

A Great Egret with its wings spread in a river. The bird is the central focus, with its long neck curved and its wings fully extended, showing the intricate patterns of its feathers. The background is a shallow, rippling river with a brownish-green hue. The text is overlaid on the image in white, with the main title at the top and the subtitle below it. At the bottom, the report title and its three pillars are displayed in a large, bold font.

OlyEcosystems

Olympia Coalition for Ecosystems Preservation

2018 Annual Report
Protect Preserve Restore

Olympia Coalition for Ecosystems Preservation 2018 Annual Report

www.olyecosystems.org

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Major Contributors

The Nature Conservancy, The Bullitt Foundation, The City of Olympia, The Dawkins Memorial Trust, Thurston County Conservation Futures, WA Department of Ecology, Anita Montgomery - graphic designer, Christine Gulrajani - musician, Nancy Partlow - photographer, The Charlotte-Martin Foundation, The Community Sustaining Fund of Thurston County, The Rose Foundation, Squaxin Island Tribe, Pacific Stage, Barry Troutman - photographer, Christopher Harbin - musician, The Lumen -musicians.

Major Collaborators

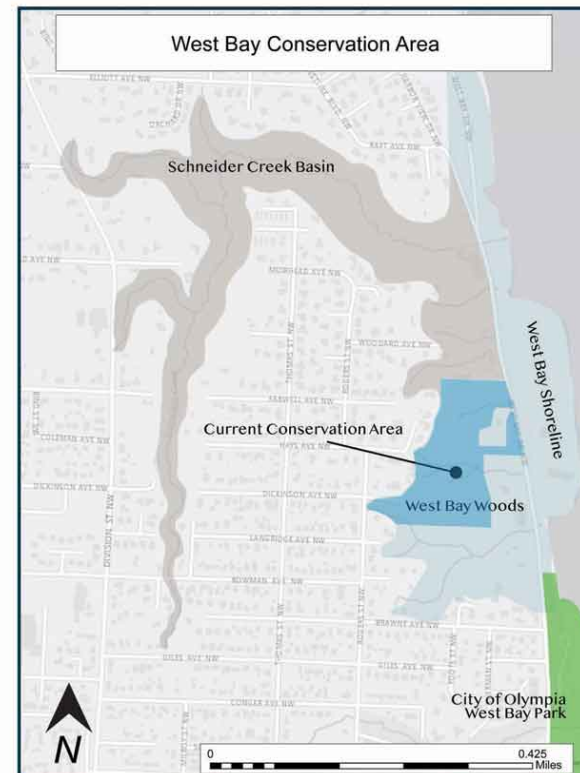
The Black Hills Chapter of the Audubon Society, City of Olympia, Washington Conservation Corps, The Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team, Encore Chocolates and Teas, Graphic Communications, Native Plant Salvage, The Olympia Food Co-op, Puget Sound Partnership, Sound Native Plants, Puget Sound Plants, Stream Team, Thurston County Conservation District, Pacific Stage.

Image Credits: The beautiful heron photographs in this document are courtesy of Barry Troutman and the stunning heron illustrations are courtesy of Rachel Caldwell. **Layout:** Crawford's Attractions



Conservation Area

OlyEcosystems is currently focused in the South Puget Sound region of Western Washington State and on sensitive habitat and waterways such as the Deschutes (Steh-Chass) River, the West Bay, East Bay, and Budd Inlet. The Schneider Creek Basin, seen in the map below, forms a mile-and-a-half wildlife corridor on the West side of Budd Inlet that is threatened by development. OlyEcosystems began work here nearly three years ago; this has resulted in an twelve-acre urban wildlife conservation area, much of which is being actively restored. This forest geographically defines Olympia's Northwest Neighborhood and is critical breeding habitat for Olympia's sole colony of Pacific Great Blue Heron. In addition to supporting these iconic birds, the woods are home to red fox, mule deer, the Pacific tree frog, mountain beaver, coyote, and numerous bird species. Both mountain beavers and pileated wood peckers are keystone species, meaning they are species on which other species in the ecosystem largely depend. Mountain beavers prolific burrow systems are used by fox and rabbit, while nest-holes of the pileated woodpecker become nests or roosts for small owls or cavity-nesting wood ducks.



OlyEcosystems Vision

OlyEcosystems is driven by our understanding of the intrinsic value of all creatures in our ecosystem. We are united in our value of biodiversity and belief that the community is enriched and defined by a relationship to the wilderness in our midst.

We are a volunteer-run, community-based urban conservation and advocacy group in Olympia, Washington. Our focus is the urban shoreline and associated watersheds in Olympia.

We recognize that the health of this ecosystem must be restored in order to reverse the decline in water quality and habitat quality in the South Puget Sound. This decline dramatically impacts salmon and many other species including the human community.

Our current focus, the West Bay Woods, serves critical ecological functions, is a refuge for urban wildlife, and is integral to the community's sense of place. In addition to providing heron habitat, West Bay Woods' stormwater filtration role is of heightened importance, as the Woods is located just upland of some of the most contaminated shoreline in Thurston County.

OlyEcosystems is unique among organizations in this region, in that we focus exclusively on protecting, preserving, and restoring important habitat in Olympia's urban core.



West Bay Woods 2018 (Photo by Sarah Haman)



OlyEcosystems Mission

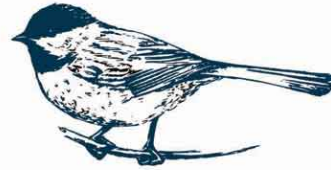
The Olympia Coalition for Ecosystems Preservation was established in 2014 to protect, preserve, and restore the diverse ecosystems of Olympia, Washington that include the freshwater, shoreline, tidal waters, and upland forests home to the Pacific Great Blue Heron, cutthroat trout, salmon, and companion species. In coordination with community members, local agencies, and other non-profit groups, OlyEcosystems works to ensure that these ecosystems remain vital in perpetuity. OlyEcosystems is organized exclusively for the above purpose under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code or any corresponding section of any future tax code.

