STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026

Overview
Many staff have been engaged in drafting sections of the policy manual as well as reviewing a draft.

Learning opportunity placeholder: In October, the Preservation Trust's Meghan Howard will be giving a presentation for the Co-Stewardship working group on *"Evolving toolkit for western conservation organizations supporting Indigenous stewardship and land return."* The event will be in-person with virtual option. Date, time, and location TBD (but likely on Orcas island)

Outreach
Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

The annual Fall Native Wildflower Sale went live on September 13th and closes on September 19th. A preview guide of available plants can be found HERE. Other outreach activities have included responding to hunting inquires and providing subsequent letters(s) of permission, supporting our second Beaverton Marsh Trail Open House, and Orcas Seniors enjoyed a tour and discussion around forest health work at Crescent Beach Preserve led by Tyler (Photos 1 and 2).

Salish Seeds Nursery
Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Staff are doing final preparations for the 2026 Fall Native Wildflower Plant Sale. As we approach fall, weeding and watering have started to taper, and staff have shifted to cleaning seed harvested throughout the season. Greenhouse progress continues as staff and volunteer time allows (Photo 3).

District 1
Staff: Doug McCutchen, Charlie Behnke, Jacob Wagner, Shauna Barrows

The District 1 forest assessment is proceeding on schedule. Field work should be complete by the end of the September, and our consultant estimates the draft of the report is 25% complete.

Staff met with the new "Pro Crew" iteration of the Islands Conservation Corps to go over projects together and discuss how to most effectively work with one another, including mutual expectations for work and communication.

Beaverton Marsh: A request for coordination for a Treaty harvest of labrador tea was received from a Lummi citizen and employee. The information was reviewed by staff and County Cultural Coordinator before an affirmative response was sent. Following delays due to breakdown of vendor's testing equipment, water quality samples of bog areas were returned. The breakdown effected ability to test some parameters, but glad to have this assessment finally underway. Mowing of select areas in the marsh has been initiated. The goal of the mowing is to reduce woody stem plants within the bog and adjacent areas as well as create pockets of open water habitat to support waterfowl. Early wet conditions prevented mowing the previous two years.

Beaverton Trail Project: All documents are submitted for review to WSDOT. It has been an effort, but our Local Programs WSDOT office has been very responsive. Upon approval, construction funds will be "obligated", i.e. available to use. We are still working out the finer details, but the next step is advertising the project for bid. We expect to do this in early November with the bid opening in late November. The details will be buttoned down once the funding is secure. These details will include an idea of the work windows. We also had a final review of the construction cost estimate. The current estimate is lean, but realistic. There is a scenario that allows us to complete the entire project with the available funds. View the project storyboards HERE.

Overmarsh Farm Commons: Will be hosting farm tours on Sunday September 27th from 12-4.

False Bay Creek: Charlie has been working with Public Works to address mitigation requirements of their Bailor Hill Road project which will take place on the Preserve.

Frazer Homestead: Interior fence construction will be installed this month by lessee as the final cost part of the current cost share project with SJICD.

Kellett Bluff: A wildfire in the driftwood was reported by a Henry Island resident on an early morning fishing trip (Photo 5). The individual reported the fire to dispatch as well as the Henry Island Fire Bridge before responding with a 5-gallon bucket. The small fire was readily extinguished, with the cause listed as "natural" after investigation by San Juan Island Fire Department.

King Sisters: Staff are following up on a request from neighbor for the installation of a sign reading "End of Trail" or similar wording at the west end of the trail, reporting they had experiences incidences of trespass. The party was not in favor of posting a private property sign on their property.

Cattle have been moved off the pastures, except for the old Scottish Highland cow that will often be seen side by side with the old ram. The flock of sheep is being rotationally grazed.

Limekiln: Bass were recently discovered in the lake, and the sighting was passed on to WDFW (Photo 6). It is suspected the fish were introduced recently. WDFW is concerned about the unsanctioned movement of fish, especially as it may complicate analysis of the success of the rotenone treatment last fall intended to eradicate the Northern Pike population.

Mount Ben: The "Acorn Team" returned to Mount Ben to search for successful seedlings from the planting effort in 2023 (Photo 7). A number of seedlings were found and flagged, and volunteers will return to place cages on select ones in the coming weeks. Blackcap Restoration reinitiated a combined habitat and public access project in the SW corner of the Preserve. Islands Conservation Corps (ICC), Samish Dept. Of Natural Resources, and Coast Salish Youth Coalition will continue the work, focusing on priority habitat areas along the proposed future trail corridor in the coming weeks. The goal is completing thinning within the vicinity of the trail corridor to reduce disruptions to future trail access as well as reducing safety concerns.

Mount Grant: Archery deer hunting season has started in the west basin of the Preserve. The Land Bank was lucky enough to host the brand-new Islands Conservation Corps on a new riparian grant project (RGP), adjacent to the landscape scale restoration project that spanned the previous 5 years. Volunteers have continued working on the foundation for a permanent restroom at the parking lot (Photo 8). Annual monitoring was conducted in partnership with the Preservation Trust.

Westside: The final draft of the cultural resource assessment spanning Limekiln, Deadman Bay, Westside, and Mount Ben was approved.

Zylstra Lake: Permitting for the restroom has been delayed due to disagreement on soil assessment between our consultant and Health department staff. Piezometers were installed to monitor and evaluate ground water through winter and spring before permit will be issued. Although permits for other sites had been approved in 2024, new staff at the health department are pursuing a different permitting process for the Toilet Tech restrooms, which will be applied retroactively to the previously permitted restrooms. Planning for the Riparian Grant Program funded restoration project is underway in collaboration with the Conservation District. The project will expand restoration buffer from 30 feet wide to 100 feet, with the goal of improving water quality and enhancing native biodiversity. The adjacent farmer/rancher informed staff that he has ceased irrigation for the year. The siphon was closed and downstream neighbors informed. A dead wood duck was reported by a member of the public. The bird was collected and frozen at the direction of WDFW for potential testing for bird flu.

