
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

MAY 2025

Overview

The shift in weather has brought on a burst of wildflowers. Following on the heels of these ephemeral beauties, rapid growth of vegetation signaled the beginning of maintenance season.

Federal cuts have hit home with AmeriCorps cuts putting the Island Conservation Corps (ICC) program in jeopardy. The program is making adjustments to fulfill commitments through the end of the year. The program is looking at restructuring for 2026 with reduced crews, potentially reduced time, and seeking new educational opportunities for crew members. ICC has been a significant contributor to field work for the Land Bank over the last few years and this will certainly impact project work.

County Risk Manager, Joe Vlach, reached out to inquire about developing a county chainsaw training and certification program in collaboration with other departments.

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

Annual favorites were back for the month of April – the Great Islands Clean-Up and Eliza’s [Lawn Be Gone](#) workshop. Margo highlighted native plants at the Town of Friday Harbor’s Arbor Day Celebration (Photo 1). May kicked off with the opening of the Watmough Head Trail! Almost 50 visitors helped break in the trail on a gloriously sunny Saturday. Coming up, Tanja and Margo will be supporting [Screen Free Week](#) with a plant ID walk at Beaverton Marsh Preserve’s Redtail Trail, Tyler will host a guided wildflower hike on Diamond Hill Preserve on Orcas, and Tanja and Margo will host a booth at the Island Rec Children’s Festival on May 17. The County-Wide Spring [Community Conversation](#) is scheduled for May 28th!

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Our first “Third Thursday” volunteer event of the year was well-attended, with lots of weeding on the menu. Plug-seeding is the other main activity this time of year. ICC member Genevieve is giving us four hours of her time weekly for credit towards her Master’s degree.

Staff made a simple but long-deferred improvement by installing plant ID markers to make the nursery more visitor-friendly (Photo 2). Eliza will be giving a nursery tour on May 16th for a San Juan Preservation Trust event. Sun and not-too-hot temperatures have made for an amazing bloom this spring, including the roof of the nursery shed (Photo 3).

District 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: The warm sunshine has brought many enthusiastic gardeners to Overmarsh Farm Commons to begin preparing beds. A greenhouse is being built, the solar water system is up and running, and fencing projects are underway (Photos 5-6).

A significant portion of Doug's time has been working on the Beaverton Trail project. We are in the process of securing WSDOT approvals of the project. Once approved we will have access to the Federal funds and begin the process of hiring consultants. We hope to have this complete in the next four weeks.

Cady Mountain: Shauna, Jacob, and Ben Hallowell (SJPT) recently completed a two-day annual monitoring visit to the Preserve. The wildflowers were at their peak bloom (Photo 4)! Jacob met with two high school students to get them started on their community project doing trail work at the Preserve.

Staff received complaints of repeat over-night use of parking areas and along roadsides. In discussing the issue with the Sheriff's Office, they were aware of the situation and agreed to help mitigate problems.

Driggs Park: Charlie did an outstanding and efficient job in giving the office parking lot a makeover.

False Bay Creek: The Bailer Hill road widening project is underway (Photo 7). Roadside fences and hawthorne dominated hedgerows are being cleared. ICC members conducted monitoring of riparian restoration zones. They will return next month to conduct plant maintenance in collaboration with SJC Environmental Stewardship.

Frazer Homestead: Lessees will soon bring cattle to the property. Monitoring of both Island Marble butterfly plots and pasture prairie trials are underway with partner organizations.

Kellett Bluff: Land Bank staff were joined by Ben Hallowell (SJPT) and Vanessa Taylor (SJINHP) for a field trip with White Swan Environmental students (Photo 8). The students were participating in a week-long language and culture immersion camp on Johns Island and spent a day learning about the cultural and ecological history of the Kellett Bluff area.

King Sisters: Our amazing volunteer, Laura, has taken on the role of mowing the roadside trail for another summer. Thank you, Laura! Staff received reports from citizens and neighbors concerned about a dead lamb. Charlie worked with the lessee to address the situation which opened up conversations about rotational grazing and BMPS.

