Turtleback Mountain Preserve

Forest Resiliency Demonstration Projects

SAN JUAN COUNTY CONSERVATION LAND BANK

SAN JUAN ISLANDS CONSERVATION DISTRICT
SAN JUAN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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HB 1168 2021-2022 Funding to address long-term forest health and the reduction of severe wildfire

San Juan County designated as a priority area (for drought, increase in fire season)

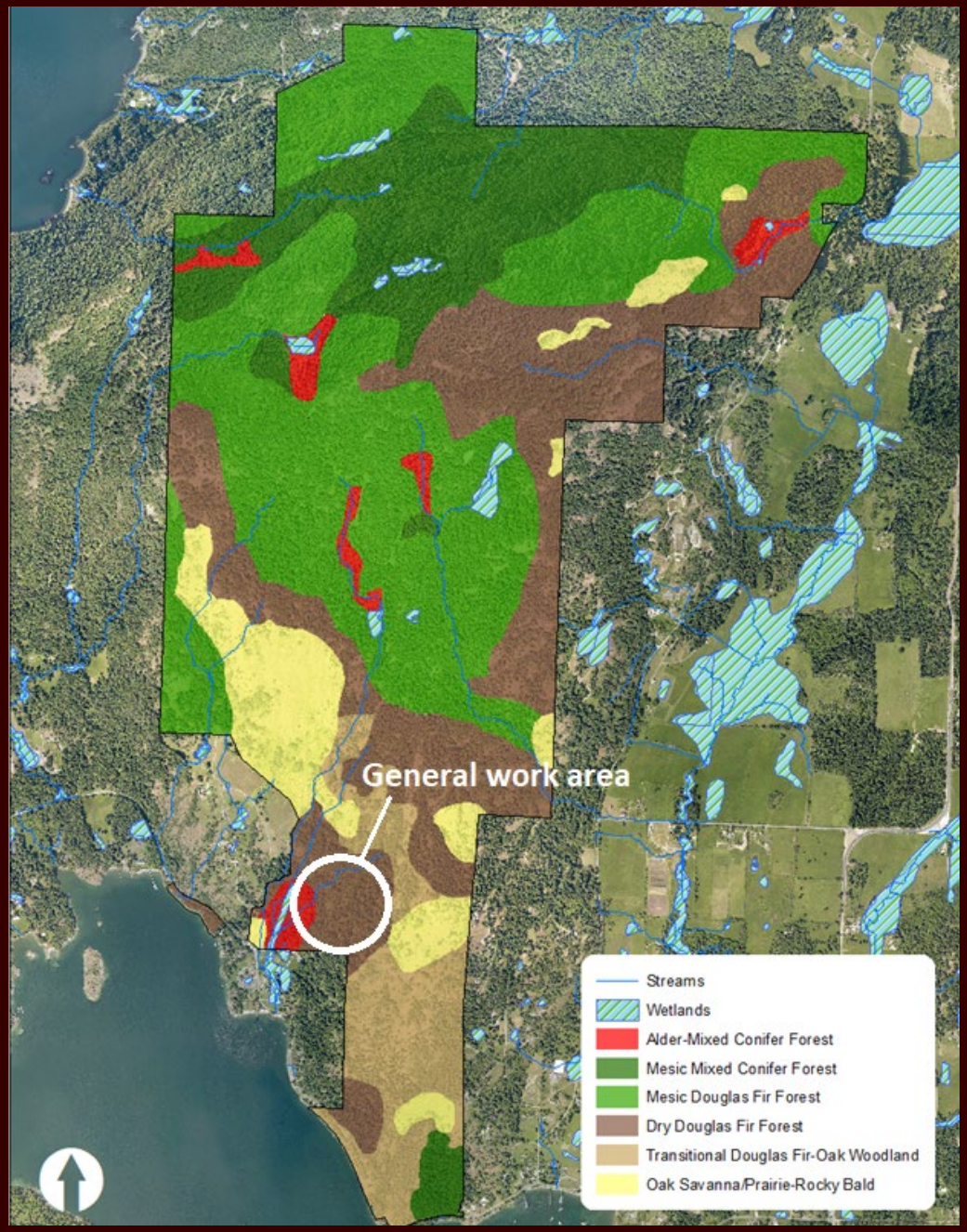
$30k awarded for small-scale demonstration projects on Turtleback Mountain Preserve

Demonstration Project Ecological Objectives:

1) **Enhance Forest Health**: expand oak woodland and increase variability in forest composition and structure
2) **Reduce Wildfire Severity:** create a fuel break near the South Slope trailhead

Project Areas:

1. ~2.6 acres upland forest thinning
2. ~6.5 acres in mixed oak woodland/savanna
3. ~600ft/0.6-ac roadside fuels



