
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

FEBRUARY 2026

Overview

It's been a productive month across the preserves as staff balance late-winter projects with preparations for spring as unseasonably warm weather has the nursery and preserves "waking up" earlier than usual. Staff are currently putting the finishing touches on their 2026 workplans.

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

January's planting parties on San Juan and Orcas Islands were busy and fruitful – a total of 25 volunteers helped plant approximately 2,150 wildflower plugs, 400 bulbs and 200 shrubs and trees across Westside and Crescent Beach Preserves. Guided birding events supporting [The Great Backyard Bird Count](#) are back for February with Shona Aitken leading a walk at Zylstra Lake Preserve (SJI), in partnership with the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center, and Amanda Wedow as lead at Channel Preserve (Lopez). Tanja has also been supporting outreach efforts for the upcoming March 4, Beaverton Marsh Trail Project Open House. She has also completed her sixth monthly Land Bank write-up for the local print papers. You can view the most recent write-up in the [February 11 e-edition](#). Lastly, don't miss the annual SJI Agricultural Summit scheduled for February 27-28 on San Juan Island. The Land Bank is a sponsor of the event and will also host an informational table – [click here](#) for registration information.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

The nursery is fairly quiet. Fall sown seeds are germinating in their trays having required winter's cold stratification. Trays were moved to the ground in anticipation of cold weather but recent warm temperatures are prompting staff to return the trays back to the tables for spring.

District 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: Very muddy conditions! Overmarsh Farm Commons will be hosting the SJI Conservation District for a biochar production burn demonstration. The CD has acquired portable biochar kilns that will be available to the public. This is a training opportunity for those interested in using it.

Beaverton Marsh Trail: The project has been making progress (Photos 1-4). A 30% design package was delivered by our consultant, reviewed by Rachel and Doug, and edits compiled. The horizontal trail alignment is mostly set. Next steps are boardwalk design, permit preparation, and vertical grade adjustments.

Upcoming events: Please join us.

Site walk with SJC Council and Land Bank Commissioners – Tuesday 3 March 2026, 1pm

Open House - Wednesday 4 March 2026, 5:30 to 7:30.

Cady Mountain: On a recent hike around the Preserve, staff noted that planting and seeding efforts from earlier in the winter are looking great. Across the various restoration areas, seeds are sprouting and plugs are looking great in their “charcoal gardens”.

Deadman Bay: Staff recently installed an automatic door closer to the restroom door which has made a positive impact on keeping the restroom much cleaner. A handful of plants were recently planted along the sunny bluff overlooking the sea.

Driggs Park: Plans are in motion to remove two aging sheds utilized by the Youth Conservation Corps and Land Bank staff. Nursery staff is preparing to order plant labels for the native plants installed over the past few years.

False Bay Creek: Plenty of water on the western pasture for waterfowl, however they’re difficult to spot among last years reed canary grass.

Frazer Homestead: Pastures are beginning to grow with the springlike weather. Planning is underway for the next phase of cost share projects including interior fences and solar pump installation. The roadside trail has been cleaned up following a heavy public works brushing.

King Sisters: Pastures are waking up and putting on some new growth.

Limekiln: WDFW will return in early March to conduct gillnet survey for Northern Pike in the Limekiln Pond. Shauna and Jacob took full advantage of a sunny afternoon to remove graffiti from the limestone cliffs at the Preserve (Photo 5). This involved a full setup of harnesses, ropes, and helmets to do the work safely. Thanks to SJI resident Neal for helping to remove graffiti from other spots on the Preserve and for showing us his magic recipe to remove the graffiti in a healthy/environmentally conscience way.

Middlewood: Annual monitoring completed.

Mount Ben: Doug worked with Ben Hallowell to refine the trail alignment on the Westside and the SJPT prospective acquisition in preparation for cultural resource assessment. Willamette Cultural Resources anticipate their field work to begin in mid-February.

Mount Grant: San Juan County Public works has been hired to conduct roadside mowing throughout the Preserve in addition to sweeping the roads after work is completed. Thank you, David, for your skillful mowing.

Third Lagoon: Staff have been enjoying the red-flowering currant in bloom over the last several weeks. According to staff observations, this currant has historically been the first native plant to bloom on the island as spring approaches. Staff recently cleaned up a shocking amount of plastic trash along the waterline of the Preserve.

Westside: Native plants are starting to show signs of life with the increasing amount of daylight and warm temperatures. Shauna led a volunteer planting party (Photo 7) and later Jacob and Shauna finished planting out the restoration sites (Photo 8).

