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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JUNE 2026

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### **Overview**

Stewardship staff participated in a wet prairie workshop on Orcas Island (Photo 1). There is growing interest from local agencies in identifying and restoring former sites. The workshop was well attended with approximately 45 people from local, state, & federal agencies, nonprofits, Tribes, and consultants.

Doug attended the Coast Salish Youth Coalition's annual camas harvest and bake at the Pacific Rim Institute on Whidbey Island. The four-day event provides great opportunities for education, networking with Tribal and non-Tribal partners, cultivating relationships, and fostering communication.

The Policy & Procedures Manual update is underway. The current schedule will generate a first draft for review in late August, a second draft in late October and a final document in early December.

### **Outreach**

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

The 2025 Annual Report is completed and coming to your local postal box soon – click [HERE](#) for a virtual viewing ahead of time. The Poetry of Place series kicked off at Crescent Beach Preserve; San Juan Island Seniors enjoyed a guided tour of the Land Bank's Island Marble Butterfly plots at Middlewood and Frazer Homestead Preserves; and Orcasonians were treated to birding tips and tricks at Turtleback Mountain Preserve thanks to volunteer ornithologist, Kim Middleton (Photo 2). Upcoming events include a Guided Bird Walk at Richardson Marsh Preserve, Guided Tours at the Dolphin Bay Property, summer walks with Orcas Seniors, and a Salish Seeds Project nursery tour for the JLS-FRC Screen Free Saturday series.

### **Salish Seeds Nursery**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Greenhouse construction is underway with the assistance of three dedicated volunteers (Photos 3-5). Construction is planned to continue incrementally over the summer, as staff fit in in between their ongoing responsibilities. The greenhouse has been on our wish list for nearly 10 years so it's exciting to see it taking shape. Staff and fallen a bit behind on weeding and other maintenance but hope to catch up soon before the next greenhouse work dates. Spring seeding of plugs is on schedule as is seed harvest (Photo 4). The website has been updated with new pricing and ordering information. Coming soon: seed packets of a few "easy" species that will be available for drop-ins to purchase at the Land Bank office.

### **District 1**

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

**American Camp Trail:** Volunteers Peter Kilpatrick, Megan Bolitho, Elliot Burch, and Thom Pence helped replace a failing turnpike with a short section of puncheon on the American Camp Trail (Photo 7). Additional turnpike work at the south end of the trail was delayed due to equipment breakdown.

**Beaverton Marsh:** Overmarsh Farm Commons – Staff and WCC crews began replacing perimeter fence around the east side of the leased property. The garden plots are full of energy with new and returning gardeners, it is looking to be a bountiful season. A small mobile building has been set up to be a produce sharing space.

**Cady Mountain:** The visiting WCC crew helped out with an ongoing restoration project girdling firs on the Preserve and controlling noxious weeds. Staff did annual monitoring of golden paintbrush introduction plots.

**Deadman Bay:** Weed season has arrived: Italian Arum seed heads have been removed, and teasel have been pulled.

**False Bay Creek:** Staff have been in contact with SJC Noxious Weed Board regarding an introduction of slender flower thistle, a Class A weed, along Bailer Hill Road. It is suspected to have come in with road construction materials.

**Frazer Homestead:** A solar pump has been installed and is now supplying water to a storage tank which feeds several livestock water troughs throughout the property.

**King Sisters:** The pastures are lush with growth. A flock of sheep has arrived to join the small herd of cattle.

**Mount Ben:** Lincoln and Doug continue to work with SJPT on development of conservation easement.

**Mount Grant:** We had an amazing group of volunteers from the American Hiking Society work with us for a full week (Photo 8). They helped with brushing trails, tread work, noxious weed removal, and constructing split rail fence on the summit. Thank you AHS!

DNR and Conservation District's final accounting of the LSR grant revealed additional funds available for Mount Grant. ICC and Samish DNR will be returning for a couple of days of noxious weed control and girdling.

**Westside:** Staff have noticed an uptick in trash at the Preserve and increased bathroom use from high visitation. Draft cultural resource assessment remains in process as several Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) have expressed interest in reviewing photos of potential culturally modified trees.

**Beaverton Marsh Trail:** We have just concluded our review process for the 60% design. It has been a massive effort by Doug and Rachel. The 90% design plan set will be delivered on 26 June. We have scheduled an overview of that plan set for 29 June from 2-4 pm. This next review set should have a reasonably accurate cost estimate as well. Sometime in July we should be able to review that information with the commissioners and discuss plans for proceeding. In the meantime, a few questions of concern and responses are listed below:

QUESTION: Can we reduce the project scope due to cost overruns?

