







Welcome to the Chehalis River Surge Plain



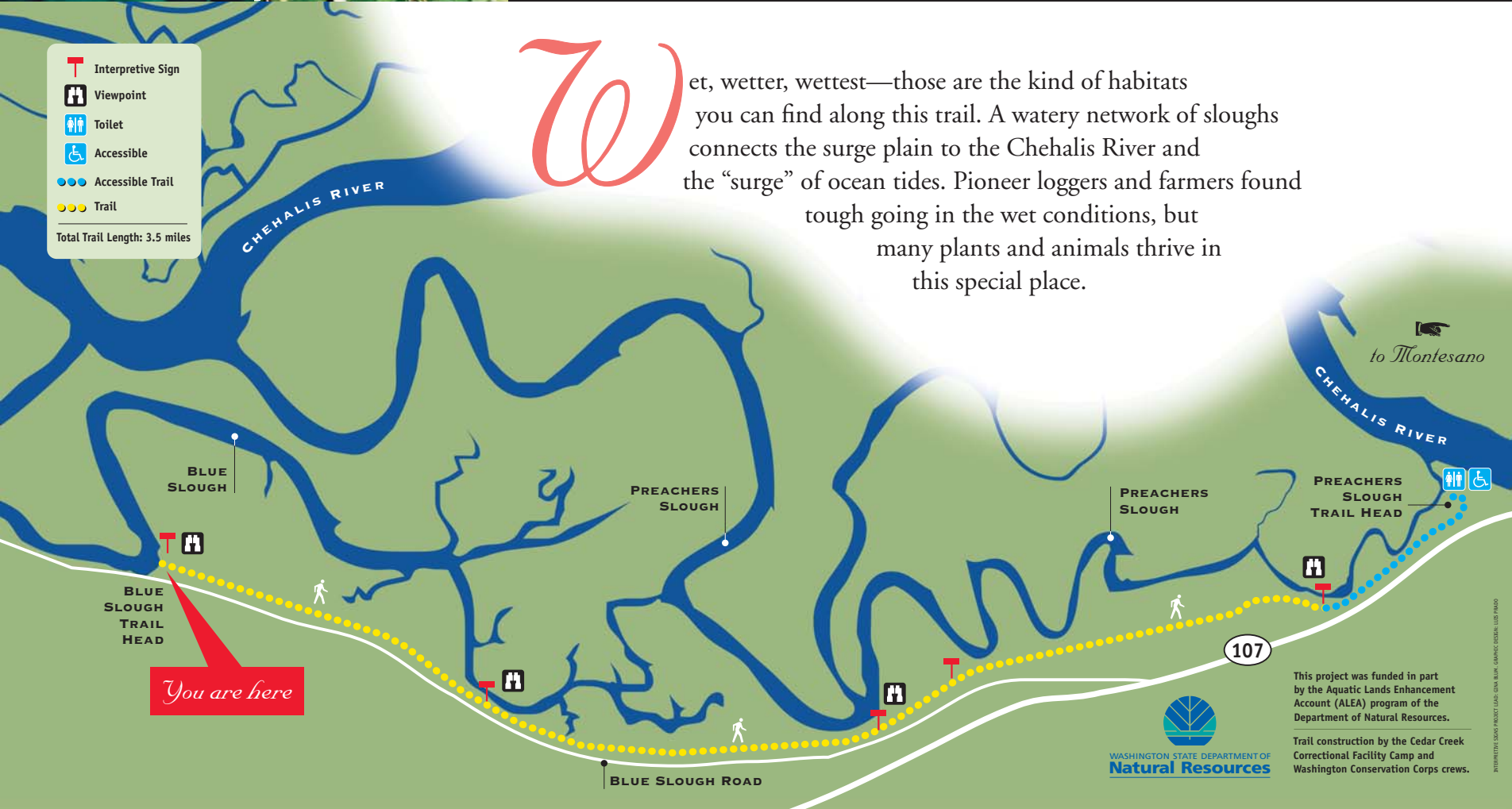
Pacific bleeding heart, *Dicentra formosa*

Salmonberry, *Rubus spectabilis*

Wet, wetter, wettest—those are the kind of habitats you can find along this trail. A watery network of sloughs connects the surge plain to the Chehalis River and the “surge” of ocean tides. Pioneer loggers and farmers found tough going in the wet conditions, but many plants and animals thrive in this special place.

