
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

FEBRUARY 2023

OVERVIEW

Funding to restore riparian areas was recently secured by the SJI Conservation District, and Orcas staff has been putting it to use across four different preserves. The abundance of species planted creates a rather long and euphonious list: bitter cherry and buffaloberry, elderberry, gooseberry, black twinberry, osoberry, snowberry and serviceberry, mock orange, crabapple, Nootka rose, native hawthorn, black cottonwood, alder and red-osier dogwood. But of course, the hope behind the effort is that these native plants will survive and give rise to even greater melodies, such as the trill and hum of songbirds and bees.

Aaron supported stewardship staff this past month in a variety of ways. He accessed Landscape software and corrected numerous maps of conservation easement areas, and he supplied documentation needed for Council to approve the long-term lease at Coffelt Farm Preserve. Several Conservation Land Bank staff participated in the recent county-wide listening sessions for farmers and ranchers, organized by the Agricultural Resources Committee, and several will also attend WSU Extension's upcoming [Agricultural Summit](#), of which the Land Bank is a sponsor. The Terrestrial Managers Group (TMG) annual meeting is scheduled for the end of March, and Erin is working within a subcommittee to arrange sessions on long-range planning like the BLM's Resource Management Plan and climate initiatives. And, as a reminder, the [Climate and Sustainability Committee](#) is looking for a liaison from the CLB Commission.

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

[Events](#) continue to blossom in the 2023 calendar, and there are guided field tours on all three islands: birdwatching on Lopez, a tour of the new North Shore preserve on Orcas, and interpretive hikes on San Juan Island. Shauna led another well-received walk at Beaverton Valley Preserve and she is collaborating with Limekiln State Park staff to develop a cross-boundary interpretive walk, scheduled for Saturday, March 4th.

Tanja provides a lot of behind-the-scenes support for all events that are offered, ranging from the TMG annual meeting to the Ag listening sessions, and from the Lopez [Open House](#) (February 15th) to the preserve-specific tours. She'll also participate in the upcoming open house, which will feature three different preserves, and is looking forward to receiving "live" feedback. Tanja is working within the communications subcommittee to develop a media calendar, and themes for this year's annual report. Send your ideas!

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: Council Member Christine Minney accompanied Doug on site for an orientation to the proposed Linde Park public access plan. The plan proposes to develop and link a 400-foot trail within Linde to other proposed trails in the Preserve. Karen Vedder is working to finalize an interlocal agreement with Island Rec and San Juan Island School District which would allow Linde Park to serve as the primary trailhead. Doug met with Island Rec staff including the director, Kerry Jack and superintendent, Tracy Roberson, and he also presented the project to the Town of Friday Harbor Council, which was received with enthusiasm. Additional planning work involves cultural resource assessment, Tribal consultation, trail alignments and infrastructure (signs, puncheon, viewing area, surfacing), and permitting with the Town. Members of the Islands Conservation Corps (ICC) spent a day clearing salal and oceanspray from a future trail corridor (Photo 2).

Cady Mountain: In preparation for a future management plan, Doug spent several days exploring the steep and complex topography of the mountain's north side to develop proposals for building trails and to map vegetation communities. While he conducted most if this work solo, he was assisted at times by neighbors, volunteers, as well as staff. Rozewood Environmental provided an initial assessment related to trailhead suitability and permits.

False Bay Creek: Waterfowl are enjoying the inundated wetland, though it contains less standing water than previous winters. Discussions regarding poor water quality and the sustainability of seasonal grazing continue.

Frazer Homestead: A pasture-prairie planting trial was initiated fall of last year, and staff and WSU Extension have scheduled a site visit to see if any early native seedlings have arisen. A collaborative effort to develop a second Island Marble Butterfly enclosure, on the north end of the Preserve, is underway with SJI Conservation District. Staff are developing a request for proposals for a new long-term agricultural lease.

Mount Grant: Staff placed waxed paper on burn piles in preparation for burning and creating biochar. The Friday Walkers, an informal group of SJI residents, will visit the Preserve and Doug will serve as their interpretative guide.

Westside: New signs have been assembled and installed (Photo 3). Staff will lead a field trip for the Whale Museum's Marine Naturalists Training, and they intend to provide both site-specific information as well as more general information on origins of the Land Bank.

Zylstra Lake: County Council and personnel, staff from Parks and Fair, Environmental Stewardship and Public Works, gathered with Representative Rick Larsen on site. The occasion was in recognition of funds being secured for a San Juan Valley greenway project, which is currently proposed to extend from Friday Harbor to the Preserve. The event attracted neighbors, members from the local Trails Committee and the press. The Preserve's annual swan survey boasted 49 swans on the lake. And, agricultural lessees, Adam Greene and Sarah Pope, generated a wonderful [annual report](#) for their community hay project.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen

Coffelt Farm: Waterfowl dabbled in the marsh as staff and members of the ICC planted a total of 800 riparian plants within the fenced, freshwater corridor (Photo 5). It's the season of lambs and kids, and the barns are kicking and bleating with new life. Peter replaced the water heater in the farm manager's house. A long-term lease is now in place, and the [Lum Farms blog](#) is a good place to read up on farm happenings over the last year.

