
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

MARCH 2024

OVERVIEW

Conservation-minded volunteers, of all ages, supported birds and butterflies across Land Bank preserves this past month. Their efforts entailed building and installing nest boxes, raking, seeding, and planting wildflowers, trees and shrubs (Photos 1-2). Volunteers with Orcas Island Fire and Rescue (OIF&R) also invested hundreds of hours of community service and honed their emergency service skills at North Shore Preserve (Photo 3). These various projects highlight how preserves support the local community in their varied interests, from enhancing biodiversity to caring for islanders during critical events. But not all opportunities at the Land Bank are solely for volunteers: We're now [accepting applications](#) for a Seasonal Field Assistant on Lopez Island!

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Since the February CLBC meeting, staff have hosted a total of eight volunteer events and tours. And there's many more on the horizon: [a series of hikes](#) on Turtleback Mountain Preserve will begin later this month with a 'Turtleback March' across the mountain. Themes for subsequent hikes (in May, July, September and November) will include birds, amphibians and reptiles, wildflowers and weeds, and forest management. Tanja produced and shared promotional materials for all these activities, and she is helping to organize and advertise county-wide events such as April's Great Islands Clean Up and Earth Day events are underway (Photo 4). She also met with staff from the [Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center](#) and [County Health and Community Services](#) to brainstorm activities for May's Screen-Free Week as well as a Nature Rx series. (Stay tuned! There's more to come on that!) Recent outreach on [National Invasive Species Awareness Week](#) was a collaborative effort with the County's [Noxious Weed Control Board](#) and [Washington Sea Grant Crab Team](#). The effort included educational articles authored by the Noxious Weed Board and WSG Crab Team ([click here](#) to scroll through) and

culminated in a shared informational booth at the SJI Farmers Market (3/2) which highlighted efforts made in the area by the Land Bank, the Noxious Weed Board, and WSG Crab Team.

This year's first quarter newsletter is being developed as is the 2023 Annual Report. Several Land Bank staff and commissioners also participated in the annual Agricultural Summit on Orcas Island. Staff set up a Land Bank table in the tradeshow. Eliza presented at a session focused on incorporating and managing native prairie plant species within working pasturelands. Shauna and Charlie teamed up on a lightning presentation about utilizing basalt dust for carbon sequestration and soil health, and Peter joined the Lum Farm's tour at Coffelt Farm.

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger

We're gearing up for the growing season. Part-time, seasonal Nursery Assistant Margo Thorp will return for a fourth season on April 1st. We're grateful to have her again as she continues to amass skill and knowledge about native plant production. We've stopped taking special orders for plugs and potted plants for this year, since so many have come in that the nursery is going to be bursting at the seams.

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: Doug provided an update to the Town Council on the Linde Park connector trail project. He also provided a brief overview on other SJI projects. The Town Council expressed an interest in a site tour of the Landscape Scale Restoration project at Mount Grant which abuts the Town's watershed. Staff were informed that permits for the Linde Park project will be issued within two weeks. Doug is working with consultants on signage designs. The Island Conservation Corps (ICC) assisted with planting native shrubs and trees and helped to further control noxious weeds (Photo 5). Two proposals to lease the designated agricultural use area were received and are currently being evaluated by the review committee. The committee aims to have a lessee recommendation by the April CLBC meeting (4/19).

Cady Mountain: Several professional assessments have been helping to inform future management. There are both rare habitats and species that definitely merit special consideration as well as two historic sites -- a collection of bottles and other household items from the 1940s

and some steam tanks likely associated with logging activities -- that were documented but not deemed significant. The Cultural Resource Assessment also documented seven culturally modified trees; none of these are directly in the proposed trail corridor or likely to be impacted. Doug met with Public Works to discuss the proposed trailhead on Three Corner Lake Road. The ICC assisted with establishing a planting strip at the former home site, re-routing a muddy section of existing trail, and brushing corridors for future trails. An American Hiking Society “Volunteer Vacation” crew will arrive soon to begin construction of new trail segments.

