

# Clean Samish Initiative

Quarterly Report

Fall 2012



## Planting for their future ...

Allen Elementary School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students plant trees to enhance the Samish River (see article on page 4)

Photo Credit: Katie Lutz, Washington Service Corps Volunteer

*This report is to inform Samish Bay residents of activities to improve water quality in their community. As residents of the Samish Bay watershed you have a vested interest in clean water. With the rainy season upon us, we all need to take extra precautions on our property to reduce any potential of runoff. Water leaving your property may be contributing fecal coliform bacteria and other pollutants into the river, streams, and drainages. This degrades the health of your local streams as well as that of Samish Bay. Your involvement can make a difference – please join us!*

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# ***A Message from the Skagit County Commissioners***

## ***Let's keep focused on a solution***

Many property owners are making sound decisions on taking care of their septic systems and managing their livestock. We're making progress in the Samish. That's good.

What's not so good is that the State Department of Health has closed Samish Bay due to high fecal counts too many times over this last year, particularly this spring. A handful of people want to deny the problem exists or blame someone else. A better strategy is to work on solutions humans can provide like managing our septic systems, managing our grazing practices for livestock, properly disposing of pet waste, and using facilities when recreating. Livestock and humans are the biggest contributing factors and ones we can address. We've adopted a work plan and have established a monitoring program to establish a baseline to measure progress. We're working hard with our partners at the Conservation District, Ecology, EPA and Department of Agriculture and others to encourage voluntary compliance.

We have a problem that still needs lots of work. We've made more than 2,000 inspections on septic systems and properties, installed fences, planted trees, wrote farm plans and worked very hard on education and outreach. We're still not there.

With the rainy season once again upon us, let's all do our part by working together to get their job done.



Ron Wesen, Chairman  
District #1



Ken Dahlstedt  
District #2



Sharon Dillon  
District #3

## **MRA Update**

Expanded boundaries for the Samish Watershed Marine Recovery Area (MRA) were approved by the Skagit County Commissioners last spring. The new boundaries remove parcels that do not have on-site sewage (septic) systems. Reductions were made to the Willard Creek drainage to more closely reflect current drainages. The southern tip of the Samish Watershed was removed because it drains into Joe Leary Slough.

After receiving public comments at a December public hearing and a January community meeting in Alger, the revised boundaries were presented to the Commissioners April 16, 2012. The Commissioners directed staff to ensure those affected received notice of the proposal. Over 1,300 letters were sent the first week in May to all property owners who had previously received a letter about the MRA boundaries. Thanks to all of you who commented, or contacted us with questions.

Property owners who are not current with an operation and maintenance inspection in the new MRA are now finding letters in their mailboxes from Skagit County Public Health. Inspections are required every three years for conventional gravity systems and annually for every other type of septic system. We encourage you to have an inspection completed as soon as possible if you are due.

## **Septics 101 NOW On-line!**

At long last, the Septics 101 class is available on-line! The 30 minute training, followed by a few questions is at [www.skagitcounty.net/septics101online](http://www.skagitcounty.net/septics101online) AND taking the on-line class counts toward eligibility for the rebates.

***A septic riser is a heavy duty piece of corrugated plastic pipe cut to the right length to bring the septic lid to ground level for easier access.***



## **Rebates Still Rolling On**

Rebates for operations and maintenance inspections and installation of septic tank risers are still available. There is \$100 available for an inspection done by a certified operations and maintenance specialist and \$100 for a septic tank riser through September 2013. Don't delay! Once the money's gone, it's gone.

Eligibility for rebates includes 1) attendance at a Septics 101 class and 2) have your septic system inspected by a certified operations and maintenance specialist.

