



An enthusiastic volunteer helps brush the trail at Frazer Homestead Preserve, San Juan Island

From the Chair

Sandi Friel, San Juan County Conservation Land Bank

Y

our Conservation Land Bank Commissioners focused on **a trio of important acquisitions** this past year that we felt were must-do projects for the citizens of San Juan County. Spread across the districts—one each on Lopez, Orcas and San Juan—these preserves protect old growth forests, ancient oak savannah, fragile rocky balds, wetlands, shorelines, and forage fish habitat. What makes these properties even more attractive, the preserves will offer islanders unprecedented access to beautiful beaches, hiking trails and mountain vistas. We invite you to **take a guided tour** while we ready these exciting preserves for opening.

Land Bank staff and our many wonderful volunteers kept busier than ever maintaining and improving your existing preserves. While this report focuses on only a few highlights, you can learn about ongoing activities across all preserves via monthly stewardship updates available at sjclandbank.org/stewardship-reports

We've worked hard to increase communication, transparency, and outreach. Last year we held six **"Community Conversations"** via Zoom, emailed 31 e-newsletters/updates/press releases, and hosted 48 tours and in-person events. We hope you were one of the many who were able to participate, and we look forward to seeing and hearing from even more of you in the coming year. If you have ideas for how we can improve, or if you're not yet on our email list, **please reach out.**

Although county property sales may have slowed, the pace of development has not. Now more than ever there's a need to **permanently protect enough land** to keep the special character of our islands intact. At the close of 2022, the Land Bank Commission greenlighted a comprehensive strategic planning process to respond to a changing landscape. There will be opportunities for public input, and we hope you'll share your vision as we work together to conserve our island home.

What's
Your
Vision?

The County Conservation Vision Unfolds...

The Heart of San Juan Island Grows

Cady Mountain Preserve Addition

San Juan Island

Cady Mountain Preserve encompasses some of the most diverse landscape in the islands with rare Garry oak savannah, old growth stands of Douglas fir and Western red cedar, extensive wetlands and open “bald” areas that feature abundant spring wildflowers. In 2022, the Land Bank had an opportunity to protect the summit of the mountain and create a natural destination point. In addition to more oaks and wildflowers, this 40-acre tract features magnificent views of Turtleback Mountain to the northeast, and to the south, San Juan Valley, with the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Olympic Mountains beyond.

This addition increases the Preserve to 470 acres and anchors a contiguous forested area stretching to English Camp and the Roche Harbor highlands. We are looking to create a trailhead to this inland refuge in 2024, giving islanders an entirely new venue to explore. In the meantime, we’ll be working on a management plan and finalizing a conservation easement with the San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT). Opportunities for community engagement, such as guided tours and volunteer work parties, happen year-round. Be sure to check our online calendar for upcoming events.

The Cady Mountain Addition increases the Preserve to 470 acres and anchors a contiguous forested area stretching to English Camp and the Roche Harbor highlands.



Completing a Decades Long Vision on Lopez

Watmough Bay Preserve Addition

Lopez Island

February marked the month your Conservation Land Bank acquired the last unprotected parcel on Watmough Bay—completing a decades long vision of fully protecting one of the most iconic locations in the archipelago. Small, but spectacular, the 11.5-acre property hosts pocket beaches and rocky headlands with its nearshore dominated by eel grass and bull kelp beds. The pristine quality of bay and its shoreline—over 2,000 feet on the Bay and Rosario Strait—makes it a critical area for salmon recovery in the islands, expanding the County’s conservation holdings along Watmough to roughly 24.75 acres.

Steeped in history, this site was utilized extensively by Coast Salish peoples for activities such as reef net fishing and tending and

harvesting shellfish, likely for millennia. This last bit of bight also contains the 1870s era homestead of Samson Chadwick, including its original cabin. It is extremely rare to find a property so rich in cultural meaning and ecological abundance.

Staff have completed an interim management plan and begun conducting various assessments of the property and the homestead. We hope to open the land to public access in the next two years, following completion of a final management plan. In the interim, we have been conducting tours of the property, will have many opportunities to participate in work parties, and provide input in the planning process.

North Shore Property

Orcas Island

While Orcas is the largest island in the San Juan Islands archipelago, it has the lowest percentage (1.4%) of publicly accessible shoreline of any of the ferry-served islands. More access to the coastline has been a consistent community desire since before the Land Bank existed. Your Land Bank is listening and has provided four access points over the years—Crescent Beach, Eastsound Waterfront Park, Judd Cove, and Deer Harbor—accounting for over 75% of currently accessible shoreline.