Frazer Homestead: Two agricultural lease proposals were received and are being evaluated by the review committee. The committee also aims to have a recommendation prepared by the April CLBC meeting (4/19).

Limekiln: The Northern Pike discovered in the pond adjacent to Westside Road by a local teenager sure heightened Tanja’s outreach on invasive species awareness! These aggressive predators threaten native salmonids, and their presence generated a rapid response from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Gillnets were deployed in the pond and a total of eleven pike, including several pregnant females, were captured. WDFW will follow-up to discuss their preferred options for control and share the results of their Environmental DNA – a method of identifying both native and nonnative species in water bodies – samples. Doug joined WDFW on site. He conducted some maintenance of the dam, which has become plugged, and surveyed for popcorn flower (*mellica oregana*), a rare plant once located on the slopes above the pond. The plant population at Limekiln was one of only three known locations in the State and it has not been successfully relocated for fourteen years. Doug was unable to relocate the plant and will consult with Public Works about assistance with the dam repair (Photos 6-7).

Middlewood: Adjacent neighbors inquired about the potential to modify their well easement, which is located on the Preserve. The neighbors operate an outdoor preschool which requires a “Class B” well and stringent water quality monitoring. Staff are reviewing the request.

Mount Grant: A volunteer helping to close the gate reported running over a rock that caused damage to the vehicle while driving on the easement road on the neighbor’s property. The neighbors responded and the Sheriff was called. The deputy who responded called for a tow truck and left after determining it was a no-fault accident. The volunteer reported then being verbally confronted by the neighbors, causing distress and concern over safety. A police report

was filed the following day. Permitting for a small restroom facility continues to encounter hurdles. We remain optimistic that construction will move forward this summer.

Zylstra Lake: WDFW staff conducted a site visit, after gillnetting at Limekiln, and expressed interest in the large woody debris project and returning to conduct a fisheries assessment for species and health. Environmental DNA samples were taken from both reservoirs to test for the potential presence of Northern Pike. At the request of Land Bank staff, WDFW will also try to have the samples tested for presence of salmonid species. Staff have received several complaints about dogs at Zylstra Lake, which is closed to canines this time of year. Reports include off-leash dogs (and owners) in the seasonal closure areas, large groups (upwards of seven dogs), and two occasions of minor aggressive behavior. Improved signage and additional staff monitoring is in-the-works.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

Coffelt Farm Preserve: Peter joined a tour of the farm as part of the Ag Summit.

Coho Preserve: Erin, Tyler and Peter were joined by volunteer Jerry Weatherman to plant native trees and shrubs along the boundary with Artworks Gallery. Plants included shrubs such snowberry and Nootka rose and trees such as alder and Sitka spruce. We also installed plants along the trail near the entrance and skunk cabbage plugs in the adjacent wetlands.

Crescent Beach: A draft Stewardship and Management Plan is out for Commission review and will and soon be posted for public comment. We anticipate holding a public meeting in April 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. As part of their Outdoor Experience Program, Mary Gropp and Carolyn Caruso brought elementary students from the Orcas Island School District to learn about: the history of lime kilns, the use of forest plants for food, tools, and everyday objects by Coast Salish people, and the upcoming stream restoration project (Photo 8). Tyler joined the group and gave a brief presentation. Another class will come to the Preserve for more place-based learning next week.

North Shore: Orcas Island Fire & Rescue (OIF&R) invested hundreds of hours of training -- search, rescue, forcible entry in the building -- which culminated in the all-day live fire exercise.

