Urban Park Restoration in Tacoma, WA: Creating a Space for the Community Through Invasive Species Removal and Native Species Enhancement

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Restoring forested wetlands and urban parks has a lasting impact on the immediate project site, watershed, and community. Urban ecological restorations provide ample opportunity to bridge the gap between nature and people. In addition to immediate changes from restoration, like habitat management for fauna, and preservation/enhancement of native species; restoration may also promote recreation and safety among community-goers through CPTED protocols. The restoration site is a highly disturbed urban park that operates as a wetland; overrun by several non-native species, specifically Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), and five-leaf akebia (*Akebia quinata*). The lack of maintenance and non-native species present caused visibility (park safety) and ecosystem functionality to diminish. This ecological restoration project aimed to reduce the presence of harmful non-native species, enhance native species present throughout the site, and promote community use. We, undergraduate students of the University of Washington, collaborated with the UW faculty and MetroParks Tacoma employees to assess and create a work plan appropriate for the site; the work plan was supported by field surveying of biotic, abiotic, and anthropogenic conditions. We successfully removed harmful non-native species present, enhanced original native vegetation, and introduced fifteen Pacific Northwest native species onto the site. Overall, the restoration of Puget Park created conditions to support more productive ecological functions and offered a chance for the community to act as stewards for the park.