-  Interpretive Sign
-  Viewpoint
-  Toilet
-  Accessible
-  Accessible Trail
-  Trail

Total Trail Length: 3.5 miles



to Montesano

107

You are here

This project was funded in part by the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) program of the Department of Natural Resources.

Trail construction by the Cedar Creek Correctional Facility Camp and Washington Conservation Corps crews.



PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID PRINCE; LAND: GINA BLUM; GRAPHIC DESIGN: LINDA PANDRO



RIVER OTTER



BANANA SLUG



DEER



CHUM SALMON



OSPREY

Exceptional Places

A P R O U D P A R T O F T H E G R A Y S H A R B O R H E R I T A G E



Chehalis River Surge Plain Natural Area

The Department of Natural Resources is proud to share with you the Chehalis River Surge Plain Natural Area, a special component of the Grays Harbor Heritage.

Natural areas, including salt marshes, mounded prairies, oak woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests are being protected statewide as the “last of the best”.

◀ Logs from all over the North River country were once dumped into Blue Slough. The logs were tucked between the pilings, away from river currents and boat traffic. Now these sentinels of a bygone era are habitat for wildlife. Birds not only nest in them, but also eat the insects that feed on the rotting wood.

This project was funded in part by the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) program of the Department of Natural Resources.

For more information on the Chehalis River Surge Plain, contact the Department of Natural Resources Central Region office in Chehalis at (360) 748-2383 or 1-800-527-3305 TTY (360) 740-6804



Wetlands threatened—Purple loosestrife blamed

▲ *Galerucella* spp., a beetle that eats purple loosestrife has been introduced in selected areas along the Chehalis River.

Purple loosestrife was brought from Europe as a garden flower, but it wouldn't stay confined behind garden fences. Loosestrife thrives in wet ground. It can rapidly take root in the surge plain. Where loosestrife grows, native plants are crowded out. When native plants are gone, animals lose habitat. A multi-agency partnership to control purple loosestrife in the lower Chehalis River is underway. Everyone can help by keeping a watchful eye out.



Hardhack, also known as Douglas' spirea, *Spirea douglasii*, also grows in wet conditions. The color is similar to loosestrife, but the flowers have a fuzzy look and the leaves are broader. This native flower poses no threat to wildlife.



Purple loosestrife
Lythrum salicaria

▼ If you see this purple flowered plant with its square stems, please call the Grays Harbor Noxious Weed office at (360) 482-2265

Funding for this sign was provided by the Washington State Department of Ecology



CHEHALIS RIVER

Parrotfeather poses problem for our waterways

▲ Parrotfeather locations as of 2000.

Parrotfeather belongs in the Amazon, but not in Washington's lakes and rivers. People brought parrotfeather here for aquariums and water gardens, and now it is a problem. Parrotfeather grows into large mats that can choke waterways and shade out algae, vital components of the food chain.

Native plant and animal species suffer. Recreation may suffer too.



Parrotfeather mat



Parrotfeather is already in the Upper Chehalis. Check your boat and equipment carefully so you don't transfer this pest downstream or to other waters. Just a tiny fragment of parrotfeather can start a whole new plant.

Funding for this sign was provided by the Washington State Department of Ecology

RIGHT PHOTO: WA STATE WEED BOARD. LEFT PHOTO: WA DEPT. OF ECOLOGY

Parrotfeather
Myriophyllum aquaticum

▼ The part of the parrotfeather that grows above the water looks almost like small fir trees.