Limekiln: Jacob and Shauna recently cleared multiple trees that had fallen across trails near the lake. Trash dumped at a roadside pull-off was also removed.

Kwiaht was granted permission to place a bat detector near Limekiln Pond. They have detected several rare species of bats at Limekiln State Park over the last few years, and believe they are using the pond for fresh water. They have concerns about potential ramifications of WDFW's Northern pike management actions. WDFW is conducting a literature review of potential impacts in response. WDFW is planning to host a public meeting on the Northern pike issue in the coming months, details TBD. Notably, gillnetting efforts this spring produced only a single fish. WDFW will return during spring/summer with minnow traps to assess the potential juvenile population.

Mount Grant: Doug and Adam Martin (Ecostreams Institute) have been working with an ICC student to develop a vegetation monitoring plot in advance of micro-burns. While the immediate goal is tracking change following the burns and follow-up treatments, the plots will be permanent to enable ability to track change over time.

A group from KEEN shoes in Portland, Oregon spent a week volunteering with the Land Bank in April. They assisted with trail maintenance at Mount Grant.

Westside: The KEEN crew also assisted with trail maintenance and noxious weed control at the Westside Preserve. They were a super group to work with, and we are already hatching plans to host them again.

Zylstra Lake: ICC have conducted monitoring of riparian restoration projects as well as a day of maintenance of the Emmerling Beaver Dam Analog (BDA) restoration zone.

The Old Military Road subcommittee of Island Rec's Trails Committee presented concepts for signage to be placed at Zylstra. The signs will be discreet and feature a QR code to provide interested parties a link to more information. Staff will work with the subcommittee and the Land Bank's graphics to ensure the signage fits with the landscape and Land Bank design standards.

District 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

Coho: Long-awaited trail improvements were implemented over four days with the help of ICC and seven volunteers from KEEN shoe company (Photo 10). The crews replaced four runs of deteriorating stairs, totaling 26 steps (Photo 11), improved both drainage and grades in those areas and also brought in gravel to raise the trail tread in problematic muddy spots. Water behaved differently in the upper loop last winter and the team installed a puncheon to mitigate what will likely continue to be a very wet zone. Community feedback has been fantastic, with many happy preserve users.

Crescent Beach: The planned thinning project with funding from DNR is on track for implementation in July. A bid solicitation is open until May 28th, and Erin and Peter are providing pre-bid tours to interested contractors. There is a project-specific page on the Land Bank [website](#) and staff will provide community updates prior to and during the project.

Eastsound Waterfront: Peter will participate in a pre-bid meeting on May 23rd for a long-planned project to remove the defunct concrete cistern and other concrete debris from the shoreline area. This project is being led by Tina Whitman with the Friends of the San Juans, which secured grant funding with Land Bank support.

Judd Cove: The Judd Cove Shoreline Restoration Project bid solicitation is open until May 22nd with a pre-bid meeting scheduled for May 13th. Pending successful contracting, this grant funded project to restore the artificially hardened shoreline will be implemented in early September.

North Shore: Tyler added refugia in the form of root masses and logs to the wetlands as added habitat complexity for egg laying amphibians. The chorus frogs have hatched and are in tadpole form. Rough-skinned newts and aquatic insects have also re-established themselves in the wetlands. Violet green and barn swallows have returned and are using the roost. To reduce increasing vole damage to young trees in the fenced area, staff recruited maintenance assistance from Blackcap Restoration and Northwest Habitat Management to remove grass from around the trees. Tyler also spent time knocking down grass between planting rows.

Turtleback Mountain: The bid solicitation for the South Entrance Parking Lot Rehabilitation Project bid is open until May 29th with a pre-bid meeting scheduled for May 13th. This project, which was described in

the 2022 SMP, will improve traffic flow, increase the number of year-round parking spaces from 12 to 20 and increase seasonal overflow parking capacity while reducing the parking footprint. Work is scheduled for implemented in early October.

