STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

NOVEMBER 2026

Overview

Staff reviewed the second full draft of the Land Bank's revised policies and procedures manual. The Land Bank Commission will complete its review by November 20th in anticipation of considering a final draft in mid-December. With revised content and a more accessible format, the updated manual supports clarity and consistency in Land Bank operations.

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

This is the time of year when staff review past events and begin planning for the year ahead. Tanja has also been supporting additional Commission meetings and preparations for the upcoming Annual Retreat. Upcoming projects are the 2026 Annual Report, as well as implementing suggestions from a recent website audit completed by Treehouse Creative Digital Solutions.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Seven volunteers joined Land Bank staff on October 21st for the exciting step of covering the greenhouse with plastic (Photos 1-4). The operation was successfully completed under the supervision of star volunteer Tom Thornton (Cloud Mountain Farm). The structure has so far fared well in the first windstorms of fall. There are a handful of remaining tasks, including electrical wiring, that remain before the greenhouse will be fully functional. Staff also plans to build propagation tables for the greenhouse later this winter.

Volunteers at the year's final "third Thursday" event harvested over 1,000 camas bulbs, which will be replanted at restoration sites countywide. Orders of plugs and bulbs have been assembled and picked up by customers. Fall seed sales were brisk through mid-October. Many plugs and bulbs also await planting at Turtleback, Watmough Bay, Mount Grant, Cady Mountain, and other Land Bank preserves. The processing of seed from this year's harvest is nearly complete.

Staff are in the middle of seeding several thousand plugs for next year. Many of our local, native plants have seed that won't germinate unless it goes through weeks of cold and wet. So, fall is a busy time for sowing as well as for lining up orders for the upcoming year.

District 1

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

Our stewardship family is losing a key member! Jacob has put in notice that the first week of December will be his final week with the Land Bank. Jacob has been an amazing team member, helping us stay organized, always jumping in to support projects and colleagues, and providing a steady and dependable presence in caring for the Land Bank's conservation lands. Jacob will be missed!

Field work for the comprehensive forest assessment by Rain Shadow Consulting concluded with site visits to Mount Ben (Photo 5) and Zylstra Lake Preserve. We are on track for a first draft by the end of November.

Charlie participated in an Agroforestry Workshop organized by SJICD and WSU at Saturn Return's farm on SJI. Participants included local and regional farmers, tribal representatives and agricultural/conservation organizations.

Beaverton Marsh: We held our Beaverton Trail Site Walk with potential bidders on November 12. There are many companies on our plan holders list, both prime contractors and specialist subcontractors. We have had several clarifying questions and so far, everything looks reasonable for our December 1, 2026 Bid Opening.

Overmarsh Farm Commons garden plots are being put to bed with mulch and cover crops. The water system is winterized and planning is underway for next year.

Cady Mountain: Draft SMP is approaching readiness for internal review. Restroom installation stalled due to inclement weather and volunteer schedule constraints.

False Bay Creek: Fallow pastures were mowed to maintain pasture quality, control weeds, and support access for future wetland mitigation plantings.

Frazer Homestead: Lessees, the Shephard family, are nearing the end of the cost-share fence project. Cattle are grazing in the north pasture.

King Sisters: Sheep are being rotationally grazed and will be pulled off soon.

Limekiln: As noted in Zylstra below, a contract with Waterways Consulting is in process to provide assessment of the aging dam infrastructure in the pond at Limekiln. Field work is anticipated to begin in late November-early December.

Middlewood: Eliza sowed host plants for Island Marble Butterfly in 5 out of 6 plots located within a fenced habitat protection area. The sixth plot had been claimed by ground-nesting yellow jackets.

Mount Ben: Additional thinning was completed by Blackcap Restoration; staff seeded restoration areas.

Mount Grant: Deer hunting season concluded at the end of October. The season marked another positive year with no incidents or negative situations. Self-reporting suggests two deer were harvested. Progress on restroom installation stalled due to volunteer travel and inclement weather. Volunteer, Lars Sjoholm, is assembling additional signs for the Preserve.

