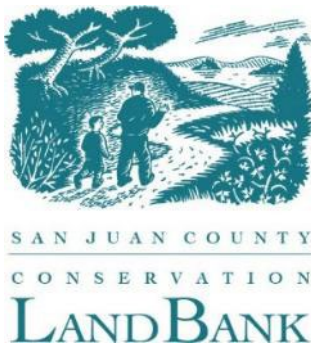


Dolphin Bay Preserve *(interim name)* Stewardship and Management Plan



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Dolphin Bay Preserve, Orcas Island Stewardship and Management Plan

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Executive Summary

Dolphin Bay Preserve (*interim name*) was acquired by the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank (Land Bank) in August of 2025. Purchase of the 23.5-acre property was supported through funds awarded by the State's Salmon Recovery Funding Board and through private donations. The Preserve is predominately forested, and it features a small intermittent stream and 1,300 feet of shoreline along East Sound, Orcas Island.

East Sound is designated as a high priority fish use region in San Juan County.¹ The area has a high presence probability for several salmonid species, including unmarked juvenile Chinook, Coho, Chum, and Pink. East Sound is also identified by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) as one of five spawning grounds in the County for Pacific herring. Pacific sand lance also use beaches in East Sound for spawning.

The Preserve's rocky waterfront and stream corridor support mature, overhanging vegetation including native conifers, alder and willow, and these riparian and shoreline habitats create a high-quality nearshore zone. The shoreline also includes a 260-foot pocket beach which is conducive to providing public access.

Opportunities for public beach access are relatively scarce in the County; Orcas has 77 miles of shoreline and yet only a little over a mile provides public access. Increasing the community's access to saltwater, as well as protecting salmonids, was a key motivator for this acquisition.² The property is also suitable for low-impact recreation. It is accessible from a county road and located in a part of the island which has no other opportunities for public shoreline access.

Prior land uses on the property included logging and clearing for homesites. Future restoration, including replanting clearings and thinning even-age stands, is proposed to enhance the habitat value of the uplands. Other proposed modifications focus on preparing the property for public use.

The following activities are proposed in this plan:

- Remove existing bridge over the creek and install a lower impact stairway
- Establish a small gravel parking area
- Repurpose portions of logging roads into a pedestrian trail
- Control noxious weeds
- Thin high-density forest stands and promote standing and downed woody debris
- Plant native trees and shrubs in riparian area, thinned forest stands and open fields
- Protect forage fish spawning from preserve user impacts

¹ Friends of the San Juans, PIAT, 2017.

² Protection of intact nearshore habitat is SJC's top priority strategy for recovering salmonids. Shoreline access is listed as a priority need in the SJC Recreation, Open Space and Stewardship Plan.

A. Introduction

Dolphin Bay Preserve (*interim name*) is the Land Bank's most recent acquisition along East Sound, an area with significant conservation value for juvenile salmon. The Preserve's undeveloped shoreline and upland forest help to protect water quality in the bay, maintain food webs for terrestrial and marine species, and sustain other nearshore ecological processes like nutrient cycling.

The Preserve also contributes to the aesthetic appeal of the islands for both residents and visitors. It offers scenic views across East Sound over to Moran State Park and provides low-impact recreation with access to saltwater. The Land Bank proposes to establish a 0.7-mile pedestrian trail leading to a small, shaded pocket beach.

The protection of natural areas is a central tenet of the Land Bank's mandate.³ Establishing interconnected natural areas is one approach to mitigating the loss of species from stressors such as climate change and population growth. Additional development within San Juan County and Puget Sound will increase the importance of such conservation areas for maintaining water resources, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and the general quality of life.

Dolphin Bay Preserve combines with three other preserves along East Sound -- Crescent Beach, Judd Cove and Eastsound Waterfront Park -- to expand shoreline protection in the area to approximately 4,200 feet. This property is also located in a region of Orcas Island identified as the Diamond Hill Habitat Conservation Area (HCA).⁴ This HCA is centered around private lands protected by conservation easements held by San Juan Preservation Trust, the Land Bank's Diamond Hill Preserve and WDFW's Killebrew Lake.

The Land Bank creates a Stewardship and Management Plan (SMP) for each of its preserves to guide decision making and work planning, allow for public input, and to promote transparency. These plans establish natural resource protection and ecological enhancement objectives, define public access objectives, and guide the development of trails and other infrastructure in ways that meet the Land Bank's mandate. Following regular monitoring and internal review, SMPs are revised approximately every ten years. SMPs are adopted by the Land Bank Commission following a public hearing and then ratified by the San Juan County Council, typically as part of the County's budgetary process.

