Juvenile salmon foraged and hid from predators among the rushes and sedges growing along clean gravel beaches. Rocks deep on the lake bottom were clearly visible through sparkling water.

Today, water meets land on a very different shoreline!

Houses and roads have replaced forested hillsides. Roofs, streets, and parking lots prevent groundwater replenishment. In turn,

creeks, overwhelmed by stormwater-runoff from hardened surfaces, erode their banks and send tons of sediments and soils into the Lake with every rainfall. Mud buries spawning gravels. Nutrients in stormwater fertilize milfoil and algae, causing explosive growth of these plants. Because rainwater can no longer filter through forest soils into the ground, most of the ground-water upwellings have



East Lake Sammamish shoreline

disappeared. Loss of shade trees has contributed to higher water temperatures. Roads and a rail line encircling the Lake have severed stream channels from their mouths, denying salmon access to their natal streams. Virtually all shoreline trees and vegetation have been stripped away. Rushes and reeds that used to absorb wave energy have been removed. Now, waves kicked up by wind or wake crash into the unprotected soils eroding them away, adding silt into the Lake.

A single bulkhead on the shore may be of little individual consequence - and so each one could be justified on that basis. However, a thousand bulkheads, one on each waterfront lot, are a different story, creating a concrete bathtub where the shore used to be. This "cumulative impact" is the same as "death by a thousand cuts" and presents unique environmental and regulatory quandaries. A person has the right to protect his own property, but does he have the right to damage his neighbors' property or the community's property by so doing?

What are the practical effects of a bulkhead? Trees and other vegetation are removed which offered refuge for fish and other creatures. As vegetation is lost so is shade, raising water temperature. The energy of waves rolling onto a natural shoreline is dissipated by rushes growing in the shallow water and by trees growing on the shore, minimizing erosion. However, the force of waves hitting a bulkhead scours the base of the bulkhead and kicks up sediment from the lake bottom. Some of the energy will spill over to neighboring, unarmored beaches and cause scour there. (For more info, see next article titled, "Better than Bulkheads.")

Because Washington citizens recognized both the value of our lakes, rivers, and Puget Sound, as well as the damage being done to them, the State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) was enacted by initiative in 1972. It was originally an attempt to protect waters and fish for the benefit of future generations. In essence, the Act controls activities on "shorelines of the State," defined as 200 feet back from the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM). Lake Sammamish and Issaquah Creek are covered by this Act.

# Legislative findings – State policy enunciated – Use preference [RCW 90.58.020] states:

The legislature declares that the interest of all of the people shall be paramount in the management of shorelines of statewide significance. The department, in adopting guidelines for shorelines of statewide significance, and local government, in developing master programs for shorelines of statewide significance, shall give preference to uses in the following order of preference which:

- (1) Recognize and protect the statewide interest over local interest;
- (2) Preserve the natural character of the shoreline;
- (3) Result in long term over short term benefit:
- (4) Protect the resources and ecology of the shoreline;
- (5) Increase public access to publicly owned areas of the shorelines;
- (6) Increase recreational opportunities for the public in the shoreline;

### This legislative guidance emphasizes:

"... uses shall be preferred which are consistent with control of pollution and prevention of damage to the natural environment ..." The Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) administers the SMA by requiring jurisdictions to develop Shoreline Master Programs (SMP) regulations to manage their shorelines. Periodically, these SMPs have to be updated. During the past three years, the cities of Bellevue, Issaquah, Redmond and Sammamish have been updating their SMPs. These revised plans are then submitted to DOE for evaluation and approval. It is against the above criteria that the SMP Updates need to be measured.

The status of the SMP Updates affecting Lake Sammamish are as follows:

City of Bellevue - Completed Shoreline Inventory and Analysis Report January 2009. The Planning Commission has been briefed about considerations that need to be addressed in the SMP Update, including regulatory considerations, shoreline stabilization, impacts of urbanization on the ecological function of lakes and fish survival. The Draft Restoration Plan is in preparation and is expected to be released in April or May 2010. The Cumulative Impacts Analysis is ready for the Planning Commission to review and recommend key policies from the preliminary draft in late April. The City expects to present the draft update to the Council in Fall 2010. For more information see: http://www.bellevuewa.gov/pdf/Planning%20C ommission/

Washington Sensible Shorelines Association (WSSA), comprised primarily of Lake Sammamish Property owners, made a long presentation of their views of shoreline regulation to the Planning Commission at the end of March.

City of Issaquah — Completed Shoreline Inventory and Analysis Report in October 2008. Both the River and Streams Board and the Council's Planning Policy Commission have reviewed draft goals, policies, and regulations. In July 2009, a Public Hearing Draft was put out for citizen comment, which has been received at public hearings and open houses also. The last public hearing was before the Planning Policy Commission (PPC) in October, 2009. The City expects the next phase of the update and associated PPC hearing to be in May or June, 2010. For details, see: <a href="http://www.ci.issaquah.wa.us/Page.asp?NavID">http://www.ci.issaquah.wa.us/Page.asp?NavID</a> = 1655

The draft SMP includes a 35-foot buffer with a 15-foot building setback – total 50 feet. This buffer has the potential to improve water quality in the Lake, for the benefit of all. The only provision to reduce the buffer is with

removal of a bulkhead and restoring a natural shoreline, in which case the 35-foot buffer could be reduced to 10 feet with a 15-foot building setback, for a total of 25 feet.