**For information contact Skagit County Public Health at 336-9380 or email: [health@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:health@co.skagit.wa.us)**

# Water Quality Report

*Fecal coliform levels in the Samish Basin took a disappointing turn for the worse this last spring (see graph below).*

While fall and winter 2011 results were much lower than in previous years and were a cause for optimism, the spring 2012 results were similar to those seen in recent springs. This fall (2012) we have seen some storms bring us results similar to the better results in the fall of 2011, while at least one storm resulted in higher bacterial loads to Samish Bay. So far this year Samish Bay has been closed 54 days due to fecal coliform pollution. That also means that on those days, the Samish River itself and many tributaries exceeded state water quality standards for fecal coliform, making them unsafe for recreation. There were another 13 days when the bay was closed due to river rises where the closure was not confirmed due to acceptable water quality data. This is good news in that in the past, those river rises would have resulted in fecal coliform levels high enough to close the bay.

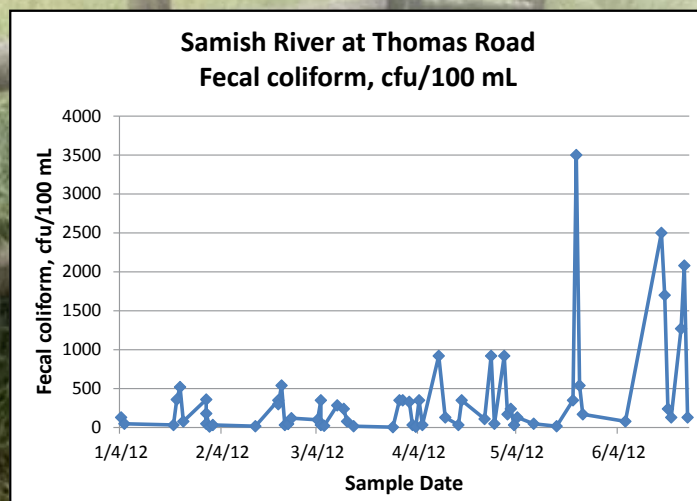
Skagit County and Ecology inspectors continue to work with landowners in the watershed to find solutions to possible pollution problems. During the summer, staff from the County, the Conservation District and EPA decided to focus on three tributaries in the reach of the Samish River where fecal coliform counts have consistently increased: Bob Smith, Swede, and Skarrup Creeks. More intensive water quality monitoring is taking place this fall in those basins.

Skagit County Health continues to work with septic tank owners in the Samish Basin and the number of failing septic systems is low and falling. Other sources such as

chicken manure spreading and wildlife continue to be investigated, but it is up to all of us to examine our own properties and eliminate pollution sources. If you have manure or other fecal matter from any source, be that pets, livestock, or your septic tank, and that material can wash into a stream or ditch, that is a source of water pollution and needs to be eliminated. The Skagit Conservation District and Skagit County have programs to help landowners eliminate pollution sources – temporary fencing for wet areas near watercourses, help with septic tank inspections and repairs, and advice for pet waste. Please take advantage of these programs and do your part to clean up the Samish Basin. Right now we have a severely polluted river, and we are better than that.

The results for the last year suggest that the fecal coliform source mechanisms in the spring are different than those in the fall and winter, and that remedies for spring pollution have yet to be implemented. Coliform levels this spring routinely exceeded the 100-cfu state water quality standard, and on two occasions, the fecal coliform loading criteria for Samish Bay established by the Department of Health was exceeded by more than 10 times the permissible limit, indicating there is much work left to be done in the cleanup effort.

Many thanks to all of those who have stepped up and improved their properties to eliminate pollution. Now it is up to the rest of us to get this done.





# Community Stewardship in Action

**When people join forces for a cause, they can make a big difference, even in a small community like the Samish watershed.**

*Samish Watershed Volunteers Making a Difference*

Hats off to Sue Mitchell and Bud and Sylvia Weber for their initiative in starting up the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, which now includes 9 members. As a small grassroots community group that wants to make a difference in their watershed, the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards have hosted numerous educational workshops and events (for kids of all ages) over the past year to engage and involve their neighbors.