Coho: Staff and the ICC planted an array of riparian species along Cascade Creek, and there are plans next month, for another round. Peter met with adjacent landowners to discuss their wish to grow a native hedgerow along the boundary, and he provided them with a sample plant list. Erin

and Peter met with representatives of the Strawberry Council (owners of the Artworks property) to resolve an unintentional encroachment into the Preserve. Future plans for restoring native vegetation along this boundary were also hatched.

Deer Harbor: Blackcap Restoration, an Orcas-based natural resources company, helped to clear an extensive blackberry patch and to plant bareroot species such as alder, elderberry, bitter cherry and gooseberry in the forested gaps.

Eastsound: Staff cleared English ivy from several large junipers and yew trees.

Fowler's Pond: The stream corridor that winds between the outlet of the pond and into Coffelt Farm Preserve has a narrow strip of mature alders, a few native understory species, and a lot of invasives such as blackberry, holly and English hawthorn trees. Peter met with neighbors and outlined his plan to use available grant funding and revitalize the riparian corridor with native hawthorn, black cottonwood, red-osier dogwood and black twinberry. And it's already underway. Staff worked beside the crew from Blackcap Restoration to perform an initial round of blackberry removal and planting, and they will return later this month for another round.

North Shore: Public tours have resumed, and planning continues. Following January's field meeting with the consultant Natural Systems Design, Peter submitted a pre-application package to Community Development and initiated review of the land use and the permits necessary to advance a variety of planned activities (Photo 6). Commissioner Brian Wiese joined Fire Chief Scott Williams, and Peter, on the property to converse about emergency vehicle access and parking layout. Peter re-issued a request for quotes for an automated entry gate after receiving inadequate responses in late 2022.

Turtleback Mountain: A productive month was wrapped up under Andrew's watch. The ICC continued to thin, and target oaks to release, throughout the LSR grant area. Blackcap Restoration, a few staff from SJI, and volunteers, together accomplished planting 2,400 seedlings. And 300 Garry oaks! Most of the species were flowering and fruiting shrubs like osoberry, mock orange, serviceberry and buffaloberry and are intended to bolster the biodiversity on site and enhance food webs. Unfortunately, some of the recently planted wildflower plugs show signs of herbivory by a rapidly rebounding deer population, and signs of the return of non-native rabbits to the mountain are similarly troubling. Peter and Eliza met with Dan Grosboll,

USFWS, to discuss the potential for a reintroduction of the Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly. Although such work seems increasingly likely, implementation would take many years (Photos 7-9).

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

FB Spit: Staff finished planting plugs, and six volunteers joined for a beach clean-up.

Upright Head: Friends of the San Juans and Coastal Geological Services prepared a feasibility report, which includes a partial design for how to remove concrete rubble and a ramp and restore a small shoreline beach.

Hummel Lake: Amanda performed general trail maintenance and deconstructed the old, collapsed gate.

Lopez Hill: The 2010 Stewardship and Management Plan (SMP) will be updated this year to include the lease purchase (2018) and the new 75-acre addition (2021). A conservation easement on the addition is expected to be conveyed to the SJPT later this month; and a contract with Ecostudies is underway for a plant survey of the addition. The open house meeting on February 15th will seek input on priorities for the Preserve and include a proposal to build a trail within the addition.

Spencer Spit: The [draft SMP](#) is posted on the website, and the public comment period extends until February 28th. Feedback on the plan, its proposed trail and cooperative agreement with State Parks for future maintenance, will also be sought at this week's in-person meeting (Photo 10).

Richardson Marsh: The open house will also seek to gather public input on which activities are to occur on this 25-acre preserve. Activities under current consideration include seasonal grazing of livestock, installing fencing, creating a short trail and overlook, and constructing a blind for wildlife viewing.

Photos



Photo 1. Commissioners: Please save-the-date and join us at the TMG annual meeting.



Photo 2. ICC members Libby and June (can you spot her?) clear area for a new trail at Beaverton Marsh Preserve



Photo 3. Red flowering currant is consistently the first to bloom on San Juan Island each year, and almost always during the first week of February.



Photo 4. The Westside preserve received new signage. The old sign (left) was vandalised and was replaced with an updated version (right).



Photo 5. The ICC plant bare root species within the riparian corridor of Coffelt Farm Preserve.



Photo 6. A shot of the Natural Systems Design team, on the ground, at the North Shore Preserve.



Photo 7. A before-and-after of a Garry oak within the LSR project area on Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 8. Blackcap Restoration enhance Turtleback Mountain with bareroot plants.



Photo 9. New plants also made it into the road cut at the base of Turtleback Mountain



Photo 10. A potential view from the proposed trail at Spencer Spit Preserve.