



Conservation in Washington: Powered by People



MAKING AN IMPACT:

- *Worked with the Spokane Tribe to establish the Chamokane Watershed Council.*
- *Installed several practices in the watershed, including riparian fencing and planting of native vegetation.*
- *Project spurred other landowners' interest in additional conservation work.*

STEVENS CONSERVATION DISTRICT - BRINGING STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

Chamokane Creek, a tributary to the Spokane River, is on the 303(d) list due to its high levels of fecal coliform and dissolved oxygen. Streams are placed on the 303(d) list when poor water quality impairs their use as drinking water, habitat, recreation, and/or industrial use. The Spokane River is also on the 303(d) list for PCBs and dissolved oxygen. Over the years the issues surrounding these waters have generated distrust and a few legal battles over water rights. As a local and trusted entity, the Stevens County Conservation District has been able to bring together diverse stakeholder groups—including private landowners—to work towards a solution.

FINDING A COMMON PATH Chamokane Creek is bordered by private lands and the Spokane Indian Reservation on the lower portion. Stevens County Conservation District (SCCD) received a Department of Ecology (DOE) grant and worked with Spokane Tribe to establish the Chamokane Watershed Council, which is made up of private landowners and a large

commercial timber ownership. Through this council the first water quality improvement project was implemented with funding from the Tribe, DOE, EPA, and a participating landowner. Several best management practices (BMPs) were installed as part of the project, including riparian (streamside) fencing, a livestock bridge, spring development, and planting of native woody vegetation. An Engineering Grant from the Washington State Conservation Commission funded the livestock bridge design. The landowner—who was active in the implementation of the entire project—provided labor and materials as in-kind.

RESULTS ON THE GROUND 1,500 feet of Chamokane Creek has been improved, and the landowners and neighbors are better informed on the importance of a healthy riparian area. One clear success is that the landowners and the watershed council are extremely pleased and look forward to the riparian area and diverse vegetation improving in the future. Many of the neighbors continue to watch the project develop and are now showing interest in working on their own property. There were some pre-project water samples collected, but SCCD has yet to find funding for post-project monitoring to further document water quality improvements.

The major challenge was finding willing landowners to participate, considering the long history of mistrust among stakeholders within the watershed. It was the landowners' trust in the local Conservation District that led them to participate in this project and implement practices to make demonstrable water quality improvements. As one SCCD Board Supervisor said, "You have to start somewhere—one successful project will spur interest in more projects."

Chamokane Creek property before (left) and after water quality improvement project (right)

