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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

FEBRUARY 2024

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### **OVERVIEW**

In between planting trees and shrubs and clearing windthrow from trails (and then planting more trees and shrubs), staff have exchanged their latest sights and sensations. There's a litany: the croak of tree frogs, the thrum of a bumblebee queen, the open bloom of a red-flowering currant, and the wriggle of both a garter and a short-tailed snake (Photos 1-3). They've also been making lots of plans. A draft schedule for this year's stewardship and management plans (SMP) was created, and by all admissions, it is ambitious. Still, on the horizon are openings for several high-profile and ecologically-significant preserves including, Cady Mountain, North Shore, and Watmough Head. The draft schedule for 2024 SMPs and public meetings is included with this month's meeting materials. Staff also continue to work on outreach with Native Nations. Peter has initiated conversations with Samish Department of Natural Resources about extending the partnership beyond the current LSR site, and Doug is scheduling meetings with contacts from several Tribes to explore grant partnerships and stewardship work. The [Stewardship Network](#) has an established Tribal Engagement subcommittee, with an existing charter, and several sub-working groups. Recently, a co-stewardship sub-group was devised and anticipates focusing on improving coordination and relationships, streamlining efforts, and providing opportunities for education of local agencies.

### **OUTREACH**

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Tanja continues to keep busy entering events into the calendar and promoting them, as well as brainstorming events with partner organizations county-wide. [Click here to view the calendar](#). Tanja has also been supporting the strategic planning efforts, working on the 2023 annual report, and reviewing the website for future updates. Charlie and other staff participated in the annual Farmer Rancher Listening Sessions that are organized by the Ag Resource Committee on occur on Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan. The Land Bank also continues to sponsor the [Annual Agricultural Summit](#) which is coming up on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Several staff and Commissioners will participate in workshops and host an information table at the conference.

## **SALISH SEEDS NURSERY**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

We've already begun to taking orders for plugs (small container plants) for the Fall and filling a few small orders for seed. The big freeze may have injured some of our plants that overwinter in containers at the nursery. We'll find out for sure in the weeks ahead. Despite the hard freeze, the recent spell of warm weather has some of our most-hardy, overwintered seed starting to germinate (Photo 4).

## **DISTRICT 1**

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

**American Camp Trail:** Annual monitoring was recently completed on a beautiful sunny day.

**Beaverton Marsh:** Winter storms downed numerous trees and branches. Thom Pence assisted in clean up. Charlie continues to field questions about the agricultural lease's [Request For Proposals](#). The deadline is at the end of the month. A review committee, comprised of Land Bank staff and Commissioners, is being assembled. Materials to replace perimeter fences are also being gather. The wells are being tested for contaminants, with none expected, and the solar water system is staged for installation. The permit from the Town of Friday Harbor for trail construction at Linde Park is anticipated by the end of month. Work continues on the management plan, and Doug will provide a project update to Town Council on March 7th.

**Cady Mountain:** Field work for the cultural resource assessment is complete. A bottle cache was investigated and determined to date to the early 1940s. It was documented and given a determination of "non-significance." Shauna met with neighbors who are interested in oak restoration and are excited to work collaboratively across boundary. Windthrow from winter storms was reported within recent oak restoration areas.

**Driggs Park:** Frog Song Landscaping has begun the process of converting a portion of the front lawn to beds, which we'll plant with native shrubs and perennials this fall (Photo 5).

**False Bay Creek:** The warmer temps and heavy rains filled the fields and wetlands with freshwater, but not enough to overtop Bailer Hill Rd (this time). The waterfowl seem to have ample standing water. Staff from the Land Bank and Conservation District are making progress on an Individual Stewardship Plan that will provide considerations for future agricultural

activities. Surveys were conducted, including wetland delineations, and markers have been placed around the Preserve to define the future expansion of Bailer Hill Road.

**Frazer Homestead:** Charlie continues to field questions about the agricultural lease, as the [RFP](#) deadline is at the end of the month. A lease proposal review committee is being assembled.

**King Sisters:** Overwintering cattle and sheep have been haybale grazing around the Preserve's higher and dryer areas. Cattle will soon be restricted from these areas to allow for regrowth and overseeding with additional forage species. Charlie is working with lessee Rob Waldron to renew his lease. The hedgerow along the trail was recently brushed.

