



Puyallup River Tales

A newsletter of the Puyallup River Watershed Council

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April 2007

Puyallup Levee Setback Sustains Floods



A levee set back near Orting not only benefited salmon, but also alleviated flooding downstream.

In Fall 2006, Pierce County Public Works and Utilities Water Programs Division completed construction on a new setback levee along the Puyallup River (RM 21.5 - 22.4), near the Orting Soldiers Home site, to improve fish and wildlife habitat and increase flood protection.

The Soldier's Home Setback Levee project restored about 67-acres of Puyallup River floodplain area to historic pre-levee conditions for fish and wildlife. At its maximum width, the

river corridor was increased from 250 to 1150 feet and over 67 acres of floodplain are now exposed to natural channel migration and floodplain inundation. The existing levee structure was removed to allow the river to naturally meander in the opened floodplain area. The new setback levee will provide increased flood protection (100-yr level of protection) to adjacent properties in the valley floor.

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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.

New Momentum, Leadership in Spring

Spring is just around the corner and we will soon see the results of our winter plantings, one of the several activities in the watershed that reflect increased effort recently. Linda Burgess has just stepped down as Chair of the Puyallup River Watershed Council and will be hard to replace. Along with our new coordinator, Lorin Reinelt, she has made a most significant difference in the watershed. Under her leadership, we have witnessed the development of new local watershed groups, a significant increase in our visibility, and dynamic forums of increasing interest to the lay and professional communities.



Dave Seabrook
**Personal
Perspective**

Linda will continue her public relations efforts on behalf of the Watershed Council, her activities with the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance, and will represent the PRWC at the County Executive's monthly meetings.

As we attempt to maintain this momentum, we see many opportunities developing at both the local and regional level. Regionally, the Governor's Puget Sound Clean-up plan, now being developed in the legislature, will include strong proposals to include restoration of our upland river systems as part of this clean-up process.

It is also important to let our legislators know and understand the importance of the "bottom up" approach. This means that local watershed groups are best able to develop the plans necessary for restoration and clean up. The participation of local groups assures the buy-in that is so critical to a successful plan and its implementation. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Puget Sound's regional Shared Strategy group are both highly successful examples of this approach. It is important that our legislators understand this. It is important that we are in a position to make use of this opportunity.

Locally, we have an ambitious work plan for the

coming year. We will continue efforts to expand our education and outreach efforts. Our new Education Committee Chair, Jeanne Fancher, has taken on the added task of including the Chambers Clover Creek Watershed Council's education efforts in her committee's tasks.

We will be looking to efforts aimed at encouraging local governments to include Low Impact Development and stormwater retrofitting efforts in their municipal planning and public works projects.

We hope to expand our capacity this year, including development of a small grant program for local "sub-watershed" groups. We hope that they will be able to use access to smaller amounts of money for local restoration and educational efforts.

Levee Setback, from page 1

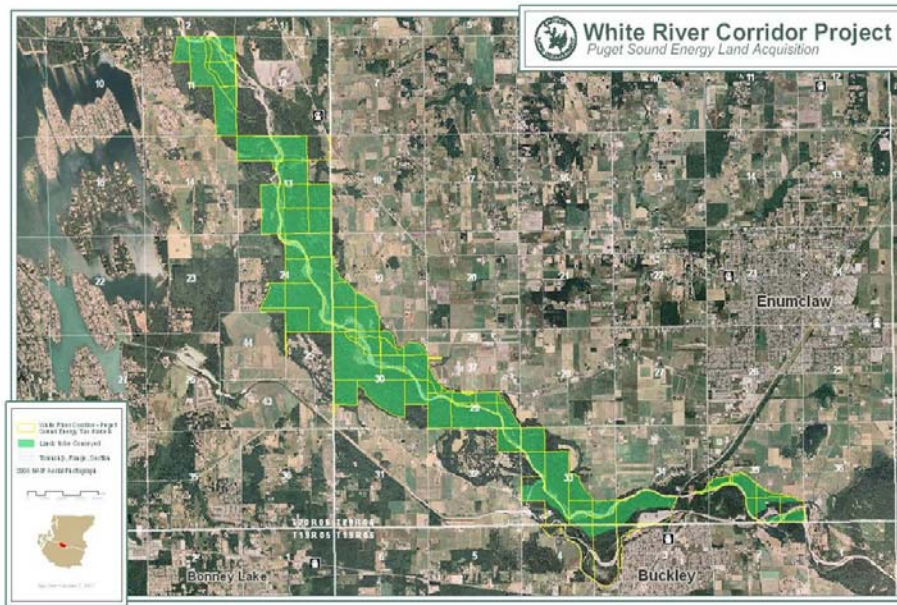
The project is adjacent to the Puyallup River left bank, upstream of the Puyallup River Calistoga Bridge crossing, in the south end of the City of Orting, Washington.

