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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

APRIL 2026

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### **Overview**

Spring has officially sprung across the islands. It's been a productive time as we transition from winter planning into the full swing of the busy field season. Community engagement is high with events including the Terrestrial Managers Group 2026 Meeting, the Public Meeting about deer hunting on two Orcas Preserves, the Climate Convergence Workshop, and a handful of outreach and volunteer events. The overall momentum is strong as we move into the year's most active months.

### **Outreach**

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

The Terrestrial Managers Group 2026 Annual Meeting brought together, over the course of two days, approximately 80 conservation practitioners. Many staff and Commissioners were in attendance (but did you fill out an evaluation?). The hunting proposal for Orcas Island has generated approximately 50 public comments.

Lincoln, Tim Clark, and Doug represented the Land Bank at the "Climate Convergence" workshop hosted by SJC Environmental Stewardship and the Madrona Institute. The purpose of the workshop was to gather organizations and agencies to review and discuss climate actions, network, and build support for collaboration.

Land Bank outreach events are picking up pace – Tanja hosted a booth at the April 4th SJI Farmers Market (Photos 1 and 2), the 2026 Art on Preserves and Senior Hikes series' kickoff, and a tour of the Dolphin Bay Property is scheduled for April 25. Margo will host two Salish Seeds Nursery tours this month; one with the Mullis Senior Center on April 27<sup>th</sup> and another with a SJI homeschool group on April 17. Margo will lead that same homeschool group on a walk at the Redtail Trail on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Salish Seeds Nursery**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Nursery operations sprung back to life the last week of March. Work focused on weeding and seeding plugs, with a goal of seeding 17,000 plugs by mid-June. Staff will be producing a slightly reduced quantity of plants this year because some of their time will be allocated to constructing a 16 x 48 foot greenhouse (funded via donations received in 2025).

Eliza and Aaron conducted a detailed costing analysis of plugs, plants, bulbs and seed sold. Nursery expenses have increased slightly over the past few years and prices will consequently be raised 10% this year. Prices are set to reimburse the cost of production per guidance from the San Juan County auditor's office. Seed sales and plant special orders are temporarily on hold while we update pricing and other details.

April 16<sup>th</sup> kicks off our Third Thursday Volunteer Day at the nursery; our first one of the season and these volunteer days generally run through October.

## **District 1**

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

A draft proposal has been received from Rainshadow Consulting for a forest assessment for District 1. The assessment would mirror those previously accomplished for Orcas and Lopez, as well as providing a district-wide list of prioritized actions. The contract is anticipated to be executed within the month, with a draft targeted for completion by November 30 and the final report due by February 1, 2027.

**Beaverton Marsh:** Overmarsh Farm Commons: A deer exclusion fence enclosing approximately 15 acres has been completed. This will support a diversity of agricultural uses including expanding community gardens, a heritage orchard, a blueberry patch, small commercial farm plots, grain, grazing, pasture prairie trials, and more!

The stewardship and management plan has been revised following public comment and input from the Commission. The revised Draft will be shared with Frances Robertson prior to sending, soliciting Tribes for review and input.

Doug and Shauna joined a site visit with Northwest Indian College professor Don McCluskey at Friday Harbor Labs and Beaverton Marsh. Don is interested in a field site for development of an eco-cultural restoration/cultural food garden as a long-term NWIC field course. He was interested in potential of the Beaverton Marsh site which is relatively easy to access and has a variety of soil types.

**Beaverton Marsh Trail:** It has been a busy month. The SEPA checklist and wetland report have been submitted for permit review at the county. There are several more permits in line for submittal. We expect the 60% design plans in a couple weeks. These plans will have clarity on the trail route, the cut and fill areas, the areas where tree removal will need to happen, and other hard features of the project. We will also have a refined construction cost estimate.

Looking ahead, the trail route will be flagged and another site walk will be offered in July. We will hold another Open House, tentatively on 18 August at the Mullis Center, after the 90% plans are complete.

**Cady Mountain:** Invitation to bid on excavation and the installation of a drainfield for restrooms at Cady Mountain and Mount Grant Preserves is in process. Only one prospective bidder attended the mandatory pre-bid site visit.

**Driggs Park:** Plant labels have been installed in the recently planted native plant beds (Photo 4).

**Frazer Homestead:** The Conservation District conducted maintenance and seeding of the island marble butterfly plot.

**King Sisters:** Lessee continues to feed hay and spent brewery grain to the small cattle herd (and 1 sheep) in a rotating pattern to spread nutrients. A group of mallards have discovered the grain resource and have become regular visitors.

