



# Great Peninsula Conservancy

Protecting our lands and waters for generations to come

Fall 2022





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

Great Peninsula Conservancy  
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**Cover:** Volunteers pose in front of a habitat pile they built on a GPC preserve.  
**Back:** The Hansville community celebrated the grand opening of the new 100-acre Greenway expansion!



## Note from the Director



*Nate uses an increment borer to determine the age of a tree on a Walk & Talk.*

As you'll read, acquisition projects like the Newberry Woods Community Forest are great wins for conservation that also create new opportunities for community engagement, including Walk & Talks like the ones pictured here. The stewardship team has taken wildlife habitat improvement projects to a whole new level. That means our need for community volunteers has also sky rocketed. If you have yet to do so, please consider signing up for our E-news, so you can stay up to date on the many volunteer opportunities coming down the trail.

Because of the generosity of members like you, this year we've been able to increase staff on both the conservation and stewardship teams, further enhancing our community conservation approach to land protection. A portion of this added capacity comes in the form of gifts left to us by Legacy Society members. I urge you to consider your legacy and dream big about the change you can make right here in your community by making a matched pledge today. Thank you.

Nathan Daniel  
Executive Director



*GPC Stewardship Manager, Adrian Wolf, leads a Walk & Talk about ecological forestry at Grovers Creek Preserve with forester Jaal Mann.*

At Great Peninsula Conservancy, we remain focused on our core mission, which is to protect and care for the most ecologically valuable lands in our region. As a community-based organization, we rely on members, volunteers, staff, and board, to help preserve the natural character that defines west Puget Sound. Everyone that contributes to our mission—no matter the amount or number of hours—is an essential member of the team.



*Over 250 guests joined us at the annual Conservation Celebration in August.*



*Everyone enjoyed meeting in person again!*

## Conservation Celebration

This year's Conservation Celebration took a new form, combining 2021's film festival with the gala dinner of years past, at an all new location. The Board Equestrian Arena at the Kitsap County Fairgrounds served

as the perfect open-air space for reconnecting with friends and fellow GPC members. A moving keynote speech from tree canopy researcher Dr. Nalini Nadkarni was a highlight of the evening for many guests.

**Save the date on May 25, 2023! GPC returns to Kiana Lodge for our salmon dinner and a keynote address from Commissioner of Public Lands, Hilary Franz.**

## Join the Legacy Challenge

Leave a legacy that speaks to your love of nature. Your legacy gift in any amount allows Great Peninsula Conservancy to protect more forests, salmon streams, shorelines, and open space right here in our region.



Community members like Janine Dolezel, 1946 – 2021, (pictured above) join GPC's Legacy Society because they care deeply for the land and for their community. Janine was passionate about connecting kids to nature and supported GPC's youth education programs. Now, she is remembered in the conserved lands and waters around her North Kitsap

home and in every student field trip that her generous bequest helped make possible.

If you have been considering making a charitable bequest to Great Peninsula Conservancy, or making GPC a charitable beneficiary of a retirement plan, life insurance policy, or trust in your estate planning, now is the time to submit a pledge and join GPC's Legacy Society. Kit Ellis, former GPC board president and Legacy Society member, is helping incentivize all of us to include GPC in planned giving, no matter the amount. **For every new Legacy Pledge GPC receives, Kit will donate \$1,000, up to \$20,000!** By simply completing and returning a pledge form, you unlock \$1,000 that GPC will use today to protect ecologically valuable wildlife habitat.

“Land conservation has been at the heart of my family for generations. I know that Great Peninsula Conservancy will use my bequest

to protect and care for the lands and waters near my home. I take satisfaction in the knowledge that including GPC in my estate plan provides a meaningful gift to my community and to future generations that will inherit the natural areas that I love.”—Margaret “Kit” Ellis

To make your Legacy Pledge and help GPC protect lands forever, visit [www.greatpeninsula.org](http://www.greatpeninsula.org) or contact Nate Daniel at 360-373-3500 or [nate@greatpeninsula.org](mailto:nate@greatpeninsula.org).



