
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

FEBRUARY 2021

OVERVIEW

Our new field staff, Shauna and Jacob, received orientations to the most significant SJI preserves, and they traveled among the islands to offer their helping hands. For two days on Orcas they removed blackberry and holly, and they planted forbs and cuttings of dogwood. (Photo 1). They roved to Fisherman Bay Spit to help improve drainage by ditching, clearing and unburying culverts. Charlie has been working on Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for several ag projects. Upcoming RFPs will include: a short-term hay agreement on Zylstra, a short-term hay and/or seasonal grazing agreement for Beaverton, and short-term seasonal small ruminant grazing agreement for vegetation management at Fowler's Pond.

Mike Thomas, James Wolf and Cindy Wolf participated in this month's JEDI meeting. Spearheaded by the LB's own Kayla Seaforth and consisting primarily of LB staff, the group welcomed broader county participation. At the meeting, the County's 'Safe and Inclusive Community' Resolution (No. 31-2020) was discussed as was the LB's first draft of a Preserve Naming Policy.

In addition to all the environmental news lately, like the [30 by 30](#) order and recent [clean water ruling](#), LB stewardship staff were all atwitter about the January Commission discussion around 'stepping up' to address climate change. Numerous documents and ideas were exchanged. Peter cranked out a preliminary overview of risks, opportunities and potential actions for Orcas, and shared the scope of work for Turtleback's forest health assessment (Exhibit 1). Members of the Terrestrial Managers Group are addressing forest health in a variety of ways. The Conservation District (CD) is training another forest planner; and the National Park plans to utilize the CD as a resource in assessing health and hazard at English Camp, and to work with the Samish Natural Resource Department to enhance oaks and camas. The CD and the Samish Indian Nation are two of the nine partners that were brought together under the State's DNR Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant proposal. The Land Bank, Preservation Trust and State Parks are among other key players as they manage lands highlighted for implementation. This ambitious "eco-cultural restoration project" has not yet been awarded but it is ranked 8 on the list of 15 nationwide finalists. In general, the LSR grant aims to (1) improve the structure, diversity, and resiliency on 13 garry oak ecosystems in the archipelago, (2) use woody biomass and produce locally-used biochar, and (3) increase the number of interdisciplinary natural resource professionals in the area. If awarded, it will be a boon for oak habitats and help develop relationships among natural resource professionals in the archipelago.

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson

The website continues to be a popular target for bot attacks, and its performance is suffering. A variety of support has been needed. (Photos 2 and 3). The LB will follow our web designer's recommendations and make the switch to another website host. Preparations for the (small) online spring plant sale are being made, and an outline has already been drafted for the annual report. Additionally, Tanja is working on a quarterly update. She's also joined the Stewardship Network's Great Islands Clean Up sub-committee and is helping to plan Covid-safe events and activities, both online and in the real world, for the entire month of April.

Public interest and one super volunteer prompted Eliza to help suss out community interest in a restoration group for private landowners that have a specific interest in re-establishing native grasslands. A [survey](#) was sent out to assess overall appeal and 34 responses were received. The LB goal is to help the group coalesce and then support them with the resources, but not to take over coordination or leadership. The next step will be a meeting among key individuals.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger

As mentioned above, the nursery is putting together a (very) small spring native plant sale. Plants will be reserved online for pickup on March 20th. Meanwhile, most of the nursery is under wraps. Potted plants are tucked away under blankets just in time for these mid-February storms. The nursery's small outbuilding at Red Mill Farm that has been used for seed drying and processing is being converted into intern housing for the Preservation Trust. This shrinks our already limited indoor work and storage space by half. An alternative under exploration includes partnering with SJPT in a fundraising effort to raise money for a work and storage shed that will be dedicated to nursery operations. Advertising for a part-time, seasonal nursery assistant will begin soon.

District 1

Staff: Doug McCutchen, Charlie Behnke, Shauna Barrows, Jacob Wagner

General: Public Works helped assess and repair the dump trailer. It is in decent condition, but staff will be planning for replacement in the next couple of years. There is considerable need for gravel, for both agricultural and recreational based improvements, and Charlie and Doug have been eyeing a five-foot wide mini-dump trailer with one-yard capacity. This would reduce impacts and improve efficiency.

American Camp Trail: Doug cleared downed trees across the trail. Tanja reached out to the Trails Committee to express LB interest in refreshing the signs between Golf Course Road and Frazer Homestead Preserve. These new signs would provide maps as well as highlight the LB's role in holding easements and maintaining sections of the trail. Annual monitoring and trail maintenance will be performed next week.

Beaverton Marsh: Staff visited the Barker property to assess its skeletal cabin and assorted debris. High-water markers, from earlier this year, were approximately 8-12" higher than the previous three years. A dozen trees were cleared from the interior, upland road. Charlie orientated new staff to the agricultural operation on the north side of the Preserve. In general, management planning has begun, and a Project Manager is under contract to lead the effort. Staff has and will continue to assist in things like working on trail alignments and neighbor relations.

