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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

NOVEMBER 2025

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### **Overview**

November brought steady progress across all three districts. Staff have been addressing everything from trail maintenance and invasive species control to infrastructure improvements and community engagement. The Salish Seeds Project team kept busy with plant and seed distribution and wildflower workshops across the islands. Major projects continue to advance including the Beaverton Marsh trail design, continued restoration work at multiple preserves, and completion of the Coffelt Farm septic replacement. Partnerships with other organizations and volunteers continue to support progress of restoration projects. This season's work sets a strong foundation for 2026. Staff look ahead to December's annual retreat.

### **Outreach**

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

As 2025 comes to a close, Tanja is reviewing the year's events in preparation for 2026 outreach. Senior hikes were popular on both San Juan and Orcas Islands, and she hopes to expand the series to Lopez. The Land Bank hosted its 15th Community Conversation on October 28, and now Tanja's attention is on the end of year "Top 10 Highlights" email, as well as logistics for December's annual retreat.

### **Salish Seeds Nursery**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Staff has been very busy distributing plants, bulbs, and seeds for various Land Bank restoration projects as well as making sales to partners and others. Seed that's not being used this fall has been packaged up, labelled, and put into cold, dry storage in the nursery fridge (Photos 1 and 2). Staff has also been busy sowing seeds in outdoor containers for next year's plants (many native seeds require cold, wet treatment in order to germinate). "New" species being tried for 2026 include the native island marble butterfly host plant tower mustard, blackcap raspberry, and wild strawberry.

Eliza gave three late October "Sowing and Growing Native Wildflowers" presentations on San Juan, Lopez, and Orcas. These talks offered practical information about how anyone can grow native species and received around 100 attendees in sum.

### **District 1**

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

Doug attended the annual Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team conference at the University of Victoria (Photo 3). The conference marked a major shift to centering Indigenous values, knowledge, and participation in oak ecosystems. While in the area, Doug is also attending a forest restoration workshop on Galiano Island with regional land trusts and practitioners. The inaugural meeting is focused on information sharing and exploring the potential of a more formal collaborative network.

**Beaverton Marsh:** Land Bank staff and consultants have been busy working on layout and design for the trail project. Doug McCutchen blazed a preliminary route through the undeveloped slopes on the east

and west sides of the proposed boardwalk crossing of the marsh (Photo 4). Site walks with the consultant team and WSDOT as well as the field survey have been completed. Our consultant, Bowman (Exeltech), is refining the layout. Permitting initial steps are underway.

**Cady Mountain:** Land Bank staff were joined by members of Samish DNR, Blackcap Restoration, and the Island Conservation Corps to burn piles to create biochar (Photo 5). The biochar “gardens” were planted and seeded with native plants from Salish Seeds Nursery the following day. Gratitude to Tyler, Scot, and Claire for joining from their respective islands! Additional planting remains to be accomplished.

**Frazer Homestead:** Charlie and the Shephard family (Lessee) with cost share support from the Conservation District, have begun implementing improvements to the water system and fencing. These improvements will support best practices including rotational grazing and water quality.

**Limekiln:** Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife continued monitoring the pond following rotenone treatment to control invasive Northern pike. Signs and barriers were removed after the reservoir was classified as “detoxified” the last week of October. Dam maintenance and inspections of valve infrastructure were completed while water levels were low (Photo 6). Staff are working on conducting annual inspections for the Lime Kiln Dam as required by the WA Dam Safety Office.

**Middlewood:** Several Friday Harbor High School students began working on trail maintenance on the American Camp Trail as part of their community service projects. They will be hiking the trail and brushing and trimming the ever-encroaching plants and shrubs.

**Mount Ben:** Rainshadow Consulting is scheduled to begin work on the SW corner restoration/view area during the second week of November. The scope of work for a cultural resource assessment in collaboration with SJPT is nearly complete with field work likely to take place before end of year.

**Mount Grant:** Deer hunting in the west basin has concluded for the year. Staff and the ICC recently completed forest restoration activities as part of the multi-year LSR grant. The Conservation District received Riparian Grant Fund money for several sites in the islands. Planning is underway for work at Mt. Grant that would abut and compliment the LSR grant. Field work for a cultural resource assessment was completed with report forthcoming.

**Zylstra Lake:** Staff are working on conducting annual inspections for the upper and lower Zylstra Reservoir dams as required by the WA Dam Safety Office. Zylstra is another site that the Conservation District received funds from the RGP program. Staff are working with Islands Conservation Corps to identify priorities and develop a restoration plan which will be focused on the riparian margins of the upper reservoir.

## **District 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

**Coffelt Farm:** Viking Excavation completed work on the septic system replacement on schedule and on budget. Following the project, there was minor basement flooding in the main house due to a separate and previously unknown greywater line. Morris Plumbing assisted with a quick fix by re-routing fixtures into the main line, which is connected to the new septic system.

