



Focus on Next Steps to Improve Water Quality in the Stillaguamish Watershed and Port Susan

from Ecology's Water Quality Program

Presentation and Public Comment

Wednesday May 9, 2007

Peace Lutheran Church in Silvana (west of town).

Meeting starts at 1 p.m.

The Clean Water Act requires a cleanup plan for these water bodies because they do not meet state standards for water quality.

Ecology worked with local and tribal governments, watershed groups, and individuals to put together this Draft Stillaguamish River Water Quality Implementation Plan (Action Plan).

The Action Plan details the activities needed to return the Stillaguamish River and Port Susan to good ecological health.

You can get a copy of the Action Plan to learn what actions are needed and how you can help. Let us know if you have more ideas.

Many areas have too much fecal coliform bacteria, too high temperatures, and not enough dissolved oxygen

Fecal coliform bacteria

Water samples collected in Port Susan and at many places throughout the Stillaguamish River watershed have concentrations of *fecal coliform bacteria* that exceed state water quality standards. This means that shellfish cannot be harvested commercially from Port Susan, and some reaches of the river may not be clean enough for swimming.

Dissolved oxygen

A second indicator of degraded water quality is the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water. At several locations in the watershed, during times of warm weather and late summer low flows there is not enough dissolved oxygen for healthy stream life.

Temperature

A third cause for concern is "warm" water temperatures throughout the watershed. Bathing temperatures are great for swimming. However, during seasonally low streamflow in August and September, the water may be warm enough to stress or kill aquatic life, including salmonids, which require cold water with lots of dissolved oxygen. Tree removal and heavy sediment loads from upstream landslides and erosion reduce the amount of high quality salmon spawning habitat, and may contribute to stream temperature problems.

Clean up streams: What can you do?

Consider commenting on the Draft Stillaguamish River Water Quality Implementation Plan (Action Plan) in writing by May 25, 2007. The Action Plan contains many ideas about how you can help reduce pollution reaching the river right now. Businesses and residents in the watershed can make a difference in water quality by eliminating pollutants that are washed into streams when it rains and by protecting and restoring healthy streamside conditions. Your Watershed Steward will welcome your help and may be able to assist you in your efforts.

Some ways you can help

- Properly maintain your septic tank.
- Pick up pet waste from yards and sidewalks.
- Keep livestock wastes out of streams
- Keep fertilizers and pesticides from lawns, gardens, and farms from entering lakes and streams.
- Landscape without fertilizers and pesticides.
- Reduce non-absorbing/impervious surfaces.
- Plant trees and perform other activities to help local streams.
- Eliminate sediment washed from construction sites and other unprotected ground.
- Wash cars at carwashes or on lawns.
- Get involved in your local government's efforts to clean up the river.

Work with your neighbors, community association, or local citizens group for water quality.

Federal law requires clean up of polluted water

The Department of Ecology's (Ecology) Action Plan is part of the federal process for determining how much pollutant a water body can accept (also called the Total Maximum Daily Load or TMDL process). The Action Plan identifies potential fecal coliform pollution sources, the causes for low dissolved oxygen levels and high temperatures in the river, and what needs to be done so that these levels can improve to meet state standards.

The Action Plan addresses both nonpoint sources of pollution and point sources of pollution. Nonpoint pollution sources are those related to land uses, such as failing septic systems and improperly managed animal wastes that contain bacteria. Point pollution sources are those that send pollution directly to the stream by piped outfalls, for example, wastewater treatment plants and stormwater outfalls. The Action Plan outlines different strategies for nonpoint sources and point sources.

- Nonpoint sources are usually addressed through public outreach and education, local government land use controls, and voluntary actions by landowners.
- Point sources are covered by state wastewater discharge permits. Ecology works directly with permit holders to determine what actions should be taken to address the pollution.

How can you stay involved?

Citizen involvement is essential to making the Stillaguamish Watershed a better place for people and fish and keeping it that way. Many local organizations are actively working to restore water quality. Stay involved by participating in future watershed activities. For example:

- Get involved in the Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force for on-the-ground community fish habitat restoration and water pollution prevention activities. Contact volunteer coordinator Cara Ianni at 425-252-6686 or info@stillysnofish.org, or see <http://www.stillysnofish.org/> for more information.
- To get a no cost, no-risk environmental audit of streamside property, contact Stillaguamish Watershed Steward Jake Jacobson, 425-388-6428 or jake.jacobson@co.snohomish.wa.us.
- Find out how to determine whether your septic system is functioning properly by contacting the Snohomish Health District at 425-339-5250. They also post information about septic systems on their website: <http://www.snohd.org/snoEnvHealth/www/waste.htm>

- Learn how to reduce the impacts of your horses or livestock on local streams, while improving pasture productivity and reducing mud and weeds. Call the Snohomish Conservation District at 425-335-5634, or Email: amanda@snohomishcd.org
- Let your local elected officials know that clean water is important to you.

Past and future of the Action Plan

To reduce fecal coliform pollution, improve dissolved oxygen levels, and reduce stream temperatures will take the coordinated efforts of the local agencies, Native-American tribes, businesses, and residents in the watershed. The Action Plan to reduce pollution was developed by Ecology with help from all these groups. The plan is now available for local review and comment through May 25, 2007. To receive more information about the plan, see contact information below.

