



# Great Peninsula Conservancy

Protecting our lands and waters for generations to come.

Fall 2021



# Protecting forever the natural habitats, rural landscapes, and open spaces of the Great Peninsula.

Great Peninsula Conservancy  
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Sierra Kross, *Education Coordinator*  
Hannah McDonough, *Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator*  
Peter Alexander, *Development Coordinator*

Cover: Students from Catalyst Public Schools planted native species of trees in a patch cut at Grovers Creek Preserve as part of 2021's Land Labs. Photo by Hannah McDonough.



# Letter from the Director



Through the highs and lows of the second year of the pandemic, Great Peninsula Conservancy has steadfastly continued to protect and steward the most ecologically valuable lands of our region. I am inspired every day by the dedication of our staff, our Board, and our membership to the cause of conservation. Thank you!

On the land protection front, GPC's conservation team continues to secure millions of dollars in local, state, and federal grants that allow us to protect the vital wildlife habitat that defines our area. We're close to finalizing a major conservation easement on Kaukiki Farm, as well as expanding several existing preserves, including Miller Bay, Rocky Creek, and Filucy Bay.

Thanks to a generous anonymous donor, our growing stewardship team was able to outfit itself with tools of the trade, including a new work truck. This will make our monitoring work more efficient and our volunteer events better than ever. From the removal of a cabin on the Hood Canal shoreline, to an assisted migration project near Belfair, on to essential habitat restoration in North Kitsap, the team and community volunteers have made a real and lasting impact.

GPC is expanding our community opportunities to participate in conservation and stewardship with a focus on inclusion and equity. To that end, one of our highlights this year has been launching the Land Labs program in earnest. This standards-based education program puts local underserved middle schoolers to work as young scientists who help care for GPC preserves. It connects students with nature and opens their eyes to career pathways in STEM.

Finally, I'd like to say farewell to Erik Pedersen. Erik has been at the core of our stewardship team for over a decade now. His commitment to caring for the lands that are in our trust has helped make the organization what it is today. Thank you, Erik!

It's been a good year for Great Peninsula Conservancy, and we have even bigger plans for 2022. There's lots of work to be done, and we cannot do it without you. The annual challenge starts now to raise \$40,000 before the end of the year. All donations will be matched dollar for dollar. Please make your generous contribution with the enclosed envelope today. Thank you again, for making local conservation possible!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Nathan Daniel".

Nathan Daniel  
Executive Director





*Sierra Kross, Education Coordinator VISTA, leads a lesson at Grovers Creek.*



*Students get muddy learning about Olympia oysters.*

## At Grovers Creek Preserve

Mushrooms and salamanders were catching students' eyes all day long. A woodpecker fluttered past. Tree frogs were croaking in the distance. Deep in the forest at Grovers Creek Preserve, the rain wasn't so bad. But these moisture-loving organisms were thriving in the gloomy weather.

In Land Labs, Great Peninsula Conservancy partners with local schools to bring students to our preserves on guided field experiences, so they can connect with these pristine natural spaces. At Grovers Creek Preserve students learned about biodiversity and forest management. They had the chance to explore the living, vibrant forest – making scientific observations and using them as evidence to support or contradict their hypotheses.

This skill, of quietly observing the world around you, is one of the most important STEM skills that GPC's Land Labs team can model for students. There's no better place to teach it than outside on a GPC preserve.

Whether it was the mighty trees of the mature forest or the tiny creatures living beneath their branches, every student found something to connect with at Grovers Creek Preserve. We're so happy to have the chance to use this preserve as a learning laboratory, and work to pass on stewardship values to the next generation.

## At Klingel-Bryan-Beard Wildlife Refuge

For Logan, it was a dream come true. He was bursting at the seams with excitement when he talked about how he wanted to become a marine biologist. Now he had a chance to be face-to-face with a professional restoration ecologist from the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF).

On a sunny September morning, Logan explored the shorelines of the Klingel-Bryan-Beard Wildlife Refuge and Belfair State Park. He collected data on habitat conditions and helped the ongoing efforts to figure out whether PSRF should try and restore the historic populations of Olympia oysters that once thrived

in this corner of Hood Canal.