If you see this plant with its square stems, please call the Grays Harbor Noxious Weed office at (360) 482-2265



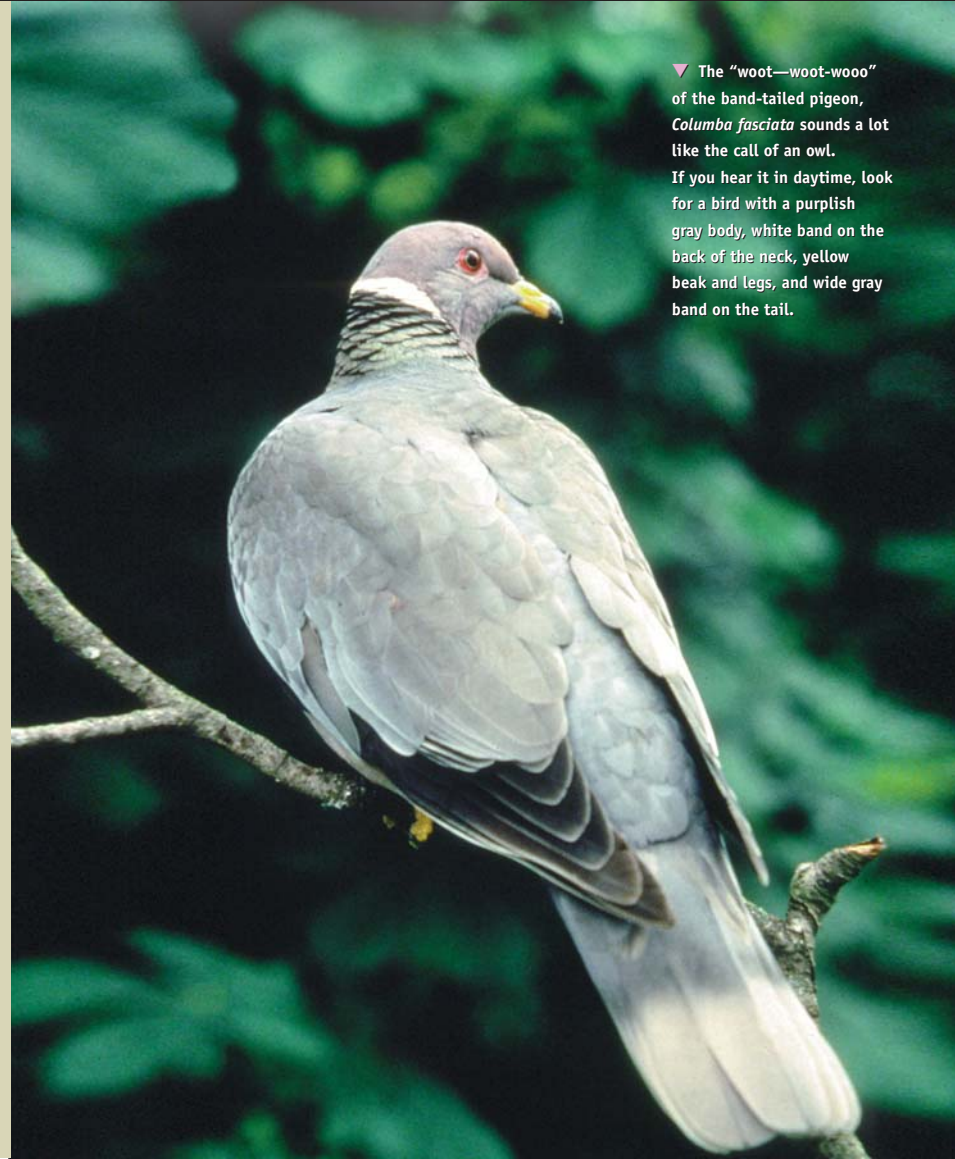
Having a place to come home to

▲ Salmonberry, *Rubus spectabilis*, is food for the band-tailed pigeon.

Each spring, band-tailed pigeons come to the Chehalis River surge plain to breed and to raise their young, but overall, the numbers of this native bird are decreasing. It is not clear why.

