



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

Conservancy Program will Transition to Center for Natural Lands Management

In March, The Nature Conservancy in Washington announced their intention to transition the South Sound Program to the Center for Natural Lands Management. The two organizations have signed a term sheet that agrees to transfer staff and programs in the South Sound to the Center in July 2011. Conservancy and Center staff are currently working on the details of transferring grants and other funding between the groups, striving to keep the transition as seamless as possible for conservation actions, partners and funding agencies. Transfer of the Conservancy's preserves in the South Sound will occur at a later date; stewardship of those preserves will be conducted by the Center in the interim.

The Center for Natural Lands Management is a California-based non-profit, that is a leader in mitigation-based conservation. They manage more than 34,000 acres for the conservation of 100 rare species. The Center owns land and holds conservation easements on 70 preserves throughout California. They are a recognized, industry-leader and have achieved accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance. The Center's management of financial resources is equally acclaimed to their rare species management, which allows the Center to meet their goal of inter-generational responsibility for places, species and finances. See www.cnlm.org for additional information.



Conference Links Airport Managers and Conservationists

The streaked horned lark is a rare bird with varied habitat tastes. It occurs on native prairie, coastal dunes, agricultural fields, wetland draw-downs, dredge material islands, and perhaps most surprising, at airports. In March 2010, aviation and wildlife professionals came together for an open discussion of the intersection between rare bird conservation and airfield management in the Pacific Northwest. Presentation and discussion topics included aviation and wildlife hazard management, streaked horned lark natural history, distribution, and regulation, and how airfield and other managers address multiple land use objectives while maintaining larks on their sites. The meeting was well attended with representation from throughout the historic range of the species and from a wide variety of public and private entities. Participants agreed that airfield management may not be in conflict with streaked horned larks and that opportunities exist to find solutions that both maintain airfield safety and conserve streaked horned larks.



Streaked horned lark male at McChord Field

Prairie Conservation

Squirrels Gain with Oak Woodland Enhancement – Winter work at Joint Base Lewis McChord focused on restoration of oak and pine woodlands. These habitat types are scattered throughout JBLM usually in small stands and have been a conservation priority for years. Western grey squirrels are one of several conservation targets that use this habitat. Looking at the stands of oaks individually, the importance of these restoration efforts can be difficult to evaluate. Yet the cumulative benefit of the forest management, Scotch broom control, understory supplementation and habitat structure creation has been tremendous. This is especially evident from the health of the western grey squirrel population on the installation. Once thought to be down to a handful of squirrels, the restoration, threat reduction and augmentation work of JBLM, The Conservancy and Washington Fish and Wildlife is showing benefits. Last fall WDFW and JBLM expanded the range of western grey squirrels, making their first reintroduction south of the Nisqually River. The squirrels, which are radio tagged, are reportedly making the best of our wet winter weather.

Wetland Conservation

Spring Amphibians – Amphibian monitoring in the South Sound is continuing this spring with efforts at Mima Creek Preserve and McChord Air Force Base. Monitoring at Mima Creek is part of a suitability assessment for the reintroduction of Oregon spotted frogs. These efforts have been ongoing for three years, and thus far have detected only native species, a positive result for reintroduction efforts. Native amphibians detected at Mima Creek include Red-legged frogs, Pacific chorus frog, Northwestern salamander and rough-skinned newt. At McChord, a follow-up survey of all reptile and amphibians is underway to assess changes and inform management. The survey has detected 11 species, one more than the previous effort in 1993/4. This spring amphibian funnel trapping captured Long-toed salamanders, Northwestern salamanders, Rough skinned newts, Pacific chorus frogs and Red-legged frogs. An additional sampling period will commence in May, with hopes of detecting Oregon spotted frogs, a historic resident of the base.



Regional Fire Program

Prescribed Fire Council - Sarah Hamman was recently awarded a fellowship from the Center for Collaborative Conservation (CCC), based at Colorado State University. The CCC Fellows Program aims to strengthen engagement among students, faculty, conservation practitioners and other stakeholders by promoting collaborative research, education and action on critical issues concerning conservation and livelihoods on landscapes around the globe. The third cohort of CCC Fellows will be working in eight countries, including Estonia, Kenya, Columbia, Nicaragua, Tibet, Ecuador, Tanzania and the United States. Through her fellowship, Sarah will develop a hub for collaborative fire management via the launch of a Prescribed Fire Council in the state of Washington. Specifically, she will plan and implement a two-day facilitated workshop that brings together participants from government fire management agencies, non-profit conservation organizations and private landowners to address the social and ecological challenges of prescribed burning across the state. This project could have potentially far-reaching impact upon the growth of a collaborative approach to fire management across the U.S. West, as formerly insular fire suppression organizations consider more prescribed burning, collaborative wildfire management and building ecosystem resilience to altered fire regimes. <http://www.collaborativeconservation.org/>

