



# Puyallup River Tales

*A newsletter of the Puyallup River Watershed Council  
Volume 3, Issue 4*

*July 2008*

## Clarks Creek, a small watershed with big problems



*Salmon spawning in Meeker Creek, a tributary to Clarks, after several restoration efforts.*

As you walk past the Puyallup Fairgrounds and the bustle of the city streets in downtown Puyallup you will come upon a small creek. The name of it is Meeker. This creek or “ditch” as many have called it is home to many ducks and geese. Ordinarily this would not be a problem but at Meeker Creek and Clarks Creek, feeding the ducks has caused a huge problem with fecal coliform bacteria.

Clarks Creek, Meeker Creek and Rody Creek were placed on the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) 303(d) list for fecal coliform bacteria. Once placed on this list, a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) or Water Cleanup Plan is required to be completed by the Department of Ecology.

For the past 5 years the Department of Ecology, City of Puyallup, Pierce County Water Programs, Friends of Clarks Creek and other local government agencies have been working together to come up with a report that discusses how to clean up the Clarks Creek Watershed. The report states that up to 95 percent reduction of fecal coliform is needed to allow some streams to meet Washington State’s water quality standards. Each target reduction varies by stream and must be in place by 2015. The report has been finalized and is available at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0710110.pdf>. Currently, the detailed implementation plan is being written.

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**continued, Page 4**

*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.*

# Puyallup Watershed Council helping to save Puget Sound

The Puyallup River Watershed Council (PRWC) is engaging its stakeholders in the development of the Action Agenda by the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP). The Action Agenda will be a guide to cleaning up Puget Sound, its shorelines and the fresh water streams that feed it.

Recently the PRWC, in cooperation with Pierce County Water Programs, submitted a report to the PSP and to the South Central Action Area Representative, King County Executive Ron Sims. The South Central Action Area includes WRIA's 8, 9 and 10. The self-reporting of plans developed by our local communities began the process. Examples include the county's Basin and Non-Point plans, the Critical Area Ordinances of cities and counties, the Commencement Bay Clean Up, park management plans and many others.

In March, with the help of Pierce County's Dan Wrye, we put together a local coordinating group. This group included the PRWC, Pierce County Water Programs, the Port of Tacoma, the City of Tacoma, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, and Citizens for a Healthy Bay. This group agreed to hold two additional meetings to create a more robust report to the Partnership and Action Area leaders.

The first occurred at our regular forum on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Here we explained the need and invited stakeholders to identify additional plans, both completed and under development, so that such efforts could be included in the list of plans submitted to the Partnership.

A science symposium followed, largely organized by Debby Hyde, Special Projects coordinator for Pierce County. Local leaders identified threats and their sources. These problems, along with the plans that address their solutions were matched with the broad classes of problem areas identified by the Partnership:

- Water quality
- Water quantity
- Marine waters habitat/land use
- Marine Waters species/biodiversity
- Fresh water habitat/land use
- Fresh water species/biodiversity
- Invasive species
- Human health/quality of life

It is important to keep communication open with PSP as the regional Action Agenda is prepared for the Legislature. We will continue to engage PSP and encourage participation and communication of our communities in this significant effort.

*By Dave Seabrook*



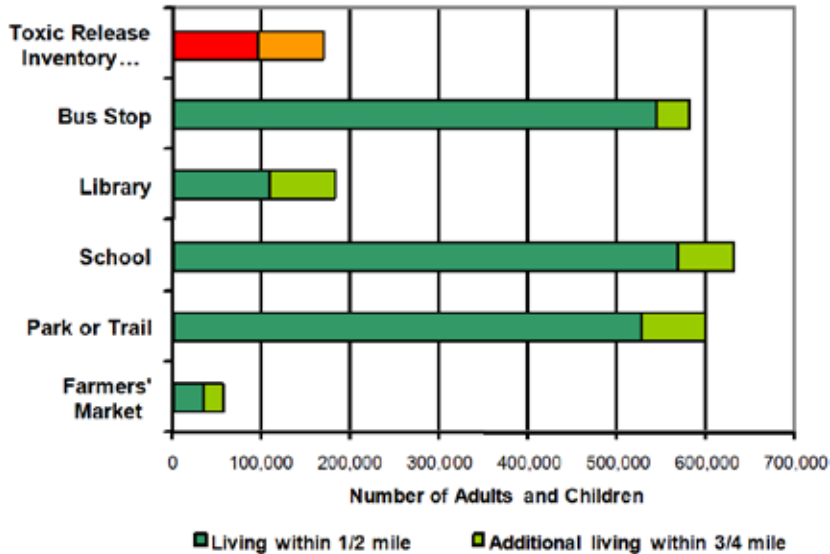
## Volunteers Restore Clarks Creek

Nineteen committed volunteers turned out on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, to enjoy the sunshine and plant native trees and shrubs along Clarks Creek. The planting event restores riparian vegetation to approximately 850 feet of stream bank. Over time, the new plants will benefit water quality by stabilizing soils, filtering pollutants and nutrients from runoff, and shading the creek from the sun. Native trees and shrubs will also provide important habitat and food sources for birds, fish and other wildlife.