**Coho:** Scot added wire mesh to a wood walkway to reduce the potential for trail users to slip on the surface.

**Crescent Beach:** Staff removed the first blowdown of the season from the trail and did minor limbing within the shaded fuel break.

**Dolphin Bay Road property:** Peter initiated cultural resources review as required by the acquisition grant. This work will be focused in areas of planned ground disturbance associated with trail work and planting.

**North Shore:** Dubbed “Apple-Palooza” by Tanja, our October 11<sup>th</sup> apple event seems to have bit a hit with attendees. With help from contractor Marguerite Greening and volunteer apple experts Madrona Murphy (Kwiaht) and Lori Brakken, we picked, identified and pressed apples from the preserve and from other island trees. The restored wetlands have begun filling again with the arrival of fall rains. Despite heavy deer browse on some of the unprotected plantings, it was an excellent growing season for native plants at the preserve. Tyler and Scot prepared piles from previous thinning work for burning this fall. Peter is working with Partners in Design to develop two interpretive signs. One will describe the modern history of the property per mitigation requirements associated with removal of the Glenwood Inn buildings. The other highlights Coast Salish culture and stewardship past and present. The signs will be paid for through the SJPT’s property acquisition grant.

**Turtleback Mountain:** Tyler and Scot led the ICC work in two days of blackberry cutting on South Turtleback. Such efforts are necessary to keep this invasive plant from dominating Garry oak habitat. Although we dig the blackberry crowns along the edges of trails, at larger scales, resprouting blackberry can be spot treated safely and effectively to prevent regrowth. We replaced the rotting log bench at the popular south overlook with a one forged by local blacksmith, Steve Gropp (Photo 7). The steel legs should last generations, while the cedar slab is easily replaced. The first benches in this style, installed by Steve himself, are in excellent condition after at least 15 years of use.

### **District 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Claire Waterman

Claire wrapped up her time as the seasonal field assistant at the end of October. Over the last few weeks, she completed fall maintenance on the Lopez preserves and traveled to San Juan and Orcas to help with planting and weeding.

**Channel:** Staff completed annual monitoring and general maintenance. It has been a quiet year at the preserve (Photo 8).

**Hummel Lake:** Staff completed annual monitoring of the preserve (Photo 8). Areas that have been planted are filling in well. Amanda and Claire traversed off trail in the woods and found quite a few holly trees.

Amanda attended a Friends of Hummel Lake event organized by Kwiaht. The goal is to revitalize the group and recruit volunteers to help steward the WDFW boat launch site. The site has been much improved over the last few years. The group could potentially also support preserve stewardship activities. The group also discussed natural history of Hummel Lake and abundant wildlife.

**Lopez Hill:** Deer hunting season at the preserve has wrapped up. Amanda will collect the vests from the entry points. Tanja and Margo assisted with hunter inquiries and written permissions. We had 64 this year, which is comparable to previous years.

**The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves:** Claire planted about 200 plugs of native wildflowers and grasses. Prepared and seeded the island marble butterfly habitat plots (Photo 10). Half are fall planted and the other half are spring planted. Litter continues to be a problem at the parking area.

**Weeks Wetland at Fisherman Bay Preserves:** Staff completed the rails on the platform and planted plugs and seeds of Douglas aster, fescue, yarrow and grindelia around the platform. Staff weed whacked and brushed the roadside ditch at the entry that was overgrown with reed canary grass and blackberries.

**Upright Head:** Staff supported grant documentation for the restoration project with Friends of the San Juans.

**Watmough:** Staff continued to maintain the parking area and outhouse in the absence of BLM staff. Trash that was dumped in the parking lot was cleaned up as well.



**Photos 1 and 2.** Salish Seeds Project final steps of seed processing - "cleaning" seed is complete, soon to be packaged and put in cold, dry storage.



**Photo 3.** Closing slide from "P'Whulhp Meadows: Understanding A Living Cultural Landscape" from 2025 GOERT Conference.



**Photo 4.** Proposed boardwalk location in the Beaverton Marsh Preserve looking east.



**Photo 5.** Land Bank staff, Samish DNR, Blackcap Restoration, and ICC burn piles at Cady Mountain.



**Photo 6.** Low water conditions at Limekiln due to Northern pike control facilitated inspection/maintenance of dam.



**Photo 7.** The rotting log bench at Turtleback Preserve was replaced with one forged by local blacksmith, Steve Gropp.



**Photo 8.** A calm day at Channel Preserve.



**Photo 9.** The dock at Hummel Lake Preserve.



**Photo 10.** Island marble butterfly habitat plots, fall planting.