

Removing Invasive Himalayan Blackberry has a Positive Effect on the Local Habitat and Community: Puget Park Tacoma Restoration Project

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Introduction

Our restoration efforts were focused on a riparian wetland ecosystem with many plant communities present, including ornamental non-natives from an old garden at the site. The invasive and ornamental plants present were rapidly creating monocultures within the rich ecosystem, reducing the biodiversity and decreasing the ecosystems habitat functions. One goal for our project was to encourage community use of the park and future stewardship. Understanding the communities' values created objectives for restoring the site. In order to merge the values of restoration with the community we held volunteer events. Introducing the benefits of an ecosystem without Himalayan blackberries (*Rubus americanus*), and with increased available space from pruning the ornamentals. Once the site was clear of invasive species there was an open and safe environment. The restored area is valued by the community because of the safe environment it creates and is valued by the restoration team because of the benefits to the local habitat and community.

Removing Blackberry

- ❖ Identify any native plants around the blackberries.
- ❖ Cut the canes of the blackberries 6 inches above the ground.
- ❖ Remove the canes to a safe location where they can dry out.
- ❖ Using a shovel or pick dig out the root ball.
- ❖ Remove the root ball to a safe location to dry out.
- ❖ Cover the ground with 6 inches of mulch.

Volunteer Work Party



Figure 6: Polygon 4 during invasive removal work party.

- ❖ Outreach to the community.
- ❖ Educating the volunteers.
- ❖ Improving how the natural landscape looks.
- ❖ Connecting the community to the benefits of being outside.

Before



Figure 1: Polygon 4 before.

Pruning Ornamental Trees

- ❖ The restoration site is in an area of the park that once contained an ornamental garden.
- ❖ Pruning the ornamental non-native trees reminds the community of consideration and compassion.
- ❖ Figure 4 & 5 Show the Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*), before and after pruning.
- ❖ Figure 7 shows Ben using a hand saw to prune the uncared-for common boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*).
- ❖ Figure 8 shows the pruned common boxwood.
- ❖ Pruning the ornamental trees was done in early spring and will need to be done yearly to manage growth.



Figure 7: Ben pruning the boxwood



Figure 8: Pruned boxwood.

After



Figure 2: Polygon 4 after.



Figure 4: Polygon 3 before.



Figure 5: Polygon 3 after.

Strengthening the Plant Community

- ❖ Planting natives rehabilitates the ecosystem to allow for biodiversity and a fully functioning habitat.



Figure 9: Gibson Silagi planting slough sedge (*Carex obnupta*).

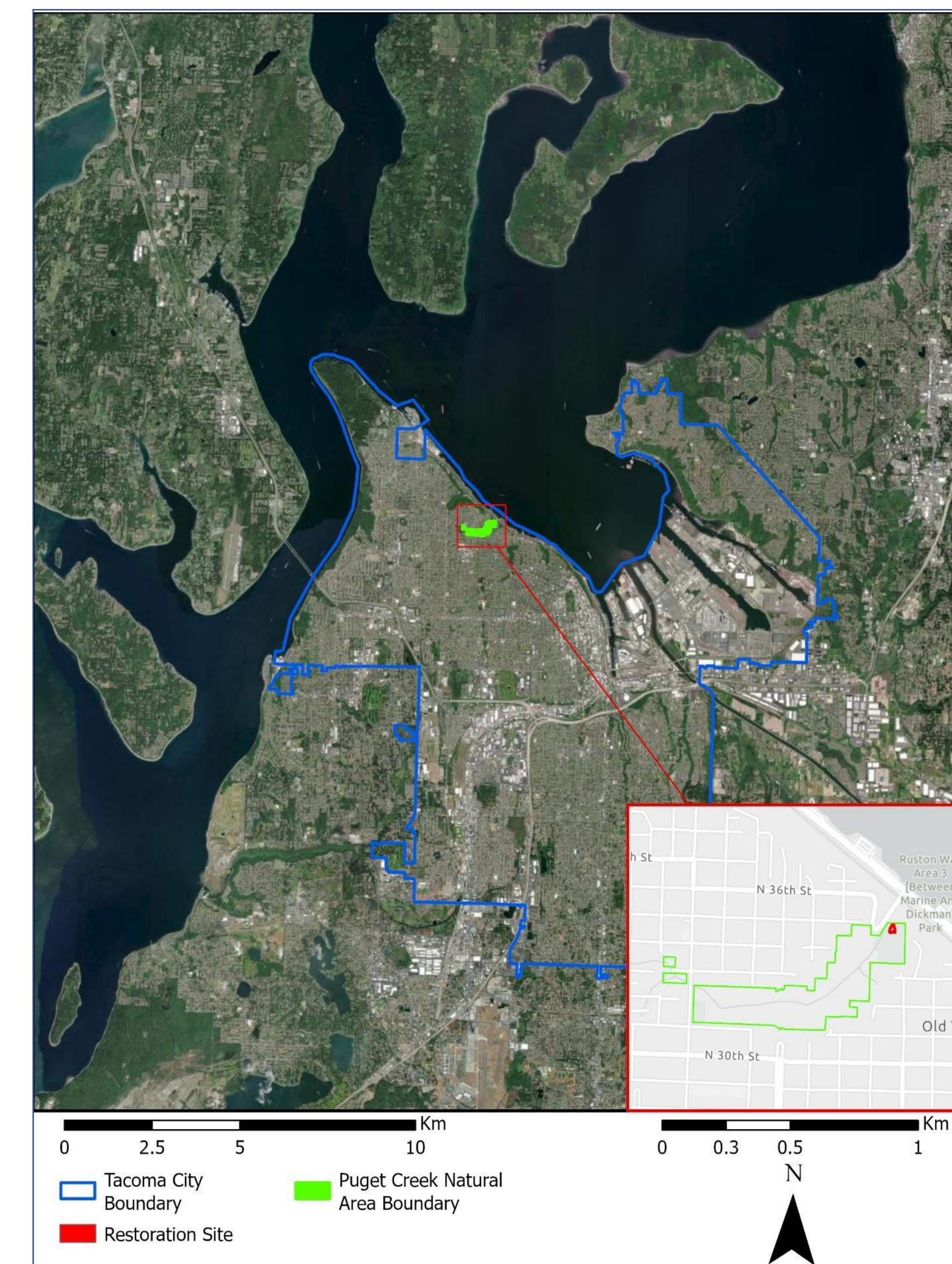


Figure 3: Map created by Ben Looney.

Conclusion

- ❖ Removed all invasive species, creating more space for native plants and future community use.
- ❖ Pruned 3 ornamental trees, creating more light availability for ground and shrub layer development.
- ❖ Opened line of sight throughout.
- ❖ Held two volunteer events where the community was welcomed to participate and learn about the environmental impact while improving how it looks.
- ❖ Mulched the pathway around the site for ease of access.
- ❖ 131 native species were planted, and 25 native species were transplanted into the project site.
- ❖ A monitoring plan was established to ensure future line of sight and plant health.

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