

## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

### APRIL 2024

#### **Overview**

The sense of awe comes so easy in April! Staff have stopped and stooped among the many displays of Spring -- the song of sparrows, the ever-growing array of petals, the spire of edible mushrooms – in between building trails, removing weeds, and prepping grants and management plans (Photo 1). Stewardship staff at the Conservation Land Bank is also expanding with the season. We welcome the return of Margo Thorpe for her fourth consecutive year at the Salish Seed nursery, and Cedar Charnley, as a new Lopez field assistant.

#### **Outreach**

Staff: Tanja Williamson

The spring newsletter dropped mid-month, and Tanja has since returned to editing content and design for the annual report. She recently hosted a booth at the San Juan Island Farmer's Market in recognition of Native Plant Appreciation Month alongside staff from the County's Noxious Weed Board, and many more outreach events are on the horizon. (Be sure to check the website's calendar!) Land Bank staff will participate in the county-wide [Great Islands Clean Up – Planet vs Plastics – on April 20](#) and host beach and roadside cleanups at Deadman's Bay, Crescent Beach, and Fisherman Bay Spit. Orcas Commissioners will also host a table at an Eco Fair [Earth Day Celebration](#). On Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, Eliza will provide a tour of Salish Seeds Project nursery. The following week, on April 27<sup>th</sup>, Shauna will lead a Know Your Island Walk with the SJI Trails Committee. Tours and work parties have also resumed at North Shore and Watmough Head preserves. (And between all the typing and tabling, Tanja escaped for five days in March to a much warmer island.)

#### **Salish Seeds Project**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

The Salish Seeds Project nursery shifted into high gear this month with Margo's return. This is her fourth consecutive year as the seasonal, part-time nursery assistant, and she's become an expert in producing native plants and seeds. We're grateful for her return especially as the nursery is again setting records: There are more requests this year for plugs, or small container plants, than ever before and the schedule for sowing plugs is an ambitious 2,500 containers per week through mid-June. Questions from the public about how to select and care for native plants is also on the rise. To help address this hunger for knowledge and reduce pressure on staff, we're developing a 16-page illustrated guide to growing local, native species in the San Juans.

## **District 1**

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

**Beaverton Marsh:** The development of a long-term management plan has been delayed due to springtime logistics, planning, and other emergent issues. Contractors and volunteers are scheduled to resume trail construction in June and the goal is to open the new trail in late July.

**Cady Mountain:** Members of the Island Conservation Corps (ICC) joined a ‘volunteer vacation’ crew from The American Hiking Society (AHS) to spend four days re-routing a section of trail (Photo 1). AHS crew members traveled from Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Oregon, and the Oregonian even wrote a [blog post](#) about her experience! Staff plan to host more volunteer trail-building opportunities including a workshop on design, construction, and maintenance. The development of this preserve’s long-term management plan is delayed, and the permit process for constructing a trailhead with a parking area has hit several small setbacks. Still, staff anticipate holding an official opening on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Driggs Park:** The lawn-to-meadow project near the front entrance of the office is springing to life, and its variety of blooms provide a spectrum of colors as well as sustenance for tiny-winged beings (Photo 2). Interpretive signage is being designed to help convey the benefits of converting lawns into native plant habitats for both pollinators and people.

**Limekiln:** Biologists with WA Department of Fish and Wildlife returned to perform another survey for Northern Pike. A total of 13 fish were captured over the course of three days and included a female that was believed to have recently spawned. Additional sampling will occur later in the summer and help inform a plan for control.

**Middlewood:** Field mustard, the host plant for the island marble butterfly, was sowed within the habitat plot, and staff intend to install more protective deer fencing later this month. In 2023, the habitat created at this preserve attracted at least one island marble butterfly, so we’re excited to see what the new season brings.

**Mount Grant:** The ICC helped to install deer fencing around the LSR site to further protect the understory from browse. Staff met with Kai Hoffman-Krull from the Conservation District to initiate on-the-ground planning for a “micro-burn” prescribed fire grant that the Conservation District secured from WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The grant will fund several small, approximately 1,000 square-foot burns and vegetative response will be monitored. In addition to the Conservation District and DNR, the Tulalip Tribes Dept of Natural Resources is a partner in this project. A tour of the project area was recently held and another one is scheduled for Sunday, August 21<sup>st</sup> (Photos 4-6).

**Zylstra Lake:** Full access to the loop trail re-opened this month. Anglers are reporting a slow start to fishing season. Maintenance of the island marble butterfly habitat plots was completed along with field mustard sowing.

