

Cotton Hill Park adopted by UW students

It's been quite an eventful year for Cotton Hill Park - Earth Day with Goats in April, a trail construction project in June, and in September the park was adopted by six students from the University of Washington Restoration Ecology Network (UW-REN) program! The students will spend the school year designing and helping to implement a restoration plan for a 4000 square foot section of the park.

The year long, 10 credit course (depts. washington.edu/uwren) is open to UW students from all disciplines. Together with the community, the students organize work parties and develop a stewardship plan to ensure that the site receives ongoing care and maintenance.

It's quite an honor to be chosen for this program, so how did it come about? Last summer, Sharon Rodman, coordinator of the Green Kirkland Program, invited the UW-REN faculty to tour Cotton Hill Park and consider it for one of this year's project sites. The teachers look for sites with ecological importance and good potential for community and client involvement, as well as educational value and restoration challenges for the students.

HIGHLANDS HAPPENINGS



Karen Story

A longtime Kirkland resident, Karen Story is the Communications chair of the Highlands Neighborhood. A technical writer by day, she spends her free time working on neighborhood projects, raising two teenage boys, and singing in a bluegrass and swing band called Back Burner.

To the great delight of the city and the Highlands Neighborhood, Cotton Hill Park was chosen! The UW staff told us that the strong

history of volunteer and community support was a big factor, as was the new trail. Without a trail, the site would have been difficult to access for both people and materials.

The students are Marian Hanson, Kinsey Burke, Robyn Mushkin, Kelley Govan, Josh Jackson, and Reed Keagle.

Marian, a Master Gardener with experience teaching junior high students, is interested in restoration of urban and suburban native habitats. She hopes to get a masters in Landscape Architecture.

Kinsey is studying Conservation Science and Management, and plans to get a masters in

Environmental Policy. She loves being outdoors and working with communities and says, "I have always been a huge science nerd, so getting to experience a restoration project first hand is very exciting for me. I'm having a ton of fun so far."

Josh, an Earth and Space Sciences major,

says he enrolled in REN because "I wanted the hands on experience, rather than just taking classes about restoration. I would love to work on river and stream restoration projects that involve creating fish habitat."

The goal is to remove

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Horseback

Ages 5 to adult, all abilities

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Cotton

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all invasive plants from the project site, plant native species, mulch to help prevent regrowth of invasives, and educate the community in the process.

The project site is at the southeast corner of the trail "T."

Himalayan blackberry, English ivy, holly, laurel, and other non-native species are turning our urban forests into "ivy deserts." Volunteers are critical to reversing the trend.

Funding for the project is coming from the Highlands neighbor-



Karen Story/Kirkland Reporter Contributor

UW-REN students (l to r) Marian Hanson, Kelley Govan, Kinsey Burke, Reed Keagle, and Josh Jackson teach volunteers about the invasive species that need to be removed from Cotton Hill Park.

hood's Matching Grant program. This program, funded by the city, allows neighborhoods to earn money for projects with volunteer hours.

Restoration events are a lot of fun. They draw

people from all over Kirkland and beyond. It's truly amazing how much even a small group can accomplish in a short time.

At the UW-REN kickoff event on Dec. 6, a group of about 20 volunteers happily hacked,

slashed, chopped, and dug out about 1500 square feet of blackberries and ivy. Underneath the choking intruders they discovered dozens of beautiful, native ferns, giving a glimpse of what this part of the park could look like at the end of the school year.

The next restoration event will be on Monday, Jan. 19 (Martin Luther King day) at Cotton Hill Park, located at 110th Avenue Northeast and Northeast 97th Street. Planting and mulching events will be scheduled in the spring.

For more information about the project, or to sign up for the Highlands e-mail list, go to www.kirklandhighlands.org.

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