*Family Night at Pomona Grange Park, hosted by the Friday Creek Habitat Stewards and partners, provided an opportunity for kids of all ages to explore Friday Creek, learn about stream life, water quality, watersheds, habitat, native plants, and much more!*

Special thanks to Samish watershed residents Sarai & Mike Stevens, Wendy Pounds & Mariah Brown-Pounds, Sarah Bishop, Dave Crabb & Maryann Dupree, Gilda & Bill Gorr, and Bud & Sylvia Weber for show-casing their beautiful and bountiful rural gardens for the Samish Watershed Garden Tour hosted by Chuckanut Transition, Friday Creek Habitat Stewards, and Skagit Conservation District. The tour featured examples of sustainable gardening practices that provide economic opportunities while protecting water quality and the surrounding native habitat.



*Mariah Brown-Pounds and Wendy Pounds of Namaste Gardens were featured on the Samish Watershed Garden Tour.*

## Allen Elementary School 8<sup>th</sup> Graders Plant Trees for the Samish

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Allen Elementary School 8<sup>th</sup> graders ventured out of the classroom and into the field to help plant 310 native trees along the Samish River as part of Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group's Junior Stream Stewards Service Learning Program. The project provided an opportunity for the students to apply classroom lessons by participating in a "hands on" stream restoration project in their neighborhood community.

This project was inspired by the landowner, Jay Lyman, who enrolled in Skagit County's Natural Resource Stewardship Program (NRSP) to enhance the riparian corridor along his Samish River property. NRSP is a volunteer based grants

program available to local landowners, which provides funding and resources to improve streams in our community. The Jay Lyman project, designed by Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, included removal of invasive species (including Himalayan blackberry and Japanese knotweed), from the riparian zone and replanting with native trees and shrubs along approximately 2,100 feet of the Samish River. Special thanks to all the project partners including Jay Lyman

Family, the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit County, Samish Indian Nation, and Allen Elementary School 8<sup>th</sup> graders!

For information on the NRSP program, contact Emily Derenne, Skagit County Public Works, at 336-9400 or email: [emilyjd@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:emilyjd@co.skagit.wa.us) or visit the website: [www.skagitcounty.net/NRSP](http://www.skagitcounty.net/NRSP)

*Active participation of an involved community is critical to making a difference in watershed health and water quality.*



*The health of a stream or river depends on the quality of the land surrounding it, which in turn relies on the people charged with the care of that land.*

## Samish Watershed Residents Receive Conservation Awards!

Over 30 Samish watershed residents were honored at the Skagit Conservation District's Annual Awards Banquet, which was held on Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, for making significant contributions toward conservation, natural resource enhancement, and water quality protection in the Samish watershed over the past year!

Special congratulations to Brian and Tori Jackson, who were the recipients of the District's prestigious "Cooperator of the Year" award due to their sincere interest in stewardship of the land, active participation in conservation practices, and the example they set for others. Over the past year, the Jackson's implemented an intensive conservation plan on their Thomas Creek property which included construction of a concrete livestock waste storage facility, a livestock confinement area to confine livestock when pasture conditions are not suitable for grazing, installed gutters and outlet lines on the barns to divert rain water, fenced livestock away from drainages which were planted with 685 native seedlings, and installed a new septic system and drain field.



*Left: Samish watershed residents, Brian and Tori Jackson were the 2012 "Cooperator of the Year" Award recipients*



Other exemplary Samish watershed residents who received special recognition include:

**Agricultural Implementation:** Rhonda & Rick Clark; Gothberg Farms; Colette & John Griffith; Trish & Wallace Groda; Cassandra & Chad Hillier; Jean & John Shea; Christina & Ezio Vermiglio

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:** DeBoer Dairy, LLC; Sharon & Mike Hull; Eiko & George Vojkovich

**Backyard Wildlife Conservation:** Sue Mitchell; Brenda Tate; Bud & Sylvia Weber

**Community Volunteers:** Alger Improvement Club; Chuckanut Transition; Sarah Bishop; Mariah Brown-Pounds; Dave Crabb & Maryann Dupree; Gilda & Bill Gorr; Mike Hackett; Janet McKinney; Chuck Nafziger; Wendy Pounds; Sarai & Mike Stevens; Wendy Swanson; Anette & Keith Witter

**Marine Biotoxin Volunteers:** Chet Bradley; Chuck Davis; Jessie Sauer

**Stream Team/Storm Team Shining Stars:** Mariepaule Braule; Deryl Hart; Robert Pare; Jack Sekora

For a complete list of 2012 Award Recipients, visit the District's website at: [www.skagitcd.org](http://www.skagitcd.org)





# Rainy Season Tips for the Farm

In these times of increasing environmental awareness, employing appropriate mud, manure, and pasture management practices can be very beneficial. Fall and winter rains can cause mud and manure run-off into nearby drainage ditches, streams, and rivers, which flow to Samish Bay. Now that the rainy season is here, mud and manure management should be on our minds.

