



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST SPECIAL VIDEO MEETING

Thursday, January 18th 2024 at 5:00 PM

BOARD MEMBERS:

Chair Geraldine Poor
Vice Chair Hillary Ethe
Secretary Marie Bender
Board Members: Lisa Anderl,
Thomas Hildebrandnt, Craig Olson and
Carol Lynn Berseth

LOCATION & CONTACT

Mercer Island City Hall – Zoom Meeting
9611 SE 36th Street | Mercer Island, WA 98040
Phone: 206.275.7706 | www.mercerisland.gov

We strive to create an inclusive and accessible experience. Those requiring accommodation for meetings should notify the Staff Liaison's Office 3 days prior to the meeting at 206.275.7874 or by emailing sam.harb@mercerisland.gov

Registering to Speak: Individuals wishing to speak live during Appearances will need to register their request with staff at 206.275.7874 or email sam.harb@mercerisland.gov and leave a message before 4 PM on the day of the meeting. Please reference "Appearances" on your correspondence. Each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

Join by Telephone at 5:00 PM: To listen to the meeting, or speak under appearances, via telephone, please call **253.215.8782** and enter Webinar ID **853 6148 8867** and Password **074222** when prompted.

Join by Internet at 5:00 PM: To watch the meeting, or speak under appearances, over the internet via your computer, follow these steps:

- 1) Click [this link](#)
- 2) If the Zoom app is not installed on your computer, you will be prompted to download it.
- 3) If prompted for Webinar ID, enter **853 6148 8867**; Enter Password **074222**

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL, 5 PM

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes for the October 19, 2023 Meeting
Recommended Action: Approve the October 19, 2023 minutes
2. Annual Report to Council & 2024 OSCT Work Plan
Recommended Action: Discuss 2023 Annual Report and Approve 2024 Work Plan
3. Engstrom Title Transfer update
Recommended Action: Receive update
4. STQRY Project Update
Recommended Action: Receive update

OTHER BUSINESS

5. [Department Update](#)
6. [Quadrant](#) Reports
7. Topics for Future Discussion
8. [Next](#) Scheduled Meeting – April 18th, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

—



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD MEETING MINUTES October 19th, 2023

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Poor called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

Chair Geraldine Poor, Vice Chair Hillary Ethe, Secretary Marie Bender, and Trustees Carol Lynn Berseth, Craig Olson, Thomas Hildebrandt, and Lisa Anderl participated remotely using a video teleconferencing platform by Zoom.

Staff participating remotely included: Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb, Sustainability Program Alanna DeRogatis and Natural Resources Project Manager Lizzy Stone

PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

No public appearances

REGULAR BUSINESS:

1. Approve Minutes of the July 20th, 2023 Meetings

Corrections: None

Motion by Berseth and seconded by Olson to:
Approve the Minutes of the July 20th, 2023, meeting.
PASSED: 6-1

2. Climate Action Plan

Alanna DeRogatis, Sustainability Program Analyst presented on the Climate Action Plan. The Trust followed up with questions about grants, baseline data and airline data.

OTHER BUSINESS

Department Report

Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager presented an update on the department.

Quadrant Reports

Northwest quadrant – Asked if City could extend fence line where plantings were done before to protect them from trampling. Looks good where revegetation has happened. Log barriers Earthcorps plantings on perimeter looking good, trail work looked good. Nicely groomed

Northeast quadrant – Looking beautiful, trails holding up well, parking on 68th, bunch of overhanging trees need trim

Southeast quadrant – Waterbars working well. Ivy removal has transformed many areas, volunteer

labor has worked well.

Quadrant assignments:
NW- Berseth and Hildebrandt
NE- Bender and Ethe
SE- Poor and Olson

Topics for future discussion

Bylaws addressed in next meeting, youth or high school representation, find a way to encourage high school kids to be on board, discuss in bylaws. Staff bring back firmer update on Engstrom title transfer. Letterboxing recognition.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 18th 2024, at 5:00 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Open Space Conservancy Trust, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 PM

Geraldine Poor, OSCT Chair

Attest:

Andrea Larson, City Clerk



**OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST
STAFF REPORT**

**Item 2
January 18, 2024
Regular Business**

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

TITLE:	Draft 2023 Annual Report & 2024 Work Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Discuss draft 2023 Annual Report and 2024 Work Plan.	

STAFF:	Lizzy Stone, Natural Resources Project Manager Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Lisa Anderl
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Open Space Conservancy Trust 2023 Annual Report Draft 2023 Work Plan

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The ordinance that established the Open Space Conservancy Trust requires that the Trust report to City Council each year on its activities of the past year and the condition of the Trust properties.