Some students, like Logan, showed up with a boatload of enthusiasm for STEM. But for some of the students this may have been their first invitation to be scientists. It may have been their first opportunity to explore a part of the Puget Sound's shoreline, and to activate their natural curiosity. These are the students that Land Labs hopes to reach. Sometimes, a student just needs to be invited to see themselves as a scientist.

The Land Labs activities at Grovers Creek were made possible by the Land Trust Alliance's Pacific Northwest Advancing Conservation Excellence Grant. Special thanks to Hood Canal Coordinating Council's Hood Canal Shellfish Initiative which for supporting GPC's cooperative partnership with Puget Sound Restoration Fund. Great Peninsula Conservancy is also thankful for the ongoing support of The Russell Family Foundation and AmeriCorps VISTA without whose support Land Labs would not have been possible.





# Welcome to Kaukiki Farm

Warwick and Janice Bryant bought the land for their sons' sake. They wanted the boys to grow up on a farm, as they had each done—Warwick in New Zealand, and Janice in Iowa. New Zealand is where Kaukiki Farm (cow-kick-kee) gets its name, from the tallest hill on the farm where Warwick grew up.

They couldn't have picked a better spot. A rich web of interconnected ecosystems and landscape features support the beautiful Kaukiki Farm on Key Peninsula, which is dedicated to sustainable agriculture. One edge is defined by more than a thousand feet of estuary shoreline and tidal marshes, fed by a stream where you can find salmon running every fall as they reach the culmination of their life cycle.

The stream winds through beautiful working farmland, dotted with grazing sheep whose wool is prized by local fiber artists. Beneath these fields are some of the richest soils on the Key Peninsula. The sustainable

practices used on this land not only protect and preserve the soil from degradation—these practices also prevent harmful runoff, protecting the stream and the estuary as well.

The stream is shaded by water-loving trees and shrubs, which connect to upland forests in the area. These habitats and refuges provide vital connectivity for the wildlife in the area. And the farm itself is dedicated to serving as a community resource, regularly hosting events and bringing people in.

There are many connections here between the fields, forests, stream, and Sound. By treating them with respect and care, the Bryant family ensures that the land continues to be bountiful for generations to come.

Places like Kaukiki Farm are increasingly threatened by development. Members of Great Peninsula Conservancy understand that people must live in balance with nature. That's why GPC has

partnered with the Bryant family, Pierce County Conservation Futures, and the state's Farmland Preservation program, to protect these places for the sake of those who will inherit these lands.

The management of Kaukiki Farm offers a model of coexistence with the natural systems that we depend on. This is a way of life not based in exploitation or extraction, but careful stewardship and cultivation of the land.

In return, the land provides bountiful harvests. The flock of Oxford Down ewes have been selected for their gentle natures, great mothering skills, and grass-based diet. Local fiber artists spin their wool into durable, beautiful yarn that will clothe local residents for many years. The cattle are Angus and Galloway breeds, and are cared for from birth, grazing on grasses without any pesticides or GMOs. The number of animals on the farm is limited to what the land can naturally sustain.





*Warwick Bryant with his sons on Kaukiki Farm.*

On odd-numbered years, Kaukiki Farm is a highlight of the Key Peninsula Farm Tours. Their commitment to community education is a great way to show people the benefits of their sustainable farming practices.

Before the end of the year, Great Peninsula Conservancy expects to purchase a conservation easement to protect this family farm for generations, while also safeguarding its wildlife habitat and movement corridors. Joining GPC's Rocky

Creek Preserve, Johnson South Sound Wildlife Refuge, and Filucy Bay Preserve, the Kaukiki Farm easement will expand the conservation footprint on Key Peninsula to over 450 acres.

Between the 77 acres of farmland and 40 acres of forestland, there's a lot to love about this beautiful spot on the Key Peninsula. It's worth taking a trip down to see it during the Key Peninsula Farm Tours, or at any other time when they're holding an event. This is a gorgeous asset to the community, and a model for how we can all be more sustainably integrated with our natural environment!