## Tips for Reducing Mud and Runoff on Livestock Properties:

- Fence animals out of creeks, wetlands, and other drainage areas; provide watering systems away from streams.
- Keep livestock off saturated and rain soaked soils - remove livestock from pasture fields **before** soils become saturated.
- Practice good pasture management techniques so you have a healthy pasture – do not allow livestock to graze grass shorter than 3 inches - avoid overgrazing and creating bare spots.
- Scatter grass seed in those areas that have bare spots.
- Create a winter paddock or confinement area (also called a sacrifice area) and use it to take livestock off pastures throughout the rainy season.
- Pick up manure every 1 to 3 days in stalls, paddocks, and outdoor arenas.
- Maintain a grassy area of at least 25 feet in width around winter paddocks; increase the dimension if near a stream. The grass will serve as a filter for any runoff that does occur.
- Install gutters and downspouts on all buildings and then divert away from confinement areas.
- Construct a manure storage structure – manure should be stored on an impervious surface and covered with either a roof or tarp to divert rainwater from manure.
- Provide forage and other feedstuffs in bins or mangers, instead of feeding on the ground (will also decrease waste feed, which will decrease feed costs).

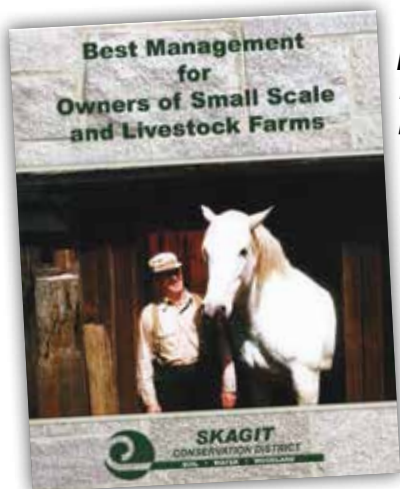
- Maintain or plant trees and moisture loving shrubs outside of winter paddocks. Trees drink a lot of water, 100 to 250 gallons per day for a mature tree. Trees also aid in keeping area drier and reducing surface water.



***A healthy pasture creates a beautiful landscape, promotes healthy livestock, and helps prevent water pollution problems.***

In summary, these are some of the practices that small scale and livestock farm owners can put into place to promote healthy farms, healthy livestock, and healthy streams. Implementing good land management practices can save money, increase farm productivity, increase property values, increase neighborhood aesthetics, protect water quality, and improve livestock health.

Free planning and technical assistance can be obtained by contacting the **Skagit Conservation District (360) 428-4313** or email: [john@skagitcd.org](mailto:john@skagitcd.org).



***Interested in additional ideas for making your property more attractive and enjoyable? One you can be proud of while improving the health of your land and water? Contact the Skagit Conservation District at 428-4313 or email: [kristi@skagitcd.org](mailto:kristi@skagitcd.org) for a free copy of this publication.***

***Create a healthy environment by reducing mud. Mud can make chore time unpleasant and can create an unsightly and unhealthy environment for livestock. In***

***addition to creating a breeding ground for insects, flies, and mosquitoes, mud creates slick, unsafe footing, increasing the risk of injury (for both animals and humans).***

***Along with mud come damp stalls, hoof disease, wet feed, hay and bedding, and excessive areas which go unused in the winter because of poor drainage.***



# Skagit County Shoreline Master Program Update

***In compliance with the State Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58), Skagit County is updating its Shoreline Master Program to reflect changes in the Act adopted by the State legislature. The Shoreline Master Program seeks to achieve responsible shoreline use and development, environmental protection, and public access.***

Skagit County is making progress on its update of the Shoreline Management Master Program, a document jointly implemented and enforced by Skagit County and the State Department of Ecology under the rules of the Shoreline Management Act. A public participation plan, shoreline inventory, analysis and characterization report and shoreline jurisdiction map have all been drafted and are available for review.

