STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

AUGUST 2026

General

Staff have been making good progress on the policy manual update and expect to have a first draft for Commission review on or around September 1st. Many thanks to Peter for heading this Up!

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

Tanja has been busy preparing for the San Juan County Fair. Margo finished a busy round of summer camp programs for San Juan Island's Camp Eagle Rock, focusing on the importance of native plants and seed (Photos 1 and 2). Margo attempted to visit Lopez Island's summer camp but after two attempts that resulted in cancelled ferries, there was no other time to visit before their camp ended.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Staff took some time off in July and August. The focus is now on plant maintenance, seed cleaning, and getting ready for the Fall Native Wildflower Sale.

District 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: The YCC bushwhacked to a remote location known as the Scotch Broom Peninsula to follow up on years of eradication efforts. The crew also helped trim the trails as they went.

The first round of a hydrologic and water quality monitoring has been completed (Photo 3). Assessments have been informed by WA Dept Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program staff. The goal is to better understand existing conditions and how they may be contributing to decline of bog habitat. This will help inform wetland restoration priorities and actions.

Overmarsh: Staff hauled several truckloads of old fencing wire to the steel recycling bin at the dump. The Grange will be participating in the annual Farm Tours this Fall on September 27th from 12-4. Tansy ragwort removal occurred.

Beaverton Trail Project: Staff have been very busy coordinating the final push with project planning. 100% plans and permits have been submitted. We are working with the prime consultant on a revised cost estimate after the Land Bank and our consultant identified significant deficiencies with the current set. Cost estimates have been generated by a third-party firm whose services have been terminated. It is remarkable to have been able to get to get these submissions completed within the timeline we have been working – a job well done by Rachel Dietzman!

Cady Mountain: The Youth Conservation Corps hiked the length of the trail while trimming and weeding along the way (Photos 4 and 5). Our contractor broke ground for the restroom here as well as on Mount Grant Preserve. The permitting process for these restrooms began in 2023. Construction was delayed

due to inability to secure a contractor in 2025. Volunteers Peter Kilpatrick and Elliot Burch will be leading the effort to construct the buildings. The drainfield will be installed by our contractor, per SJC Health requirements.

Deadman Bay: The Preserve has been very busy with summer guests, but it remains in great condition. Staff reviewed Best Management Practices for driftwood structures due to community concern following an injury to a child at Jackon's beach and a death in the Bellingham area. Our practice is to request visitors disassemble structures if opportunity presents, and to disassemble all structures during regular weekly monitoring visits.

False Bay Creek: Staff have been in discussions with Public Works regarding the wetland mitigation plan to take place on the Preserve. Preparation for planting will likely happen in late summer, with planting happening in the fall and winter. Tansy ragwort removal occurred.

Frazer Homestead: Tansy ragwort removal occurred.

King Sisters: Tansy ragwort removal occurred.

Limekiln: The final draft of the cultural resource assessment covering Limekiln, Deadman Bay, Westside, and Mount Ben preserves is anticipated within the week. Staff and consultants had phone meetings with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers representing five different Tribes to discuss stewardship of cultural resources that have been identified.

Middlewood: Tansy was pulled recently, staff noted a general decrease this year at the Preserve.

Mount Ben: Staff did a weed sweep of the Preserve targeting tansy and mole plant. Very few plants were discovered!

Mount Grant: Restroom construction has begun (Photo 6)!

Third Lagoon: An increase in Preserve users has been noted by staff, mostly from boaters anchoring nearby.

Westside: Staff has noted an increase in trash in recent weeks, and high summer visitation.

Zylstra Lake: The Youth Conservation Corps hiked all over the Preserve targeting teasel in remote locations. The crew did very well considering hot weather and wildfire smoke. A restoration plan for the Riparian Grant Program funded project has been drafted and is being reviewed by partners. The project will focus on expanding previous work at the Emmerling Creek interface with Zylstra Lake, which has been identified as an ongoing source of nitrogen and phosphorus. Previous work included installation of three beaver dam analogs, adding large woody debris, and planting a 30-foot wide buffer on each side of the stream. This phase will enhance the beaver dam analogs, add large woody debris and expand the planted buffer to 100 feet. The plantings will include a small trial installation of wet prairie. Work is scheduled to begin in early October.

District 2
Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

Coho: Tyler and Scot supported the summer seining effort with Jenny DeGroot and WDFW Biologist Steve Boessow (Photo 8).

Crescent Beach: Staff and Jason Ontjes (Noxious Weed Program) put in a day of weed management.

Diamond Hill: Tyler conducted weed management on the balds and collected tower mustard seed to be used in Island Marble butterfly plots.

Dolphin Bay Property: The draft Stewardship and Management Plan is posted for public comment until early September. Peter and Tanja co-led a well-attended tour for the Orcas Senior Center. The permit application for proposed public improvements is in review. Public tours continue the third Thursday of each month.

Eastsound Waterfront: Tyler and Scot led a YCC crew in ivy removal and beach trash pickup.

