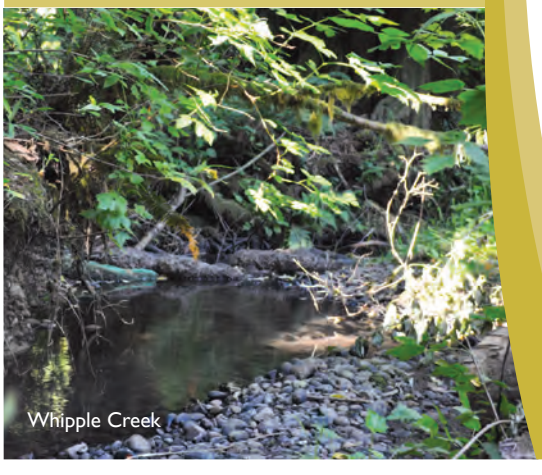
Clark County's CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

YIELDING RESULTS

Salmon Creek

We all have a stake in keeping our waterways clean and healthy for people, fish, and wildlife.



Whipple Creek

Salmon Creek is making a comeback

Fifteen years ago, Salmon Creek had high levels of bacteria and way too much particulate matter or turbidity. The creek also was overloaded with nutrients, primarily from fertilizers. Since then, Clark County and other agencies have made significant progress to improve this important waterway. The county's monitoring data shows the creek now meets water quality standards for turbidity at all tested locations. Fecal coliform bacteria have decreased by as much as 98 percent, and nutrient levels (phosphorus and nitrogen) also have also decreased.

These improvements are the results of better stormwater management, streamside plantings, habitat restoration and improved septic system maintenance. In addition, county residents are using fewer fertilizers and making other changes in their everyday lives that make a difference. The documentable improvements in Salmon Creek prove that individual actions do matter and that we can all be part of the solution.

Protecting upper Whipple Creek

A county-sponsored project completed in 2010 enhanced 40 acres of stream habitat, wetlands, and adjacent riparian areas in the Whipple Creek watershed. The work protected the creek from stormwater runoff that flows from roads and developments on about 1,100 acres upstream. The project also protected the Whipple Creek channel from erosion in a valuable natural area and preserved both wetland and floodplain functions.

The stream bed was stabilized with rocks and large pieces of wood. Log jams were installed to slow storm flows and use the wetlands and floodplain to curtail flooding during high water. Native vegetation was replanted in the adjacent riparian areas. Today, the area is a protected natural area in an urban setting.

Continued on back

A healthy community needs clean water.

It all goes downstream

When walking streams, Clark County monitoring teams often find trash and other debris littering stream banks. In one example of this, the county mailed letters to private landowners along several streams in the Salmon Creek and Lacamas Creek watersheds explaining the effect trash has on stream health and habitat. Landowners were asked to voluntarily pick up the debris, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Most indicated they were unaware of the problem but were more than willing to clean up the land along the stream.

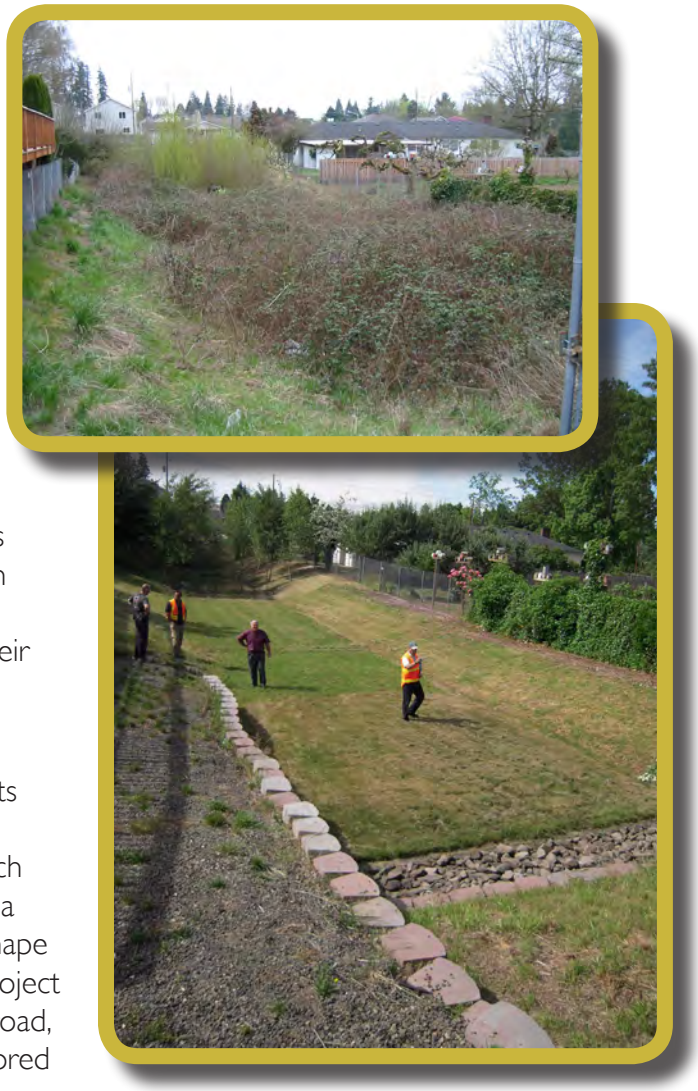
Often, landowners called back to let staff know they had taken care of the problem. One landowner reported removing 1,200 pounds of trash. Another reported removing three garbage bags and four five-gallon buckets of litter, six tires, three washing machine tubs, a clothes dryer cabinet, drain pipe and aluminum siding.

Keeping our streams litter-free helps protect water quality and stream habitat for fish and wildlife. Debris also can contribute to downstream flooding and creates an unsightly mess that no one wants. In the fall of 2011, over 500 volunteers helped pick up trash and litter at Vancouver Lake. Once again, individual county residents have and will continue to make a difference in helping our streams and waterways.

Neighbors just do it

Years of neglect had caused the privately owned stormwater treatment facility in Hazel Dell's Wanke Meadows subdivision to become overgrown with blackberry vines and other vegetation. Clean Water Program staff met with residents to explain their maintenance responsibilities and to help work out an affordable solution to fix up the facility.

As a result, a small group of Wanke Meadows residents stepped up to spearhead work parties to remove blackberries and remove dozens of small alder and birch trees that had invaded the pond area. They also hired a contractor to dig out all the accumulated dirt and reshape the facility. Neighborhood residents completed the project by building a retaining wall for a maintenance access road, planting sod and spreading seed to vegetate the restored stormwater facility.



Wanke Meadows stormwater facility before (top) and after (side).

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