
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

MARCH 2021

OVERVIEW

It's a coarse estimate, but we think approximately 5,000 new plants found ground this past month. Shoots, forbs and conifer seedlings. False Bay Creek, Coffelt, Coho, Westside and Turtleback. This breadth of activity was made possible by staff – even Aaron Rock joined us in the field! --, the Conservation District's new conservation corps, and a cadre of nature-loving volunteers (Photos 1-4).

The LB is a sponsor of the 2021 SJC Agricultural Summit, and a contributor to *Farmers-to-Farmland: A collaborative model to enable new farmers and ranchers in the remote San Juan Islands*. The latter is a grant proposal by the SJI's Agricultural Guild to the USDA Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program. Check out the Ag Summit agenda here:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/sanjuan/ag-summit-2021/>.

The County recently hosted a second training, Cultural Resources 2.0, aimed at enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity. (First training session can be found here:

<https://www.sanjuanco.com/1767/Cultural-Resources>) Staff on the Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) committee drafted a Preserve Naming Policy, which is included in this month's meeting materials for Commission review.

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Tanja says March is roaring in like a lion. After arranging the spring online native plant sale (more info on that below), she transitioned into: preparing the annual report and the e-news quarterly, supporting the Stewardship Network's Great Islands Clean Up, and helping the San Juan Island Trails Committee revamp their website. She has too much bot experience to go to waste. This past month Tanja has also made headway on the LB's upcoming Community Conversation events. As always, in between various projects and initiatives, she fields questions from the public and responds to whatever immediate needs arise and require a social media post such as this past month's situation with trespassing goats.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger

The second online Salish Seeds Project native plant sale went live on March 5th, with only a wee hiccup, and within 24 hours all the plants were sold. Our community loves native plants! Plant pick-up on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez is scheduled for Saturday, March 20th. The spring plant sale also generated a lot of inquiries from the public about how people can get their hands on more local plants and seed. A desire for deer-resistant wildflower seed mixes and plants has emerged as a common theme.

At the nursery, plants came through winter storms in good condition. A new nursery assistant, Margo Thorp, was hired just in time for the high-gear switch in early April to weeding, seeding, and general spring maintenance. Margo brings a wealth of experience to the position. The San Juan Preservation Trust has committed to supporting a fundraiser in order to improve nursery infrastructure; and we anticipate this effort to take shape later this spring or summer.

District 1

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

General: A number of questions were fielded about odd mistletoe-like growths observed on Douglas fir limbs. Most of the occurrences were from branches that had snapped in windstorms. Botanist Peter Dunwiddie reported that true mistletoe is only found within the archipelago's pines (every species has its own) and that it can be observed in the pine trees near the summit of Mt Constitution. The growths witnessed on Douglas fir are caused by other pathogens which might include insects, fungi or bacteria, and though the abnormal growth might indicate some degree of stress due to high densities or drought on its own does it not result in tree mortality. Fun fact: Many dwarf varieties of conifers found in residential landscapes are cloned from cuttings of these types of growths (Photo 6).

Beaverton Marsh: Staff have been working on access to the west side in order to address existing, and increasing, public use of the Preserve. We will host an online meeting to discuss the project and get input from adjoining neighborhoods. There are plans to develop a small parking area at the western end of the property and construct a short trail to bypass a neighbor's driveway. (This was an agreed on during the acquisition). The existing road will be used as trail with formalization of one viewpoint in order to define access and protect habitat. Staff anticipate late summer or fall for an "official" opening, and Doug is coordinating project work with Dona Wuthnow, the Project Manager.

Cady Mountain: The demolition of the cabin on Three Corner Lake Road has been delayed until autumn. Observations by neighbors and staff, as well as occasional grocery-store tales, indicate that social trail use is on the rise.

Driggs Park: Shannon Kelley was contracted for landscaping, and has been busy battling the English ivy and other overgrowth in the back lot.

False Bay Creek: A pair of bluebirds have arrived on site and in between checking out nest boxes, they oversaw the riparian planting effort. When staff shared the sighting with bluebird guru, Kathleen Foley from the San Juan Preservation Trust, she recognized the male from the photo but not the female. She replied: “The male appears to be the lone offspring that survived from the next door's clutch last year. I can't tell who his lady-friend is yet, but thankfully it is NOT his mother 😊 It's still quite early in the season for nesting, and they may still move on. But I really hope they stay!” (Photos 7 - 8).

Middlewood: Island marble butterfly plots were reseeded, since slugs ate the first batch.

Mount Ben: Doug oriented Shauna and Jacob to the Preserve, and hatched a plan to hire a WCC crew this summer to combat hawthorn.

Westside: Cleanup work surrounding the view easement area continued. Many yards of chips were generated from limbs and small trees and delivered for use to the Salish Seeds Nursery. Work within restoration areas also continued. Piles were burned; Douglas firs were thinned and limbed; and seeds were set. Numerous volunteers joined staff, including Aaron Rock, for seeding, and planting of forbs and shrubs.

Zylstra Lake: Eliza gave a site tour to University of Washington personnel who propose conducting water quality monitoring at a number of locations within the False Bay drainage. There are indications that excessive nitrogen in the creek, or other poor water quality factors, may be negatively impacting UW's False Bay Biological Reserve. Monitoring will assist us and other landowners in better understanding the sources of pollution and prioritizing remedies.

