

Friends of Seward Park
Minutes for Board Meeting 13 September 2025
Submitted by E. Van Volkenburgh

Attending: Lizabeth Collier, Lee Dunlap, Chris Hollinger, Paul Shannon, Paul Talbert, Liz Van Volkenburgh

Paul Talbert called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.

Announcements. Paul Talbert let us know that on Sunday 14 September there will be an event for Save our Science at Seattle's Waterfront Park. He also reminded us that elections for FoSP officers will be held next month.

Audubon Update. Joey was occupied setting up events and unable to attend our meeting.

Treasurer's Report: (Lizabeth) FoSP has more than \$60K in its budget. Payments have been made recently to support the Fern 2025 survey, and to support Paul Talbert's sequencing work (fern die off project).

Secretary's Report (Liz): June 2025's minutes will be posted on the FoSP website which will be updated with all available minutes for the past year. Liz asks Board members to review the minutes for accuracy and submit changes to her.

Seattle Parks Trails: Paul T reported that there is a new interactive trail map put out by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) showing established (not informal, "social") trails in Seward Park.

www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/Parks/Seward%20Park%20Trails%202025%20ADA.pdf

It was suggested that revisions of the map be made to include all paths (Paul S agreed to attempt this).

We discussed improving safety of the "bogs" (wet areas) leading off the upper parking area. Paul S had talked with Seattle Parks senior gardener Gail Johnson. about this, who said SPR cannot or will not address these as their work must be ADA compliant, thus expensive. Chris H questioned whether the Park has an unsafe amount of dead wood possibly presenting a fire hazard. This led to a discussion of the Fire Return Interval (so far, 500 years; the last notable fire in the Park was in 1701) and the observation that downed wood is necessary for establishment of new hemlock trees, and more. There was a reference to past discussion of a prescribe-burn the Garry Oak prairie. We agreed that this might be scientifically apt but a bad idea for a Park.

Trail Marker Cleaning: Chris H reported that the stone trail markers have been cleaned. She was encouraged to write up (for FoSP memory) what materials were used and how the cleaning was done. Chris mentioned she and Liz used spray bottles of water, mild bleach, and fingernail

brushes. Two stones were moss covered and required more scrubbing; some required cutting away grass and brush from the base of the marker. The maps on some stones could use a paint touch-up. Paul T offered to call the sandblasters who painted these originally to see what kind of paint they used.

Fern Survey: Paul S invited Lee Dunlap to introduce himself; Lee works as a volunteer with the Green Seattle Partnership on the Queen Anne Greenbelt on the northeast slope of QA. Lee says some ferns there appear unhealthy; he came to us for information and advice.

Plant Pathogen Testing: Paul S said he wishes to step away from pursuing the cause of the fern die-off and welcomes anyone else who'd like to pick up the cause. He reported a brief foray into the possibility that nematodes were the cause of our fern blight. One of the summer students, Kaiis Davis Jarrahy, shared with Paul a journal article describing a new nematode species discovered in diseased sword fern on the Olympic Peninsula. Paul reached out to the primary author of the article (Sergei Subbotin) for assistance. Paul and Liz followed up the lead with microscopic analysis of dissected, diseased sword fern fronds at the University of Washington. Ultimately Sergei accepted some samples and agreed no nematodes were present. However, he offered his lab's consultation for next steps (California Department of Food and Agriculture Plant Pest Diagnostic Center).

Paul S intends to write up the summer's research results of Kaiis Davis Jarrahy and Ben Schillp to submit to *Douglasia*.

Paul S showed results of the summer survey on a map of the Puget Sound basin. He pointed out that the fern die-off is active and moving within Seward Park.

Forest Report: Paul S proposed an approach to more scientific restoration in the Park. A motivating question is: Has deep mulching improved soil in a way beneficial for growing without irrigation? Paul S presented an idea for a proposal to carry out soil analysis (\$25/sample) in sites where soil has been mulched, and new ferns have been planted (e.g. Ground Zero) and are successfully growing. He will take this idea to SPR's Danielle Devier for approval and return to FoSP with a formal proposal.

In sites where revegetation is occurring with plantings of salal, snowberry, osoberry, Oregon grape, others, he plans to keep track of where and when each planting occurred. The data will be stored in FoSP data archive.

Paul S reported that forest steward Jenny Dooley will host work parties the last Saturday of September and the first Saturday of October, deep mulching at the Trillium Swale.

Endophyte Sequencing Update. Paul T reported he has been successful at extracting DNA from sword fern fronds with sufficient quantity and purity for sequencing. He will continue to learn how to handle fern DNA and hopes to run PCR tests for pathogenic endophytic DNA (bacteria, virus, fungi).

Paul T also reported that the Simon Frasier sequencing group sent an application to Danielle Devier at SPR for sampling Seward Park ferns and DNA analysis.

Other business. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:22 am.

The next FoSP meeting is scheduled for October 11.