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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

APRIL 2025

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### **Overview**

Spring moves at a quick and dramatic pace. In just a few weeks time, there occurs a transition from winter hibernation to the excitement of spring. It's thrilling to observe daily changes seen in nature; buds swelling, flowers blooming, birdsong increasing, and days getting longer. With the seasonal transformation, comes an energy to the community with more events, opportunities to come together, more visitors to the preserves, and plenty of mowing!

Following successful educational events and positive reception from Tribal partners in collaborative work, the Co-Stewardship subcommittee of the Stewardship Network's Tribal Relations Engagement Group is exploring options for the group to grow. Several group members are exploring the formation of a splinter non-profit group whose purpose would be to provide support for restoration of cultural practices through fundraising, advocacy, and facilitation. Peter Forbes, [who recently provided a lecture about the establishment and ongoing work of First Light in Maine](#), has volunteered to help provide mentorship in these efforts.

### **Outreach**

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

Winter "Art on the Preserves" with Alchemy Art Center concluded at the end of March, with many kudos from participants. The spring newsletter dropped and Tanja has since returned to editing content and design for the annual report. She hosted a booth at the San Juan Island Farmer's Market highlighting Native Plant Appreciation Month and is in the midst of formalizing plans for the May 3rd Watmough Head celebration as well as future outreach events. (Be sure to check the website's [Events Calendar](#)). Orcas Commissioners and staff will participate in the Eco Fair Earth Day Celebration again, scheduled for April 26th. Margo has also been busy hosting and planning events including hosting a table at the FRC Community Baby Shower on April 6<sup>th</sup> (Photo 2); she shared Preserve and trail information for families with young kids. Margo is sitting on the [Arbor Day Community Celebration](#) committee being led by the Town of Friday Harbor along with collaboration from other local organizations. The event will be held on Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup> from 3pm-5pm at Brickworks followed by a native tree ID walk at Redtail Trail from 5pm-6pm.

### **Salish Seeds Nursery**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

2025 nursery operations started up in earnest on March 31<sup>st</sup> with staff seeding plugs, weeding, and assessing winter damage (minimal this year, thanks to a fairly mild winter). Gennevieve Gislason from the Islands Conservation Corps (ICC) will be helping out one day a week through mid-June for independent study credit. The nursery will be at full capacity once again this year based on requests for plugs and potted plants. Erin is helping explore potential sources of funding for a greenhouse. With San Juan Preservation Trust staff, we've been discussing ideas for increased cold storage for native seed at Red Mill Farm.

## **District 1**

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

Staff are working with the Noxious Weed Board (NWB) to identify priorities and strategies for ongoing noxious weed control efforts, with an emphasis on targeting areas for direct NWB support.

**Beaverton Marsh:** Bare-root planting on the Redtail Trail is complete. An amazing amount of effort was put in by many volunteers to restore an old homesite and along the trail (Photo 3). Initiating the Beaverton Trail project initiation is underway with effort focused on developing the project concept, determining regulatory path, timing, contracting, and other procedural elements. To help inform mitigation, rehabilitation, and restoration elements of the project, work has re-commenced in design hydrologic and water quality assessment of the bogs with support from DNR Washington Natural Heritage Program.

**Cady:** Restroom permitting should be in its final stage. We hope to issue a combined request for bids for the septic installation for both Cady and Mount Grant for cost efficiency. Volunteer Elliot Burch has begun crafting timber frames for both restrooms. Doug met with neighbors of Shooting Star Road to discuss road maintenance issues and help determine priorities.

**Driggs Park:** All are encouraged to stop by the office as the native "lawn-to-meadow" area and new front yard beds come to life.

**Limekiln:** A recent motor vehicle accident caused moderate damage to a trail section crossing a culvert and two neighboring trees. Staff was able to reassemble the trail section. To be filed under "weird things people do", 10+ gallons of corn was dumped in the parking area. In what appeared to be a related event, nearly the same volume of rotted wood and old electronics including several telegraph machines was dumped a short distance down a trail in the same timeframe. While on site, staff attended to large tree blocking a trail and a hung-up hazard tree.

**Middlewood:** Island marble butterfly habitat patches have been sowed with host plant mustard. A moderate hazard tree has been identified and is scheduled for mitigation.

**Mount Grant:** This month we welcome back two volunteer stewards Judy Cumming and Tom Marschner! They will be helping open/close the gate for driving access to the summit. The summit road is now open Wednesdays and Sunday for driving access from 10am-7pm. Thanks to a report from a trail user, Shauna was able to locate and remove three trees that had recently fallen across the trail. Neighbors have communicated intent to begin logging, indicating they plan to start within the Native Growth Area covenant zone along the roads. We hope to have good communication about the issues and may need to have a temporary, pre-emptive closure of the preserve to ensure visitor safety. The San Juan Islands Conservation District will be holding a chainsaw safety class on April 12 & 13. The site will be additive to ongoing habitat restoration work and may facilitate prescribed burn work later in the year.