A working draft document is currently being reviewed by the Shoreline Advisory Committee, the Skagit County Planning Commission and the general public. A draft shoreline environment designation map has been developed and is also part of the ongoing review effort.

The attendees of the public visioning workshops last summer were assured that several opportunities would be offered for interested residents and landowners to review the work and provide input into the process. The very rough, working draft document is one of the first chances people have had to mark the progress of the project team and the shoreline advisory committee (SAC) as the draft document is being developed and refined.

As part of the grant agreement, Skagit County is required to provide a working draft document to the State Department of Ecology. This is still a fluid document that will continue to change and evolve as it is reviewed and comments are received. The County should then receive some preliminary comments from Ecology after initial review of the working draft document and maps.

The County anticipates having another round of community meetings and open houses to give landowners and interested citizens the opportunity to look at the maps and get their questions answered and concerns addressed. These open houses will occur after the preliminary comments from the Department of Ecology have been received and considered. A more complete draft shoreline master program (SMP) will be made available for formal public review and comment, environmental review, and public hearings before the Planning Commission.

The shoreline rules apply to areas that meet the definition of shorelines of the state and their associated shorelands, which include all marine waters, lakes and reservoirs greater than 20 acres in size, streams with a mean annual flow greater than 20 cubic feet per second, designated floodways, some floodplain areas that are adjacent to the floodway and associated wetlands.

Additional information being generated for the update include a restoration plan and a cumulative impacts analysis, which will be made available once they are completed.

For additional information, please visit the website at [www.skagitcounty.net/SMP](http://www.skagitcounty.net/SMP), or please contact Betsy Stevenson, AICP, Project Manager, Skagit County Planning and Development Services, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273 [betsyds@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:betsyds@co.skagit.wa.us) or (360) 336-9410 ext 5879.





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## Skagit Conservation District 2013 Annual Native Plant Sale

### Pre-orders now underway!

The Skagit Conservation District (SCD) is holding its 2013 Annual Native Plant Sale that offers a selection of native trees and shrubs for conservation purposes, such as wild-life habitat, windbreaks, hedgerows, raingardens, reforestation, and stream and wetland enhancement at low-cost affordable rates. Visit the SCD website for the 2013 order form and price list – [www.skagitcd.org](http://www.skagitcd.org).

### Two Ways to Purchase Plants:

**Pre-orders:** are limited to buyers who purchase \$100 or more and a 50% deposit is due upon order placement. Pre-order deadline: 4:30 p.m. Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. **To place order, call 428-4313 or visit the SCD office at 2013 E. College Way, Suite #203.**

If you would like to pre-order but can't meet the \$100 minimum, try ordering with neighbors, friends, and family, and then split up the order. Use one order form and send in all the payments together.

**Open Sale:** This sale is for all purchases, other than pre-orders. Plants will be sold on a first-come, first served basis on:

**Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9 am to 5 pm;**  
**Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, from 9 am to 1 pm; and**  
**Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to 1 pm.**

*The annual plant sale is held at the  
WACD Lynn Brown Plant Materials Center,  
located at 16564 Bradley Road in Bow.*



There are many benefits to using native plants in your landscape – for you, for your community, and for wildlife.

- 100 mature trees catch about 250,000 gallons of rainwater per year
- Decrease polluted runoff
- Decrease soil and streambank erosion
- Help prevent flooding
- Encourage beneficial insects reducing the need for chemicals
- Provide habitat for salmon and wildlife
- Many native plants produce showy flowers, abundant fruits and seeds, and brilliant fall foliage. By planting native plants, you will have a beautiful yard that is friendly to wildlife.

## Clean Water is Everyone's Business

**The Clean Samish Quarterly Report is being published by the Skagit Conservation District, Skagit Conservation Education Alliance (SCEA), Skagit County, and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).**

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