ANSWER: Yes - we will need to get approval by executing a Local Agency Agreement

Supplement. There will be significant documentation to support this change. If the scope change results in a dropping of the federal share by \$250,000 or more, there may be a requirement to deobligate funds. Additionally, if NEPA/SEPA requirements are impacted (i.e. by not constructing required stormwater or mitigation elements for example), the environmental documents will need to be amended. There may also need to be a STIP amendment.

QUESTION: Can we split the project into several construction contracts?

ANSWER: Yes - WSDOT permits multi-contract phasing. This is typically used for massive highway projects. We are in the process of determining if we can use this for our small project due to the several distinct types of work required.

QUESTION: Can we bid the project with a base bid and several alternates to control costs?

ANSWER: Yes - WSDOT permits this type of bid process. It permits the agency to pick the contractor and sequence of alternatives that they can afford. Note that care must be taken to utilize the maximum amount of obligated federal funds or risk having to deobligate those unused funds. If the base bids (the minimum that must be awarded) come in over budget, the entire bid package can be withdrawn.

## **District 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

**Coho:** A half-day of seining on lower Cascade Creek by Jenny DeGroot (Speckled Trout Consulting), Tyler, Scot and Steve Boessow (WDFW) netted a total of 360 fish (Photo 10). The majority were sculpins, which is typical. At 12 total, Chinook salmon numbers seemed low. This may be due to a lower-than-expected emergence due to scouring flows over the winter and/or to the possibility that some have already entered saltwater. Seining also yielded a total of 19 Coastal Cutthroat trout and one invasive Eastern Brook Trout. Despite limited rainfall, stream flow is currently adequate, as the Rosario diversion appears to be inactive. With Peter's support, Eliza prepared a Special Use Permit to WDFW Fish Biologist Monica Blanchard for a lamprey survey in Cascade Creek. Although we haven't encountered lamprey during fish surveys, a recent eDNA report indicated their potential presence.

**Crescent Beach:** In response to a report of a European green crab (EGC) molt on the beach, we granted sampling access to Micah Mitchell with the EGC unit of the WDFW invasive species team. They will also sample at Eastsound Waterfront Park and Judd Cove. Peter worked with Troy Buckley (SJC Noxious Weed Program) to manage tansy ragwort and resprouting Himalayan blackberry around recent plantings in the reforestation area of the preserve.

**Diamond Hill:** Jason Ontjes (SJC Noxious Weed Program) joined Tyler, Scot and Peter in a difficult, half-day spurge laurel pull in the eastern half of the Preserve.

**Dolphin Bay property:** Peter drafted a Stewardship and Management Plan and provided it to staff for internal review. He will provide it to Commissioners next. With help from the ICC, Tyler and Scot used small trees and brush to decommission former logging roads that won't be used as trails. Coordination continues around a planned training session for OIFR staff in the future parking area in late spring. With help from Tanja, staff will provide additional tours of the property for interested community members.

**Entrance Mountain:** Peter initiated a neighborhood conversation about the potential for coordinated tansy ragwort control along Kahboo Hill Road.

**Fowler's Pond:** Jason Ontjes assisted with holly and hawthorn control on the Preserve. Peter met this week with Jen-Jay to review the valve that controls flow through the dam.

**Turtleback Mountain:** Tyler and Scot wrapped up an arduous broom pulling season and promptly shifted their focus to invasive mullein. They also cut the grass around the new oaks in the South Entrance field. Tanja coordinated a birding walk last Saturday by Kim Middleton and was joined by 10 enthusiastic birders.

### **District 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Matt Currey

**Channel:** Matt removed a large scotch broom patch from the upper beach.

**Hummel Lake:** A Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forester visited the Preserve with staff to review a potential fuel reduction project on the driveway and roadside. Abundant mosquitos made routine mowing and trail work challenging. Matt pulled scotch broom along the field and roadside.

**Lopez Hill:** Completed a second round of noxious weed removal of scotch broom and isolated patches of herb Robert. Reviewed potential areas for fuel reduction projects. Amanda is working on the updated Stewardship and Management Plan and mapping habitat features like rocky balds.

**Richardson Marsh:** Staff completed routine mowing and cleaned up a pile of logs leftover from the Opalco right of way work.

**The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves:** Scotch broom removal is wrapping up and staff are shifting noxious weed removal to bull thistles.

**The Tombolo at Fisherman Bay Preserves:** Amanda and Matt spent a morning removing weeds in the upper beach and roadside margins. Meadow knapweed is a noxious weed, and salsify is a non-native that seems to be spreading rapidly.