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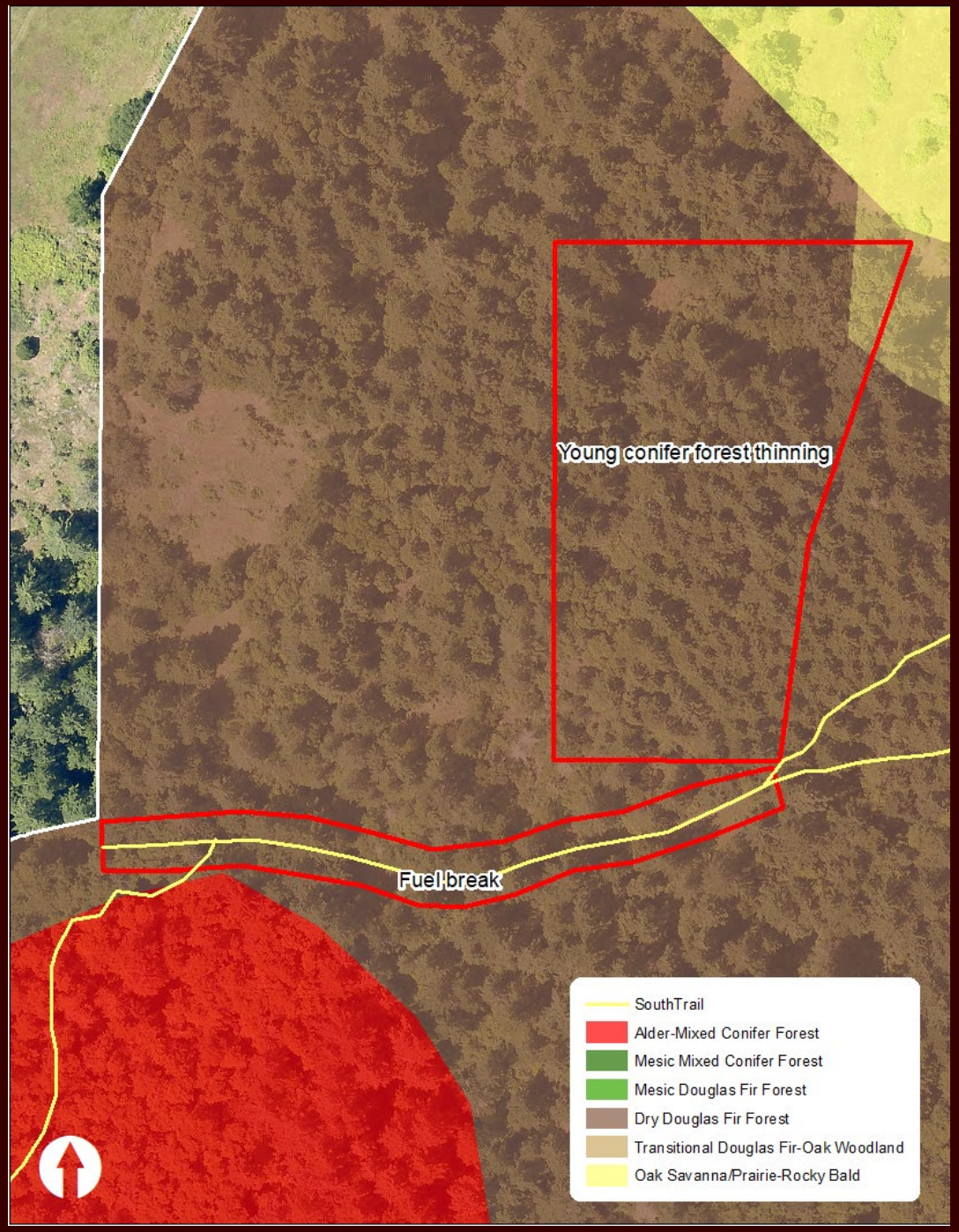
