

French Creek News

Snohomish County Public Works Surface Water Management
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July 2000

Watershed Plan Nears Completion

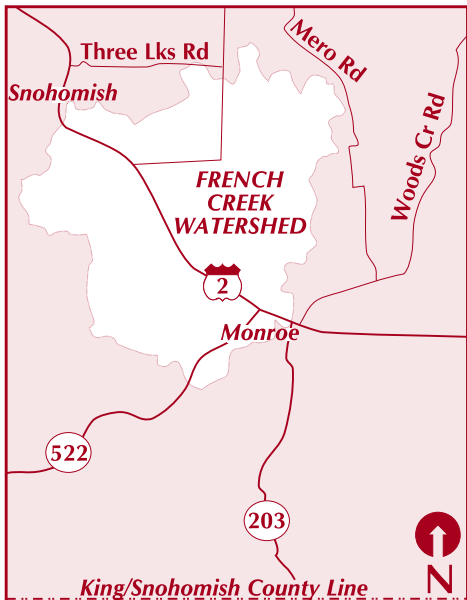
In 1997, the French Creek Watershed Management Committee began work on the French Creek Watershed Plan. During the past three years the faces on the committee have changed, but the focus has remained the same: to develop a watershed management plan that identifies the sources and recommends solutions to surface water pollution, flooding, and degraded fish and wildlife habitat problems.

Development of the watershed plan is a three-phase process. Phase 1 included conducting watershed studies and preparing a watershed characterization. The purpose of Phase 2 was to identify problems and develop solutions.

The watershed committee has recently completed development of all the plan components. Once the component parts have been put together into the draft plan, Phase 3, plan review will begin. The document will spend many months of its life being reviewed by scientists, lawyers, planners, citizens, and elected officials. The committee will have to review all of the comments and decide whether they will be included in the plan. Once all the comments have been reviewed and a public meeting held to hear more comments, the final plan document will be submitted to the State Department of Ecology for approval. The committee hopes to have this process completed by the end of the year.

When the plan is adopted it will serve as a guideline to individuals, agencies, and local, state, county, and tribal governments for protecting and improving surface water resources in the French Creek Watershed.

If you would like to review a copy of the plan, please call Janet Carroll, Snohomish County Surface Water Management at (425) 388-3464, ext 4572 or e-mail her at: Jcarroll0@co.snohomish.wa.us.



These individuals have participated on the French Creek Watershed Management Committee during the plan development process:

- Tony Balk, Monroe City Council
- Manfred Bartz, watershed resident
- Jeff Barnes, City of Monroe
- Janet Carroll, Snohomish County Surface Water Management
- Mike Chamblin, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Dave Demarest, local businessman
- Joan Drinkwin, Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team
- Robert Fairfax, watershed citizen
- Jim Hagar, Monroe City Council
- Robert Heirman, Snohomish County Sportsman's Association
- Bobbi Lindemulder, Snohomish Conservation District
- Andy Locke, The Tulalip Tribes
- Mark Meckling, Monroe City Council
- Kurt Nelson, The Tulalip Tribes
- Charlie Noggle, watershed resident
- Mike Noll, watershed resident
- Lois Ruskell, Snohomish Conservation District
- Nancy Strain, watershed resident
- Clark Vellema, watershed resident



Children playing along lower French Creek.

The Problems

One of the first tasks of the watershed committee was to identify the problems in the watershed and to prioritize those problems. The committee identified fifteen major watershed issues and specific problems under each. The issues have been prioritized as follows:

High Priority

- ♣ Aquatic habitat degradation
- ♣ Wetland loss and degradation
- ♣ Increased stormwater runoff
- ♣ Pollution from agricultural practices
- ♣ Stream sediment from land clearing and grading
- ♣ Regulatory enforcement

Medium Priority

- ♣ Groundwater depletion and contamination
- ♣ Fecal coliform bacteria and nitrates from on-site septic systems
- ♣ Pollution from urban/rural stormwater and direct discharges into creeks
- ♣ Sediment and other non-point pollution problems from forest management
- ♣ Stream sediment from ditch maintenance

Low Priority

- ♣ Pathogens and nutrients from household pet waste
- ♣ Illegal dumping and stream garbage
- ♣ Toxic chemicals from hazardous materials
- ♣ Drainage problems



These straw bales in the creek and the collapsed silt fence are examples of inadequate erosion control.

The Recommendations

For each of the 15 issues, specific problems were identified and recommendations made to correct or decrease the problems. The following are examples of recommendations for the aquatic habitat degradation, increased stormwater runoff, and sediment from land clearing and grading issues.

Aquatic habitat degradation

Problem: Lack of streamside vegetation on many stream reaches.

Recommendation: Salvage native plants for streamside or wetland planting projects.

Problem: Impediments to movement of salmon into and out of French Creek through the pumping station because of poor water quality and the pump station fish ladder.

Recommendation: Work with the French Slough Flood Control District to reconnect the Snohomish River to French Creek to allow salmon better access to French Creek and to improve water quality in lower French Creek.

Increased stormwater runoff

Problem: The French Creek watershed's impervious area (buildings, roads, parking lots) is projected at full buildout to be beyond the level scientists have found can sustain salmon productivity.

Recommendation: Provide technical assistance at the predesign stage of a construction project to identify how the impervious surface can be reduced.

Problem: At maximum allowable future development only 1,223 of the 5,911 forested acres now left in the watershed will remain.

Recommendation: Acquire or otherwise protect forested sites.

Sediment from Land Clearing and Grading

Problem: When it rains, it is almost impossible to prevent disturbed soils from washing into streams and wetlands.

Recommendation: Prohibit land clearing and grading during the rainy season.