City of Redmond – The City Council adopted its update of the Shoreline Master Program (Ordinance 2486) on September 15, 2009. Little in these regulations will protect the health of Lake Sammamish, never mind improve water quality or ecological function. Although vegetated buffers are required along streams in Redmond, the City adopted a "Lake Sammamish Flexible Setback to encourage the re-establishment of a vegetative buffer."

Section 20D.150.60-020 Lake Sammamish Setback states:

"Lake Sammamish has no buffer but rather has a building setback. The waterfront building setback for new development and redevelopment (tear downs) along Lake Sammamish shall be a minimum of 35 ft. This set back may be reduced to 20 feet if the setback area is revegetated with primarily native vegetation"

City of Sammamish – An ordinance to approve the City of Sammamish Shoreline Master Program Update was passed by the City Council on October 6, 2009. The document, along with supporting documents such as the Shoreline Inventory and Characterization Report, Designation Maps, and Restoration Plan, has been submitted to the State Department of Ecology for final review.

The City is to be congratulated for recognizing and starting to regulate <u>light pollution</u> and the damage caused by light and glare on the water to fish and other wildlife (ref. Sec. 25.060.020(4). However, the lack of a requirement for vegetative buffers, as opposed to a setback, is disappointing. A 15-foot Vegetation Enhancement Area (VEA) in rare cases will not suffice to improve water quality.

In SLS' opinion, both the Redmond and Sammamish SMP Updates fail to meet the six mandates of RCW 90.58.020, listed above.

Many residential shoreline properties along Lake Sammamish have the potential to improve ecological functions as follows:

- remove or modify bulkheads and shoreline armoring;
- replant native trees, shrubs, reeds, and rushes along the shoreline and in the nearshore zone;

- reduce overwater cover and in-water structures (grated pier decking, pier size reduction, pile size and quantity reduction, moorage cover removal); and/or
- reduce impervious surface coverage on small lots in Sammamish, it can be as much as 75%.

Yet the best these cities can manage is to "encourage the reestablishment of a vegetative buffer" (Redmond), and "identify opportunities for vegetation enhancement" (Sammamish). This is a lost opportunity to restore ecological functions and undo some of the harm inflicted upon a common resource by unbridled shoreline development over the past 20 years.

Lake Sammamish property owners face **risks to their property values**, which should be addressed in the SMP Update process. Such risks include:

**Flooding:** Increased runoff and armoring has led to flooding of shoreline properties within the 100-year flood plain. As homes are built closer to the Lake, they are more vulnerable and they displace water onto neighbors' properties.

**View loss:** Without a firm setback line from the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM), your neighbor could obliterate your view with his new house or addition.

Eutrophication: Without vegetated buffers to capture runoff between human activities (fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, roof cleaners, paints, petrochemicals, soap, heavy metals, moss-killer, slug-bait, etc.), more nutrients and pollutants will flow into the Lake. These will stimulate excessive milfoil and algae growth, causing algal blooms (some will be toxic, as we saw in 1997). These plants take dissolved oxygen out of the water, which can lead to fish kills and an uninviting, stinking, slime-covered lake. Some readers may remember "Lake Stinko" -- as Lake Washington was called in the 1950's and 1960's because of all the nutrients (sewage) in it. People couldn't swim in it and, yes, property values were seriously affected!

State DOE may require Sammamish to improve their SMP to protect the Lake and its ecological functions. The communities of Bellevue and Issaquah still have time to affect the updates in their cities to protect water quality, our enjoyment of the Lake, and property values.

More information can be found on the websites of each of the individual cities.

## Better than Bulkheads

bulkhead is a retaining wall that serves the purpose of preventing the adjacent yard or beach from eroding into the lake. Many lakeside homeowners have bulkheads along their waterfront to serve this purpose. But studies have shown that bulkheads are not the best or only way to prevent erosion. In solving one problem, bulkheads also bring with them numerous undesirable effects to the habitat areas of fish, plants, birds – and people.

### The Problem with Bulkheads

Bulkheads are usually constructed as a vertical wall made from such things as wood pilings, commercially developed vinyl products, large stacked boulders (riprack rock), and concrete or another hard substances.

Waves naturally travel along a horizontal plane, and dissipate their energy over distance and as they hit shallower bottom, rocks, or shoreline vegetation.

But if a wave is suddenly stopped by a vertical wall, such as a bulkhead, the

wave energy will increase in amplitude as it hits and bounces off the wall, and it is added to by subsequent incoming waves. Instead of moving on a horizontal plane, the wave energy moves up and down. This causes sediment at the base of the wall to get scoured out -- the finer sands are removed as the gravel gets eroded away and the bottom sediment gets coarser.

