
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2023

OVERVIEW

A display of weather, complete with lightning strikes and thunderclaps, recently resounded across the archipelago and delivered some much-welcomed moisture (Photo 1). Now, the woods are quieter; there's less crackling among the fallen leaves. But there's still some danger present as yellowjackets seem more abundant than apples in an orchard right now. They've been seen wrestling with other invertebrates across trails and, unseen, and leaving behind a litany of swollen hands (Photo 2-4).

Annual monitoring of conservation easements is underway (Photo 5). To date, landowners have expressed interest in forest health and hunting programs, and as a follow-up are provided with information about state resources such as cost-share funding (DNR) and permit applications (WDFW). The Terrestrial Managers Group (TMG) reconvened after their summer hiatus and partner announcements included the hiring of a new State Parks Area Manager, the formation of the next cohort of Island Conservation Corps members, and the release of the County's Sustainable Destination Management Plan (SDMP). The SDMP can be viewed on the [Engage San Juan County project page](#), and community members are encouraged to [submit feedback](#) by the end of October.

Grant applications for the License Plate Stewardship Fund are open until mid-October. Last year, specialty plate sales -- which was a TMG collaborative project -- accrued \$45,000 which was then distributed to seven local nonprofits to promote stewardship. Funds available for this cycle are not yet available, but there are a lot of plates around the isles!

Lastly, Sarah De Roy concluded her second season as the Lopez Island Field Assistant. Conservation Land Bank (CLB) staff and volunteers, as well as preserve users, appreciate her hard work and wish her the best on her next endeavor!

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Tanja considers the 2023 Green Village at the County Fair as the best one yet! It was complimented this year by a partnership with WSU Extension's Ag Program, and this created a wide variety of educational talks, food demonstrations and kid activities. Several staff and Commissioners helped to host the booth over the course of the four-day event, and all the support was much appreciated (Photo 6)! Post-fair activities have entailed responding to hunting inquires and providing subsequent letter(s) of permission and preparing for the fall newsletter as well as several upcoming events. The online annual Fall Native Wildflower Sale goes "live" September 12th, and a guide to the sale is available [HERE](#). Volunteer days are in-the-works for Orcas, and a community celebration of the new, north forest trail at Lopez's Spencer Spit Preserve will be held on September 23rd for [National Public Lands Day](#).

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Staff is concentrating on processing and cleaning seed harvested from the nursery, so that it's ready in time for sowing at restoration sites this fall. The online sale (9/12) will be followed by pickup locations on no less than five islands on September 30th. Eliza received a golden paintbrush commemorative coin from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in appreciation of her efforts to restore this rare species, which was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1997 and delisted last month due to recovery successes.

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: A small fire (100 feet by 6 feet) was located nearly two weeks after the big storm! Embers persisted despite the rainfall and the lightning struck fir smoldered until it kicked up enough smoke to catch attention (Photo 7).

Cady Mountain: Plans for developing a new trailhead and parking area continue.

Kellett Bluff: Doug hosted [WhiteSwan Environmental](#) and several other partners on the Preserve.

Mount Grant: The new parking lot is complete! Please spread the word for people to park there. Staff are utilizing trees that were cleared for the parking area and milling the lumber to use for other projects on site such as kiosks and a new bathroom and note that it feels incredible to retain the wood from the beautiful trees (Photo 8). Archery hunting is now open in the west basin, and the CLB has partnered with the SJPT to extend hunting access onto a portion of their Sugarloaf Preserve.

Zylstra Lake: Staff continue to monitor water levels and water quality and are keeping watch for cyanobacteria blooms as the warm season ends. Canada geese are returning in huge flocks.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Mary Gropp

Crescent Beach: It's been a busy summer on this Preserve for the downsides of developing public access areas: illegal overnight parking and camping. Most of this activity has been at the Mount Baker Road and the easternmost Crescent Beach Road parking lots, and staff have worked closely with the Sheriff to resolve it. Peter and Erin are exploring potential grant funding for forest thinning in 2024. A forthcoming update to the Stewardship and Management Plan, informed by a recent forest assessment, will outline the proposed work.

