



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING

Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 5:00 PM

BOARD MEMBERS

Chair: Hillary Ethe

Vice Chair: Carol Lynn Berseth

Secretary: Marie Bender

Board Members: Geraldine Poor,
Thomas Hildebrandt and Lisa Anderl

LOCATION & CONTACT

Mercer Island Community & Event Center and Zoom
8236 SE 24th Street | Mercer Island, WA 98040
Phone: 206.275.7600 | 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

The virtual meeting will be broadcast live on Zoom and recorded and saved on the City Council's [YouTube Channel](#)

Registering to Speak: Individuals wishing to speak live during Appearances will need to register their request with staff at **206.275.7861** and leave a message or [email](#) before 4 PM on the day of the meeting. Each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

Join by Telephone at 5:00 PM: Call **253.215.8782** and enter Webinar ID **879 6474 1572** and Password **644328** 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 **879 6474 1572** and Password **644328**

Join in person at 5:00 PM: Mercer Island Community & Event Center - 8236 SE 24th Street, Mercer Island

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL – 5:00 PM

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Open Space Conservancy Trust Meeting Minutes:

- A. October 16, 2025, Regular Hybrid Meeting
- B. November 12, 2025, Special Hybrid Joint PRC/OSCT Meeting
- C. January 8, 2026, Special Hybrid Joint PRC/OSCT Meeting

Recommended Action: Approve minutes

2. 2025 Annual Report to Council and 2026 work plan

Recommended Action: Discuss 2025 Annual Report and approve work plan

OTHER BUSINESS

3. [Department Update](#)

4. [Quadrant](#) Reports

5. Topics for Future Discussion

6. [Next](#) Scheduled Meeting – April 16th, 2026

ADJOURNMENT



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST REGULAR HYBRID MEETING MINUTES October 16, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The Open Space Conservancy Trust meeting was called to order by Chair Ethe at 5:03pm.

ROLL CALL

Chair Hillary Ethe, Vice Chair Carol Lynn Berseth, and Trustees Geraldine Poor, Thomas Hildebrandt, and Council Liaison Daniel Becker were present.

Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb, Natural Resources Program Manager Lizzy Stone, and Recreation Specialist Raven Gillis were present.

APPEARANCES

No public appearances

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from July 17, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Becker; seconded by Berseth to:

Approve the minutes from July 17, 2025 Regular Meeting.

Passed: 5 – 0

2. 2026 Meeting Schedule and Draft work plan

Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb presented. Trustees asked questions and provided input.

3. Pioneer Signage Inventory and Update

Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb presented. Trustees asked questions, and provided input.

OTHER BUSINESS

4. Department Report

Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb presented. Trustees received the report.

5. Quadrant Reports

Northwest quadrant – Berseth & Hildebrandt reported.

Northeast quadrant – Poor & Ethe reported.

Southeast quadrant – Ethe & Poor reported.

6. Topics for future discussion

There were no recommendations for future discussion.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is a Special Joint OSCT/PRC Hybrid Meeting on November 12, 2025 at 5pm

ADJOURNMENT at 5:38 PM

DRAFT



JOINT PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION & OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING MINUTES

November 12, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The Joint Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Open Space Conservancy Trust was called to order by Chair Hay at 5:01 pm.

Open Space Conservancy Trust: Chair Hillary Ethe, Vice Chair Carol Lynn Berseth, Secretary Marie Bender, and Trustees Thomas Hildebrandt and Daniel Becker were present.

Parks and Recreation Commission: Chair Ashley Hay, Vice Chair Rory Westberg, and Commissioners Peter Struck, Jodi McCarthy, Don Cohen, Sara Marxen, and Mar Brettmann, were present. Council Liaison Craig Reynolds was present.

Staff Participation: Recreation Manager Ryan Daly, Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb, Management Analyst Amelia Tjaden and Recreation Specialist Raven Gillis were present.

APPEARANCES

Debi Gerstel addressed the PRC & OSCT regarding E-bike regulations

Norma Berquist addressed the PRC & OSCT regarding E-bike regulations

SPECIAL BUSINESS

1. PRC 25-17: E-Bike Regulations Study Session

Management Analyst Amelia Tjaden and Staff presented. Commissioners and Trustees engaged in discussion and asked questions.

