

Nelson Property Port Susan Bay The Nature Conservancy Long-Term Stewardship Plan 2010

I. Introduction

Stewardship of the Nelson property will be the responsibility of The Nature Conservancy's North Puget Sound Program. Specifically, the North Puget Sound Stewardship Manager will implement stewardship and maintenance actions on this site. The Nelson property is located in Port Susan Bay, Washington (Figure 1).



Figure 1. An aerial photo of Nelson property with the approximate boundary. The inset picture shows location of the Nelson property in Port Susan Bay.

II. Current Conditions

The Nelson property consists of approximately 18 acres of high quality marine riparian forest and a feeder bluff, 15 acres of tidelands, and seven acres of pocket estuary. The marine riparian forest is comprised of mature Douglas fir, western hemlock, and

western red cedar trees with some snags. The forest along with the intertidal salt marshes and mud flats provide habitat for a variety of migratory and non migratory birds such as dabbling ducks, western grebe, great blue heron, loons, and shorebirds to name a few. The tidelands are in good condition. Island County has been controlling *Spartina* on these tidelands, and there are currently no mature *Spartina* plants on the site. There is a dike preventing intertidal connectivity to the pocket estuary below the riparian area. This has been preventing tidal exchange and has prevented large woody debris from moving as it would naturally. Currently, there is no public access to the property.

III. Desired Conditions

The marine riparian forest is in good condition providing quality habitat. Management actions will be designed to maintain this high functioning, high quality condition. Management of the tidelands habitat will maintain the high functionality of this habitat as well. TNC will coordinate with Island County and other members of the North Puget Sound *Spartina* Task Force to ensure that any future *Spartina* colonization is addressed immediately. Currently, the pocket estuary is impaired by a degraded, manmade dike, which is preventing intertidal connectivity. A restoration project is planned for completion in 2012 to restore tidal flow and other ecological processes to the pocket estuary. This project will have system-wide and species-specific benefits including improved access for juvenile salmon and other fish. Volunteer monitoring associated with the restoration project will inform evaluation and prioritization of related stewardship actions. There will continue to be no public access to the location.

IV. Adaptive Management

Stewardship planning and priorities will be re-evaluated after the restoration project is completed to ensure that all stewardship activities required to achieve long-term goals of the restoration and maintain the functionality of the restored pocket estuary are incorporated into the plan.

V. Maintenance and Monitoring schedule

Regular stewardship actions will be limited to annual visitation to assess site conditions and evaluate signs of trespassing. Volunteers will monitor restoration activities and bird populations. Through visits, monitoring, and communication with neighbors/community further stewardship actions and priorities will be identified. Anticipated actions include invasive species control, signage installation, trail maintenance or other actions as needed.

Stewardship Contact:
The Nature Conservancy
North Puget Sound office
410 N. 4th Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360.419.3125