
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JULY 2022

OVERVIEW

Following a prolonged cool and wet spring, there is a pronounced shift to summer. The sweet smell of cut hay abounds with farmers working all hours to bring in harvest between squalls. As maintenance activities slow, public access swings into high gear along with the annual marathon of noxious weed control, as well as plans for the first “in-person” County fair booth since 2019. A request to collect acorns from a University of Idaho researcher was granted. The researcher is exploring cultivation of European truffles with Garry oaks.

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

The second month of the Summer Farmers Market Series was well attended. On Orcas, Peter was joined by Craig Canine of SJPT (San Juan Preservation Trust), and Land Bank Commissioner, Brian Wiese. (Photo 1).

Tanja has been working with the Stewardship Network helping shape the Green Village for this year’s county fair, August 17-20. In addition to the organization’s individual booths, debuting this year are daily scheduled activities and presentations in a common area under the “big tent,” including a camas presentation and planting demo by Salish Seeds Project nursery assistant, Margo Thorp.

Lastly, San Juan Island stewardship staff is hosting a blitz of volunteer work parties throughout the month of July, spread over four different preserves. Volunteer opportunities abound, from noxious weed removal to trail construction. Anyone interested in joining these conservation efforts can find all details on the [online calendar](#).

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Seed harvest is in full swing. So is the potting up of plants that will be sold in September at our fall plant sale. Summer wet and warmth has meant extra weeding, mowing, and tending. Islands Conservation Corps members have completed their internships at the nursery.

DISTRICT 1

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

American Camp Trail: The ACT received a good haircut this month in a joint effort from Jacob and Shauna – prolific growth and creeping roses were trimmed along the trail corridor while grass was mowed underfoot. The only casualties were sinuses as a result of the grass’s virility.

Beaverton Marsh: Two volunteer parties took place in the last month: one focusing on trail construction and the other continuing Scot’s broom control effort initiated by the Islands Conservation Corps. The SJI Youth Conservation Corps helped continue trail and weed control efforts. Cleanup of the cabin site on the Barker property continues. Site development for recreation will ramp up in July and August with a goal of opening the first phase in mid-September. The deadline for the Request for Qualifications for engineering and design support closed with no submittals. Doug will follow-up with firms and explore potential of broadening the request and/or revising the scope of work. Two proposals were received from cultural resource consultants. Island Conservation Corps member Susan Ridl has designed a bird survey for the preserve using the eBird platform for her internship with the CLB. Staff are working with her on final details and hope to roll out the project to a small group of avid birder/volunteers as a test sometime in the next month. After the kinks are worked out, it will be released more broadly.

The agricultural area has had fence lines mowed to assess condition and replacement priorities. Currently working with the Conservation District to apply for funding for the riparian portion of fence.

Cady Mountain: ICC member Julia Jacquery helped assess and map ecological communities on existing and newer Land Bank acquisitions. This information will be used to support ecological assessment and management plan development. A decommissioned social trail has been closely monitored following the removal of the trail closure sign.

Deadman Bay: The trail leading to Deadman Bay was cleared of logs and now supports three pathways to the beach. The parking areas were mowed.

False Bay Creek: The pullouts were mowed. Currently working with the Conservation District to apply for funding for riparian portion of fence that is in poor condition. Tansy Ragwort has been pulled.

Frazer Homestead: Lessee Thor Black passed away, a great loss for the island. Charlie is working with family and colleagues to address removal of equipment; no animals were on the property. A condolence card was signed by staff members and sent to the Black family. Prior to his passing, he had been mowing down the pastures to manage hawthorn.

King Sisters: King Sisters has continued to receive TLC at the hands of Laura Helander, a neighbor who volunteered to mow the trail this year. The northern end of the trail was brushed of reed canary and encroaching shrub.

Limekiln: Jacob and Shauna responded to a neighbor's report of a downed tree at the end of the North Trail. The tree was bucked and removed from the trail corridor.