PROCESS

Parks and Natural Resources staff have drafted a report based on the 2023 OSCT meeting minutes, Natural Resources work accomplishments, and progress on the 2008 Forest Health Plan with its transition to the 2022 levy benchmarks. The Trustees may discuss the report and suggest changes at the January meeting. Staff will finalize the report in conjunction with the Chair. The report will be presented to the City Council on the Consent Agenda at the March 5th, 2024 meeting. The report will also include the Open Space Conservancy Trust’s 2024 Work Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss draft 2023 Annual Report and 2024 Work Plan.



TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

In 2023, the Open Space Conservancy Trust held meetings in January, April, July, and October. Meetings were held online via Zoom. The annual election of officers took place at the July meeting. Trustee Geraldine Poor was elected as Chair, Trustee Hillary Ethe was elected Vice Chair, and Trustee Marie Bender was elected Secretary.

MERCER ISLAND PARKS AND RECREATION, NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM

The Natural Resources program is tasked with managing forest restoration, tree risk mitigation, and trail construction and maintenance on Trust properties.

In 2023, after piloting a seasonal volunteer coordinator position, we hired a limited term volunteer coordinator to continue to lead restoration and trails related volunteer events throughout the City’s parks and open spaces, including many events on Trust Properties. Additionally, the program hired a seasonal trails and restoration crew, consisting of two staff for 6 months and one team leader for 9 months. At the end of 2023, program staff included:

- Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager
- Lizzy Stone, Natural Resources Project Manager
- Andrew Prince, Urban Forestry Project Manager
- Jordan Fischer, Volunteer Coordinator
- Rebekah Graham, Trails and Restoration Team Leader

FOREST HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT

Background

Forest management on Trust properties is directed by the Open Space Vegetation Management Plan 10-Year Evaluation and Update, the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan adopted in 2003, and recommendations outlined in the 2008 Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey. These plans emphasize the importance of protecting existing tree canopy and maintaining a resilient forest ecosystem by controlling invasive species and planting native species. Activities outlined in the plans include invasive tree treatment, ivy ring creation, ground ivy and herbaceous weed management, targeted maintenance around newly installed plants, and planting native trees and shrubs.

2023 Accomplishments

In 2023, restoration tasks were performed on over 20 acres of Trust properties. Work was performed by professional contractors, seasonal field staff, volunteers, and Washington Conservation Corps crews. The following is a summary of 2023 accomplishments:

Professional contractors

Restoration Task	Pioneer Park	Engstrom Open Space
Planting	275 trees	n/a
First year comprehensive weed removal (includes ivy rings, invasive tree removal and treatment, ground ivy and herbaceous weed removal)	8.8 acres	1.7 acres

Second year comprehensive weed removal
(includes ivy rings, invasive tree removal and treatment, ground ivy and herbaceous weed removal)

8.3 acres

n/a

Volunteers

In 2023, the City’s volunteer program provided regular engagement, education, and volunteer opportunities for the Mercer Island community. With the help of the volunteer coordinator and forest stewards, the City hosted 22 events on Trust properties, working with 343 volunteers for over 717 total volunteer hours. Volunteers removed ivy from 84 trees and 15,528 square ft from the forest floor, planted 242 trees and shrubs, and repaired trails in the northwest quadrant. The volunteer coordinator role received very positive feedback from the community and the position will be continued in the next year.

Seasonal Trails and Restoration Crew

In 2023, the seasonal Trails and Restoration Crew consisted of two to three crewmembers from April through September. The crew conducted regular park checks to empty waste bins around the parks, brushed back trailside plants throughout the growing season, blew leaves from trails, and re-graveled muddy sections of trail. Additionally, the crew conducted noxious weed monitoring, mapping, and treatments throughout Trust properties, watered previous years’ volunteer plantings, and supported volunteer events as needed.

Washington Conservation Corps Crew

In 2023, the City of Mercer Island contracted with the Washington Conservation Corps to bring on crews for a total of 50 days in fall and winter of 2023-2024. In November and December of 2023, crews worked on Trust property to re-gravel muddy patches of trail in Pioneer Park Northwest, maintain ivy rings, decommission a small, redundant section of trail in Pioneer Park NE, plant 75 trees, and perform first year comprehensive weed removal on 1.9 acres of Pioneer Park Southeast. Comprehensive weed removal was performed on areas where volunteers had started work to remove weeds, which allowed WCC to move more quickly through the site and complete a larger area.

Forest Health Plan Transition

The Natural Resources program utilizes management recommendations described in the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan to direct restoration practices on Trust property. From 2009 – 2022, the benchmarks set in the Forest Health Plan served as a guide for restoration planning, though in recent years increasing costs of restoration contracting and challenges recruiting contractors slowed progress on these benchmarks.