Cady Mountain: Doug continues to work on disposition of the Lester Cabin. The roof was salvaged, and tarps were spread out in order to keep the structure dry until the fire department is able to organize its training burn. A virtual Q & A session between the neighborhood and fire department will be planned prior to taking action.

Driggs Park: Eliza is working with Catkin Garden Design to develop a site plan for the front yard. The design will incorporate a native plant demonstration area as well a low-maintenance and "natural" zone of lawn. Doug is working with a new contractor for maintenance.

False Bay Creek: Over the next few weeks, a thousand plus plants including, red osier dogwood, pacific crabapple and red alder, will be planted along the stream corridor. Since 2019, the County's Environmental Services department has managed riparian restoration efforts and invested roughly \$40,000 from its Clean Water Utility Fund to enhance biodiversity at this site. What's not eaten by voles, will grow up to shade the creek, provide songbird nesting and help filter pollution from the struggling creek. A short-term seasonal grazing agreement will be renewed. And currently waterfowl, gulls, waders, raptors and songbirds abound.

Kellett Bluff: Doug, Lincoln, and Jon will meet to discuss how to proceed with public access. Installation of an 'official use only' mooring buoy has stalled, presumably due to the pandemic. Doug is looking for alternatives to access the site in order to monitor its condition.

Mount Grant: Trees were cleared from the trail and road system on several occasions. Staff and volunteer Lars Sjöholm decommissioned the trail that crossed Town of Friday Harbor property and made an awesome reroute on LB ownership. A new crew has surfaced to support gate duty on Sundays, and gratitude is extended to all everyone – past and present -- that have helped.

Westside: Doug worked with the neighbor and a crew from Rainshadow Consulting to fulfill the first phase of view easement work. The tree removal was a little more rushed than envisioned.

Additional cleanup work remains. Doug has worked with Eliza to create a seeding and planting plan. Cold weather snap has put a delay on accomplishing this, with plants projected to be delivered in the first two weeks of March.

Zylstra Lake: Discussion continues with consultants about future dam management. Mud mitigation continues (Photo 8). Further improvements to the trail are a high priority for this year. Nonetheless, community members continue to glow about their experiences on the Preserve. County Environmental Services is again using their clean water funds to plant willow stakes along the shores of the lower lake. With water levels lowering due to state requirements, they aimed to combat further spread of reed canary grass by restoring native vegetation. We're grateful for their assistance and their quick response to the emerging situation.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Kayla Seaforth

Coffelt Farm: The work on the heavy-use area project is progressing nicely. The compost and the loafing shed are currently being framed. (Photo 9).

Coho: Volunteer videographer, Michael Noonan, visited the Preserve and captured underwater footage of juvenile Coho salmon for his future film about the Land Bank. De Groot with Speckled Trout Consulting and volunteer Jerry Weatherman joined him. (Photo 10). Orcas staff also spent time tidying up trail issues, removing blackberry and to tending restoration plantings from the previous year.

Entrance Mountain: Peter attended the neighborhood's annual road maintenance association meeting, virtually.

Turtleback Mountain: Kayla and Peter piled limbs from recent thinning work by the WCC. Over half of the 14,000 native plugs from the Salish Sea Nursery are in the ground. The rest will be planted by the island's own CCC over the next few weeks. Peter has roved the mountain with Rainshadow Consulting, and Eliza roamed the donated acreage in order to write a rapid habitat assessment. Her final document will be available in March.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

General: Amanda has kept (very) busy with removing fallen trees, leaning trees, and other storm debris from both roadways and trails. She continues to sample for forage fish presence,

specifically pacific sand lance eggs, at Hunter Bay and the Fisherman Bay Spit. Still she made time to visit and work on Orcas and to go to Zylstra with the SJI crew.

FB Spit: Italian arum ‘season’ has begun. As a refresher, this pesky plant is an invasive and difficult to control herbaceous perennial. In the fall, glossy green leaves that emerge from its underground bulbs. Seed heads appear in the summer and boast bright red berries. It’s been used ornamentally as a ground cover. It is drought and shade tolerant and deer resistant. It is also now a [“Class C”](#) noxious weed and required for control in the County. Basic control entails removing the seed heads to prevent spread by wildlife. Eradication requires locating and then killing or removing all the underground bulbs. At the Spit, arum is present along the shoreline bluff, in the fields, in the forest, and at the base of nearly all the orchard trees (Photo 11).

In addition to removing seed heads, current treatment methods at the Spit focus on eradication of the outlier ‘satellite’ populations. This entails digging, mulching with road fabric and woodchips, and spraying. This approach has been fairly successful though it relies on consistent, long-term effort. The large hot zone of infestation represents a significant challenge, and current efforts are focused on containment and seed head removal.

Potholes have also been appearing in the driveway, possibly due to increased winter visitation. Staff is planning to perform grading and ditching improvements to the driveway later this year. But in the meantime, the potholes are being filled the old-fashioned way.

Hummel Lake: Island-roving field staff assisted with preemptive removal of five alders that were leaning across the entryway. The new electric hedge-trimmer was used to clear shrubby vegetation from along the drive, and storm debris was cleared from the dock trail.