*Plan on joining the Bryant family in 2022 for a barn dance to raise funds for the long-term stewardship of this land. More details to come!*

## 2021 Conservation Projects

### Update from Conservation Director Erik Steffens

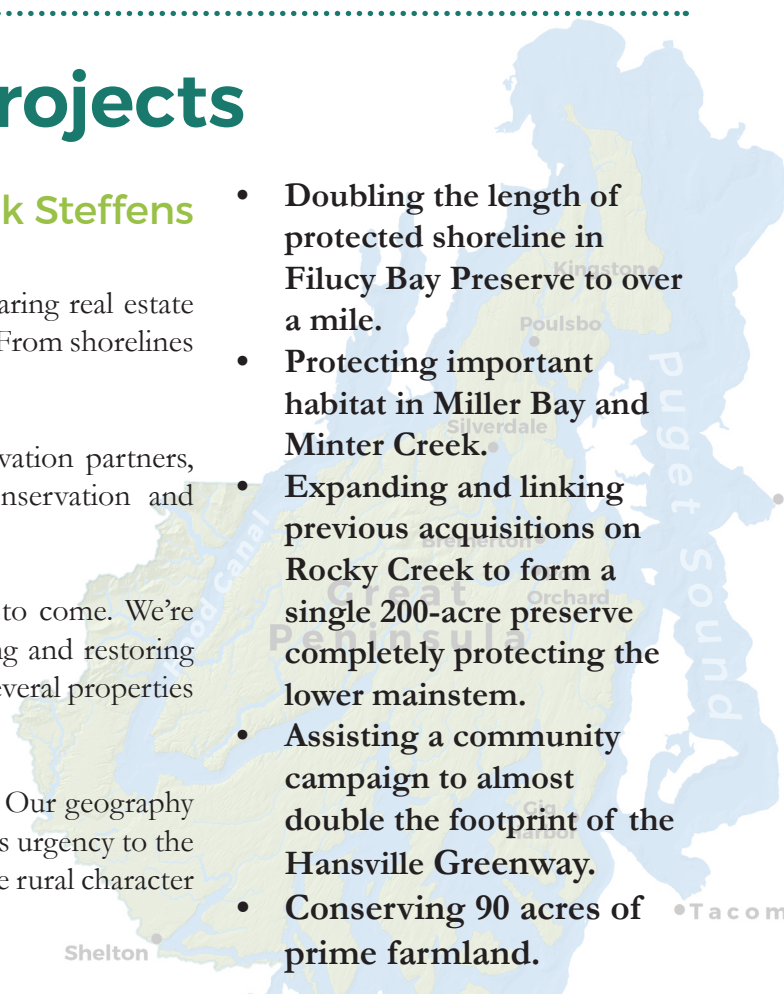
Despite facing the twin challenges of the pandemic and soaring real estate prices, 2021 has been a great year for our conservation work. From shorelines to working farms, we've closed on a record ten properties.

The lion's share of the credit goes to our amazing conservation partners, funders, and landowners who share our passion for conservation and determination to leave a lasting legacy.

2021 has also laid the groundwork for even bigger things to come. We're working on large-scale community forest projects, protecting and restoring miles of river and shoreline, as well as working to conserve several properties in the Gig Harbor area.

Perhaps the biggest lesson of 2021 is that our land is finite. Our geography is now squarely in the greater Seattle housing market. There is urgency to the work we do to protect the wild places, the future trails, and the rural character that makes this place special.

- **Doubling the length of protected shoreline in Filucy Bay Preserve to over a mile.**
- **Protecting important habitat in Miller Bay and Minter Creek.**
- **Expanding and linking previous acquisitions on Rocky Creek to form a single 200-acre preserve completely protecting the lower mainstem.**
- **Assisting a community campaign to almost double the footprint of the Hansville Greenway.**
- **Conserving 90 acres of prime farmland.**



# 2021 Stewardship Spotlight

## Wildlife Habitat, Native Vegetation, and Climate Resilience



*Volunteers are the core of GPC's stewardship program!*

### Hahobas Preserve Restoration

Out with the old and in with the new! With funding through the Mason Conservation District (MCD), the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and the Washington State Conservation Commission, GPC partnered with Cascade Excavators, Inc. in June to remove the old Boy Scouts cabin and vault toilet, located just off of Hahobas beach.

The removal of these structures, along with their associated septic tanks, foundations, and road allows the now-open area to be replanted. In January of 2022, GPC's stewardship team will plant over 400 native trees and shrubs along the shoreline. It will take time before this stewardship work yields any results. But time is on our side: GPC's lands are protected forever.