Find Ecology's draft Water Cleanup Action Plan here

Copies of the draft Water Cleanup Plan will be available at these locations:

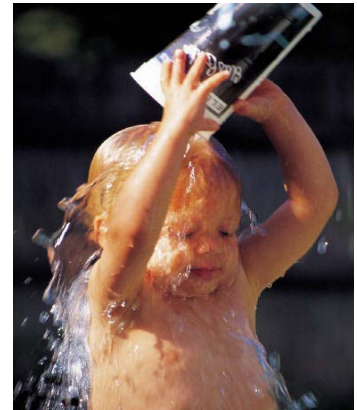
- | | | |
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| 1. Everett Public Library
2702 Hoyt Ave
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135 N Washington Ave
360-435-3033 | Stanwood Library
9701 271st St NW
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Library hours: Monday – Thursday, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Everett until 6, Thurs.-Sat); Sunday 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. (Stanwood not open Sunday)

2. On the Internet: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/watershed/tmdl_info-nwro.html
3. At Ecology's Bellevue Office (address is below), and the May 9, 2007 meeting.
4. To obtain a copy by mail, to ask questions or get information, or to send written comments; please contact:

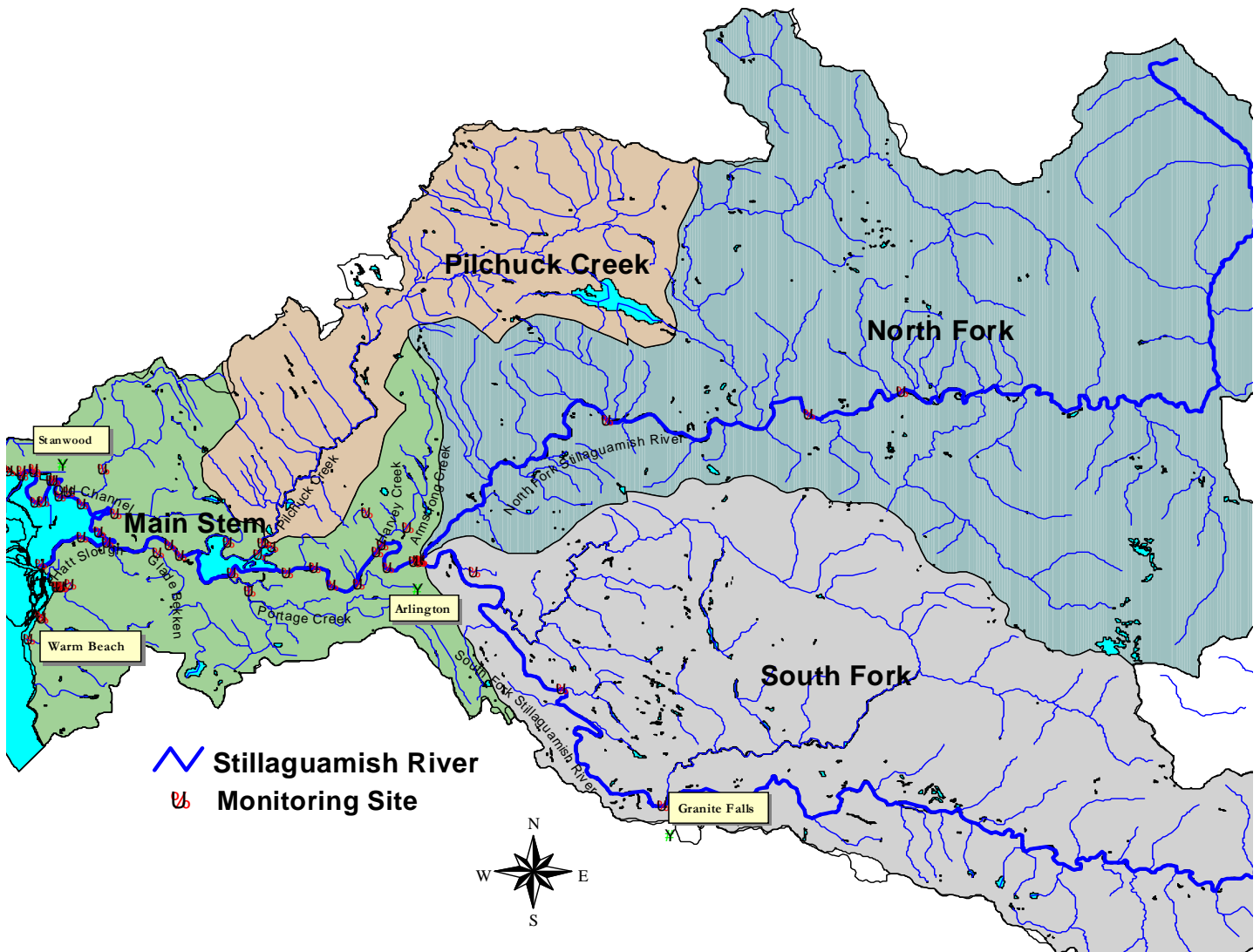
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