Zylstra Lake: October Farm neighbors reached out with several questions including the location of boundary as they plan to fence their property. We agreed to have a surveyor recover the property corners. The Land Bank has also contributed gravel to help maintain our shared access. Overhead power to one of the Land Bank outbuildings, currently in use by Island Haven, will be removed by OPALCO. ICC

helped plant live stakes at the Emmerling restoration site and monitored the water flow at the Beaver Dam Analogs.

District 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

Coho: Peter met with the Taylors to review and mark the proposed riparian acquisition boundary prior to a survey by Holman Land Surveying. After efforts spanning over five years to purchase a portion of Cascade Creek senior water rights using grants from Ecology and RCO, the owners have indicated an unwillingness to sell. Although we will lose access to the current grant funding, we will continue to seek opportunities to increase instream flow for native salmonids.

Coffelt Farm Preserve: Charlie is preparing an RFQ for the construction of an improved heavy-use area, a project recommended and supported with cost share funds from the SJI Conservation District.

Crescent Beach: Planting in recently thinned areas continues, with perhaps 4,000 plants in the ground to date and more to come (Photo 10). Volunteers came out on a recent Saturday to assist with the effort.

Dolphin Bay Property: Following a group meeting in January to review site conditions and conceptual plans, Peter has begun incorporating staff input into a draft Stewardship and Management Plan.

Eastsound Waterfront: Peter continues to work with Tina Whitman (Friends of the San Juans) to advance a landowner agreement for the planned shoreline restoration project. The agreement is a requirement of the Salmon Recovery grant and would apply to the neighboring private parcel, which includes a portion of the concrete structure to be removed.

Entrance Mountain: Peter attended the Kahboo Hill Neighborhood Association annual meeting.

Judd Cove: Erin led an effort to prepare two letters of interest for a grant to fund culvert replacement and other necessary actions to address ecological impairments caused by prior land uses at the preserve.

North Shore: Staff completed planned inter-planting with bare root seedlings to fill gaps and refine the distribution of species across the preserve. Last year's plantings are establishing quite well.

Turtleback Mountain: Continuing last year's efforts, staff, ICC and Rain Shadow Consulting collaborated to complete a shaded fuel break running the length of the north side trail network. Although we'll continue to make refinements over time, completing this task was a high priority in the 2022 SMP. Another project in that plan is the planting of Garry oaks throughout the South Entrance field. Last week, following delivery of the auger from San Juan by Jacob, we planted 150 oaks, including roughly 100 larger specimens grown for the purpose (Photo 11). Establishing oaks in an environment with heavy browse pressure from meadow voles and deer will require attention and care over the next several years. In the long term, this project will increase habitat value, eliminate the need for mowing, and provide an appealing environment for a future loop trail for folks who struggle with steep trails.

District 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

Staff reviewed the draft and final Forestry Health Assessment and discussed findings with Rain Shadow Consulting. Recommendations vary among preserves and forest stands and include shaded fuel breaks

along driveways, some trails and boundaries, thinning for forest health and fuel reduction, protection of ecologically sensitive habitats, and monitoring. Staff are considering potential projects and priorities.

Staff met with the Lopez Fire Chief to discuss driveway clearances for access and emergency access. One area identified as a priority was Watmough Head Rd., and some initial work was done by Amanda and BLM. Several of the Preserve driveways need some light clearing and would fit in well with the shaded fuel break recommendations.

Channel: Amanda will lead a bird walk during the Great Backyard Bird Count. Volunteers have been picking up marine debris on their beach walks.

Hummel Lake: Staff completed trail work to cut back vegetation on the dock trail.

Lopez Hill: Plugs and bulbs were planted. Staff started on the Stewardship and Management Plan update.

“Picnic Point”: Erin drafted a letter of interest to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to support the purchase of a conservation easement on an 11.92-acre parcel on Shaw Island. Among its many significant features, the property has 2,431 feet of undeveloped shoreline.

Richardson Marsh: Gravel was installed on the driveway and parking area and the upper field was mowed. Staff need to complete split rail fencing and signage. The overlook trail was brushed back and weed wacked. Staff removed bull thistle from the Opalco line clearing and planted plugs near the overlook and along the trail.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Planning is underway for parking area improvements. The initial design concept is to expand the parking area towards the field to add parking and improve ingress and egress. Staff sent out a request for proposal for further design work. One idea under consideration is to use fill from the tarped noxious weed Italian arum mound nearby under the parking expansion. Amanda is uncovering a portion of the tarped area in order to take soil samples. Approximately 1/10 an acre has been under road fabric and woodchips for 8+ years.

General field work at the Spit included weed wacking, clearing driftwood from the beach trail, planting plugs, and removing scotch broom (some already blooming)(Photo 13) and arum.

