

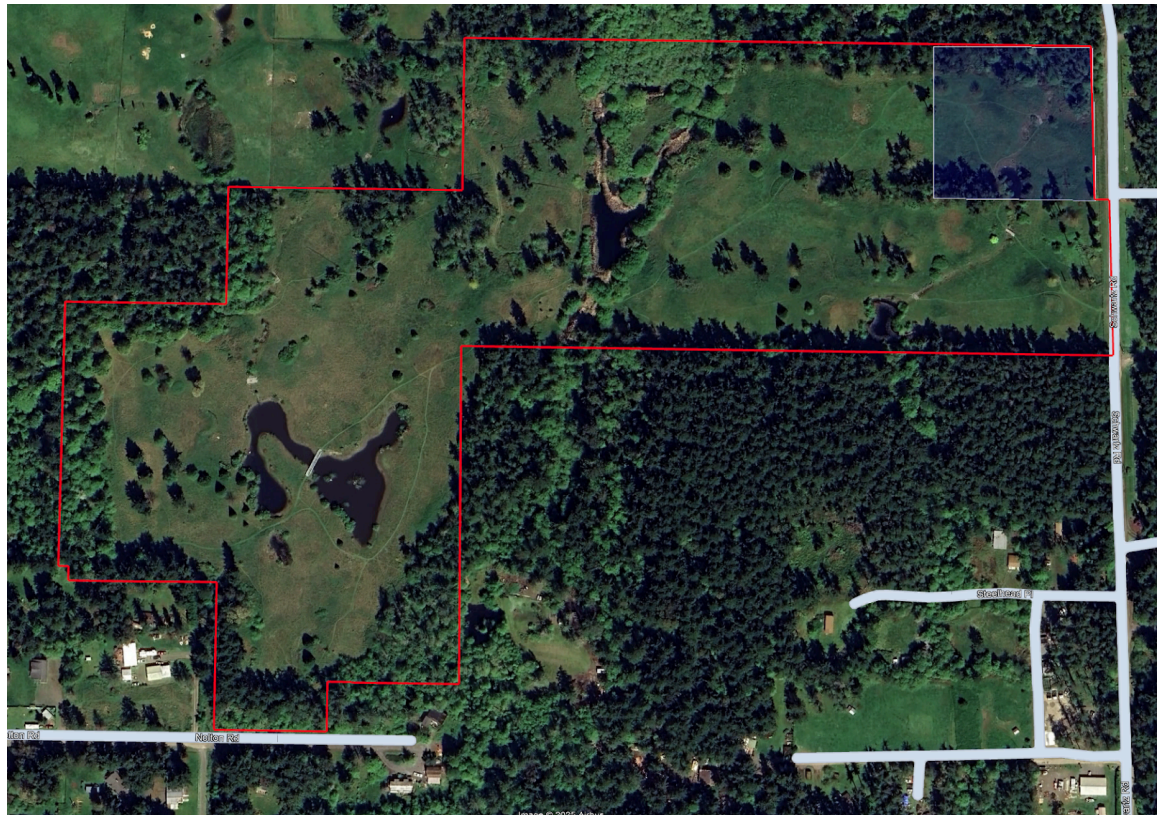
Proposed Conservation Burial at Marrowstone Preserve

Location and Site Features

Marrowstone Preserve is an approximately 36-acre parcel of land on the north end of Schwartz Road that features wetlands and a natural stream, walking trails (currently made available to the public by the owner), human made ponds, meadows, forested stands, fencing and bridges, and a 2.5 acre building envelope (on the northeast/Schwartz Rd side of the property).



Aerial showing location of property on Marrowstone Island (outlined in red)



Building envelope adjacent to Schwartz Road shown in shaded area.

A Gift of Conservation

This former golf course property was purchased in 2016 by its current owner who wanted to see its habitat values protected forever. In 2019, the owner worked with the Land Trust to place a conservation easement upon the property that removes all but one development (building) right and outlines management protocols intended to support the long-term natural and open space values of the property.

