
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2022

OVERVIEW

Seed from the nursery will soon be sown at numerous restoration sites across the County. Turtleback Mountain and Mount Grant preserves are among the Conservation Land Bank's recipients, as they are sites that were selected by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for grant funding to promote forest health. DNR staff recently traveled to Orcas Island to review several more potential forest health projects, and staff remain hopeful that more cost-share funding for this work will be made available in the future.

Several dead geese were found strewn along Crescent Beach Preserve and subsequent samples and tests determined that avian influenza was the cause of death. Two dead geese were then also reported and collected at Zylstra Lake Preserve, alongside a Green-winged teal. Samples were also collected here, but tests results have not yet been received and revealed the cause of death.

Annual monitoring of conservation easements is well-underway and yielding some nice views of late-season flowers (Photo). The guided tours for the public at the Watmough Addition and the North Shore have remained well-attended. The specialty license plate raised a total of \$40K this year. That's double the amount of last year, and it's only the second year of the program. Half of the total will be split between the SJI Youth Conservation Corps and the Coast Salish Youth Stewardship Corps, and the remaining \$20K will be made available for local grants. To learn more about the RFP process: [click here](#).

Last, but not least, Mary Gropp has wrapped up her very productive, seasonal position; and everyone hopes she'll return next year.

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

After three years of being virtual, the County Fair returned to being an in-person event. Tanja set-up and tirelessly staffed our booth which featured maps of conservation lands across the County as well as those specific to the Land Bank. She even had a Poo Game on hand for those

fair-goers that were playing bingo and for this, she had two takers. One was all the way from France. Margo gave a presentation that was all about camas and how to grow it -- to a full house, despite the heat! (Photo). Post fair, activities have included updating the webpage for the Fall Native Wildflower Sale. The launch date for the public to make online reservations is September 13th. "Doors" open at 9am, and it's recommended that they view the plant list beforehand. [Click here](#) to see the great selection. Pick-up of the plants is scheduled for October 1st. Eliza is also working with Tanja to create some sweet nursery gifts that will help recognize some of the Land Bank's dedicated volunteers. Ideas include native seed packets and small pots of sedum.

Later this month, on September 24th, there will be an open house at the North Shore property. It will be a joint celebration between the Conservation Land Bank and the San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT) and held from 10-2. A fall e-newsletter will be released next week and will announce the event more broadly.

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Nursery staff and stock have welcomed the cooler temperatures. There was a water shortage in late August, a result of heavy water consumption by cattle at Red Mill Farm, that caused staff some anxiety. They adjusted to watering in the predawn light, before the cattle were up, and kept the plants alive. The water supply is now back to normal.

Seed cleaning and processing has been a focus this month (Photo). Samples of collected seeds were sent to a laboratory to test for germination, presence of weed seed, and other characteristics. – State law requires this of any seed, native or cultivated, that is to be sold. Volunteers have been helping with weeding, seed-cleaning, labelling plants for the upcoming sale, and packing seeds into packets. And speaking of the fall sale: Over 1,200 potted plants, bulbs, and seed packets are ready and waiting for their new homes and Waldron and Shaw Islands have been added to this year's list of pick-up locations (Photo).

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: Work continues on the trail, and the trailhead, accessed off of Halvorsen Road. The grand opening is scheduled for next month. (It's going to be amazing, says Shauna;

and her enthusiasm is often infectious.) A cultural resource assessment will soon begin, and Doug and Eliza collaborated with SJPT staff, Taylor family, and others on a plan to mow portions of the marsh and potentially a portion of the pine bog, in an attempt to maintain plant diversity and structure (Photo).

Cady Mountain: Recent trail work has involved making a small bridge, within a cedar grove, to provide for a seasonal creek crossing. Doug led a tour of the addition area, purchased from the Buck family, for SJPT staff as they intend to begin to fundraise for a conservation easement.

Driggs Park: Over the past year, landscape fabric has smothered a side lawn near the office entrance. The fabric has now been removed and soon native species will be sown and planted. The long-term vision for this area is that it can hope is it can serve as a demonstration area for how to convert lawn into meadow.

Frazer Homestead: Charlie and Jacob spent many hours harvesting tansy. Charlie has also been mowing the fields to reduce the amount of English hawthorn.

Kellett Bluff: Doug has been working with outside council, Derek Little, to review and suggest edits to an agreement that hopes to gain approval from the Suquamish Tribe about installing a mooring buoy.

King Sisters: The trail was recently brushed to remove the incredible growth that continually attempts to take over the trail!

Limekiln: Some evidence of diesel fuel from the sunken fishing vessel was detected on a small pocket beach on the north end of the Preserve.

Mount Grant: Archery hunting season has opened in the west basin of the Preserve and is operating on a new reservation system though WDFW. Preparations for the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant are underway and include scheduling, tree marking and making improvements to a parking lot. A tour of the project area will be offered to preserve neighbors and the public.

Mount Ben: Staff joined Michele Smith, from the SJC Noxious Weed Board, for several days of hawthorn control (Photo).

Third Lagoon: Several Least Sandpipers -- the smallest of the sandpipers that are adoringly known as “peeps” – were seen feeding along the mudflats during this past month’s sampling for invasive green crabs. Welcome migrants!

