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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JUNE 2023

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### **OVERVIEW**

Have you seen the first of the fledglings? They're out and about, begging. Recent attendees of a field trip to North Shore Preserve witnessed a brood of brown creepers toddle up a mature Doug fir. They also observed a chestnut-backed chickadee forage on tent caterpillars. For the first time, staff and state biologists detected a caterpillar *and* an adult Island Marble Butterfly on Middlewood Preserve. Another rare species that's received targeted attention from the Conservation Land Bank (CLB) is also having a banner season; Golden paintbrush within our deer exclosures on Cady Mountain are in bloom in record numbers (Photos 1-3).

This past month staff spent considerable time managing vegetation, removing noxious weeds, mowing fields and brushing trails. They monitored conservation easements (CE), led educational field trips on preserves for all ages, and traveled to a variety of professional development trainings. Six CLB staff joined a workshop on native grasses that was hosted by the San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT) and WSU Master Gardener's, and Doug attended the [Cultural Resource Protection Summit](#) in Suquamish (Photos 4-5).

Commissioners from across districts gave freely of their time at outreach events, and in planning and policy initiatives. Other volunteers labored beside staff to build trails and pull weeds. As seen in the many accompanying photos, the wide range of service also yielded a surplus of smiles.

### **OUTREACH**

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Our attendance at the summer Farmers Market kicked off this month. Staff and Commissioners hosted booths on Lopez, Orcas and San Juan (Photo 8). Our displays received an updated look from last year and now feature a map of all conservation lands in the County as well as a rotating digital photo frame. The map of CLB preserves, tucked inside the centerfold of our annual report, remains a steady talking point. Visit our booth this summer, on the first Saturday of the month, and be sure to share suggestions with Tanja if you do. Back in the office, content is

getting churned out. Tanja is compiling an e-newsletter for the second quarter and is nearing completion of the 2022 annual report. Her contribution to the Journal's Springtide Issue is now out in print, and preparations for the Fair are underway.

### **SALISH SEEDS NURSERY**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

The nursery is filling up with pots and plug and they're full of native wildflowers and grasses, thanks to the many volunteers that have assisted with weeding. The Island Conservation Corps (ICC) crew also supported staff in spreading several cubic yards of woodchips to keep down the weeds. Seed harvest has begun!

### **DISTRICT 1**

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

**American Camp Trail:** The trail received a trim and kittens were discovered along the trail. Efforts to humanely trap and relocate the litter were undertaken by community members and the Animal Protection Society.

**Beaverton Marsh:** For the past two weeks, Jacob, Shauna and a robust crew of volunteers spread gravel on the segment of trail that extends from Linde Park. Volunteers also assisted with "Phase III" trail construction on the western part of the Preserve. A permit application was submitted for the Linde Park portion of the trail which lies within the Town's jurisdiction. Students within the High School's Environmental Science class initiated independent research projects. Stay tuned for the opportunity to see their presentations (Photos 9-11).

**Cady Mountain:** Jacob and Eliza monitored the golden paintbrush study plots. This marks the 10th year of working to recover this rare species, and as noted above, the results are all abloom; there were a record number of paintbrush plants. EcoStudies staff joined Doug in the field to assess the Preserve's most recent additions (Cady Mountain Development and Hauschka). They noted that the high-quality habitat, which stretches beyond the Preserve into adjacent unprotected and National Park properties, may be one of the largest contiguous areas of Douglas fir woodlands in western Washington and SW British Columbia. A number of rare plants were encountered along with a *Propertius duskywing* butterfly. Doug tackled the first round of

noxious weeds removal and cleaned up trash from a mossy bald, which he believes was brought in by an ambitious fox.

**False Bay Creek:** The ICC managed reed canary grass and performed other assorted plant maintenance within the stream corridor.