Third Lagoon: A tree fell, demolishing a rotten entry gate which Jacob had been coordinating for replacement with DNR for at least a year. DNR will supply a new gate next week.

Westside: Doug has been in coordination with SJPT and the Department of Community Development regarding land use permitting for the proposed Westside-Mount Ben expansion of the Goldenback trail. A geotechnical assessment will be required. Land Bank and SJPT are exploring specifics on how to partner on this project.

Zylstra Lake: Doug & Charlie attempted installation of a water level and temperature monitoring well in Zylstra reservoir (Photo 9). Installation failed and will likely be shelved for the immediate future. San Juan Island Excavating will help repair entry road drainage issues as weather allows. Waterways Consulting's contract to assess a failing large culvert at Zylstra is expected to be in place within next week. Associated field work is anticipated in late November – early December. The "back 40" storage area has been partially cleaned and organized. A new Island Marble Butterfly plot was mowed in anticipation of additional site prep and out planting.

District 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman

Closing a very productive summer season on Orcas, Scot Devereaux wrapped up his role as the part-time Seasonal Field Assistant. Scot brought solid field and communication skills and lent his interest and abilities in data management to an effort to track trail use on several Orcas Preserves. Additional trail use data is available upon request (Photo 10).

Coffelt Farm: Under Charlie's watch, construction is nearly complete on the heavy-use-area improvement cost-share project at the site of the former mobile slaughter facility. Staff are considering whether it is feasible to finish the site in concrete or leave it as compacted gravel.

Coho: The acquisition project continues to advance slowly towards closing.

Crescent Beach: Tyler completed annual monitoring.

Deer Harbor: Tyler completed annual monitoring.

Dolphin Bay Property: Peter led the last tour of the season. Tyler and Scot deconstructed the deck and bridge over the creek outlet and then worked with the ICC crew on portions of the future trail (Photos 11-13).

Eastsound Waterfront: The planned shoreline restoration project advanced by Friends of the San Juans will not proceed as planned due to their inability to secure a 10-year agreement from the owner of the private parcel impacted by the project. We're grateful to Friends staff for their efforts on this project.

Fowler's Pond: Tyler continues to remove beaver-placed debris from the outfall pipe (Photo 14). If the HPA permit from WDFW arrives this month as anticipated, we will remove mud and woody debris from around the pond outlet. This will restore lost outfall capacity and protect the dam while we continue to plan for outfall improvements and a beaver deceiver next year.

Judd Cove: Peter completed SJC and WDFW permit applications to support next summer's planned culvert replacements and stream restoration work. Tyler completed annual monitoring.

North Shore: Peter and Tyler visited the neighboring private parcel to evaluate future work associated with the potential acquisition. Tyler completed annual monitoring.

Turtleback Mountain: Staff and the ICC will finish adding roughly 130 small woody debris jams to five tributaries to help slow streamflow during increasingly strong winter downpours (Photo 15). Staff

hosted a planting event at the South Entrance on November 16th to celebrate the 20th year of the Preserve.

District 3
Staff: Amanda Wedow, Katherine McDermott

Katherine McDermott wrapped up her role as part-time Seasonal Field Assistant. She worked on a wide range of tasks and was much appreciated.

Hummel Lake: Amanda and Katherine removed old fencing from the roadside. Amanda offered a site tour of the proposed fuel reduction project along the driveway, but no one attended. Amanda is preparing a scope of work to complete the project this winter or early spring.

Lopez Hill: Amanda is working on the updated Stewardship and Management Plan. Hunting season wrapped up, with 55 hunter inquiries this year. Staff removed vests and hunting signs.

Amanda and Katherine had several field work projects. They removed a long section of old barbed wire and field fencing from the addition and completed trail work to improve tread and drainage on the entry trail. They also worked on removing ladder fuels along the south boundary.