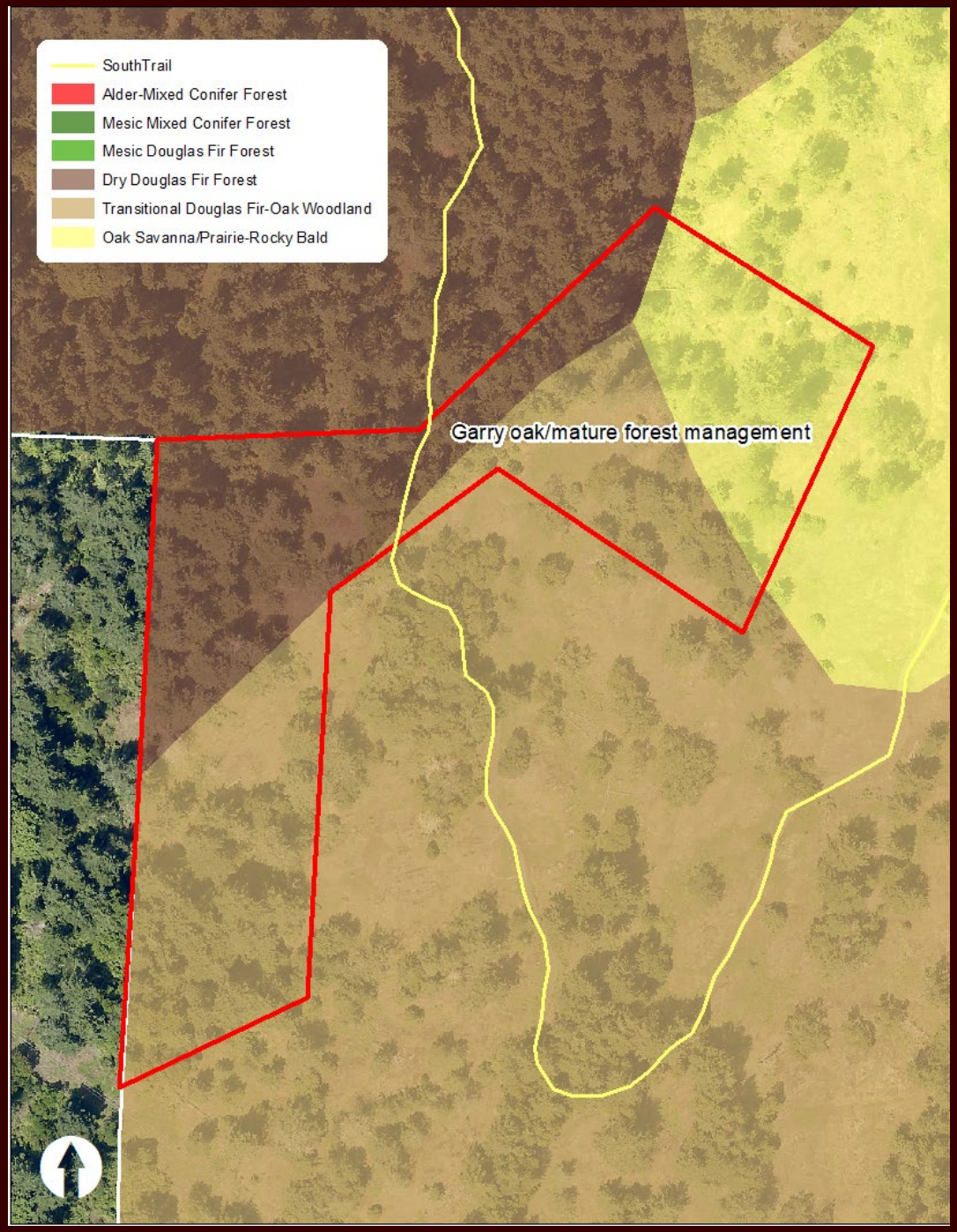
Small-Scale Demonstration Project Strategies:

