

WPOA

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER & MEETING NOTICE

SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

May 26

6:30 PM

Fellowship Hall
Grace Community Covenant
Church
5501 Wiggins Rd SE

AGENDA

- 2026 activities update
- Guest Speaker
- Greenbelt update
- Trail Improvements
- Governing Documents Review
- Transition to Mgmt. Agent

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MESSAGE FROM THE WPOA PRESIDENT

Spring has sprung in all its magnificent glory! I know I'm not alone in embracing the warm sunny days, clear blue skies, bird song, and all the shades of green and other colors that surround us in our Wilderness. We all want to keep it this way for years and generations to come.

Doing so is becoming more challenging in an environment of changing climate and weather patterns. Washington has been under a statewide drought emergency since April 8, 2026, with an early-melting snowpack about half its normal level, and is expected to have an unusually hot and dry summer.

To maintain our Wilderness, our greatest community asset, we want to do all we reasonably can to prevent suburban fires that we've begun to see in other parts of the country. Toward that end, we're increasing our focus on fire prevention in our greenbelts and throughout the wider community. We are fortunate to continue to be a recognized Firewise USA® community, which allows us to take advantage of multiple grant opportunities and obtain free home fire-hardening assessments. Please see details at the bottom and sign up for an assessment if you have not already done so.

Meanwhile, we are also taking advantage of additional grant opportunities to make improvements in our common areas. We have again received grant assistance to further improve the paths that kids use to go to and from Centennial Elementary School, as well as repair the pedestrian bridge that crosses the Chambers Drainage Ditch. As Ben notes below, volunteers are key to making this and future grant opportunities available.

We have enjoyed an increasingly cooperative relationship in recent years with the folks managing the Chambers Drainage Ditch that traverses Wilderness and are now proud to acclaim that one of our own, Tristan Allen, is serving as one of the three elected "Ditch District" commissioners. Please see Tristan's write-up below to learn more about the ditch and the district. Thank you again to all the dedicated volunteers who continue to make all this possible!

PATH UPGRADES AND PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE REPAIRS

The WPOA was recently awarded a 2026 City of Olympia neighborhood matching grant. The ~\$2,400 grant funding will be used to resurface the pathway between Wilderness Drive and the gravel pathway connecting Wilderness to the Sweet Briar neighborhood. The existing dirt path will be widened to 4 feet and resurfaced with gravel. In addition, the grant will be used to replace rotted deck boards and to perform other minor safety improvements



Pedestrian bridge repair location

to the pedestrian bridge spanning the ditch near 3320 Donnelly Drive SE.

To complete this project, we need YOU!!! Volunteerism is a cornerstone of the grant program, where volunteer hours are valued at \$40 per hour and provide our matching contribution for the project.

To get involved in volunteering for this project, please email the board: wildernessboard@gmail.com



Existing dirt pathway from Wilderness Dr SE

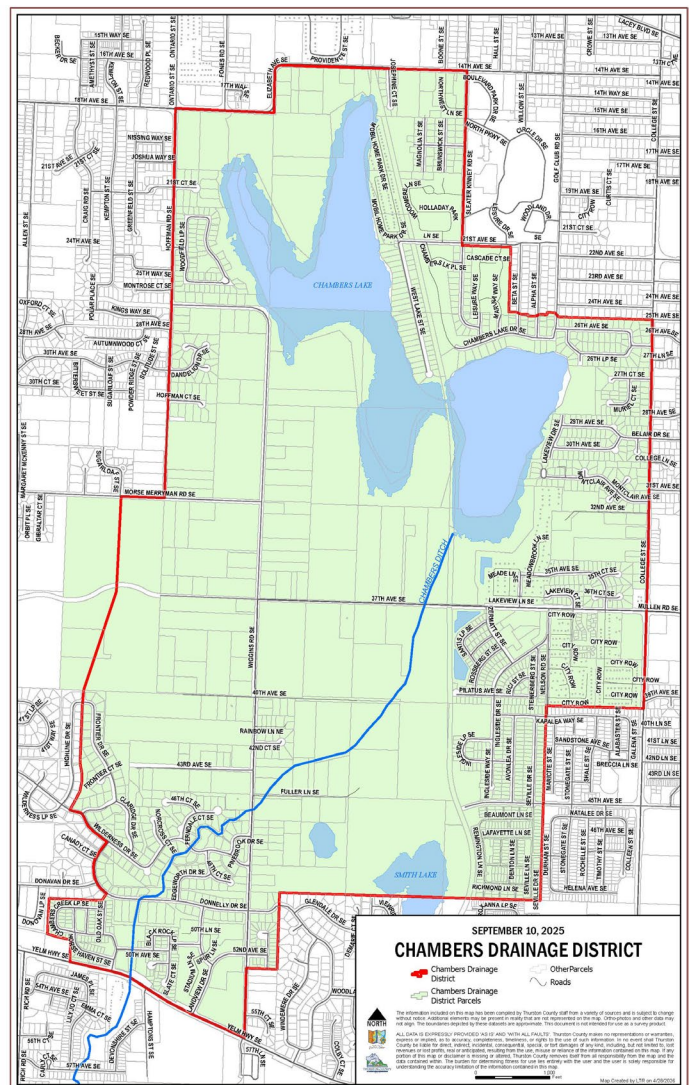
For more information on the City of Olympia Neighborhood Matching grant program, please visit https://www.olympiawa.gov/community/neighborhood_associations/neighborhood_matching_grants.php