More Coastline Access on Orcas

In 2021, we learned of an opportunity to change this picture substantially in one fell swoop. After a year of on-and-off negotiations in partnership with the San Juan Preservation Trust, the County successfully acquired a 58-acre beachfront property on the north shore of Orcas Island known as Glenwood Inn, adding 50% more to the total. In addition to fulfilling a long-time objective, the new preserve is located within one of the County's highest priority regions for salmon recovery. Its vital nearshore environment features mature forest, wetlands, feeder bluff, tidepools and eelgrass beds.

As with all new preserves, it is closed to the public until preparations to provide for future public access and natural resource protection, are complete. In the interim, staff has and will continue to lead tours to provide the public opportunities to visit.

The North Shore Property will add much-desired public access shoreline on Orcas Island in the future.



TRIVIA QUIZ: WHAT IS THE PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC LAND IN SAN JUAN COUNTY?

A) 16.4%

B) 25.2%

C) 61%



SCAN FOR ANSWER

To preserve in perpetuity areas in the county that have environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic or low-intensity recreational value and to protect existing and future sources of potable water.

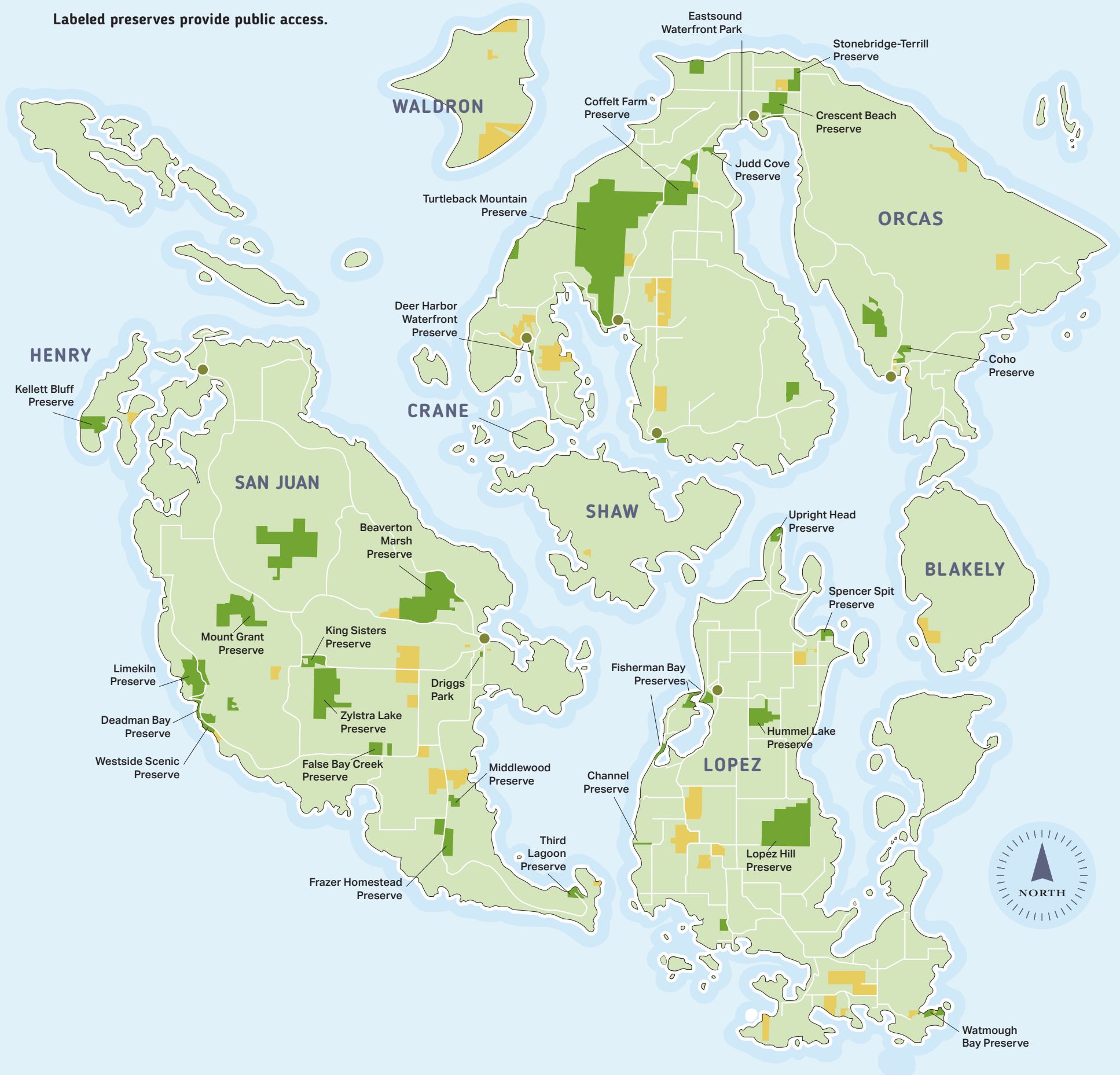


Talking Story

During the Land Bank's North Shore Open House last year, our Outreach Coordinator came upon a visiting couple (above) holding hands, looking towards the old Glenwood Inn cabins. When asked what brought them to the event, they said, "We honeymooned here over 50 years ago!" With big grins, they shared their story and their clear delight in hearing of the Land Bank's vision for its future preservation.

- Land Bank Preserves
- Conservation / Historic Preservation Easements

Labeled preserves provide public access.



Conservation Restoration

Taking care of conservation land is like painting a canvas—multi-layered colors blending to bring the artist’s vision into focus. The Land Bank mandate informs the foundation’s broad brushstrokes, leaving the finer detail work to on-the-ground management. Beaverton Marsh Preserve is one example of how a multi-phased approach to managed **public access** can co-exist with the significant **ecological resources** the 330-acre wetland complex offers.

Phase one of the Preserve’s public access plan was completed last summer, shifting a former neighborhood trailhead away from private property and opening it to all. Volunteers, along with staff, spent 260 hours creating the new, accessible Nuthatch Trail (*photo, above*), linking it to the existing informal forested path (Dragonfly Loop Trail). Their efforts added 2.5 miles to San Juan County’s public trails. Nestled mid-way along the loop is a viewpoint with a panoramic vista across the northeast portion of Beaverton marsh—offering varied scenery as the seasons shift. The Preserve is a good example of the multi-dimensional conservation efforts required. It’s not just a marsh but a forest and ag fields as well (*see chart next page*) and our management planning needs to account for these differences and also incorporate public access.

