
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

MAY 2023

OVERVIEW

Conservation Land Bank preserves are teeming with activity. Beaver, butterflies and an abundance of wildflowers inhabit our protected areas, and many islanders are out enjoying the scenes of spring. But you don't have to travel outside of Town to admire a plethora of native wildflowers in bloom. The lawn-to-meadow conversion area, located along the south side of the San Juan office, is a stunning success (Photo 1). As is Eliza's accompanying "Lawn Be Gone" workshop. The workshop highlights the office demonstration project, and it proved so popular that a second session was added to accommodate public interest. Commissioners are encouraged to contact Eliza if they're interested in a tour of any of the demonstration areas or the many happenings at the nursery.

Mary Gropp returned as the Orcas seasonal field assistant and she's already out battling Scotch Broom (Photo 2). Staff across all districts have kept busy removing weeds, and hosting work parties and field trips. This past month, the local review team for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) visited Orcas and Lopez to assess proposals for nearshore restoration, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gathered with partners of the LSR grant to review the forest health work accomplished on Orcas and San Juan (Photos 3-5).

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

The spring series of Community Conversations and last month's Commission meeting were the first "in-person" meetings since 2020 and were well received. Since then, Tanja has shared the happy news about [Coho salmon in Cascade Creek](#) as well as on the many upcoming opportunities to join staff for tours and work parties. Her post about retrieving bundles of lilacs has also led to many merry gatherers (Photo 6). Tanja has turned her attention now to developing content for the annual report, organizing information kits for our booths at the summer Farmers' Markets and generating material for community events like the upcoming [Children's Festival](#).

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Springtime means lots of seeding and lots of weeding at the nursery. Volunteers attended the monthly “third Thursday” work party and meticulously sowed thousands of seeds (Photo 7). In addition to the new area outside the office, there are demonstration areas at the nursery that also provide a place for the public to see how to use local, native plants as attractive landscaping options. These include both the shed’s living roof and plantings that surrounds the shed, and as you can see by the photos, these areas are thriving too (Photos 8-9).

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: The ICC joined staff for a two-day Scotch broom eradication extravaganza. The crew employed a “snip and strip” method, as a follow up to last year’s successful effort. There are two new trail projects occurring on the Preserve. “Phase II” will connect Linde Community Park with an overlook to the marsh. Interlocal agreements for this project have been signed with Island Rec and SJI School District. Designs, solicitation for bids and permit applications are underway. Trail construction for “Phase III” has also kicked off. Over the course of two work parties, a handful of volunteers helped staff rough in a pedestrian trail along the uplands above the marsh. Doug will lead a field trip with a science class from Friday Harbor High School. Juniors and seniors will undertake environmental science projects during the final weeks of the school year and their class instructor, Sam Garson, hopes this pilot project will initiate a series of long-term studies.

Cady Mountain: Staff monitored the wildflower bloom and went to mark trees for upcoming work parties. Commissioner Marilyn O’Connor joined Doug for an in-field orientation of the Preserve (Photo 10).

False Bay Creek: Staff joined Tyler Davis (SJC Environmental Stewardship) and Dean Dougherty (SJPT) on a tour of various restoration sites along False Bay Creek, and they further discussed how to collaborate and improve water quality within the watershed.

Kellett Bluff: Numerous staff, including Andrew, joined the ICC for a three-day work party (Photo 11). The crew removed firs from around a collection of oaks and performed extensive

monitoring. An amazing amount of work was accomplished in such a short period and the concentrated time on the Preserve enhanced staff's intimacy with the site; there are at least a dozen Pacific yew trees on the property and six are greater than 20" in diameter.

King Sisters: Doug, Kathleen Lewis (SJPT), Kurt Licence (WDFW) and Nathan Redon (UW) visited several private and public preserves to evaluate potential red fox research sites. The local study of red foxes seeks to gather baseline info and to establish protocols that can then be used to inform a study on a subspecies known as the [Cascade red fox](#). The overall population size of the Cascade red fox is unknown, but reportedly estimated to be less than 100 individuals in the central Cascades of Washington State.

Mount Grant: Doug put a bid package together for establishing the new trailhead and we hope to initiate the project this summer. An archaeologist from Falcon Cultural Resources will return to further assess the property along with several Tribal members. Additional grant-funding for restoration, communication and collaboration with Tribes is being explored. Volunteer Jon Shannon is assisting with design of and permitting for restrooms at Mount Grant and other San Juan preserves.

Westside: Gabe repaired split rail fences, replaced signs and assisted with other maintenance activities.