Diversity Statement

We welcome, value, and rely on a diversity of people, cultural experiences and perspectives. We believe that bringing together diverse individuals allows us to collectively and more effectively address the issues that face our communities. In order to more fully accomplish our mission and live our values, we strive to make our commitment to diversity and justice evident in our organizational structure, strategies, policies, Board of Directors, staff, partners, donors, goals, and vision. We welcome people of all backgrounds and abilities. We seek to foster a culture of respect, openness, learning, integrity, honesty, and a sense of fun. Our commitment to working in partnerships compels us to build relationships where all partners are valued, heard, respected, and empowered.

2018 Accomplishments

Restoration of the West Bay Woods



What an amazing year it has been. Working with our volunteers, contributors and collaborators, we were able to plant over a thousand native shrubs, ferns, trees, and sedges in the cedar and maple forest of the West Bay Woods. We mulched and restored a portion of an abandoned development. We removed invasive ivy and blackberries choking the native landscape. We constructed a rain garden at the Hays Avenue NW trailhead entrance to divert stormwater runoff and protect the marine waters of Puget Sound. The woods are now taking on the welcome appearance of a forest on the mend, with increased plant and animal diversity. Our Annual Report details these major accomplishments, and other exciting events that defined our past year.



Reforestation

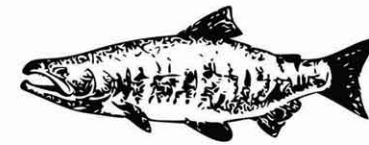
One of six organizations in Puget Sound selected to receive funding from the 2018 Nature Conservancy's City Habitats Program, OlyEcosystems used the award to restore part of a deforested section of the West Bay Woods that had been cleared in years past for a now abandoned development proposal. Restoration work will improve stormwater filtration in West Bay Woods and the water quality of Puget Sound.

Restoration

With generous funding from the Dawkins' Memorial Trust, we cleared invasive species, then mulched and planted native flora on nearly two acres in the West Bay Woods. During this project, OlyEcosystems engaged dedicated local volunteers, and for the first time, contracted members of the impassioned Washington Conservation Corps, who's labor was generously subsidized by Washington State's Department of Ecology.

By transforming this ivy laden forest into a thriving and complex ecosystem of cedar and maple with a diverse new understory, we can also support jobs for youth in our community and grow the restoration economy.

The images show work crews removing invasive ivy (right), and a plaque marking the new *Hays Stormwater Swale* rain garden with native plantings in the background (below.)



Connections

The health of Budd Inlet depends upon the health of its watersheds in general and upon this shoreline forest in particular. With funding from the Rose Foundation, and in collaboration with the City of Olympia, OlyEcosystems constructed a critical rain garden at the entrance to the new trail at Hays Avenue NW. The Hays Stormwater Swale rain garden will address long-standing, uncontrolled runoff and ponding on the street. The runoff had been troublesome to neighbors, an obstacle to constructing the trailhead, and a source of pollution for Budd Inlet. When fully open, the Hays Avenue trail will provide neighbors with year-round access to the West Bay Woods.

Protecting Puget Sound

OlyEcosystems constructed the Hays Stormwater Swale, a rain garden, to slow and treat intermittent water flows from three new storm drains installed by the City. This beautiful Northwest Neighborhood landscape feature will filter runoff before it reaches Budd Inlet, reducing harmful algal blooms, and toxic pollutants in Puget Sound. The images document grading (below), and placement of erosion control measures with rock, stream cobbles, boulders, and plants (bottom), and slope stabilization with burlap, logs, cardboard, and mulch (right.)



2018 Events

Gala & Silent Auction

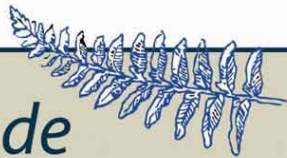
OlyEcosystems Fourth Annual Gala and Silent Auction, held in February 2018, was a sold-out success. Together with the greater Olympia community, we celebrated an evening of protecting, preserving, and restoring wilderness in Olympia's urban core. We enjoyed a keynote by State Representative Beth Doglio, music from Rooster Crow and Love, MC, delicious appetizers, Washington wines and local beers, and a short program that showcased environmental challenges and opportunities in the South Puget Sound.

Sound Waters: Science-Informed Policy for the Deschutes Estuary

OlyEcosystems received an award from The Bullitt Foundation to host a single-day scientific and policy symposium, entitled Sound Waters: Science-Informed Policy for the Deschutes Estuary. Held in May of 2018 at the Washington State Capitol Building, the symposium convened over thirty regional and local organizations engaged in water-related research, policies, and education. Sound Waters represented a major, significant, and timely forum to develop recommendations for future engagement and partnerships with the shared goals of improving the health of Deschutes Estuary and South Puget Sound. Keynote speakers included U.S. Congressman Denny Heck, Washington State Representative Beth Doglio, Natural Resources Director of the Squaxin Island Tribe Jeff Dickison and Bethany Gallagher of The Nature Conservancy.



In Deepest Gratitude



OlyEcosystems is an entirely volunteer-run organization. Volunteers serve on our Board of Directors and their Committees and participate in events such as work parties and community tabling. In 2018, volunteers donated over a thousand labor hours to protect, preserve and restore our precious local ecosystems.

To all who have contributed their time, funds, artwork, in-kind donations, and other important resources, OlyEcosystems achievements would not be possible without you.



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