CHAMBERS DRAINAGE DITCH

Chambers Drainage Ditch is a small trench that provides critical drainage for properties as it flows south from Chambers Lake towards the Deschutes River. There is debate over whether the ditch is a human-made ditch or a naturally occurring creek. Regardless of the history, it is recognized for its important role providing drainage for surrounding properties and is maintained as a ditch to ensure uninterrupted flow.

The Chambers Drainage Ditch originates from the southwest corner of the 2nd Chambers Lake. It immediately culverts under the Chehalis Western Trail and then again under Herman Road before flowing through several pastoral lots east of Wiggins Road. The ditch enters the Wilderness neighborhood just south of Fuller Lane SE, flowing under Wiggins. The ditch meanders through our neighborhood before exiting via another culvert under Donnelly Drive and into the Chambers Creek Crossing neighborhood. Passing beneath Yelm Highway, the ditch continues south until it joins Chambers Creek for a short distance before ultimately ending in the Deschutes River.

In 1919, the community around the ditch recognized the need to establish a commission to pool resources and allocate them to the ditch's maintenance. Established as Thurston County Drainage District No. 3, the Commission has 3 elected Commissioners who serve six-year terms, overseeing the budget and ensuring that the ditch is



maintained and the water continues to flow. The Commission's budget is funded by taxes levied on property owners within the drainage basin. This includes much of Wilderness, but not all. See attached map for more details.

Any resident who has a question related to the ditch, or notices a ditch-related issue that needs attention, please reach out to Tristan Allen (tristanallencdc@gmail.com | 541-908-5950).

GREENBELT MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS – WINTER '25/SPRING '26

The past three years, we've mostly been focused on taking down hazardous trees. Hazardous trees will always be something we need to manage as a priority to protect property and life as best we can. To that end, we continue to work through the 2025 arborist report to remove the remaining hazardous trees identified in that report.

Unfortunately, last December, during the extreme wind and rain events that came through, three trees fell, but fortunately, they did not cause major property damage. For better or worse, managing our aging forest greenbelts consumes most of the WPOA's budgeted greenbelt funds, leaving little for other important projects that may not be as critical but are nonetheless important to the overall health of our greenbelts.

This year, we were able to plant trees in a few of our greenbelts, and that feels really good! Here's a summary of the work we've been doing since September '25:

- Removed a pick-up load of metal debris left in the Wilderness Park greenbelt.
- Removed invasives from a section of the Wilderness Park greenbelt, chipped limbs from tree trimming that had been done earlier in the year, and planted with native trees and shrubs.
- Removed invasives from the greenbelt at the end of Wilderness Drive near Boulevard Road and replanted with native trees and shrubs.
- Firewise USA Grant - Removed invasives from the greenbelt on Wilderness Drive at Donnelly Drive and replanted the area with native trees and shrubs.
- Continued working through the 2025 arborist report to remove the identified hazardous trees.
- Continue to remove invasives from the LBA Woods Trailhead area as they reappear.



Metal garbage removed from Wilderness Park

If you would like to volunteer for greenbelt activities, let us know!

WPOA-greenbelt@pm.me

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.”

~ Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*



Planting Day at Wilderness Park



Planting Day at 48th Ct. & Donnelly Dr. Greenbelt



Invasive removal at Wilderness Dr. near Boulevard Rd.



Planting Day at Wilderness Dr. & Donnelly Dr. Greenbelt



Planting Day at LBA Woods Trailhead

FIREWISE USA

Wildfire is a fact of life—but when neighbors come together, we can significantly reduce the risk it poses to our homes and community. By working collectively, everyone benefits.

WPOA is proud to be a Firewise USA® community. Through this partnership, we've received expert guidance on managing our forested greenbelts to better protect against wildfire. Over the past two years, we've also secured more than \$9,000 in grant funding from Firewise USA® to reduce fire risks by cleaning up and maintaining key areas.

To retain our Firewise USA® status and qualify for future grants, we need at least **42 homes (15%)** to participate in the Wildfire Ready Neighbors program. It's a simple, impactful way to protect your home, support the safety and resilience of our entire community, and help us continue this important partnership with Firewise USA®.

Please sign up for a free consultation today and help us keep our community safe. Go to <https://wildfireready.dnr.wa.gov/> and request your consultation soon. We are heading into the dry season, so there's no time like the present to ensure you, your family, and your community are safe.

You can learn more about the Firewise USA® program at our website: <https://wildernesspropertyowners.org/category/firewise-usa/>

Will you do your part to help protect your property, strengthen our neighborhoods' fire resilience, and ensure Wilderness remains eligible for future Firewise USA® funding?