

Door-to-door Outreach

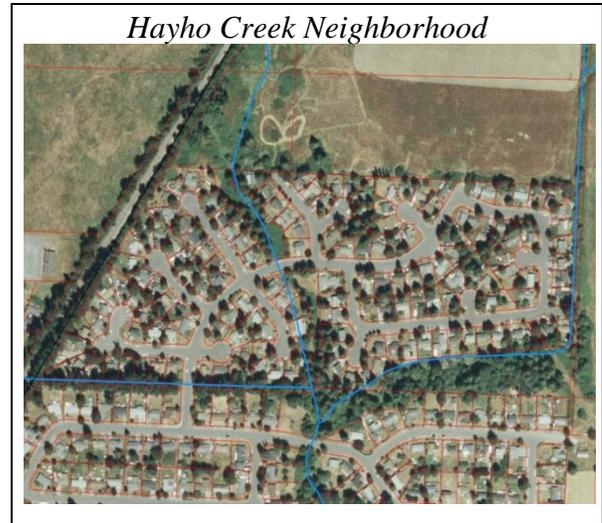
Helping Streams One Home at a Time

Introduction

Getting polluted water clean requires change in human behavior and land uses at the local level. In many cases, that local level is right in our backyards! The Adopt-A-Stream Foundation (AASF) understands this challenge and developed a program to reach people where the water meets their property.

Problem

As farmlands give way to housing developments, the number of families living next to streams increases. So does the amount of outreach needed to help protect the water and fish in those streams. Our fast-paced modern lifestyles make it hard to reach citizens and help them do the right thing. So many backyards, so little time!



Project Goals

The AASF made it their mission to reach streamside landowners in the Middle Fork Quilceda watershed in Snohomish County. As a private, nonregulatory environmental organization that has worked for years to identify fish passage barriers and improve instream habitat, AASF hoped to gain the trust of local residents and improve water quality and fish habitat in the Middle Fork. Using an approach refined over many years, the AASF went door-to-door to make personal contact with streamside landowners. They applied for and received Ecology grant funding to use this approach to improve stream shading and instream fish habitat and to reduce pollution inputs.

The Adopt-A-Stream Calling Card



Milestones and outcomes

AASF staff first researched the water quality and fish use in the Middle Fork. Bacteria levels were high, dissolved oxygen levels low, and elevated water temperatures were suspected. Coho and chum salmon and trout were the key fish species.

An important part of the Middle Fork Quilceda is Hayho Creek, which flows through one neighborhood with 1,500 linear feet of creek and 33 streamside landowners. Many properties need trees to reduce stream temperatures and other best management practices to reduce nonpoint pollution.

AASF staff visited homeowners during the week and on weekends. When residents were not home, staff left a calling card—a simple brown paper bag with a message and educational information.



They recorded the address and visited again when residents were likely to be home. Staff provided education on local water pollution and habitat problems and prepared a “Prescription for Stream Health” for each property.

After a newspaper article covered AASF’s project, one resident remembered the brown paper bag and invited AASF to prepare a prescription for his property. Even though the property was small and needed little work, the AASF learned by experience that sometimes getting your foot in the door can lead to big progress. That willing landowner turned out to be a leader in the community, and soon the interested streamside property owners was over 50 percent of the neighborhood!

Project highlights

As a result of the unique door-to-door outreach and perseverance, 88 percent of neighborhood landowners contacted agreed to a site visit (10 percent had No Trespassing signs, and 1 landowner denied access). Nine out of 33 streamside property owners in the neighborhood participated in tree planting, stream restoration, or pollution reduction activities. Seven others expressed interest, but projects were unnecessary or not feasible. The AASF and its army of volunteers planted 43 percent of the Hayho Creek streambank in the neighborhood that needed help. The AASF to date has reached about one of every three landowners using door-to-door outreach in the Middle Fork Quilceda.

The AASF Streamside Database was an important tool for tracking and managing project progress. Using a 2-page checklist, staff documents the needs of each property in the field. The database provides a picture of watershed needs on a property-based level, tracks on-the-ground improvements, and helps the AASF improve their outreach program. They track progress, catalog observed pollution sources (livestock access, septic problems, pet waste, riparian problems) and design future projects to overcome barriers to success. Even though all property owners do not participate, the percentage that participates appears high compared to other popular outreach techniques.

Lessons learned

The AASF has refined the effectiveness of their door-to-door approach over the years. Originally, AASF envisioned gaining permission to access properties then walking stream channels to assess habitat. When areas of degradation were found, they would re-visit landowners to see if they were interested in a project. In practice, they found it was more efficient to make face-to-face contact with landowners and immediately ask permission to begin restoration.

Prescription for Stream Health

Adopt-A-Stream Foundation's Recommended Actions for Improving Water Quality



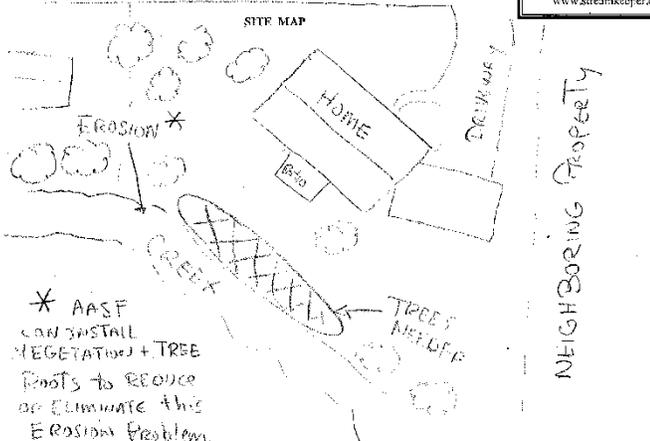
Swamp Creek is polluted! You can help clean it up!

