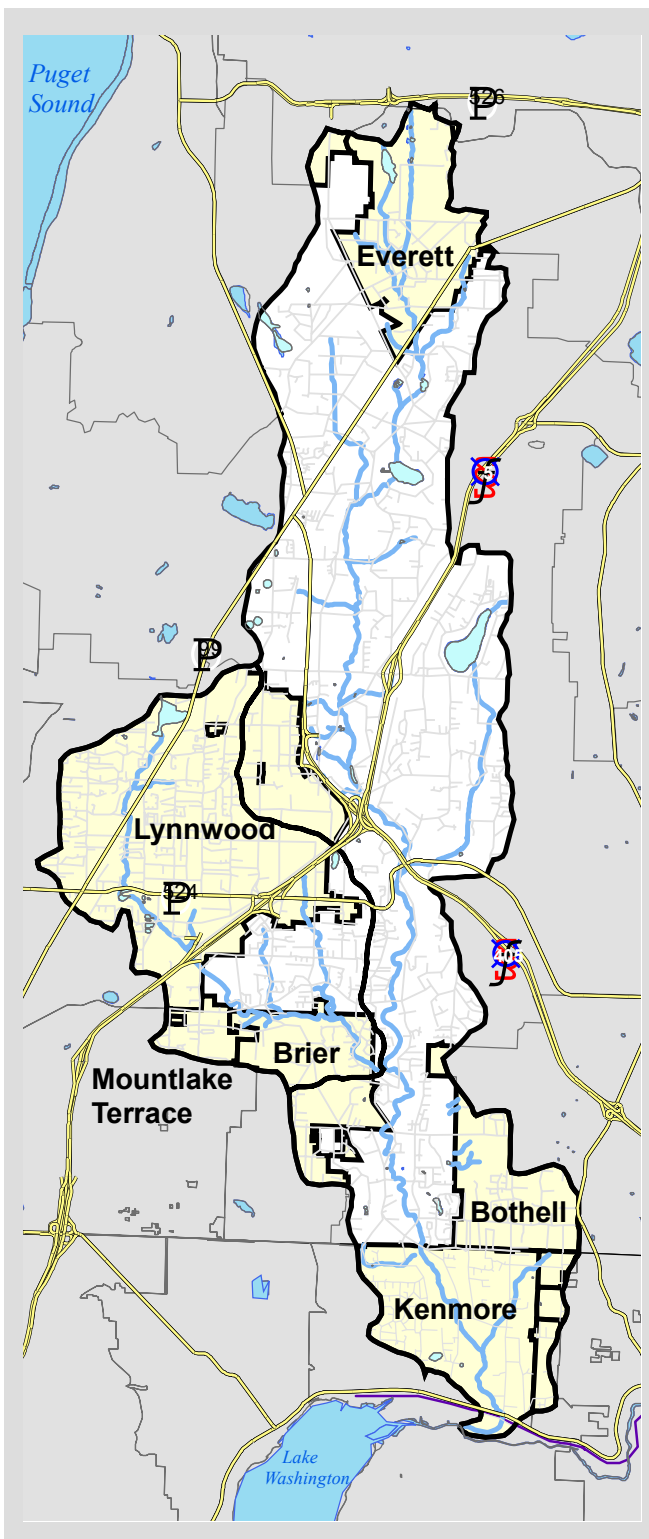


Focus on Swamp Creek

from Ecology's Northwest Regional Office -- Water Quality Program

Stream Has Too Much Bacteria -- Water Users at Risk



The Department of Ecology is developing a plan to clean up bacterial pollution in Swamp Creek and would like your participation. There will be a public meeting for the *Swamp Creek Water Quality Improvement Report and Implementation Plan* on:

April 18, 2006, open house/meeting at 6:45 p.m.
at the Lynnwood High School
Cafeteria/Commons, 3001 – 184th Street S.W.

Swamp Creek contains high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. These bacteria are typical and widespread in Washington State, affecting at least 30 percent of our polluted water bodies. The problem is that the presence of these common bacteria also indicates the possible presence of other more serious disease-causing (pathogenic) bacteria and even longer-lived viruses.

Stormwater runoff, failing on-site septic systems, and other sources deposit organisms into streams, lakes, and estuaries where they can infect people by skin contact, drinking water, or ingestion of contaminated fish and shellfish.

Water Quality Improvement Report

This report and plan (also known as ‘total maximum daily load assessment’ or *TMDL*) describes: 1) the amount and sources of a specific pollutant in a water body, 2) how much the waters can absorb without violating clean water standards, and 3) solutions to correct the related water quality problems. It includes the following specific elements:

- An evaluation of water quality conditions associated with pollutants of concern.
- An analysis of where the pollution is coming from.
- A plan to control pollution ... what we can do to help protect water quality.

Ecology works with local, county, and tribal governments, and concerned individuals and organizations to gather this information and prepare the plan. The plan helps these parties to work as partners to reduce bacteria levels in Swamp Creek.