However, there’s more to this San Juan Island preserve than its art-inspiring rocky balds, grasslands, and savanna. The open areas of bog and wetlands provide an important open-water resource for seasonal migratory waterfowl, and it boasts a rich history of agricultural use, dating back to the late 1800s. As part of the Land Bank’s **commitment to conserving agriculture**, haying, and most recently, seasonal grazing activities occur at the preserve—sheep rotate through the pastures using portable electric fencing.



(above) Mt. Grant seed planting party, November 2022

BEAVERTON MARSH PRESERVE:	
LAND TYPE	471 ACRES
FRESHWATER MARSH	266
AGRICULTURAL	40
FOREST/BALD	165

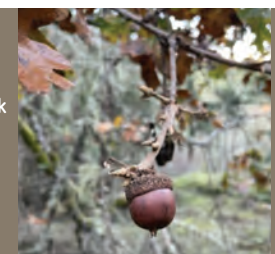


Creating Resilience for the Future

Another component shared by conservation and artistry is **flexibility**—the willingness to respond and adapt to changing conditions and new circumstances as they present themselves. 2022 was a big planning year for Orcas Island Preserves; adoption of a revised, 10-year Turtleback Mountain Preserve Stewardship and Management Plan (SMP) set the stage for an increase in the pace and scale of both Garry oak habitat restoration and general forest management. Similar restoration activities took place along the westside of San Juan Island’s Mount Grant Preserve.

This work helps **increase ecological resilience under climate change and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire**. The SMP also established plans for more sustainable forest roads and public trails, and for parking improvements at the preserve’s South Trailhead. Looking beyond Turtleback, forest assessments were completed on all Orcas preserves to focus the vision of future management.

Read more about Garry oak habitat conservation efforts at two Land Bank Preserves at Mount Grant (San Juan Island) and Turtleback Mountain (Orcas Island).



Impact & Value

We are often asked if the Conservation Land Bank acquisitions “take land off the tax rolls,” resulting in higher property taxes for other landowners. To answer this specific question— yes, but very little.

To begin, the taxable value of Land Bank Preserves is less than **one half of one percent** of the total taxable property in the County (roughly \$55 million of the total \$12.49 billion). If this amount were added back to the total, and the tax rate adjusted to keep the total amount collected the same, it would **reduce the annual tax on a \$500,000 property by just \$10.00.**

These are the numbers for today. But we think it’s important to recognize that conservation has a tangible value to the community. It comes in the form of ecosystem services—clean air and water; moderation of climate; timeless refuge. These, nature gives us for free . . . if we conserve it.