In November 2022, the City passed an updated parks levy that increased funding for Pioneer Park restoration work. The levy establishes a new timeline for restoring the health of Pioneer Park’s forests over its 16 year duration. In order to complete three years of comprehensive weed removal throughout Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space by 2038, the Natural Resources program must enroll on average 6.5 new acres of forest in first year treatment each year, in addition to follow up treatment on previously enrolled acres. In 2023, the Natural Resources program exceeded these new benchmarks by enrolling 10.5 acres of forest in first year comprehensive weed removal, 9.2 acres in second year removal, and by planting 617 native trees and shrubs on 2.2 acres of Trust property.

The following outlines actual progress made compared with proposed benchmarks set by the Parks Levy goals:

Table 1. Restoration Progress in Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space 2023

Restoration Task	Annual Proposed in Parks Levy (acres)	2023 Actual (acres)
Year 1 Comprehensive Invasive Species Removal*	6.5	10.5
Year 2 Comprehensive Invasive Species Removal*	9.2	9.2
Year 3 Comprehensive Invasive Species Removal*	-	-
Tree planting	1.6	2.2

**(includes ivy rings, invasive tree removal and treatment, ground ivy and herbaceous weed removal).*

LETTERBOXING PROGRAM

The Letterboxing Program is a collaborative effort between Parks and Recreation staff, OSCT Board Members, and community volunteers. In 2023, the Natural Resources team restarted the program after a 3-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to decreased involvement by community volunteers and limited staff capacity, the City implemented a pared down version of the program, placing just 5 letterboxes in the Southeast quadrant. Letterboxing booklets were distributed at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC) and at volunteer events throughout the summer. Over 100 booklets were distributed throughout the season and 26 were returned to the MICEC. Participants that turned in their booklets were recognized with a certificate and prize packet.

LEASH POLICY EDUCATION EFFORTS

Leash policy education efforts continued in 2023 with distribution of educational brochures “The Dog Owner’s Guide to Mercer Island Parks” brochure, which provides park users with information about voice/signal control and the location of off-leash versus on-leash parks.

TRAILS

In 2023, the Natural Resources team continued to maintain trails by conducting regular trail brushing, leaf blowing, and culvert clearing, as well as re-graveling muddy sections of trail in all three quadrants. In December, a Washington Conservation Corps crew decommissioned a short, redundant section of trail in Pioneer Park Northeast, which had been discussed and approved in the April 2023 Open Space Conservancy Trust Board meeting.

ENGSTROM OPEN SPACE TITLE TRANSFER

On September 20th, 2022, the City Council passed a resolution to direct the City to transfer the title of Engstrom Open Space to the Open Space Conservancy Trust. The title transfer has been assigned to outside legal council as of early 2024.

URBAN FORESTRY

Tree risk mitigation continues to be a primary focus of urban forestry efforts in Pioneer Park. Certified staff arborists make recommendations each year to remove dead, dying, or structurally defective trees to reduce the risk of trees failing and causing injury, property damage, or interference with utility lines or roadways. Trees are retained through corrective pruning or as wildlife snags when possible, but tree removals are occasionally necessary. In the case of whole tree removals, the wood from the tree is left to decompose on site as habitat and to improve soil conditions. Dead and dying trees continue to make up the majority of tree removal work. In 2023, two trees were removed from Trust properties to reduce risk of failure. Staff continued to monitor park boundaries regularly for trees in need of pruning or removal.



Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust

2024 Work Plan **Draft**

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
January 18	Annual Report to Council: The Trust is required in its bylaws to report to City Council each year on the status of Trust properties.
	OSCT Work Plan: The Trust develops a list of topics that it intends to address during the year (this document). This work plan is submitted to City Council with the Annual Report as a courtesy.
	Engstrom Title Transfer: Staff will provide an update
	Stqry Project Update: Educational signage update in the park
	Quadrant Reports (ongoing item): Trustees will report on the condition of certain quadrants at Trust board meetings.
April 18	Trail Work Plan: City staff report to the Trust its intended maintenance activities in the spring of each year, and recap work completed in the previous year. This report includes status of recently decommissioned social trails on Trust properties.
	Restoration Work Plan: City staff report to the Trust its planned restoration activities, and recap work completed in the previous year.
	Draft Bylaws Review: Review draft bylaws
July 18	Election of Officers: The Trust is required by its bylaws to elect officers at its July meeting each year.
	Herbicide application report: City staff will report on the use of herbicides on Trust properties each year, in accordance with the Herbicide Use Protocol.
October 17	OSCT Schedule 2025: Per the Bylaws, the calendar of meetings shall be set by the Board at the last meeting of the calendar year
	Off-leash dogs: The Trust will evaluate success of education measures over the past year and discuss possible changes.
	Eagle Project recognition: The Trust will recognize Eagle projects that have benefitted Trust Properties.