Sites such as the surge plain that meet their needs are increasingly important. Here the birds can find the forest they need for nesting, the fruit they need for food, and springs that provide minerals essential to their diet.

REGION PHOTO: CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY, #2772; TED WILCOX/PHOTOGRAPHER, SALMONBERRY ILLUSTRATION: SANDRA NEEL



▼ The “woot—woot-wooo” of the band-tailed pigeon, *Columba fasciata* sounds a lot like the call of an owl. If you hear it in daytime, look for a bird with a purplish gray body, white band on the back of the neck, yellow beak and legs, and wide gray band on the tail.

From forest to slough, from slough to sawmill

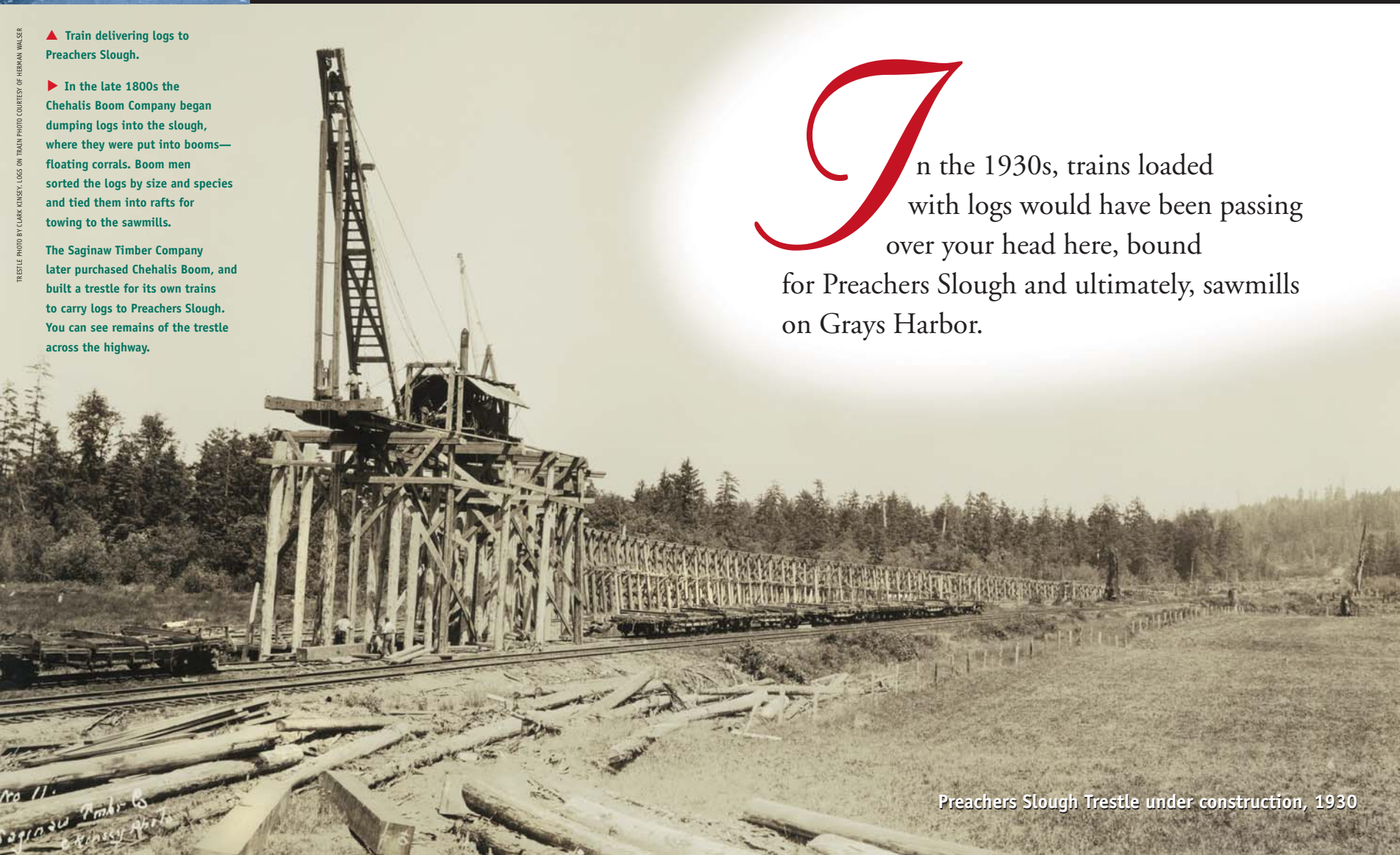
▲ Train delivering logs to Preachers Slough.