North Shore: Clean-up continues (Photos 9-10). Scrap metal, wood and, most recently, tires require ongoing trips to the dump. Usable building materials are being salvaged -- chimney bricks, windows, interior doors and some fixtures – and most materials will go to the Orcas Island Exchange. The contract for building demolition and road stabilization is in review, and the tentative start date is September 25th.

Turtleback Mountain: Staff selected a contractor to decommission a segment of the south slope trail, and this contract is also in review. If all goes as planned, the work will also begin in late September and occur in conjunction with improvements to the Morning Ridge trail by the Washington Trails Association (Photo 11). Peter recently offered two evening tours for anyone interested in touring and talking about the upcoming work. After completion, staff will work to restore the ground disturbance and spread seed and plugs produced by the Salish Seeds Project.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sarah DeRoy

Lopez Hill: The annual Lopez Walkabout, a cross-island hike hosted by the community trails network (LCTN) occurred at the end of August. Lopez Hill is one of many properties that hikers pass through. Hunting season has started. Staff installed hunting information at the various trailheads and provided orange vests for trail users.

Spencer Spit: Preserve information is up on the website, a trail map was produced by Partners in Design, and a trail counter was installed to collect visitor use data. Staff are spreading the word for the upcoming celebration on National Public Lands Day (9/23).

Watmough: The recent tour had poor public attendance, perhaps because it occurred during the tail end of the thunderstorms. But Commissioner Brian Wiese braved the weather and joined for a tour of the property with board members of the Lopez Island Historical Society. Conservation easement monitoring in the vicinity was completed. A well-attended community meeting was held and provided the opportunity for the public to share their thoughts about future management of the Addition.

Weeks Wetland: Staff and volunteers replaced old, rotten boardwalk decking (Photo 12).

PHOTOS



Photo 1. Pacific banana slug (*Ariolimax columbianus*) ‘enjoying’ the late summer moisture on Orcas.

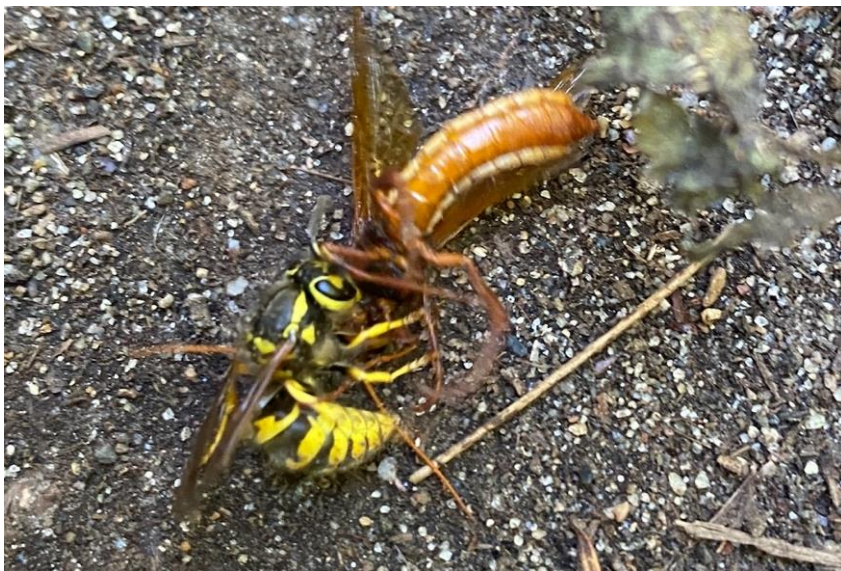


Photo 2: A battle between winged beasts was carefully avoided during a CE visit.



Photos 3-4 . Sara De Roy is one among the many that felt the sting this summer, and wrapped up her second season with the CLB with some paw-sized hands!



Photo 5. Scenic views from a conservation easement property, south Lopez



Photo 6. A scene from the 2023 CLB Fair Booth



Photo 7. A small ground fire became visible nearly two weeks after the lightning storm, at Beaverton Marsh Preserve.



Photo 8. Gabe and volunteer Steve cut rough-sawn lumber at Mount Grant.



Photo 9. OPALCO removes a transformer that is no longer needed, on North Shore Preserve.



Photo 10. Solar panels removed from the main North Shore house in storage for future use.