Madrona Murphy led a mushroom walk with the Master Gardeners. While preparing for the mushroom walk, Madrona found an interesting slug in a mushroom. She identified it as a Blue-gray taildropper (*Prophysaon coeruleum*), which was confirmed by WDFW. "The Blue-gray taildropper is rare and perhaps declining in Washington, and its known populations are scattered and somewhat disjunct." https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/prophysaon-coeruleum#resources

Richardson Marsh: Staff completed annual monitoring and routine trail maintenance. During annual monitoring, staff noticed that a water monitoring pipe installed by Friends of the San Juans was damaged by cows in the field. A follow up trip is planned to reinstall the piezometer.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Seasonal trail closure sign was posted at the beach due to trail flooding during high tides (Photo 17).

Weeks Wetland at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Katherine continued to tackle blackberry removal along the trail and in the field. Staff observed that Douglas aster grew exceptionally well this year and collected seed for the Salish Seeds Project. Amanda completed annual monitoring.

Watmough: Staff reviewed the final draft of a Cooperative Use Agreement with the BLM for management at Watmough Bay.

PHOTOS






Photos 1-4. So many ladders, even more hands! Greenhouse construction underway in a magnificent effort from volunteers and staff.



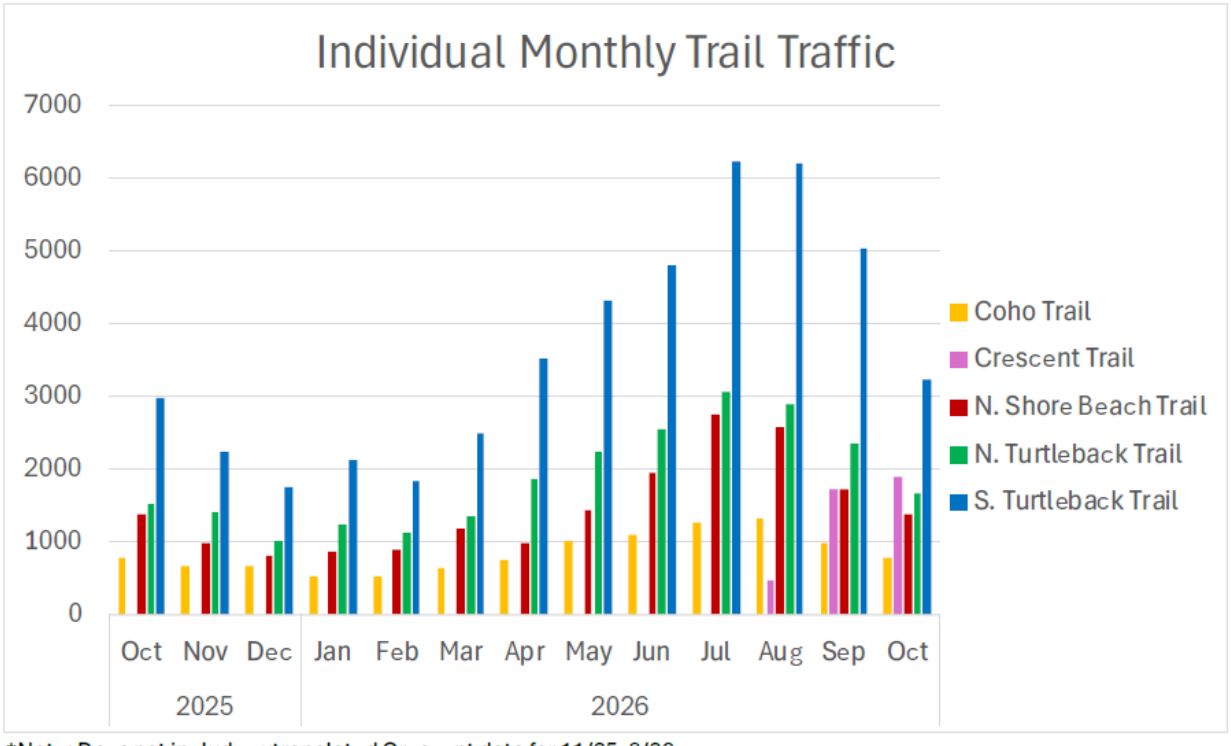

Photo 5. Mike & Ryan of Rain Shadow Consulting admiring a massive thatch ant colony at Mount Ben Preserve.
Photo 6. Deploying EPDM sheets to occlude the site for wet prairie preparation.




