

Stewardship Area 8



Size: 5.2 acres

Overview

This area is forested with an overstory canopy of mostly mature red alder which is 60-70 years old, and an understory of mostly western red cedar of similar age. There are a few scattered older trees. This stand was established following a “clear-cut” logging of the previous stand.

There is an east-west trail through the south part of this area which is the main entrance to the Hansville Greenway from Buck Lake Park. This was an old farm access road, and is now a wheelchair accessible trail. Another trail branches off this main trail and goes through the forest in a northwesterly direction. This trail is more primitive and is not wheelchair accessible.

The southeast corner of this area adjoins private property; otherwise the perimeter is bounded by Buck Lake Park, Buck Lake and the meadow (Stewardship area 7). Adjacent to the east edge of this area, a native plant garden is being established by a local Master Gardener group. Blackberries and brush have been cleared; the soil surface has been shaped, a wheelchair accessible trail has been constructed; and mostly native landscaping installed. The extreme northeast edge of this unit adjoins thickets of Himalaya blackberry,

bull thistle, stinging nettle, and seedling plum and cherry trees. This corner provides food, cover and shelter for those species of wildlife that feed on browse, fruit and nectar – i.e. songbirds, butterflies, deer, raccoon, etc. There is a dense cover of trees and shrubs along the edge of Buck Lake and beyond this the shoreline is dominated by emergent vegetation for an average width of approximately 30 feet. The remainder of the lake is open water.

Vegetation

Predominant overstory trees are 18-24" DBH (diameter at breast height, 4.5 feet above ground surface) red alder. Many are saw log quality, and are approximately 60-70 years old. There are a few widely scattered good quality Douglas-fir of 20-30" DBH that are approximately 70-100 years old. There are also a few limby but otherwise good quality western red cedar in the overstory which are 16-36" DBH, in this older age class.

The predominant understory trees are good quality western red cedar that are 4-14" DBH and mostly 60-70 years old. Some of the smaller diameter trees, though, are only 20-30 years old. These cedar are spaced about 8 feet apart and occur in clumps. In the southern part of this area, the western red cedar is more uniform and of thicker density with smaller overall diameter. The DBH is generally 6-8" in this area, with spacing of 5-6'. There is scattered western hemlock of comparable size to the trees in the cedar clumps. There are about ten 10-24" diameter downed logs per acre in various stages of decomposition, as well as a few relict old growth stumps and logs. In the more open areas of this unit, the understory consists predominantly of bracken fern, salmonberry, red elderberry, trailing blackberry, Oregon grape, and red huckleberry. Understory in shady areas consists of predominantly sword fern and foam flower. Along the west and south edges of this area are almost continuous hedges of Himalayan blackberry, salmonberry, trailing blackberry and vetch.

Wildlife

As the alder is allowed to mature and die, there will be an increase in usage of standing trees by woodpeckers and cavity nesting birds. Extensive downed wood will provide habitat for up to 100 species. The groves of cedar are long lived and will provide thermal and hiding cover for deer and other animals for many years. The few scattered large old trees will add to the diversity of habitat. There will be an increase in density of brushy understory in openings created by the dying alder. Early succession brush species like salmonberry and red elderberry will probably be common in openings, and Himalayan blackberry could potentially invade. There will be an increase in usage by songbirds, hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and other species that feed on berries and nectar, and deer which feed on browse. Eventually the conifer canopy will close in most areas, and understory will be predominantly sword fern and foam flower. There will be a decrease in the usage by songbirds, etc., and an increase in usage by such species as owls, red crossbills and Douglas squirrels. Refer to Appendix I for a more complete listing of wildlife species present.

Objectives/Alternatives

- Allow this area to remain a red alder forest and allow natural succession to occur. The climax community will be predominantly a coniferous forest of mostly long lived western red cedar.

- The red alder in this area is mature and will be dying and breaking apart in the near future. This creates tremendous opportunity for use by cavity nesting birds and woodpeckers, but dead alder trees in close proximity to the trail creates a safety hazard. For this reason, it is suggested these trees be cut soon after they die to create short snags and reduce the hazard.
- The existing forest could be augmented by planting western red cedar seedlings in any understocked openings created following the death of red alder trees. Additionally, thickets of western red cedar in proximity of trail could be thinned to a spacing of D+2 to allow for more rapid growth.

Field Observation Notes

1. Natural succession of red alder stand to conifer
2. High degree of cavity nesting bird and woodpecker use
3. Few 36 inch DBH Douglas-fir trees in northwest corner by meadow, scattered large diameter red alder in the older age class
4. Old, frequently charred relict stumps
5. Trillium in spring
6. Few wetlands, dominated by red alder canopy, with salmonberry, slough sedge, and lady fern understory