Snohomish County, local cities, the Snohomish Conservation District, Snohomish Health Department, and other groups are working with Ecology to develop this plan to improve water quality in Swamp Creek. We need to identify sources of fecal coliform bacteria in the watershed and act to reduce them. These actions will form key parts of the Swamp Water Quality Improvement Plan.

Right now, Snohomish County is also working to understand the needs of citizens and businesses regarding animal wastes. The Health Department is studying the county's on-site septic systems to help locate potential problem areas. The county and cities are also working on their stormwater management programs that will educate local citizens about what they can do and how these actions will help control bacteria and other pollutants that run off our streets and parking lots.

Where is the pollution coming from?

Human sources of these bacteria vary. Leaky or over-flowing sewers are one potential source. In non-sewered areas, failing on-site septic systems can be a significant problem. Humans also create problems with mismanagement of pet waste, other domestic animal wastes (cattle, horses, poultry, and other animals), and from illegal sanitary connections or waste disposal. *Non-human sources can include pigeons, seabirds and waterfowl, rats, raccoons, squirrels, beavers, muskrats, deer, and other wild mammals. These are not assumed to be a significant problem in most parts of Swamp Creek.*

What can you do?

“Fixing” fecal coliform contamination problems means each of us looking at what we do (or don't do) on our property to prevent sewage, manure, or other sources from reaching public waters. To be a good steward of your watershed, here are some important things you can do:

- Make sure your on-site septic system is in good working order; check every 2-3 years & pump as necessary.
- Manage livestock so they can water away from a stream or lake. Need help figuring out an alternative? Call the Snohomish Conservation District at **(425) 335-5634** for help, it's free!
- Safeguard manure piles from rain & surface runoff. The Snohomish Conservation District can help here too.
- Protect the natural vegetation along streams and lakes ... you may need to plant more. Vegetation slows & filters pollutants from runoff and promotes natural wildlife balances.
- Bag pet waste & put it in the garbage, not in the septic system where it can cause expensive problems.
- Use proper waste management when you are walking dogs; don't feed ducks and other waterfowl.

Add your name to a mailing list for information about the Swamp Creek TMDL (Water Quality Improvement Plan)

The Washington Department of Ecology is working with local organizations; Snohomish County; the cities of Bothell, Brier, Everett, Lynnwood, and Mill Creek; Snohomish Conservation District; Washington Dept. of Health; Washington Dept. of Transportation; and Native-American tribal governments to develop a water quality monitoring plan that will aid in determining sources of fecal coliform bacteria to Swamp Creek. To help or get more information please contact:

Ralph Svrjcek, Snohomish Watershed

Water Quality Improvement Plan (TMDL) Leader

Washington State Department of Ecology, Northwest Regional Office

3190 - 160th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98008-5452;

Phone: (425) 649-7165; email: rsvr461@ecy.wa.gov

How else can you be involved?

Citizen involvement in deciding what needs to be done is essential to making your local water body a safe place for people and fish. You can be involved by participating in the following future watershed activities (see website for more contact information):

- Join local volunteers to improve water quality by helping with stream restoration activities.
- If you own livestock (even just a horse or two!), contact the Snohomish Conservation District to have a FREE farm plan prepared!
- If you live outside of a city, be a Salmon Watcher or a Watershed Keeper. Get involved in other individual or group activities to improve local waters. (Activities are coordinated by Snohomish County staff.)
- Share your ideas with others. Let local elected officials know your wishes to improve water quality and fish habitat and your ideas for clean local streams.

Please comment on Ecology's draft water cleanup Action Plan.

You may comment on the Water Quality Improvement Plan in writing from April 6 through May 8, 2006. You can obtain a copy of the draft plan three ways:

- 1) At Ecology's Northwest Regional Office in Bellevue (see address in box below);
- 2) On the Internet: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/watershed/index.html#nwro>;
- 3) At these Washington libraries:
 - ◆ Bothell: 18215 98th Avenue NE, Bothell, WA 98011-3336 Phone: (425) 486-7811
 - ◆ Brier: 23303 Brier Road, Brier, WA 98036-8247 Phone: (425) 483-0888
 - ◆ Kenmore: 18138 73rd Avenue NE, Kenmore, WA 98028-2703 Phone: (425) 486-8747
 - ◆ Lynnwood: 19200 44th Avenue W, Lynnwood, WA 98036-5617 Phone: (425) 778-2148
 - ◆ Mountlake Terrace: 23300 58th Ave. W, Mt. Lake Terrace, WA 98043 Phone: (425) 776-8722
 - ◆ Everett: 2702 Hoyt Avenue, Everett, WA 98201-3556 Phone: (425) 257-8020

Ecology will continue working with local governments and others listed in the report and plan, to carry it out the plan and get waters clean again!

Please send written comments to:

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3190 160th Avenue SE, Bellevue, WA 98008-5452,
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