In a broad sense, the Land Bank's stewardship goals for Dolphin Bay Preserve are:

- To protect and enhance the property's ecological values;
- To promote habitat resiliency in the face of climate change; and
- To provide opportunities for low-intensity recreation and education.

³ The Land Bank's mandate is to "preserve in perpetuity areas in the county that have environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic or low-intensity recreational value and to protect existing and future sources of potable water."

⁴ Land Bank Habitat Conservation Plan, 2008

The Preserve's various ecological resources and the Land Bank's habitat conservation objectives are described in Section C. Stewardship activities for the next ten years based upon short-, medium-, and long-term goals are summarized in Table 3. This plan also provides a ten-year management cost projection (Section E) and summarizes the public process (Section F). Management planning is an iterative process, and the activities outlined are subject to final approval and available funding.

B. Preserve Overview

Dolphin Bay Preserve encompasses 23.5 acres within the Eastsound watershed.⁵ It is located on Dolphin Bay Road approximately 6.1 miles from the Orcas Ferry landing via Killebrew Lake Road (Fig. 1). Dolphin Bay Road borders the Preserve to the west. The waters of East Sound define its eastern boundary. Other boundaries, including across the road to the west, are shared with private, residential properties.

The Preserve is downslope and nearly a mile from the summit of Mount Woolard. Its topography reaches a high point of roughly 240 feet along the county road, and from there the terrain slopes steadily down to the shore. The underlying geology is like other hilly areas on Orcas Island, predominately bedrock with sections of deeper soils containing glacial drift and loam.⁶



Figure 1. Preserve context

Most of the Preserve is forested. Species include big-leaf maple, shorepine, Douglas and grand fir, yew and cedar. The shoreline is rocky except for a 260-foot gravel beach, which is located at the mouth of an unnamed, intermittent stream. The stream flows onto the property for approximately 100 feet but most of the riparian corridor is south of the Preserve.

Honoring Coast Salish Use and Stewardship

Dolphin Bay Preserve is within the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples. Native American Tribes and First Nations of Canada have lived in and stewarded the San Juan Islands as part of their ancestral territory since time immemorial. Coast Salish people have long tended and harvested shellfish, salmon, crab, and other species from the sea, camas in the prairies, berries along streams and in forests, and other flora and fauna for food and

⁵ [San Juan County GIS](#)

⁶ As mapped by NRCS

traditional uses. Still used by Coast Salish people, these ancestral lands and waters are protected under Tribal Treaty Rights.

The Land Bank will seek opportunities to collaborate with Coast Salish peoples to reincorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) for cultural, spiritual and other activities, to inform management priorities and stewardship practices, and protect cultural resources and treaty rights. A 2025 professional cultural resources review did not encounter artifacts or sites and recommended that the proposed activities, with primary focus on redesigned access to the shoreline, proceed without further archaeological review.

Acquisition History

The San Juan County Conservation Land Bank acquired Dolphin Bay Preserve in August of 2025 for \$3.35 million. Funding for the acquisition came from a \$1.15 million Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant and approximately \$2.2 million in private donations from two Orcas Island residents.

Restrictive Covenant

The Land Bank is establishing a restrictive covenant with the adjacent private property owner to the south of the Preserve. This reciprocal agreement is designed to provide continued access by the neighbor to the public pocket beach and eliminate any development on approximately 0.3 acres along the Preserve's boundary. The Land Bank will enhance the riparian area with plantings in this same vicinity, which will also serve to provide screening to the neighbors.

Existing Infrastructure

The previous owner installed faux stone columns and a steel gate at the entrance from Dolphin Bay Road. These will be retained. At the time of acquisition, a shed, a boat, mowing equipment and other debris occupied the parking area. All of these have since been removed. An old deck and footbridge currently span the stream inland of the beach, and an unpermitted mooring buoy is anchored offshore. These are described further in Section D.

Parking Area

An informal parking area exists on site at the entrance to the property. The Land Bank proposes to improve it to accommodate a maximum of eight vehicles.

Roads and Trails

A partially graveled, former logging road runs from this entrance, along the northern property boundary, down to the shoreline. Several short skid roads branch out from the main logging road. The Land Bank proposes to incorporate portions of these existing roads into a pedestrian trail.

C. Ecological Overview and Conservation Objectives

Habitat and resource protection is a guiding principle of the Land Bank's stewardship program. Maintaining or restoring an area's ecological health also typically protects, and

enhances, its scenic and open-space character and its recreational opportunities. For example, wildlife activity on a preserve affords memorable outdoor experiences.