District 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

Peter worked with a consultant, staff and two Commissioners to develop a first full draft of the Policy and Procedures Manual. The next draft will be available for review by the full Commission from 11/6 to 11/20.

Coffelt Farm: Tyler and Scot spent time weed whacking around plantings in the riparian zone along the stream corridor.

The cost share livestock heavy-use area improvement project is underway.

Lum Farm will be hosting Farm Tours the weekend of October 3rd.

Coho: Work on the RCO grant requirements for the additional acreage continues. As one final step, a consultant will complete a Phase I Environmental Assessment next week. Staff remain hopeful that closing will occur prior to the close of the year.

Crescent Beach: Staff have worked on weed management throughout the segments of the Preserve that received forest health treatments last summer.

Deer Harbor Waterfront: Tyler and Scot worked on clearing the trail of encroaching rose and blackberry and tagged a kayak that had been left on the beach. The owner removed it promptly.

Dolphin Bay Property: Monthly public tours continue on the third Thursday of the month. Peter inquired with SJC DCD about the status of the permit application and was told that it has yet to be reviewed. Staff eagerly await permits to begin preparing the property for public access.

Eastsound Waterfront: Staff removed trash and stabilized rocks along the path that lead down to the water.

Fowler's Pond: Peter and Tyler met with a project manager from Beavers Northwest to discuss the possibility of installing a beaver deceiver. A permit application is under way to remove beaver-deposited muck from around the dam outfall and to install a deceiver to prevent its reoccurrence.

Judd Cove: Tyler and Scot responded to downed trees on the upper trail segment.

North Shore: Staff conducted weed sweeps for persistent patches of tansy ragwort. Scot fixed replaced a damaged section of drainage pipe under the trail to the beach.

Turtleback Mountain: At the request of Brandon Roozen (WDFW), staff joined him in exploring the western portion of the mountain in further consideration of potential limited deer hunting. Staff spent multiple days with Jason Ontjes from the Noxious Weed Program managing blackberry patches on the southern slopes. Tyler and Scot scouted eroding creek drainages for potential addition of woody debris in anticipation of a grant funded effort by the ICC. Tyler and Scot responded to downed trees blocking segments of the northern trail loop.

District 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Katherine McDermott

Amanda was on vacation for a portion of the month. Katherine kept up with regular field monitoring and wrapped up the season's noxious weed work.

Channel: A tree that fell over the trail was cleared.

Lopez Hill: Katherine brushed overgrown salal along the trail system. Hunting season started September 1st. Hunting signs and vests were placed at entrances. So far, staff responded to sixteen hunting inquiries.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Amanda and Katherine cleaned and repainted the outhouse.

The Tombolo at Fisherman Bay Preserves: The WDFW green crab trapping in August caught a female green crab in Fisherman Bay. Another green crab was found in Mud Bay - these were first detections for Lopez.

Watmough Bay: The Heritage Capital Projects Grant Program announced project rankings, and the Chadwick House Stabilization made the final ranked list. The final list has to be approved for funding in the 2027-2029 State Capital Budget by the Washington State Legislature.

PHOTOS





Photo 1. Tyler highlighting wet vs dry areas of Crescent Beach Preserve during a forest health walk with Orcas Senior Center members.

Photo 2. During a forest health walk through Crescent Beach Preserve, Tyler explains how to identify a Serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia) leaf.

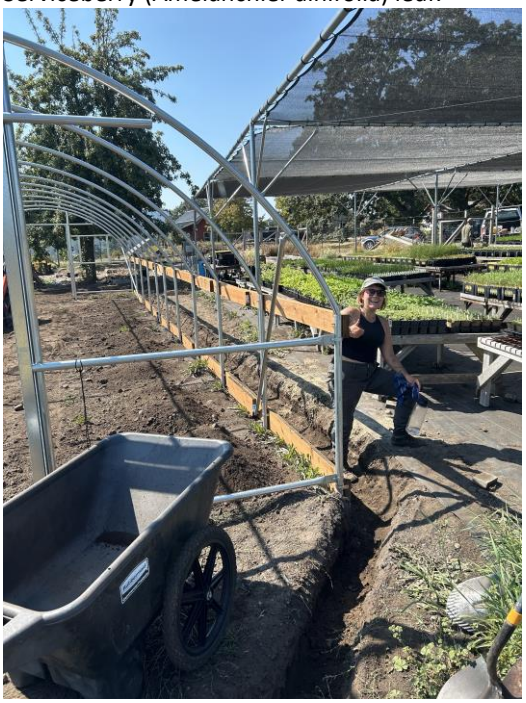



Photo 3. Shauna and Jacob helped out with the new greenhouse build at Salish Seeds Nursery. Shauna is very proud of that trench!

Photo 4. Garter snake in the Salish Seeds Project nursery plugs.




Photo 5. Area of very small wildfire at Kellett Bluff Preserve.
Photo 6. Newly introduced bass from Westside Lake.




Photo 7. One of the 6000+ acorns planted by volunteers in 2023.
Photo 8. Volunteers Peter Kilpatrick, Elliot Burch, and Barrett Kennedy pouring mini foundation for outhouse at Mount Grant trailhead.



Photo 9. European green crab 76mm adult female detected in Fisherman Bay.

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