*Conservancy Circle & Legacy Society members enjoyed a luncheon overlooking Port Gamble in June.*



# Ecological Forestry

Since time immemorial, Coast Salish tribes who live on and around the Great Peninsula—including the Suquamish, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Squaxin Island, Skokomish, Puyallup, and Nisqually—have managed a legacy of sustainable land-use that lives on in our forests today. In addition to foraging and hunting, tribes in the Pacific Northwest have cultivated “forest gardens” replete with native fruit trees, succulent greens, and tasty tubers. Their forest management practices provide food and ceremonial resources for people and increased the biodiversity of the forest.

Over the last 150 years, the vast

majority of the forests on the peninsula have been managed for timber, which played a central role in the economic development of our region, but decreased forest biodiversity by focusing on the cultivation of just one species — the fast growing Douglas fir.

Great Peninsula Conservancy (GPC) has prioritized the conservation of many of these monoculture, timberland tracts over the past four decades thanks to willing landowners, community volunteers, tribal partnerships, and private and public funds. To date, GPC has protected 5,463 acres of forest to maintain wildlife corridors, sequester carbon, improve watershed function, and preserve open space for recreation.

With each forest acquisition, GPC staff work with partners, like the Northwest Natural Resource Group (NNRG) and the Department of Natural Resources, to create an ecological forest management plan. Each plan ultimately has the same goal, to restore our forests to high functioning habitat that provides ecosystem services to both wildlife and humans. Depending on the history of land-use on GPC’s forest preserves, different lands have different management prescriptions

necessary to attain these goals. Natural processes, including fires, wind storms, and tree death, occur regularly in older, healthy forests and support habitat vital for wildlife. Many of GPC’s restoration practices implemented in young forest stands will mimic these natural processes.

At Grovers Creek Preserve in North Kitsap, GPC’s stewardship team is using ecological forestry strategies to manage and improve forest health of several young stands on the 279-acre property. These practices include thinning, snag creation, and patch cuts.

Currently, some stands on the preserve are severely overstocked, estimated to have as many as 500 trees per acre. By selectively **thinning** trees across 14 acres of the preserve, the biggest trees will be able to grow even bigger. The goal is to thin these stands to approximately 150–200 trees per acre. In addition, six 3-acre **patch cuts** will be created to mimic natural light gaps that occur from wind thrown trees. In each patch cut, the largest conifers are retained as “seed trees” for natural regeneration. Both thinning and patch cut techniques reduce forest fire fuels and leave the remaining trees with the resources

they need to grow stronger and faster. These prescriptions increase available sunlight and water, creating conditions ideal for increased species diversity in the herbaceous and midstory layers of the forest.

During the thinning and patch cut operations, standing dead trees—

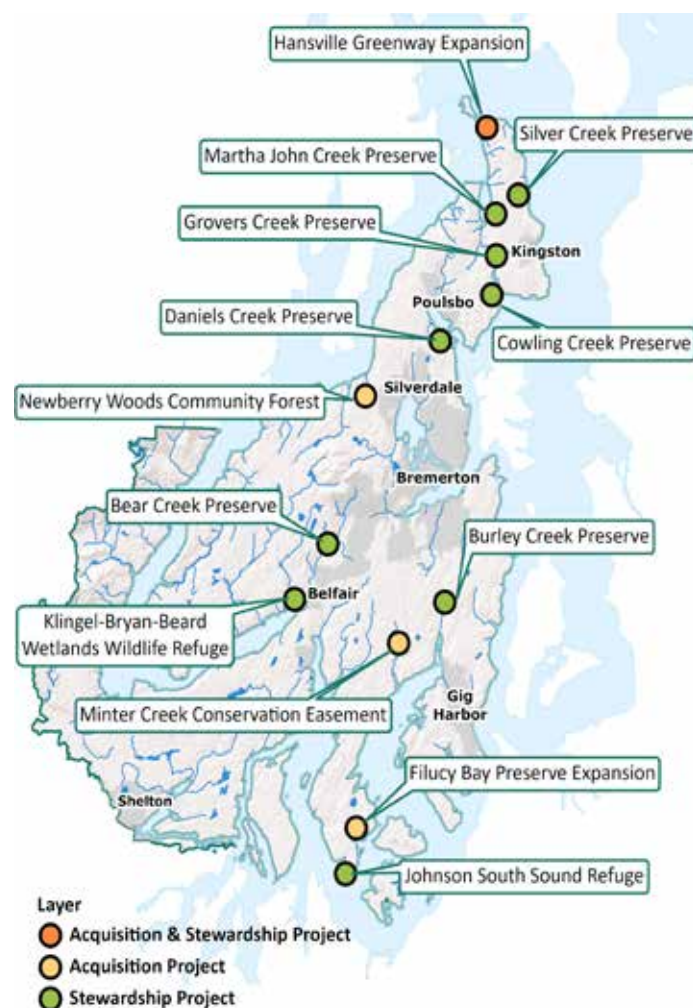
known as **snags**—stumps, and large downed logs are left in place. Many of the felled trees are also left to decompose on the forest floor. These legacy structures, referred to as **course woody debris**, serve as home for fungi, contribute to soil health, and provide critical habitat for wildlife. GPC’s stewardship team increases the number of snags in the preserve’s younger, less healthy stands by **girdling** trees, which entails cutting through the living cambium layer of the trunk to create a standing dead snag.