Mount Grant: WSU North Sound Extension and San Juan Islands Conservation District held a forestry workshop focused on exploring natural history and current forest health issues. Thom Pence volunteered to help lead the walk with support from Jacob and Shauna. Numerous occasions of RVs and similar campers have been encountered along Geraldine Lane leading to some confusion with regards to property boundaries, easements, covenants, and commercial camping rules. An orientation for volunteers and staff is planned. Volunteers Peggy Reily and Barrett Kennedy assisted with opening a trail blocked by a very large old-growth Douglas fir. (Photo 2) The trunk was 43" diameter at 30 feet from the base, where it intersected the trail, with a preliminary ring count of more than 440 years. Shauna led a group of Spring Street International School students up the mountain as part of their False Bay watershed discussion and intersectionality of ecosystems; the students were part of the 6-week Salish Sea Sciences course.

Third Lagoon: Staff continued to monitor and remove Canada thistle from a patch that just won't quit.

Westside: Shauna led a blackberry control volunteer event that made a dent in the prolific blackberry growth. The Goldenback Trail was mowed and restoration plots weeded.

Zylstra Lake: Water release for downstream agricultural use has begun, a full five weeks later than in 2021. Bald eagles have utilized their long-term nest at the west side of the preserve with a young eagle being seen perched on the edge of the nest recently. No incidents with preserve visitors have been noted this year. In conjunction with King County Environmental Lab (who does lab testing) a new “test-strip” analysis is being used to help track potential advancement of toxic algae. The test strips are not as accurate but will help monitor changing conditions and provide more immediate feedback. The Lessees began haying in late June and will continue into the coming weeks. They hosted a public Q&A opportunity to talk about hay production, their practices, and the Zylstra site. Charlie attended the hay event.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Mary Gropp

Coffelt Farm: The farm lease proposal review committee met to discuss the Lum Farm proposal and sought clarification on a few items prior to making a recommendation at the July Commission meeting. Most materials have arrived for the electrical system improvements project. Perennial Consulting, LLC completed fieldwork associated with a plant inventory and a wetland delineation associated with the potential trail alignment.

Deer Harbor: Peter purchased new galvanized steel posts and chain to replace the rotting split rail fencing along the edge of the parking area.

North Shore/Glenwood: Staff secured the entrance and the many building doors and posted no trespassing signs. New interim signage is on its way and will be posted at the entry and the beach next week. Peter has begun meeting with neighboring landowners and has sought quotes from consultants for support with assessments of cultural resources and slope stability and drainage issues. (Photo 3)

Turtleback Mountain: Peter replaced the South Turtleback footbridge with the help from the ICC crew. (Photo 4) A summary of comments and staff responses will be posted shortly, as will a final (draft) SMP for review by the Commission. Mary has been busy collecting native seed.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sara De Roy

Channel: Reports continue to trickle in about creosote logs and large marine debris along the westside and other shorelines. Many of these items have been tagged using the MyCoast.org app, and Amanda confirmed with the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) that a crew will be out this summer to assist with removal of these items.

FB Spit: The field and trails were mowed, noxious weed removal continues.

Hummel Lake: The field was mowed, and trails brushed. Relayed comments about the Hummel Lake boat launch area to WDFW.

Lopez Hill: Amanda continues to refine trail layout to the north, and through the LCLT (Lopez Community Land Trust) trail easement. A surveyor is scheduled to stake the easement prior to final layout. Amanda met with the neighbor to review the project. SJPT is beginning a fundraising campaign for the conservation easement purchase on the addition.

Tombolo: Locals and visitors enjoyed the annual Lopez fireworks along Bayshore road. Sara participated in firework cleanup at the Tombolo.

Watmough: Amanda and Sara led a guided walk to the addition. (Photo 5) The Bureau of Land Management staff and volunteers had a site visit during their Monument tour.

Our “area closed” sign was removed, and gate tampered with and left open. The gate was resecured, and a replacement sign posted. Met with a neighbor about posting signs at property boundary and closing off informal trails. Ecological assessment work is underway. One recent exciting observation was of a Bullock’s oriole, an uncommon site on Lopez. Amanda had a meeting with the Marine resources committee staff to learn more about the voluntary no-anchor zone project to protect eelgrass.

Photos



Photo 1. Craig Canine (SJPT), Peter and Brian team up at the Orcas Farmers Market.



Photo 2. Volunteer Peggy Reily stands next to large, downed Douglas fir at Mount Grant Preserve



Photo 3. Slope failure requiring attention along the beach access road at the North Shore-Glenwood property.



Photo 4. Turtleback bridge replacement under way.



Photo 5. June 29 Watmough Addition guided walk attendees.