**Limekiln:** Graffiti was discovered near one of the quarries around the same time as National Park staff at American Camp discovered graffiti and a broken window. Staff were notified by a friendly trail user that the reservoir at Lime Kiln appeared higher than usual, and after a visit to the site, staff concurred. It was determined that the lake's outfall was clogged – the cause has yet to be identified -- and water levels were dropped by utilizing the backup valve. Winter weather downed numerous trees and limbs along trails, including “widow makers,” which Shauna and Jacob were able to clear with some creative rigging.

**Mount Grant:** A couple of trails were reshaped after heavy runoff caused drainage issues.

**Third Lagoon:** An abandoned vehicle has been periodically parked overnight, and the sheriff was notified. We report annually on a precocious red flowering currant from this preserve as it is consistently one of the earliest known bloomers, which emerged the last week of January.

**Zylstra Lake:** Volunteers from Trails Committee assisted with winter storm cleanup!

## **DISTRICT 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

**Coffelt Farm:** It's baby season on the farm, and the first goat kids and lambs are appearing. The Lums have recently made upgrades such as dairy improvements, an egg-cleaning facility, and other general organization. Fencing projects are also being prioritized and planned. The Lums will give a farm tour (for registered attendees only) during the Ag Summit on Friday March 8<sup>th</sup>

and Land Bank staff will be present. Recent repairs and maintenance of the water system were performed by Coldspring Pumps, Inc.

**Coho Preserve:** Staff will join with a few volunteers to plant some native trees and shrubs along the boundary with Artworks Gallery. The plants are intended to raise awareness about the Preserve's boundary and the importance of buffering critical areas from adjacent development. Sitka spruce trees and skunk cabbage plugs will enhance the adjacent wetlands.

**Crescent Beach:** A draft Stewardship and Management Plan is out for staff review. It will go to the Commission next and then out for public comment. We anticipate holding a public meeting in March to discuss the proposed forest management work and other elements of the plan.

**Judd Cove:** Planning and permitting for the grant-funded shoreline restoration project continues. Staff are cautiously optimistic about implementing the habitat enhancements this summer. Mary Gropp has a new role with the Orcas Island School District, and she plans to bring an elementary class to the preserve on March 6 and March 13. Youth will learn about the history of land uses in the area, including the Lime Kiln.

**North Shore:** For the past two weeks, there's been a pulse of habitat enhancement projects on site and an estimated 11,000 new trees and shrubs are now in the ground. Many, many hands have helped to (almost!) complete these restoration projects including the Island Conservation Corps (ICC), the hard-working crew with Blackcap Restoration, and dozens of hearty volunteers (Photos 7-8). The large effort was planned and approved in the [Interim Management Plan](#), and involves planting shoreline areas where buildings were removed as well as an upland field full of nonnative grasses and thistles. Most of the plants are within the newly fenced-in field to protect them from deer browse. No fencing was installed along the shoreline, and though some damage is anticipated, these areas were planted predominantly with browse-tolerant shrubs. Both the Land Bank and Orcas Island Fire & Rescue issued [press releases](#) announcing plans for a fire training exercise on February 24<sup>th</sup>. We're hoping the weather conditions are perfect to pull it off.

A slide has developed along a portion of the bluff above the beach road, following recent snow and rain events. The Land Bank's geotechnical consultant warned of additional slides in this area. Repairs will be pursued next summer, and staff are considering various ways to infiltrate or divert winter runoff. The property is very wet, and instability along the bluff is exacerbated by multiple pipes, installed by previous owners, to drain the wetlands. Volunteers

Mary Gropp and Laurie St. Aubin are making a variety of nest structures for the future preserve (Photo 9). Peter is coordinating with SJPT on their plans to hold a summer social event on site and ensuring that it doesn't conflict with other efforts that are planned but not assigned a calendar date, such as the final building demolition, grading, and parking lot construction. The automated gate is working well and the adjacent neighbor, who uses it to access their property through a driveway easement, gave it a thumbs UP (Photo 10).

Lastly, the Preserve needs an approved, formal name that can adorn signs and more. Staff reviewed the Naming Policy and drafted a proposal that North Shore be finalized (Exhibit A). Discussion and approval by the Commission is expected at the February meeting.