GPC’s restoration work is funded in part by the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) administered by a division of the US Department of Agriculture. Working with community volunteers, GPC’s stewardship team created over 500 structures, including habitat piles, constructed logs, and snags, across nine preserves (see map)! The ecological harvest at Grovers Creek Preserve (through thinning and patch cuts) will use light-impact machinery, or will be cut manually, to decrease disturbance to the forest and wildlife. Any proceeds from the harvest will return directly to support stewardship of the preserve.

Earlier this year, GPC purchased 100 acres to expand the Hansville Greenway. In addition to completing the record-breaking \$2 million campaign to buy the land, the amazing community raised an additional \$175,000 to help restore the land to what will eventually be a high functioning, ecologically diverse forest.

Trees are marked to be felled in a dark overstocked stand of Douglas fir on Grovers Creek Preserve.

2022 Highlights Map



Hansville community members cut the “ribbon” at the Hansville expansion opening.

GPC’s stewardship team is working with the Hansville Greenway Association and NNRG to finalize a management plan for this land, which has bountiful restoration opportunities. In addition to removing invasive species and planting native trees, the plan includes an exciting partnership with the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe to cultivate a First Foods Forest or “forest garden,” in the spirit of those found in the region for millennia.



Aerial view of an overstocked stand at Grovers Creek Preserve





# Welcome to Newberry Woods Community Forest

*Aerial view of GPC's 200-acre Newberry Woods Community Forest, which will be managed on behalf of the community.*

Great Peninsula Conservancy continues to prioritize the conservation of forests in our region. In Pierce County, GPC expanded the Filucy Bay Preserve forest by 20 acres and purchased a conservation easement on the forested salmon habitat on Minter Creek in Gig Harbor.

The most recent addition to GPC's protected forestlands lies between Seabeck and Silverdale, north of

one thousand acres enjoyed by the community at Newberry Hill Heritage Park. Great Peninsula Conservancy acquired the 200-acre Newberry Woods Community Forest in October 2022 with funding from the USDA's Community Forest Program, Kitsap County Conservation Futures, and the U.S. Navy's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program. Thanks to a generous donation by the landowners, a section of the forest will be named the Lindstrom Family Preserve.

With stunning views of Hood Canal, this forest protects 1.5 miles of the salmon-bearing Little Anderson Creek, and is home to a multitude of birds and other native wildlife. Community forests have many definitions, but broadly speaking, they are managed to provide a community benefit. As such, **Newberry Woods Community Forest will prioritize guidance by the community to help inform its purpose and management.**

The exact definition will be up to community members like you!

Great Peninsula Conservancy will be holding forest tours and community

meetings in January and February to help define the long-term vision of the Newberry Woods Community Forest. We will explore the relationship of the community to this forest and uncover the forest's values for both people and wildlife. Together, we will work to identify dynamic management goals for the forest that will support the needs of the community, including recreation and trail use, habitat restoration, education, and climate resilience.