Upright Head: A large snag fell over the trail and clipped the upper overlook (Photo 14). One railing broke off and Amanda put up a temporary replacement 2x4. The YCC afterschool program planted 200 plugs at the trail entrance. Amanda installed deer fencing around the newly planted area.

Watmough: Staff met with BLM staff to develop a Cooperative Management Agreement for the Watmough Bay area. Primary actions identified are to support the shared parking and trailhead and to improve trail maps and signage. Staff worked with BLM staff to improve Watmough Head road. We had the potholes filled and removed trees and branches encroaching into the roadway. Staff also helped remove a conifer at Pt. Colville that fell directly on the bike rack.



Photo 1. A little muddy on the west side of Beaverton Marsh Preserve.

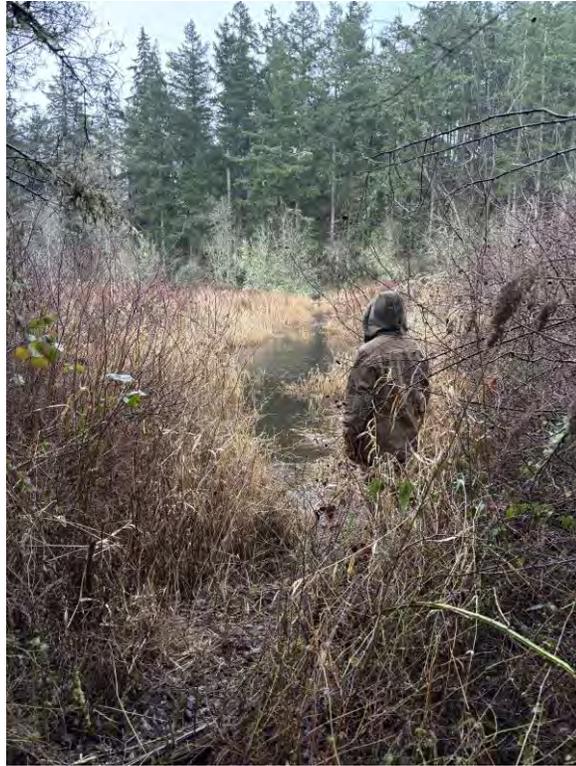


Photo 2. Access to the marsh on the west side of Beaverton Marsh Preserve.



Photo 3. Nicer on the east side of Beaverton Marsh Preserve.

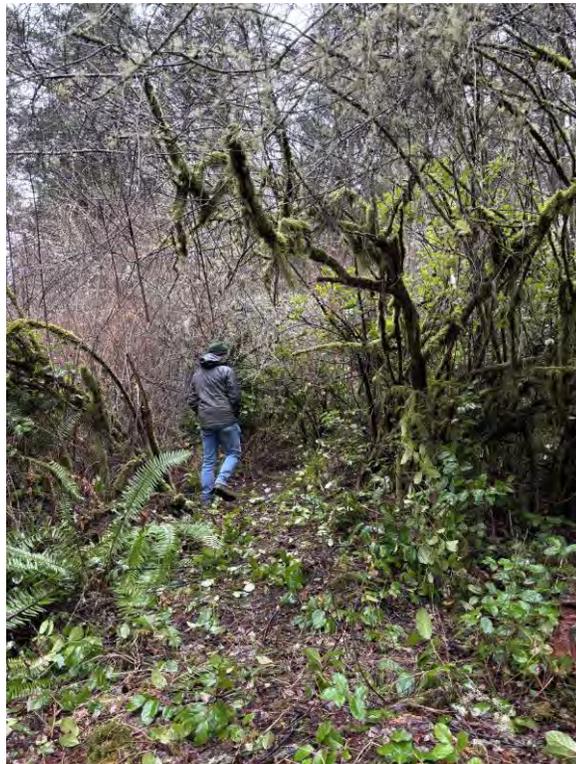


Photo 4. New trail on west side of Beaverton Marsh Preserve.



Photo 5. Jacob removing graffiti from the cliff at Limekiln Preserve.



Photo 6. The view from the top of Mount Grant while on “closing the gate duties”.



Photo 7. A few of the Westside Preserve volunteer planters gather for a snack in the sun.



Photo 8. Shauna planting at the Westside Preserve.



Photo 9. Sunset over Turtleback Mountain from Coffelt Farm Preserve.



Photo 10. 1 of the 200 Western flowering dogwood seedlings planted in the forest understory at Crescent Beach.



Photo 11. ICC members assisting with Garry oak planting near the Turtleback South Entrance.



Photo 12. Post-fire meeting with DNR and neighbors on Turtleback to discuss fire recovery, weed management and additional fuels reduction in the area.



Photo 13. Early blooms of scotch broom at the Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserve.



Photo 14. Fallen snag at Upright Head Preserve.



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