

Executive Summary - Pritchard Beach Natural Area Stewardship Report – 2007



Pritchard Island Beach Park, located on Lake Washington in southeast Seattle, is an important site for recreation and wildlife, providing a public swimming beach and a 5.7-acre natural area with a wide variety of habitats. Since its acquisition in 1935, much of the park was used as a staging ground for equipment and a nursery, resulting in a highly degraded condition. In 1996, residents of Seattle's Rainer Valley neighborhood and Seattle Parks and Recreation embarked on a planning process to improve the 5.7 underutilized acres in the park. The result of the ensuing public planning process was a vision for a natural area centered on a restored wetland that would be aesthetically appealing and would serve as a site for nature-oriented recreation and environmental learning. To act on this vision, several dedicated community members formed the Friends of Pritchard Beach and solicited support for the project from various public and private entities. Starflower Foundation committed to providing in-kind support for design, plants and seeds, restoration expertise, planting and maintenance, with 33 other organizations also contributing to the project. Friends of Pritchard Beach supervised the process and held monthly work parties to remove invasive species, plant native species and maintain the plantings.

The Friends of Pritchard Beach conducted community meetings with Charles Anderson (then of Anderson and Ray Landscape Architects, now Charles Anderson Landscape Architecture) to develop a design for the project. Construction and initial planting were completed in two phases in 1998 and 1999. Starflower Foundation continued providing in-kind support for supplemental plantings and ongoing maintenance during the plant establishment phase of the project, concluding its participation at the end of 2007. Over the course of 10 years, more than 260,000 native plants were planted in 14 different management zones at Pritchard Island Beach Park. In addition, a large amount and variety of native plant seed was sown. An average of 2300 person-hours a year were spent doing maintenance on the project, primarily consisting of hand-removal of non-native plants. Maintenance hours decreased towards the end of Starflower's involvement with the project, with 1200 person-hours scheduled for maintenance in 2007.

In the spring of 2007, Starflower Foundation partnered with Seattle Urban Nature to assess the composition of the plant communities at the park. Data was collected using the line-intercept method on 66 transects that spanned each of the 14 management zones. In addition, Starflower Foundation assembled comprehensive planting and seeding lists for each management zone.

A total of 322 native species were planted and/or seeded in Pritchard Island Beach Park by Starflower Foundation from 1998 to 2007. During the 2007 survey, a total of 255 species were recorded: 179 native plants, 63 non-native plants (of which 20 are considered potentially invasive) and 13 plants that were not identified to species. Potentially invasive species found were mostly seedlings. Ten of the 20 potentially invasive species found showed an average percent cover in zones where they were found of less than 1%, and ten an average percent cover of between 1% and 3%. A total of 165 species that were planted and/or seeded were not located during the survey.

Based on the survey's findings, Section VI of this report includes recommendations for managing invasive species, improving structural diversity and increasing conifer regeneration developed for future stewards of the area. Of note is the importance of encouraging the development of a structurally diverse, species-rich conifer forest on the site. Care should be taken that invasive species do not regain a foothold. Also, young conifers should be encouraged by periodically clearing competing plants around them and mulching with woodchips.