OIF&R staff and volunteer firefighters, including a large number of new recruits, joined together for the effort. The event was a tremendous success. OIF&R realized significant cost savings by holding the training on island as opposed to at a mainland training facility; Land Bank staff estimate that approximately \$70,000 was saved in demolition, hauling and disposal costs; and the burn effectively eliminated all flammable materials in the structure so that only the concrete foundation remains to be removed (Photos 9-10). Plus, the view is much improved. Even as one structure was demolished, another was raised. A swallow nesting structure, complete with artificial nesting cups provided by volunteer Laurie St. Aubin, is now in place to host the return of the barn swallows that once nested in the old house. The final site design for the Preserve is complete and permit applications are under review. Peter is working with Bob Eagan of Coldspring Resources to plan and permit redevelopment of the water system. Tyler continues to lead the ongoing clean-up effort, and his keen eye for invasives recently detected a patch of Italian Arum. (Fun staff fact: Tyler studied Invasion Ecology as an undergraduate and he has *volunteered* for WDFW for nearly a decade.)

Turtleback Mountain: A second-year member with the ICC, Maggie Long, wrapped up her pile burning research project (Photo 11). Nearly 350 (former) burn piles have been planted with seed and wildflower plugs. Numerous piles were also left in place for wildlife habitat values. As part of the ongoing monitoring for sharptailed snakes Tyler and Christian Oldham with Kwiaht installed additional cover boards on the Preserve.

Fowler's Pond: Volunteers Mary and Steve Gropp constructed wood duck nesting boxes, which Mary and Tyler installed (Photo 1). Beaver activity remains high as the furred engineer continues with the ongoing effort to plug the water control structure and the creek outlet with branches and roots masses. Staff will install a 'beaver deceiver' in the coming months to help stabilize the water level in the pond and eliminate the need for weekly visits to clear the debris.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

Channel: A 'birthday club' gathered for baked goods, hot beverages, and the merry adventure of planting 400 wildflowers. Their choice of celebration helped staff finish planting the remaining flowers from the nursery and will hopefully display as a living bouquet on the land this spring.

FB Spit: Local Girl Scouts attended the recent work party for the Island marble butterfly project. Activities entailed removing tarps, raking out the old grass, and seeding the habitat plots with field mustard (Photo 2). The trail down to the beach was cleared by re-positioning numerous driftwood logs.

Richardson Marsh: The draft Stewardship and Management plan is out for public comment through the end of March. Public comments and potential revisions will be prepared and reviewed at the April CLBC meeting. Opalco cleared trees from the right of way.

Spencer Spit: The Lopez Community Trails Network hosted their first ['Go Take a Hike'](#) event of the year at Spencer Spit State Park and Preserve on Saturday, March 9th. The Network has explored other Land Bank preserves in the past such as Lopez Hill and Turtleback Mountain.

Watmough: Amanda is preparing for the public scoping meeting on Tuesday, March 19th at the Lopez Center. She has been creating several different concept maps to present including one depicting proposed public access and one detailing infrastructure – well, power, and a potential R.V. pad for a caretaker – on site.

Photos



Photo 1: Volunteer Mary Gropp installs a wood duck nest box at Fowler's Pond Preserve.



Photo 2. Members of the Girl Scouts volunteer to enhance habitat for the Island marble butterfly, FB Spit Preserve.



Photo 3. Orcas Island Fire and Rescue at pre-training meeting, North Shore Preserve.



Photo 4. Press for the upcoming Great Islands Clean Up.



Photo 5. The ICC helps to control an infestation of spurge laurel within section of Beaverton Marsh Preserve that's been dubbed as "Spurgelandia."



Photos 6 -7. Activities at Limekiln Preserve involved WDFW biologists removing eleven Northern Pike from the pond (left) and Doug attempting a full-immersion repair of water control mechanism (right).



Photo 8. Orcas Island elementary school students learn about the past, present and future of the Judd Cove Preserve.



Photos 9-10. Scenic views were improved at North Shore Preserve. The training fire at its peak (left, view to the SE) consumed everything but the concrete foundation of the dilapidated house (right, view to the NW).



Photo 11: As part of a research project, ICC members (Maggie, Nick and Sage) installed an underground temperature sensor and weighed all of the debris in the pile prior to ignition, on Turtleback Mountain Preserve.