



Puyallup River Tales

*A newsletter of the Puyallup River Watershed Council
Volume 1, Issue 1
June 2005*

Smolt Trap Helps Diagnose Watershed's Health

Using a smolt trap – a safe and effective device for catching and counting young fish – the Puyallup Tribe of Indians is assessing the success of recent habitat improvement on the Puyallup River.

Last summer the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group, in cooperation with the tribe, reconnected off-channel habitat with the mainstem Puyallup River. “That project was designed to give juvenile salmon additional habitat,” said Russ Ladley, resource protection manager for the Puyallup Tribe. “The smolt trap captures out migrating juvenile salmon. Increased numbers of smolts can tell us if our habitat improvements are working.”

In the past century, most of the habitat that salmon used in the Puyallup River watershed has been lost to development. “The major factor leading to the decline of salmon is loss and degradation of habitat,” said Ladley.

Recovering weak salmon populations is a primary focus of the Puyallup Tribe. Chinook salmon in the Puyallup and White Rivers are part of the Puget Sound population listed as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act.

In addition to the smolt trap, the tribe also conducts salmon spawning surveys. Tribal staff scout practically every salmon stream in the watershed, looking for returning adult salmon of every species. In addition to counting salmon and redds (salmon nests), spawning surveyors also collect genetic material, such as scale samples, which helps determine the age



Andrew Berger (left) and Kristin Williamson, Puyallup Tribal fisheries biologists, check a smolt trap on the Puyallup River for out-migrating juvenile salmon.

of a returning salmon. “The only way to know exactly how many fish are coming back to any particular stream is to go out there and look for them,” said Ladley. “The more information we collect, the better we can protect and restore salmon in the Puyallup watershed.”

The Puyallup River Watershed Council is a forum which promotes and implements programs that restore, maintain, and enhance the watershed in order to protect its environmental, economic, and cultural health.

Dear members and friends,

The Puyallup River Watershed Council (PRWC) has had a busy year to date. We've hosted monthly forums on such topics as Stormwater Best Management Practices and sponsored tours of a local fish trap, a stream restoration and wetland enhancement project and other innovative stormwater facilities. We've been working hard not only to maintain an interesting forum speaker and tour schedule but also to make consistent progress on our aggressive 2005 Work Plan.



Linda T. Burgess

Our projects this year include continuing to implement the non-point source watershed action plans, creating an outreach program in the Clark's Creek and Fennel Creek sub-watersheds, writing a Total Maximum Daily Load - Detailed Implementation Plan (TMDL DIP) for South Prairie Creek, and developing a Watershed Assessment framework for creating a "State of the Watershed" report. We have dedicated one forum a quarter to update you on our progress and we have sent out a member questionnaire to survey how our forums can better serve your interests.

Because our watershed is so large (just over 1000 square miles) and the stakeholders many it is a challenge to keep connected with one another. This newsletter serves as a supplement to our monthly forums. In addition, it gives us a place to celebrate our successes and highlight the activities that are taking place throughout our watershed. We invite you to participate in one of our upcoming forums and/or tours. The forums and tours are designed to include all interested citizens of the watershed and we look forward to you joining us at one of these events.

Visit the PRWC and the other related websites listed in this Newsletter for more information about monthly activities. Your participation is critical in helping to shape the future of our watershed.

Linda T. Burgess is chair of the Puyallup River Watershed Council

For more information and volunteer opportunities, visit our Web site:
www.piercecountywa.org/PRWC

Or, send an email to:
PC-PRWC@co.pierce.wa.us

The Puyallup River Watershed Council meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, 5-7 p.m., at Sumner City Hall, 1104 Maple St.

Puyallup Watershed Salmon Restoration Projects Funded!

This year, three projects were funded in the Puyallup River Watershed by the state's Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Buying land to protect salmon habitat, \$576,955

The Cascade Land Conservancy will use this grant to buy and restore about 100 acres, known as the Inglin Farm. The South Prairie Creek, the primary tributary to the Carbon River, is the most important salmon spawning area in the Puyallup watershed, producing nearly half of all the wild steelhead in the Puyallup River system, the only significant run of pink salmon and important returns of Chinook, coho, chum salmon and sea-run cutthroat trout. The high quality habitat along the stream is threatened by increasing development. The conservancy will plant native plants to restore the area. The Cascade Land Conservancy will match this grant with \$523,072 in cash and donated labor.

Designing a new channel for Boise Creek, \$160,690

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks will use this grant to design and get the permits for a project to restore channel, floodplain, and shoreline conditions at the mouth of Boise Creek, a tributary to the White River near Buckley. Boise Creek is one of the largest producers of Chinook, coho and steelhead salmon of all the creeks entering the White River. This project will design the relocation of the lowest 500 feet of the creek into a newly constructed channel about 1,200 feet in length. It also will restore the slope of the historic channel and create valuable salmon habitat. King County will match this grant with \$53,564.

Studying the feasibility of moving levees, \$297,500

The Pierce County Water Programs Division will use this grant to create a comprehensive catalog of potential levee setback projects on the Puyallup, White and Carbon rivers. Moving the levees would reconnect the rivers and floodplains, a top priority restoration action. The study will pick project locations where features such as historic side-channels and hydrology indicate the likelihood that natural processes will act to create the desired habitat. Conceptual designs will be evaluated and prioritized, and a few high priority projects will proceed through preliminary design. The Pierce County Water Programs Division will match this grant with \$52,500.

PRWC Spring 2005 Stormwater Tour



The Puyallup River Watershed Council recently took a tour of stormwater facilities. Stormwater is water that doesn't seep into the ground, but rather flows off directly into creeks, lakes and Puget Sound. Upper left: New floodplain storage area and native plantings adjacent to an apartment site. Upper right: Dan Repp, Assistant City Engineer with the City of Puyallup, describes flood plain improvement project at an apartment site adjacent to the Puyallup River. Bottom right: At the Silver Creek restoration project which used to run in an undersized culvert and was prone to flooding.



Get Involved!

Volunteer groups involved in watershed health

Citizens for a Health Bay

<http://www.healthybay.org>
chb@healthybay.org

917 Pacific Avenue, Suite 100
Tacoma, WA 98402
253-383-2429

Friends of the Hylebos Wetlands

<http://www.hylebos.org/>
chinook@hylebos.org

(253) 929-1519

Friends of Swan Creek Watershed

(253) 473-6705
sue.b@prodigy.net

Pierce Stream Team

<http://www.piercecountycd.org/streamtm.htm>
streamteam@piercecountycd.org

1011 E. Main, Suite 106
Puyallup, WA 98372
(253) 845-2973

South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group

<http://spsseg.org>
spsseg@spsseg.org

6700 Martin Way E., Suite 112
Olympia, WA 98516
(360) 412-0808



An illustration from the inside cover of "I am Clark's Creek;" a book featuring essays and artwork by students from the Maplewood, Fruitland and Spinning schools in Puyallup. The students were inspired from a field trip to Clark's Creek. The book was a collaboration of the Puyallup River Watershed Council, the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program and the Puyallup School District.



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