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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JANUARY 2023

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### **OVERVIEW**

Staff accomplished many impressive endeavors over turn of the year, and many of these highlight the on-the-ground ways in which the Conservation Land Bank protects and enhances the County's ecological areas. Some of the stewardship activities were spontaneous such as removing debris that was deposited along our shorelines with the high tides (Photos 1-3). Other activities were more formally planned. Still, their numbers are notable. On San Juan Island 253 piles were burned and on Orcas Island 8,000 plants found new home ground.

Of course, we didn't do this alone. Community volunteers and members of the Island Conservation Corps (ICC) were among the workforce that enabled these accomplishments. One exceptional Lopezian even chose to celebrate her birthday by having a planting party at the Channel Preserve and now 400 plugs, a sweet mix of fescues and wildflowers, will beautify the years ahead (Photo 4).

Over the past month, annual activities like preserve and conservation easement monitoring were also performed, and staff is well-underway in making plans for the year ahead.

### **OUTREACH**

Staff: Tanja Williamson

In between power outages, snowpocalypse 2022 and vacation, Tanja produced an end of year [highlight email](#). She took a cue from December's photo essay and emphasized visuals over text but also included some great hotlinks. She is currently collaborating with staff and numerous partner organizations to establish a calendar of diverse outreach events for 2023.

### **SALISH SEEDS NURSERY**

Staff: Eliza Habegger

The plants are taking their winter rest and staff has been following suit.

## **DISTRICT 1**

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

**Beaverton Marsh:** The landscape firm of JA Brennan is supporting the planning effort to provide more public access, and assisting with engineering, budget development, and graphic designs. Doug and Karen will present to the Town Council next week and seek their support for the project. Falcon Cultural Resources provided a draft of a cultural resource assessment. Nursery-grown native plugs were planted around the parking lot (and are very happy to be in the ground), and staff have begun to develop a long-term management plan.

**Cady Mountain:** In preparation for a developing a management plan, staff have identified a preferred trailhead and general trail alignments. Meanwhile, rain on snow led to rushing streams (Photo 5).

**Deadman Bay:** Surprisingly, the king tide and storm conditions were less severe than have been observed in past!

**False Bay Creek:** The Skagit Delta hosts tens of thousands of snow geese each winter, but they aren't often seen in the islands, and this is why the presence of approximately a dozen brought excitement to local birders. The flock has been regularly seen at False Bay Creek Preserve but were also counted by volunteers at Zylstra during the Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count.

**Limekiln:** Staff dismantled a few lean-to type structures within a remote area of the Preserve and on a cold day, when the lake was ice-glazed, cleared debris from its inlet.

**Mount Grant:** Newly minted preserve stewards have contributed to opening and closing the gate on the weekends and monitoring the trail system.

**Westside:** Replacement of parking barriers is underway, and the ICC assisted with trail maintenance and blackberry control.

**Zylstra Lake:** The ICC staked site-sourced willow whips at Emmerling Creek, an inlet to the upper lake, to help filtrate the water and stabilize the newly installed [beaver dam analogs](#). The ICC also assisted with soil sampling and fencing to inform and prepare for a riparian restoration project at the lower reservoir (Photos 6-7).

## **DISTRICT 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen

**Crescent Beach:** Crescent Beach Road was inundated with debris during king tides which were combined with strong southerly winds. Public works removed the material from the road and

there is now a large berm of driftwood and other material along the road edge. Andrew was assisted by many members of the public, as he removed several loads of plastic and other garbage, and their haul included three trash bags full of Styrofoam (Photo 8).

**Diamond Hill:** Peter and Andrew completed annual monitoring, and they connected with two neighbors of the Preserve that are interested in opportunities to be volunteer stewards.

**Eastsound:** This preserve needs some noxious weed control and clarification of the southwest boundary.

**Fowler's Pond:** Staff scouted areas for an upcoming riparian planting project, and also observed evidence of beaver activity (Photos 9-10).

**Judd Cove:** Peter met with Coastal Geologic to finalize plans to restore the Preserve's stream and shoreline.

**North Shore:** Staff held a kick-off meeting with Natural Systems Design, the consultant supporting planning for the property. Peter also met with Kathleen Foley Lewis from SJPT to initiate work on the conservation easement.

**Turtleback Mountain:** Staff planted approximately 8,000 plugs with help from the ICC, Mary Gropp, and Troy from the SJPT. And the year started off strong with the ICC implementing the project funded by the Landscape Scale Restoration grant (Photos 11-12).

### **DISTRICT 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow

**Channel:** During the Audubon Christmas Bird, the Channel was a hot spot of activity. Species included common and pacific loons, harlequin ducks, horned grebes, goldeneyes, buffleheads and more. And, well-worth mentioning again, a mix of fescues and wildflowers that totaled 400 plugs were planted with the help of a merry volunteer birthday party.

**FB Spit:** General maintenance consisted of filling potholes and clearing a fallen tree. Beach clean-up is underway as the sand spit was almost entirely inundated during December's high tides, which occurred several days after the predicted high, and left piles of debris.

**Hummel Lake:** Together, Jacob and Amanda conquered the Preserve’s slippery conditions. Jacob brought a pressure washer and cleaned the dock, while Amanda, scrubbed the bridge on the other side of the Preserve with a push broom. Cheers to inter-district teamwork (Photo 13). Other general site maintenance included brushing the trail and clearing it of downed trees. Some of the infrastructure at Hummel Lake is over 20 years old and ready for replacement. For example, while Amanda attempted to set screws to install a sign on the field gate, the entire gate collapsed...because it’s post was rotten.

**Lopez Hill:** General site work included monitoring and clearing fallen trees.

**Spencer Spit:** The draft management plan was reviewed internally, and Erin and Amanda are working on recommendations.

**Tombolo:** The first beach cleanup of 2023 was held! Six volunteers helped to pick-up both sides of the Tombolo -- the beach and the marsh – and remove debris that had accumulated during December’s storms and high tides (Photo 14).

**Upright Head:** Amanda completed plantings at the entry and within the fenced area.

**Watmough:** An ecological assessment was completed by Kwiaht for the addition area.

Photos



Photo 1. Crescent Beach Road during the king tides and high wind event.





Photos 2-3. A spectacular high tide at the Spit. (Courtesy of Sarah Snowden)



Photo 4. A hearty and happy birthday-planting party at the Channel Preserve.





Photo 5. Three Corner Lake stream passing through Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photo 6. Fresh snow provided beauty and a rare recreational activity at Zylstra Lake Preserve.





Photo 7. The ICC pose with their best “beaver” face at a newly installed beaver dam analog at Zylstra Lake Preserve.



Photo 8. Styrofoam debris deposited along the shore of Crescent Beach Preserve.





Photos 9-10. A beaver didn't obey the signage at Fowlers Pond and attempted to plug the outlet.



Photo 11. ICC member, Campbell, releases oaks at Turtleback Mountain Preserve.





Photo 11. Campbell, Eve and Julia with the ICC plant plugs in burn scars at Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 12. Jacob pressure-washing the dock at Hummel Lake Preserve.





Photo 13. The first beach clean-up of 2023, at the Tombolo.