



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.

Ecological Burn Program

Despite a historically wet spring and summer, the South Sound ecological burn program managed to achieve its primary objectives and make significant advancements. Overall, South Sound partners conducted 45 ecological burns, totaling over 3000 acres. This is an increase from 2009 of 15 burns and 1200 acres, even with half the burn window lost to poor weather. The burn program directly supported restoration efforts for several rare species: Taylor’ checkerspot and Mardon skipper butterflies, golden paintbrush, streaked-horned lark and Mazama pocket gopher. Fire was also a central component in several science projects designed to improve integrated restoration strategies. Three examples include: regional fire severity and effects monitoring; regional native seed trials; and prairie restoration on highly degraded sites. These projects will be producing results over the coming year that will help hone our application of future fires. Thanks to the dedication of our many partners, we continue to advance our skills as fire practitioners, strengthen our partnership network and have gained outside recognition for our successes.



A South Sound ecological burn is completed despite unseasonably wet weather for most of the 2010 summer.

Maintenance-level Control of Scotch Broom

Ever since integrated control of Scotch broom started here on South Sound prairies our goal has been getting infestations down to a maintenance level. Typically this was described as the background germination from a depleted Scotch broom seed bank, at a level where volunteers could take care of it. After a decade of intense effort, Scotch broom is now reaching those levels over much of several protected prairies. Mima Mounds, Glacial Heritage, Tenalquot Prairie Preserve and portions of Joint Base: Lewis/McChord are all approaching this level. For instance, at Glacial Heritage the majority of Scotch broom in the ‘interior’ prairie was treated by a crew of six in less than a week this fall. This is vastly different than past struggles, trying each year to just keep large sections of prairie from flowering and replenishing the seed bank.

We now take for granted that our prairies will have that open, grassland structure, but even maintaining that goal requires continued effort and oversight. At Mima Mounds, we have found that careful follow-up Scotch broom control is needed for years after ‘success’ seemed in hand. If you haven’t visited Mima Mounds or Glacial recently, stop by. Not only will the open views help cheer an upcoming winter day, but it will bring home the need for continuing, thoughtful stewardship. Also keep recruiting those volunteers, it looks like we have another decade of Scotch broom control for them to help with!

Prairie Conservation

Northwest Science Papers – The Cascadia Prairie and Oak Partnership conference earlier this year offered an opportunity for Conservancy staff and others to summarize recent findings and get them published in a compilation at Northwest Science. Our South Sound staff responded well and has submitted four papers. These add to our accumulating knowledge on invasive plant management, native plant and seed production, fire history and management, and climate change. The papers, with at least a dozen more are currently under review. They should be published in a special edition in 2011.

Cooperative Conservation

Integrating State Wildlife Plans – In cooperation with the State Wildlife Agencies in Oregon and Washington, the Conservancy is producing a document that captures the prairie conservation strategies and actions within the two states' Wildlife Action Plans, and builds upon them to produce an integrated, prioritized plan for prairie habitat conservation across the WPG Ecoregion. The integrated plan will provide public agencies, nonprofits, scientists and landowners with a “one stop shop” to see the strategies and actions considered to be most critical for conserving and restoring prairie habitat in the Ecoregion. It will include the most recent learning and practices on the many issues that affect prairies and oak woodlands – from invasive species to grazing impacts. The plan will also identify various areas where coordinated action between the States may be effective, and where opportunities exist to create best management practices, such as for prescribed burns.

The plan can additionally be used as a springboard to apply for grants to address particular needs identified within the plan, such as data gaps in scientific research or opportunities to create conservation programs spanning the Ecoregion. In protecting the prairie habitat in a coordinated manner, the rare and declining species that find a home in that habitat – such as the streaked horned lark, the Oregon spotted frog and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly – will correspondingly be protected.

South Sound Interns

In with the new - Every year as summer turns to fall, we sadly have to say goodbye to our Americorps members and get ready to welcome a crew of three new Americorps members. We had a fantastic 2009-2010 group so it was especially hard to let them go. Lauren Poulos has now started graduate school in fire ecology at the University of Oregon and Briana Abrahms is applying for graduate school at UW, hoping to study landscape connectivity and biodiversity in South Africa. We were able to hold on to Anita Goodrich, however, by making her our new permanent Native Plant Nursery Manager! We are thrilled to have her on our team and feel good knowing that our native plant and seed production program is in her capable hands. We welcomed in a great new group of Americorps members, including Liza Norment (Prairie Riparian Science Specialist), Ashley Smithers (Prairie Restoration and Volunteer Coordinator) and Ben Waldron (Native Plant Production Specialist). They will be helping us with everything from seed cleaning to monitoring amphibian populations for the next 10 months.

We have also acquired several wonderful, valuable volunteers over the past few months from a variety of places. José Arellano from Bolivia is a Fulbright Scholar at Univ. of Maryland was with us for 3 months, learning about prairie restoration and the native plant nursery. Meg Krug from TESC also assisted at Shotwell's Landing nursery for three months and we now have Sylvain Amiet from Switzerland and Autumn Pickett from TESC here to assist with plant production and prairie restoration throughout the fall and winter. Welcome and thank you all for your help!