Commissioner Marxen left the meeting at 6:30pm

Recess from 6:40pm to 6:47pm

ADJOURNMENT at 7:00 PM



JOINT PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION & OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

The Joint Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Open Space Conservancy Trust was called to order by Chair Hay at 5:02 pm.

Open Space Conservancy Trust: Chair Hillary Ethe, Vice Chair Carol Lynn Berseth, and Trustees Thomas Hildebrandt and Daniel Becker were present.

Parks and Recreation Commission: Chair Ashley Hay, Vice Chair Rory Westberg, and Commissioners Peter Struck, Don Cohen, and Mar Brettmann were present. Council Liaison Craig Reynolds was present.

Staff Participation: Recreation Manager Ryan Daly, Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb, Management Analyst Amelia Tjaden, MIPD Commander Mike Seifert and Recreation Specialist Raven Gillis were present.

APPEARANCES

Ben Sharpe addressed the PRC & OSCT regarding E-bike regulations

Jeff Koontz addressed the PRC & OSCT regarding E-bike regulations

Jim Stanton addressed the PRC & OSCT regarding E-bike regulations

Jay Greer addressed the PRC & OSCT regarding E-bike regulations

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. PRC 26-01: E-Bikes in Parks

Management Analyst Amelia Tjaden presented. Commissioners and Trustees engaged in discussion and asked questions.

ADJOURNMENT at 6:57 PM



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST STAFF REPORT

Item 2
February 12, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

TITLE:	Draft 2025 Annual Report & 2026 Work Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Discuss draft 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Work Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

STAFF:	Lizzy Stone, Natural Resources Program Manager Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Lisa Anderl
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft Open Space Conservancy Trust 2025 Annual Report 2. Draft 2026 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 2025 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 February 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 March 3rd, 2026 meeting. The report will also include the Open Space Conservancy Trust's 2026 Work Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss draft 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Work Plan.



**City of Mercer Island
Open Space Conservancy Trust
2025 Annual Report to City Council**

Item 2.

TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

In 2025, the Open Space Conservancy Trust held regular meetings in January, April, July, and October, as well as one special joint meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission in November to develop a recommendation for e-bikes in parks. Hybrid meetings were held in the Mercer Island Community and Events Center and online via Zoom. In July, Councilmember Daniel Becker was appointed as the new City Council Liaison, after Councilmember Jake Jacobson's passing in the spring. The annual election of officers also took place at the July meeting. Trustee Hillary Ethe was elected as Chair, Trustee Carol Lynn Berseth was elected Vice Chair, and Trustee Marie Bender was re-elected Secretary. After the November special meeting, Trustee Brian Gaspar's seat on the board was vacated. The seat will be filled in 2026.

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 2025, 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 2025, program staff included:

Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager
Lizzy Stone, Natural Resources Program Manager
Andrew Prince, Urban Forestry Program Manager
Jordan Fischer, Volunteer Coordinator
Jaime Boggess, 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.

2025 Accomplishments

In 2025, restoration tasks were performed on 34.5 acres of Trust properties. Work was performed by professional contractors, seasonal field staff, and volunteers. The following is a summary of 2025 accomplishments:

Professional contractors

The City contracted out work on 33.5 acres of Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space in 2025. In order to achieve established goals for weed removal on Trust Property, the City contracts out comprehensive weed removal in three year cycles, where weeds are removed from the same area for three years in a row. After the initial three year removal cycle, the areas that have received this treatment are maintained every 4-5 years. Ivy removal around trees (ivy rings) and weedy tree treatment are also performed in some areas in preparation for future comprehensive removal.

In 2025, contractors carried out first year comprehensive weed removal on 5.8 acres of Pioneer Park NE, which included 2.3 acres of steep slope leading down to the ravine and watercourse that passes through the Northeast quadrant and Engstrom Open Space. Contractors carried out second year weed removal on 11.0 acres of Pioneer Park, third year comprehensive weed removal on 8.8 acres of Pioneer Park and 1.7 acres of Engstrom Open Space, and maintenance on 3.2 acres of Engstrom Open Space. Additionally, a contractor completed ivy rings on 3.0 acres of Pioneer Park NW.

