Images Script
Restore a Habitat I

History

Page 1 We live in an ecosystem which is called the ‘Westside Lowland Forest’.
- This ecosystem stretches from the coastline of the Pacific Ocean on the Olympic peninsula all the way to the Cascade Mountains.
- Who has gone skiing, snowboarding or hiking at Snoqualmie or Stevens Pass? They are on the Cascade Mountains.
- Who has driven across the pass to eastern Washington? What difference do you notice between western Washington and eastern Washington? (focus on vegetation, climate, terrain)
- Eastern Washington is a different ecosystem than western Washington.

Page 2 The Westside Lowland Forest ecosystem has provided habitat for people and wildlife for thousands of years.
- This photo was taken about 100 years ago and shows a summer home of the Coast Salish Native Americans who live here in Puget Sound area. Their canoe was made from the wood of trees, their baskets from leaves and barks, their summer house from cattail leaves, and their warm robes from animal furs.
- The Westside Lowland Forest provided the Coast Salish people with all of the resources they needed to live a comfortable life.

Page 3 The Westside Lowland Forest covered virtually all of the land we are standing on today.
- The trees in this forest were some of the largest and oldest in the world.
- This photo was taken about 80 years ago and shows the size of these trees. The arrows point to two men standing in the forest and shows the scale of these trees.
- When planning habitat restoration it is important to understand that this forest once covered the entire Puget Sound region from sea to mountain, with occasional clearings of wetland meadows and prairies.

Page 4 When the first European settlers arrived they cleared the land for houses, and pasture for their animals, and eventually built cities like Seattle.
- This shows men using axes to cut down this enormous Douglas fir tree. A single tree could build a house and a barn with wood to spare.
- The arrow points to where holes were cut in the side of the tree to support a platform to stand on. Look for these holes on old stumps in the forest as evidence of this logging. Has anyone here seen one before?

Page 5 The early settlers cleared the land using oxen, and then used trains to ship lumber to other parts of the United States.
- Over about a 20-year period between 1900-1920 most of the Westside Lowland Forest was clear cut and burned.
- A few old growth forests were not logged in the Seattle area and include Seward Park and Schmidt Park. These are examples of what this land used to look like before it was logged.

Page 6 This is an example of clear cut logging from a photograph taken in 1926.
- The smoke is from fires set on purpose to help clear the slash and debris after logging.
- This is an example of a man-made disturbance.
**Plant Communities**

The Westside Lowland Forest is made up of many different plant communities. A plant community is made up of different plants that grow together in the same habitat.

Page 7  This is a freshwater wetland with an ‘emergent wetland plant community’ and ‘wetland forest plant community’.
- Plants that like to grow in and next to water are called ‘emergent wetland plants’.
- There are trees and shrubs that can live in wet soil near wetland areas like this. They are called ‘wetland forest plants’.
- Do you think you may have these plant communities in your habitat area?
- This image also shows an ‘edge zone’ that forms a border between two different types of plant communities- in this case a forest community and a wetland community.
- Edge zones have amazing plant diversity since they are a combination of two plant communities growing together.
- Can you find an edge zone in your habitat area?

Page 8  This is a ‘shrub-scrub wetland plant community’ which is made up of shrubs, thickets and small trees.
- These plants thrive in sunny, wetland meadows and tolerate wet soils for much of the year.
- Does this look like a plant community in your habitat area?

Page 9  This is a riparian plant community. A riparian plant community is one that grows near streams or rivers of all sizes.
- This shows a very large river, but it could also be a very small creek and still be called a riparian plant community. Notice the tall trees growing right next to the water along with shrubs and small trees.
- Does this look like a plant community in your habitat area?

Page 10  This is an upland forest which makes up most of the Westside Lowland Forest ecosystem.
- This plant community is not in a wetland or riparian area, and is made up of many different trees, shrubs and groundcover plants.
- This plant community can tolerate heavy rains of winter, and lack of rainfall in summer.
- Does this look like a plant community in your habitat area?

**Layers**

Page 11  Layers are very important to consider when a forest is growing back.
- Layers provide many different levels of habitat for a wide diversity of plants and animals.
- Compare forest layers to a single story house versus a 3 story apartment building. Which provides habitat for the most people?
- Layers in a forest are an indicator of a healthy ecosystem.

Page 12  The most important layer in the forest is the canopy layer. The canopy is the uppermost layer in the forest made up the crowns, or top parts, of trees or shrubs.
- When you look up can you see a canopy layer?
- The canopy layer provides shade and protection to other plants in the community.

Page 13  The next layer is the understory layer which is made up of shrubs and small trees.
- The understory is an important layer to provide a wide variety of habitats and is an important part of a healthy ecosystem

Page 14  And finally we have the groundcover layer which covers the ground with very low growing plants.
- Groundcovers help hold moisture and the soil, and provide important habitat.
  - Groundcovers also help to prevent non native plant species from invading a restoration site.

**Summary**

The Westside Lowland Forest is a very important ecosystem, and it is what we are trying to help grow back when we do restoration. When doing habitat restoration it is important to know which plant community will grow in the habitat area and to provide the types of plants that will create layers. This will help to make sure the restoration is successful.