Photos 7-8. Auguring hundreds of holes at the Zylstra Emmerling Creek restoration site to help break up clay soils in anticipation of planting this winter.



Photo 9. Charlie and Doug rigged up to install the monitoring well at Zylstra. The project had unexpected setbacks and is on pause for the near term.



*Note: Does not include extrapolated Crescent data for 11/25–8/26

Photo 10. Excerpt from Orcas 12-month trail use summary.

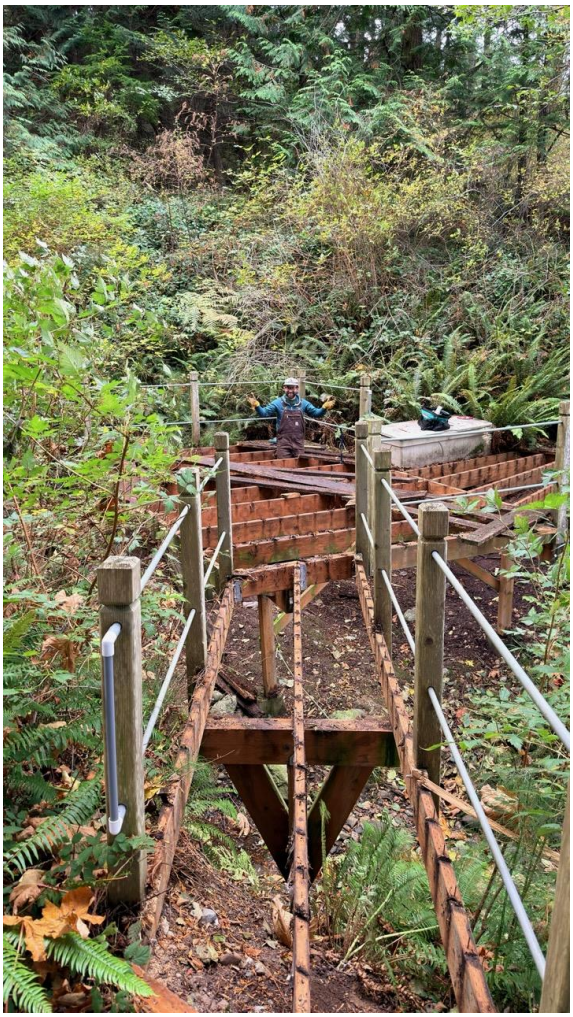



Photo 11. Staff removing Dolphin Bay deck and creek crossing.
Photo 12. Salvaged pressure treated lumber from removed deck and creek crossing.




Photo 13. Work under way on future Dolphin Bay trail.
Photo 14. Beaver handiwork debris removed from outlet pipe at Fowler's Pond.

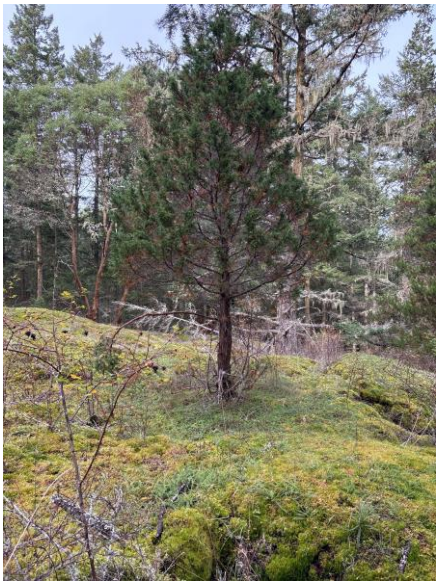



Photo 15. ICC works on woody debris installations on Turtleback.
Photo 16. A juniper tree, locally uncommon, growing on an herbaceous rocky bald on Lopez Hill.



Photo 17. Seasonal high tides at the Fisherman Bay Spit.