This results in an underwater beach that is much deeper and steeper.

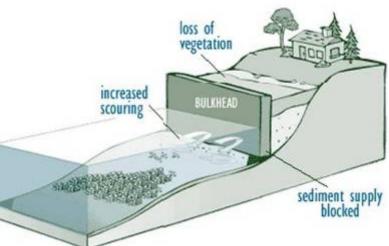
Baby salmon, as well as other fish, need shallow beaches with a gentle gradient to hide from predators that hunt in deeper waters. Bulkheads result in a sudden drop off, which is bad for salmon. These unnatural drop offs can also be dangerous for children and the elderly.

The scouring action can also cause the eventual failure of the bulkhead as the base erodes away. Vertical wall bulkheads can

accelerate erosion on neighboring properties if they are not tied into the same bulkhead system. The result is a continuous "hardening" of the lakeshore.

Rock or boulder walls can also create problems by providing habitat for predators that feed on young Chinook salmon. Fish that feed on juvenile salmon, such as sculpins and bass, hide in the rock crevasses where they can ambush unsuspecting baby fish.

Artificial bulkheads also interrupt natural shoreline vegetation. When bulkheads are



built, overhanging trees and shrubs are often removed. This can cause increased siltation, reduced organic matter, and changes in the surrounding bird and near-shore marine habitats.

### Alternatives to Bulkheads

A good landscape plan protects water quality and encourages native plants, fish, and wildlife close to shore. Encouraging shoreline habitat doesn't necessarily mean tearing out a bulkhead and building a barrier of native vegetation between your home and the lake.

Shoreline designers have come up a balanced approach to waterfront landscaping that retains natural habitat and reduces pollution and erosion, while also meeting your aesthetic and access needs. This approach features the use of terracing, large flat rocks, shallow pools, logs, and vegetation to prevent erosion and provide an attractive, usable shoreline.

To reduce the slope where a vertical wall bulkhead exists, the shoreline can be pulled back, creating a shallower grade. In its place a beach cove is created. By pulling the shoreline back, the homeowner isn't really losing property but converting it to a new format, which can be quite attractive and very functional, especially in terms of improving access to the water. As the water along this modified shore will be shallower, it becomes easier and safer to access.

If your property does not already have a bulkhead, consider creating a natural landscape that maintains, enhances, and restores native vegetation along the lake shoreline. Shoreland vegetation, otherwise referred to as the shoreland buffer, is vital to the overall health of our lake's ecosystem. A strip of natural plants between the water and buildings, lawns, or cleared areas keeps the lake healthy by stabilizing the soil and slowing runoff, and allowing for the filtering of nutrients, sediments, and other pollution.

Buffer zones also benefit plant, fish, and wildlife populations by providing movement corridors, habitat, and spawning and breeding grounds. They also discourage nuisance plants and wildlife and reduce wave impacts on the shoreline.

Finally, buffer zones reduce the time and effort required for lawn care and maintenance while improving scenic beauty and aesthetics along the lake shorelines.

### Things to Remember

The permitting process can be daunting for any shoreline project. Agencies at local, state, and federal levels review shoreline plans to ensure that development in and around shorelines will protect safety, the aquatic environment, endangered species, and water quality. The resulting multilayered regulatory process can seem confusing and overwhelming. Fortunately, help is available.

Any project that involves work in, over, under, or adjacent to water requires review from three levels. Each project may be required to obtain the following permits from the following agencies:



One Lake Sammamish shoreline buffer design

# Local jurisdiction (your city or King County)

- Shoreline substantial development permit or exemption
- Environmentally Critical Area permit
- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) permit or exemption
- General construction permits

#### State agencies

- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA)
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Section 401 Water Quality Certification
- Coastal Zone Management Certification
- NPDES Stormwater General Permit

## United States Army Corps of Engineers

- Discharge of Dredge or Fill Material, Section 404 Permit
- Work for Structures in Navigable Waters, Section 10 Permit

You can read more about natural shorelines in a brochure created by city of Seattle entitled:

Green Shorelines: Bulkhead Alternatives for a Healthier Lake Washington. It can be downloaded from the Washington Department of Ecology website at:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/events/greenshorelines.html



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### Spring 2010 YES, I want to join Save Lake Sammamish or renew my membership. Enclosed are my dues of: □ \$25 Individual □ \$250 Sponsor □ \$40 Family □ \$500 Lake Guardian □ \$100 Steward ☐ \$1,000 or more Water Basin Guardian ☐ I would like information about volunteering to help Save Lake Sammamish. Please contact me. Please indicate any changes to your info. Add your e-mail address if we don't have it so you can receive updates on SLS issues and events every couple weeks. Only official SLS messages are sent. Your address will not be given or sold to other organizations. \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: Snail mail address: Contributions to SLS, a non-profit organization, are fully tax deductible by law.

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