



Mason Gulch Landscape Management

Mason Gulch consists of 39 acres of forested open space in North Tacoma. Steep slopes surround small creeks and wetlands found at lower elevations. This area provides many environmental benefits including *stormwater management, water quality protection and wildlife habitat.



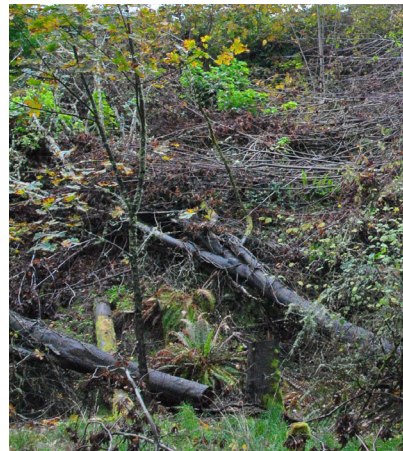
History

Creek flow is plentiful in Mason Gulch, and was used from the late 1800's to the 1920's as a water supply for North Tacoma residents.

In 1926, the Tacoma Public Utility Water Department purchased the property intending to further develop the water supply, however a hydrologic report in 1964 demonstrated this would be too complex due to the geology, springs and unstable soils.

In 1966, the North End Wastewater Treatment Plant was built at the mouth of the gulch and currently uses some of the creek water for processing sewage.

In 2014, the properties making up the gulch were transferred to the City of Tacoma's Environmental Services Department with the intent to manage the site responsibly with a focus on vegetation to benefit both *stormwater runoff quality and quantity.



The Plan

In 2015, the City began a public process to create a landscape management plan to address the declining state of Mason Gulch. Previous logging, recent tree cutting and landslides have upset the forest balance. The goal was to ensure this plan was reflective of the current conditions, best available science, regulation compliance and public interests. The result was a permitted 20-year landscape management plan built on the concept of achieving a target ecosystem to maximize the nature-based services that Mason Gulch can provide.

For More Information

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*Stormwater runoff is rainwater or snow melt that has not soaked into the ground. It carries pollutants from streets and lawns to lakes, streams, and the Puget Sound without being cleaned. Too much stormwater runoff can cause flooding.

Management Goals

- Achieve a sustainable forest ecosystem
- Improve slope stability
- Maximize stormwater benefits
- Protect public safety and infrastructure
- Develop a volunteer stewardship program

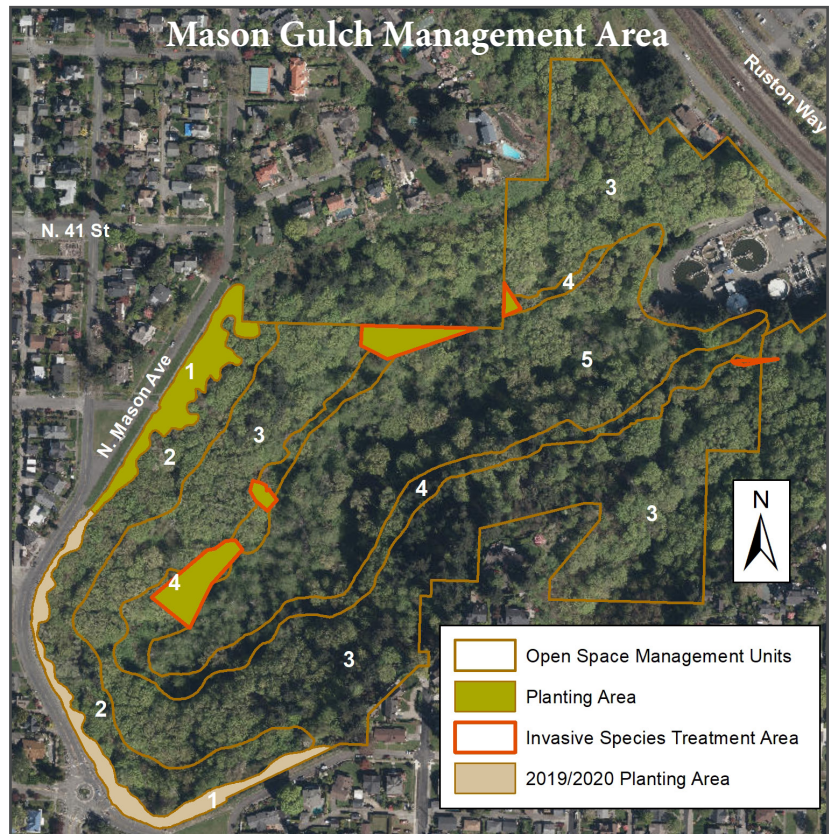
Restoration Overview

Restoration began on Mason Gulch in 2016 with the removal of noxious weeds. In 2017, restoration efforts continued on the northern half of Management Unit (MU)1, where slopes are very steep. This included invasive species removal, installation of natural erosion control materials, and planting 872 native species across the entire 0.75 acre area. Additional planting took place in 2018 with the installation of 3,480 native plants.

MU2 is steeply sloped, and dominated by big leaf maple trees, many of which were previously cut, resulting in the growth of multiple stems (tree trunks), often having structural damage and disease. The dense big leaf maple canopy, and lack of native seeds, has precluded the growth of once prevalent evergreen trees in this area. The goal is to re-establish a healthy tree canopy dominated by evergreens, which do not lose their leaves and absorb water year round.

Preliminary restoration took place in a small section of MU2. Multi-stemmed big leaf maple trees were reduced to one healthy stem to allow for increased light to reach the forest floor. This approach will help maintain slope stability while newly planted trees and other vegetation become established.

Nearly 1.4 acres of invasive bamboo was treated during 2017 and re-treated in 2018 in the lower reaches of the gulch. Volunteer work parties began in 2018 in MU4 and MU5.



Next Steps

The southern half of MU1 will be restored in 2019. Previously planted areas of MU1 and MU2 will be monitored and maintained.

A habitat steward will lead restoration work parties at the bottom of Mason Gulch. For more information on restoration work parties, please see the following link <https://www.earthcorps.org/volunteer/tacoma/>

