
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JULY 2023

OVERVIEW

Staff has been taking advantage of the long days, and with the help of various work crews and volunteers, are ticking off stewardship tasks, both small and large. Fences were built, trails constructed, and 26 culverts were installed at Turtleback Mountain Preserve. Staff also provided interdepartmental support. Doug assisted County [Department of Environmental Stewardship](#) with a shoreline restoration project. Working on a tight schedule, the team needed multiple test pits dug along the uplands but did not have time to hire a contractor. Instead, they rented a micro excavator and were instructed how to dig and fill holes (Photo 1). Ultimately (surprisingly) a larger machine was needed as the substrate proved to be too hard for a small machine.

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

It's been a busy month at the desktop. Tanja has been typing and editing away – finishing up the annual report (proofing and editing phase), formatting the Q2 Summer e-Newsletter, and keeping the Land Bank socials up to date. She made it out in the world, along with Lincoln, and hosted the Land Bank table at the SJI Farmers Market. (Photo 2) Tanja is now turning focus to the County Fair booth (Dancing with the Steers), which opens Wednesday, August 16 and runs through Saturday, August 19. Keep an eye out for tabling sign-up sheet; she'll be sending that along in the next week.

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

With seed harvest in full swing, the nursery shed is filling up with bags, bundles, and totes of dried plant material. We're potting up lots of plants for the fall plant sale. For this year's sale, we're avoiding disposable plastic pots and have switched almost exclusively to using "cow pots," a biodegradable, plant-able pot product made from cow manure and recycled paper. (Photo 3) We're continuing to seek a funding source for a hoophouse, as our recent application for a grant for this purpose was not funded.

DISTRICT 1

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

American Camp Trail:

Beaverton Marsh: Local contractor Eco Earthworks completed two separate projects: 1) Grading, surfacing, ditch restoration, and culvert replacement on forest road/trails, and 2) Construction of a rock retaining wall to create a small viewpoint of the marsh from the new trail from Linde Park (Photo 4). Bid announcement for paved trail was released and, not unexpectedly, we have had just one local contractor respond. [Washington Conservation Corps](#) crew helped with noxious weed control and trail construction of the Pintail trail – a pedestrian trail which provides several views over the extensive marshlands to the south. An additional crew will help finish up the trail in the next week.

Farm fence lines have been mowed in preparation for fence repairs and replacement. Preparations are being made for upcoming solar water system installation for farm use. Lessees (Shephard family) plan to bring sheep to the property later this summer. Weed control is underway.

Cady Mountain: Doug led a tour of portions of the preserve for a Historical Marine Ecology class from Friday Harbor Labs (Photo 5). [San Juan Island Youth Conservation Corps](#) started their summer project helping map and assess “big and old” trees at the northwest side of the property (Photo 6). Jacob and volunteers completed some overdue trail maintenance and opportunistic weed control. Doug photographed and mapped social trails associated with a squatter living at the NW side of the preserve.

Deadman Bay: A boat was left at the beach for many days before owner was encountered. Owner was belligerent and admitted to fishing without a license before promising to remove the vessel. The Sheriff’s department was contacted a couple of days later after the boat had still not been removed. The owner eventually removed the boat to the County Park where Sheriff became involved; it was the second time the owner broke down on the boat ramp attempting to put a 20’ x 2’ diameter cedar log in the back of a pickup truck.

False Bay Creek: John Wilson’s polled Hereford cattle continue to graze the property. Tansy ragwort has been removed from the fields.

Frazer Homestead: Weed control is underway. Maintenance and repairs are underway for the solar water system and pond exclusion fencing. Charlie met with members of the SJI Grange to discuss potential future farm lease opportunities, there was strong interest in this Preserve.

Planning and preparations are underway the new Island Marble Butterfly plot, a collaboration with [SJI Conservation District](#) and [Fish and Wildlife Service](#).

Kellett Bluff:

King Sisters: Tansy Ragwort has been pulled and blackberry bramble removed along barn. Rob Waldron's red devon / highland cattle continue to graze the pastures.

Limekiln: SJI Youth Conservation Corps spent a day controlling noxious weeds in collaboration with [San Juan County Noxious Weed Board](#).

Mount Grant: Staff and volunteers completed a big push on trail maintenance. Bid process for the new trailhead is complete and is in process of being awarded. Bids were substantially higher than estimated due to under-estimation of inflation in materials and labor costs. Anticipate work initiating in mid-August and we will roll out communication plan soon. A meeting was held with the adjoining landowners to discuss shared interest in gate which may be impacted by this project.

Third Lagoon:

Westside:

Zylstra Lake: [Island Conservation Corps](#) assisted with weed control and restoration planning. Weed control is underway and the farm lease areas have been hayed. Water continues to be conveyed downstream for agricultural use by neighbor and for irrigation of native buffer plantings. Dam mowing and maintenance continues.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen

Coffelt Farm: Staff from the SJI Conservation District and [Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) joined Charlie and Peter for a meeting to discuss a potential grant application for additional heavy use area improvements. Andrew and [Black Cap Consulting](#) completed what will hopefully be the final summer round of maintenance weed whacking of reed canary grass in the riparian planting area. Mary and Anna of Black Cap collected sedge seed from the riparian area and the wetland fields, for use in revegetating upcoming wetland restoration work at North Shore.

