



South Puget Sound Program Highlights January – March 2007

The Nature Conservancy is committed to conservation within the South Sound region and the Willamette Valley /Puget Trough/Georgia Basin ecoregion. The Conservancy will continue to perform outstanding stewardship, protect key conservation parcels and promote a conservation community of cooperative partners.

Verifying Success at Halverson Springs

How often can you use a picture of a dead fish to communicate success? Halverson Springs is an important spawning area for trout and salmon at Fort Lewis. It is an area where pristine groundwater percolates up through gravelly outwash to create ideal spawning conditions.



Over the past decades, resource managers have watched as canarygrass and yellow iris almost completely degraded the spawning areas. Fort Lewis funded the Conservancy to remove the invasive plants and accumulated muck and replace it with clean spawning gravel. This effort saw almost immediate success, and in January more than 60 chum salmon were seen at one time and about 20 redds were counted. Halverson Springs has again become an important resource for Nisqually River salmon.



A spawned-out salmon verifies success of Conservancy restoration efforts at Halverson Springs, Ft. Lewis

North Sound Prairie Initiative

An initiative for prairie and oak woodland conservation in the North Puget Sound, funded by the Department of Defense, via TNC's Rare Species Project, has begun in earnest. The Whidbey-Camano Land Trust is these leading efforts, initially focusing on Whidbey Island. Already, several major developments are underway. A North Puget Sound Prairie Working Group has been formed with the mission to provide a venue for creating new partnerships, sharing expertise, developing and sharing resources, and effectively planning, coordinating and implementing prairie conservation activities.

The Land Trust also sponsored a Prairie Incentives Workshop in March. Presenters, including representatives from Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Project Bluebird, and Whidbey-Camano Land Trust, spoke about conservation incentives available to private landowners. The Conservancy produced a new brochure on conservation incentives available to private landowners for this workshop. The workshop was deemed a success, with several landowners expressing interest in restoring prairies on their lands, one wishing to donate an easement, and an eager individual who will be bringing Project Bluebird to Island County schools. For more information about the North Sound Initiative, go to www.northsoundprairies.org.



Ebey's Landing – one of the prairie sites on Whidbey Island that is the focus of the North Sound Prairie Initiative

Ft. Lewis and McChord Project

Typical Quarter – It was another typical quarter of restoration work at Ft. Lewis and McChord. Scotch broom was controlled on 415 acres. 25 acres of grey squirrel habitat were enhanced with brush control and planting of 1,000 native shrubs. Invading Douglas-fir was girdled on 72 acres, while 15,000 native prairie forbs and grasses were planted. Three miles of Clover Creek were restored with planting of 4,500 shrubs.

The project also initiated a new program to improve wildlife habitat by creating tree cavities. More than 50 acres of habitat were enhanced for cavity nesting mammals, amphibians and birds on Ft. Lewis.

Thurston County Project

Native Plant Workshop – Partnering with the Native Plant Salvage Project, and sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Conservancy held a Native Plant Workshop at the Littlerock Grange. Though targeted at Mima Prairie residents, participants traveled from as far as Seattle to participate in the workshop. Erica Guttman from the Salvage Project gave an overview of landscaping for wildlife, while Daeg Byrne led a hands-on demonstration of plant propagation. All the participants left with oak trees and other native plant goodies – so keep an eye out for the next workshop.

Rare Species Project

ACUB - The Conservancy and partners have been awarded an additional \$500,000 through the Fort Lewis Army Compatible Use Buffer Program for restoration and management work on South Sound prairies. This allotment brings the total up to just shy of \$1,000,000. The first round of on-the-ground projects is beginning in April and second round projects are currently in review by ACUB cooperators.

Action Summaries - With input from partners, conservation action summaries for each of the 4 federal candidate species that occur on South Sound prairies – streaked horned lark, Mazama pocket gopher, mardon skipper, and Taylor's checkerspot – have been completed. The rare species project works cooperatively among partners and organizations to promote those actions across the species' ranges. Presentations about collaborative conservation, particularly focused on the 4 candidates were given to the Society of Northwestern Vertebrate Biology and the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team at their respective annual meetings in Victoria, B.C.



Don't forget Prairie Appreciation Day – Saturday May 5th from 10-4 at Glacial Heritage Preserve. It should be fun for all.