



Conservation in Washington: Powered by People

MAKING AN IMPACT:

- *Completed 16 water quality projects with participation from 11 landowners.*
- *WA Department of Health upgraded or reclassified 278 commercial and recreational acres for shellfish harvest following project implementation.*
- *Farmers who worked with the district increased production, improved animal health, and saw greater farm management flexibility.*

PIERCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT - LIVESTOCK OWNERS IMPROVE SHELLFISH HARVEST AREA

In 2009, freshwater streams in Key Peninsula were showing downward water quality trends due to impacts from bacteria and sediment. Shellfish harvest areas downstream were downgraded due to bacteria pollution. Following a windshield survey, Pierce Conservation District (PCD) noted areas where potential impacts may have been due in part to poor farming management or livestock keeping practices.

FINDING A COMMON PATH Partners first identified channels for communication and feedback between District and regulatory partners. Together, the partners then focused outreach, education, and cost-share into areas with the highest likelihood of direct impact. Beginning in 2010, PCD leveraged funds to install best management practices (BMPs) in selected sub-watersheds identified by threatened harvest areas and upland freshwater quality links. Eleven landowners implemented 16 projects that installed 4,500 square feet of heavy use area; 700' of cross fence; 5,763' of exclusion fence; 1,600' of pipeline; 40 yards of manure removal; 3 off stream watering units; and 1 critical area buffer planting that was completed by 35 volunteers.

RESULTS ON THE GROUND This concerted effort included several partners including agencies, non profits, a university, and citizen partners. Multiple strategies were employed to address behavior changes and values, replace failing septic systems, implement farm BMPs, improve farm management, and reduce impacts and quantity of stormwater runoff. Following these projects, significant declines in bacteria levels have been realized. As a result, the WA Department of Health has upgraded or reclassified 278 commercial and recreational acres for shellfish harvest. Pierce County has also measured an upward trend in stream health around focus areas in the watershed. Farmers who installed practices or utilized district technical assistance are seeing increased production, improved animal health, and greater farm management flexibility.

PCD's ability to provide landowners with a suite of options, as well as the opportunity to address their farm priority first, was key for project ownership and buy-in.

"I can't believe there's help like this available," said Jerry Kersting of Wildberry Farm. "I wish I would have called sooner."

Upland water quality project site before (left) and after implementation (right)