This easement reduced the market value of the land by approximately \$510,000; the owner voluntarily reduced the property value by this much by protecting it in this way. Some of the administrative and legal costs associated with this easement sale (about 9% of the value of the conservation easement) were awarded to the project by a public competitive grant source designed to support land conservation.

The owner has decided to generously allow the use of the existing trails by neighbors and visitors. The site experiences daily use, especially by birders who are drawn to the site by the rich diversity of birds found there.

The property is monitored annually by the Land Trust, ensuring that the conservation easement protected natural and open space values are being well cared for, and documenting current conditions. The owner is responsible for the site's ongoing maintenance.



Photo: John Gussman

A Stewardship and Restoration Challenge



The site requires significant restoration to return it to the desired future condition outlined in the conservation easement, and ongoing maintenance to control multiple invasive species that have taken root.

A couple of years ago, the owner decided it was time to sell the property, and began to search for an organization that could ensure the conservation values of this land would be protected forever and that would make appropriate provision for its perpetual care.

Over the past two years, several proposals for future ownership have been explored, but none have come to fruition due to the significant costs associated with the restoration and ongoing stewardship of the site.

Conservation Burial Proposal

In the fall of 2024, the Land Trust proposed to purchase the property from the owner and use conservation burial as a tool to restore and care for it in perpetuity. A conservation burial ground at Marrowstone Preserve, owned and operated by Olympic Wildlands Burial Grounds (a wholly owned subsidiary of the Land Trust) would:

- Provide the financial resources needed to restore, maintain, and enhance the property's natural values in perpetuity
- Preserve a recreational resource for neighbors and visitors
- Preserve and enhance habitat for hundreds of wildlife species
- Offer the community an alternative option for burial that reflects the conservation values they hold in life
- Be consistent with the terms of the property's conservation easement



Photo: John Gussman

What would change?

As a site for conservation burial, the property would see the following changes:

- Addition of a small parking area (within the 2.5-acre building envelope)
- Control of invasive species
- Repaired fences and bridges
- Regular trail maintenance
- Rewilding of some areas with new native tree and shrub species
- Careful site management and monitoring
- Possible addition of a covered pavilion and equipment storage
- Possible future addition of a caretaker cabin (in the 2.5-acre building envelope)
- Addition of portable restroom facilities

We estimate there would be up to 20 burials a year. On burial days, neighbors could expect to see a modest increase in traffic on Schwartz Road. On other days, we anticipate visits similar to current use.

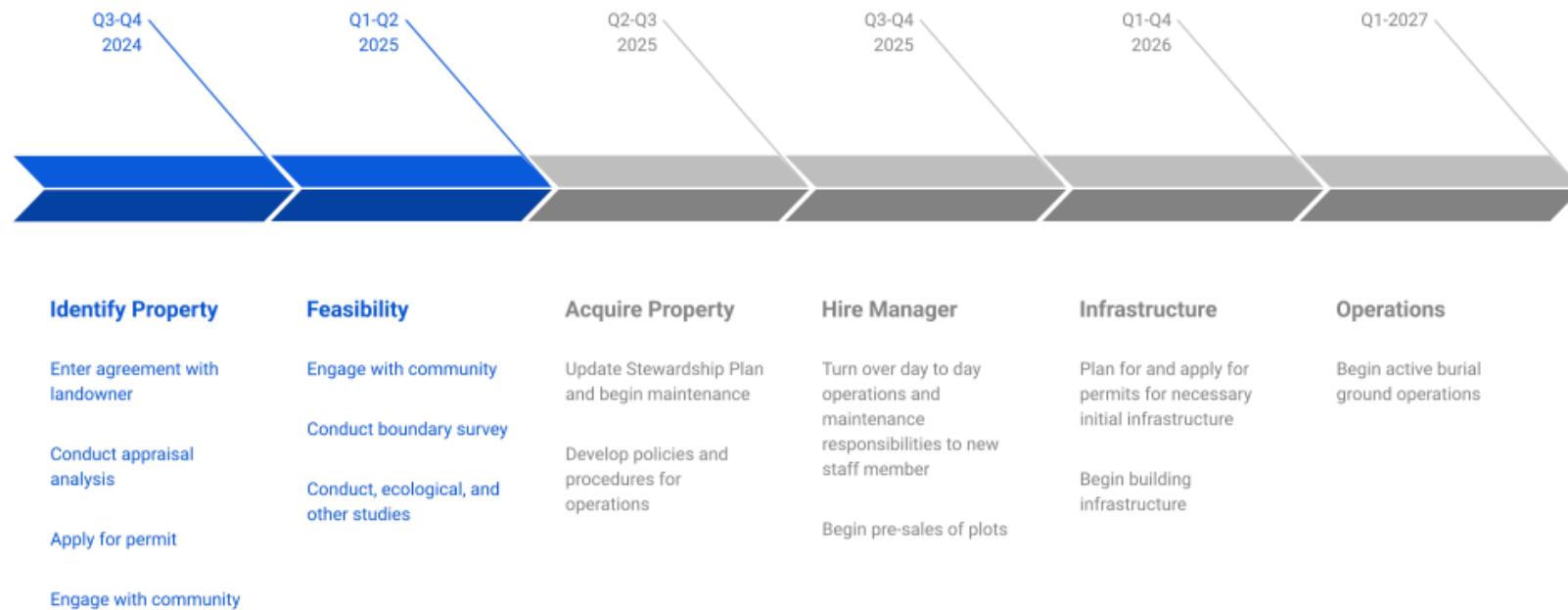
What would stay the same?

