



Focus on Little Bear Creek

from Ecology's Water Quality Program

Too Much Bacteria Causes Concern

High levels of fecal coliform bacteria have been identified at various locations in the Little Bear Creek Watershed (Snohomish and King Counties). Fecal coliform bacteria may indicate the presence of other disease-causing bacteria (pathogens) in water. These bacteria are easily carried by stormwater runoff or transported in other ways into streams, lakes, or estuaries where they can infect humans through contaminated fish and shellfish, skin contact, or ingestion of water.

Concentrations and distributions of fecal coliform bacteria in Little Bear Creek are being evaluated and will be addressed in a *Little Bear Creek Water Cleanup Plan for Fecal Coliform Bacteria* being prepared by the Department of Ecology (Ecology).

Water Cleanup Plans (TMDLs)

A Water Cleanup Plan, also known as a Total Maximum Daily Load (or TMDL), describes the quantity of a specific pollutant in an area and offers solutions to correct related water quality problems. A Water Cleanup Plan includes the following elements:

- A scientific evaluation of water quality conditions associated with a pollutant of concern.
- A technical analysis of the sources of a pollutant of concern.
- An action plan to control pollutant sources and help protect water quality.

Water Cleanup Plan for Little Bear Creek

Snohomish and King counties, the City of Woodinville, and other groups and individuals have already done much to restore and clean up Little Bear Creek, but more work is needed. Ecology is compiling information on current activities and additional actions that are needed to identify and correct important remaining fecal coliform bacteria sources in the watershed. This information will form key parts of the *Little Bear Creek Water Cleanup Plan*.

Potential Sources of Fecal Coliform Bacteria

Human sources of these bacteria may vary depending on whether a watershed has sewers or not. **In non-sewered areas, failing septic systems are often significant human sources of fecal coliform bacteria and other pollutants.**

Humans also create problems with illegal sanitary connections, and the illegal disposal or mismanagement of manure and other domestic animal wastes (cattle, horses, poultry, and other domestic animals – especially dogs and cats). *Non-human* sources include pigeons; gulls; ducks, geese, and other waterfowl; rats; raccoons; squirrels; beaver; muskrats; deer; and other warm-blooded wild mammals.



The Department of Ecology will host two public meetings for the *Little Bear Creek Water Cleanup Plan*:

March 3, 3-5:30 p.m.
Woodinville City Hall
17301-133rd Ave NE

March 10, 7-9 p.m.
Fernwood School
3933 Jewell Road
Bothell

The plan will establish maximum amounts of fecal coliform bacteria that Little Bear Creek and targeted tributaries can receive and still meet state water quality standards.

Fecal coliform bacteria is a common water quality problem in the state. These bacteria affect at least 30% of the state's polluted waters.



What can you do?

To “fix” fecal coliform contamination, each of us must look at what we do on our property to prevent sewage or manure from reaching public waters. To be a good steward of your watershed:

- Make sure your on-site septic system is in good working order: test and pump it regularly.
- Manage livestock so they can water away from a stream or lake. Need help figuring out an alternative? Please call the Snohomish Conservation District at: **425-335-5634**.
- Protect the natural vegetation alongside streams and lakes, and you may need to plant more. Vegetation filters pollutants from run-off. Your conservation district can help.
- Bag your pet's waste and put it in the garbage...not in the on-site sewage system.
- Safeguard manure piles from rain and surface run-off. Snohomish County, the City of Woodinville, and the Snohomish Conservation District can all help.
- Call the Spill Hotline if you see a spill or illegal dumping: **1-800-258-5990**.

Also--Comment on the Little Bear Creek Water Cleanup Plan

The Washington Department of Ecology is seeking your written comments on the *Little Bear Creek Water Cleanup Plan* **through March 31, 2005**. You can review a copy of the plan starting February 28 at local libraries in Mill Creek 425-337-4822 and Woodinville 425-788-0733 and at Ecology's website:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/watershed/tmdl_info-nwro.html

To receive a copy, or for more information or comments, please contact Anne Dettelbach, Little Bear Creek TMDL Leader, by phone at 425-649-7093, by email adet461@ecy.wa.gov, or at:

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If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact the Water Quality Program at 425-649-7041. If you are a person with a speech or hearing impairment, call 711, or 800-833-6388 for TTY.