**Turtleback Mountain:** A field crew from the Samish Indian Nation, one of our partners with the LSR project, joined Tyler and the ICC crew in forest thinning and pile building. We're also preparing to ease up on thinning -- prior to the start of nesting season -- and transition into weed management. A second-year ICC member, Maggie Long is conducting her graduate research on the pile burning process to establish baseline data and measure charcoal yields. Staff installed several new signs related to recent trail changes, and the first of several commercial grade 'Rambler' bicycle racks at the South Entrance (Photo 11). Additional racks will go in at the North Entrance and at other Orcas preserves.

### **DISTRICT 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow

**Channel:** Amanda performed general maintenance including filling potholes and cleaning up debris from the recent storms.

**FB Spit:** Commissioners Peggy Bill and Tim Clark helped to protect the habitat enhancement project by surrounding existing plantings with wire cages to prevent rabbit browse. And even more plugs were planted.

**Hummel Lake:** Shauna joined Amanda on Lopez and helped with storm clean-up and general trail maintenance.

**Lopez Hill:** Shauna and Amanda teamed-up to clear a tangle of fallen trees at the trailhead (Photo 12).

**Richardson Marsh:** The draft Stewardship and Management Plan is under review by staff, Commissioners, and partners at SJPT. Many have already provided thoughtful comments, and revisions are being incorporated. The draft plan will soon be released for a 30-day public comment period. Amanda partnered with the Lopez Library and Beth St. George to lead a bird walk. The event was well attended by people and ducks.

**Upright Head:** The Youth Conservation Corps planted over 400 plugs of wildflowers and grasses at the trailhead (Photo 13).

**Watmough Bay:** Monthly work parties kicked-off with clearing out the “overgrown orchard.” The group of volunteers helped to cut blackberry canes, which were then loaded into the trailer and brought to the compost facility (Photo 14). The scoping meeting is moved to March 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### Photos



Photo 1. A Red Flowering Currant at Third Lagoon; this is always the first plant SJI staff see in bloom.





Photo 2. A Sharptailed snake encountered on the southside of Turtleback Mountain.



Photo 3. A Garter snake basks in the sun at Deadman's Bay Preserve





Photo 4. *Lomatium nudicaule*, barestem lomatium, or q'exmin seeds are germinating after overwintering outdoors.



Photo 5. Future native plant beds at the Driggs Park front yard.





Photo 6. The 13,600 bare root trees and shrubs that were happy to have found new ground at North Shore.



Photo 7. Hearty (and hardy) volunteers take a break from planting at North Shore.





Photo 8. Barn swallow nest cups made by volunteer Laurie St. Aubin for the future North Shore nesting structure.



Photo 9. Automated gate at North Shore





Photo 10. The new commercial grade bicycle rack at Turtleback Mountain.



Photo 11. Inter-island teamwork at Hummel Lake and Lopez Hill





Photo 12. Lopez YCC plants over 400 plugs at Upright Head



Photo 13. Volunteers successfully clear blackberries from the overgrown orchard at Watmough Head.

**EXHIBIT A**

**Preserve Name Proposal - North Shore property, Orcas Island**

| <b>Preserve Name Review Worksheet</b>   | <b>Score</b> | <b>Notes (optional)</b> |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|
| <b>1. Name Origin or Source (3 Points Possible)</b>   |              |                         |
| The proposed name, “North Shore Preserve” originated with staff shortly after acquisition as an interim name. This name is generally descriptive of the location and is not in use for other properties. The SJPT previously had a property with this name but changed it recently.   | 2            |                         |
| <b>2. Compatibility with Preserve Naming Policy criteria and Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion goals (3 Points Possible)</b>   |              |                         |
| This name meets the criteria outlined in the Land Bank’s Preserve Naming Policy. It is not linked to previous owners or donors and is unlikely to be offensive or to generate significant opposition.   | 2            |                         |
| <b>3. Community Support (3 Points Possible)</b>   |              |                         |
| The Land Bank’s multiple public communications since acquiring the property in 2022 have described it as the North Shore property or the former Glenwood Inn property. “North Shore property” has been used repeatedly by staff over the last year and a half to describe the property to members of the public during tours as well as in many discussions about the future of the property. There appears to be public support for the name and a lack of opposition. | 3            |                         |
| <b>4. Proposal Quality (1 Point Possible)</b>   |              |                         |
| Due to the decision to propose that the interim name become permanent, it seemed unnecessary to draft a separate naming proposal.   | 0            |                         |
|   | <b>7</b>     | <b>10 Points Total</b>  |