Historic uses have reduced Dolphin Bay Preserve's ecological values. The forest and stream corridor have been altered by road building, excavation and logging. The Land Bank's proposed management actions detailed in this section focus on maintaining or restoring biodiversity, protecting water resources, promoting old-growth characteristics, increasing carbon storage potential, and reducing the risk of catastrophic fire.

Classification of a preserve into habitat types helps to inventory resources, and to organize and prioritize management activities. Using a habitat classification system adapted from the Washington State Natural Heritage Program for local use, staff identified five major habitat types based on land cover (Table 1, Fig. 2). Stewardship activities within these habitat types, their estimated costs, and the proposed sequence over the next ten years, are outlined in Table 3.

Stewardship and restoration work will be supported by grants and by Land Bank stewardship funds. Priorities for specific habitat areas may be revised in response to available funding and changing site conditions. Even with careful management, the Preserve's conservation values face threats from stressors such as drought, invasive species, and changing land uses on, or further fragmentation of, surrounding properties.

Table 1. Generalized land cover and approximate area

Habitat Type	Acres	% of Total
Accretion Shoreline (1c)	<.1	<1%
Lowland-Riparian Forest (6)	1.2	5.0%
Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest (7e)	16.4	69.8%
Dry Douglas Fir Forest (7b)	2.2	9.3%
Herbaceous & Woody Developed Vegetation (clearings) (11c)	3.8	15.9%
Total	23.5	

Wildlife

As a protected area at the margin of marine and upland environments, Dolphin Bay Preserve supports resident and migratory marine, aquatic and terrestrial species. The subtidal zone offshore is mapped by WDFW as a "pre-spawning" holding area for Pacific herring, a state priority species. Herring congregate in these holding areas for several weeks to mature before moving into shallower water, in this case north toward Ship and Fishing Bay, and depositing eggs on aquatic vegetation such as eelgrass. Friends of the San Juans staff completed preliminary forage fish sampling in 2025 and such efforts will continue.

Large ochre stars and Pacific oysters inhabit the intertidal zone.⁷ Waterfowl in the area range from loons to grebes and goldeneyes. The forested uplands support warblers, wrens and woodpeckers. Mammals likely to inhabit the Preserve include a variety of bat species, Douglas tree squirrels, black-tailed deer, mink, river otters and raccoons. Pacific chorus frogs have been noted onsite.

Major Habitat Areas

Based on notable and distinct ecological values, the Preserve can be viewed as supporting three general habitat types. These include the shoreline and intertidal zone, a stream, and upland forests (Fig. 2). Forested areas were further delineated into stand types based on species composition and structure. Staff assigned ratings (e.g., Poor, Fair, Good) to represent the current condition of each habitat type and identified future stewardship activities to enhance the Preserve's ecology. A summary of the current and the desired future conditions is provided in Table 2.

The ratings used by staff reflect multiple ecological criteria with an emphasis on aspects of biology, ecology, or ecological processes that, if missing or altered, could lead to future declines or losses to either species or habitats.⁸ A similar process is used by other conservation organizations to help prioritize stewardship goals, actions, and monitoring. The ecological attributes and ratings in use by the Land Bank represent an iterative, adaptive process informed by research, field observations and peer review. Priorities may be revised in response to site conditions and available funding.

Invasive plants at Dolphin Bay Preserve include Canada thistle, tansy ragwort, Scot's broom and other common weeds. Management of these weeds is well under way. The spread of invasive species ranks second only to habitat loss as a threat to global biodiversity. The Land Bank recognizes this problem and puts a high priority on controlling populations of invasive species on its properties. In general, the Land Bank's weed management efforts are focused in areas of greatest priority and vulnerability, and where actions have the greatest chance of success. Staff follow Integrated Pest Management approaches, with the preferred methods being manual and mechanical control and with cut stem and spot herbicide treatment for species that are especially difficult to control.⁹

⁷ Latin names for identified species are *Pisaster ochraceus* and *Magallana gigas*.

⁸ These values are also referred to as Key Ecological Attributes (KEAs) and this methodology for determining conservation action was developed by The Nature Conservancy in 2007.