## **District 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

**Coffelt Farm Preserve:** It's been relatively quiet on the Preserve, aside from the bleating of the Lum's newborn lambs. In the next few months, new field fencing will be erected along Crow Valley Road and separate the pasture from a future boundary trail corridor.

**Coho Preserve:** Tyler is planning trail improvements for this summer which will include replacing of the rotting stairs with new ones made from locally milled cedar. An interpretive walk is also being planned for May 22<sup>nd</sup> during the Gathering of the Eagles canoe journey.

**Crescent Beach:** The updated management plan was refined following input from Land Bank staff and Commission, and it is scheduled to be released for a 30-day public comment later this month.

**Fowler's Pond:** Peter and Tyler rebuilt the rickety wooden dock. They also installed heavy steel mesh to prevent the beaver from plugging the dam's outlet, and although it's too early to tell, it appears to be working.

**Judd Cove:** Peter met with consultants, and the adjacent property owners, to review plans to restore the lower end of the creek. The project is a welcome cross-boundary collaboration with the neighbors as the previous owners were opposed to having the creek's outlet on their property even though it is the lowest point in the landscape and the stream's natural location prior to being buried.

**North Shore:** Staff continue to work on permitting and general clean-up, and to support the partnership efforts of the San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT). They recently met with SJPT staff to review details of the conservation easement and to make plans for a festive Summer Social gathering. Now that the new roost is ready, anticipation is high for the return of barn swallows (Photo 7).

**Stonebridge-Terrill:** The County Sheriff provided prompt support to staff and engaged with a person that was attempting to camp-out on the Preserve. This same individual had previously camped at Crescent Beach Preserve the week before.

**Turtleback Mountain:** The Turtleback March was a great success. And while staff was out trekking around for oak planting sites, a fungal beauty was found (Photos 1 and 8)!

### **District 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow

**FB Spit:** Annual treatment of Italian arum has resumed, and a variety of control methods are being utilized. The field portion of the Preserve with Italian arum is mowed and in smaller, select patches the bulbs are dug out, bagged up, and disposed of. This method has been fairly successful but requires revisiting the area to ensure that all bulbs are removed. Beth St. George with the Lopez Library led a “Walking Bookclub” group and facilitated a discussion focused on invasive weeds.

**Hummel Lake:** Staff performed general maintenance, including brushing vegetation along the trail corridor and mowing.

**Lopez Hill:** Discussion continues with the Lopez Community Land Trust and the lessee about how to revise the trail easement and connect the new trail to the north, across private property and over to School Road/Lopez Sound Road. Milled lumber was purchased for the construction of seasonal stream crossings.

**Richardson Marsh:** Five comments were received during the 30-day public comment period on the draft Stewardship Management Plan. A summary of the comments and staff responses will be provided in the meeting materials.

**Spencer Spit:** The Lopez Community Trail Network recently featured the Preserve’s forested walk as part of their “Go Take a Hike” series. However, the weather did not cooperate and there was a small turnout for the event.

**Watmough:** Approximately 23 community members attended the public scoping meeting, held on March 21<sup>st</sup>, and provided their input on the long-term management of the Preserve (Photo 9). Amanda and Erin had a follow-up meeting with Lopez Commissioners to review the comments, and a summary of the public input will be provided. The next step is to begin to outline and draft the management plan. Six volunteers attended the monthly work party. They cleaned up around the pumphouse, filled the trailer with sweetbrier rose, and removed poison hemlock. A boundary survey of the property was completed. Amanda has reviewed historic preservation grant opportunities, started mowing the lawn, and continues to cut back vinca around the house.

Photos



Photo 1. Morel mushrooms have been found across several preserves this month.



Photo 2. American Hiking Society volunteers and the ICC take a break from trail work on Cady Mountain.





Photo 3. Fawn lilies are in bloom, along with Shooting stars and Satin flowers, at Driggs Park.



Photo 4. Conservation District Manager, Paul Andersson assists the ICC crew with a deer enclosure, Mount Grant.





Photo 5. Town of Friday Harbor staff and Council, ICC and CLB staff and Commissioners visit the LSR site, Mount Grant.



Photo 6. Volunteer Elliot Burch stands in front a kiosk that he built almost entirely of trees that were removed to construct the parking area, Mount Grant.





Photo 7. Nest cups and bird boxes, handmade by volunteers Mary Gropp and Laurie St Aubin, grace the new roost for barn swallows at North Shore Preserve.



Photo 8. A mature stand of mature Black Cottonwood along the birding trail at Stonebridge Terrill Preserve.





Photo 9. Happy hikers at the start of the Turtleback March.



Photo 10. The scoping meeting for Watmough Preserve generated many thoughtful comments.