Judd Cove: Peter met with the new owners of the neighboring property to the north of the preserve to discuss our planned shoreline, stream, and wetland restoration project. By the end of

the meeting, they expressed interest in working with the Land Bank collaboratively on the project. Although this has the potential to delay the stream and wetland portions of the work by up to one year, including a portion of their property into the design and permitting would likely increase ecological benefits and improve the overall outcome. We will continue to explore this valuable opportunity for collaboration. Mary has taken the lead on improving the forest trail.

North Shore: The 60% site plan is complete and work on final plans and permits is under way. Peter met with [Recreation and Conservation Office](#) (RCO) and [Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation](#) (DAHP) staff to discuss mitigation for the removal of buildings that the consultant deemed eligible for historic preservation. There was collective agreement that a combination of interpretive signage and outreach documenting the history of the site as well as limited salvage of useable building materials would be adequate mitigation. Based on that meeting, Peter submitted SJC permit applications to remove the shoreline buildings and to stabilize and convert the beach road to a trail. Trenching for new electrical lines between the well, garage and entry gate is expected to begin next week. Staff worked with a group of [Camp Orkila teen](#) leaders on fence removal projects.

Turtleback Mountain: The culvert replacement project is finished. It went well – more quickly than planned, under the contract amount, and level of disturbance is quite manageable. The new culverts will improve stream function and help to resolve the conveyance issues that have caused multiple road washouts over the years. (Photos 7, 8, 9) Thanks to Tanja for helping to keep preserve users informed about temporary trail closures. The ICC crew finished out their year with a day of work in the LSR area and beyond, followed by leading a tour of forestry projects for WWU alumni (Photo 10). Mary and Andrew removed “the last” patch of broom on Turtleback. Rainshadow Consulting will be mobilizing on July 17th to complete forestry work in the LSR area. Andrew mowed the area with the tractor in preparation and to reduce fire risk. Mary has been busy collecting seeds and removing tansy.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sara DeRoy

Channel: As staff and volunteers have collected beach trash over the years, some of the larger and heavier items were piled off the side of the trail at the base of the bluff. It was time for the

pile to go. Amanda and Sara creatively hauled the debris out with a few trips of the riding mower. The [Washington Wildlife and Recreation](#) (WWRC) tour also visited the site.

FB Spit: The WWRP tour visited the site on their island trip. The fields were mowed with the county parks tractor. Lopez Island Youth Conservation Corps (LICC) joined the Aruminators and pulled Italian arum seed heads. A vehicle collided with a tree by the parking area. There were no serious injuries, but the badly damaged car sat in the parking area for several days until a tow truck could come haul it away.

Hummel Lake: Mowed the field with the county park tractor. The dock has been getting frequent use for fishing.

Lopez Hill: Finished layout and flagging of new trail that will travel north and connect to the county road. The future trailhead will be for neighborhood/non-motorized use and will not have parking. LICC spent 4 days helping build a major portion of the new trail. (Photos 11, 12) Ecological assessment of the Addition was completed by [EcoStudies Institute](#) and is under review.

Richardson Marsh: Finished fence bracing and stretching wire to exclude cattle from the well site. A section of the north property line was also fenced, and electric fencing was strung between the two areas to temporarily complete the fence line. (Photo 13)

Spencer Spit: Amanda and Sara are working on finishing touches to open the new trail for public access. The [Lopez Community Trails Network](#) (LCTN) hosted a preview during their June “go take a hike” series.

Tombolo: The fireworks show had a few small fires, and the largest was just north of the Tombolo turnout on private property. All were quickly extinguished –thanks to all involved as well as to the many volunteers who showed up the following day to help with fireworks cleanup, including the LICC.

Watmough: Sara is being a true weed warrior and putting in many hours dealing with the abundant poison hemlock on the site.

Photos



Photo 1. Dr. Frances Robertson, Marine Program Coordinator SJC Environmental Stewardship, learns to use excavator for shoreline restoration project at Jackson beach



Photo 2. Lincoln and Tanja at SJI Farmers Market



Photo 3. Cow pots



Photo 4. View from Kuby (our mini track loader) of EcoEarthworks building rock retaining wall at Beaverton Marsh Viewpoint



Photo 5. WWU Associate Professor Marco Hatch giving an old oak a hug on Cady Mountain Preserve



Photo 6. Jacob teaching SJI Youth Conservation Corps how to conduct tree surveys



Photo 7. Turtleback culverts. Before (old culvert in foreground).



Photo 8. Turtleback culverts. One of 20.



Photo 9. Turtleback culverts. New culvert buttoned up.



Photo 10. ICC leading WWU Alumni tour of Turtleback forestry projects



Photos 11 and 12. LICC trail work at Lopez hill, before and after



Photo 13. Fencing at Richardson Marsh



Bonus photo 1. [Cinnabar Moth](#) caterpillars (*Tyria jacobaeae*) enjoying a delicious lunch of Tansy ragwort.



Bonus Photo 2. Andrew with a bucket of camas seed heads collected from Linda Harris' garden