### Girdling and Habitat Piles

Most Pacific Northwest forests, including those that comprise GPC lands, were heavily logged in the early 19th century. As a result, the younger forest stands are commonly even-aged with little structural diversity, which is important for hosting diversity of wildlife species.

Snags and woody debris on the forest floor are often absent from many second growth forest stands, so GPC is working to create these features through two intensive management actions – girdling and building habitat piles. Girdling cuts off the nutrient supply to a tree, slowly killing it over time; habitat piles mimic the piles of downed logs and branches of mature forests.

This work is funded through Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and is contracted to continue over the next three years on nine different preserves.

### Assisted Migration

Over the past ten years, GPC members have gotten to watch as Klingel-Bryan-Beard Wetlands Wildlife Refuge transitioned from diked cattle pasture to restored saltmarsh.

GPC is continuing to work to improve the estuary habitat through funding from CSP and The Rose Foundation. In January 2022, in partnership with Dr. Jenise Bauman from Western Washington University, GPC will plant over 4,000 native trees and shrubs in parts of the preserve that remain impacted by the land's history of diking in this specific area. Dr. Jenise Bauman, a restoration ecologist and professor at WWU, along with graduate student Chelsea Harris, will be studying growth and mortality of Garry oak, shore pine, and Douglas-fir.

What makes this extra special? This study, as part of GPC's planting project, uses the practice of "assisted migration." For the purposes of this project, assisted migration means moving plants of the same species but a different genotype in response to climate change. Trees naturally migrate, but it can take hundreds of years, and our climate is changing faster than trees can move. Using USFS's "Seedlot Selection Tool," GPC stewardship staff identified areas that currently match the climate that our planting site is predicted to have in 100 years' time. In January 2022, head over to Klingel to plant trees from Humboldt County, CA, and Salem, OR!



# Planned Giving for the Future

## Why did you choose to leave a legacy for local conservation?

Great Peninsula Conservancy's Legacy Society members often have the common goal to preserve our natural areas for the next generation. Including GPC in your estate planning is one way to make a substantial investment for the future of local conservation. Legacy gifts are received most commonly through a bequest in your will, naming GPC as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or retirement account, or through a charitable remainder trust. Contact us to learn more: (360) 373-3500 or [info@greatpeninsula.org](mailto:info@greatpeninsula.org).

"We are lifelong residents of the Puget Sound region and have witnessed the **dramatic growth in the area and subsequent loss of our natural areas**. We looked for a local conservation organization that worked to protect these areas for current and future generations. **GPC has and continues to do an excellent job of protecting our critical natural areas**. We are pleased to offer ongoing financial support and to name them in our estate plans."

—Steve and Patti Marek, Tacoma

"We've watched as more development has taken place, and more forested acreage has fallen to the chainsaws. **Only through the dedication of active groups like GPC can our remaining natural lands be saved**, and the youngsters living here today be taught how important this effort is."

—Ron and Nancy Sefton, Poulsbo



*Members of GPC's Legacy Society and Conservancy Circle share breakfast at the annual reception in 2019.*

"Hood Canal has always been a magical place to me, but it wasn't just its beauty that drew me. It was the time I spent with my grandparents and other family members. It was at the canal where my father taught me life-saving skills. It was where my grandfather first showed me phosphorus at night by boat. It was where I was taught to respect and love nature. When I learned about GPC, I knew **I wanted to leave a legacy to this non-profit that will help preserve the region's shoreline for future generations of wildlife, shorebirds, and people.**"

—Karen Wylde, Vashon Island

## Anonymous Community Member Makes Major Gift

Along with three other local nonprofits, GPC was chosen to receive \$250,000 from a community member who has lived and worked in Bremerton for decades and wants the gift to support environmental protection. GPC has used the donation to purchase stewardship tools, including a work truck, and will be hiring a new staff member to the conservation team. This gift will make a huge impact on GPC's ability to acquire and preserve vital lands across the peninsula.

## Donate your Required Minimum Distributions to GPC!

If you're age 72 or older, you must withdraw a minimum amount each year from your traditional IRAs and employer-sponsored retirement plans. The money you're required to withdraw gets added to your taxable income. However, a qualified charitable distribution made payable directly to Great Peninsula Conservancy can be counted toward satisfying your RMD for the year and can be excluded from your taxable income.



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