## Forest Tours

**Jan 14, Jan 28, & Feb 11**  
**Saturdays 9 to 11am**

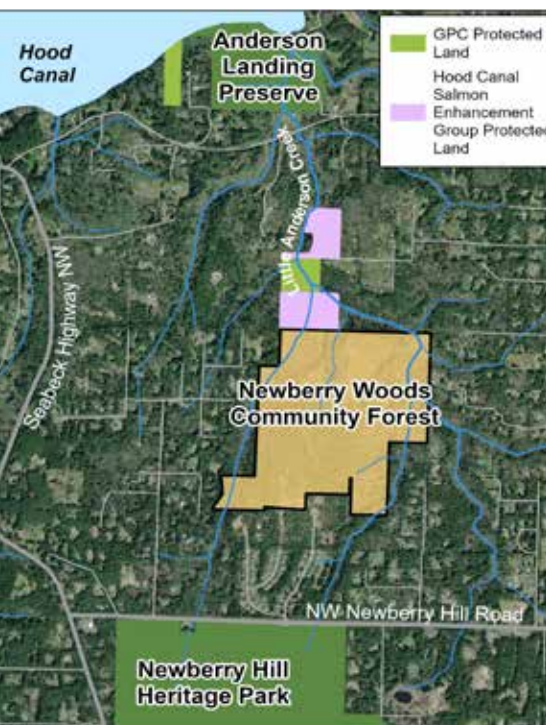
Come explore Newberry Woods Community Forest!

## Planning Meetings

**Jan 17, Jan 31, & Feb 15**  
**4:30 to 6:30pm**

Join your neighbors to discuss the potential objectives of and benefits from the community forest. Each meeting will build on the previous session. Meetings will be hybrid, held in-person at the Silverdale Library or via Zoom.

**Learn more and register at [greatpeninsula.org/events](https://greatpeninsula.org/events)**



*Newberry Woods will increase the protected lands in the watershed.*

# Inspiring the Future

On a cold, wet day in May, a class of fifth grade students braved the elements to take part in a rare opportunity to learn outside of the classroom. A new experience for many, the sights and sounds of the forest felt scary at first. One student shrieked at the sight of a pond snail and a dragonfly larvae, but by the end of the day she was showing off a caddisfly she had caught to all of her friends.

In 2022 GPC's Land Labs program entered its second year of connecting students with nature right here in our region. This spring, the Land Labs team led four field trips for students at Curley Creek Tyner Preserve, where they learned about the importance of stewardship through monitoring the creek. The data collected by these students will be used by GPC to monitor the water quality of Curley Creek, providing an important introduction to the possibilities in STEM career fields.

This summer, Land Labs had its first lesson at Misery Point Preserve in Seabeck. Students of all ages explored the wildlife along the Hood Canal shoreline and discovered the

importance of eelgrass beds to many native species of crabs, migratory birds, and salmon.

To explore the eelgrass beds in the Hood Canal, students and staff kayaked together around Misery Point, offering a new perspective on marine ecosystems that many students had never before experienced. These summer sessions connected students to the land in new ways and created a unique opportunity for environmental education outside of the normal school year.

This fall, Land Labs will take on its biggest endeavor yet: working with the entire seventh grade class at Mountain View Middle School, almost 300 students! The lesson at Grovers Creek Preserve is based on managing forests for climate resilience, an important focus for GPC's stewardship plan at the site.

Land Labs activities in 2022 were made possible by the Land Trust Alliance, the Women's Giving Circle Fund, and the KETA Legacy Foundation, as well as the ongoing support of the Russell Family Foundation and AmeriCorps VISTA program.



*Top: A student kayaks at Misery Point. Middle: One student examines a macroinvertebrate. Bottom: A VISTA member shows students how to sample from Curley Creek.*



*Leadership Kitsap volunteers helped erect a kiosk at Misery Point Preserve.*

## Community Events

This year was packed with events, including Walk & Talks and two ribbon cuttings to celebrate new GPC preserves. Both the publicly accessible Misery Point Preserve and the 100-acre Hansville Greenway Expansion received special recognition with their debuts to the local community. Walk & Talks in 2022 covered a multitude of topics and spaces, including a birding tour

through the Hansville Greenway, nature journaling at Sehmel Homestead Park, a lesson on lichens and moss in Banner Forest, and a historical tour of Davis Farm in Belfair.

Visit the events page on our website to see upcoming Walk & Talks and other opportunities to connect with the land at [greatpeninsula.org/events](https://greatpeninsula.org/events).





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Look inside to read more about forests and the benefits they bring to our community!