Note: The listing of an item under a particular month indicates that the item will be introduced at that meeting. There may be follow-up discussions and decisions at subsequent meetings, as directed by the Chair.



Item 4.

Pioneer Park Story Maps





Background

- In the July and October 2023 meetings the Trust and staff discussed updating signage in the park. Utilizing technology to highlight historical uses of the land
- The City currently utilizes a Stqry map platform, linking public art and items of historical or cultural significance to online content with QR codes

Current uses


- Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery
- Public Art Collection
- Riley Cove and Lincoln Landing



Where is It?

Mercer Village Shopping Center & SE 48th St

Fire Station 92

 Get directions

Learn More

[Search the Database of WTC Artifacts](#)

[Gateway of Service, FS 92](#)

Next Steps

- Platform subscription based, City is in process of upgrading account
- Developing content
- Printing and installing signage
- Plan to have staff start in 2024



Department Report January 18th, 2024

Open Space Conservancy Trust



Accessing City Services

Customer Service Team

(206) 275-7600

CustomerService@mercerisland.gov

(staffed Mon-Fri 8:30a-5:00p, except holidays)

- For the quickest and fastest service, community members should contact the City of Mercer Island Customer Service Team.
- The City's Customer Service Team can help answer your questions about services, such as service requests, pet licensing, business licenses, or parking permits during the closure of City Hall.
- The Customer Service Team can also assist you in getting connected to other City department teams as needed.
- Submit a service request: www.mercerisland.gov/servicerequest

Roanoke Park Playground Replacement

The City has kicked off a community engagement process for the Roanoke Park Playground Replacement.

- **Virtual Public Meeting-** January 30
- **Ongoing engagement through Let's Talk**

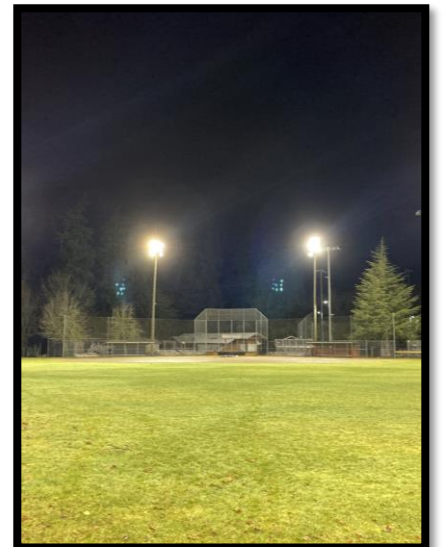
For more information and to get involved visit:
<https://letstalk.mercergov.org/playground-replacements>



Roanoke Park

Parks and Natural Resources

- Tree chipping in Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery
- Repainting interior of Deane's Childrens Park
- Island Crest Park south baseball field bulb replacements and electrical repairs
- Washington Conservation Crew (WCC) working this winter Nov-March



Parks and Natural Resources

- Wind, ice and snow
- Brushing along parking area at NE quadrant
- European chafer causing turf damage
- Washington Conservation Crew (WCC) working this winter Nov-March



1/16/24 City Council Meeting

YouTube

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Forest Management

Natural Resou...

- In 2023 in Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space, the City conducted:
 - 1st year comprehensive weed removal on 10.5 acres
 - 2nd year comprehensive weed removal on 9.2 acres
 - Planted 617 native trees and shrubs.
- This exceeds the 6.5 acres of 1st year removal planned as an annual goal in the parks levy for 2023.

Next slide, please. In 2023 on these

zoom

1/16 - Mercer Island - City Council Regular Hybrid Meeting

Mercer Island Council
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- Parks Levy Annual Progress Report
- <https://www.mercerisland.gov/citycouncil/page/city-council-regular-hybrid-meeting-28>



2023 VOLUNTEER YEAR IN REVIEW

We held
82 EVENTS
IN 14
PARKS



Hosted
1,065 VOLUNTEERS
For
2,200+ HOURS

Removed
22,000 SQ FT*
OF IVY

*That's over 10 tennis courts worth!



Planted
1,172 NATIVE TREES
AND SHRUBS



THANK YOU
VOLUNTEERS!



Letterboxing

- 26 participants completed letterboxing booklets and awarded certificates
- Thank you participants!



Trails and NR Crew

- Thank you Rebekah and Bree!