Problem: Areas with highly erodable soils are easily altered and respond rapidly to changes. Erosion occurs when earth-moving activities even slightly alter drainage patterns, stream velocities, or slope steepness.

Recommendation: Monitor erosion control used in erosion sensitive areas.

The entire text of this section is too lengthy to print in this newsletter. These examples familiarize you with a few of the problems and recommendations in the plan. Copies of the draft plan will be available later this year.

Stables Creek: From Problems To Possibilities

The concern of private landowners and the cooperation of government agencies and volunteers have transformed fish habitat problems into possibilities along one section of Stables Creek, a French Creek tributary. This project is an early action of the French Creek Watershed Management Plan.

The problems were caused by a wooden culvert that prevented fish from migrating upstream; a pond that diverted stream water; bare streambanks and animal access that contributed to streambank erosion.

Working in cooperation with French Creek Stables owners John and Joan Hartsfield, and the stable managers, Lisa and Don Eckhart, Snohomish County replaced the wooden culvert with a metal culvert having a gravel streambed bottom to encourage fish migration. Upstream from the new culvert, the pond was filled and the stream returned to its original channel. Large logs and tree roots were placed in the new stream channel to create resting pools for fish and to provide fish with protection from predators.

Volunteers planted over 2000 native plants along the stream to create a buffer which will ultimately be 100 feet on the stream's west side and 35 feet on the east side. Large trees (15 to 20 feet tall) were planted along the new streambank to

provide immediate shade. This is one of the first times trees of this height were used on a restoration site in Snohomish County.

Downstream from the culvert, the Snohomish Conservation District fenced an area to keep horses out of the stream. The fenced area created a stream buffer that was planted with native trees and shrubs to provide shade for the stream and a filter for pasture runoff from outside the fenced area.

Horses in the adjacent pasture are now watered from a trough instead of the stream.

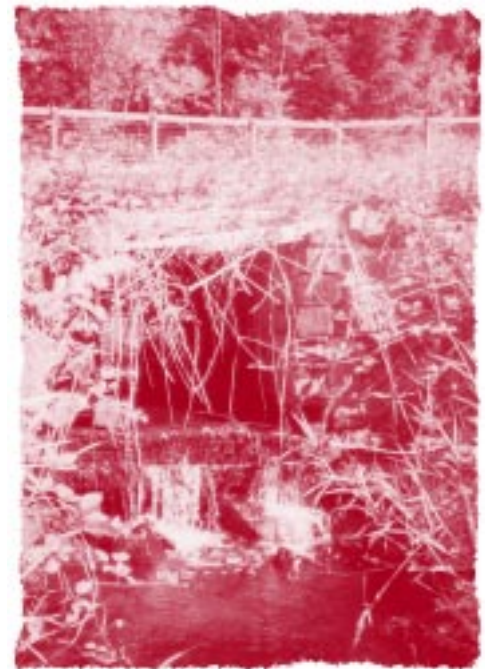
The project improves aquatic habitat by restoring rearing and spawning habitat to coho salmon, steelhead, and searun cutthroat trout; reducing the amount of fecal coliform bacteria from horse manure reaching the stream; reducing the amount of sediment reaching the stream, and providing shade that lowers summer stream temperatures.



This is one of the mature trees planted during the Stables Creek Restoration project.



This new culvert in Stables Creek replaced a culvert that prevented fish migration. The new culvert is at stream level and is filled with gravel to simulate a streambed.



This is the culvert that was replaced during the Stables Creek restoration. The culvert was a barrier to fish because it was "perched" above the streambed.

Salmon Watchers Needed

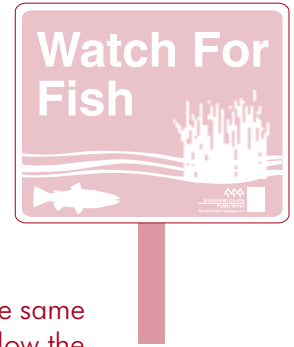
If you're looking for a way to get involved in salmon recovery, look no farther than your neighborhood stream. Snohomish County needs salmon watchers to collect data on the salmon that spawn in streams throughout the county. The information collected is posted on the internet and shared with natural resource agencies, schools and anyone interested in salmon in Snohomish County.

After attending one training session, Salmon Watchers watch for fish for at least 15 minutes twice a week during October, November and December. At the training sessions fish experts will teach Salmon Watchers how to identify salmon, give them data forms, fish I.D. cards and other information. Salmon Watch sites can be a bridge, public path or a watcher's own backyard. Salmon Watchers can choose their own site or County staff can help them find one. This is a great activity for families, home schools, community organizations, schools, and individuals.

The Salmon Watcher training session for the Monroe area is Wednesday, Sept. 20 from 6:30-8 p.m. at the Long House at Evergreen State Fairgrounds. If you can't attend the Monroe training class, please attend one of the following: Wednesday, Sept. 13 from 6:30-8 p.m. at the Marysville Public Library or Tuesday, Sept. 19 from 6:30-8 p.m. at McCollum Park in Everett. To reserve space for one of these sessions, or for more information, please call Roger Kelley at (425) 388-6414.

Name a Creek!

In June, these signs were posted at several stream crossings in the French Creek Watershed. The stream's name (if known) will go on a smaller sign mounted below this sign on the same post. If there is not a name below the sign, that creek may not have a name registered with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Early next school year students from the watershed will be asked to suggest names for creeks that do not have an 'official' name. The students suggestions will be sent to the DNR for consideration as the official stream name.



This is one of several creeks in the French Creek Watershed with no "official" name.

Development of The French Creek Watershed Management Plan is funded by a Washington Department of Ecology Centennial Clean Water Grant. For more information about the plan, please contact Senior Planner Janet Carroll, at (425) 388-3464, ext. 4572 or by e-mail at Jcarroll0@co.snohomish.wa.us.

