
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

NOVEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW

There is a swell of gratitude for the community's showing of support for the Conservation Area Real Estate Excise Tax, and for our continued, collective ability to protect and enhance the local environment. Staff also share a deep sense of appreciation for all the service that Cedar Charnley and Mary Gropp, our seasonal field assistants, provided throughout the summer. They aren't often in the spotlight for their efforts, but their dependable talent was critical to the success of many projects across Orcas and Lopez.

Seasonal endeavors associated with this time of year include annual monitoring of preserves and conservation easements, and ecological enhancements like thinning, burning, and planting. Staff have kept busy this past month with all the above as well as with removing limbs and trees, downed by high winds and wet weather, from roads and trails. You can be sure that while they are out and about, staff are also admiring the abundance of freshwater and fungi, the gilded leaves of bitter cherry, maple and aspen, and the grace of trumpeter swans, and that these occurrences across Conservation Land Bank preserves are most often shared while in the company of our many, supporting partners (Photos 1-2).

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Brainstorming and planning are at the forefront this month as the winter weather creeps in and outdoor events slow. Tanja is reviewing 2024's outreach calendar in preparation for 2025 and hopes to expand the Art on Preserves and Nature Rx series to Orcas and Lopez. The Land Bank hosted its 13th Community Conversation, Ornithologist (and painter) Kim Middleton wowed a group of birders during a guided walk at Crescent Beach Preserve, and the [fall newsletter](#) dropped on Halloween (Photo 3). Tanja's attention is now on the end of year "Top 10 Highlights" email and logistics for the annual retreat in December.

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

November is a rewarding time to work at the nursery, as Land Bank staff, partner organizations, and other native plant enthusiasts pick up their special orders of plugs, bulbs and seeds. This year, plant materials from the Salish Seeds Nursery are finding homes on at least eight Land Bank preserves, including Turtleback Mt., Cady Mt., Kellett Bluff, Mt. Grant, Beaverton Marsh, North Shore, Frazer Homestead, and Watmough Bay. A major partner this year is Washington State's Department of Natural Resources. They purchased 12,000 plugs for habitat restoration at Cattle Pass on San Juan Island. You might also notice Salish Seeds plants soon at the Orcas ferry landing, a San Juan County Public Works project, or hear about their use by the San Juan Preservation Trust in restoring and creating habitat for rare species such as the island marble butterfly and golden paintbrush.

As mature plugs are picked up and leave the nursery, staff is busy filling the space with newly seeded containers, that will overwinter and germinate in very early spring. An end-of-the-year major weeding and clean-up is underway. Seed is being labelled, inventoried, and put into cold, dry storage for use in the future. We are grateful to have the assistance of an Islands Conservation Corps (ICC) intern, Ani Henry, with these tasks during the months of November and December. She's working 8 hours a week while learning about native plant propagation.

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: Charlie and SJPT Ben Hallowell discovered and retrieved an abandoned moped. Charlie continues to work with the Grange on agricultural infrastructure.

Cady Mountain: ICC members and staff continue to work on oak restoration efforts. The ICC also received professional chainsaw training and certification from outside agencies on site, which provided additional project work at no cost to the Land Bank (Photo 4).

Deadman Bay: The annual pump-out of restroom was completed.

False Bay Creek: Researchers from Yale University have initiated the implementation of an Advanced Rock Weathering pilot project. Approximately 10 tons of basalt dust was spread over one acre, and the researchers will monitor soil nutrients and carbon.

Frazer Homestead: A small herd of cattle continue to graze in the northern pastures, but they will soon be pulled off for the winter.

Kellett Bluff: For two days, staff worked alongside members of the ICC and the Samish Department of Natural Resources for two days. The workforce of approximately 22 people burned piles, and then planted native plants and seeds into the charcoal-rich burn scars. The transportation, gear, and crew logistics for so many were complex but executed seamlessly. Neighboring landowners provided use of a mooring buoy and overland access which greatly contributed to the success (Photos 5-7).

King Sisters: OPALCO completed utility work within the right-of-way and did a good job minimizing impacts to the Preserve's hedgerow.

Limekiln: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) sent a formal request for collaboration on mitigating the introduction of invasive Northern pike. The request did not detail any public process but reiterated a request to drawdown the reservoir. A response has been drafted requesting WDFW to work with staff and engage in a public process.

Mount Grant: Hunting season closed at the end of October, and at least two deer were harvested from the designated area this year. ICC assisted with prepping for burning, tidying and papering piles. The crew will also use experience burning piles as the field portion of their wildland fire certification. This training is a modification of traditional certifications and geared towards the unique needs of prescribed fire rather than fire suppression.