Entrance Mountain: Tyler, Scot and Peter removed isolated patches of tansy (Photo 9).

Fowler's Pond: Peter met with Jen-Jay and a potential contractor to review options for removal of a beaver-constructed berm around the dam outlet (Photo 10). He then scheduled a meeting with Beavers Northwest to review design options for a pond leveler/beaver deceiver device to restore adequate winter overflow capacity. Pending permitting, we plan to proceed with work late this summer.

Judd Cove: Peter responded to additional project-related questions from the Army Corps of Engineers.

North Shore: Tyler spent a day with YCC pulling weeds among native plantings around the wetland restoration area (Photo 11).

President Channel: Tyler, Amanda, Shauna and Jacob joined in on the annual monitoring visit with Meghan Howard from SJPT and removed sparse weeds (Photo 12).

Turtleback Mountain: Use levels continue to be exceedingly high, with both parking lots often at full capacity. Tyler and Scot continued weed management efforts independently and in collaboration with Blackcap Restoration. The YCC assisted with trail brushing. Scot, Peter and Tyler completed maintenance on the connector trail between North and South Turtleback (Photo 13). Peter and Tyler installed a new bicycle rack at the North Entrance, re-set the kiosk on new brackets and moved the porta potty to a more accessible location (Photo 14).

District 3
Staff: Amanda Wedow and Katherine McDermott

We welcomed a new seasonal Field Assistant, Katherine McDermott. Katherine is a recent UW graduate in marine biology and has spent the last few weeks training on the Lopez preserves.

Amanda applied for cost share funding with the DNR for shaded fuel breaks on the Hummel Lake driveway and Upright Head road/trail.

Hummel Lake: A willow fell over the dock trail, and Amanda and Katherine cleared the path and completed some brushing along the trail.

Lopez Hill: Amanda and Katherine cut back vegetation along the driveway. Lopez Community Trails Network enjoyed a hike around the hill in mid-July (Photo 16). After careful monitoring, it was determined that the nighthawks had fledged (Photo 17) and the temporary closure sign at the top of the hill was removed.

Richardson Marsh: Staff removed noxious weeds and weed wacked along the trail.

Friends of the San Juans are initiating the Richardson Marsh Resiliency Research project to study hydrology and water quality of the marsh and surrounding area. Water level loggers will be installed on the Land Bank property, and they are reaching out to neighboring well owners for permission to test water quality.

Spencer Spit: Amanda completed the annual monitoring visit and performed some light maintenance. The trail counter data was downloaded and determined that the unit was malfunctioning.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: YCC helped with another round of noxious weed removal (Photo 18). Katherine has followed up on more bull thistle, scotch broom, and hidden arum seeds.

YCC also helped install island marble butterfly habitat plots. Landscape fabric tarps are laid out and stapled down to smother the grass before planting field mustard.

Staff replaced a signpost and ADA sign in the parking lot (damaged from earlier in the summer).

The Tombolo at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Amanda and Katherine removed noxious weeds along the roadside.

Weeks Wetland at Fisherman Bay Preserves: The trail was mowed and brushed. Staff removed noxious weeds from the Preserve. The WDFW green crab team will be monitoring on Lopez in August by placing traps in various places in Fisherman Bay.

Watmough: One of the Watmough buoys was replaced after it was damaged earlier this summer. Staff was contacted by OnBuoy, an app that provides information on mooring buoys and rents out private mooring buoys. As an example, State Parks has buoy information provided in the app.

General site maintenance included watering newer plantings, removing noxious weeds, trimming back vegetation around the buildings, and posting “fire risk high” signs.

PHOTOS





Photos 1 and 2. Camp Eagle Rock participants focus on cleaning native wildflower seed.



Photo 3. Volunteer Barrett Kennedy assisted with hydrologic and water quality data collection at Beaverton Marsh.




Photos 4 and 5. The YCC pulls scotch broom and explores the Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photo 6. Doug and Pete contemplate the new restroom installation at Mount Grant Preserve.



Photo 7. Conservation District and Land Bank staff taking soil samples to inform restoration activities at Zylstra Lake Preserve.





Photo 8. Steve Boessow (WDFW), Tyler and Scot during seining at Coho Preserve.
Photo 9. Scot tracks down tansy at Entrance Mountain Preserve.



Photo 10. Mud beaver dam surrounding Fowlers Pond outlet.



Photo 11. North Shore Preserve plantings growing well in their second season.



Photo 12. Shauna and Jacob observe a large madrona at President Channel Preserve.



Photo 13. Peter and Scot prepare to lay a culvert under the trail at Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 14. North Turtleback entrance improvements including bicycle rack and repositioned kiosk and toilet.



Photo 15. Noxious Weed Program Manager, Jason Ontjes, supporting invasive hawthorn control on Turtleback.




Photo 16 Trails Network hike at Lopez Hill.
Photo 17. Common nighthawk egg shells at Lopez Hill.



Photo 18. YCC at the Fisherman Bay Spit on a nice cloudy July day.