Zylstra Lake: The YCC tended the native plant enclosures by the parking lot and removed (an enormous) teasel patch by the lower reservoir. Water quality has declined, as has been observed in previous years at this time of year. As mentioned, several dead birds were collected and tested, but no results have been received.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen, Mary Gropp

Coffelt Farm: Peter and Charlie refined the draft long-term lease agreement and met with the Lums to discuss details. The electrical project continues to be on schedule and within budget.

Crescent Beach: Andrew worked with Rainshadow Consulting to gather tree data at this preserve and numerous others. These forest stand exams will inform the district’s forest health plan. Staff posted temporary signs to notify the public of avian influenza.

Deer Harbor: Shauna and Jacob assisted with removing a rotten split-rail fence that surrounded the parking area (Photo). The split rails were replaced with galvanized steel posts and a chain, and though the aesthetic is a change, these materials should last many decades and improve safety. A decaying alder that leaned over the mowed area was deemed to be a hazard and removed.

Fowler’s Pond: Someone removed the chain from a gate that opens onto Orcas Road and as a result the Lum Farm sheep crossed the road, created a minor stir in the neighborhood, and had to be rounded up. Staff added a new, heavy-duty lock and chain to prevent recurrence.

Judd Cove: After receiving several comments about dangerous road conditions at the entrance, Peter reached out to Public Works. They agreed that the conditions were unsafe but were unable to help remedy the situation because of their busy schedule. Peter issued a request for quotes (RFQ) for the necessary paving, via the SJC Small Works Roster, and received three bids. He is currently pursuing a contract and aims to have the work completed this fall. Andrew brushed the roadside ditches in preparation for winter rains.

North Shore: Public tours continue, and now numerous professional assessments are underway. Cultural resource, historic preservation, and geotechnical consultants all visited the property, and contractors have begun to evaluate the water and electrical systems. The roof and exterior of the garage were cleaned, the gutters were replaced, and the extensive dilapidated fencing and other hidden hazards are starting to be removed. Staff has sought and received quotes for an automated gate and initiated an in-house ecological assessment. Erin (merrily) performed an initial bird survey and met with a professional ornithologist to discuss the how to mitigate impacts to the swallows, both cliff and barn, that are nesting in the old house (Photo).

Turtleback Mountain: Mary continued her dedicated assault on invasive species, and among her (many) achievements this past month was the early detection and removal of a burr weed outbreak. Andrew teamed up with Troy from SJPT and they liberated oaks from unnecessary competition, which they intend to make a regular partnership activity. A dedicated SJPT volunteer, Kristin, also joined staff to collect seeds of California oatgrass and other species. Coordination for the LSR grant has increased as we prepare to work jointly with the Island Conservation Corps (ICC) and the Samish Indian Nation crew.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sara De Roy

FB Spit: Oh, Italian Arum.

Lopez Hill: Hunting signs were posted, and neon vests were placed at four entry points. Tansy and thistles were removed within the addition, and a trail alignment for this area was reviewed. Staff is considering contracting with EcoStudies Institute for an ecological assessment.

Spencer Spit: Staff are in the middle of preparing a draft Stewardship and Management Plan for this property. The current vision for future management of this preserve is that employees of Washington State Parks will manage public access and maintain the proposed trail. This necessitates a MOU. One has been drafted, and it awaits review.

Weeks Wetland: Staff spent considerable time here this month. The trail was brushed and weed-whacked. Blackberries were removed. And many days were spent working on the boardwalk: rotten boards were removed and new decking was installed (Photo).

Watmough: Guided walks continued to be well attended. The final event was an evening walk, that included a picnic on the shore. Samples of beach sand were collected and will be examined for evidence of forage fish spawning.

Watmough CE: Staff monitored conservation easements in the vicinity of the preserve. One of the easements is within lands managed by the BLM and the new SJI National Monument Manager joined for the hike (Photo).

Photos



Photo 1. Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) seen at a conservation easement property.



Photo 2. At a North Shore public tour, many Orcasonians met each other for the first time.



Photos 3-4. Fun at the Fair was complete with a poo pick-up game called, "Stash It, Lash It, and Trash It"



Photo 5. Margo Thorp gave a well-attended presentation on camas



Photo 6. Margo weighs out a portion of the spring gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*) harvest



Photo 7. Yellow-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium californicum*) plants are ready for the Fall Native Wildflower Sale.



Photo 8: Eliza and Doug spent time in the Beaverton Marsh bog, and planning short- and long-term management.



Photo 9: Seeds of the aptly named “Tall Sock Destroyer” (*Torilis arvensis*) clings to more pants, boot laces, and beyond, after just 30 minutes of weed work on Mount Ben Preserve.



Photo 10. New parking lot fencing at Deer Harbor Preserve



Photos 11-12. A Barred owl and Cedar Waxwings were among the species detected during a recent bird survey at the North Shore.



Photos 13-14. Large Douglas firs, some standing dead and some still growing, at North Shore



Photos 14-15. Great smiles at the Weeks Wetland boardwalk replacement



Photo 16. SJI Monument Manager, Brie Chartier, joins for an outing to Watmough and gets up close to a stately cedar to observe some sapsucker wells.