



## Biennium Overview

In 2011 and 2012, partnerships with the volunteer management organizations Earthcorps and Mountains to Sound Greenway continued, while commercial landscape contractors were hired to accomplish the majority of the work plan. A combination of volunteer and contract crews performed restoration on 139 acres in 19 parks and open spaces. Of this acreage, 14% was work in areas that had not previously received any restoration tasks. Contracted crews and volunteers planted 6,496 native trees and 3,027 native shrubs into 11 parks.

	2011-2012	2009-2010	2007-2008	2005-2006
Total acres worked	139	204	99.2	88.3
Trees planted	5,705	12,947	2,407	3,799
Shrubs planted	3,027	2,027	2,066	N/A
Ivy survival rings created	21.5 acres	37.4 acres	30.4 acres	2,233 rings
Volunteer events	114	109	92	125
Volunteers	6,496	4,148	2,089	1,312
Volunteer hours	12,684	13,547	8,371	2,260

In February 2012, City staff applied for and received \$10,000 in funding from the 'Wild Places in City Spaces' grant from King County. This grant is being used to restore and improve forest habitat adjacent to the North Wetlands at Luther Burbank Park. In 2012, a portion of this money was used to hire a contractor to remove invasive trees and clear blackberry thickets in this area. This allowed volunteer groups with Mountains to Sound Greenway to access the area and remove additional invasives. In 2013, volunteers will continue this invasive removal, and in the fall, will plant approximately 400 native shrubs and trees. The desired outcome of these efforts will be a forested wetland buffer that provides food, shelter and cleaner water for wetland fauna.

## Contracted Restoration Work

In 2011-2012, contracted restoration work focused on the maintenance of areas that had received considerable attention in 2009 and 2010. These tasks included maintenance of young trees and upkeep of areas in which comprehensive invasive removal had cleared the majority of invasive species. Further restoration work, such as invasive tree control and native tree planting, were performed in areas that had received selective tasks previously.

Several parks, including Homestead Park, Cayhill Open Space and Roanoke Park, received their first restoration projects, and restoration activities spread into previously unworked areas throughout Island Crest Park, SE 53<sup>rd</sup> Open Space and Luther Burbank Park.

This biennium saw the third and fourth years of implementation of the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan, adopted by the Open Space Conservancy Trust Board in early 2009. The continued favorable bidding climate allowed the City to accelerate the workplan outlined in the Forest Health Plan. Together,

Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space received extensive restoration treatments, including planting maintenance (42 acres), tree planting (16.9 acres), and ivy ring creation (8.5 acres).

## **Volunteer Contributions**

Volunteer participation in forest restoration on Mercer Island was very strong in 2011-2012. In total, 6,496 volunteers participated in restoration events in the parks and open spaces, contributing more than 12,500 hours of service. The majority of volunteer hours were spent removing invasive plants and planting native trees in the wetlands in Luther Burbank Park, Pioneer Park, Island Crest Park, and Clarke Beach Park.

Earthcorps and Mountains to Sound Greenway managed almost all volunteer events in 2011-2012. The majority of events occurred on weekends, with some weekday events during the summer to accommodate volunteers with the VOICE programs. Earthcorps organized large events for school groups such as Islander Middle School, which brought 290 volunteers to Pioneer Park in 2012, as well as Mercer Island High School, Forest Ridge Academy, United Way and Eastside Catholic School. Mountains to Sound also hosted volunteer events for large groups including University Prep and Seattle University. Several park neighbors also held small restoration events or worked independently in their nearby parks.

## **2013-2014 Work Plan**

The first priority of the Open Space Vegetation CIP program in the 2013 - 2014 biennium is to maintain areas of open space that have received restoration activity previously. This work focuses on maintaining recent tree plantings to ensure survival and keeping areas that have been cleared of invasive species intact. This biennium will also see an expansion of restoration activities into previously unworked areas in Luther Burbank Park, Island Crest Park and SE 53<sup>rd</sup> Open Space.

Between 2009 and 2012, a significant portion of Mercer Island open space areas have received some or all of the basic restoration tasks: invasive tree control, native planting and ivy ring creation. During this biennium, many of the areas that have not undergone these tasks are slated to receive them. Those areas that have will begin to receive more thorough restoration treatments, such as comprehensive invasive removal.

## **2014 Open Space Plan Evaluation**

The 2004 Open Space Vegetation Management Plan calls for an evaluation of forest restoration progress after the first ten years. To meet this requirement, a graduate student of restoration ecology will be recruited in spring 2014 to perform a quantitative evaluation of how well the objectives set forth in the OSVM Plan have been met. Field measurements will be designed similarly to those of the initial evaluation, so that results can be compared. After collecting and analyzing this data, the student will work with staff to produce a revision to the original document, which will help guide forest stewardship on Mercer Island over the coming ten years.