- The peaceful, natural character of the property
- Community pedestrian access

Community Participation

Positive partnership and collaboration with community members are core values of Jefferson Land Trust. Community members are invited and encouraged to participate in planning for the site, and to volunteer for ongoing property care. Jefferson Land Trust strives to be a good neighbor and manage all our properties in ways that enhance the neighborhood in which they're in and minimize disruption.

Timeline



Questions? Please contact Erik Kingfisher, Director of Stewardship and Resilience, at ekingfisher@saveland.org 360.379.9501 ext 103.

Ask Us to Share: To request a presentation about this proposed vision with your community group, please contact Ric Brewer, Events and Community Engagement Manager at rbrewer@saveland.org 360.379.9501 ext 113.

Marrowstone Island FAQs (regularly updated with questions as they are received)

Why is this site considered ideal for this use?

There are many aspects of this site that make it well suited for this type of green burial ground. The property was an undeveloped forest until the 1990s, when it was converted to a private golf course. It was then purchased by a conservation-minded landowner, who worked with Jefferson Land Trust to permanently protect the habitat and other natural values of the property, and to permanently ensure that almost all of its acreage (all but 2.5 acres) would not be developed in the future. Additionally, conservation burial on this site is consistent with local land use regulations, and the landowner has decided this is the best way to ensure the property's habitat restoration and long-term care. As a former golf course, its natural environment has been compromised and requires regular maintenance; restoration and stewardship through conservation burial practices can support improved ecological conditions over time.

Will the Land Trust run the burial ground/cemetery? How will it be structured from a business standpoint? Is this a for-profit enterprise?

Per Washington State Law, cemeteries must be owned and managed by dedicated organizations with this sole purpose and perpetual mission. Additionally, the Land Trust cannot own a property upon which it holds an easement. For these reasons, the Land Trust has formed a wholly owned subsidiary organization to own and manage such burial grounds and memorial forests: Olympic Wildland Burial Grounds LLC (OWBG). The OWBG volunteer Board of Managers is working in tandem with the Land Trust's Board of Directors and staff members to set up the organizational structure. Once the property is dedicated as a conservation burial ground, OWBG will hire a manager who will oversee the day-to-day operations of the site, and will be the main point of contact for neighbors and others.

This is not a "for-profit" enterprise. Proceeds from burial plot sales will be used to maintain the property and facilitate its restoration. Any additional proceeds in the future will be used to support other non-profit conservation projects both on Marrowstone Island and across Jefferson County.

I'm a neighbor. Will having the conservation burial ground next to my property reduce its value?