**Middlewood:** Tyler joined San Juan staff for island marble butterfly plot maintenance and seed sowing.

**Mount Grant:** Land Bank and Conservation District are planning a public presentation coupled with a field trip to the Landscape Scale Restoration Site. The goal will be sharing the outcomes of the LSR

project and introducing the next phase of work funded through the state Riparian Grant Program (RGP). Planning for the RGP project is underway.

**Zylstra Lake:** Tyler joined San Juan staff for island marble butterfly plot maintenance and seed sowing. Seasonal dam boards were installed at upper and lower spillways to maintain water levels for water right conveyance.

## **District 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

We're pleased to see Scot Devereaux returning in April for his second season as the part-time Orcas field assistant.

**Coffelt Farm:** As anticipated, the first known beaver in recent years reached the Preserve as planted riparian seedlings reached their preferred size. In addition to finding downed alders along the stream bank, we discovered a deceased beaver in the stream. The cause of death is unknown.

**Coho:** Peter is working with Aaron to finalize billing for the unsuccessful flow restoration grant from the Department of Ecology. Jenny DeGroot reported finding Chinook fry and coastal cutthroat trout in the lower portion of the creek. Peter continues to work with the Taylors on tasks required to complete the acquisition. Using grant funds, the Friends hired the ICC to plant a small portion of the Taylor riparian area. We'll expand on that work next winter after the property is added to the Preserve. At the request of the Friends, Peter joined Jason Ontjes in providing ICC members with an overview of weed management practices in natural areas, including the limited use of herbicides.

**Crescent Beach:** Peter and Tyler led TMG meeting attendees on a short tour of recently thinned areas (Photo 5). The group also went to North Shore Preserve. Tyler completed trail drainage improvements along the trail. Recently planted seedlings are leafing out nicely.

**Deer Harbor:** Marguerite Greening pruned the Preserve's five fruit trees.

**Diamond Hill:** Tyler removed spurge laurel and scotch broom.

**Dolphin Bay property:** At the request of SJC DEM/OIFR Lieutenant Dave Halloran, Peter met at the property to review the potential to allow a training session for OIFR staff in the future parking area.

**Judd Cove:** Stream restoration permit applications are finally complete. Pending approval, we'll implement the project during summer 2027 using funds from Environmental Stewardship that are earmarked for Orcas Island.

**North Shore Preserve:** Peter and Tyler planted donated aspens and caged them to protect from deer rubbing. Tyler added additional nesting platforms to the swallow roost ahead of their return for the season. Marguerite and crew pruned the apple trees.

**Turtleback Mountain:** Peter, Tanja and Tyler led the March Turtleback march commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Preserve. Marilyn showed her support and participated along with 30+ others (Photos 8 and 9). Tyler assisted Kathleen from SJPT and volunteer Kristin with installation of western bluebird boxes (Photo 10). Tyler finished caging the rest of the oaks at the south parking lot field. Following a donation of large native plants from Jeff Bossler, Peter and Tyler planted several large juniper seedlings

in the field and bigleaf maples in the adjacent riparian area. Tyler worked on trail drainage in a handful of spots and cleared downed trees along the northern loop trail system. Blackcap Restoration assisted with scotch broom removal at both the north and south ends of the Preserve.

### **District 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Matt Currey

Staff completed interviews for the Seasonal Field Assistant position and is pleased to hire Matt Currey. Matt is a former ICC member and will start in mid-April.

Amanda prepared a grant application for the Heritage Capital Program for stabilization of the Chadwick house. If we are approved in the eligibility review, a full project proposal will be due in June. The project would be implemented with Historicorps, a nonprofit that trains volunteers in historic preservation.

Amanda and Tim met with North Lopez Services about the water system at Upright Head.

Spring tasks include mowing, clearing trails, and removal of Italian arum and scotch broom.

## PHOTOS



**Photos 1 and 2.** Tanja hosted a booth at the April 4th SJI Farmers Market.



**Photo 3.** The Salish Seeds Nursery is starting to bloom.



**Photo 4.** Plant labels have been installed at Driggs Park.



**Photo 5.** Land Bank Commissioner Chris Guidotti inspects the Crescent Beach project with other TMG participants.  
**Photo 6.** A deceased sea lion ripens on the North Shore beach.



**Photo 7.** Native bee foraging on currant flower at North Shore.  
**Photo 8.** Participants on the March Turtleback march.



**Photo 9.** Turtleback March marchers enjoy a perfect spring day on the mountain.



**Photo 10.** Bluebird box installation on Turtleback with Kathleen from SJPT and volunteer Kristin



**Photo 11.** Field trip to Little Summit at Moran state park to discuss a restoration project with Adam Martin.