Zylstra Lake: Contractors recently repaired an access road, mowed difficult areas around the dams, and removed old fencing. The old, dilapidated pumphouse at the lower dam will soon be removed, as recent tests did not detect lead paint or asbestos. Pumps and other related equipment from the outbuilding will be salvaged and assessed. Natural inflow to the upper reservoir initiated the latter part of October and the reservoir was fully recharged within 10 days. The Conservation District has prepared soil and seeded approximately ¼ acre for a small pasture prairie trial. A large grand fir fell across the trail and a fence. Volunteers Shona Aitken and Ross Lockwood assisted with clearing it and enjoyed the sight of swans returning to the upper lake.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Mary Gropp

Coffelt Farm: A vehicle strayed off Orcas Road and damaged a portion of the field fencing. There were no injuries, and staff are working with the Lums to plan repairs (Photo 8).

Coho: A recent [Seattle Times article](#) detailed challenges with the sale of Rosario Resort, and as a follow-up Peter scheduled a mid-November meeting with Orcas Water Holdings, a water rights owner for Cascade Creek. This is part of the ongoing effort to utilize successful grants to secure additional flow for Cascade Creek salmonids.

Crescent Beach: Erin and local bird expert Kim Middleton led a well-attended bird walk. On the walk, they spoke about important habitat features for a variety of species and highlighted some of the changes anticipated to come in 2025 associated with the DNR-funded thinning project.

Judd Cove: Following complaints from a neighbor, Tyler installed new signage to discourage recreationalists from trespassing beyond the southern boundary to access the waterfall that empties into the cove.

North Shore: Staff continue to receive positive reviews from visitors. To date, the SMP has had one public comment in support of managed deer hunting. Wetland planting is ongoing, and various partners including the ICC crew, Blackcap Restoration, and community volunteers are helping with the effort. Recent heavy rains have filled the wetlands quicker than was expected (Photos 9-10).

Turtleback: Members of the Washington Trails Association joined for several days to refine the layout of the future south trail and to re-work an eroding section near Ship Peak. Tyler led several days of forest thinning and pile burning with help from the Samish DNR crew, Blackcap Restoration, and the ICC (Photo 11). Samantha Martin and a colleague from Ecostudies Institute joined staff in a day of blackberry management; this work is part of a small USFWS grant focused on enhancing Garry oak habitat for *Propertius duskywing* butterflies and other oak-dependent species.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Cedar Charnley

A mild fall resulted in the need to continue trail mowing at Hummel Lake, Fisherman Bay Spit and Weeks Wetland. Other site maintenance completed includes storm debris cleanup, trail brushing, and wrapping up lingering summer projects and weed work.

Channel: The access road, Meadow Lane, was graded and graveled, and annual monitoring was completed.

Lopez Hill: Hunting season closed on the Preserve at the end of October. The Land Bank had 55 inquiries for written permission to hunt this year.

Upright Head: Annual monitoring was performed here and elsewhere -- Spencer Spit, Hummel Lake, and Watmough Bay – and the gate was temporarily replaced (Photo 12).

Watmough Bay: The SMP received one comment related to tidelands and is now ready for formal CLB Commission approval. Staff continue to work with RCO on grant requirements for the headland and are preparing for several onsite projects. The contract for removal of the sport court was awarded to Lopez Sand and Gravel. This project will remove an old asphalt pad and bring in soil to restore a more natural grade. The area will be replanted during a work party on 11/22. Concurrently, staff will work on replacing the steps to the beach. Cedar will work his last remaining hours on these projects, and Erin supported a partnership effort with BLM and WDFW to promote safety during hunting season by staffing the trailhead kiosk (Photo 13).

Photos



Photo 1. The CLB holds a conservation easement on a portion of SJPT's Point Disney Preserve on Waldron Island.



Photo 2. Linnea and Erin tour a conservation easement area where DNR cost-share funds supported removal of scotch broom on the Waldron Community Land Trust.



Photo 3. Kim Middleton leads a walk and shares the importance of various habitat features for birds at Crescent Beach Preserve.



Photo 4. A black-tailed deer feasts on a windthrown willow at Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photos 5-6. The Samish DNR and ICC members burn piles at the Kellett Bluff Preserve



Photo 7. Margo joins other LB staff and Samish DNR to plant plugs from the nursery at the Kellett Bluff Preserve.



Photo 8. A vehicle crashed into the perimeter fence at Coffelt Farm Preserve.



Photo 9. New wetlands fill with freshwater in location of former inn at North Shore Preserve.



Photo 10. ICC crew members plant sedges and rushes at North Shore Preserve.



Photo 11. Tyler led several days of thinning and burning with help from the Samish DNR crew, Blackcap Restoration, and the ICC on Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 12. A temporary fix for the gate replacement at Upright Head Preserve.



Photo 13. A quiet scene, aside from Virginia rails calling in the nearby wetland reeds, at Watmough Bay Preserve.