**Middlewood:** This is the third year that Eliza has led staff in creating and caring for habitat designed for the extremely rare Island Marble Butterfly, and the efforts have paid off! A butterfly was spotted using the habitat, and a single caterpillar was also found. State and federal biologists who are working towards helping this rare species were thrilled.

**Mount Ben:** Doug surveyed for “mole plant” (*euphorbia lathyris*), an uncommon weed which has been the focus of control over the years. He determined that staff efforts expended here have also paid off; plants within the Preserve were significantly reduced. The bulk of the plants in the area are located on an adjacent private property and, fortunately, the owners have granted permission for control on their side of the property line.

**Mount Grant:** The Cultural Resource assessment aimed to inform activities associated with the LSR grant was completed (Photo 12). Rainshadow Consulting worked for a week within the restoration area and their thinning and processing of small diameter wood resulted in 70 cubic yards of woodchips. These chips will be utilized at the nursery. Gabe tackled Scotch broom along the summit road and Newt Pond, in addition to areas at Beaverton Marsh Preserve. Doug continues to collaborate on septic designs, and samples from the potential drain field are being analyzed by SJC Health Department.

**Westside:** Contractor Eco-Earthworks replaced parking barriers. The new logs will feature “No Camping Signs,” as van camping continues to be an issue at this site.

**Zylstra Lake:** ICC members helped staff remove fencing and weeds from enclosures in the parking area. They generated more than three cubic yards of thistle and blackberry. Native plantings are faring well, but the number of weeds within these disturbed areas have staff considering revisions to their management strategy. The ICC also worked on a conceptual design for restoring a small, upland area by the lower reservoir. Their project will build on skills they’ve gained over their term of service, such as utilizing soil data to inform plant selection, site prep, and maintenance. Charlie and Doug are working with SJ Preservation Trust to release additional

water for a day to support irrigation of riparian restoration plantings on the Red Mill Farm property. Two of the three long-awaited benches were installed. The wood slabs were donated by the Zylstra family, the cedar stump bases were sourced from logging slash on Cady Mountain, and the craftsmanship was provided by volunteer Lars Sjöholm (Photos 13-14).

## **DISTRICT 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen, Mary Gropp

**Coffelt Farm:** Staff from the SJI Conservation District performed a NRCS Stream Visual Assessment Protocol survey. This rapid assessment helps to satisfy grant requirements for riparian projects and to establish a baseline against which to track changes in the stream and its surrounding riparian area. Maintenance of the septic system maintenance was also completed.

**Coho:** Peter led a walk for 6<sup>th</sup> graders in an experiential learning class from Spring Street International School. He also met with the Washington Water Trust to discuss alternatives for the acquisition of water rights as there is an upcoming meeting with Department of Ecology to discuss the grant received for flow restoration.

**Eastsound:** Staff is working with the Friends on a full proposal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) to remove the large concrete structure from the beach, after receiving the “green light” for this project. At the urging of the SRFB grant review team, the collaborative team is considering a modest expansion of the shoreline buffer in the proposal. This expansion would help to mitigate sea level rise, associated with effects of climate change, at the site.

**North Shore:** Marilyn adventured over for a tour! Peter continues to focus on planning and permitting. His primary goals are to remove the shoreline buildings as soon as possible, and to fast-track the completion of the 60% preserve design which is required to complete the permit applications. Vegetation management demands on the property are very high. The current emphasis is to reduce the extensive invasive species cover and to prepare for planting early next year. Jason Ontjes with the SJC Noxious Weed Board has helped tremendously (and has applauded staff for making this a top priority). Andrew led another holly management day with the ICC crew. There’s a lot of holly! Upgrades to the electrical system and installation of an automated entry gate are anticipated to happen next month.

**President Channel:** Andrew joined SJPT staff for the annual monitoring of their conservation easement.

**Stonebridge-Terrill:** Several trees received a trim. This resolved their status as “hazardous” and retained their importance as habitat (Photo 15).