Trail maintenance for drainage improvement and removal of fallen trees have been ongoing. The Washington Trails Association (WTA) led a weekend volunteer group and additional trail work has commenced that will highlight restoration work in the Gary oak ecosystem. Invasive weed work is in full swing with scotch broom, mullein and tansy ragwort as the main focus. Kwiaht's observations of sharp-tailed snakes have been fruitful. Tyler was able to accompany Christian Oldham and observe three snakes in one outing (Photos 12-13). This included a male and a female under the same cover board, something that had not been previously observed on Turtleback. Orcas Fire and Rescue responded to a hiker in need of medical attention at the north trailhead.

With Land Bank permission, Nathan Roueche of the Washington State Department of Agriculture deployed several beetle monitoring traps to detect exotic beetles including the Mediterranean oak borer, which is killing oaks in California and Oregon (Photo 14).

Diamond Hill: Tyler will lead an upcoming wildflower walk in May and has observed over 15 species of wildflowers present on the balds.

Fowler's Pond: The beavers remain active and have attempted to lodge debris in the "beaver deceiver" surrounding the dock with the outlet pipe.

District 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

General: The Seasonal Field Assistant position is re-opening for applications. Amanda has been keeping up with general spring maintenance needs such as mowing trails and some fields, outhouse cleaning, and clearing noxious weeds. An Earth Day hike at Iceberg Point was well attended and hikers were treated with an abundance of buttercup and chocolate lilies (Photo 15).

Hummel Lake: The field trail was finally dry enough to mow. Scotch broom, poison hemlock and one patch of Italian arum were removed.

Lopez Hill: Staff received reports of trees down on the Preserve but staff hasn't yet made it through the trail to locate the trees. Fawn lilies have had an excellent bloom this season on the hill.

Richardson Marsh: Staff partially mowed this Preserve, including the upper field area where the parking/ trail will go.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: The Institute of Applied Ecology wrapped up their study on treatment of Italian arum. The project started 3 years ago to compare 6 treatment plots. The final stage was to dig all the bulbs from each study plot. They have 2 other study sites (in Oregon) and will analyze their findings later this year and report back. Amanda took photos of plots that were setup in 2020.

The Tomolo at Fisherman Bay Preserves: There is an abundance of field mustard in bloom where the Island Marble butterfly was once spotted.

Watmough: The trail opening was a success! Staff installed a new gate for maintenance access and several new signs were installed. The fall replanting of the sport court is filling out and looking good.

PHOTOS



Photo 1. Margo highlighted native plants at the Town of Friday Harbor's Arbor Day Celebration.
Photo 2. New plant ID labels were installed at the nursery.



Photo 3. View from the top of the Salish Seeds Project nursery shed roof.
Photo 4. Springtime on Cady Mountain.



Photo 5. Overmarsh Farm Commons at Beaverton Marsh Preserve.



Photo 6. A greenhouse is being built at Overmarsh Farm Commons at Beaverton Marsh Preserve.
Photo 7. Bailer Hill road work near False Bay Creek Preserve.



Photo 8. Visit to Henry Island with White Swan Environmental students to learn about the cultural and ecological history of the Kellett Bluff area.

Photo 9. An uncommon sighting of a California Tortoiseshell butterfly on Mount Grant Preserve. This butterfly relies on ceanothus species as its host plant, which only known from introduced and/or ornamental plantings in the San Juan Islands.



Photo 10. ICC and Keen employees spread gravel at Coho Preserve.

Photo 11. Finished run of 14 steps at Coho Preserve.



Photo 12. Christian Oldham of Kwiaht prepares to measure a captured sharp-tailed snake.

Photo 13. Tyler prepares to place a sharp-tailed snake on the scale.



Photo 14. Nathan Roueche, Exotic Pest Survey Supervisor with Washington State Department of Agriculture deploys boring beetle detector traps at Turtleback Mountain Preserve.

Photo 15. Earth Day hike at Iceberg Point.