The conservation burial ground will be a peaceful, natural space that enhances the surrounding environment, similar to our other natural area preserves. There will be no headstones, and burial plots will blend in with the natural conditions of the site. By designing and managing the site in this way, we expect surrounding property values to respond in a way that is consistent with having any

permanent natural area and open space nearby. While traditional cemeteries can negatively impact property values, park-like permanently protected green spaces like this conservation burial ground can have the opposite effect.

What kinds of physical changes would occur on the property to accommodate burials?

The general meadow, wetland, and forest conditions of the property are to be managed over time for their habitat values. Some portions of the property will be slowly reforested with native plants as burials occur. Certain infrastructure will need to be added in order to operate the site appropriately and meet the needs of families and friends honoring their loved ones. We expect this to eventually include a dedicated parking area and outbuildings, and space for indoor memorial ceremonies (all in a 2.5-acre area on the NE corner off Schwartz Road).

How much of the site would be used for conservation burial; are there specific areas you've earmarked for restoration?

We are currently planning to use approximately 10 acres (less than a third) of the site for conservation burial. Burial areas would be concentrated around the forest edges. The specific burial areas and sizes will be finalized following the site analysis by specialists such as biologists and hydrologists.

How many burials do you expect each year? When would the site reach capacity?

We anticipate up to 20 burials each year and anticipate it will take more than 150 years to reach burial capacity at the site.

Will funerals or ceremonies cause traffic issues for neighbors?

Most ceremonies on site are expected to be small and occur infrequently. Appropriately sized parking and other infrastructure will limit the number of people who may participate in a ceremony. The OWBG board and manager are sensitive to neighbor concerns about traffic volume on Schwartz Road and will work closely with neighbors to mitigate negative impacts of its operations, including considering shuttles to and from the site on burial days.

We frequently walk this property and use it for birdwatching. Will the public still be allowed for these types of uses?

Yes. Many neighbors and visitors (especially birdwatchers) currently enjoy access to the property via existing trails that have been approved by the landowner, and that have been maintained by the owner, friends, and neighbors. Owning and operating the property as a conservation burial ground will help ensure this type of access can continue (compared to other private ownership).

Will we be able to walk the trails on days when burial services are taking place.

Yes. With 36 acres of property, it will be possible for pedestrian visits to continue concurrent with any services. Just like a regular preserve, visitors can expect certain areas to be fenced off and trails re-routed to accommodate burial and restoration activities. And just as in traditional cemeteries, visitors will be asked to maintain a distance from active burial services out of respect for the families and friends participating.

If I'm visiting the burial ground, how will I know if I'm walking across a body?

None of the trails will cross burial sites. As in all our preserves, we will ask visitors to stay on trails to minimize disturbance of habitat.

What kind of noise can we expect from the site?

Neighbors can expect regular mechanized mowing to control invasive species, and the sound of occasional chain saws as we manage the forested areas for safety and improved forest health and resilience. We expect burial plots will be dug by hand. Burial services will be held in daylight hours and will not allow amplified music.

Is this proposed use consistent with the terms of the conservation easement?

Yes. To discuss the technical provisions of the easement and how they are consistent with this use, please contact Erik Kingfisher at ekingfisher@saveland.org 360.379.9501ext 103

Since public funds were used to help purchase the conservation easement, doesn't this give the public rights to use the property and/or determine its future use.

No. Public grant funds are regularly used to place restrictions upon the use of private land that have broad ecological benefits to the community, but do not affirm public rights of access, use, or future ownership. For example, public funds are regularly used to place easements on farmland that borders salmon habitat, creating a buffer around streams that may not be farmed. This is considered a public ecological benefit since it protects salmon habitat in perpetuity, but does not afford the public any rights to access the land, nor to determine its future ownership.

Will this burial ground be open to only Marrowstone Island or Jefferson County residents.

The burial ground will be open to all, though we expect that this option will be used most often by Jefferson County residents.

Will there be a way to reserve a burial site years in advance.

Yes. Once the program has launched, pre-sales of burial sites will begin.