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Whatcom Million Trees Project Intern

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title:

Organization Worked For:

Student Name:

Internship Dates:

Faculty Advisor Name

Department

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STUDENT SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and appears to be a first name followed by a last name.

DATE: _____

WHATCOM MILLION
TREES PROJECT

Spring Internship

Ainsley Shearer



WHAT I LEARNED AND WORKED ON THIS SPRING VOLUTEERING
FOR A LOCAL NONPROFIT, WHATCOM MILLION TREES PROJECT.



Comparing Coursework and Experiential Work

Ecological systems are complex and are directly impacted by human activity just as we are by them. As an environmental studies student it is easy to become quickly wrapped up in climate anxiety. Coursework has taught me to question my perception of nature and look to my local community for guidance. That is what I did this past spring. This internship gave me the opportunity to use my knowledge of ecological systems and outdoor education to work with community members to build local climate resilience. I also got to use my skill in Geographic Information Systems to display visual data for Whatcom Million Trees Project.



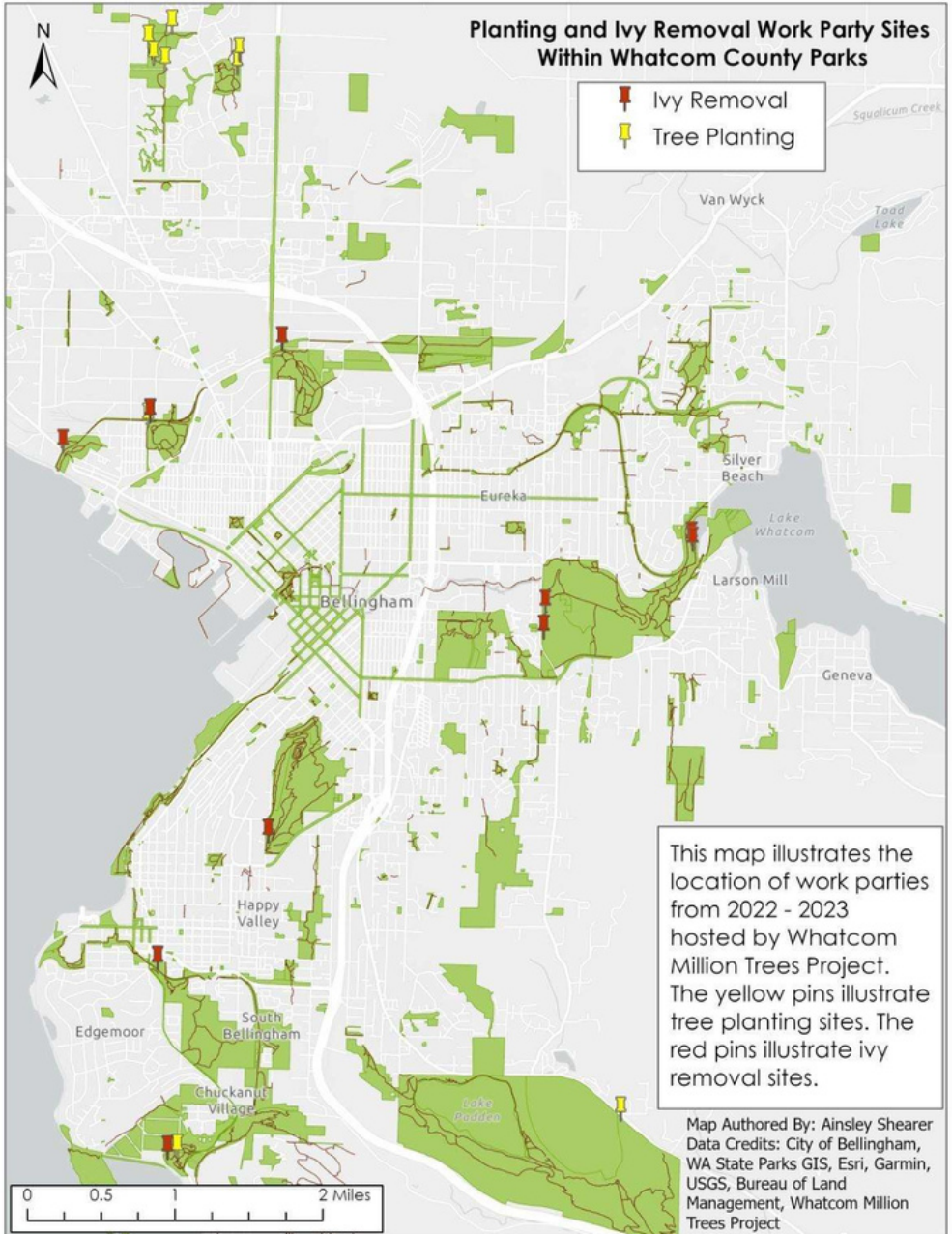
Learning Objectives

One of my learning objectives before I started the internship was to learn how to work with a map making team to create visually stunning and comprehensive maps of Bellingham's invasive species. Over the course of the quarter that is exactly what I did. I have made a static map of different work party sites that Whatcom Million Trees Project have and will host within the City of Bellingham Parks. Along with a Story Map that presents and displays that map in a more interactive way.

[Link to Story Map](#)



Static Map of Work Party Sites



Learning Objectives

My second learning objective going into this internship was to learn how and where to plant trees so I could offset my carbon footprint locally. Within the past couple months, I helped Whatcom Million Trees Project's planting coordinator, Jim Smith, in the tree nursery. I learned how to repot Douglas Fir, Big Leaf Maple, and Red Cedar tree saplings. I also learned how Jim decides where to plant different trees and how the local neighborhoods and communities have a say. I helped set up the tree seedlings for a work party and learned that the local neighborhood that borders the park where we were planting expressed how much this empty hill meant to their community. Whatcom Million Trees Project asked them if they wanted trees planted on this hill and they refused. It was the local sledding hill and if trees were planted there then the neighborhood kids would have nowhere to sled. I found this so heartwarming. It made a connection for me back in ENVS 303 and 305 when we learned how the perception of nature changes management of public outdoor spaces. This neighborhood did not want a thickly planted forest because it would change their recreation activities.



