



# Conservation in Washington: Powered by People



## MAKING AN IMPACT:

- *Improvements to water quality in Whatcom County resulted in the reopening of Portage Bay shellfish beds.*
- *Over one million trees planted in Whatcom County through CREP.*
- *Whatcom Conservation District worked with private landowners to plant 359 CREP projects, restoring 2,375 acres of riparian areas and 166.6 miles of stream.*

## WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT - OVER 1 MILLION TREES PLANTED IN EFFORT TO PROTECT SALMON AND SHELLFISH HABITAT

Degraded riparian (streamside) conditions and water quality are key limiting factors in the recovery of endangered salmon and steelhead in Washington State. Shellfish beds are also adversely affected. Through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Whatcom Conservation District offers incentives to landowners who voluntarily remove riparian areas from production and implement conservation practices.

**FINDING A COMMON PATH** CREP provides financial compensation to landowners who restore vegetated areas bordering streams, termed riparian buffers, that protect salmon and shellfish habitat. CREP buffers alleviate water temperatures, turbidity, fecal coliform, and nutrient inputs by providing shade and acting as filters. Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) has worked with private landowners to plant 359 CREP projects, which restored 2,375 acres of riparian areas and 166.6 miles of stream since 2000. Today, over one million trees have been planted in Whatcom County through CREP. WCD also used the program to install 196,861 feet of fencing, 11 livestock crossings, and 10 off-channel watering facilities in the county.

**RESULTS ON THE GROUND** Annual monitoring has shown that, since the program’s origin in 1999, CREP buffers are reducing water temperatures and addressing limiting factors for salmon and shellfish. In fact, improvements to water quality in Whatcom County have resulted in the reopening of the Portage Bay shellfish beds, and the Birch Bay beds may reopen this year (2014).

When a program such as CREP provides technical expertise, funding, and incentives, landowners are willing and sometimes eager to participate. With CREP there is little for the landowner to do other than watch the buffers grow and know that they have made a difference.

“I’m new with the CREP program, but my experiences with it have been very positive,” said Burton Jay, Whatcom County landowner. “... a plan was developed to solve the problem of 14 acres overgrown with reed canarygrass and blackberries and a salmon creek in need of shading. I was pleased that I could have input ...and look forward to returning the property to a more pristine condition.”

Left: Site visit before CREP planting



Right: Same site following CREP project implementation—the blue tree shelters (plastic tubing) mark new tree plantings

