
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2025

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

Another County Fair has come and gone - thank you to everyone that visited and helped support our booth! The annual Fall Native Wildflower Sale went live on September 14th and closes on September 19th. A preview guide of available plants can be found [HERE](#). Other outreach activities have included responding to hunting inquires and providing subsequent letters(s) of permission, supporting Tal Engel's lecture on forestry and preparing for the fall newsletter. The 2025 walking series with the Mullis Senior Center continued with a visit to Limekiln Preserve's Westside Lake (Photo 1), and in September we're island hopping to Orcas and meeting up with Orcas Senior Center walkers at North Shore Preserve. Poetry of Place workshops were hosted at Mount Grant Preserve and Third Lagoon Preserve. Both had strong attendance and were successful in engaging members of the community who otherwise are not frequently exposed to the preserves.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Charlie and Jacob bravely took on watering duty for a few days of hot weather, keeping all the baby plants alive while Eliza and Margo had overlapping vacations. At our monthly "Third Thursday Volunteer Day", volunteers measured and packed seed into wildflower mix packets for the upcoming Fall Native Wildflower Sale. We've found it challenging to process self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) seed, so this year Ferry Boat Seeds took on the task for us using their fancy seed sorting equipment (Photo 3). This small seed company located in San Juan Valley also has a contract with us this year to grow blue wild-rye (*Elymus glaucus*) and sea-blush (*Plectritis congesta*) seed. Vacationing on Waldron Island, Eliza came home with wild seed that some residents there had collected and donated. Finally, this is the time of year when we tend to field a lot of questions from island residents interested in learning how to best seed or plant native species on their own properties. We are planning to present October workshops on this topic on San Juan, Lopez, and Orcas.

District 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: The Land Bank hosted Tal Engel, a phenomenal researcher and forest rehabilitation practitioner from Vancouver Island. With the assistance of the ICC, Tal led fieldwork days implementing his rehabilitation strategies in areas of high-density conifers with little to no existing understory. Members of the public then attended an informational field trip to hear more about Tal's strategies and take a look at the fieldwork firsthand. A trail project update was provided to the Island Rec board. We are in the process of bringing Rachel Dietzman, the former County Engineer, onboard as a consultant contractor for the trail project.

Overmarsh Farm Commons: The community garden plots are thriving and producing an abundance of food! The greenhouse and shed are complete, and the western perimeter fence is coming along. There are approximately 20 sheep being rotationally grazed in the pasture to the east of the garden area. The

Grange will be participating in the [Fall Farm Tours](#) on Sunday, September 28th from 12-4pm. The Land Bank will be there with a table as well, come see the farm!

Deadman Bay: Someone had a fire at the small cove tucked to the West of the main beach. Said persons were surprised to learn that this was not a permissible activity. There was no concerning damage. Another intrepid individual built a surprisingly stable fort out of driftwood and kelp that was challenging to dismantle and included a robust driftwood ladder.

Driggs Park: Goldenrod, pearly everlasting, and Douglas aster are blooming in the native plant beds in the front yard. The pear and apple trees have started dropping fruit. An unsightly fence was removed from between the road and main parking lot.

Frazer Homestead: Cost share funds have been awarded by the SJI Conservation District for farm improvements including water system improvements and interior fencing to facilitate rotational grazing. We will be collaborating with the Shephard family (Lessee) on installation.

Kellett Bluff: Annual monitoring of Kellett Bluff yielded great views of the record salmon run. Our mooring buoy was installed!! This project was initiated in 2017.

Limekiln: Staff have been closely monitoring the steady drawdown of Carefree Lake (also known as Westside Lake, or The Limekiln Lake) in anticipation of WDFW rotenone treatment for pike removal in the upcoming weeks. It is currently incredibly stinky there. Coordination has been ongoing with the neighbors.

Mount Ben: Staff solicited an estimate for the restoration project work to begin this fall in the SW corner of the Preserve.

Mount Grant: Tal Engel gave a lecture to the ICC about forests and their capacity for growing Elders along the slopes of the Greywacke trail. Several errant blown down trees were removed by staff, one of which was over 45 years old at only 5" in diameter! Hunting season opened on September 1. Staff are working with a consultant to complete the cultural resource assessment before the end of the year.

Third Lagoon: The wooden gate on the east side failed and staff are coordinating with DNR for a replacement.

Westside: Whales passing by more frequently have led to an influx of visitors.