**Turtleback Mountain:** SJPT staff joined for a walk into recent forest thinning and planting areas. Twenty cover boards for reptiles were placed out, and the contract for the replacement of 20 undersized culverts is complete and staff are preparing a press release to announce temporary trail closures. Andrew wrapped up our biggest broom pulling season since at least 2018. The mild weather last summer appears to have supercharged broom growth. With help from Erin, Peter submitted a WDFW Watchable Wildlife grant application to fund a Garry oak planting in the South Entrance field. This project is described in the 2022 Stewardship and Management Plan but in general seeks to increase biodiversity, provide a low-mobility trail and reduce mowing (Photos 16-18).

### **DISTRICT 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sarah DeRoy

**FB Spit:** Staff monitored the Island Marble Butterfly plots. The spring-sown plots produced roughly 200-300 mustard plants, whereas plots seeded in the fall produced 5-20 plants (Photo 19). Maintenance of the preserve such as mowing and removing weeds was performed, and the interior of the outhouse was also repainted.

**Hummel Lake:** Scotch broom was tackled!

**Lopez Hill:** EcoStudies staff returned for their second visit to complete their ecological assessment of the addition. Their assessment will help to inform management proposals put forward in the updated Stewardship and Management Plan.

**Spencer Spit:** Staff hosted two volunteer work parties with the Lopez Community Trail Network (LCTN) and thanks to their efforts the new trail is now nearly complete (Photos 20-24). The LCTN will feature a preview of the trail in June as part of their “Go Take a Hike” program.

**Richardson Marsh:** Staff mowed here as well and continue to work on the fencing project.

**Upright Head:** One of the railings at an overlook point rotted away and needed repair. Though the barrier is fixed and functional now, the entire structure will need to be replaced soon.

**Watmough:** Tours of the addition have resumed and remain popular (Photo 25). Staff also removed weeds and mowed along the coastal headland.

**Weeks Wetland:** Staff cut blackberry brambles and performed some other general “tidying” such as installing a new signpost at the entry.

Photos



Photo 1. Kim Middleton (center) volunteered her time to lead a birding field trip on North Shore.



Photo 2. WA Dept. Of Fish and Wildlife biologists find an Island Marble Butterfly caterpillar at Middlewood.



Photo 3. Golden paintbrush and great camas thrive in a deer exclosure, Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photo 4. Attendees of Grass Class, taught by Clay Aniteau, at Red Mill Farm. The field portion of the class was held on Mount Grant Preserve.



Photo 5. Doug at the Cultural Resource Protection conference with other islanders, Elexis Fredy, (SJINHP Superintendent) and Dr. Frances Robertson (SJC Marine Program Director).





Photo 6. Meghan with SJPT delights at the height of great camas while on a shared CE property, Orcas.



Photo 7. Freshwater meets the sea on a CE property, Orcas.



Photo 8. Erin, Judy and Marilyn host a booth at the SJI Farmers Market.



Photo 9. FHHS AP Environmental Studies class at Beaverton Marsh Preserve



Photos 10-11. The volunteer trail crew at Beaverton Marsh Preserve.





Photo 12. Lisa Nash-Lawrence and Falcon Cultural Resources archaeologists at Mount Grant



Photo 13. ICC filled a trailer with more than 3 cubic yards of thistle, blackberry, and other weeds.



Photo 14. A new bench was installed at a viewpoint on Bluebird Ridge trail at Zylstra.



Photo 15. Former hazard trees now serve as habitat snags, Stonebridge-Terrill Preserve.



Photo 16. Christian Oldham (Kwiaht) helps to place cover boards in an effort to detect the presence of sharp-tailed snakes within work areas, Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 17. SJPT and CLB staff tour of work areas, Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 18. Andrew and crew battle broom in the backcountry, Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 19. Staff count mustard planted for the Island Marble Butterfly, Fisherman Bay Spit



Photos 20-24. Scenes of volunteers building trail, Spencer Spit Preserve







Photo 25. Public tours remain popular, Watmough (Addition) Preserve