Volunteers

In 2025, 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 21 volunteer events and 13 educational events on Trust properties. There was a total of 328 volunteers for over 644 total volunteer hours. Volunteers removed 24,013 square ft of ivy from the forest floor and planted 473 trees and shrubs. The educational events engaged an additional 121 participants and included Mindfulness Walks, Plant ID walks, Owl Walks, among others. There are now 6 active forest stewards working in Pioneer Park

Seasonal Trails and Restoration Crew

In 2025, the seasonal Trails and Restoration Crew consisted of a crewmember from May through October, a crewmember from July to December, and a team leader from March 2025 through February 2026. The crew worked on a variety of restoration and trails related tasks on Trust property throughout the year. Restoration tasks carried out by the Natural Resource Crew included:

- Installing 330 native plants along the NE border of Island Crest Way
- Spreading mulch and wildflower seed along the same Island Crest Way border
- Watering previous years' plantings from crews and volunteers
- Conducting noxious weed monitoring, mapping, and treatments throughout Trust properties
- Supporting volunteer events, as needed.

Forest Health Plan Progress

The Natural Resources program utilizes management recommendations described in the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan to direct restoration practices on Trust property and benchmarks set out in the 2022 parks levy to establish goals for the work. The parks levy establishes a 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 an average of 6.5 new acres of forest in first year treatment each year, in addition to follow up treatment on previously enrolled acres.

In 2025, the Natural Resources program progressed towards these new benchmarks by enrolling 5.8 acres of forest in first year comprehensive weed removal, 11 acres in second year removal, 10.5 acres in third year removal (completed by contractors and volunteers), 3.2 acres in maintenance on previously enrolled acres, conducting ivy rings on 3 acres and by planting 803 native trees and shrubs on Trust property.

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

Table 2. Restoration Progress in Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space 2025

Restoration Task	Annual Proposed in Parks Levy (acres)	2025 Actual (acres)
Year 1 Comprehensive Invasive Species Removal*	6.5	5.8
Year 2 Comprehensive Invasive Species Removal*	6.5	11
Year 3 Comprehensive Invasive Species Removal*	8.8	10.5
Invasive Removal Maintenance*	3.4	8.8
Tree planting	1.6	1.2

**(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 2025, the Natural Resources team placed 5 letterboxes in the Northwest quadrant of Pioneer Park. Letterboxing booklets were distributed at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC), at the Leap for Green celebration and afterwards at the front desk, at volunteer events throughout the summer, and at kiosks in Pioneer Park. Over 100 booklets were distributed throughout the season and 35 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 2025 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. In 2025, Mercer Island Police Department received the following reports in Pioneer Park: two complaints about off-leash dogs, one found dog, one dog hit and injured by an e-bike, and one report of a dog bite to another dog.

TRAILS

In 2025, the Natural Resources team continued to improve and maintain trails on Trust property. The seasonal Natural Resources crew carries out maintenance and improvements to the trail system, with support from full time Parks Maintenance team staff.

Some improvements that took place in 2025 include:

- installing check steps along Salal trail in the Southeast quadrants
- adding non-skid surfaces to the stairs in the Northeast quadrant
- installing a railing along a staircase to encourage use of the stairs
- adding rock steps and gravel to an uneven section of the Northeast quadrant
- installing a drain under the Dogwood trail in the NW quadrant.

These improvements were in addition to regular trail brushing, leaf blowing, and culvert clearing, as well as working with the Parks Maintenance team to remove trees that had fallen across trails throughout the season. One donation bench was installed by the Parks Maintenance team in the northeast quadrant.

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 paperwork was accepted by the Trust and finalized with King County in 2025.

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 2025, about 15 trees were removed from Trust properties – mostly along SE 68th ST to reduce risk of dead or dying trees falling across the road or utility lines. Staff continued to monitor park boundaries regularly for trees in need of pruning or removal.



Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust

DRAFT 2026 Work Plan

Item 2.

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
February 12	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.
	Quadrant Reports (ongoing item): Trustees will report on the condition of certain quadrants at Trust board meetings.
April 16	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.
	E-bike Policy Update: Staff will update the Trust on this process
	Off-leash dogs: The Trust will evaluate success of education measures over the past year and discuss possible changes.
July 16	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.
	Signage Inventory and Update: The Trust will evaluate current signage and needs
October 15	Forest Health Assessment Update: Staff will update the Trust on results and implementation of the 2024 Forest Health Assessment
	OSCT Schedule 2027: Per the Bylaws, the calendar of meetings shall be set by the Board at the last meeting of the calendar year
	Scout Project recognition: The Trust will recognize scout 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.