1. **Reduce tree densities:** remove conifers from around oaks and large old trees (thinning)
2. **Enhance structure:** create snags
3. **Reduce surface fuels:** around trail (fuel break)

Demonstration Sites 1 & 2 (~3.2 acres)



Demonstration Site 3 (~6.5 acres)

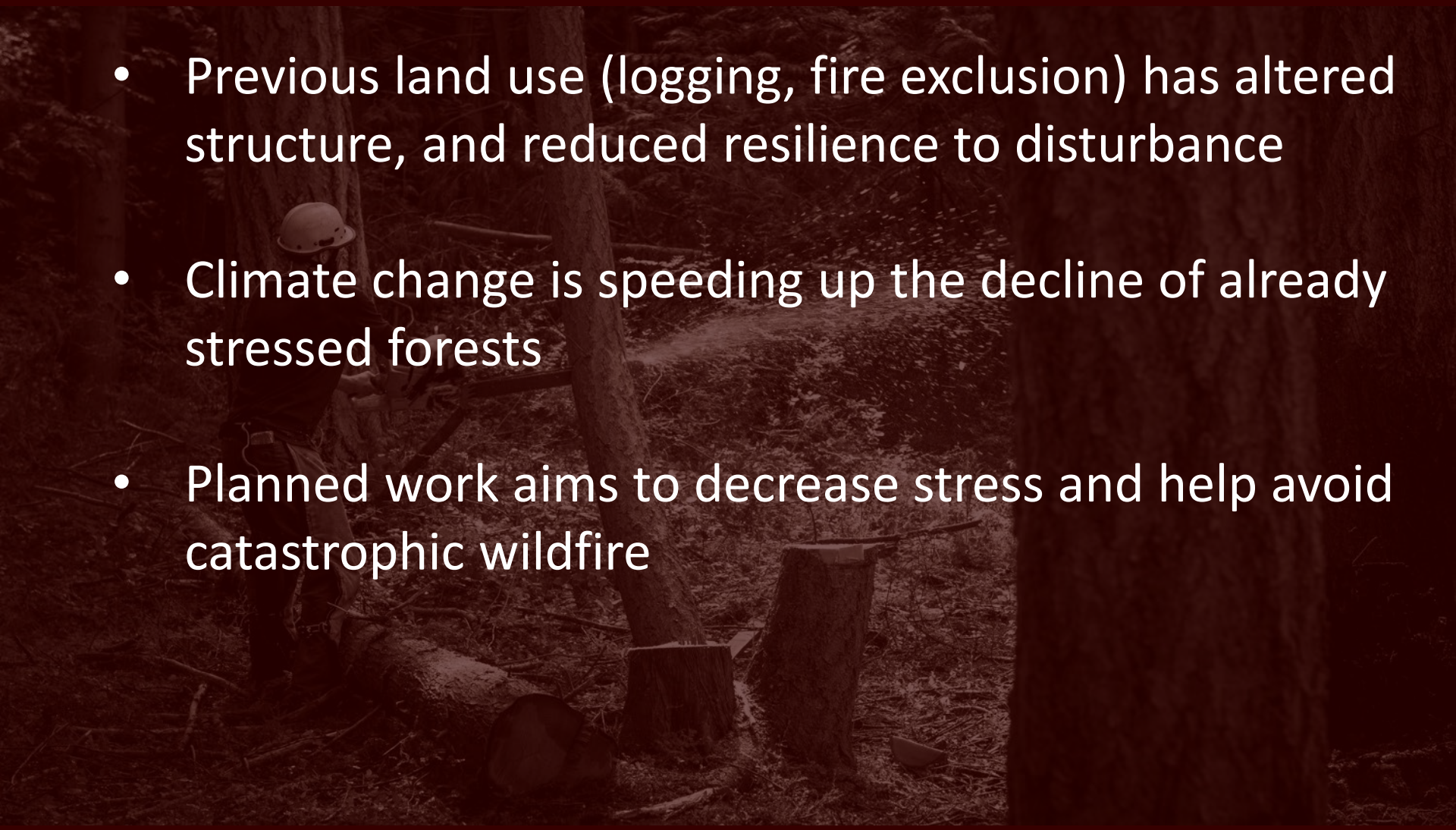


Area	Proposed Actions	Details
Upland forest	Selective thinning, Increase snags and downed wood.	Treatment and 'control' areas side by side with treatment area a safe distance from trail. Extensive chipping
Garry oak habitat	Release large oaks from encroaching conifers. Create large habitat snags and downed wood.	Felling large and small conifers Topping large conifers
Fuel break	Establish fuel breaks along road to reduce potential for wildfire spread rapidly and to improve manageability.	Primarily brush grinding and small tree chipping

Demonstration Project
Social & Workflow Objectives

- Inform users groups about state-wide forest health and fire risk reduction goals
- Collaborate & strategize with staff, crews, and contractor on future projects
- Demonstrate successful implementation
- Obtain additional funding

Forest Health: Why it Matters



- Previous land use (logging, fire exclusion) has altered structure, and reduced resilience to disturbance
- Climate change is speeding up the decline of already stressed forests
- Planned work aims to decrease stress and help avoid catastrophic wildfire

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Role

- Site selection
- Project design includes forest activities proposed 2022 Turtleback Stewardship and Management Plan (SMP)
- Understory plantings

Role

- County-wide lead for Forest Health Initiatives
- Workforce development: Island Conservation Corps (ICC) will implement thinning in oak woodland and upland forest (reduce tree density)
- Conservation burning

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Role

- Forest Health Assessment (completed)
- Technical felling
- Snag Creation (enhance structure)
- Chipping

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Role

- Monitoring of conservation values
- Turtleback Endowment funding

Timeline: December – June

- Satisfies grant requirements
- Reduces disruptions to breeding season for terrestrial wildlife

Work will occur:

- during normal business hours (up to five days each week)
- without any anticipated trail closures
- in high-visibility(/traffic) areas

Anticipate:

- noise from equipment and minor trail disruptions
- potential smoke from pile burning

Together we can reduce the likelihood of …

…and increase the likelihood of this…

QUESTIONS?

Peter Guillozet
Orcas Preserve Steward
peterg@sjclandbank.org
(360) 298-0052

Kai Hoffman-Krull
Forest Health Manager San Juan Islands Conservation District
kai@sjicd.org
360-419-4030

Carson Sprenger
Ecologist & Restoration Forester
Rain Shadow Consulting
carson@rainshadowconsulting. com
360-376-9100