**Third Lagoon:** Calypso orchids, red flowering currant, and skunk cabbage are all in bloom! Doug met with DNR and Cattle Point Homeowners Association to look at proposed FireWise work, the culmination of which was the recognition that existing road/trails provide more than adequate firebreak and no additional mowing is necessary. They may revisit the scope and timing of the road mowing in the future.

**Zylstra Lake:** Island marble butterfly habitat patches have been sowed with host plant mustard. The full trail loop reopened to humans and dogs on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Many smiling visitors to the preserve have recently been sighted enjoying the trails. The SJI Trails Committee's Old Military Road sub-committee has circled back to a request for sign placement at Zylstra. Two immediate locations were explored with the plan for the OMRT group to develop content that the Land Bank will provide to our graphics people to ensure it fits within organizational identify as well as within the site itself.

## **District 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

**Coffelt Farm:** Rufous and Anna's hummingbirds are enjoying the red flowering currant outside of the office window.

**Coho:** Tyler is preparing to lead several days of trail improvements with help from the ICC, and volunteers from Keen. Staff (including Erin and Aaron!) planted trees and shrubs along the boundary with the Artworks property.

**Crescent Beach:** Marking for the forest thinning project is complete and signage with a QR code link to a project page on our website is in place (Photo 5). Under our two-year MOU, County Noxious Weed program staff have been working to control invasive holly and hawthorn trees using an EZ-Ject lance. Removing these species ahead of the forestry work means that we will be ready to install native understory trees and shrubs next winter.

**Judd Cove:** The undersized culvert under Maddie Lane became plugged during a recent downpour and damaged the road (again). This culvert is targeted for replacement in 2026.

**North Shore:** Tyler added eight platforms inside of the swallow's roost structure that are the same style as the birds selected for nest sites last year. He also added root masses from downed trees into the old pond wetland as added habitat complexity for amphibian egg laying season while the wetland vegetation slowly takes hold. A crew led by Marguerite Greening pruned apple trees in the large orchard and Tyler burned the piles of pruned branches. Blackcap restoration spent time scraping grass away from trees and shrubs inside of the exclosure planting zone to minimize vole-induced mortality.

**Turtleback Mountain:** Peter and Tyler met with Jim Brennan, owner of JA Brennan Associates to develop a site plan for rebuilding the South Entrance parking lot. As proposed, the project will improve accessibility and increase the number of vehicle spaces within the approximate footprint of the existing parking area. Tyler observed several bird species on Turtleback this month including kestrels, band-tailed pigeons, and golden eagles.

**Diamond Hill:** Tyler has made progress in managing the spurge laurel that is prevalent on the SE boundary of the property.

**Fowler's Pond:** The beavers have become active again and are making attempts at plugging the "beaver deceiver" that Peter and Tyler installed last year.

## **District 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow

**Channel:** The trail to the beach is peaceful with red flowering currants blooming and water flowing through the swale.

**Spencer Spit:** Participated in the WSU crab teams first monitoring session of the season. Amanda plans to be a backup monitor for when the group needs extra hands (Photo 10).

**Fisherman Bay Spit:** Island marble butterfly plots have been seeded with field mustard. With the mild winter, the fall sown plots are doing well. The field with the plots is extremely wet after the spring rain. Italian arum control continues, which includes mowing field areas with arum, weed wacking, and digging areas with small amounts. A dingy washed ashore in high tides. Amanda posted on LopezRocks and it was removed but the following week a new dingy washed ashore in the same location. It has not been claimed yet. Other routine maintenance has been completed and potholes filled.

**Upright Head:** Friends of San Juans did a site visit with the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for a grant proposal to remove shoreline armoring and restore forage fish spawning habitat.

**Watmough:** Prepared a contract with Historicorps and an architectural historian to assess the Chadwick Homestead buildings (Photo 11). They completed a site visit the last week of March. A follow-up report will describe present conditions, describe treatment options and provide a project proposal using the Historicorps volunteer model. The county council and other county staff visited the site after their March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. Staff is completing trail work and other small projects to prepare for the May 3<sup>rd</sup> opening. Mowing is underway.

**PHOTOS**



Photo 1. Morel mushrooms are a favored sign of Spring.



Photo 2. Margo sharing family friendly hikes at the first annual FRC Community Baby Shower.



Photo 3. Volunteers on the Redtail Trail after a successful planting event.



Photo 4. Satin flowers in bloom on the Westside Preserve.



Photo 5. Crescent Beach forest health signage with QR code link to project page on the Land Bank's website.



Photo 6. Volunteer drone videographer Scot Devereaux works with Peter to capture high resolution 3D imagery of the restored lime kiln.



Photo 7. Photogenic fungus on an OIF&R fire-scarred tree at North Shore.



Photo 8. Collinsia blooming at the Fisherman Bay Spit sand dunes.  
Photo 9. Found at Spencer Spit, likely a killdeer eggshell.



Photo 10. Spencer Spit crab team resumes its monitoring season for invasive European green crab.  
Photo 11. Historicorps and an architectural historian assess the Chadwick Homestead buildings at Watmough Head.