



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.

Shotwell's Landing Restoration

Shotwell's Landing is a unit of the Conservancy's Black River Preserve; it is the property formerly known as Rainbow Valley. Over the last three years the appearance and activities at Shotwell's Landing have changed dramatically. An initial restoration of Rainbow Creek has been very successful with a suite of birds using maturing trees and shrubs and salmon spawning in the creek. The property is also home to the Conservancy's native plant nursery, which propagates at least a quarter of a million plants for prairie restoration each year.

This quarter a major step was taken to create suitable habitat for some of the Black River's rarest species. The creation of microtopographic swales, with funding from the Natural Resource

Conservation Service, will increase the duration of water retention in portions of the wetlands on Shotwell's. We anticipate this will create habitat suitable for the Oregon spotted frog, a state-endangered and federal-candidate. Reintroduction of the frog to Shotwell's is scheduled for this spring.



Excavator begins to remove sod of reed canarygrass and forming microtopographic swale at Shotwell's Landing.

Army Funds Regional Prairie Conservation

The US Army has awarded the Conservancy the first installment of a \$2.2 million grant to promote prairie restoration and assist in the recovery of four federal candidate prairie species. The Army Compatible Use Buffer Program awarded the funds based on Ft. Lewis' application. The funding is expected to boost conditions on regional prairies and to enhance habitat for the rare species. This should reduce the need for federal listing of these species, and any potential conflicts such a listing would cause for military training on Ft. Lewis. The funds will be primarily dispersed to cooperators, which includes state and county agencies, for actions on local prairies. This program compliments similar actions that are taking place on Ft. Lewis, which the Conservancy also assists. The proactive regional approach to conservation of this award mirrors the philosophy of Ft. Lewis's Sustainability Program, which contains a goal for the recovery of all rare species in the South Puget Sound region by 2025.

Ft. Lewis and McChord Project

Scotch broom – Scotch broom continues to be the greatest biological threat to our prairies. Scotch broom alters the basic structure and functions of prairie habitat, making prairies uninhabitable to all but the most adaptive native species. On Ft. Lewis and other prairies we use an integrated control approach that matches control technique to the density and distribution of Scotch broom. On Ft. Lewis we have made steady progress on the control of Scotch broom on multiple priority prairies. This last quarter, the Ft. Lewis Field Crew, aided by the Washington Conservation Corps, controlled Scotch broom on substantial parts of Ft. Lewis prairies. At least 700 acres of Scotch broom were controlled on the grasslands and oak woodlands of Ft. Lewis. This effort was in addition to significant work controlling other noxious weeds, including a new effort focused on weeds in priority wetlands.

New Mowing Deck - The acquisition of a new mowing deck for our tractors would not normally make the quarterly highlights, but with the help of McChord Air Force Base the Conservancy is trying a new type of mowing deck, a 'wet' blade. This deck cuts Scotch broom and other woody vegetation and simultaneously applies small amounts of herbicide to the stalk of the plant. This double-whammy might be just the treat we are looking to give some of our invading plants. Our hopes are high for this control technique. Initial trials are just underway – we will keep you updated on results next quarter.



Wet blade mower in action at McChord Air Force Base.

Thurston County Project

Gophers Make Home at Wolf Haven – Last winter Conservancy and WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife staff translocated Mazama pocket gophers from a site slated for development to Wolf Haven. The good news is that these gophers have survived. The prairie at Wolf Haven, which the Conservancy has been helping to restore, is now home to pocket gophers. This is a great positive success for this rare species. Additional translocations, from another nearby site slated for development, will be taking place this fall. Let's hope this effort is just as successful and thanks to WDFW for initiating the effort and Wolf Haven for offering their site.

Mima Mounds Restoration – The Conservancy has been working with WA Dept. of Natural Resources at Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve for several decades. Recently, efforts have focused on restoration, including the control of Scotch broom. The use of an innovative strategy, where broom control techniques are integrated to the condition of broom along two different spatial scales has been very successful. Carri Marschner reported findings about the program at the Invasive Species Conference held recently at UW. Other presentations by South Sound staff at the conference included Chehalis Knotweed (April Johnson) and Sulphur Cinquefoil (Cliff Chapman).



Scotch broom at Mima Mounds NAP has declined dramatically.