

## South Puget Sound Program Highlights January – March 2010

*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.*

### CPOP Science Conference

If you didn't know, CPOP stands for Cascadia Prairie-Oak Partnership, a newly forming ecoregional group that recently sponsored a successful conference on oak and prairie conservation. The Conference was hosted in conjunction with the Northwest Scientific Association and was well attended, bringing more than 250 individuals from British Columbia, Washington and Oregon together to learn and collaborate on prairie and oak research, restoration, and conservation. Resulting from the provocative character of the presentations, CPOP will be publishing a comprehensive state-of-knowledge on the prairie-oak system in the peer-reviewed journal *Northwest Science*. The partnerships cemented at this event provide momentum for collaborative effort that will increase our ability to positively affect this fragile and rare system.

### ACUB Funding Awarded

\$600,000 of additional funding was awarded to The Nature Conservancy from the Army Compatible Use Buffer program for restoration and rare species recovery actions on lands outside Fort Lewis. A \$50,000 direct allocation from Joint Base: Lewis-McChord was also awarded. These funds are awarded in cooperation with the ACUB partners, including state agencies and non-profits. Over the past 5 years, ACUB funding has played a crucial role in improving prairie quality throughout the South Sound. In addition, the funding has supported several rare species translocations, which aim to establish new, or to augment current populations of plants, butterflies, birds and mammals. Nowhere else in the country is such a myriad of translocation efforts occurring within a single habitat. The Conservancy and partners hope to declare the establishment of new populations soon—it just takes time to establish self-reproducing populations.

### TNC Presentations at CPOP

- \* Ed Alverson (TNC Oregon) – Historical vegetation of the Willamette Valley
- \* Hannah Anderson – Columbia River streaked horned lark habitat analysis and restoration trial
- \* Laurel Carver – Prairie landowner's management guide
- \* Eric Delvin – Restoring highly degraded habitats for rare species in Puget Lowland prairies
- \* Casey Dennehy – Invasive plants of South Puget Sound prairies: success stories, control efforts, and future challenges
- \* Grace Diehl and Anita Goodrich – South Puget Lowland prairies native plant production: lessons learned and future challenges
- \* Patrick Dunn – Conservation of South Puget Lowland prairies-status and progress: 1995 to 2010
- \* Cheryl Fimbel – Butterfly habitat enhancement in Puget Lowland prairies
- \* Cheryl Fimbel – Pollinators on native and degraded Puget Lowland prairies
- \* Sanders Freed – Invasive squirrel control: a trial on Fort Lewis, Washington
- \* Sanders Freed – Bat box preference study on Fort Lewis, Washington
- \* Sarah Hamman – Fire in Pacific Northwest prairies and oak woodlands: a review
- \* Mason McKinley – Development and current status of the South Puget Sound cooperative ecological burn program
- \* Jason Nuckols (TNC Oregon) – Comparison of burning and mowing treatments in a Willamette Valley wet prairie, Oregon, 2001-2007

## Prairie Conservation

**Seed Germination Trials** - Plant production for South Sound prairie species is a challenging process with over 130 species of interest for restoration. Each species has individual germination requirements that have to be met in order to efficiently produce the plant materials needed for restoration. The Conservancy has initiated a study designed to evaluate the pre-treatment germination requirements of 30 species of forbs and grasses. After a literature review, four possible treatments were delineated including: direct sowing for outdoor stratification, imbibing (soaking in water) followed by cold or warm storage, and scarification (attempting to physically break the seed coat). These treatments are intended to increase germination rates through uniformity and allow nurseries to establish predictable sowing schedules. The study began in February 2010 and results will be evaluated by mid June 2010.



*Seed germination trials will help optimize production techniques for species like Gallardia.*

## Chehalis River Knotweed Control

**Restoration of Treatment Sites** – Since January, the knotweed team has planted 11,000 willow stakes in controlled knotweed sites throughout the Chehalis Basin. The restoration was focused primarily on the Satsop watershed, but plantings were established on the Newaukum River and Porter Creek. Willows are a first successional species in riparian habitats following disturbance. With the plantings in place, we have initiated the natural successional process which will mature with the added diversity of cottonwoods, ninebark, alders, (among others) and eventually conifers that will provide the ideal conditions for riparian species. We are grateful to the landowners that allow us to treat this noxious weed on their properties and restore the riverbanks on their private properties.

## Joint Base: Lewis/McChord Conservation

**Ft. Lewis and Fire Reports** – We don't often draw attention to a report as a conservation highlight, but the recently completed Ft. Lewis 2009 Annual Report is really worth the notice. A summary of work completed by the Conservancy over the last year, it gives a great overview of the breath and amount of conservation work the Conservancy is helping Ft. Lewis achieve. This includes several items that may not fit the standard paradigm of the program, including marbled murrelet surveys, bat box construction and trials, and stream restoration. Take a look at the report at [www.southsoundprairies.org](http://www.southsoundprairies.org). Another comprehensive report worth noting is the South Sound Program Prescribed Fire Report. It too is on the website.



*Mobile radar set-up at a murrelet survey station, 15 July, 2009, Fort Lewis, WA.*