► In the late 1800s the Chehalis Boom Company began dumping logs into the slough, where they were put into booms—floating corrals. Boom men sorted the logs by size and species and tied them into rafts for towing to the sawmills.

The Saginaw Timber Company later purchased Chehalis Boom, and built a trestle for its own trains to carry logs to Preachers Slough. You can see remains of the trestle across the highway.

In the 1930s, trains loaded with logs would have been passing over your head here, bound for Preachers Slough and ultimately, sawmills on Grays Harbor.

TRESTLE PHOTO BY CLARK KINSEY, LOGS ON TRAIN PHOTO COURTESY OF HERMAN WALSER



Preachers Slough Trestle under construction, 1930

School days, school days

▲ Peterson's homestead.

Before most of the surge plain was returned to the plants and animals, people tried to farm here. They were more successful at growing children. The Peterson and Willis families had twelve each.

Because transportation was difficult, a school was needed right here on the surge plain. The Petersons, whose former homestead you are standing on, donated the land for it. The school was located across the highway from here. Every month, Mr. Willis rowed to Montesano and then hiked to city hall for school supplies.

▼ Favorite recess games were Pump Pump Pull Away, Red Rover, and Run Sheep Run. What do you think children played when it snowed?



Preachers Slough School
One-room schoolhouse, early 1900s

Nothing is made which is not first provided by nature

Cattail, *Typha latifolia*

“A woman’s work is her art and her trade.”

—Lillian Sanders Young
Premier tribal basketmaker
and conservator.

▶ Basketmakers like this Lower Chehalis woman turned the dried leaves of the cattail into artful tools and trade items.

Attracted by the richness of the surge plain, Indians came here from many miles away to gather resources, including cattail. Sometimes called the “supermarket of the swamp,” cattail met many needs. The inner core of the new stems was prized as food. The root-like rhizomes were ground into flour. Cattail leaves could be woven into baskets and mats, and fluff from mature flower heads filled bedding and diapers.



Different plant communities, different needs

Notice where different kinds of plants grow in the surge plain. They provide clues to how wet each area is.



Wet

The evergreen trees here do well in the rain and fog and generally wet conditions. But they grow above the wetter areas, on humps, hills, or downed logs because they can't grow with their roots in water.

◀ Sitka spruce, *Picea sitchensis*



Wetter

Willow trees and red osier dogwood can grow with their roots in wetter soil where evergreen trees can't survive. These wet shrub communities are an important habitat in the surge plain.

◀ Willow, *Salix spp.*



Wettest

Having its roots in standing water is not a problem for skunk cabbage. The wettest plant communities are home to cattails and bull rushes.

◀ Skunk cabbage, *Lysichiton americanu*

A song can be as good as a sighting

Some birds nesting on the surge plain are small and hard to see, but you can hear them and even identify them by their song. What can you hear right now? Are there birds nearby that you can hear but not see? Some of these birds come from as far away as Mexico and Guatemala to nest here.



Pacific-slope flycatcher likes habitats near water, and uses red alder trees for cover and nesting. The male has two songs. One is a single up-slurred note meant to warn off other males, and the other is a 3-note song meant to attract females.



Wilson's warbler nests in willow thickets at the surge plain. Its song is a rapid series of short chatty notes.



Marsh wren lives among cattails and wetland grasses. Its song is a chattering, bubbling trill.