⁹ Further details in the Land Bank's *Guidance for Integrated Pest Management Plan* (available upon request)

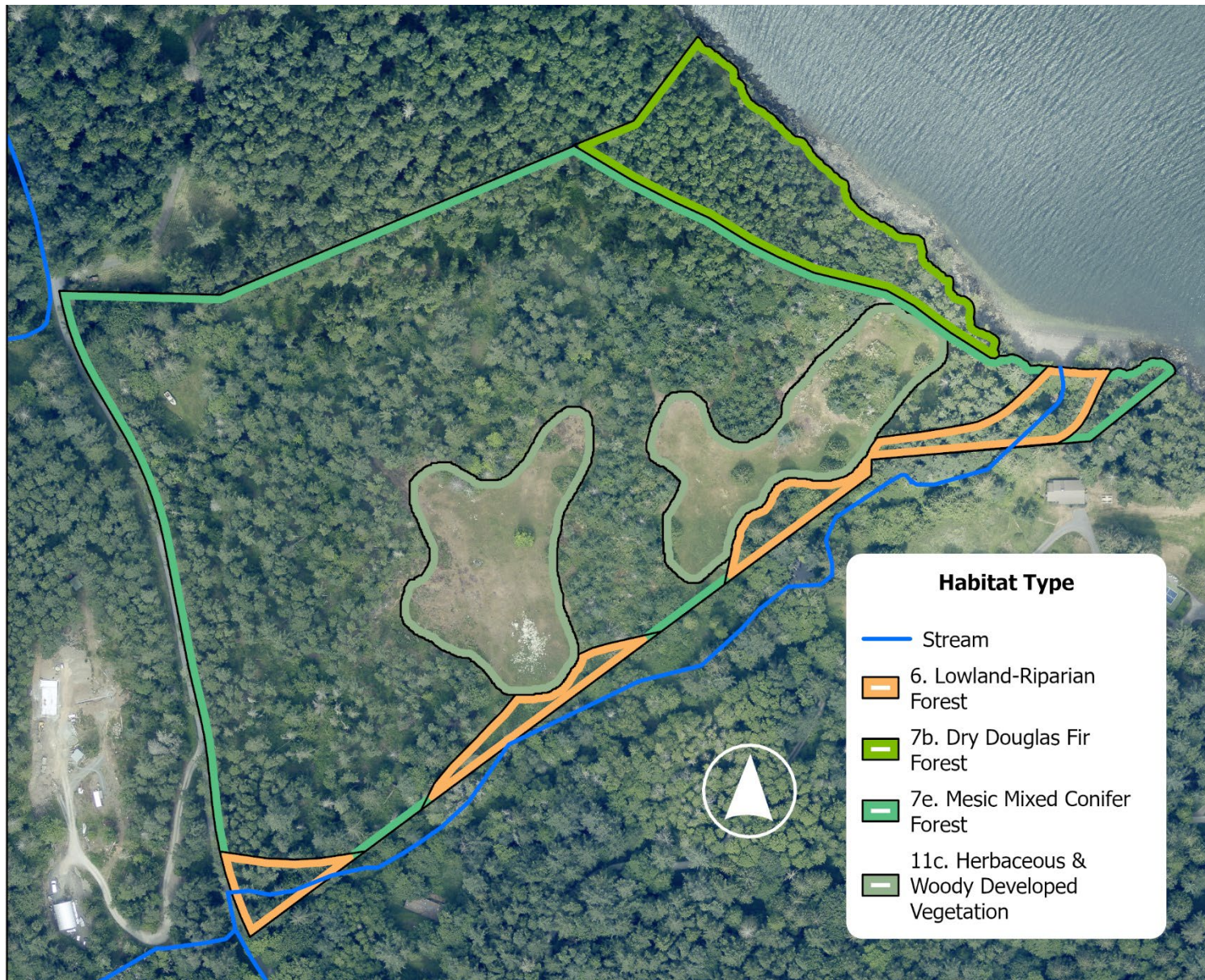


Figure 2. Generalized land cover of Dolphin Bay Preserve

Table 2. Generalized current and desired future condition¹⁰

AREA	CURRENT CONDITION	DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION
Accretion Shoreline (not mapped)	VERY GOOD – Intact natural processes. Overhanging native vegetation.	VERY GOOD– Intact natural processes. Overhanging native vegetation. Mooring buoy removed.
Lowland-Riparian Forest (6) and stream	FAIR – Bridge and deck inhibits native vegetation near stream mouth. Artificial in-stream pond on neighboring property. Native riparian vegetation dominant.	FAIR to GOOD – Bridge and deck removed and replaced with a lower impact stairway. Native riparian vegetation established along lower stream and dominant throughout.
Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest (7e)	FAIR to GOOD – Stand conditions range from young, dense low-vigor trees to mature, mixed-age forest. Downed wood is sparse. Excessive invasive plant cover in some areas.	GOOD – Appropriate stand density. Adequate snags and downed wood with diverse native understory and ground layer. Priority invasive species removed.
Dry Douglas Fir Forest (7b)	FAIR – Stand conditions range from young, dense low-vigor trees to mature, mixed-age forest. Downed wood is sparse. Excessive invasive plant cover in some areas.	GOOD – Appropriate stand density. Adequate snags and downed wood with diverse native understory and ground layer. Priority invasive species removed.
Herbaceous & Woody Developed Vegetation (11c)	POOR – Dominant vegetation consists of non-native grasses. Excessive invasive plant cover in some areas.	FAIR - Native trees and shrubs established at wide spacing leading towards ‘savanna’ habitat. Priority invasive species removed.

Shoreline and intertidal zone

Undeveloped shorelines help maintain coastal processes that benefit a host of species. The forested nearshore provides vital food resources such as terrestrial insects, which are estimated to comprise 30% of the diet of juvenile Chinook in the San Juans and supports growth necessary to survive their first year in the ocean.¹¹ This highlights the importance of protecting shorelines from conversion and clearing. Dolphin Bay Preserve includes approximately 1,300 feet of shoreline, and the shoreline is predominately characterized by low, rocky banks with native vegetation. A small pocket beach, which spans 260 feet, has desirable habitat features including large woody debris, overhanging vegetation, wrack, and sand.

As previously mentioned, East Sound is a high priority area for marine and shoreline conservation. The area supports spawning and rearing forage fish, both herring and sand lance, and it provides rearing habitat for out-migrating juvenile Chinook, both

¹⁰ Future condition timeframe is the duration of this plan or roughly ten years. Key Ecological Attributes and indicator rating definitions are available upon request.