During our site visit, Adopt-A-Stream staff found the following pollution problems:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pet waste <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stream bank erosion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lack of native plants for creek shade & stable bank <input type="checkbox"/> Invasive plants <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical use on yard (Fertilizers, Pesticides) <input type="checkbox"/> Septic system problems <input type="checkbox"/> Yard waste near stream <input type="checkbox"/> Drainage pipe (Outfall) to stream or wetland... <input type="checkbox"/> Hardened stream bank (Rip rap or rock) <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<p>We recommend the following actions:</p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dispose of waste properly <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-stream wood placement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plant native vegetation along stream <input type="checkbox"/> Remove with hand tools <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate or reduce chemical use <input type="checkbox"/> Use natural, low-impact alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> Have septic system inspected & cleaned <input type="checkbox"/> Place yard waste in compost or isolate away from stream <input type="checkbox"/> Allow outfall to flow through vegetated area first <input type="checkbox"/> Install "soft" bank revetment (anchored wood and vegetation) <input type="checkbox"/> Other
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For more information or for help implementing these suggestions, please contact the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation.

The Adopt A Stream Foundation
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 Everett, WA 98208
 425-316-8592
 www.wstreamkeeper.org



* AASF CAN INSTALL VEGETATION + TREE ROOTS TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THE EROSION PROBLEM.

Database Checklist (page 1)

SWAMP CREEK - LANDOWNER INFORMATION	
Last Name.....	Phone.....
First Name.....	E-Mail.....
Address.....	
City.....	State <input type="text"/> Interested In Project.....
Zip Code.....	Rx Provided.....
Site Number.....	Stream.....
Site Address.....	River Mile.....
Parcel #.....	Site Stream Length (ft).....
GPS File.....	Note.....
EDUCATION INFORMATION	
Date.....	Time.....
Crew.....	
Educator.....	Tenant / Landowner / None (vacant)
# Tenants.....	
Contact Type.....	In person / Email / Mail / Phone
Educate Method.....	Material / Discuss / Both / No Interest
Access.....	Not Home / Allow / Timing / Deny / NT
SITE CONDITIONS	
Avg Buffer Width.....	
Predominant Cover.....	
Native Vegetation (SF).....	
Invasive Vegetation (SF).....	
Type of Invasive 1, 2, & 3.....	
Erosion (LF).....	
Hardened Streambank (LF).....	
Shade (% Cover).....	0-25 / 26-50 / 51-75 / 76-100
Herbicide/Pesticide Use.....	None / Mild / Mod / Severe / Unk
Household Pet Waste.....	None / Mild / Mod / Severe / Unk
Livestock (50').....	0 / 1-5 / 6-10 / >10 / Unk
Outfall to Water (#).....	
On-Site Septic.....	Yes / No / Unk
Septic Problems.....	None / Mild / Mod / Severe / Unk
Solid Waste.....	
Other Invasives.....	
Other Problems.....	
RECOMMENDATIONS	
Invasive Removal.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Native Riparian Planting.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bank Bioengineering.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
In-Stream LWD.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce/eliminate Chems.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Septic Inspection.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rain Garden.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fencing.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Farm Plan.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce Stream Access.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information Given.....	Erosion/Sediment..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard Packet.....	Thermal Pollution..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Chem-Free Gardening.....	Biology (Fish)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Home Chemicals.....	Farm Planning..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Septic.....	LID..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Pet Waste.....	Resources for Help..... <input type="checkbox"/>
PROJECT PRIORITY.....	L / M / H
NOTES	

Ninety percent of landowners are willing to chat and explore their property on first introduction! As a result, the door-to-door approach helped landowners better understand the glossy, written materials about streamside improvement they have likely seen. It also helped AASF gain a rapid understanding of existing streamside conditions.

AASF found that *a team of two is ideal* when going door-to-door. Besides providing a safety factor, one worker can record field notes while the second focuses on landowner interaction. Reports from male-only teams indicate some landowners may be reluctant to open the door to two male strangers. No-trespassing signs or other warning signs are always respected, and staff avoids properties with dangerous animals.

Flooding is a concern of some landowners, who may have observed changes in stream hydrology because of upstream development. They often comment that anything they might do is irrelevant compared to the development practices that cause the flooding. In these instances, outreach staff must be clear about the scope and intent of proposed projects.

Small parcel sizes pose challenges. Landowners with the least land are frequently the most interested. If they are influential community members, project success may hinge on including them. It may be necessary for several landowners to join together to develop an acceptable average buffer width and to select tree varieties and locations that work for everyone. Small parcels also increase project management time per mile of stream, since every property must have a landowner agreement, project plan approval, and project maintenance instructions.

Skeptical landowners often turn out to be the best stewards. Extra education may be needed for skeptical landowners. However, providing simple maintenance instructions for installed plantings—and flagging native species so they don't accidentally pull out the wrong ones, may be all that's needed. Patience on your part while guiding the process will pay off with diligent, educated streamside landowners.

Partners

Adopt-A-Stream Foundation, Streamside Landowners, Department of Ecology Water Quality Program.

Funding

It cost about \$35,000 for the AASF to perform outreach and stream restoration in this one neighborhood. The AASF provided 25 percent of the funding through a combination of cash and in-kind services, with Ecology providing the rest.

For more information

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