Lopez Hill: Roadside brushing (using the new electric hedge-trimmer) was performed.

Upright Head: Four hazard trees removed near Hilltop road.

Spencer Spit: Amanda performed a variety of fieldwork to familiarize herself with the new property. She located survey stakes and property corners and met with a neighbor in order to remove trees that had fallen across a fence.

Watmough: Alders, two large and one little, were cleared from the road and trail. Amanda also assisted Skeet, with the BLM National Monument, with tree clearing on trails at Point Colville.

Exhibit 1.

Turtleback Mountain/Turtlehead Preserves Forest Health Assessment, Scope of Work

Introduction

The San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT) and the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank (CLB) seek the assistance of a forestry consultant (Consultant) in planning short and long term management actions within the Turtleback Mountain Preserve and Turtlehead Preserve forested areas. As envisioned, future forest management will place a strong emphasis on promoting forest resiliency, climate adaptation, and carbon sequestration. Prior to beginning work, Consultant shall review all available planning documents, maps, and GIS layers provided by the SJPT and CLB.

Tasks

1. Relocate and remeasure approximately 20 permanent plots to determine mortality and growth rates. Add new permanent plots on Turtlehead Preserve (see number 5 below). This will enable biomass projections and will help with delineation of Forest Management Units (FMU's).
2. Delineate FMU's as sub units of stand types.
3. Using FMU's, create ranked (prioritized) management actions and a phased timeline for implementation that takes into account CLB staff capacity, contractor availability and continued public use. Recommended actions will be consistent with established goals and will address specific objectives. In developing recommended actions, Consultant shall, at a minimum, consider the following:
 - fire risk – prioritize work areas and actions to reduce risk
 - critical areas – identify and protect
 - soil impacts – minimize through timing and use of existing roads and corridors
 - invasive plants – prevent new introductions, stabilize and seed disturbed areas
 - wildlife habitat – identify target densities of snags and down logs
 - public safety – promote through use of signage and area closures
 - cost – optimize labor, equipment, and timing in planning
4. Develop cost estimates associated with recommended management actions. Provide details on any permits or regulatory issues affecting recommended management actions.
5. Install six permanent .1 acre plots on Turtlehead property consistent with plot protocols from 2010.

Deliverables

Contractor shall prepare a draft and final document for SJPT and Land Bank review that presents findings, recommendations, maps, and tables totaling 20 to 30 pages. Contractor shall provide paper and digital copies of the document as well as ARCGIS compatible files, preferably a Geodatabase. Contractor shall complete all work by December 31, 2020*. ***Pandemic caused delay, adjusted to March.**

Photos



Photo 1. Amanda, Jacob, Shauna and Kayla on Turtleback planting plugs in new deer enclosure

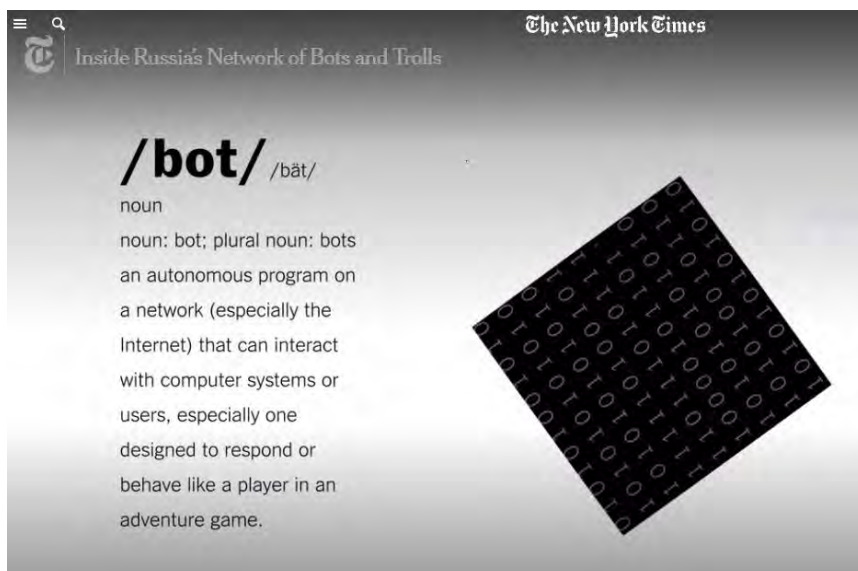


Photo 2. Our website is under constant attack.



Photo 3. This really helps humans endure cyber attacks.



Photo 4. The highland bull at King Sisters hasn't heard, and doesn't care, about Russian bots.



Photo 5. Flowering currant at Third Lagoon.



Photo 6. It's a fungal wonderland on Mt Grant.



Photo 7. Doug and Steve Ulvi help our USFWS partner fix their sign.



Photo 8. SJI field crew doing mud mitigation at Zylstra.



Photo 9. Coffelt compost shed foundation, new fencing and loafing shed frame



Photo 10. Jerry Weatherman, Michael Noonan and Jenny De Groot filming in Cascade Creek



Photo 11. *Oh, Aram.*



Photo 12. Tree clearing at the Channel Preserve