¹¹ Duffy, et al. 2010

wild and hatchery.¹² Pocket beaches, as compared to other shore formations, also have the highest presence rates for juvenile Chinook. The Preserve's habitat features contribute important sources of food and organic detritus as well as shade for migrating juvenile salmonids during their critical early life-stage.

The Preserve's pocket beach has substrate suitable for spawning habitat by sand lance and surf smelt, two priority forage fish species that feed salmonids and other marine animals.¹³ Sediment samples were twice surveyed for sand lance and surf smelt spawning activity. These samples yielded no eggs; however, the beach should not be ruled out as a potential spawning site.¹⁴

Summary of proposed shoreline and intertidal zone management activities:

- **Remove mooring buoy**
- **Monitor for marine debris**
- **Monitor for forage fish spawning activity; if present, then implement protective measures to prevent disturbance**

Riparian forest and stream

A small, unnamed stream flows mostly south of the Preserve's boundary, entering it briefly in the southern corner for about 100 feet at its mouth. Due to its small size and seasonal flows, the stream mostly lacks a distinctive riparian zone although moisture-loving plants including Western red cedar, alder, red elderberry and salmonberry are more common in this vicinity. Horsetail, a reed-like perennial commonly found in riparian areas, is present at the mouth of the stream.

A wood deck and footbridge span the stream just above the beach. This dilapidated structure displaced riparian vegetation and will be removed and replaced with a smaller stairway for safe access to the beach. Management activities designed to enhance the native vegetation and maintain water quality are proposed.

Summary of proposed stream management activities:

- **Remove deck and bridge and replace with lower impact stairway**
- **Outplant with riparian species**
- **Manage priority weeds**

Upland forest and clearings

Healthy forests sequester and store carbon, filter water, help control floods and erosion and sustain biodiversity. Much of Dolphin Bay Preserve is forested with common conifers such as Douglas fir, grand fir, Western red cedar and lodgepole pine. Bigleaf maple is the dominate hardwood species on site. Common native shrubs such as salal, trailing blackberry and low Oregon-grape occupy the understory along with herbaceous species such as sword fern, stinging nettle, and grasses.

¹² Beamer and Fresh, 2021

¹³ Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2008

¹⁴ Friends of the San Juans, 2026.

The Preserve's forests include three different stand types. All three stands have been logged, although some old, large diameter trees remain on site. Overall, these forests are in fair condition with opportunities for improvement through management. Descriptions for each stand type are provided below and followed by proposed management activities.

Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest: This stand type occupies over 16 acres (~70%) of the Preserve. Douglas fir dominates the canopy with Western red cedar prominent to occasionally co-dominant where deeper, moister soils are found. Some of the largest and healthiest cedars occupy the level ground in the property's northwestern corner area. Western red cedar and grand fir are common as smaller size class trees in the subcanopy. Western hemlock saplings are common in some areas but are unlikely to become canopy dominants in the Preserve's mostly dry soils. Regeneration of all five conifer species was noted, especially on abandoned logging roads. Deciduous trees including bigleaf maple, red alder, and Scouler's willow are found in areas with more sun and/or moisture availability. Salal generally dominates the shrub layer, and low Oregon-grape, baldhip rose, and oceanspray are common. The herb layer is typical for this forest type with the presence of swordfern and native and non-native forbs varying by light levels and soil moisture.

This forest type has a limited geographic range in western Washington and British Columbia. Throughout this range, most stands have been altered by past timber harvest and fragmented by residential development and other uses and any large, high-quality examples are considered a priority for conservation.¹⁵ The Preserve's forest is generally in fair condition and typical of other San Juan County occurrences. It has been logged at least twice in recent decades. Aerial imagery shows the creation of the existing clearings over time.¹⁶ The most recent cohort of stumps are mostly Douglas firs and some large Western redcedars in the one-to two-foot diameter range.

Some of the Preserve's Western redcedars appear stressed or dying. This is a regionwide trend attributed to warmer, drier summer conditions.¹⁷ Individuals growing in deep, moisture-retentive soils will have the best chance of survival in the face of climate change. It can be expected that over time, drought-tolerant Douglas firs will increase on this site.

The forest contains several small stands of young, even-aged Douglas-fir trees, which apparently established following the most recent logging disturbance. With low diversity, a poorly developed understory, and vulnerability to fire, these stands would benefit from thinning. Large woody debris on the ground and standing dead snags are valuable components of older, diverse forests. The Preserve is lacking in these elements, except for the property's southernmost tip, where both cut logs and windthrow enrich the forest floor with decaying wood.

¹⁵ NatureServe, 2026

¹⁶ Small clearcuts occurred by 1990 and again by 2004.

¹⁷ Andrus et. al. 2023

Dry Douglas Fir Forest: This stand type covers approximately 2.2 acres (9%) of the Preserve near the shoreline, where the slopes are relatively steep and soils thin. Douglas fir is the dominant tree species. Shore pine and Western redcedar are occasionally present. Typical of this forest type, the understory has a very high cover of salal, leaving little space for herbaceous species. Other common plants include oceanspray, low Oregon-grape, and rattlesnake plantain.

Most of the conditions noted in the Preserve's dominant forest are the same here, including the history of logging, the presence of dense stands of young, even-aged Douglas fir, and a scarcity of snags and large woody debris. Thoughtful management actions can increase structural complexity, species diversity, and habitat value for wildlife.

Dense patches of young Douglas fir and older mixed stands can be thinned selectively and planted with understory species to increase species diversity and increase the vigor of remaining trees. This will also reduce fire risk. Former logging roads, that are not retained for trails, are being colonized by conifer seedlings. Management activities will entail thinning these areas to prevent the formation of future dense stands as well as existing areas with high-density, and to create and retain snags and woody debris.

Herbaceous & Woody Developed Vegetation: There are two large clearings that combine to total approximately 3.8 acres (~16%). These areas were created by the previous landowner and are currently dominated by a mixture of non-native pasture grasses and forbs including some invasive species. The clearings have gentle slopes and mesic soils and would be suitable for a variety of forest species; they offer an opportunity to diversify the forest with "gap" species of sun-loving wildflowers, shrubs and mid-size broadleaf trees through active planting. Although forest species are likely to establish on their own in the absence of regular mowing, the clearings will likely remain at least partly open for both habitat value and scenic views. Management recommendations and general cost estimates are reflected in Table 3.

Summary of proposed forest management activities:

- **Thin forest selectively to enhance resilience**
- **Promote standing and downed dead wood for habitat**
- **Manage priority weeds**
- **Out-plant understory and field species**

Table 3. Dolphin Bay Preserve prioritized habitat management actions and cost estimates

HABITAT AREAS	KEY ECOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES	STRESSORS	MANAGEMENT ACTIONS	PRIORITY¹⁸	TIMING¹⁹	EST. COST
Shoreline and Intertidal Zone	Large woody debris Tidal influences Mud and mixed-fine Sediments Sand Eelgrass	Mooring buoy	Inspected recently and believed to be unpermitted. Remove to reduce impacts.	Medium	Medium term	\$1,500
Riparian Forest and Stream	Riparian habitat continuity, Vegetative structure: tree layer	Previous logging and land alterations, deck and bridge, artificial in-stream pond (on neighboring property)	Remove deck and footbridge. Establish riparian trees and shrubs along lower end of creek.	High	Near term	\$5,000
Upland Forest and Clearings	Stand density and structure, Standing and downed dead trees, Native tree and shrub richness	Climate change, previous logging and land alterations, species introductions.	Minor thinning and fuels reduction in priority areas by staff to improve tree health. Increase snags and downed wood. Control priority invasive species (especially tansy ragwort and Canada thistle). Outplant thinned areas to support understory development. Outplant clearings to improve habitat value.	High	Near term/ Medium term	\$25,000