Doug met with some local birders to identify potential locations for blinds. Volunteer Jim Goetz, a retired engineer, has been working on the potential future design of a pedestrian bridge to cross the channel below the upper dam and provide access to the wooded area to the south. In the vicinity, there is a concrete abutment which likely housed a bridge for agricultural use prior to the construction of the dams. The concrete walls appear to be more than sufficient for pedestrian recreational use. There are no immediate plans to develop this pedestrian bridge and the concept will be subject to other considerations such as long-term water resource management and agricultural use. Plans for the siphon have been drafted and final design details are being worked out. A bid request for the project will be released next month. And, Charlie's soliciting proposals for a two-year haying agreement (RFP).

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Kayla Seaforth

Coffelt Farm: In the past month, 1,400 plants, representing a dozen different species, took root within the fenced riparian area of the Preserve. The Islands' CCC, and a young volunteer, performed the planting, while volunteer videographers Michael Noonan and Craig Canine (SJPT) captured photos and drone footage of the action. The heavy-use area's compost and loafing sheds are largely finished (Photo 9). The Lums are busy as usual. Currently, they have a lot of lambs and goat kids, and they continue to collaborate with the youth from the Salmonberry school and other programs. They extend an invitation to all Land Bank staff and Commissioners to tour the operation.

Coho: The local CCC, plus LB staff Shauna and Jacob, inter-planted fenced areas with approximately 1,500 plants. This included 1,000 Western hemlocks, which were planted along Cascade Creek. These conifers will begin to supply large wood to the channel, beyond our lifespans, and support habitat for salmon and trout. Michael Noonan returned with his camera to capture more footage of Jenny De Groot of Speckled Trout Consulting and the juvenile Coho salmon in the creek. The Clean Water Utility has purchased automated flow monitoring equipment and LB staff will install it later this month.

Fowler's Pond: Request for proposals will be announced and shared with the public for a short-term (2 year) seasonal sheep grazing agreement.

Judd Cove: New boundary signage was installed following a complaint from a neighbor about trespassing by preserve visitors.

Turtleback Mountain: Thanks to efforts of the WCC, the CCC, volunteers and staff, all 14,000 native plugs from the Salish Sea Nursery have now been planted. This, along with the additional seeding and the planting of 300 Garry oaks, wraps up Orcas planting efforts until the fall...Acorns anyone?

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

General: It seems like so long ago, but it's been only a month since 10 inches of snow blanketed the island. As a result, several more trees fell and Skeet, with the National Monument, proved a hardy partner in helping to clear the debris. Amanda attended the County's cultural resource training, and she's helping to organize a Great Islands Cleanup on April 24th.

Hummel Lake: Staff has been preparing for more extensive drainage work to the driveway by clearing the ditch of vegetation in order to provide access for the excavator. The current ditch is too shallow and water overflows onto the driveway and causes erosion and potholes.

Fisherman Bay Spit: Amanda dusted off the mower and began mowing arum in the orchard. She met with Jason Ontjes and Carlton Burns (!!) of the SJC Noxious Weed program to review the arum treatment plan. In the forest, there is a small infestation of arum that –dare we say? – we are nearing success with eradicating. A steady hand for years now and neighbor of the Preserve, Jim Falconer has been helping to dig out the small plants. This month only about 30 bulbs were found. High tides moved driftwood into the trail over the winter which resulted in obscuring a footpath. Logs were shifted out of the way, with the help of Tim (!) and Skeet, in order to reveal a clear trail (Photo 11).

Tombolo: After the incident of the trespassing goats, a neighbor to Sunset Acres requested additional signage and outreach about the property boundary. A new sign was placed at Otis Perkins (Photo 12). Tanja also followed up with a social media post. The goats have since been seen walking with their owner on the Tombolo beach. (We really wish we had a photo for you!).

Channel: Amanda drafted text for an interpretive sign and met with several volunteers to discuss sign priorities. Three new volunteers signed up to be monitors and completed a volunteer steward orientation.

Richardson Marsh: Staff visited the new acquisition with several area residents to learn more about the history, as well as agricultural and recreational uses (Photo 13). Staff received a report of a dead beaver in the area but have not seen any signs of previous beaver activity!

Weeks Wetland: Amanda and Charlie coordinated with farmer Travis Arnott for haying the upland field this year.

Photos



Photo 1: Botanically Distanced Volunteer Planting Party at Westside Preserve



Photo 2 & 3. The CCC at False Bay Creek Preserve



Photo 4. Planting crew at Coho



Photo 5. Early wildflowers (*Olsynium Douglasii* - Satin Flower)



Photo 6. George isn't convinced "Witches Broom" growth on Douglas Fir isn't edible



Photo 7. He was raised next store to FBC Preserve.



Photo 8. And, she's not his mother...



Photo 9. Newly completed cost-share loafing shed at Coffelt Farm Preserve



Photo 10. Visiting forester Marty Main stands before a Garry oak in decline due to shading by Douglas fir.



Photo 11. Clearing a trail through driftwood at FB Spit, Lopez.



Photo 12. For the goats...



Photo 13: Richardson Marsh