Photo 11. Steve Gropp of Salamander Forge provides additional matching benches for installation following the planned trail improvements on Turtleback Mountain.

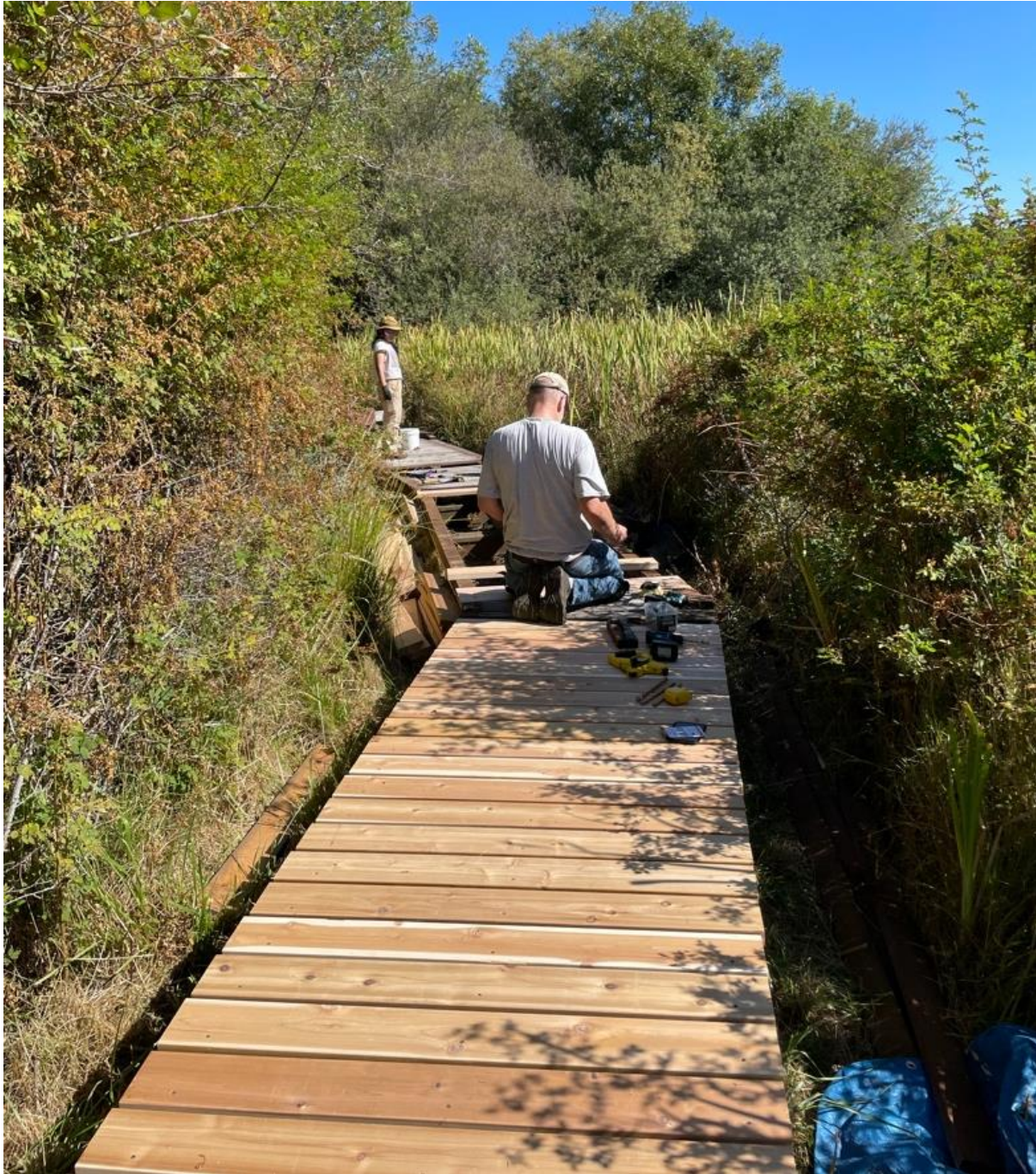


Photo 12. Sara and volunteer Steve Snowden work together to replace old boards at Weeks Wetland.