¹⁸ In the context of this ~10-year plan

¹⁹ Near term = 1-2 years, medium term = 3-10 years, long term =11+ years

D. Public Access Overview and Objectives

Providing access to the natural beauty and diversity of the San Juan Islands is an important part of the Land Bank's mission. The conservation mandate specifies preserving areas for "low-intensity" recreation. This stipulation for low intensity reduces the likelihood that human use will degrade a preserve's ecology. Limited, low-intensity recreation also helps assure quietude for visitors; retain the rural character of neighboring communities; and avoid management costs that tend to result from higher-intensity uses. For these reasons, access to Land Bank properties is primarily designed for pedestrians and infrastructure on preserves, ranging from benches to bathrooms, are often kept to a minimum.

Impacts from recreation are expected to increase throughout the Puget Sound region as population growth continues and more people seek access to natural areas.²⁰ Maintaining moderate levels of use is essential to preserving the conservation values of preserves, and the Land Bank employs several strategies to keep use within an acceptable range. These include day-use only and prohibitions on camping and campfires. Signage and in-person contact from Land Bank staff and volunteers are the primary methods of educating visitors about regulations. Standard preserve rules and regulations are listed in the appendix.

The following approaches will be used to manage impacts and levels of use:

- No recreational promotion or commercial uses
- Limited signage and facilities
- Dogs allowed on-leash only and not on the forage fish spawning beach during spawning and incubation

Proposed Access

The Land Bank proposes to improve the gravel parking area, within the existing clearing, to accommodate a maximum of eight vehicles. The parking area will also serve as the Preserve's trailhead with one bicycle rack and informational signage. From the parking area a 0.7-mile, 2 to 3-foot-wide, natural surface trail will lead pedestrians through the forest and opens fields down to the water's edge while providing viewpoints along the way. Portions of the trail will follow existing, moderately sloped logging roads, some of which have a gravel base. Trails will be designed to minimize runoff and maintenance requirements.

Two benches are proposed on the Preserve, alongside the trail. One will be placed near the parking area and provide a view across East Sound to Moran State Park and another near the lower section of the loop trail. To retain ecological values and to reduce long term maintenance costs, no other infrastructure is planned. A portable toilet and an automated gate may be added in response to future demand or need. A map of proposed access and infrastructure is provided in Figure 3.

²⁰ For more information see The Tulalip Tribes report, [The "Recreation Boom" on Public Lands in Western Washington: Impacts to Wildlife and Implications for Treaty Tribes](#), 2021.

Beach landings by non-motorized watercraft (e.g., kayaks, canoes and rowboats) are also proposed to be allowed except when posted to protect forage fish spawning. Although individuals could also launch from the beach, the distance and incline from the parking area makes this unlikely. Publicly accessible shoreline on the Preserve will largely be limited to the 260-foot pocket beach. Signs will be posted at property boundaries.

When necessary, enforcement of rules may be carried out through the San Juan County Sheriff's Office. The Land Bank always reserves the option of restricting or discontinuing any aspect of public use if it proves unmanageable or detrimental to the land's conservation values.

Summary of proposed recreational infrastructure:

- **Gravel parking area for a maximum of eight vehicles**
- **Natural surface loop trail with steps to beach**
- **Limited wood barriers to delineate public access areas**
- **One bicycle rack**
- **Two benches**



Figure 3. Proposed recreational infrastructure

Outreach, Education and Research

The Land Bank will work with community volunteers and host work parties to meet some of its stewardship objectives. Interpretive programs may be organized by Land Bank staff or in collaboration with outside groups or experts. Where appropriate, the Land Bank may collaborate with local organizations, schools, Tribes, universities and scientists to increase or disseminate knowledge of the Preserve's ecological resources. Activities related to education and research will be subject to review, conducted on a permission-only basis, and limited in size or duration.

