

The Leader

Northwest Watershed Institute completes 2025 habitat plantings along Tarboo Creek



NWI field restoration crew Megan Brookens, Grace Burke, Hanna Petersen, Bernt Goodson, Eva Ellis, Veronica Phelan, Zach Hawkes and Wesley Meyers at a restoration site at the Tarboo Wildlife Preserve, also pictured below. COURTESY PHOTOS

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Leader Staff

Northwest Watershed Institute's field crew and volunteers wrapped up its 2025 season in May, after having planted a total of 19,000 native trees and shrubs along wetlands and streams in the Tarboo valley near Quilcene.

Peter Bahls, director of the Northwest Watershed Institute, explained that the plantings are part of a long-term project by the NWI to restore fish and wildlife habitat from the headwaters of Tarboo Creek to Dabob Bay.

Bahls touted how, since 2002, NWI has been “instrumental” in conserving and restoring nearly 5,000 acres in the watershed, by working with volunteers, landowners and 40 partner organizations.

“NWI’s eight-person field crew spent the winter keeping weeds at bay, planting trees and shrubs while they’re dormant, and preparing for volunteer planting and stewardship events through NWI’s Plant-A-Thon and Dabob Days programs,” said Wesley Meyers, NWI’s stewardship director.

Bahls explained that, this winter, the field crew worked primarily at the Tarboo Wildlife Preserve, NWI’s center for restoration and education in the heart of the Tarboo valley.

Bahls elaborated that the 500-acre preserve was “historically productive” salmon and wildlife habitat, consisting of spruce and cedar forests, and wetlands, that were cleared and drained for pasture in the late 19th century.

To make it possible for the crew and volunteers to work in the wetlands, Bahls clarified that the crew constructed temporary boardwalks, with wood donated from Carl’s Building Supply of Port Hadlock, while a semi-truck of corrugated cardboard sheets was donated by Sheets Unlimited in Renton.

“Planting native plants is incredibly rewarding,” said Hanna Petersen, NWI’s assistant field crew leader, who returned for her third planting season in 2025. “You are often near trees and shrubs (that) NWI’s crew and volunteers have planted in previous years, that are taller than you are, and you know your work is making a difference.”

Bahls extended credit to local student leaders, and other community volunteers, for working in partnership with NWI’s field crew, since the planting season revolves around the Plant-A-Thon, now in its 19th consecutive year, during which high school students from local schools lead their peers and younger students in tree-planting events.

Dabob Days restoration projects are open to community volunteers of all ages, and the most recent project is Friday, May 30, to remove marine debris and English ivy along Dabob Bay, near the mouth of Tarboo Creek.

To volunteer at an upcoming Dabob Days project, email megan@nwwatershed.org.