For more information about this planting event or the Clarks Creek Initiative, please contact Lorin Reinelt, Pierce County Water Programs, at (253)798-3096 or [lreinelt@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:lreinelt@co.pierce.wa.us).

# What is the Pierce County Environmental Health Indicators Project?

## What's In Our Neighborhoods?



negative trends

- Make better decisions and take more effective actions at personal and policy levels, and
- Show how environmental conditions, ecosystem and human health are connected

The indicator bar chart shows the number of Pierce County residents living near sources of hazards and benefits. Please see the report draft posted online for additional information on human health and economic impacts, personal and policy actions, and other indicators: <http://www.tpchd.org/ehindicator>.

### What makes us sick and what makes us healthy?

Many things influence our health and well-being, including our behaviors, environment, genetics, and access to health care. Our level of education, income, occupation, and the neighborhoods we live in also influence our health because they help determine the resources and choices we have, the decisions we make, and what environmental hazards we're exposed to.

About 20 percent of early deaths in the U.S. are a result of exposure to environmental hazards. For example, heart disease is a leading cause of death for Pierce County residents, and the World Health Organization estimated that 16 percent of heart disease can be attributed to pollution.

### What is environmental health?

Environmental health is about understanding environmental conditions, and how they impact ecosystem and human health. It includes chemical and biological hazards, such as toxins in our air, water, soil, and food. It also includes hazards and benefits from natural and man-made physical features of our environment, such as parks and trails.

### What are environmental health indicators?

Most environmental health indicators are measures of conditions in the environment that are linked with human health impacts. We use them to:

- Track changes over time: identify positive and

### What should we track?

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department's Environmental Health Program invited agency and community members to select the environmental health measures. Seven Watershed Council members participated in the water, air, and land use workgroups that selected indicators, and two others reviewed the draft report.

There were many challenges narrowing down the list of indicators and finding data. When we couldn't find data for some indicators other relevant data is presented instead. We also couldn't find historical data for many of the indicators.

This report is not intended to form a comprehensive description of Pierce County environmental health. We hope the indicators provide snapshots or windows into the more complex world we live in and share. We also hope you use this information to improve environmental health in Pierce County.

### What can you do?

The report includes some policy and personal actions to improve ecosystem and human health. We hope this report helps you identify environmental health risks and benefits, and what you can do about them, including some personal and policy actions.

*By Marianne Seifert*

## Continued from Page 1

Public comments on this report will be taken after the draft is complete.

Planting trees and shrubs that make it more difficult for waterfowl to get in and out of the water is helpful. It can also filter bacteria and nutrients. In 2007, the City of Puyallup planted the south side of Meeker Creek as well as several areas along Clarks Creek. The Friends of Clarks Creek have been working with streamside owners to educate them on the importance of streamside plantings, and Pierce County has assisted in the plantings on private property (see story pg 2) and at WSU-Puyallup.

Plantings are only one piece of the puzzle. Eliminating pet waste that can wash into the stream and cause fecal coliform bacteria to increase is another. It is also important to maintain a healthy septic system and keep fertilizers used on lawns and plants from reaching the stream.

Here is a list of a few items already happening in the watershed to bring it back to a healthy condition:

- Streamside plantings
- Increased catch basin cleanings
- Sanitary survey on Rody Creek to detect failing septic systems
- Increased focus on pet waste programs
- Initiate a duck feeding education program
- Volunteer clean-up projects
- Public education displays and events

There is still more work to be done. Please contact Cindy James (360) 407-6556 or [cjam461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:cjam461@ecy.wa.gov) if you would like information on the progress of the TMDL or to get on the mailing list.

Clarks Creek Watershed is a gem located in the heart of Puyallup, and it's worth protecting; with everyone working together, we can bring it back to healthy condition.

*By Cindy James*

## Get Involved!

### *Volunteer groups involved in watershed health*

#### **Citizens for a Healthy Bay**

<http://www.healthybay.org>  
[chb@healthybay.org](mailto:chb@healthybay.org)  
(253) 383-2429

#### **Friends of the Hylebos Wetlands**

<http://www.hylebos.org>  
[chinook@hylebos.org](mailto:chinook@hylebos.org)  
(253) 874-2005

#### **Fennel Creek Preservation Group**

<http://www.fennelcreek.org>  
(253) 826-1079

#### **Friends of Swan Creek Watershed**

(253) 472-7264  
[swanecreek@prodigy.net](mailto:swanecreek@prodigy.net)

#### **Pierce Stream Team**

<http://www.piercecountycd.org/streamtm.htm>  
[streamteam@piercecounydc.org](mailto:streamteam@piercecounydc.org)  
(253) 845-2973

#### **South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group**

<http://spsseg.org>  
[spsseg@spsseg.org](mailto:spsseg@spsseg.org)  
(360) 412-0808

#### **Friends of the Lower White River**

<http://flwr.wetpaint.com/page/Home>  
[pacific\\_naturalist@clearwire.net](mailto:pacific_naturalist@clearwire.net)  
(253) 924-0211

#### **Friends of Clarks Creek**

(253) 864-6042

For more information and volunteer opportunities, visit the Puyallup River Watershed Council Web site: [www.piercecountywa.org/PRWC](http://www.piercecountywa.org/PRWC) or, send an email to: [PC-PRWC@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto: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.