Squalicum Creek Park Planting Work Party



I took this picture at my first work party where I assisted Jim with the planting demonstration. I also taught volunteers how to build tree cages around the newly planted saplings. Not pictured are the laughs and stories shared by the volunteers and I as it drizzled on and off for the entire work party. One thing that stuck with me after this first work party was the demographic of the Whatcom Million Trees Project volunteers, most are older in their mid-sixties. So much of my outdoor education experience has been with youth but seeing the generation that came before me still fighting for climate justice filled me with hope. Their dedication to bettering their local community is inspiring and something I hope to take with me.

City of Bellingham Plant Nursery, Repotting Party



I took this picture at one of my visits to the plant nursery where Whatcom Million Trees Project keeps their tree saplings. During this trip Jim and I, along with two other volunteers, repotted as many seedlings as we could. Most of the seedlings that did not get planted during this past planting season are growing out of their pots and need to be placed in one or two pot sizes up. This is a lot of work for just Jim alone so I have been helping him with this part of his work as planting coordinator.

Cornwall Park Ivy Removal



I took this image at one of the ivy removal work parties.

Whatcom Million Trees is dedicated to protecting and planting one million trees in Whatcom County. Part of the protection is done by removing English Ivy that has wrapped around trees threatening their health. The tree in the image above is a cottonwood. The trunk of this tree was huge and the ivy that was killing it was the thickest I had seen in a while. I had to cut and chop my way through but finally I had removed enough so the ivy will die. This was such satisfying work. I got to save a tree that will now be able to continue its long-life providing shade and joy to future Whatcom County residents.

Conclusion

As an environmental studies major with an emphasis in outdoor education and eco-social justice this internship spoke to my interest in education and learning from my local community about tree health and protection. I learned so much about community resilience. I got to see firsthand how much power comes from volunteers in Bellingham that are dedicated to improving their community. I am going to continue to volunteer with Whatcom Million Trees Project into the next planting season. Jim and I are going to visit sites in the Fall, and he will teach me how he makes planting plans. Jim's goal is to replicate growth that he observes in nature. I am excited to continue learning and helping to build resilient forests and help to protect trees in my community.

