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.

Wolf Haven Conservation Project

The Nature Conservancy has been working in cooperation Wolf Haven International to restore prairie habitat for the past five years with funding from NRCS and USFWS. As the habitat has improved the ecological importance of this relative small (50 acres) preserve to the eco-region has become more evident. It has become clear that sites of this size can support many of the rare and endangered species associated with South Puget prairies and oak woodlands. In 2007 Wolf Haven received a Private Stewardship Grant (PSG) from USFWS. The objective of the PSG is to restore high-quality prairie habitat at Wolf Haven. Improved habitat quality will provide opportunities for the enhancement, colonization, or introduction of six at-risk animal species including Mazama pocket gopher, Mardon skipper, and Taylor's checkerspot (all Federal candidates). In addition, the federally threatened golden paintbrush will be re-introduced at the site. The Mazama pocket gopher has already been successfully translocated to the site and rare butterflies such as the Zerene fritillary are currently utilizing the prairie. This fall Golden paintbrush will be planted as part of the recovery efforts for the species.

Zerene Fritillary at Wolf Haven – July, 2007

Youth Leadership Corps.

In June, the South Sound program initiated an exciting new partnership with the Tacoma Urban League's Youth Leadership Corp. The Leadership Corp provides a foundation for underserved inner-city youth to improve their work ethic and trade skills while guiding them to complete their education and/or continue with higher education. The early days were a bit of a transition for some of the crew members as they learned to identify invasive weeds and faced snakes and assorted insects for the first time. They have quickly adapted to a routine that currently includes reed canarygrass control along one of the most productive tributaries of the Nisqually River. We are optimistic that this four-month trial project will lead to future opportunities.

The Youth Leadership Crew takes a moment off from their field work.

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Ft. Lewis and McChord Project

Johnson Prairie on Ft. Lewis – No Broom and Looking Good!

Scotch broom milestone – The Fort Lewis project reached a milestone in Scotch broom control this last spring, after more than a decade of integrated management. A crew of five was able to brushcut all flowering broom stems on more than 500 acres of high priority prairie habitat in ***two weeks!*** In the past, this same area would have required about two months of tractor mowing and brush cutting to control the dense patches of broom. Mowing and cutting have restricted broom seed set in our core prairie habitats. Prescribed burning has killed broom and stimulated rapid depletion of its seedbank. Herbicide has also been carefully used to as a surrogate for fire to kill broom. Relentless application of this integrated strategy has brought us to a near maintenance control level on significant amounts of core prairie sites at Fort Lewis.

Thurston County Project

Chehalis Knotweed Control Project - The Nature Conservancy's Chehalis Basin Knotweed control project has received more support over the last several months through USFWS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in addition to the funding awarded from Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA) . The project started four years ago with a grant from WSDA and has matured to a project that has a goal of implementing a top-down treatment strategy for the Chehalis Watershed (2nd largest in Washington). This goal is feasible through the strong partnerships that TNC has developed with stakeholders in the watershed as well as the continued improvement of treatment techniques regionally. This year the Chehalis Basin project will work with the Skagit River project to replicate new treatment methods regionally in order to better inform the restoration community about the effective control of this habitat modifying invasive species.

Rare Species Project

ACUB - The second round of projects for the Fort Lewis ACUB have been selected and begun this quarter. $480,000 additional dollars have been obligated to on-the-ground projects including: Control of the invasive species Tall Oatgrass; Restoration planning for ACUB sites; Captive rearing for both Taylor's checkerspot and mardon skipper butterflies; Initiation of a Conservancy-led prescribed fire program; Taylor's checkerspot habitat selection study; mardon skipper oviposition study; Habitat enhancements for Taylor's checkerspot on grassy balds of the south Cascades; and Habitat enhancement in preparation for reintroduction of both Taylor's checkerspot and mardon skippers. Additionally, $25,000 in funds from USFWS has been secured for butterfly habitat enhancements in the south Puget Sound grasslands. Joint Taylor's checkerspot captive rearing efforts, led by WDFW and partially funded by ACUB, has had success this quarter with captive-reared caterpillars emerging as adults and flying at release sites.