

THURSTON

Cozy Valley Creek Instream & Riparian Enhancement Phases 2 & 3

Resource Challenge

Scatter Creek is located in southern Thurston County and is an important coho salmon production tributary of the Chehalis River. The watershed is facing increasing pressures from land use conversion and residential development. Scatter Creek and its tributaries routinely exhibit low instream flows and high water temperatures during the summer months.

Project Summary

The Heernett Environmental Foundation has purchased over 840 acres within the Scatter Creek watershed to protect against development and conserve ecological values. Since 2002, the Foundation has partnered with Thurston Conservation District, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board on several habitat restoration projects. In the summer of 2006, the Foundation implemented a USFWS funded instream habitat enhancement project in 3,000 ft. of Cozy Valley Creek. The banks were reshaped in some areas and large woody debris and spawning gravels were placed throughout the channels. Several large snags were installed to provide habitat for cavity nesting birds and perch areas for raptors. A tree spade was used to plant six to 10 feet tall alder saplings gathered from the property near the restoration site. In the spring of 2007, the Foundation installed a 9.6 acre riparian restoration project adjacent to the instream project implemented in 2006. The riparian restoration was funded by the Northwest Pipeline Company as wetland mitigation. Nearly 5,000 seedlings were planted in buffers that ranged from 100 to 200 feet wide.

Project Results

The Cozy Valley restoration site is home to a variety of fish and wildlife including coho salmon, blacktail deer, Roosevelt elk, beaver, and a wide variety of birds including raptors and song birds. The instream restoration project has provided channel complexity that was lacking since the channels were ditched to enhance drainage. Plant survival within the riparian restoration project has been satisfactory, but it will take several years for the seedlings to grow tall enough to provide noticeable habitat benefits.

FEATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

In the long term, it's hoped that this project will shade Cozy Valley Creek and enhance water holding capacity within the valley, thereby reducing summer water temperatures and enhancing instream flows downstream in Scatter Creek. The Foundation will maintain the project site to ensure plant survival in the riparian buffers.



Riparian planting along Cozy Valley Creek (spring 2007)

Contact

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Key Partners Involved

Heernett Environmental Foundation
Northwest Pipeline Company
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Thurston CD

Doug Rushton, Chair
Fred Colvin, Treasurer
Nora Mena, Member
David Hall, Member
Harry Petersen, Member

Funding

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|---------|-----------|
| State | \$ |
| Federal | \$ 25,000 |
| Private | \$ 77,500 |

OTHER DISTRICT INFORMATION

Background Information

The Thurston Conservation District has been serving the residents of Thurston County since 1948. The 2005 population was 224,100. Total land mass is 737 square miles (471,819 acres). Approximately 74,400 acres are in farm production (~1300 farms). The major watersheds include Nisqually, Henderson, Chehalis, Deschutes, Eld, and Totten.

Mission Statement

To conserve, sustain, and protect our natural resources for the people of Thurston County through: rural and urban partnerships, fostering volunteerism, cooperation, education, leadership, and technical and financial assistance.

Natural Resource Priorities and Goals

Surface Water Quality: By 2011, all major streams in Thurston Co. will show improvement &/or meet water quality standard

Riparian Protection & Restoration: By 2011, 15 miles of restoration and 5 miles of protection completed.

Shellfish Areas: By 2011, there will be a 50% reduction in shellfish bed harvest closures due to human caused pollution.

Land Use Conversion: By 2011, a formal Thurston Co. working lands protection program will be in place, operating with dedicated funding source.

Small Acreages Management: By 2011, 30% of landowners in Thurston Co. with 5 acres⁺ will have implemented water-quality focused BMPs.

Invasive/Exotic Species: By 2011, Knotweed invasion is arrested/current infestation reduced by 10-15% through CD assistance;

Critical Geographic Areas

The Henderson Inlet is our top priority critical area, due to the shellfish downgrades and gravity of the problem. This area consists of numerous waterfront properties and farms which contribute to poor water quality. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the District's tax assessment is dedicated to work in the Henderson/Nisqually Shellfish Protection District. The Totten and Eld are the smallest watersheds in our county and are our next priority critical area. These watersheds are located in both Mason and Thurston Counties and contain several small streams. Land use consists of mainly forestry, shellfish harvesting and small farms. Much work was done in the early 90s to restore water quality and reduce closures in the shellfish harvest area. The district is committed to maintaining the improved water quality status.

Information – Education Priorities and Goals

- By June 2008, provide at least 10 workshops, 10 community outreach events (excluding workshops), community presentations, and 5 educational newspaper articles reaching 150,000 homes each.
- By June 2008, train 2200 teachers and students in water quality monitoring methods.
- By December 2008, enroll a minimum of 150 participants in the Watershed Education Pledge Programs in the Henderson, Nisqually and Deschutes watersheds. Participants will implement over 1,000 actions, aimed at improving water quality.
- By December 2007, host an annual Open House and Conservation Tour to educate policymakers, agencies, and landowners about the services we provide, the projects we have done, and the water quality issues that need to be addressed.

Natural Resources Information: More Work to Do

- Thurston County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Large parcels are being divided into smaller parcels. These land divisions are steadily increasing and therefore, the demand for technical assistance to these landowners has become a majority of our workload. Further, we have been experiencing a rapid and steady increase in the number of water quality violation referrals from both the State and County. Best management practices (BMPs) are needed to correct the violations and many of these landowners do not have the money to implement BMPs such as manure storage facilities, and underground outlet systems. Furthermore, most granting agencies do not fund these types of practices, yet these practices provide the quickest resolution to water quality issues.
- Land use conversion over the past several years has had a significant impact on our farming community. Farms are important to our health and local economy. A dedicated funding source is needed to protect these working lands for our future generations.
- The spread of invasive weeds (particularly Japanese knotweed) is of particular concern in Thurston County. Education and public awareness is needed throughout the county, especially along rivers and streams. Education is the one of the most important keys to controlling these species.



Horse owners tour a farm to learn how to properly manage their fields.