Table 4. Dolphin Bay Preserve prioritized access infrastructure improvements and cost estimates

TASK	JUSTIFICATION	MANAGEMENT ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMING²¹	EST. COST
Cultural resources review	Prevent impacts to cultural resources	Survey for potential impacts.	High	Complete	\$3,000
Site cleanup	Public safety	Remove boat, shed and debris piles.	High	Complete	\$5,000
Establish sustainable shoreline access	Public safety, water resources protection	Eliminate creek crossing (remove deck/bridge) and install beach access stairway.	High	Near term	\$6,000
Utility relocation	No meter or base fee if inactive, but power would support future automated entry gate, if one is deemed necessary.	Coordinate with OPALCO to move the transformer from center of property to entrance.	High	Near term	\$3,000
Establish parking lot	Public access	Repurpose existing clearing by adding gravel and up to eight parking stops. Install one bicycle rack. Consider future addition of portable toilet.	High	Near term	\$10,000
Establish trails	Public access	Repurpose existing logging roads where feasible and add additional segments. Install up to three trailside benches.	High	Near term	\$5,000
Install signage	Public access	Install preserve signs at entry and beach. Install trail and boundary signs as needed.	High	Near term	\$3,000
Install entry gate (if necessary)	Public access	Monitor use. If needed, to prevent overnight parking in the lot, install automated entry gate.	TBD	Near term/ Long term	\$25,000

²¹ Near term = 1-2 years, medium term = 3-10 years, long term = 11+ years

E. Cost Projection

This cost projection is intended as a financial planning tool and is not a commitment of resources. It includes separate cost estimates for general operations and for one-time capital expenditures. All figures are approximate.²² Land Bank staff and Commissioners will review and revise actual planned expenditures during the Land Bank's budgeting process.

Table 5. 10-year cost projection (for planning purposes, only)

Year	General Operations ²³		Capital Projects ²⁴		Subtotal
2026	\$3,000	Site cleanup. Weed management.	\$27,000	Relocate OPALCO transformer. Beach access stairway, gravel parking area, trail, signage, bicycle rack and benches	\$30,000
2027	\$15,000	Forest thinning, understory and clearing planting. Ongoing weed management. Mooring buoy removal. Routine trail and parking lot maintenance, general stewardship and monitoring.	\$25,000	Automated gate (if needed)	\$40,000
2028	\$10,000		\$0		\$10,000
2029	\$10,000		\$0		\$10,000
2030	\$5,000		\$0		\$5,000
2031 Co	\$5,000		\$0		\$5,000
2032	\$5,000		\$0		\$5,000
2033	\$5,000		\$0		\$5,000
2034	\$5,000		\$0		\$5,000
2035	\$5,000		\$0		\$5,000
Total					\$120,000

²² As cost estimates are for general planning purposes, they are not adjusted for inflation.

²³ Recurring, non-capital improvement operating expenses such as monitoring and maintenance by staff

²⁴ One-time capital expenses

F. Public Process Overview

To gather and incorporate input from the public regarding the use and management of Dolphin Bay Preserve, the Land Bank provided and sought information in a variety of ways. These are summarized as follows:

Action	Completed (Planned)
LB Commission review of Draft Stewardship and Management Plan	July 2026
Share Draft Stewardship and Management Plan with Tribes	July 2026
Stewardship and Management Plan Press Release	August 2026
Public review of Draft Stewardship and Management Plan	August 2026
LB Commission adoption of Final Stewardship and Management Plan	(September) 2026
Adoption by the County Council within the annual budget	(October) 2026

G. References

Additional information about the Dolphin Bay Preserve will be made available upon request. Supporting digital documents are hyperlinked when possible.

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Appendix A. Rules and Use Restrictions

The following use restrictions will be in effect. Restrictions are intended to protect the ecology of the Preserve, the safety and peace of neighbors, and to minimize management costs. They will be posted on site and mentioned in literature as appropriate.

The Land Bank generally relies on signage and periodic contact from staff or volunteers to educate visitors about use restrictions. An enforcement ordinance that governs activities on Land Bank Preserves was adopted by the San Juan County Council on August 25, 2009. When necessary, enforcement actions may be carried out through the San Juan County Sheriff's office.

- Daytime use only
- Pedestrian access only (except where posted for other uses)
- Land Bank permission required for organized groups of 15 or more
- No camping
- No fires
- No vehicles
- No hunting
- Launching or landing of UAV (drones and similar devices) is allowed only for research purposes and requires written permission of Land Bank Director
- No commercial use
- No collection of botanical, zoological, geologic or other specimens except on a permission-only basis for scientific or educational purposes²⁵

²⁵ Policy under review. Any organizational update will supersede existing policy.