



North Wind's Weir Estuarine Restoration Progresses



This February photo shows the "Portadam" used to allow the final excavation of contaminated soils. More photos are available on the website.

Late winter saw more progress on constructing the North Wind's Weir habitat project on the Duwamish in Tukwila. King County contractors removed an additional 8,400 cubic yards of contaminated soils. A unique portable dam system was used to isolate the work area and ensure that contaminated soils were not released into the river. The completion of this soil remediation work clears the way for the final restoration phase, which will occur this summer if funding comes through.



Duwamish Gardens Property Acquired for Future Restoration



Duwamish Gardens, on the opposite bank, is named after the farm that was operated by the seller's family years ago.

In December, the City of Tukwila completed purchase of the 2.1 acre "Duwamish Gardens" property. The property is in the "transition zone," critical habitat where juvenile salmonids rear and adjust to saltwater. Funding for purchase was provided by King County Conservation Futures, Washington State, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, King Conservation District, and the City. Located just downstream of East Marginal Way S., the site will be excavated to create shallow water habitat, similar to the North Wind's Weir project.



Message from the Coordinator

If you haven't already done so, you should check out the photos on the WRIA 9 website of the soils clean up work underway at North Wind's Weir in Tukwila (see article to the left). I was feeling a bit in a slump this morning after reading more news about the economy and budget issues when I took a look at the recent photos and was reminded that, despite the odds, this major WRIA 9 habitat project in the Duwamish estuary is happening! Hopefully, a little good news will jolt you out of a slump as it did me!

And there is more good news out there. Indeed, as I write this column, Burien Mayor Joan McGilton, Karen Bergeron, Dennis Clark, and other WRIA 9 partner staff are attending a conference in Shelton to learn about successful habitat project implementation efforts throughout the State. There are numerous stories – and lessons about building better projects – from across the state that demonstrate progress toward improved watershed health and salmon recovery. One of the projects being showcased is the Pautzke levee restoration project near Auburn (see my message in the Fall 2008 "News Fit for a King"). This project is turning out to be a model of doing habitat restoration the RIGHT way and sheds good light on the recovery efforts of WRIA 9.

On the funding front, King County as project sponsor just submitted restoration proposals for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) federal stimulus funds. There is \$170 million nationwide for habitat restoration projects that create jobs. These proposals were for Big Spring/Newaukum Stream and Wetland Restoration, \$2.6 million, and Salmon Projects At Work Now (SPAWN), \$3.4 million across King County WRIAs. The Big Spring proposal was included on a list of projects totaling \$45.8 million that the Governor and the Puget Sound Partnership endorsed.

On the State level, the Legislature is likely to include \$33 million for Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund (PSAR) in the Puget Sound Partnership budget. Of this funding (if approved by the Governor), WRIA 9 will be allocated about \$1.3 million for high priority habitat projects. The PSAR capital funding was one of the key legislative priorities of WRIA 9 as well as the Puget Sound Partnership. Thank you to everyone who supported the PSAR funding by traveling to Olympia or talking and writing to your representatives and senators.

The upshot: it takes all of us working diligently and creatively **together** in "Making Our Watershed Fit for a King".

- Doug

Knotweed Control Intensifies Along the Green



An example of what we're trying to avoid on the Green. A wall of knotweed has taken over the stream bank, smothering native vegetation once there. This cautionary photo is from the Snoqualmie River watershed.

Building on recent progress in controlling knotweed in the Green River (Fall 2008 “News Fit for a King”), the King County Noxious Weed Board is stepping up efforts to prevent its spread. Starting in 2009, control of Bohemian, Japanese, giant and Himalayan knotweed is now required on the Green River and its tributaries upstream of Auburn, including but not limited to Newaukum Creek, Soos Creek, Big Soos Creek, Jenkins Creek, Covington Creek, and Crisp Creek. Control of these invasive knotweed species is required up to the ordinary high water mark and in the adjacent buffer area. For technical advice, contact the Noxious Weed program at 206-296-0290.

Beach Naturalists Nurture Nearshore Appreciation



A Beach Naturalist interprets the wonders of the marine nearshore for WRIA 9 residents.
Photo courtesy of the Seattle Aquarium.

As regular as the seasons, the Beach Naturalist program is back for another fun- and information-filled summer in the marine nearshore. This program is run by the Seattle Aquarium in partnership with many enthusiastic, knowledgeable volunteers. The Beach Naturalists help visitors learn how to explore beaches during low tides in an environmentally-sensitive manner. This popular program receives financial support from many partners including the King Conservation District as recommended by the WRIA 9 Watershed Ecosystem Forum and WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council. WRIA 9 beaches this season include Olympic Sculpture Park, South Alki, Lincoln Park, Seahurst, Des Moines Beach Park, and Redondo. Dates and times are available at: www.seattleaquarium.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=781

Careful Design Allows Retention of Culvert While Restoring Stream



Culvert showing gravel that has accumulated due to large wood placed downstream. Culvert is no longer a passage barrier.
Photo courtesy of Mid-Puget Sound Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group.

In its survey of the Newaukum Creek sub-watershed (Summer 2008 “News Fit for a King”), Mid-Puget Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group identified a newer private culvert as being the highest priority fish passage barrier to fix. The original idea was to replace the steeply sloped, bare culvert. However the project engineer identified a cheaper, “more natural” solution: enhance 150 feet of stream bank by adding large wood to the bank and streambed. The wood was placed to trap gravel and sand, causing sediment to properly line the bottom of the culvert. This improved fish passage and soon after completion, salmon were observed spawning in the restored area. The RFEGroup thanks the private landowners for their participation.