FOR ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL DETAILS, VISIT
WWW.SJCLANDBANK.ORG/ABOUT/FINANCIAL-INFORMATION

2022 REAL ESTATE
EXCISE TAX (REET)

\$5.0 M

TAXABLE VALUE OF
LAND BANK PROPERTY

.4%



TOTAL TAXABLE
VALUE IN COUNTY¹

\$12,490,694,086



\$2,930

AVG. TAX ON
\$500,000 PROPERTY

TAX SAVINGS² OF

\$10

**TRIVIA QUIZ: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF LAND BANK 2022 REET
REVENUE CAME FROM SALES EXCEEDING \$1 MILLION?**

A) 50%

B) 70%

C) 22%



SCAN
FOR ANSWER

¹ SJIC Assessor / 2022 Tax Year
Statement of Assessments

² \$2.00 per \$100,000 in value, adjusting the
tax rate to yield the same total tax figure.

TRIVIA QUIZ: HOW MANY ACRES DOES THE LAND BANK LEASE TO FARMERS?

A) 200

B) 400

C) 325

1852 total volunteer hours in 2022, including time contributed by our all-volunteer Commissioners



1700 trees and shrubs (approximately) planted along riparian and restoration areas across all preserves



50 hunters contacted for hunting permits on Lopez Island



10 farms participated in making hay and 15 farms purchased hay at Zylstra Lake Preserve's informal hay school on San Juan Island



52 Coastal cutthroat trout spotted in annual fish seine on Cascade Creek on Orcas Island



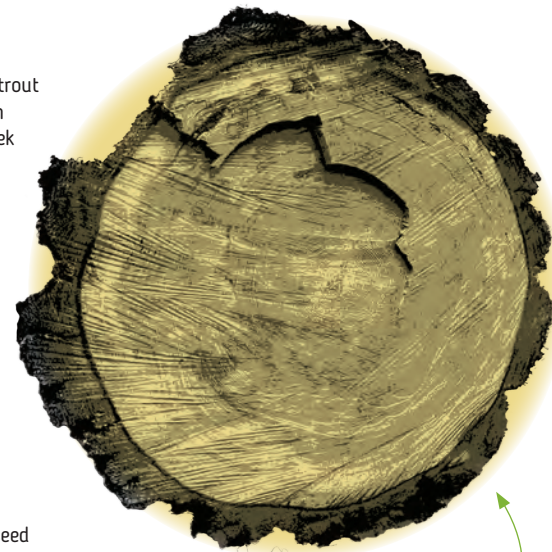
10,000 plugs seeded at the Salish Seed Nursery and 1,200 potted plants, bulbs and seed packets are ready and waiting for new homes



10 lbs of native seed spread in the burn scars of 199 burn piles on Turtleback Mountain Preserve on Orcas Island



1 fallen Doug fir tree at Mount Grant measured 43" diameter at 30 feet from the base with a preliminary ring count of 440 years!



696 hours of Youth Conservation Corp stewardship on Land Bank properties on San Juan and Orcas Islands



7 Whimbrels visited the Tombolo on Lopez Island



SCAN FOR ANSWERS



TRIVIA QUIZ: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF 2022 LAND BANK STEWARDSHIP DOLLARS STAYED LOCAL?

A) 25%

B) 50%

C) 70%



350 Court Street, No. 6
Friday Harbor,
Washington 98250



(360) 378-4402
sjclandbank@sjclandbank.org



Commissioners 2022

- Miles Becker, District 3, position 3
Christa Campbell, at large, position 7, Vice-Chair
Sandi Friel, District 2, position 2, Chair
David Meland, at large, position 6
Jim Skoog, District 1, position 1
Mike Pickett, at large, position 5, Finance Officer
Brian Wiese, at large, position 4

Staff

- Lincoln Bormann, Director
Shauna Barrows, Field Assistant
Charlie Behnke, Agricultural Program Coordinator & Field Steward
Sara DeRoy, Seasonal Field Assistant
Margo Thorp, San Juan Island Seasonal Nursery Assistant
Mary Gropp, Seasonal Field Assistant
Peter Guillozet, Orcas Island Preserve Steward
Eliza Habegger, Land Steward
Erin Halcomb, Stewardship Coordinator
Andrew Jansen, Field Assistant
Doug McCutchen, San Juan Island Preserve Steward
Aaron Rock, Office Manager/Fiscal Clerk
Amanda Wedow, Lopez Island Preserve Steward
Jacob Wagner, Field Assistant
Tanja Williamson, Outreach/Volunteer Coordinator

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 699

ECRWSSDDM
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Photos contributed by staff and volunteers unless otherwise noted.
Printed on 30% post-consumer waste stock.