



Bainbridge Island
Metro Park & Recreation District



2023 Natural Resources **ANNUAL REPORT**

Letter from the Parks Superintendent

Bainbridge Islanders have a unique connection to their natural resources. As a community, this island has chosen time and time again to protect open space and preserve the conservation value of its forests, meadows, creeks, wetlands, and shorelines. Those decisions have had incredible impacts, and today, residents and visitors can easily access over 45 miles of trails, 1,500 acres of open space, and 75 acres of shoreline.

The Natural Resources Department is committed to maintaining public land and encouraging the intersection of conservation and recreation on Bainbridge Island. Created in 2022, our department encompasses trail maintenance and development, volunteer programming and community conservation, and the protection and management of the Park District's natural spaces. In two short years, the Natural Resources Department has been able to implement a successful integrated pest management strategy that mitigates the impacts of invasive plants in our parks, develop management plans that guide the restoration of overstocked forests, build new trails that expand trail connections and park access; complete trail re-routes that improve the sustainability of our trails, and grow a small volunteer program into a robust community of over 1,000 island stewards!

Every success the Natural Resources Department has had in the past two years is attributed to and directly shared with this community. As a small team of five full-time employees, we could not achieve our objectives without your generosity. Whether you've joined us at a work party, donated to the Parks & Trails Foundation, or thanked us for our work while out on the trails, this community has provided the resources and support to expand our reach and enhance our efforts. Thank you!

With 2023 now behind us, the Natural Resources Department is excited to continue our work and grow our stewardship in 2024. Although we face challenges, our team believes that **perseverance and intentional management can build resilient landscapes able to withstand climate change, improve ecological function, and offer refuge for the island's human and wild inhabitants.** We hope you'll join us in 2024 as we work together to restore our shared spaces and preserve them for generations to come.

With gratitude,



Lydia Roush, Parks Superintendent



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Healthy Forests

The Natural Resources Department launched the Healthy Forests initiative in 2022, with a primary focus on **improving the health and resilience of public forests** through the thinning of overstocked areas. The initial parks included in this program are **Moritani Preserve and Strawberry Hill Park**.

Overstocked forests contain excessive numbers of trees that lack access to sufficient nutrients. Many of these trees display **signs of stress**, reducing their ability to provide essential ecosystem services such as **soil retention, carbon sequestration, and habitat**. To address these issues, variable density thinnings are underway at both locations, aiming to reduce the number of trees per acre and alleviate stress within the system. By selectively releasing larger, dominant trees, we intend to **stimulate proper growth, enhance ecosystem function, and boost resilience to climate change and diseases**.

Thinning activities will also create openings in the forest canopy, allowing additional **sunlight** to reach the forest floor and facilitating space for **new plant growth**. This strategy improves the forest's plant community and increases the forest's structural diversity, contributing to the overall **vitality and sustainability of the ecosystem**.

We invite you to visit Moritani Preserve and Strawberry Hill Park and watch as we develop robust, resilient forests!



On the Trails

The goal of the Natural Resources trails program is to develop community through a system of interconnected trails, and trail infrastructure, that offer prescribed, healthy, outdoor experiences, within a rich variety of landscapes and natural habitats.

Trails are designed to protect, conserve, and blend with the natural landscape allowing for public use while carefully considering impacts to wildlife.

Volunteers, staff, and summer crews:

- * Improved **45+ miles of trails**.
- * Built **five new trails**.
- * Added three new trails to our management through inter-local agreements.
- * Closed social trails to maintain **wildlife habitat** at Gazzam Lake Nature Preserve.
- * Rerouted three trails for **increased trail sustainability and habitat health**.
- * Employed four young adults through our **Summer Trails Crew**

Thank you 2023 financial supporters:





400+

Native trees, shrubs, and flowers planted



150+

Volunteer events



2,900

Hours of service



VOLUNTEERS



45

Miles trails maintained



400+

Yards of mulch spread



300+

Yards of invasive species removed

Thank you 2023 community partners!

Bainbridge Island Cross Country
 Bainbridge Island FC
 Bainbridge Island Japanese
 American Exclusion Memorial
 Association
 Bainbridge Island Land Trust
 Bainbridge Island Montessori
 Bainbridge Island Parks & Trails
 Foundation
 Bainbridge Island Pickleball
 Bainbridge Island Rotary Club

Bainbridge Island Saddle Club
 Bainbridge Island School District
 Bainbridge Island Ultimate
 Bainbridge Youth Services
 BHS Key Club
 BHS Volleyball
 Boys & Girls Club
 BSA – Eagle Scouts, Cub Scouts
 Carly's Rolling Bay Cafe
 Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
 FIUTS
 Gear Grinders

Hyla Middle & High School
 Island Cooperative Preschool
 Island School
 IslandWood
 Madrona School
 Montessori Country School
 Odyssey Multi Age Program
 Peacock Family Services
 St Cecilia's Catholic School
 Sustainable Bainbridge
 Washington Conservation Corps
 Windermere Real Estate



Invasive Species

Invasive species aren't your garden variety weeds. Invasive species are defined by law in Washington State and involve three classifications based on their invasibility, current distribution, and other factors. These listed species are proven to have a detrimental effect on our region's ecology, economy, and human/animal health.

The Natural Resources team implements the Park District's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program to work towards controlling invasive species in our parks. We use numerous techniques for managing invasive species based on the restoration goals of a park.

You might have seen the huge piles of English holly removed by hundreds of dedicated volunteers at the site of the new Strawberry Hill Bike Park, or walked through Manzanita Park and noticed the browning English ivy vines cut thanks to our Student Conservation Corps crews.

Each of these efforts, and many others, allow our native forests and other habitats a better chance of adapting to our changing climate.



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Student Conservation Corps

With their neon shirts and boundless energy, Student Conservation Corps (SCOCO) crews stand out as they dedicate their summer to working with the Park District's Natural Resources team. Their tasks include managing invasive species, installing boot brush stations, spreading mulch and enhancing habitats across island parks, all while earning a paycheck.

”

I learned how to work with people I don't know and work with everyone's special skills to get tons of work done!

The most rewarding part was when I found myself looking forward to going to work and pulling weeds!

Crew Accomplishments

- * 40 teens employed
- * 175 yards of invasive species removed
- * 35 yards mulch spread
- * 10 parks impacted
- * 2 boot brush stations installed

*Read the full report,
and learn more about
SCOCO 2024!*



Thank you 2023 financial supporters:





Volunteer

Join the Park District's Natural Resources team in caring for our island's trails, parks, forests, beaches and meadows at a monthly work party!



www.biparks.org/volunteer

Be In Touch

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