



Light reading

Nature Conservation News

September/October 2018

INNOVATIVE PILOT PROJECT SEEKS TO GROW A FOREST MORE RESILIENT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

An innovative pilot project will replant portions of logged land now owned by Seattle City Light to grow a new forest that could be more resilient to climate change.

Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust and its partners — City Light, Seattle Public Utilities and the Northwest Natural Resource Group — received a \$140,000 grant to reforest portions of the Stossel Creek area in the Tolt watershed northeast of Carnation.

The grant money is being provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society through its Climate Adaptation Fund, a program supported and established by a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. “Stossel Creek presents a unique opportunity to test innovative, new habitat restoration methods designed to increase resiliency to climate change for Western Washington forests” said Jon Hoekstra, Executive Director of the Greenway Trust.

Trees on the 154-acre site were harvested by a private land company in 2012. Since then, the site has experienced new plant growth, but with few trees. Invasive species have taken hold in some areas. City Light purchased the land in 2015 as part of its Endangered Species Act Early Action Plan to conserve and enhance habitat for steelhead.

Crews and volunteers will reforest the site with native conifer species, such as Douglas fir and Western redcedar. Instead of using only subvarieties that are native to Washington, this project also will include trees sourced from southwestern Oregon that are better adapted to warmer temperatures and drier summers.

“The climate of the Stossel Creek area is projected to be similar to southwest Oregon’s by the end of the 21st century,” explains Crystal Raymond, a climate adaptation specialist who helped secure the grant while she worked for City Light. “Therefore, the trees adapted

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-Jon Hoekstra,
Executive Director of the Greenway Trust

to southwestern Oregon are expected to be better suited to the Stossel Creek site as the climate warms. By increasing the tree genetic and species diversity, the site’s resiliency to climate change will increase over time.”

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A volunteer from Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust clearing invasive brush.

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Work to control invasive plant species and site preparation at Stossel Creek will begin this spring and planting new trees will begin in the fall. After planting, the team will have several opportunities to monitor success and share lessons learned from the project.

This pilot project will inform future climate-adapted restoration practices for lands owned by City Light, Seattle Public Utilities and other owners in the region. The long-term goal of the reforestation effort is to establish a diverse forest that will be adapted to the climate of the mid to late 21st century.

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**-James Alexander,
Overhead Crew Chief**

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- Arroyo/South Arbor Heights: Installing underground conduits, vaults and streetlights to replace aging infrastructure;
- Pioneer Square: Increasing electrical reliability and supporting alley restoration by replacing old, damaged underground conduits;
- South Lake Union: Installing vaults and conduits to connect customers with Denny Substation underground infrastructure.

This is a partial list. For details go to seattle.gov/light/atwork to access our map and learn about individual projects.

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Seattle City Light



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