First Purchases Completed to Protect Pt. Heyer Nearshore



This stretch of shoreline north of Pt. Heyer on Vashon is the focus of conservation efforts.

Protecting healthy beach-bluff drift cells on Vashon-Maury Island is a top priority in the WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan. This winter, King County made its first two purchases of high-quality nearshore habitat within the drift cell system that created and sustains the rare barrier lagoon and marsh system at Pt. Heyer (KVI) on the east shore of Vashon Island. The two contiguous parcels total over 20 acres and include 600 feet of high quality, unarmored beach. The purchase was funded with grants from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Conservation Futures, and the King County Parks levy. King County expects to purchase additional properties in this reach as willing landowners are identified. This long-term drift cell conservation effort has ranked high among potential funders and further grants are anticipated.



Fenster Project Planted by Long-Term Volunteers



Hundreds of native trees and shrubs set out at Fenster in February. A few days later, volunteers and Earth Corps planted them next to the Green River. Photo courtesy of King County.

Progress continues on the Fenster restoration project along the Green River in Auburn. Last summer saw a second phase of earth-moving and large wood installation (Fall 2008 “News Fit for a King”). In February, hundreds of native trees and shrubs were planted at the site. While most of the planting was done by a crew from Earth Corps, approximately 150 plants were planted by volunteers from Auburn First United Methodist Church and other members of the community. Church volunteers have been volunteering regularly since 2004 to plant and maintain trees at Fenster. The project is partnership between King County and the City of Auburn. Additional work in 2009 will include mulching, weeding, and watering of the plants and project monitoring.



Newaukum Creek Private Properties Restored



Some of the 4,000 willow and cottonwood stakes planted at the Rosatto property on Newaukum Creek. The stakes are covered in fresh growth now. Photo courtesy of King County.

The King County Small Habitat Restoration Project (SHRP) program completed four projects along Newaukum Creek over the course of 2008. About 1,750 linear feet of the creek – both sides – was restored in partnership with private property owners. Over 1,300 trees and shrubs were planted and 4,300 willow and cottonwood stakes installed. Several projects included fencing to keep out livestock. Some plots were fenced in to protect them from beaver damage and many of the trees received vole protection. Funding for the SHRP projects came from King County and King Conservation District.



Levee Vegetation Policy Discussed



Keynote speaker and King County Executive Ron Sims was emphatic at the February symposium about the dilemma levee vegetation policies have created. Photo courtesy of King County.

Maintenance of vegetation on levees has been an issue since King County began incorporating native vegetation to increase levee stability in the early 1990s. It became a hot topic over the last year as King County and the Army Corps of Engineers partnered to repair flood damaged levees in the Green and Snoqualmie basins. Both the Salmon Habitat Plan and the King County Flood Hazard Management Plan call for using bioengineering techniques including planting native trees and shrubs on the levee prism. However, national policies followed by the Corps, a key funder of levee construction and repair, do not allow vegetation to be used in this way. To respond to the resulting conflict, the Corps convened a day-long symposium in Renton on February 26. The outcome was a commitment by the Corps and NOAA Fisheries to develop within 90 days a roadmap for resolving the issues.



Community Salmon Fund Funds WRIA 9 Projects

In January 2009, the Community Salmon Fund awarded:

- \$36,452 to the King County Noxious Weed Program to support further knotweed control efforts in the Green River east of Auburn (see related article on page 2)
- \$38,688 to People For Puget Sound to conduct further native plant restoration at the Codiga Duwamish restoration project in Tukwila
- \$48,500 to expand the SalmonSafe program into WRIA 9

CSF is managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Program in partnership with King County. It awards small-scale grants for salmon habitat protection and restoration projects that are marked by community involvement and watershed health benefits, and which are consistent with the WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan. WRIA 9 staff helped with proposal ranking.



KCD Awards More Grants

The King Conservation District/WRIA 9 Forum partnership continues to improve the health of the watershed and conserve natural resources. Recent grants by KCD address key recommendations of the Salmon Habitat Plan:

- Olympic Sculpture Park Post-Construction Monitoring (City of Seattle): \$30,000 for year 3 post-construction monitoring.
- Watershed Restoration Education (Environmental Science Center): \$30,000 for classes and field trips for students in the Highline, Kent, Renton, and Tukwila School Districts and education to adult audiences.
- Beach Naturalist Program (City of Seattle – Seattle Aquarium): \$17,000 for the 2009 Beach Naturalist program (see article on page 2).



Middle Green River Clean Up Calls to You



This could be you! One of the boats in last year's cleanup in the Green River Gorge.

Photo courtesy of Steve Lepenske.

The 24th annual Middle Green River Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, May 2. After participating in a boat- or foot-based cleanup, you can enjoy live music, a barbecue, a mountain bike ride, or a hike to the historic Franklin townsite. This is a fantastic opportunity to explore and steward a more wild part of the watershed. It is organized by Washington Recreational River Runners and Friends of the Green. More info: http://www.mgrc.org/Email_10/web-content/index.html

Contact the Salmon Habitat Team

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