The project consists of a new setback levee 5,150 feet in length. The setback levee project also included fortification of the existing levee downstream, across stream and upstream of the setback levee. The existing levee was removed down to the water line and the material was re-used to build the new setback levee.

Areas of habitat channels were also dug to help induce river flows into the opened up floodplain area for lower river flow conditions. Large woody debris was placed along the setback levee alignment for more habitat features. The total project cost was about \$6.3 million

The early November 2006 floods allowed the natural riverine and floodplain processes to begin to restore and enhance spawning and off-channel rearing habitat across the 67 acres. It also helped reduce downstream flooding. The project was funded by Pierce County, Port of Tacoma, Hylebos Partners, and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Agreement Could Protect White River Corridor



that will demonstrate the goals and aspirations of The Cascade Agenda, plus an opportunity to demonstrate the power of cooperating on a project for the benefit of all. PSE chose to work with the CLC because of the organization's expertise in conserving open space, either by acquiring and holding sensitive lands itself or by creatively arranging for other conservation-minded parties to own and manage lands in an environmentally beneficial way.

A natural corridor along the White River between Buckley and Enumclaw could provide important habitat to fish and wildlife.

Elk, deer, bears, cougars, bald eagles, great blue herons, wood ducks, and other wildlife frequent the property's forests, wetlands, canyons, and meadows. Where is this ecological wonderland? In our own backyard.

Nearly 2,500 acres of woodlands largely untouched for 100 years along the White River will be protected with the recent signing of a purchase-sale agreement between Puget Sound Energy and the Cascade Land Conservancy.

The undeveloped, PSE-owned land straddles both sides of the White River between Buckley and Auburn - about half in King County, half in Pierce County. The land was acquired nearly a century ago and has been held as part of PSE's White River Hydroelectric Project, which the company took out of service in 2004. The river lands are now surplus to PSE's needs.

The area is one of the last untouched stretches of a river of the quality of the White.

The Cascade Land Conservancy is now working with various governmental groups, tribes and other organization to conserve the land. When successful, it will be a landscape-scale project

The Tacoma News Tribune praised the agreement as a good step in reducing the march of development across the region. "Anyone who has lived in Pierce County for more than a few years has surely noticed development creep. Stands of trees that stood on the edges of towns have been replaced by strip malls, shopping centers and housing. Habitat for wildlife shrinks with each passing year," the newspaper said.

Some recreation advocates were disappointed that the state didn't buy the land for a park. Given the high price - a 2000 estimate of its value was \$30 million - it's unlikely the state Legislature would have authorized buying it. The CLC's work in conserving the lands does not rule out parks on the property as an option.

"We will ensure that these White River lands become an asset for generations to come and are put to use in a socially and environmentally responsible way," said Gene Duvernoy, President of the Cascade Land Conservancy.

The Conservancy has a strong desire to craft a disposition program that addresses as many of the interests in the lands as possible while guaranteeing that the property retains its essential natural features, Duvernoy said.



In 2006 the PRWC Executive Committee created the **Citizen Watershed Steward Award** to recognize the citizen volunteer who most embodied the spirit that individuals can inspire their local community to take actions that will make a difference in the environmental health of their watershed. At the January 2007 council meeting two 2006 winners were announced and presented with plaques: **Marian Betzer** for her passion and tireless efforts to raise awareness of the importance of Fennel Creek to the overall health of the watershed , and **Ann Coon (pictured above with Dave Seabrook and Lorin Reinelt)** for her leadership and enthusiasm in promoting community cooperation to clean up Clarks' Creek.

Volunteer groups involved in watershed health

Citizens for a Healthy Bay

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

917 Pacific Avenue, Suite 100, Tacoma
(253) 383-2429

Friends of the Hylebos Wetlands

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

(253) 929-1519

Friends of Clarks Creek

(253) 864-6042

Fennel Creek Preservation Group

<http://www.fennelcreek.org>

(253) 826-1079

Pierce Stream Team

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

(253) 845-2973

South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group

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

(360) 412-0808

Friends of Swan Creek Watershed

(253) 472-7264

sueb@prodigy.net

For more information and volunteer opportunities, visit the Puyallup River Watershed Council 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.