

South Puget Sound Program Highlights October - December 2008

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.

DIRECT SEEDING

Early in December, nearly 13 acres of the 2008 burn unit at Tenalquot Prairie and about forty acres of the 2008 burn unit at Glacial Heritage were seeded with Roemer's fescue, a key prairie matrix species. Using a no-till seed drill and a broadcast seeder, TNC staff is re-establishing Roemer's fescue to the landscape. Application of each



The no-till seed drill at work on the prairies.

technique was made within prearranged random plots which will be monitored and compared in subsequent years. Because these seeding methods are so efficient, larger areas of prairie can be enhanced, if sufficient seed is available and effective techniques developed.

SARAH HAMMAN: RESTORATION ECOLOGIST



Sarah during a recent trek down the John Muir Trail in California.

Please welcome Sarah Hamman to the Nature Conservancy. She is based in Olympia, and will primarily focus on projects in the South Sound. Sarah has a wide background in ecology, with studies in California, Yellowstone, Colorado and most recently Florida. Her PhD is from Colorado State University, and she recently completed a post-doctoral appointment at University of Texas. She is already working to enhance our

knowledge of fire and soils in prairie systems, and has taken the lead investigating the effectiveness of large-scale seeding on the prairies.

PRAIRIE CONSERVATION

TNC Authors Published

Sharing research results with the scientific community is crucial for collaborative work and two staff members of the South Sound Program were published in journals this fall. Finding the Western gray squirrels has been difficult in the past but now with the publication of

Monitoring Western Gray Squirrels for Landscape Management in Western Washington *Northwest Science* (Vol. 82 (4): 299-308) by Cheryl Fimbel and Sanders Freed, a new method for monitoring has proven successful. Survey results can serve as a basis for management planning and lead to the application of other direct study techniques. Sanders published another paper with Kelly McAllister of the Washington State Dept. of Transportation, titled, Occurrence and Distribution of Mammals on the McChord Air Force Base, Washington, published in *Environmental Practice* (September 2008, 10(3): 116-124). McChord AFB is recognized as a biological stronghold in the South Puget Sound and the results of this survey will be useful to managers as a baseline for focused species efforts and future comparisons due to climate change and development.

MARINE CONSERVATION

Conservancy Helping Establish Marine Committee in Washington's Coast

Eric Delvin is actively working with an exploratory committee in Washington's Grays Harbor County to help establish the first Marine Resources Committee (MRC) on Washington's Pacific Coast. Approved by Congress in 1998, MRCs provide the foundation for scientifically sound, locally supported marine conservation. Grays Harbor County will serve as a pilot for state agencies, coastal counties, and other stakeholders to learn how best to establish their own MRC. The Grays Harbor MRC will likely address multiple marine issues important to conservation in the region. The exploratory committee has already developed a list of 'shovel ready' projects such as an estuary clean up event and a citizen wildlife project to monitor water quality and fish usage in the estuary.

COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION

Getting the Prairies Ready for Butterflies

The Fort Lewis Army Compatible Use Buffer Program (ACUB) is in its 3rd year of active projects to restore and enhance protected prairie sites in the South Puget Sound. The Conservancy has been working cooperatively with WA Depts. of Fish & Wildlife and Natural Resources to create habitat for rare butterflies for reintroductions of captive-reared animals. In November 2008, we

planted over 13,000 native plants important to the butterflies for larval food and adult nectar. In addition to enhancement, test release plots were established to learn about larval and adult habitat preferences. Through this collaborative framework we have been able to achieve a high level of conservation with wide-reaching impact for the species.



Taylor's checkerspot