



*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.*

### ***Western Gray Squirrel Conservation***

The western gray squirrel is listed as threatened by the state of Washington, and is a federal species of concern for the western Washington region. Fort Lewis has the last remaining population in western Washington, a population which has become the focus of a significant multi-partner conservation effort.

For several years, Fort Lewis has partnered with The Conservancy to conduct habitat restoration, squirrel monitoring and invasive species management. Recently, WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife has increased its participation in squirrel conservation on Ft. Lewis. Using mitigation funds from the cross base highway, WDFW is working with Fort Lewis and TNC to perform radio-telemetry monitoring of gray squirrels to better inform management actions. WDFW is also using these funds to solicit participation from an academic institution to help the partners develop and implement a controlled western gray squirrel population augmentation program. These recent developments will help bring squirrel conservation to an elevated level of sophistication, and will be important guides to future progress.



*Western gray squirrel investigating a hair-snag monitoring tube on Ft. Lewis.*

### ***Morgan-Tenalquot Preserve Enhanced***

Restoration of Morgan Prairie, The Nature Conservancy preserve adjacent to Ft Lewis, began in earnest over the winter. Restoration crews removed hundreds of Douglas-fir from the grassland. Areas where trees were removed and slash burned were planted with more than 15,000 plugs of native fescue and forbs. In addition to fir removal, Scotch broom was also controlled throughout the site. The restoration work is possible due to multiple funding sources including WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and The Nature Conservancy. More fir removal will continue over the winter, with grassland enhancement efforts beginning this spring.



*Slash piles burning on now, open prairie at Morgan-Tenalquot Preserve.*

## ***Ft. Lewis and McChord Project***

**Annual Reports** – The Conservancy’s crew at Ft. Lewis and McChord continues to make demonstrable enhancements to one of the most important conservation landscapes in South Sound. The crew is conducting biological surveys, restoring prairie, enhancing streams and wetlands and improving habitat for some of the rarest species in the region. The diversity, amount and quality of work produced by the crew are impressive and too lengthy to even summarize in these highlights. But each year the project produces a comprehensive annual report on actions at each of these installations. This year’s reports are almost completed and will soon be available on [www.southsoundprairies.org](http://www.southsoundprairies.org). Keep an eye on the website and take a look at the reports, you will be impressed by the conservation completed by The Conservancy’s crew.



*Chemical control of noxious weeds is one of the tasks described in the annual reports. Cliff Chapman at Ft. Lewis.*

## ***Thurston County Project***

**Chehalis Basin Knotweed Project** – The Chehalis Basin Knotweed Control Project is entering its fourth year conducting survey and treatment of knotweed within the third largest watershed in Washington. In 2006, WA Dept of Agriculture funded Conservancy surveys and knotweed control over a significant portion of the watershed, 141 river miles in some of the most diverse and biologically sensitive areas.

For 2007 The Conservancy has solicited funding for landowner outreach in collaboration with the Chehalis Basin Partnership. This will enable us to communicate with community groups and individuals to gain greater support for knotweed control. The Conservancy will also begin restoration plantings with local middle school students to demonstrate the link between stream health and salmon. The project is also seeking funds to survey and treat knotweed on the Satsop River watershed. The Satsop has been recently highlighted by The Conservancy’s *Assessment of Freshwater Systems in Washington State* as one of, “the best opportunities for conservation of Washington’s native freshwater species and natural systems.” Working on the Satsop will bring us closer to the goal of comprehensive knotweed control in the Chehalis River Basin.

## ***Rare Species Project***

**Project Manager** – We are pleased that Hannah Anderson has joined the South Sound Program as Rare Species Project Manager. Hannah is recently from WA Dept. of Transportation and the International Canopy Network. She has plenty of prairie experience from studying streaked horned larks here in South Sound. Hannah is managing two Dept. of Defense funded projects – Rare Species Cooperative Conservation and Army Compatible Use Buffer. Products for these grants are continuing apace. The multi-partner, multi-species Prairie Candidate Conservation Agreement has reached an initial draft while the first round of funding from the Compatible Use Buffer program is ready to be awarded.



*Hannah Anderson – Rare Species Project Manager conversing with one of those species, a Mazama pocket gopher.*