

Water Cleanup Planning in the Watershed

The 27 square mile Burnt Bridge Creek watershed is located in Clark County in southwest Washington. The creek's headwaters begin in agricultural fields on the eastern edge of Vancouver. After flowing approximately 13 miles through the heart of the city, Burnt Bridge Creek drains into the eastern end of Vancouver Lake. This watershed offers city residents easy access to a pleasant natural setting.

Unfortunately, the quality of water in some areas of Burnt Bridge Creek does not meet state standards. The Burnt Bridge Creek watershed has been identified for study and cleanup because of high fecal coliform bacteria numbers, high temperatures, and low dissolved oxygen. High levels of fecal coliform bacteria increase risks to people swimming, wading, or fishing and high temperatures and low dissolved oxygen create poor conditions for fish and other wildlife.



What's being done?

Burnt Bridge Creek is under pressure from growth resulting in many small, uncontrolled sources of pollution entering the creek. In order to return Burnt Bridge Creek to a healthy condition, a coordinated process has begun, called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or Water Cleanup Plan. The process, described in the federal Clean Water Act, will be used to reduce harmful bacteria, lower water temperatures, and increase dissolved oxygen levels in the creek.

The first step in the TMDL process is a water quality study to figure out how much existing pollution needs to be reduced to keep the water healthy. The study also identifies main sources or source areas of pollution.

Who is involved?

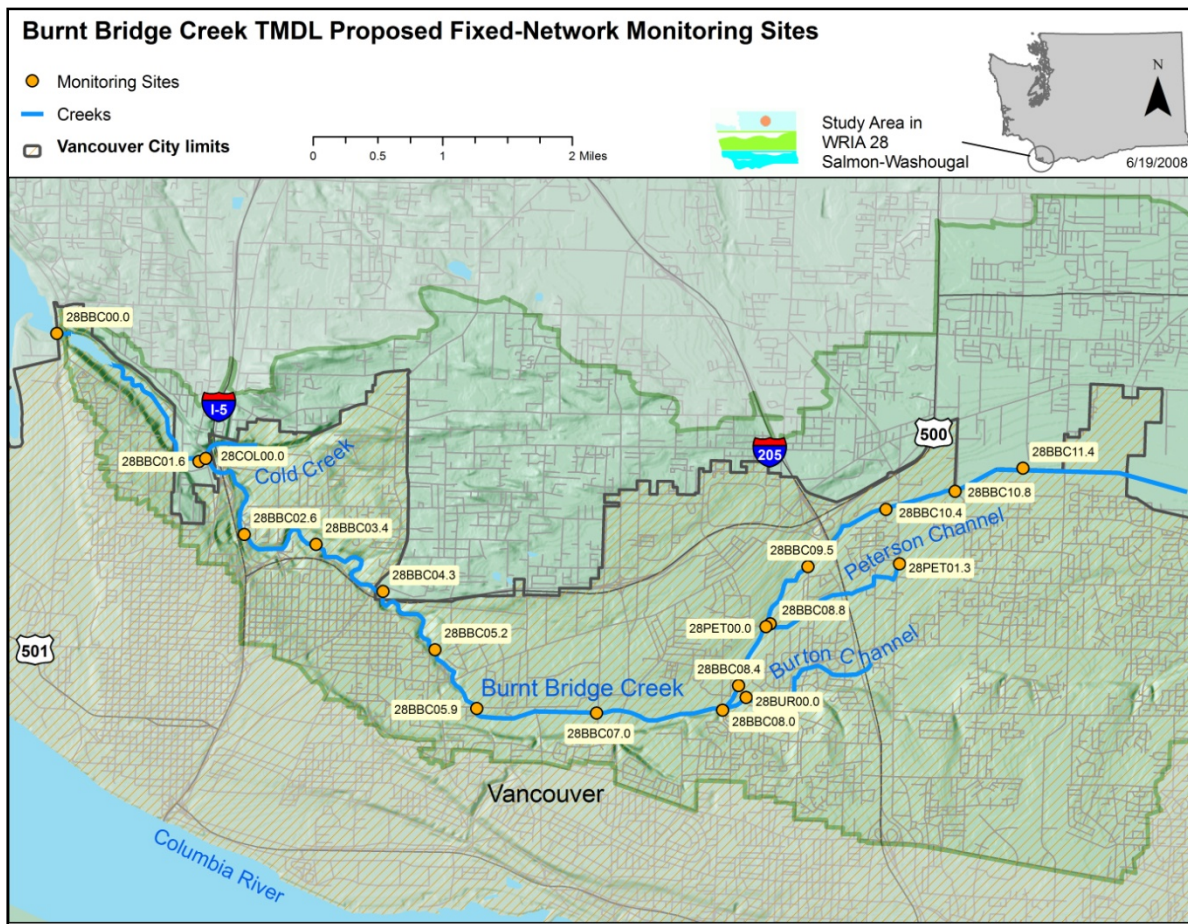
The federal Clean Water Act requires states to clean up water bodies that don't meet water quality standards. In Washington, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) has that responsibility. But, we don't do it alone. Clark County and the city of Vancouver have monitored water quality in the watershed for several years. Those data have been analyzed to figure out what questions still need to be answered.

While Ecology will coordinate the study and cleanup planning process, many other agencies and individuals are helping. They will help with the study, serve on the advisory committee, explore solutions, and conduct or oversee cleanup activities.

What's next?

Ecology field crews began sampling in the watershed in June 2008. Sampling will be ongoing through August 2009 in order to study conditions in a variety of seasons. Data analysis and modeling will take place in 2009 and 2010. In late 2010 local agencies and individuals will work with Ecology to identify cleanup activities and prepare for public input on the Water Cleanup Plan.

For updates on the Burnt Bridge Creek TMDL process visit the Ecology webpage at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/burntbridge/BurntBrtdml.html>



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