**Weeks Wetland at Fisherman Bay Preserves:** Amanda found the platform damaged by a small fire. The surface of several deck boards were burned. The incident was reported to the sheriff's office, and staff rotated the boards to the other side.

**Upright Head:** A Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forester visited the Preserve to review a potential cost-share project for fuel reduction along the trail/road.

**Watmough:** Gathering of the Eagles canoe journey participants visited Watmough Head for ceremony and reflection.

Amanda prepared and submitted a grant application to the Heritage Capital Program for \$100,000 to stabilize the historic Chadwick House, one of the oldest buildings on Lopez. If awarded, the project would take place in 2028 and have volunteer participation through HistoriCorps. Amanda and Matt

removed poison hemlock, completed routine mowing and weed wacking, and plant maintenance on the revegetated former sport court site.

## PHOTOS



**Photo 1.** Samantha Martin leads a session on soil identification at the Wet Prairie workshop at Preservation Trust's JB Farm on Orcas Island.



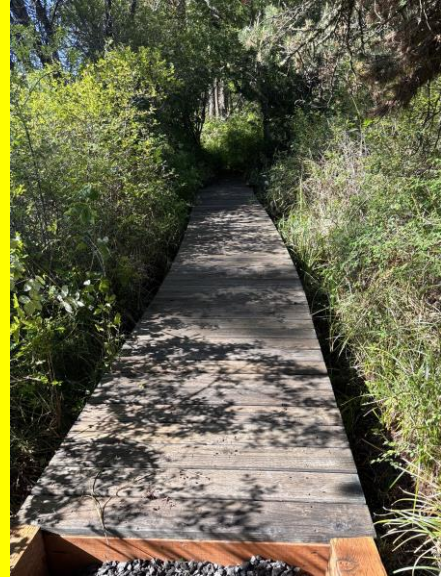
**Photo 2.** A guided bird walk at Turtleback Mountain Preserve led by Kim Middleton.



**Photos 3.** The greenhouse takes shape at the Salish Seeds Project nursery.



**Photos 4-5.** The greenhouse takes shape at the Salish Seeds Project nursery.



**Photo 6.** Western buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*) seed collection at the Salish Seeds Project nursery.

**Photo 7.** Volunteers Megan Bolitho, Peter Kilpatrick, Elliot Burch, and Thom Pence helped upgrade puncheon trail infrastructure on the American Camp Trail.

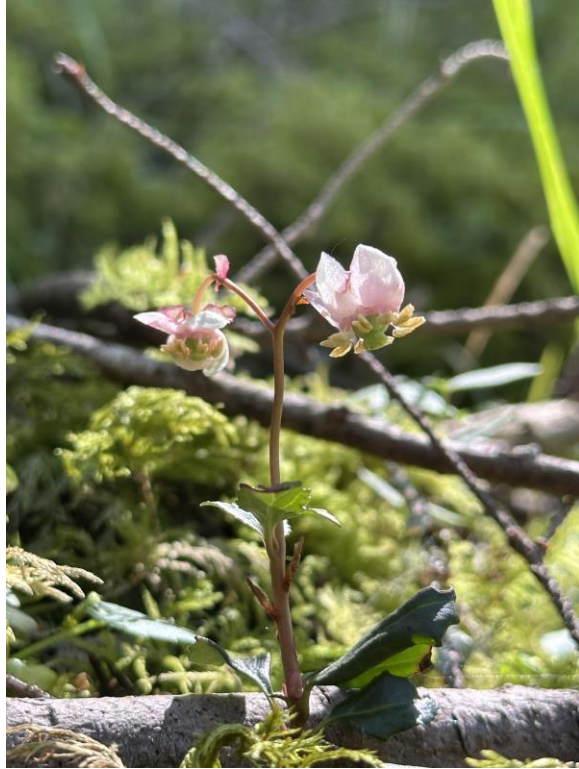


**Photo 8.** The AHS crew hard at work at Mount Grant.

**Photo 9.** Cactus in bloom at the Westside Preserve.



**Photo 10.** Jenny De Groot, Steve Boessow (WDFW) and Scot Devereaux observe and measure a Chinook salmon fry during Cascade Creek seining observations.



**Photo 11.** Prince's Pine (Pipsissewa) on Entrance Mountain Preserve.



**Photo 12.** Northern alligator lizard amongst sea blush on Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



**Photo 13.** White-crowned sparrow nest observed on Turtleback Mountain Preserve.