Zylstra Lake: The restoration plantings along the northern edge of False Bay Creek beneath the lower dam are doing well despite the drought and heat.

District 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

Coffelt Farm: Staff selected the lowest of two qualifying bids for the septic system replacement project. The contractor, Viking Excavation, will begin work as soon as the contract is approved (total not to exceed \$79,536.48). Work will include installation of an entirely new four-tank system and drain field. Our goal is to complete the project before the end of October. Lum Farm continues to produce an

abundance of meats, dairy, and other farm products. They will be participating in the annual [Farm Tours](#) October 3-5th from 12-5pm.

Crescent Beach: Roughly six weeks in, contracted work on the shaded fuel break and forest thinning project is nearing completion (Photo 5). Several less common hardwoods – Western flowering dogwood, native hawthorn, Garry oak, and Douglas maple – were discovered and given space to grow. Land Bank staff have begun rehabilitating the trail with help from the ICC. We continue to update the project page on our website and are developing post-project signage describing both the completed work and plans for planting this winter. Pending completion of the many tasks remaining, we expect to re-open the Preserve in late September. County management and Councilmember Paulsen also toured the project area (Photo 6).

Dolphin Bay “Cherry” property: Ongoing efforts are focused on preliminary weed control and debris removal in anticipation of an all-staff site visit this fall to discuss potential restoration and public access opportunities in the context of a future management plan.

Eastsound Waterfront: The Friends-led, grant-funded shoreline restoration project has been delayed until next year.

Judd Cove: Shoreline restoration work is complete (Photo 9). Tasks included removal of rock, concrete and metal from the beach and shoreline and the addition of 30 cubic yards of fish enhancement sediment to improve conditions for forage fish spawning. Boulders removed from the shoreline were staged near the Preserve entrance for use in a future culvert replacement project. Following the completion of contracted work, Orcas staff spread native seed, covered the work area with straw and reinstalled the split rail fencing and signage. The RCO salmon recovery grant will reimburse the Land Bank for project-related expenditures.

North Shore: Staff sought professional assistance removing large, hanging limbs on two separate trees.

Turtleback Mountain: The South Entrance parking lot project is scheduled to begin Tuesday, September 23rd. We anticipate reopening the South Entrance on Friday the 26th. The North Entrance and trails will remain open while work is underway. Staff will issue additional website and media posts and will install project signage prior to beginning work.

District 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Claire Waterman

Lopez Hill: Hunting season opened on September 1st and Lopez Hill be open to hunting through October 31st. Signs and vests are posted at the trail entrances. As of early September, 14 hunters have received written permission to hunt at Lopez Hill. Amanda met with a neighbor to discuss their concerns about fire risk.

Richardson Marsh: A Request for Bids to construct a parking area was sent out through the small works roster and closes on September 18th.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: The Institute of Applied Ecology wrapped up a three-year study on treatment options for Italian arum. One of the study plots (the most abundant arum plot) was at the Fisherman Bay Spit. IAE hosted an online stakeholder meeting with 40 attendees to discuss the results.

Weeks Wetland at Fisherman Bay Preserves: The old decking and rails have been removed from the damaged platform and new boards are being installed.

Watmough: The decision to retain structures on the headland reduced the RCO grant award by approximately \$190k. Erin continues to work to recover some of the funding withheld by accounting for incidentals within the natural area and staff time spent on the project. Her takeaway: be cautious about infrastructure projects as the true costs – including staff time well into the future -- are easily underestimated.



Photo 1. Happy Mullis Community Center seniors after their hike around Limekiln Preserve's Westside Lake.
Photo 2. Douglas aster and pearly everlasting in bloom along the perimeter fence at Salish Seeds Nursery.



Photo 3. Ferry Boat Seeds using their thresher to process Salish Seeds Nursery grown *Prunella vulgaris* seed.



Photo 4. A forest walk with Tal Engel.



Photo 5. An example of small-diameter conifer thinning (prior to chipping) at Crescent Beach Preserve.



Photo 6. County management and Council member Paulsen tour the Crescent Beach Forest Health Project.



Photo 7. Staff tour Crescent Beach Preserve.



Photo 8. Crescent Beach blackberry and hawthorn clearing underway in preparation for planting this winter.



Photo 9. Judd Cove Preserve shoreline following removal of rock and concrete.



Photo 10. Peter overlooking one of the wetland enhancement areas at North Shore Preserve.



Photo 11. Richardson Marsh parking area will be improved with gravel and fencing