Zylstra Lake: Slabs of wood, donated by the Zylstra family, are being made into benches by a talented volunteer woodworker. The benches will be installed trail-side soon. Mowing has begun on the trails and dams, and staff has been dialing in a mowing technique with the flail mower on the steep face of the upper dam.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen, Mary Gropp

Coffelt Farm: The Lums worked alongside staff to remove piles of scrap metal, wood and other materials from the forest near the parking lot. We also established an ADA-compliant parking space, re-set parking stops and spread a load of gravel. An accessible porta potty is next on the list.

Coho: The presence of a new cohort of juvenile Coho salmon in Cascade Creek has been confirmed. This welcome evidence of successful spawning follows the recent discovery that Chinook salmon also spawned in the creek in 2022. Peter continues to pursue opportunities to purchase some additional flow from water rights holders to increase instream use.

Crescent Beach: A spate of illegal camping and parking occurred at the Preserve this month. After efforts to assist the owners and a lengthy process that involved the Sheriff, two cars were towed and the third was driven away. The experience highlighted the need to revise language on the signs regarding overnight parking and relevant code enforcement.

Eastsound Waterfront: Andrew met with the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) local review team to assess a collaborative project with the Friends of the San Juans. The proposed project aims to remove a large concrete structure from the beach. It was favorably received by the local review team and will advance to a full proposal.

Fowlers Pond: Beaver! A talented but rogue woodworker once again attempted to plug the pond's outlet pipe and spillway with some tooth-and-groove paneling. We've anticipated the appearance of beavers as part of the broader resurgence throughout the PNW and are monitoring the situation in the hopes of establishing a long-term relationship.

North Shore: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) airlifted materials from the Preserve to Point Doughty without incident (Photo 12). Andrew led the ICC crew on another day of holly management. Following the recent bid solicitation, Peter is finalizing the scope of work to re-route the electrical and water utilities to the garage and to power the automated entry gate.

Turtleback Mountain: Andrew and Mary are already close to wrapping up a big year of broom pulling on the mountain (Photo 13)! Staff received four bids for the culvert replacement project and selected the qualifying low bidder. The contract scope is now being finalized and the hope is to complete the replacement of 20 undersized culverts this summer. Peter met with other DNR staff to search for *Propertius duskywing* butterflies and, happily, found several fluttering across the south slope (Photo 14). They also toured a new prairie restoration area that is slated to receive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG) funds in order to finalize the project boundaries. This small grant will complement the work already underway within the LSR work area.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sara De Roy

Channel: Staff cleared several large trees that fell across the trail.

FB Spit: Amanda and Sara tackled a list of projects including, freshening-up the outhouse with a new coat of interior paint, replacing a step on the beach trail and filling potholes in the driveway. to the beach. Additionally, scotch broom and poison hemlock were removed from the site, a portion of the field was mowed, and, arum treatment continued.

Hummel Lake: Sara pulled broom and poison hemlock. Staff carefully weed-whacked around recent hedgerow plantings, an assortment of bitter cherry, snowberry and other native shrubs, in order to reduce competition and provide them with more space to sprawl.

Lopez Hill: Staff cleared fallen trees from the trail.

Richardson Marsh: Amanda rented a brush mower and mowed reed canary grass from around the well site in order to prep for layout of a new fence line, which will exclude cattle from both the well site and the upland forest. Amanda and Sara completed layout for the fence and the ICC crew joined for a day to install posts. The ICC also helped to grub out blackberries and clear a fallen willow.

Spencer Spit: Staff continue to clear the new trail corridor. Volunteer work parties are scheduled with Lopez Community Trails Network for 5/18 and 5/23.

Upright Head: The local review team for the SRFB traveled to this preserve to assess another collaborative project with the Friends of the San Juans. Similar to the proposal on Orcas, this project seeks to remove concrete, an old ramp at a pocket beach near the ferry terminal, as well as shoreline armoring in an effort to restore forage fish spawning habitat.

Watmough: Staff mowed the field and continue to lead field trips to the new addition.

Photos



Photo 1. The lawn is GONE!



Photo 2. Mary Gropp returns for another season!



Photo 3. SFRB grant tour of Eastsound Waterfront Park.



Photos 4-5. LSR site reviews: Jacob and Carson Sprenger from Rainshadow Consulting at the Mount Grant (left) and Peter with Ashley Blazina from DNR at the Turtleback Mountain (right).



Photo 6. Come retrieve some lilacs from the office (and admire the native demo area).



Photo 7. Volunteers sowing seeds for the Salish Seeds nursery at Red Mill Farm



Photo 8. The “living roof” on the Salish Seeds Project shed.



Photo 9. Columbines also adorn the native plant demo area at the nursery shed



Photo 10. SJI Commissioner Marilyn O'Connor toured the wonder of Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photo 11. The oak release team on Henry Island. Nobody had any fun at all!



Photo 12. DNR helicopter lift of Point Doughty restroom building materials.



Photo 13. Mary in a grove of broom prior to removal.



Photo 14. *Propertius duskywing* on Turtleback Mountain.