

# SCHUSTER SLOPE



## LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

### BACKGROUND

Historically, Schuster Slope was a feeder bluff contributing sand and soil to the Tacoma shoreline. Evergreen trees such as Douglas-fir and redcedar once grew in abundance as they do today at nearby Point Defiance. The slope was significantly altered through tree clearing and regrading by Tacoma's first logging company and the railroad. These modifications, in combination with invasive species, frequent wetland seeps, and loose soils, contribute to shallow landslides as the slope regresses to its pre-development state. Restoration of Schuster Slope is a priority to protect and enhance public safety, neighborhood health, and environmental function.

### THE PLAN

In 2014, the City began a public process to address the declining state of Schuster Slope through a 20-year Landscape Management Plan. The plan reflects current conditions, best available science, regulatory compliance, and public interests. Implementation is directed by City staff and restoration work is performed by Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews.

### MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Achieve a sustainable target forest ecosystem
- Improve slope stability
- Maximize stormwater\* benefit
- Protect public safety and adjacent infrastructure



\*Stormwater is rainwater or snowmelt that has not soaked into the ground. It carries pollutants from streets and lawns to streams, lakes, and ultimately Puget Sound. Too much stormwater runoff can cause flooding.



### SUMMARY OF RESTORATION WORK COMPLETED SINCE 2015

- 2,561 trees planted
- 27,695 shrubs planted
- 1.5 acres of erosion control materials installed
- 9.4 acres of invasive weeds cleared

### 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

- Restoration along South Stadium Way stalled due to pandemic-related WCC crew absences and development of large encampments
- Clearing of invasive weeds and planting in MU9 continued

### 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- Increased homeless outreach and debris cleanup
- Subsequent clearing of invasive weeds and substantial infill planting in MU1 and MU2

## MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Annual monitoring of plant survival and cover occurs during late summer in restoration areas. Monitoring data help track progress towards management goals. These data also help City staff assess the need for adaptive management, which may include infill planting at different densities, with different species, or using different methods. Success and speed of restoration is limited by challenging site conditions. WCC crews employ ropes and harnesses to maneuver safely across the slope.



## NEXT STEPS

- Ensuring success at top of slope through focused clearing of invasive species, irrigation, and homeless outreach, and debris cleanups
- Installing climate-adapted plants that may better tolerate summer drought conditions
- Underplanting conifers along creeks and wetlands to stabilize wet soils
- Supporting efforts to plan recreational access along Schuster Parkway near bottom of slope

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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